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A CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL HARDT

This interview was conducted on October 22, 2005 at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina and was filmed as part of a documentary about the present state of philosophy and the future. Jason Craig (Director) and Chris Haley (Producer) also asked questions.

CRESTON DAVIS: *First of all, I would like to thank you for your time, Michael; it is a real pleasure to be with you again. Let's begin by situating your philosophical structure with and against one of your colleagues who also happens to be one of the greatest living Marxist theorists of our time, Fredric Jameson. How do you see your theoretical work relating to Jameson's especially as outlined in his monumental argument, Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism? For example, how does your diagnose of history and narrative structure both approximate and depart from Jameson's idea of "History."*

MICHAEL HARDT: Well one thing that occurs to me that is very similar or coordinated, is the assumption that there has been an historical break—that there has been an historical break sometime let's say between 1968 and 1989 (I don't know exactly what it is) and that historical break makes us rethink both the conditions of domination and the conditions of possibility. One can see in Jameson's work the notion of postmodernism, which is quite complicated because it is trying to do both. It is not, of course, a celebration of the postmodern period as if it is the absolute freedom of expression of differences and so forth, but neither is it a kind of lamenting of the current postmodern condition as one of totalitarian commodity control and market control of all of life. Above all, Jameson tries to keep open those two, the two possibilities, and I think that that is fundamentally similar to the way I approach things. The global difference, if you could speak just in Marx's theological terms [Hardt smiles] is that Jameson is much more interested in questions of consumption and of commodity fetishism and the logic of the commodity and its extension over artistic expression and

social life in general. I am much more interested in the other side of the equation that is materially situated in the moments of production, productions not only of goods but also productions of subjectivity and possibility. And I have relatively little to say about consumption or about the nature of commodities for that matter. So, viewed that way, I would see it as a complimentary relationship but it is certainly quite different in the respects I have just highlighted.

CD: *Yes, and maybe perhaps one of these differences can be seen in how each of you employ central figures that animate your specific ways of highlighting your various theoretical and material structures. Although each of you shares the central figure of Karl Marx you diverge on how you individually interpret the Marxist tradition in our contemporary epoch. For example one of the central philosophical figures for Jameson is the Hungarian Hegelian Marxist, George Lukacs, whereas for you the figure might be more along the lines of a Gilles Deleuze, or for that matter the latter's interpretation of Spinoza within the Marxist tradition through Negri and perhaps to a lesser extent Guattari.*

MH: Yes, there certainly are different histories of philosophy that go with these. You could say they are different faces of Marx which you could then line up, like you are doing, with different lines of Marxist tradition and maybe even with different traditions within Modern Philosophy as a whole that could stand in for them. It is true that everybody creates her or his own history of philosophy. Everyone that works in this way constructs his or her own history of philosophy that stands behind them and that is one way, like you are trying to do, of identifying the differences between two thinkers who like to look at the different history of philosophies that they have constructed behind them.

CD: *Right, and for you, you talk about certain philosophies of history and one of these, the main "figure" if you will, as you talk about, you are interested in modes of production, and how subjectivity gets constituted, and I am curious exactly how would you understand subjectivity as a concept. What in general is subjectivity in your view?*

MH: Well, start by thinking about what we can do because that is really a lot of what interests me here: What are our abilities to think and what are the limits of our ability to think, to imagine a better world, to imagine ourselves in a better world—this power to think and then also the power to act. These are at least two aspects of what subjectivity is. So we both (with that kind of investigation), we both want to ask: What is it that we can do; what is it that we can do together; what kind of society can we build; what kind of things can we make, and also at the same time, what are the forces and structures that limit those abilities, that separate us from what we can do—you might say—that make it impossible for us to imagine a better world or impossible for us to bring about the world that we imagine. That is what, that is at least one way of approaching what the question of subjectivity is here. It has to do with our abilities to produce, produce ideas, imagination, and produce reality itself.

CD: *And what would you say are some of the key obstacles, as an example, for what blocks, say, our ability to produce subjectivity, to connect, to relate to others in their own differences of production? What are some obstacles that you can see which are at once dominant and perhaps even unconscious to thinking and acting itself and the conditions that create the subject? Let me ask a basic question: Are there such obstacles at all and what do they look like?*

MH: There are numerous and enormous obstacles and sometimes it is hard because one is tempted either to give a general explanation which seems to lose the specificity or a specific one which then does not give justice to the generality of it. Let me just give a couple specific examples and then hope they can stand in. I have recognized recently in European Countries, in a kind of media discourse, a way that Islam and the threat of terrorism has made it impossible, at least at a general media level of the society, to imagine a world of difference—let us call it that for now. Suppose every difference is perceived as a threat, so that for instance, a couple weeks ago I was doing a TV interview on Danish TV and the commentator was saying, “You imagine a better world and please tell us what this better world will be like.” And I talk about world of globalization that could possibly bring together the free expression of differences -- cultural differences, social differences, and so forth. But for him the trump card is “but there is Radical Islam.” And for him radical Islam stands in the way for everything and makes impossible that imagination of a world of difference, let's call it. And, therefore through a strange kind of conflation, his imagination at least of the threat of Islamic Terrorism is also an argument against immigration, so that ‘a pure Danish society culture is required because all difference is a threat.’ Now that is a very small example I suppose, and yet it's an example of the way that our ability to think a society of differences – a society comprised of true freedom and mixture in this sense – the way that that's blocked by – it's not only an ideological structure, but also a military structure, a sort of state of war that's pervading the world today, So I guess you could try to describe differently what the blocks are, but at least you can see that in the case I have just given we're being blocked from thinking something and its something that I, in particular, want, and I think that all of us desire.

CHRIS HALEY: *It is all bound up with the Nation-state system. It's a by-product of that exact kind of mindset that you get with borders and homogenous cultures and National identity and it immediately produces all of these kinds of differences that are outside of the norm or whatever the way the nation-state gets configured culturally....*

MH: And those differences are then...Once those differences are all...Once those differences can only be understood as threat then it blocks completely the ability to think differences. So I responded to this television commentator “a pure society is a dead society.” And he says, “but we have no choice, that's the only thing we can do to preserve Denmark for the Danes because otherwise it would be destroyed” I mean, it's a strange conflation because actually the immigrants in Denmark pose very little danger of terrorism, but nonetheless the kind of media

ideological conflation between bombings in London and immigration policies seem to wipe out that possibility of thinking ...calling it just a kind of multicultural world is already a kind of a degraded notion of it, but its kind of a society in which differences can be expressed with each other. It was in this regard that I loved a graffiti that I remembered in France from the 90's that said something like: "Foreigner's please don't leave us here alone here with the French." Which is sort of expressing that notion that a pure culture is a dead culture. This is one way - of course the Danish TV commentator says to me then at that point, 'oh well, you just say that because you are from the US and the US is, you know, by force, a nation of cultural mixture' and it is. And one should recognize actually that with respect to notions of purity there are enormous possibilities within the US and its tradition - not to say, of course, that there aren't horrible and enormous structures of racism and hierarchy in the US, but nonetheless, that possibility of mixture is itself a utopia. It is a utopian possibility let's call it. Anyway, that is just one example that came to me off the cuff, an example it seems to me of an ideological blockage of thinking. It is like an obstacle to thinking under which we suffer I think today. We cannot even imagine today the world we want.

CD: It is happening not just on the material level but also on the level of thinking. Of course thinking and the material - it seems to me anyway - are not separable - they are in fact intertwined in a, dare I say it, "theological" mode. This is very interesting. Perhaps I should ask you point-blank: What do you mean by "thinking" on your terms? Are you not appealing to a kind of German idealism, in which thought or maybe a certain modern philosophy, in which thought is set over and against action and the material world? What is your notion of thought or thinking the logics of thought itself? How are you using this term?

MH: I think it's probably best to look at the imagination because the imagination works by reference to what already exists. We can't imagine things that aren't already on our horizon. The imagination always does bring something new to the world. I can, we can imagine the world being different but it is within certain limits that are related to reality. The imagination is not just, and I think it is wrong to think of the imagination as just some sort of unhinged fantasy that does not relate to reality. The imagination is always bounded to our times, but can move those times forward. Sometimes it seems just like a small turn, but that makes all the difference. So, I think that that is the kind of thing I am appealing to is the powers of imagination to see a different world. And I guess I put the link like this: I think that imagination can lead to desire. Like if I can imagine a better world then I can want a different world. And the desire is already the first step in bringing it to reality. With this notion of imagination, you might say, and now I am just paraphrasing a famous dictum, that humanity only poses problems for itself, that it already has the tools to resolve. And that I think this is inherently related to this notion of the imagination. We can only imagine a world that is already possible. The fact of our being able to imagine a better world is already, you might say, on the first step toward accomplishing it - passing

through desire, and then actually the power to act that follows from desire.

CD: *So, instead of thought being representational, like well, you have an idea or an image of an external object in reality that is projected within the closed space of the mind, thought or what you are calling "imagination" is actually already bound up in the world as such.*

MH: Right, there might be two ways, of approaching this which are classic modes that people who study utopias employ – two ways of thinking utopia. I mean, there is one way of thinking utopia, which is not what I am saying, which is a little bit like the idea/ notion you just said, which is a kind of blue-print of a world qualitatively different from our own. It is as if, there the power to create that utopia mentally, is somehow unhinged from our world, it is something completely different. Whereas I am talking about (I would also call this utopian thinking but one of a very different kind than the "blue-print" versions), which is based on the potentials within reality, passing through our desires and then leading to the creation of it. It is a kind of utopia that is already implicit in what is here. And I would say that each age does not, we cannot imagine a world, and a better world that is not already embedded in our own. That is what, in fact, a lot of the work of bringing a better world about is the kind of work done through the imagination in allowing us to imagine, more powerfully, on the basis of what exists, what could be better.

CD: *And this notion of the imagination, would this be convertible to Deleuze's idea of potentiality and desire and, on the other hand, creation as actuality? Is that fair to say? Can I put things this way?*

MH: Yes, that seems fine to me as long as, what is essential for me here is the, that link between imagination and desire. I think that, just as I was saying that once we collectively have the imagination of a better world, we are already on the way to making it. Or, at least, we have the possibility of making it. Also with desires the recognition of people's desires for different social arrangements and so on and so forth. That too is already much more concretely on the way to creating it. So that when people tell us, when people will tell you that it is unrealistic to imagine our world being more democratic, we could have not only peaceful but constructive and enriching relationships across cultural differences etc. I think you first have to look at how much people want that, and the fact of wanting it already, I think, is a sign that what is seemingly impossible is in fact quite real and within our grasp.

CD: *And once again, does the imagination really begin for you, as not just on the philosophical level, as you just have expounded, but also on the level of the literary, being in literature, does literature play into your notion of the imagination? And could you give an example?*

MH: Yes, I think that there are many ways in which all kinds of artistic production, and each era has the ability to work through social (and even philosophical problems) in different terms and sort of prefigure what the social is and then answers can arrive. This is certainly true with high literary texts but it might be better to talk about popular culture. I mean, we can think of examples of how fear and desire function and are configured within pop culture. Think...ok, here is a super banal example, but it might work anyway. Think about all the representations of vampires we have. Think for instance, of Buffy. One of the things that Buffy and her friends all learn (what we all learned in High School) is the basic fact that we are all monsters. That our difference makes us excludable and in some ways horrible. I mean we all have this experience from you know, our own pathological families, our own strange sexual desires, all these ways in which we realize, particularly in High School, that is why of course, many of these vampire things are located in High School, that we recognize the monster within ourselves. I mean, there is a real kind of terror of social exclusion that comes with that. However, what is combined, and I think Buffy is a perfect example of this, what is combined with that, is what seems like a fantasy element, because it turns out that all that... Buffy and her friends, not only are they all monsters, but there is also an incredibly powerful element to monstrosity. They all have supernatural powers, and what these supernatural powers fill in for, stand in for, it seems to me, is precisely our ability even superhuman ability to create the world, to make it different. All fantasy, even Lord-of-the-Rings fantasy, all of fantasy has to do with magic, magic is always that stands-in for the great human potential to create the world. I mean, that is what is magical. What is really magical, what is really divine, for that matter, is our ability to make the world, our ability to make the world *different*. And so we see, I think that we see in fantasy or even in elements of popular culture, like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, we see the combination of both the horrifying exclusion of recognizing our monstrosity, but at the same time, the empowerment of, and the realization of the powers we have, to create the world. I mean, they are not always; it is not always like *Willow* that we are all great witches, but, in fact, that Willow's recognition of her magical powers is like all our recognition, or our collective recognition of our power to transform the world. I think these are ways, it seems to me, even what seems to be the most, what should we call it, the lowest levels of popular culture, are trying to work out the often, not abstract but, diagonal ways – you know, not confronting social problems head-on but working through them diagonally, trying to work out social problems with their own terms, with their own possibilities.

CD: *And literature and, as you nicely put it in your example of popular culture in Buffy, are horizons in which we come to terms with our own destiny: the monster and the divine in our collective destinies. That was nice. Great, we started talking about, you know, how you understand a certain kind of cultural analysis that is different and similar to Jameson's cultural analysis. I was wondering if we could just back up for a moment and re-approach it in terms of how you understand the notion of postmodernity as between, on the one hand, you said not a celebration, you are not celebrating a kind of postmodern*

difference nor are you lamenting it. So therefore, the question emerges, what then is the postmodern between celebration and lament?

MH: It might be good to back up and look at the modern for a little bit, because I think that what is my general method, which I take from others obviously approaching these questions is to recognize the power of people to throw off forms of domination that in fact moves history forward, so that when we look at this passage from the modern to the postmodern, however we are going to understand it, it is first good, I think, to recognize how the refusals of modern forms of domination defined and even prefigured this passage. Like, even gave the terms of how this passage would be worked out. And so what are the dominant elements of modernity we are talking about? I mean it is a certain, obviously a certain kind of capitalist control, you know, dominated through nation-states, formed internationally through relations of imperialism, colonial regimes, economic domination of peoples of the southern parts of the world, etc. I think these are the elements of modernity, or at least these are some of them, which we call the disciplinary regimes centered on the factory. That is another element of the kind of regime, where you are defined by one task in a factory and you are guaranteed of that employment for forty hours a week, fifty weeks a year for life. And it is that kind of prison sentence of that job that really defines modern life. Other sorts of disciplinary regimes, one can say too, the discipline of the patriarchal family, the discipline itself of the prison regime, all kinds of things we can understand as modern institutions. I think it is good to understand postmodernity as first of all, the expression of throwing off these regimes of modern power: The defeat of imperialism and colonialism; the defeat or transformation of the factory regime; the attack on the patriarchal family itself. These are all, of course very different struggles that do not take place among the same populations even. Some of the peoples struggling against colonialism, for instance, are the most patriarchal ones, and they, and some of them also would like to have the discipline of factory production rather than the horrible forms of exploitation they already have. But nonetheless, if we try to think the modern life and modern forms of power as the intersection among all these different regimes against which all these people are struggling even if from different sides, it is in that regard we can see the passage to postmodernity as not exactly a kind of liberation but as a victory. Now victory quickly turns into defeats, but that is another matter. At first to recognize the victory and what do I mean by this, I mean think of '68 for example, as just sort of an emblematic year. It is in many ways, you know '68 is in many ways constructed explicitly against the discipline of the university system. That is quite clear in France, in Germany, in the US, and Mexico. '68 is also a year of anti-imperialist struggles. Think of the Tet offensive as sort of emblematic of the long line of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles leading up to it. '68 is also a year of a first crest, let's say, of second wave feminist movements. So all of the things that coincide then, it is in a way a defeat of modernity and an opening of a certain passage beyond modernity. Like I say though, that passage quickly turns into new forms of domination, that in many ways define the postmodern. So, the reason we call it postmodern is not

because domination has ended but because a specific form of it, a modern, a specific modern form has ended.

CD: Does this get to yours and Toni Negri's idea of "biopower", a specific form of domination inscribed within a postmodern horizon?

MH: It does eventually. Let me try one more link before getting into it, which is that, you know, it is a little bit like those, I was thinking in some ways what the great movements of the sixties, think of the US context, but similar in Europe, and really elsewhere. The great demands of the movements of the sixties, in some strange way came to pass. But they came to pass in a way that turned out to be horrible. It is like, it is a little bit like, I do not know if you would remember any of those *Twilight Zone* episodes, or, a lot of *Twilight Zone* episodes, where the message was beware what you wish for because it turns out that what someone wishing for comes true and it turns out to be horrible. You recognize by the end of the episode, "oh my god it came true" and they are suffering from it. And so, you know there are some ways in which economically you could look at the movements of the sixties as being against the factory regime, against the 40 hour work-week, as I was saying, against that kind of death of guaranteed employment. Well, that came true. There is no longer guaranteed employment; the working day is being destroyed; and we are recognizing a new kind of exploitation from that, and what do I mean by that? It seems to me that production now is dominated by what we call immaterial productions, like the production of immaterial goods: like the production of knowledges, the production of ideas, the production of images, the production of affects even like emotional relationships, you know like how working in a fast-food restaurant you have to sort of smile at people. You know, part of the *affect* is part of your work. Even your emotional life is controlled. Well, in these kind of jobs, there is a break down of the relationship between, the division between the work-a-day world and life that characterized previous form of domination. So that people, said, "we don't want work to be separate from our life." Well, you got. You got it in a way where there is no working day. You are like, where people are like working in fast food during the day and sweeping offices at night and so the working day has broken down. There is no guaranteed job for fifty weeks a year. There are no 8–5 or 9–5 working days. But, it turns out to be horrible. Or even at the upper level of the economy. Think about how in some ways the student movement, the feminist movements were demanding that our work life involved intelligence, that it involved the production of knowledges, that even it involves affects. That is a large element, especially of the feminist movement. So now I think that it is true that affective has become a central element of production but like I say in a horrible way. The way flight attendants, for instance, you know this kind of work, is what, it seems to me, becoming progressively dominant where you are being paid, you are being commanded to be nice to people. To have your affective life, your ability to be friendly, to love even, is part of the job and is commanded. So, this is what I am thinking, this is a very concrete way of thinking about the passage of the modern to the postmodern. The shift from the

dominance of that factory production and all the social qualities that come with it, the well defined working day, the guaranteed employment of a certain wage relationship, even the routine aspect that is not intellectual, let us say, that is not even affective of factory labor. That shifted its dominance to, what I was trying to describe as these new forms of labor. I do not mean, of course that people are not working in factories anymore or that they are not working in the fields for that matter. What I am talking about rather is the shift in the dominant form, the dominant qualities of labor, that I think are being progressively imposed over the others.

CD: *Yes, you have nicely given us an economic example. But is this "economy" this, economy of producing certain affects, being "nice" and even "loving" someone (or in a fetishized sense, something) and so forth, is this a domain of domination from which a new struggle is birthed within our so called "postmodernism?"*

MH: Yes, with this economic example, that in a way is relating to the struggle. There are at least two things you can get out of it. One is the fact that the shift to the postmodern doesn't involve the kind of liberation that would inspire us to celebrate it wholeheartedly because really it has been the author of, it has created new forms of exploitation and domination that in some ways are more sinister and horrible than the last. But it also should point to something else, which is the power of resistance, the power of resistance to these forms of domination. The fact that the resistance to the modern regime of power, resistance to the factory society, resistance to all the things that the 60s were against. It really underlines an enormous power, a power of creativity, even if that creativity turns out to be used in sinister ways. It is that power, I think, that one always has to keep in mind. It is that power that will be able to create a new world. There is some Patti Smith song that goes something like that "we made this world and there is no reason we cannot make another one." You know like, recognizing our collective power in the construction of this world is in a way an enormously empowering recognition, an empowering way of reading history to.

CD: *There is a sense in which to create a new world it always requires a kind of resistance. As you say, dominance and resistance are sort of counter-posed to each other. For example, let me lift a sentence from your book "Multitude." It says here on page 54, "dominance, no matter how multidimensional can never be complete, and it is always contradicted by resistance." Your analysis of dominance takes on Hegel's "master" as the "capitalist" and resistance takes on a kind of "slave" that is, the "workers" like you and me and the majority of living people in our culture. Are you comfortable in my framing your notion of "dominance/capitalist and resistance/workers" in such dialectical terms? I know you don't like Hegel very much because he is too idealistic, but is that a master/slave dialectic operating there in the heart of your analysis of the shift from the modern to a passage which we are now calling, by some shameful historical default, the "postmodern."*

MH: I think that the primary point I would want to insist on in this regard, is that

the current regime of power we have, whether we are going to describe it or think of it in terms of capitalist control or capitalist production or in terms of U.S. domination in military affairs or in other regards. The current regime we have is constantly dependent on “us.” It needs those who are resisting it in order to survive. Like for instance, the capitalist, you know, or the corporations etc. can’t just kill all the workers—it needs them, it needs them to produce, even if they’re opposed to it and resisting it all the time and antagonistic to it. It’s completely...capital is completely dependent on labor. Like, there is no way out of the relationship. And I think that is true also in a rather different way, in terms of U.S. military dominance or other ways one wants to think about the current global power structure that it’s completely dependent on the creativity and productivity of those below. Looking at this from the other direction it’s not the same. It’s not like those of us below need the boss. We don’t need someone to rule over us. It’s not the dependence of the relationship is only one way. Because if one were to say, if one were to think for that matter—that everybody needs a boss; we need a boss to have society; we need a boss to produce; we need someone to control and rule over us—well there would be little hope in changing things. If instead, though we recognize we are potentially autonomous we could actually rule ourselves. I see no other definition of democracy actually that we are capable of democracy that we have that power to produce autonomously, I mean working together, that we have the possibility, more generally, to produce society autonomously working together democratically. Well, that allows for a kind of freedom from that relationship, or a potential autonomy, let’s say. And without that, I would think that any of these notions of resistance would be just vain or useless. I mean, why should we go on resisting if all we’re doing is supporting a permanent relationship in which the oppressed or the ruled constantly maintain their position of subordination and have no way out of it.

CD: Do you think that there could be a kind of cyclical operation happening here in your analysis that suppose we resist the dominant rule, but then the resisters become the dominant and conversely the dominant rulers, say the capitalist robber-barons like the Ken Layes, or the George Bushes, suddenly are out of jobs, out of houses, out of their precious 401ks, and so forth. I mean, does this cycle simply continue an infinitum? Aren’t we all simply monsters in the final analysis awaiting our chances to actualize our dominance over others through various strategies of power.

MH: No, that would suck. No, that is not the right way of thinking about it. I mean, there is the classic and inadequate response to this point is that the expropriation of the minority by the vast majority is already a step in the right direction. Which, ok, I mean, that, I think, is true. But that doesn’t correspond to what I was saying before, which would be the democratic self-organization of production and etc. The possibility of autonomy, though, I was talking about or think about as a possibility of democracy, if you would like, would mean, means that we don’t have to have exclusions and hierarchies in order to create society. I mean it might be true—this would be the historical debate one could have—that the ancient Greeks, in order to construct their democracy in Athens, needed slaves.

And that even if they were so willing, they couldn't have maintained the Athenian society for thousands of years without slaves, you know, to make possible the freedom and democracy of the small group. I don't think that's true today. I mean that is the thing, of course, that has to be verified, one has to make an argument to say that people are capable of democracy today, to say that people are capable of organizing themselves. Like I say, that they don't either require someone to command them or require someone below them that they command. But that, at least it seems to me is the only worthy aim. Whether it is true or not, whether we can do it or not, that is what we have to prove. I mean, the proof is in doing it, I think. But that is clearly what I want.

CD: *Is this, your desired logic of "radical democracy" taking hold in various ways?*

MH: I think that there are probably things you could point to in the contemporary world about, I don't know, workers taking over a factory, blah, blah, blah. That's all good and everything. I prefer to take a historical view and look how human society is moving in that direction and making that ever more possible.

CD: *Is that like a Hegelian historical analysis in that the spirit sort of unfolds and first there is an Athenian society and then, over time to the Christian empire and then eventually modernity, secular modernity, and post-secular modernity, or...?*

MH: The difference would be this I think: it's true you could say, "Oh Mike, what you are talking about is that there is an ultimate idea—democracy, freedom, etc.—that is pulling all of history toward itself." I don't see it that way. I see it rather as there is kind of an immanent desire that we have for freedom and that in each historical instance, we struggle for freedom, we struggle against slavery, in early 19th century United States. We struggle against slavery in Haiti. We struggle against Fascism. We struggle against all of these things, and they, all these forms of domination, let's say, all these things that make our society un-free and undemocratic. It's true of course that when looked at historically, that is pushing us unevenly, with fits and starts, in a certain direction, but it's doing it from within [an immanent unfolding or desire] because that's where our desire is pushing us.

CD: *It is not a top-down Spirit?*

MH: It's not that there is some force of history that's using us as its tools. We are those who are creating history and we are creating it in the direction we want. There is no reason to deny that. That's, in fact, it seems to me, what history, looking at these historical examples to try to resolve present problems. Like, I am not one who is actually terribly interested in history for the sake of the truth of the past. What I am interested in it for is what it can teach us about the possibilities today. Sometimes it is hard to interpret what it teaches us.

Sometimes it is not so clear. But nonetheless, that is why it interests me for showing us how this has been done before. Let me put this in another way.

I often get people asking me, “Mike you’re such an optimist. You know, your belief the world could be better etc. Your belief people will rise up against the present form of domination. We, today, sometimes seemingly facing insurmountable odds and enemies it seems like the global order, that capital itself is so impenetrable and so powerful, the U.S. military, capital itself, that there is no alternative. And, I really don’t think that this is optimistic in the least, if by optimism one assumes, or even hopes, that things will be better without a reason for it. It seems to me this is precisely where thinking historically can help because in every regime of domination we face, slavery, colonialism, every other one, people have always found ways to organize and successfully overthrow forms of domination. And that is why it is useful to look at: “what were slavery revolts about?; what were anti-colonial struggles about? What is the feminist movement about? What are gay and lesbian movements about?” If you look at this historically like that, it seems to me not optimistic, just a mere statement of fact—people have always risen up against the forms of domination they face. It would be unreasonable to think that people would stop. And so, it is not a matter of optimism, it is just a matter of confidence, confidence that humanity, that is, part of our abilities is to express our desire for freedom, express also our desire for equality in real terms and to resist and overthrow forms of domination. Like I say, it is not optimism at all; it’s a confidence in humanity that seems to me perfectly rational and even undeniable.

CD: *There lies the balance you are trying to strike between celebration and lament, and this balance is found within confidence and even self-determination.*

MH: Right, yes, it is a confidence in our capacities, confidence in our capacities to create a different world. Something that has been done throughout history.

CD: *How do our human desires create a future – what does a “human future” look like under your terms.*

MH: Well, I don’t actually have a, I’m usually reluctant to project what the future will look like. I think it is much more useful, at least for me to look at what people are already doing, and to try to, on the basis of what people are doing, in a way, think of them more like vectors. You know, where is it that various movements today are leading? What are they reacting against and which direction are they going? I don’t know if that is slightly different. Rather than imaging a point in the future like a science fiction novel might do, I’m much more, I think that that’s useful in many regards. Science fiction is useful for separating us from what seems natural today etc. But my inclinations are much more in thinking, in looking for inspiration but also knowledge at, I don’t know, the organizations of the unemployed in Argentina: what are they doing and

what are they demanding? Like the movement against the construction of a large dam in India. How is it that people are organizing; what are they demanding; which direction are they going? That's the, maybe another way of putting it is, what are the desires that are implicit in these. It is partly those desires that seem to me to be, let's call it like, "heralds of the future." That desire for self-organization and self control and equality, these are the kind of things that are implicit in acts of resistance and that themselves project a future or point towards a future is a better way of saying it, you know because there are certainly firmly embedded in present reality but they're pointing in a direction based on what they want, you know, what they are asking, what they are demanding to. Does that correspond?

CD: *This raises the question Michael: How would you relate your notion of confidence, in what seems like a despairing moment in history especially when you look at it in terms of sustainability of the earth? How do you, is the contradiction of global capitalism sort of points out a major contradiction in our time, isn't that less about optimism and more about a certain kind of pessimism, a certain kind of death-drive, a wave that we are riding into kind of nothingness?*

MH: By which you mean environmental disaster and we're certainly seeing in recent years all kinds of examples of suffering from, let's call them environmental disasters that have a large part of human component, a hurricane, tsunamis, earthquakes that might be in themselves natural events but the destruction caused by them are in large parts human made. I don't see any contradiction really here. I mean, one thing we do want, and I think all of us want in a way, is a kind of, let's say, security and peace. It's not though that, when I say security and peace, this is one of those difficult instances where some concepts have been so corrupted that it is hard to use them anymore. Where we have to win back concepts themselves because we have been told, for instance, that for security we need to have the US military ruling over us or for...

CD: *...with duct tape even, taping our windows up and so forth.*

MH: Well, ok, there are the absurd examples and then there also are the constructions of security and peace that, it's true, sometimes devolve into a kind of George Orwell kind of nightmare where they say peace and really just mean by it a constant slaughter or they say security but what it really involves is a continual creation of new kinds of dangers. I think that one has to try to, you see, in this case, it's not just struggle over the concept of security and of peace but to find what it could really mean, a real security, or a real peace that is a freedom from war and a freedom from suffering etc. what I mean is that there is sometimes a temptation to abandon these terms because they have been so corrupted: lets not talk about security, lets not even talk about peace because when they keep talking about peace they really mean something horrible by it. I think that we have to struggle over what peace really means and then find a way

to achieve it. I don't mean, and when I talk about confidence that people will resist, confidence also that we will come up with strategies to make the world better, that doesn't mean that this is spontaneous and immediate. It doesn't mean that that we are not facing horrible dangers and horribly destructive forces: environmental forces, like you say, but also the forces of militarization of our societies, the forces of degradation of social life, horrible kinds of poverty. You know this has to do with environmental disasters, but there is also another aspect to it. I think that one has to be lucid to recognize the horror of the present and at the same time struggle to transform it. I think it would be unreasonable and we would be lost in fact, if we were to only wallow in the degradation of our world and our society. I think that it's necessary but also natural and inevitable that we will struggle against it.

CD: *But you and your analysis, your methodology say, really operates on the notion of contradiction. You really look at certain phenomena that happen and you identify a certain kind of contradiction in that phenomenon. But unlike Marx, whose notion of contradiction, is imbued with the inevitable overturning in a kind of violent way, your notion of contradiction is something different; it's not an immanent violence of an overthrowing an immediate spontaneous revolt, although it could be that, but I take it that your notion of contradiction is slightly different. Could you talk about the differences between your notion/analysis of contradiction and say, Marx's?*

MH: Well Marx is complicated. The first distinction to make, I think, is between an objective notion of contradiction and what I think of as a subjective one. Let's put it this way: and it's useful, I think in many analyses, Marx's own thought included, to recognize objective contradictions even in the structures of power. Like for instance, there is a contradiction today within the U.S. between a free-market, pro-capitalist right that wants anything for profit and there is another right in the U.S. that is really focused on values, and that these two often comes to a point of contradiction with free-market ideologies because anything for profit runs against the notion of the preservation of certain traditional and conservative value structures. So, recognizing that contradiction, that can be useful. One can recognize the possibilities that are presented. I am much more inclined to think of contradiction though in subjective terms, which is to think of contradiction as antagonism. I think that the, so that the creation and reproduction and exacerbation of poverty in the world, that might conflict with, and it certainly conflicts with, or even contradicts lets say, the desires and abilities of many people in the world who are poor. In the dominant countries and moreover in the subordinated ones, when that contradiction interests me is when it's transformed into an antagonism and its transformed into kind of resistance and organized into a kind of resistance that can challenge, threaten, and eventually overthrow the kind of power that it is existing under. Perhaps it is a more dynamic notion of contradiction than the first one. But contradiction also, the difficulties sometimes of notions of contradiction is that they limit the field to two. Now I am just thinking in philosophical terms. There is some ways in which contradiction can't recognize differences and can only recognize the

extreme points. So sometimes, this perspective of antagonism is more open for a variety of perspectives that don't just operate along one axis. For instance, you might say there is just, there is a contradiction between the forces of certain militarized Islamic fundamentalism and the U.S. government and its desire for Middle Eastern oil or global domination or whatever. But if we are only thinking those two and that contradiction, we don't really recognize the field, we are not really on one side or the other. In fact, we are on a quite different side. So that it is that thinking about contradiction that sometimes can say, "well you're criticizing the U.S. government and these Islamic fundamentalists are criticizing the U.S. government therefore you're the same as them." It is that kind of binary thinking that sometimes, thinking in terms only of contradictions can lead to.

CD: *Would you call that binary thinking dialectical thinking over and against say, Deleuze's univocal thinking?*

MH: We must be cautious here because we can get into all kind of difficulties here because the dialectic can mean many different things in different contexts, but it is a thinking that at least some forms of contradiction can lead to. If you want to get Marxiological about it, the place to talk about it, I would think or what occurs to me, is Mao Zedong's essay on contradiction, where he tries to talk about various kinds of contradiction, various kinds of levels of contradiction. He says in order to analyze the present situation you have to look at a primary contradiction and a series of secondary contradictions, and if not that the primary contradiction defines everything else and in fact in each salutation they can act and interact differently. The contradiction between the European colonial powers and the subordinated colonized powers can sometimes be the primary contradiction but there can be various secondary contradictions: conflicts among colonized powers, conflicts within the colonial society itself that can, in fact, transform and radically alter that first one. This is just an example of a way in which within the Marxist tradition a certain kind of thinking of contradiction opens up to a greater plurality of thinking about it. I think what I was complaining about certain notions of contradiction is exactly what Mao was complaining about. The tendency of a certain kind of thinking of contradiction to close off the multiplicity of both conditions and possibilities.

CD: *I am going to go briefly lighter and talk about you, "The Professor Michael Hardt!"*

MH: I like that appellation

CD: *How is that you who are dependent upon certain freedoms given by the United States power, being in one of the elite universities in the West, sitting in your office talking about this theory and all of this optimism, how is it that you can dare draw upon people like Mao Zedong or radical leftists who have opposed the very drive of the freedom that you presuppose to talk about them? Somebody might say, "How dare you talk in those terms." It seems like you are not being fair to your own historical moment.*

CH: *Is that a legitimate argument?*

MH: Sure.

CD: *To put it crudely: Why don't you be a good American!*

MH: In some ways some of the noblest historical stories one can think of involve class betrayal, you know, betrayal of one's own class. Think of the, or even of one's own nation. Think of the German or the Nazi who aids the Jew to escape. Think of the slave owner who tries to conspire with the slave revolt. So in one sense you can say that the betrayal of the dominating power by its progeny are, and have been historically, wonderful elements of hope. But I think one should look a little differently at democracy and freedom and the democracy and freedom that we want. Let's set aside the question for the moment about what kind of democracy there is and what kind of freedom there is in the U.S. but even if one were to accept that there were the kind of freedom and the kind of democracy we want in the U.S., why would one think that our desire for it stops there? Why wouldn't one want, and in fact of course I am not the only one who wants it, and in fact, we generally want relationships of equality and freedom with others, and that we would profit from them. It is precisely in our interests; it is not a matter even of altruism. It is not that I want to aid the poor in order to deny myself. In fact, I want people to escape from poverty; I want people to be more powerful; I want people to be equal to me, to be free because that would aid me, because that would make my life better. Here is a stupid example, but nonetheless sometimes stupid examples are the best to start with: when you're thinking about relationships and globalization, one thing that is being created throughout the world by capitalist corporations and etc. are global relationships. But when you look at them they turn out to be the most horrible, degrading kinds of relationships. Like, say I have Nike tennis shoes, and those tennis shoes were made by a factory in the Philippines. So that let's imagine a woman in the Philippines working in this factory with whom I now have a relationship. It's a horrible relationship we've got. She makes the tennis shoes and eventually I wear them. So, and she's, there's a relationship of inequality, a relationship of un-freedom, and even just in the most stupid personal sense, I don't find it a very satisfying relationship. I would much more profit from a much more substantial and more over-free and equal relationship with people in the Philippines or people in other countries in the world. So there is no reason to think that, what I am sort of laying out is an old argument that you could think of as anti-slavery and anti-colonial. Think of both Thomas Jefferson and Dubois who say that the slave relationship not only degrades the slave it also degrades the master who says similar things in terms of the colonial relationship. There is no reason to assume that masters are; even if they benefit materially from the subordination of the slave really don't have an interest and a desire for a relationship of equality. That would be the first way of saying it but then one would have to then broaden the meaning of what democracy means, what democracy could

mean. You know what freedom is and what the blocks of freedom in today's world are. It is much more generalized of course than thinking about those in the U.S. as free and those outside the U.S. as not free. But at least that is a first step to recognize how freedom and equality not only for ourselves but for everyone is something that, it makes us all more powerful even; it makes us all more, you know when I say it makes the world a better place, it partly is to make us more powerful; it makes us more able to think, more able to act. This is what the joy would be—joy precisely conceived as the increase in our abilities to act and to think. This would be the joy of these relationships of freedom and equality. That is why I want it. Not because I want to give up my privileges, on the contrary.

CH: *Do you think that it is a matter of people not, lets say commodity fetishism, there sort of is an idea that we don't really know what that relationship is-- we've lost sight of that. People don't have the cognitive map Do you think that in general people if they understood that kind of relationship what it means to buy a pair of cheap shoes that were export processing zone or whatever. Is that part of the solution? That is to show the full ramifications of our life in America at the beginning in the 21st century. Are we going to be willing to make the material sacrifices that would entail a better life for other people? How much traction do you believe that has as an argument?*

MH: I think that there is an enormously important pedagogy that works against the commodity fetishism you're talking about. I mean because one aspect of commodity fetishism in Marx's argument is precisely like you're saying a kind of eclipse of the production process of the commodity itself. So that simply from the taste of the oats we know nothing about the farmers that grew them, you know that sort of thing. And so that I think of these as pedagogical movements that have been enormously useful. Think of students against sweatshops as one. Think of Naomi Klein's *No Logo* as another. These are ways that reveal from the perspective of consumers the kinds of relationships that stand behind the commodity choices etc. I think that is enormously productive and has a, like I said, a pedagogical value that can open up political possibilities. But I am also reluctant to see this strictly in terms of sacrifice. Of course it involves some sort of sacrifice. I mean, I think that the sharing of the world in an equal way will involve and should involve a restriction of certain privileges and wealth—no doubt about that. But I think the gains are much larger than the sacrifices. That is what I wanted to point towards. And so, it just doesn't seem to me like, that's why I think of it like not simply in a relationship of altruism. It's not out of charity that a desire to change the world comes about. In fact that is where the shift from charity towards *love as political* would be a very interesting shift, if we were going to stick within the Paul-Augustine model.

JASON CRAIG: *I have a question on this while we are talking about liberation. It seems that there are certain political structures that are trying to—freedom, freedom for instance, are trying to put more controls, are trying to control the elements of more and more aspects of our environment, and that will lead to a certain type of freedom. And it seems what you're offering is that what we need is to sort of get back to a kind of faith in*

community, like to make choices based on just a faith in people rather than trying to control elements.

MH: I am reluctant to call it faith only for the reason that faith can sometimes imply an irrational attachment. Like if one were to say: there's no reason really to believe in humanity but have faith, you know, they will do it. I would rather think of it, this is what I meant by confidence, and confidence that springs from our experience. And it also depends on real empirical evidence. What is it that people do in their lives that suggest to us or even prove that they are able to organize themselves and even produce social relationships corporately? And that they don't necessarily when left to their own devices end in mutual destruction and destruction of the world. It does require some empirical evidence. That is the only reluctance I have to use the term "faith" there. If by faith you mean rather a perfectly rational, it seems to me, and informed recognition of people's powers, then that seems to me exactly the point.

CD: *This faith in a divinity that doesn't arrive from beyond, but a faith in a divinity that erupts from within, though not erupts even, but is already within the desire of the human – striving...*

MH: ...and our abilities. If we conceive divinity now as strictly as that human capacity or even capacity of life to produce and to create. If one thinks about creation as a divinity, and I could imagine a reading of Genesis that would do this sort of thing that would read, if you read Creation as divinity then you look at people's capacity for creation and precisely, what is necessary here in this context of this discussion, is creation of society, creation of a peaceful, secure, productive, joyful society. It is those kinds of things that one has to verify for this not to be an irrational leap of faith. One thing I have been interested in, in the last few years is the reaction of theological scholars to my and Toni's work. And one of the things I have figured out, because I have thought, you know Toni and I often write about the history of theology and my feeling like we're political thinkers, and of course when we're thinking the history of politics, we think the history of theology. It's like, art historian, if you had an art historian you say, "well why do you talk about images of the Madonna and Child?" They say, "Well, that is where European history of art was." It is sort of like, that is what you look at. Of course we look at theological arguments where politics was done for many centuries. That is where the history of European political thought is found. But it is a little more than that that interests me. I have found that the, let's say, the attraction of our work for theological scholars, or rather the point of contact isn't so much the history and concepts that are proper to theological tradition, that intersect, like I say, with the tradition of political thought. It's rather that Toni and I are both always focused on the possibility of a project, and what I think I've understood as a frustration of many theological scholars with much of the political theorizing is its inability to or refusal to pose a political project. I mean, it's closure at critique let's say, that that seems unsatisfactory, and that in some ways people who work in preaching or people who work in all

other forms of the theological enterprise require that transformative moment, and I think that that is the real point of contact. I mean there are others that don't, that seem to me like, I have been worried about, in fact, false points of contact like, so in our book *Empire* Toni and I say, well, the current global order is becoming something like the Roman Empire we say, in various qualities. And so that, what will be, of course, the logical next step, well, you know early Christianity in some ways critiqued the corruption of empire, posed an equally global, that is, Catholic movement as solution to the corruption of empire. So then, certain theologians respond and say, "Yes! We too think that Christian cults are the answer to today's problems." Am I am like, "well, no, that isn't exactly what I meant." So I still think that is a false point of contact because I am perfectly atheistic in all of my beliefs about this. But, nonetheless, I think the real point of contact is that need for a collective and human moment of transformation, which at least certain theological traditions and our political work both have.

CD: *Let's pick this up. I like how you worked into the theological and in some way Negri's work has been in fact dubbed by people like Slavoj Zizek as being theological, but by theological, of course, perhaps Negri and yourself don't mean again a kind of a drawing upon a transcendent power. But theological in the Spinozian sense of, that is that suddenly the divine is imbued within the order of the world. And so, in that sense, it is a theological enterprise in fact.*

MH: Sure, I think that it's important when saying these things to recognize that the theological was also not one thing, and that there's not one theological tradition. So when, Carl Schmitt famously says that, "the political is a theological form," by it he means that thinking the political for him requires a power, a transcendent power that is specifically a power that stands above society and rules over it the way that in a certain theological framework, one imagines a god that stands separate from the world that rules over it—a creator that is separate from the created. Therefore, it requires a ruler who is separate from the ruled, and you can imagine, and I'm sure its immediately familiar, the long tradition of thinking the divine in terms of kings etc. When we think theologically, it is precisely the other, another aspect, but seems to me a radically contrasting, opposed aspect, which is, like you say, the divine abilities of the human. I mean, or even of life. And so, someone might say, "well what do you get by saying human creativity is divine? Why don't you just say it's what people do? One of the things it does, there is something magical about the world. I mean, there is something magical about our own abilities—that human ability, especially that collective human capacity for creating the new, for invention. There is something magical about that, or at least using that language can help us recognize and defamiliarize it to us as not just a repetition of the same but there are certainly great historical moments, in which we have created something radically different—think of the great revolutions for instance. There are many great historical shifts, historical events that do that. But even in your own daily life we can recognize myriad ways that there is a wonder let's say of our power, of

human collective power, of wonder that is precisely embedded in creativity and innovation. And so, I think that is what at least a large strand of what theological traditions are trying to get at. The same way I think, that's what Joss Whedon is trying to get at in *Buffy*. When he talks about Willow having magic and that the relationship between Willow and Tara being based on this magical union, it's trying to grasp something that he can't yet comprehend or we can't yet comprehend, which is precisely the magic of love, the magic of creativity and productivity we have together. And so, you might say I am being, I'm treating these theological concepts, in a way you might say, with bad faith, but...

CD: ...*in a Sartrean sense?*

MH: ...well, also it's just, you might even say I'm being dishonest because I don't think there's, that it involves god in any, with god being separate from us, with being separate from the world. But I do think quite sincerely that what we do is adequately captured by that divine quality, by that magical quality.

CD: *In so far as, and I think you will disagree with this, but in so far as you are identifying this mystery of life, this newness of love, of connection that circumvents a kind of banality of our time, of relationships, aren't you in some kind of way a shaman or priest because you're talking, you're preaching about that love. You're saying, "Look! Look at the possibilities here," and in so far as you're identifying and talking about the "good news of this newness" called mystery, albeit, very different from an outside mystery, a mystery from within, in a certain way you're kind of being, preaching the good news of this mystery of love. Would you say you're sort of acting as a kind of priest?*

MH: I'll tell you the way I usually think about it. I usually think about it this way, and it's partly, I think it's partly a compensation or even a guard against the long tradition of a kind of privileging intellectuals. I think that, the way I normally think about it is what I'm simply doing, this is the way I also insist mine and Toni's work is unoriginal—Toni hates it when I say this—it's unoriginal in a sense that we are really reading what people are doing. Like, rather than writing "what is to be done," what we're doing is...

CD: ...*Lenin's famous work, What is to be Done...*

MH: ...or even any notion of a manifesto that outlines what people should do, what we're generally doing is writing what people are already doing...

CD: ...*so, you're more of an anthropologist...*

MH: ...well, no, I think of this is precisely as what political intellectuals do, and it's not, also that it's theory learning from practice, it's rather this kind of theorizing learning from the theorizing that's going on everyday in political movements and people's own lives. So, I sort of think of us as writing within a

wave—or something like that. Anthropologist may be—but anyway, that’s how I mostly think about it.

CD: *Plus, you probably dispense or reject the hierarchical inscription when I drop the language of “priest” or “shaman” or something like that because it poses a certain kind of hierarchy.*

MH: Certainly, right, and so that is how I normally think about it. But I think it’s probably true that there is an element of, or let’s put it this way, there is certainly also the desire and assumption on my part that the kind of work that we do, the intellectual kind of work does help people think more clearly and does help people recognize what they can do. So, I think there is some connection to at least certain elements of the tradition of preaching or rabbinical work or you could think of it in a number of ways in religious communities that intellectuals have played a similar role. I would of course, at each moment, like you suggest, argue against the hierarchical conception of it. But I think it’s probably right to recognize the possible effects. We do this largely to help ourselves figure out what’s going on in the world and understand things, that’s why people write books but there is also the hope that they will help people in thinking about the world, help people in being able to do more, to link to what they can do.

CD: *One of the effects your work has already started to do among theologians, especially younger theologians – like Jeffrey Robbins, who doesn’t really think of himself necessarily as a theologian or at least not in the conservation sense of one who tries to police the dogmas of the Church, but Clayton Crockett and even myself, is that you’re providing a new, and I know you don’t like this way of thinking about it, this is sort of my work that I do, we’re providing a certain way of conceptualizing human possibility in ways that are divine, and in ways certainly drawing from the rich history of philosophy with Spinoza, Marx, Deleuze, Negri, and even Badiou and Zizek, but even going beyond that and from within this context, and this is what’s really interesting for me, within this context of your ontology of life, your ontology that strives for joy and love: cupiditas and amor, is that we can start to see theological and even Christian theological arguments in light of what you’re doing. And what this does, I think, is it makes it interesting to see how... suddenly, there is a god, ok, who’s above, in some sense and transcendent – exterior to the world, so there is a transcendence and there is an immanence, and neither the twain shall meet. There is a kind of dualism that you’re talking about earlier. But in a theological way you see god suddenly enter the material world – what Badiou calls the “multiple,” and so suddenly god now can no longer be conceptualized as strictly external to the world, god empties himself out, as we talked about earlier into the world itself, becoming human, becoming material, and in so far as that happens, suddenly the material world lifts up; something more than just the banality of reductive materiality exists! There’s a famous expression by an early Christian theologian, who says Athanasius who says: “The Divine became human so that humanity could become Divine,” something like this. And in this way, suddenly the polarity of transcendence and immanence breaks down into a radical and infinite flux, into something wholly new, certain magic (as Joshua Ramey is arguing) or certain mystical operations start to open up, and so although we would like*

to keep a concept of god as not totally collapsing into the immanent, and thus a certain – I'm sorry I'm talking so long – a certain production of the pure immanent, as Deleuze would say perhaps, but suddenly the world looks even more dynamic and revolutionary. There is a kind of transcendence but that transcendence can't be understood and constituted without that pure immanence of god operating and walking around on the earth among the poor, among the poor announcing similar good news that you're announcing, you and Toni are announcing.

MH: Right. That seems good to me.

CD: And so, I just want to say, just sort of tip my hat to your work and how your work is suddenly reinterpreting theological arguments – that even add to a radical orthodox tradition that, as Žižek and Badiou maintain – drawing on Althusser's idea of the "irruption" recently seen in the figure of St. Paul – the irruption that disrupts the status quo, "the state of the situation" and so forth.

MH: Right, and there also is, or there should be, something like what Max Weber called, "a heterogenesis of ends" – that is, the "law of unintended consequences." There should be for any work like having effects in ways that had no intention for, which is a credit to the readers more than the writers.

CD: What do you make of that? I mean, isn't it a better...

MH: ...It's a great thing...

CD: ...isn't it a better kind of aesthetic, if we want to draw on that notion – we might have to unpack that – just let's follow this line for a minute. Isn't there a better aesthetic view of the cosmos of being whereby the dynamism between pure immanence and pure transcendence or a kind of antagonism between transcendence and immanence suddenly is intertwined and kisses, the infinite kisses the finite, the finite suddenly kisses the infinite and there's something new that happens, and that dynamic, the dynamism that happens with that, it seems to me on the whole, interesting and can open up political possibilities that would certainly comport with your concept of the political.

MH: Yes, I can see how there is a relationship, that there can be, right, I can see how these ways of thinking can communicate, not quite coincide though. But because I think that it still doesn't make sense I think that the relationship between the transcendent the immanent doesn't quite make sense with my way of thinking about it. But, on the other hand, someone might want to say that this is a kind of transcendence that I keep talking about in human capacity...

CD: ...yes, precisely!

MH: ...as long as you make it completely grounded in "us," I'm ok with that...

CD: ...*“in us” meaning “us” as our co-creation with a divine power?*

MH: No. In our own [i.e. human autonomous] creation, call it divine if you want. And even what I was saying before about that which is magical and wondrous in the power of creation of us and of life, partly the reason I feel we need this language of wonder and magic is partly because we don't yet understand. Like, these are ways of almost, placeholders for approximating things we don't yet comprehend. But nonetheless, that's, you know what, Spinoza says that a miracle is: namely, just a phenomenon for which we're still ignorant of the cause. That doesn't mean that we're going to stop talking about miracles because we're ignorant a lot. But it's again not then assuming that miracles are in fact...

CD: ...*caused by...*

MH: ...events outside the world or anything like that. No, they are but we have a limited understanding, and we still remain ignorant—over time we'll come to a better understanding of things. Spinoza, of course, in a quite charming way, wants to go through every miracle of both scriptures and explain how they were just ignorant of the causes, how the light at a certain time of day changes the color blah, blah. I think I am much more in line with that. If you want to say that's the same thing as you're saying, well then maybe it is.

CH: *What is going to happen is that, Creston, you just can't make Michael a Christian.*

CD: *I'm not trying to, goddamn! May I ask just one more question? There is a trend in the humanities back to the return to the religious, back to perhaps a return to the theological, the theological in ways I think you were describing and in ways, I was describing. The theological is no longer a kind of centrality by the Church; it's not a dogma controlled by Rome, nor by Constantinople, but certainly a dogma, not even a dogma, but a way of understanding the logics of the world. One of the key figures of this recent trend is St. Paul, St. Paul of Tarsus, who in the scriptures was at one point a legal enforcer of the Jewish laws and would go off and slaughter Christians. And suddenly, on the way to a Damascus sees Jesus, and is knocked down off his horse and blinded in fact. Paul is being interpreted as someone who is suddenly announcing something new. In terms of Badiou's notion of Paul, it's the event, the event that is unannounced and breaks with the status quo. How does your work and perhaps Toni Negri's work relate to and would like to approach or reconstitute this notion of Paul with Jacob Taubes or even Agamben and Slavoj Zizek. How do you approach this ontology of the new announced by Saint Paul?*

MH: I think it is interesting and it would be an interesting analysis of the times, like you suggest why Paul now? Some of the answers, I think, do have to do—well there are two really. One is, but these are still initial answers that someone else is going to have to do this better than I. One has to do with the political conception of Paul. That Paul, that really in the New Testament or even in the entire tradition, Paul is most successful at thinking the political mandate of the

organization of the Christian community, and so that looking for new models of the political, or political formation, Paul is an obvious choice—specifically having to do with temporality, both the notion of the event and then even the notion of the possibility of a new time. This is what Agamben tries to capture when he talks about the “messianic time” in Paul. I think that this too is trying to answer in a way the crisis of thinking politics today, that this offers a suggestion of an alternative. The third possibility, which might interest me most in Paul, is the notion of love. Again, I actually find interesting suggestions in Paul, but I don’t find their notion of what I want out of a political conception of love. But nonetheless, there is quite clearly a political conception of love in the epistles, and of love specifically that’s aimed at the formation of the community. Sometimes even just for the initial thing helping us separate the concept of love or broadening the concept of love from the mere cloister within the family or the couple. It’s recognizing love as a properly political concept as the foundation of the community.

CD: *It’s the mystical body of Christ, as Paul would say.*

MH: I’m not so pleased with that part.

CD: *But, there is a community nonetheless?*

MH: Yes, in fact, what politics is—is an act of love. That seems to me worth pursuing and figuring out. I think not a love that should be separated as radically different from the kind of love we experience within the couple.

CD: *Sentimental love, those kinds of things.*

MH: I think there shouldn’t be a radical division between eros and agape, between the personal and the political. And there are many other things that I would say about the concept of love. Leaving that aside, I think that Paul does present one means of beginning to think that. And you can add Arendt to this list too because Arendt’s book on Augustine is really about Paul. That is trying to think freedom. What is interesting, and this is Arendt’s dissertation, writing under Heidegger’s influence, (and K. Jaspers is the director— so it’s a very powerful committee she’s got there.) And it’s about Augustine’s conception of love, which is of course directly taken from Paul, or at least it is an interpretation of Paul, and the two things that she wants to get at, which are influential for her entire career, is a notion of love that is autonomous, and can found the political in a way that separates the political from the social. This notion of freedom, of politics and freedom, that she will in a later book for instance affirm in the US revolution as opposed to the French, this is already she finds in the notion of *caritas*, Augustine’s in a way of freeing of love from need—that’s her way of putting it. That love, the properly political love she wants does not have to do with craving but is a love that is freely given. And that is really the foundation of

her notion of the political that she will continue throughout. Anyway, that would be an interesting one to add to the mix of Badiou and Agamben and Taubes too.

CD: *What do you make, finally in the end, of Paul's, a quick gloss on Paul's Galatians, where he says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one...." Paul is not an identity politics kind of guy. In fact, he sort of has cast asunder this notion of identity politics.*

MH: I think already in the concept of love it refuses those, it is implied in that refusal of these identities.

CD: *But not the refusal of identity per se but certain kinds of identities that are generically attributed to the human and thus boxes humans up into status quo functional robots that simply follow the state dominate paradigm.*

MH: There is a way in which I think that love is corrosive of identity, and that would be in the same way I think political organization is corrosive of identity. The kind of political organization I want and the kind of love I want obviously, because there are many different ways of posing it. There is a notion of love that really is love of the same: racist love, Nazi love. In the last chapter in Foucault that is sort of like the notion of racism and love, and that is love of the same, love of the genetically same. But, I think that any love that is really a love of difference is corrosive of identity.

CD: *You don't want neither the love of pure identity nor the love of pure difference.*

MH: Well, Badiou says something lovely at one point, in the Paul book or somewhere else, love is the experimentation with differences. I don't know if that is love of pure difference, but it's a love based on difference rather than sameness, which does at least qualify one division between, I think of the concept of love you have to make a lot of sortings out.

CD: *And it is on this subject of love that we unfortunately must stop. Michael, this has been fantastic. Thank you.*

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