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Empire's New Clothes, Reading Hardt and Negri

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Market

On Divine Markets and the Problem of Justice: *Empire* as Theodicy

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> *Divine violence, which is the sign and the seal but never the means of sacred execution, may be called sovereign violence.*
>
> —Walter Benjamin, 1921.

Thinking Empire

Is *Empire* useful because it is "good to eat?" That is, would its consumption and absorption result in theoretical growth? Or is *Empire* useful because it is "good to think?"[1] That is, is it homologous to other practical and theoretical interventions in contemporary social fields? Lévi-Strauss had argued that the logical relations differentiating totemic creatures from one another could be seen as similar to the system of social differences constituting a society.[2] The resemblance between these two sets of logical relationships dispelled the totemic illusion by revealing it to be something in the structure of all human thought. That resemblance, then, was not strictly speaking an analogy but a structural homology, a concordance of structure, function, and functional interrelationships among constituent parts of the animal kingdom, human society, and the mind. Lévi-Strauss claimed to find homologies in customs, beliefs, and practices that reacted "dialectically among themselves in such a way that we cannot hope to understand one of them without first evaluating, through their respective relations of opposition and correlation, *institutions, representations, and situations.*"[3] Anthropology, as a mode of knowledge, was simply to assert the homology of structure evident in that dialectic, integrating "essence and form" and reflecting "a more necessary integration: that between method and reality."[4]

The analogy I am drawing between Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's *Empire* and the phenomenon of totemism is not necessarily apt, however, since the critical work of *Empire* would itself preclude its own incorporation via simple consumption, "eating" *Empire* for critical practical and theoretical projects. The book, after all, seeks to theorize other means of transformation besides those suggested by incorporation as a dialectical means to growth. "Eating" is far too linear for the project *Empire* sets out. Indeed, the sort of (theoretical, corporeal, social) development occasioned by *Empire* would, like the structuralist theory put forward in *Totemism*, defer the possibility of the analogy between *Empire* and totemism in favor of homology.

A principle of lateral homology occupies much of the book and provides it with theoretical momentum: the two sides of the body of the contemporary global political order correspond in terms of structure, function, and organization. Empire and counterempire or "multitude" are each and everywhere diffuse and dispersed yet linked by multiple and overdetermined points of contact and/or homological correspondence, as two rhizomatic assemblages immanent to each other at every point and every level of scale, simultaneous laterality and unity.

This principle of lateral homology is both analytically fertile and analytically limiting, since it lies in the way of conceptualizing alternative theoretical, corporeal, and social morphologies. Such homology, after all, is not universal in the existent biological phyla. Just as there are not only trees but also rhizomes, so too there are not only chordates like fish (which exhibit lateral symmetry) but also echinoderms like sea stars (which exhibit radial pentamerous symmetry). The move from tree to rhizome is not necessarily a total break with preexisting modes of conceptualizing global capitalism. Other phylic imaginaries could well reveal deeply rooted—or densely lateralized—assumptions about causality, power, and the social. As Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham have demonstrated, the very languages used to describe and analyze phenomena like "global capitalism" themselves presume the existence and, indeed, transcendent dominance of those phenomena.[5] Is *Empire* the new language we are looking for or as equally unsatisfactory as the ones heretofore at our disposal?

This chapter argues that the book has been compelling not because of its theoretical innovation but because it is itself homologous to certain tactical interventions in a number of social fields. The chapter builds its case through a consideration of recent interventions in contemporary money and finance and probes a double homology. The first part of the homology is the relation between Empire and the multitude, as articulated in the book *Empire*. The second is the relation between the book's lateral homologous form and contemporary money and finance. This double homology calls for a reappreciation of Lévi-Strauss's insistence on the integration of essence and form and an opening up of the relation between method and reality—indeed, a reunifying of method and reality occasioned as much by *Empire* as by the conditions it names. *Empire* articulates a theoretical perspective infused with the principle of lateral homology and immanence at a moment when certain elements in contemporary money and finance—which form the hidden background to the world condition the book purports to describe—themselves are also animated by the same principles. Like a totemic animal whose relations to other animals are homologous to human social relations, *Empire* is good to think. Indeed, it expresses a certain limit of thought and language that hinders the appreciation of alternative forms of knowing and expressing because it compels itself by its own demonstrations.[6]

Divine Justice

The double homology with which I am concerned becomes clearer when considering both *Empire* and finance capital as a joint exercise in theodicy. From the Greek for God and justice (θεος + δικη), theodicy concerns the question of God's goodness in the face of the evident evils of the world. Are such evils themselves the product of divine will? Are they deviations from divine purpose? If the former, how can God be considered truly good? If the latter, how can God be considered truly omnipotent? Such questions exercised theologians and philosophers in both of the "two modernities" outlined by Hardt and Negri.[7] Those of the dominant modern tradition emphasized God's transcendence; those of the countertradition, in which Hardt and Negri place themselves, emphasized God's immanence. Augustine and Spinoza illustrate the essential contrast, and Hardt's and Negri's reformulation of Augustine tracks Spinoza's quite closely.

The Neoplatonic conception of the universe as a great chain of being unified the highest plane of divine intellect with the lowliest plane of degraded matter, a many-leveled universe itself embodying the Oneness of God.[8] Augustine accepted the limitless fullness of the universe but separated God from it, turning the One into two, a transcendent, uncreated God and a created universe dependent on God's divine power:

> Ex plenitudine quippe bonitatis tuae creatura tua subsistit, ut bonum, quod tibi nihil prodesset, nec de te aequale tibi esset, tamen quia ex te fieri potuit, non deesset.
>
> For of the fullness of Thy goodness, doth Thy creature subsist, that so a good, which could no ways profit Thee, nor was of Thee (lest so it should be equal to Thee), might yet be since it could be made of Thee.[9]

This doubling reflects his conception of the Heavenly City and the Earthly City, the former a state of ultimate perfection and the latter the degraded condition of humankind. Evil in Augustine's theodicy is not an intrinsic quality of beings in the Earthly City, for God does not create evil things. Rather, it results from the privation of good, from beings acting outside of their divinely ordained place in the cosmic hierarchy. Augustine accepts the principle of plenitude but, in making it separate from God and without its own independent principle or power of generation, simultaneously invests it with mutability and contingency.

In Spinoza's *Ethics*, we find a particular reformulation of Augustine's Christian-inflected Neoplatonism. Spinoza, like Augustine, separates God from cosmos. They have ontologically separate existences and essences.[10] At the same time, however, God is internal to cosmos:

> All things which are, are in God, and must be conceived through God, therefore God is the cause of those things which are in him. This is our first point. Further, besides God there can be no substance, that is nothing in itself external to God. This is our second point. God, therefore, is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things.[11]

Similarly, as Hardt and Negri have argued elsewhere in passages that prefigure the political thrust of *Empire*, Spinoza's separation yet infolding of divine and worldly causes allows for a dual conception of power, as *potestas* (Power) and as *potentia* (power). The former maps onto God and Empire, the authorized power of the sovereign; the latter maps onto the creation and the multitude, the immanent capability or potentiality of life itself.[12]

Empire is theodicy that rotates around the shift from "plenitude" to "multitude" and a reconfiguration of power as always dual (as *potestas* and as *potentia*). At the heart of the old Neoplatonist cosmology and reflected in the quotation from Augustine above, plenitude referred to the fullness of the universe and of God's intellect. In *Empire*, multitude refers to the irrepressible and manifold powers of human and nonhuman agents whose attributes and actions compel and challenge new kinds of sovereign power. Ultimately and intimately, Power (*potestas*) is separate from power (*potentia*) yet internal to it, and vice versa, yet they are not self-identical, any more than God is to creation.

Furthermore, for Spinoza, as for Hardt and Negri, there is an important revolutionary element in the immanence of sovereign power. As they write, "the horizon of immanence and the horizon of democratic political order coincide completely":

> The plane of immanence is the one on which the powers of singularity are realized and the one on which the truth of the new humanity is determined histori-

> cally, technically, and politically. For this very fact, because there cannot be any external mediation, the singular is presented as the multitude.[13]

Continuing in the Spinozist revision of Augustine, Hardt and Negri develop the potential power of the multitude as political agent via the contrast between the City of God and the Earthly City. In Empire, "corruption" rules as the "negation" of life and generation. Like evil for Augustine, yet transposed from the multitude's Earth to Empire's Heaven, "Corruption . . . is not an ontological motor but simply the *lack* of ontological foundation of the biopolitical practices of being" (389; emphasis added). Corruption is not a prime cause but rather the privation of the good. It presents to the multitude "a smoke screen." Imperial power exercises command "in this putrid cloud, in the absence of light and truth" (389). The Earthly City is thus defined by life itself, its irrepressible biopolitical constitution. Empire is the privation of true life, even as it channels and grows a corrupted life. Nevertheless, ultimately the Earthly City will sunder itself "from any belonging or subjection to a city of God which has lost all honor and legitimacy." It will do so "by the power of its own destiny" via the "endless paths" of the "movements of the multitude."[14]

The theoretical motion of *Empire* is to travel through Neoplatonism to the Augustinian theodicy that defined evil as the privation of good but transposing that lack onto Heaven, and then to follow Spinoza's absorption of Augustine with the crucial return of the divine immanence into the worldy cosmopolitical order. Spinoza's insistence on immanence—returning God into the muck of the Earthly City—had led to his being variously labeled pantheist, monist, or atheist. Hardt and Negri sidestep the theological import of Spinoza by insisting that, in their vision, the "multitude . . . resides on the imperial surfaces where there is no God the Father and no transcendence. Instead there is our immanent labor" (396). Labor is the divine principle of the multitude.

Immanent to multitude itself, however, there are two abstractions. The first abstraction involves the transposition from God to labor. It hinges on the abstraction of "labor" itself, bringing all productive human activity under a single sign and conjuring a sameness that is possessed of an unchanging essence such that all human activity can be brought into that sameness. Labor is the universal equivalent. This is the work of capitalism.

The second abstraction involves a principle in the shift from plenitude to multitude. For Augustine, the cosmos, as God's creation that is separate from God, has no independent power. Evil, which may seem to the unlearned to be an independent power of creation separate from God's will, is merely the lack of good, and therefore has no aseity or independent existence. Spinoza, by making Creator and creation immanent to one another, recuperates that aspect of Neoplatonism jettisoned by Augustine but also disperses and multiplies the sources of being. This is the essential shift from plenitude to multitude. That shift, however, homologically related to the abstraction of "labor," keeps constant the problem of aseity: plenitude and multitude each leave unquestioned the *-tude* that is itself the grammatical marker of the abstract state of being.

This *-tude* turns a temporary and descriptive quality that demands a subject to qualify (e.g., *altus*, high) into an unchanging, atemporal essence that is a subject in its own right (*altitudo*, height). It is the question of the divine ordination of such unchanging essences that makes *multitudo*—the state of being many—another exercise in theodicy, divine justice, even as it is put forward as a principle of democratic biopolitical plurality. The postulate of abstract labor and principle of *-tude* place *Empire* firmly within an analytical project that seeks to identify abstractions in the world whose independent existence from their analytical enlistment goes without saying. And yet the practical unfolding of Empire and multitude would itself obviate such enlistment, as each is always immanent to the other, demanding that the aseity of analytical tool and object be at once infolded into the integration of method and reality of which Lévi-Strauss had reminded us. To paraphrase the anthropologist Roy Wagner, it is not so much a matter of *Empire*'s objects (Empire and multitude) being inadequate to the book's tasks as it is of the book's own analytical apparatus being completely swallowed by the potency of the objects it defines.[15]

Marking to Market

The multitude, for Hardt and Negri, is not only the locus of democratic plurality. By way of a utopianism that saps it of its real strength, it is the locus of the capitalist market. In his exegesis of Spinoza, Negri had argued that early Dutch capitalism was linked ideologically to the Neoplatonic emphasis on immanence and the internal *potentia* of creation. The ideology of the market, like the Neoplatonic universe, produced "extraordinary effects that [were] constitutionally effective."[16] Spinoza, Negri maintained, pushed Neoplatonism "to the limit, toward a philosophy of surfaces" and to a "revolutionary materialism."[17] Spinoza's thought thus did not underwrite the bourgeois market so much as it pushed it to its limit. As Negri argued:

> If the metaphysical utopia was a transcription of the ideology of the market, the ethical disutopia is the proposal of the rupture of the market, here transposed and projected in the material and practical dimension of a philosophy of the future. . . . Either one can submit to the crisis of the market or one can live its crisis, going beyond it through the constitutive tension. The disutopia is the discovery of a real and future revolutionary horizon.[18]

In *Empire*, Empire is the metaphysical utopia. The capitalist world market—which "has always run counter to any division between inside and outside"—presents itself as "a model for understanding imperial sovereignty" (190). According to Negri, Spinoza's thought, in and through its production in relation to the capitalist world market, presents an ethical disutopia that partakes of the power of the multitude but has not (yet) extended beyond the revolutionary horizon to rupture the market itself. Rather, it traces the limit of that horizon as it asymptotically approaches it. For Negri, Spinoza's thought is marked to the market, identified through a relation to it, and fundamentally marked by the market, identified by the stamp of it.[19] It is nearly but not yet beyond the market.

In this formulation, the productive disutopia of the multitude possesses a homological relation to the utopia of the capitalist market. This homology, in turn, demonstrates a sort of metahomology between the abstractions of *Empire* and the abstractions of the capitalist market. For example, there is a metahomology between the function of abstract labor in the theoretical project of *Empire* and the function of abstract labor in the practical project of capital. Rather than turn to labor, however, here I consider aspects of contemporary money and finance that themselves exemplify the method of Hardt's and Negri's work. They also exemplify the reality *Empire* stands for—as a book that has been taken up in widely divergent quarters—and names—as a guide that names the features of an unfolding landscape of which it is a part. That reality is in the nature of theodicy. God is immanent to the design, and a transcendental abstract justice is found to reside in and be marked to the divine market. Again, this shows that *Empire* may be good to think, because it points up the unity of analytical object and analytical apparatus. But it is not necessarily good to eat, to be taken in or taken on as descriptive of an independent empirical reality, because it does not linger over the necessity of reflecting on the tools of critique and the failure of knowledge produced by those tools. Such a reflection has the potential to point up the practical as well as theoretical limits of *Empire*'s laterality, a laterality found in other quarters as well, which obviates alternative imaginaries of the contemporary moment.

Contemporary adherents to Islamic banking and finance often invoke a particular *hadith*, or story from the life of the Prophet, to differentiate between financial interest and *riba*, the form of financial increase that is forbidden in Islam.[20] Generally, interest was simply understood to be the English translation of *riba*. Often, especially in the early to middle twentieth century, Islamic economic theorists would argue that *riba* referred to excessive interest, or usury. The full blossoming of Islamic banking and finance in the 1980s and 1990s was accompanied by a vast expansion of theorizing and practical activity around financial techniques to allow observant Muslims to adhere as closely as possible to scriptural injunctions about money and economic exchange. It is in this context that the following *hadith* has become significant:

> Abu Sa'id reported: Bilal (Allah be pleased with him) came with [dates of] fine quality. . . . Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said to him: "From where you have brought them?" Bilal said: "We had inferior quality . . . dates and I exchanged two *sa's* of inferior quality with one *sa'* of fine quality as food for Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him)," whereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: "Woe! It is in fact usury; therefore, don't do that. But when you intend to buy dates of superior quality, sell [those of] the inferior quality in a separate bargain and then [buy those of] the superior quality."[21]

Contemporary economists interested in exploring the convergence between modern economic theory and classical Islamic texts use the Bilal *hadith* to argue that prohibition against *riba* was intended by God to prevent injustice by ensuring equality in market transactions. Barter and trade, of course, make equal transactions difficult, since they always involve comparisons of unlike goods and services. Money as a universal equivalent is supposed to mitigate the valuation anomalies introduced by barter. Hence in the Bilal *hadith*, adhering to the prohibition of *riba* requires that the ratio of barter trade equal the ratio of market prices. As contemporary economist Mahmoud El-Gamal argues, we have in this *hadith* a specification for the conditions for Pareto efficiency in the market.[22] Bilal should have marked his poor dates to the market by selling them for the highest price he could get. Then, he should have purchased high quality dates with the money thus obtained at the lowest price he could find. In so doing, he would have brought into alignment traders' desires with market mechanisms. This is what the Prophet demanded of him. And this confirms the market itself, the mechanism for equating utilities with prices, as at one with divine plan.

Others in Islamic banking take very different routes through Islamic jurisprudence to find a unity between the form of money and the shape of divine order. Hence, an Islamic economist influenced strongly by Neoplatonism writes:

> Money in Islam is seen as a highly significant carrier of values that span real market exchange, justice, security, growth and organization [and] also the realm of mankind's medium that links existence between this world and the Hereafter. . . . Thus, money in Islam is the carrier *par excellence* of all the attributes of *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law). Besides, for those who are ready to accept *Shari'ah* as the be all and end all of existence in the universe, money as such a social contravention [*sic*] then becomes the carrier of cosmic meaning and purpose.[23]

As immanent to the money form and divine knowledge itself, the epistemology of Islamic economics presents itself here as "identical with the unifying knowledge-centered circular causation and continuity model of unified reality."[24]

Both Pareto optimality and Neoplatonism come together in contemporary Islamic financial practice. The most mundane example of marking-to-market and the divine unity of knowledge can perhaps be found in contemporary Islamic mortgage alternatives in the United States, currently offered by several Islamic financial services companies and underwritten by the U.S. federal mortgage underwriter, Freddic Mac.[25] Instead of interest-based mortgage financing, one model for an Islamic mortgage alternative is based on an equity partnership. A house buyer enters into a partnership with a financial institution in which each pays a percentage of the cost of a house and serves as co-owner. If the financial institution pays 80 percent and the buyer pays 20 percent, the buyer will then buy back the financial institution's share over a predetermined term (e.g. thirty years). In accordance with divine law, there are no interest payments. Instead, each month, the financial institution calculates the market *rental* value of the house and charges the buyer a percentage of the rental value based on the institution's current share of the ownership of the house. In the first month, then, the financial institution would receive 80 percent of the rental market value of the property. Its share of this value decreases with each payment made by the buyer, who, in effect, is paying rent to the institution and to him- or herself until the point of the full transfer of ownership from institution to buyer.

This process is utterly dependent on the marking-to-market of the rental value of the house on a month-to-month basis, exactly as the Prophet had instructed Bilal for the minute-to-minute transactions at the date market. The market here is the motor of justice, for the market obviates the inequalities inherent in *riba*. The assumption, of course, is that markets are free and fair. More importantly, markets are efficient: the value of any given commodity in a market is equivalent to its price at any given time. As Louis Bachelier wrote at the turn of the twentieth century, "At a given instance, the market believes in neither a rise nor a fall of true prices. . . . Clearly the price considered most likely by the market is the current true price: if the market judged otherwise, it would quote not this price, but another price higher or lower."[26] As final arbiter of price and judgment, the market is in the transcendent space of God and in the minute details of everyday transactions; closed and complete yet open and indeterminate.[27]

The understanding of money, market, and knowledge as all immanent to one another and to divine will should not be taken to characterize Islamic banking alone. It is also common across contemporary capitalist economic formations. The multitude's disutopia, as it were, contains within itself the mark of *Empire*'s theodicy. God and market are translations and transpositions of one another, just as, for Freud, the gods and demons are each other's doubles.[28]

Consider the United States Senate Committee on Finance hearings on tax evasion in the spring of 2002. Seeking to address growing concerns about the use of offshore money havens among corporations and individuals, the Committee on Finance solicited testimony not only from academic and regulator "experts" but also from convicted tax evaders themselves. Striking in their testimony is the manner in which God is both cause and consequence of their actions.

Daniel Bullock, now in prison in Atwater, California, began by asserting that he was "a spiritual man—a leader in my church and community," but then "the enemy of all that is good had crept into my heart and slipped a tentacle around my soul."[29] In his act of contrition before the committee, he proclaimed:

> It's too late for me to learn other than the hard way. It is not too late for our materialistic society. As Paul wrote to Timothy 2,000 years ago: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 5:19). Please act now to help keep other citizens from ruin and destruction.[30]

Robert Spears, also convicted of tax evasion, believed that the federal income tax was unconstitutional and followed "anti-tax gurus and Pied Pipers [who] send their 'patriotic' calls to ears ready to hear how to get our country back. They appeal to our patriotism, desire for more freedom and privacy, and love of God to encourage us to join in their crusade."[31] He related that his "journey began in spring of 1993 shortly after I retired. I had formed a foundation for the purpose of teaching our Christian heritage and the Constitution."[32] That foundation served as a money-laundering structure hiding his assets from the Internal Revenue Service. His wife, in her own testimony, extolled the role of religious transformation in atoning for one's sins: "Our world can change but first it must change within you."[33] Another testifier at the hearings, Kelly Stone, got involved in tax evasion through her church:

> In November of 1994 I received a phone call from my sister. She had heard from one of her church friends about a Tax and Insurance Seminar being held at an Insurance Agency in Billings, Montana. The man running this Seminar was supposedly a Christian man with solid morals and an uncanny knowledge of American History.[34]

In each testimonial, the desire to evade federal income taxes is connected with a vision of divinely ordained American patriotism. Taxes, the lifeblood of the state, are seen to suck off the God-fearing and to pervert or corrupt the national body. At least in the beginning, setting up complicated tax evasion structures is an act of fealty to God and country. Later, reconciliation with the taxman comes about through renewed faith in God, a "true" faith that sees state law, however unjust, as nevertheless legitimate. The road to change after the act of contrition involves the legislative process rather than tax vigilantism, as one of the convicted tax evaders argued in his statement, before he concluded: "May God bless America."[35]

Nomological Machines

The immanence and homology between Empire and multitude are good to think because they themselves are homologous to phenomena such as the finding of God in finance and money. In the examples discussed above, God is cause and consequence of both markets and tax avoidance. Other examples could be used to make much the same claim.[36] It is worth remarking, too, that the technique of marking-to-market was central to the accounting scandals that took place in the early 2000s. Those scandals, which began with the Enron Corporation and the Arthur Andersen accounting and consulting firm, involved marking debt equities and options contracts to market and essentially recording future value "today." They also involved complicated offshore corporate architectures, making use of tax havens in the Caribbean and the Channel Islands. As early as 1993, the business press picked up on the potential risks of mark-to-market accounting at Enron and expressed worries about the embrace of the practice by other corporate giants such as Coca-Cola.[37]

Of interest here is the particular temporality of mark-to-market accounting. As a reporter for *Forbes* noted, there is nothing inherently "wrong" with mark-to-market accounting, but only so long as "nothing major happens to impair the value of the contracts" being valued today at tomorrow's price.[38] That statement echoes a classic pronouncement of John Maynard Keynes, who maintained that the chief illusion governing the stability of the market as an entity "lies in assuming that the existing state of affairs will continue indefinitely."[39] It is in effect a religious chronology, infinitely extendable into a future horizon, asymptotically approaching but never quite reaching the End Times.

Yet marking-to-market also fixes that chronology in the immediate moment, in the calculative event among traders and prices, concretizing as law (the law of supply and demand, the law of marginal utilities) the divine violence of God's sovereignty and in effect deferring endlessly the sign and seal of divine justice. The belief that the future will be like the present both projects the present forward infinitely and operates in the shadow of apocalyptic or millennial time. The theodicy here is true to the term's original Greek, where δικη signified not only justice and penalty but also struggle, discord, conflict, and injustice as well.[40] God's discord is the movement of the market. At the same time, under the principle of immanence, the market is the horizon of democracy through the abstractions of the capitalist machine, "living its crisis," as Negri stated,[41] to move it to the plane of a revolutionary new humanity.

My argument, in short, is that if Hardt and Negri are correct about the homology between Empire and multitude, then so too are Islamic bankers and tax evaders who live in the crisis of market theodicy. My argument is also that the homology between *Empire* and these other social phenomena demands attention to the tools of the analytical enterprise.[42] It is not simply that *Empire* performatively constitutes what it names. It is also that *Empire* and these phenomena operate in terms of an ontological complicity, forming what philosopher of science Nancy Cartwright terms a nomological machine: "a fixed (enough) arrangement of components, or factors, with stable (enough) capacities that in the right sort of stable (enough) environment will, with repeated operation, give rise to the kind of regular behaviour that we represent in our scientific laws."[43] Or, I would add, our critical analytical apparatus. This is why *Empire* is good to think. Like marking-to-market, *Empire*'s modality of knowledge production contains two opposed positions that can be variously characterized as transcendence and immanence, completeness and indeterminacy, closed being and unfolding becoming, *potestas* and *potentia*. As Peter Fitzpatrick has argued in another context, these two positions "correspond . . . to the characteristic attempts in modernity to account for society,"[44] which produces the "illusion . . . that the institution of the social can account for itself."[45]

Echinodermata

In this sociotheological sense, it is not particularly a problem, then, that *Empire* declares itself with the voice of prophetic oracle. Prophecy is in the nature of its nomological machine. It is more of a problem that the book, like the interventions in money and finance discussed above, is so preoccupied with lateral homology. The totality presumed in *Empire* is troubling,[46] but I am more interested ultimately in the interrelated theodicy and morphology.

Christian myth has incorporated one echinoderm into its own nomological machine, organized through a series of supposed homological correspondences between the animal and the body of Jesus. The sand dollar's five holes are said to correspond to the wounds of Jesus (four nail holes, one side wound). The five "bones" inside are said to be five doves of peace; and the patterns on either side of the animal are held to be a poinsettia flower, the star of Bethlehem, or an Easter lily. Fitting rather nicely into eschatological traditions within Christianity, the creature thus has become, for some, an object of reflection and meditation on the unity of creation and the wonder of the incarnate God-man.[47] The God-man in itself suggests the problems of adequation that have preoccupied monetary theorists since the Greeks, again homologically: How can the substance of flesh (Jesus-as-man) approximate the divine essence of the Word (Jesus-as-God); how can any physical substance (gold, paper) approximate the transcendence of value ("money")? The problem of adequation here is also a problem of language and meaning, sense and reference.[48]

At the same time, however, while sand dollars seem at first glance to exhibit a basic five-part homological pattern, what distinguishes sand dollars from some other echinoderms is their irregularity and deviation from strict pentamery and, indeed, from strict homology. The petal patterns on either side of the animal often do not correspond to one another. The leftmost petals may differ in length from the rightmost ones. One of the five may be smaller than the other petals and also of a different size and shape from the corresponding petal on the other side of the creature.[49] The sand dollar's systematicity for Christian eschatology thus is belied by its own radical morphological underdetermination. Furthermore, sand dollars, like more systematically pentamerous echinoderms like starfish and sea urchins, are internally relatively morphologically undifferentiated. There is no circulatory system, no respiratory system; and no nervous system but rather a distributed patchwork of nerve cells. There is, however, a water-vascular system unique to the phyla that pumps seawater into and out of the creature and in the process achieves the functions filled by such "systems" in other animals while providing a means of locomotion via hydraulic tube feet. In short, the echinoderm has no "universal cover of law" governing it.[50] This may account for its uncanny regenerative capabilities: a whole organism can regrow itself entire from almost any tiny part.

Empire ruptures one version of totality through the Spinozist reformulation of immanence, and this is a welcome move for critical analyses of the contemporary moment. It forecloses both global triumphalism and metaphors of global or capitalist totality by excavating the potentiality of the multitude. At the same time, however, the Spinozist theodicy puts in place of totality a radically limited lateral homology. This prevents *Empire* from coming to terms with both nonlaterality and radical overdetermination by particular sites at least in some moments (e.g., the United States—but not always, or everywhere, and not as hegemon in the classic sense but as nonetheless powerful, both as *potestas* and *potentia*). It also prevents *Empire* from even beginning to approach sites of nonimmanence or radically different homological relation other than through its tropes of envelopment, incorporation, or unity.[51] In addition, opening to the possibility of other morphologies like that embodied by echinoderms also means accepting a principle of underdetermination. As a theodicy, the work of *Empire* and its homologies is to attempt to fix a cover of law for the morphology of the contemporary moment, obviating divine justice even as the book depends on it. This is why, while good to think, *Empire* is ultimately not good to eat.[52]

Off the seafloor, far from the echinoderm, and in a properly "social" space, I cannot necessarily imagine what such sites of nonimmanence or different homological relation might be. But that lack of imagination is precisely the failure of knowledge with which *Empire* leaves us, because it leaves us soundly within the modern imagination of the social, configured paradoxically yet productively as both closed and indeterminate, when perhaps what we need most is some antisocial, even echinodermatic, theorizing.[53]

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Notes

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 89.
2. Ibid., 79.
3. Ibid., 91, original emphasis.
4. Ibid.
5. J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). J. K. Gibson-Graham is the pen name of Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham, who have been conducting research on noncapitalist economic formations and querying the very tendency to define them in terms of a negative relation to capitalism.
6. In that, it is much like the category of the social and modern sociological knowledges, to which I return at the end of this chapter. Roy Wagner writes, of one such knowledge, anthropology: "To the extent that it may *compel* knowledge, rather than merely explain or interpret it . . . the science of the human is compelled by its own demonstrations. The science of humanity's capabilities and limitations is after all carried out by human beings, who become their own self-demonstration in the act of carrying it forth." Wagner, *An Anthropology of the Subject: Holographic Worldview in New Guinea and Its Meaning and Significance for the World of Anthropology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 6.
7. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 69–92. Subsequent references to *Empire* are given parenthetically in the text.
8. See, generally, Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).
9. The Latin is from *S. Aurelii Augustini confessiones: ad fidem Codicum Lipsiensium et editionum antiquiorum recognitas*, ed. Herm. Bruder (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1837), XIII, 2. The English is from *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1946), XIII, 2.
10. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, in R. H. M. Elwes, trans. and ed., *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza* (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), I, Prop. XVII.

11. Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, Prop. XVIII, references omitted.

12. See Michael Hardt, "Translator's Forward: The Anatomy of Power," in *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, by Antonio Negri (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xi–xvi; Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly.*

13. *Empire*, 73. See also Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, and Negri, "*Reliqua desideratur.* A Conjecture for a Definition of the Concept of Democracy in the Final Spinoza." In *The New Spinoza.* ed. Warren Montag and Ted Stolze (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 218–246.

14. *Empire*, 396, 397, emphasis removed; see also 206–208.

15. Wagner writes: "it is not so much a matter of anthropology's pragmatic exemplars being inadequate to its tasks as it is of the discipline being completely swallowed by their potency"; Wagner, *An Anthropology of the Subject*, 7.

16. Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, 18.

17. Ibid., 19, 20.

18. Ibid., 176.

19. By stamp, I refer to Nietzsche's assault on metaphysics using the numismatic metaphor of the χαρακτήρας or *charaktēr*, the die used to produce the obverse impression on a coin. He wrote: "truths are . . . metaphors worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their impressions and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins"; Nietzsche, as quoted by Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 154.

20. On Islamic banking and the prohibition of *riba*, see, for example, M. Umer Chapra, *Towards a Just Monetary System* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1992); Timur Kuran, "The Genesis of Islamic Economics: A Chapter in the Politics of Muslim Identity," *Social Research* 64 (1997): 301–337; Bill Maurer, "Engineering an Islamic Future: Speculations on Islamic Financial Alternatives," *Anthropology Today* 17 (2001): 8–11; and Bill Maurer, "Anthropological and Accounting Knowledge in Islamic Banking and Finance: Rethinking Critical Accounts," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, 4 (2002): 645–667.

21. Quoted and translated in Muhammad Akram Khan, *The Economic Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad* (Delhi: Noor Publishing House, 1992), 153–154; some punctuation removed to modernize the text.

22. Mahmoud El-Gamal, "An Economic Explication of the Prohibition of *riba* in Classical Islamic Jurisprudence," in *Proceedings of the Third Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 2000), 31–44.

23. Masudul Alam Choudhury, *Money in Islam: A Study in Islamic Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1997), xv.

24. Ibid., xvi.

25. See, e.g., Freddie Mac Press Release, "Freddie Mac Investing in Islamic 'Mortgages' from American Finance House—Lariba," March 28, 2001; and "Freddie Mac, Standard Federal Bank Announce New Islamic Home Financing Initiative for Michigan Families," August 10, 2001; copies in possession of the author.

26. Louis Bachelier, "Théorie de la spéculation," *Annales de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure*, 3rd ser., 17 (1900): 26.

27. A note of the ethnographic kind: in interviews, at moments when I expect Islamic finance professionals to say "God," they say "market," and vice versa. In an interview conducted in the summer of 2002, one professional stated that "the technique of marking to market" is what makes Islamic finance truly "unique."

28. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London, 1955), vol. 17, 217–256; originally published 1919.

29. Statement of Daniel Bullock, 1. All references to the Senate committee testimony are from: United States Senate Committee on Finance, "Hearings: Schemes, Scams and Cons, Part II: The IRS Strikes Back." April 11, 2002. Available at http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/hearing041102.htm, accessed April 12, 2002. The statements of each witness who gave testimony are paginated independently.

30. Ibid., 6.

31. Statement of Robert Spears, 1.

32. Ibid.

33. Statement of Mary Elaine Spears, 3.

34. Statement of Kelly Stone, 1.

35. Statement of Robert Spears, 2–3.

36. For the example of derivatives trading, see Bill Maurer, "Repressed Futures: Financial Derivatives' Theological Unconsciousness," *Economy and Society* 31 (2002): 15–36.

37. See Toni Mack, "Hidden risks," *Forbes* 151; 11 (May 24, 1993): 54–56; and Ronald Fink, "Off again, On again: The FASB Says that Equity Accounting for Unconsolidated Subsidiaries May Not Reflect Reality," *CFO Magazine*, July 1, 1997.

38. Mack, "Hidden Risks," 54.

39. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1964; originally published 1935), 152.

40. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. by Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

41. Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, 176.

42. I am indebted to conversations with and unpublished manuscripts by Annelise Riles for my thinking about analytical tools.

43. Nancy Cartwright, *The Dappled World: A Study of the Boundaries of Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.

44. Peter Fitzpatrick, "Bare Sovereignty: *Homo Sacer* and the Insistence of Law," *Theory and Event* 5 (2001), 24. I would like to thank Paul Passavant for pointing me toward this essay.

45. Ibid., quoting Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986), 184. See also Wagner, *An Anthropology of the Subject.*

46. E.g., Gibson-Graham, *End of Capitalism.*

47. The sand dollar myth is widespread and has been taken up by hundreds of Florida tourist traps selling shell wares.

48. Marc Shell has written eloquently on this topic in *Art and Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

49. See A. M. Kerr and J. Kim, "Bi-penta-bi-decaradial Symmetry: A Review of Evolutionary and Developmental Trends in Holothuroidea (Echinodermata)," *Journal of Experimental Zoology (Molecular and Developmental Evolution)* 285 (1999): 93–103; J. M. Lawrence, C. M. Pomory, J. Sonnenholzner, and C.-M. Chao, "Bilateral Symmetry of the Petals in Mellita tenuis, Encope micropora, and Arachnoides placenta (Echinodermata: Clypeasteroida)" *Invertebrate Biology* 117 (1998): 94–100; S. V. Rozhnov, "The Left-Right Asymmetry in Echinoderms," in R. Mooi and M. Telford, eds., *Proceedings of the 9th International Echinoderm Conference, San Francisco, 5–9 August 1996* (Rotterdam: Balkema, 1998), 73–78.

50. The phrase is Cartwright's (*Dappled World*, 6), in relation to science, not starfish.

51. This point is closely allied to Gibson-Graham's criticism (*End of Capitalism*, 126) that Negri only ever allows noncapitalist relations to enter the discussion as subject to "invasion." In their gloss on Negri, such relations may be "recalcitrant but [ultimately] incapable of retaliation."

52. Sea urchins and sea cucumbers, of course, are delicious.

53. See Fitzpatrick, "Bare Sovereignty." The idea of an antisocial theory is derived from the work of authors such as Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, Alain Pottage, and especially Marilyn Strathern. See, for example, the special issue of the journal, *Economy and Society* 31; 2 (2002) on Callon; Alain Pottage, "Persons and Things: an Ethnographic Analogy," *Economy and Society* 30 (2001): 112–138; and Marilyn Strathern, *Property, Substance, and Effect* (London: Althone Press, 1999).

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Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean

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