“After Posthegemony”

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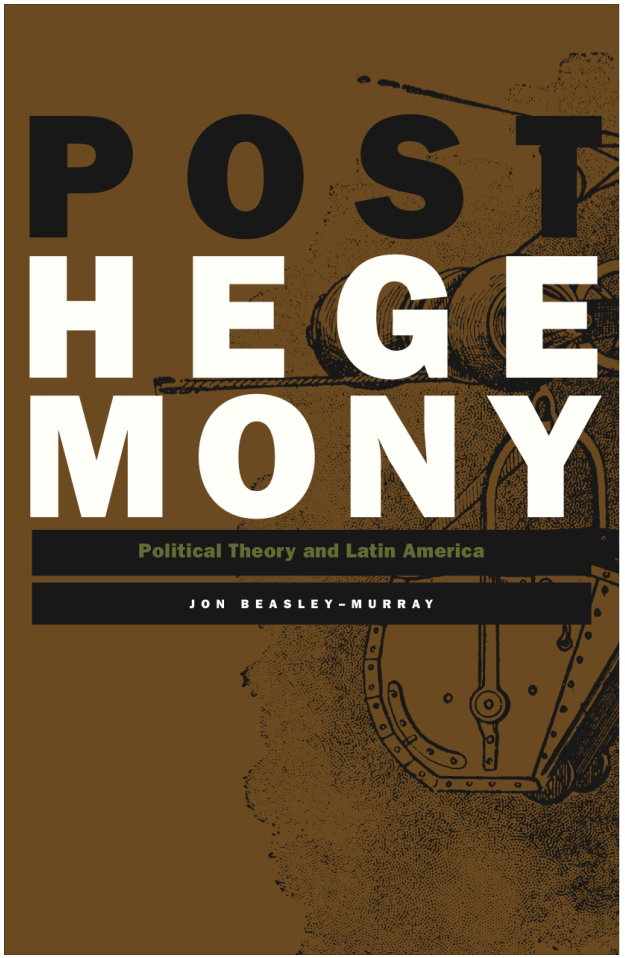
Posthegemony

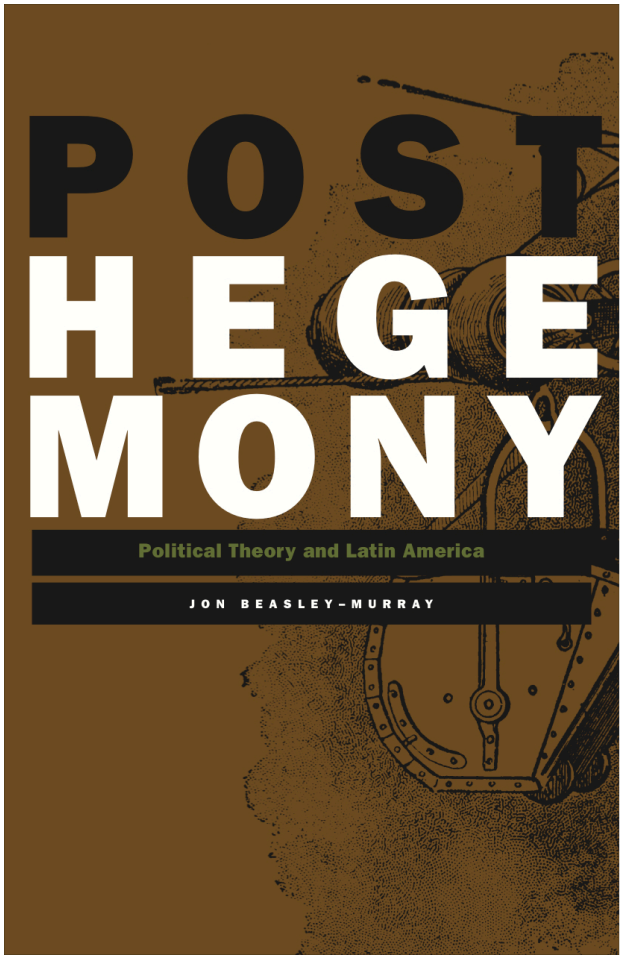
"There is no hegemony and never has been. We live in cynical, post-hegemonic times: nobody is very much persuaded by ideologies that once seemed fundamental to securing social order. [. . .]But we have always lived in posthegemonic times."



Posthegemony

"In this book there are two texts which simply alternate; you might almost believe they had nothing in common." (Perec)

"One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with." (Flann O'Brien)



Posthegemony

- Gilles Deleuze and affect (versus emotion): an index of the power of the body; a line of flight but also diffuse biopolitics or destruction.
- Pierre Bourdieu and habit (versus opinion): the means of social reproduction; what goes without saying but also motivation to rebel.
- Antonio Negri and the multitude (versus the people): the subject of modernity; founds of the common but also disaster or entropy.

Posthegemony

- The present is key to the past: if power can do without the façade of hegemonic projects now, then these were always at best a distraction from its real operations.
- The past is key to the present: a revised history offers an alternative narrative of a constituent power that always precedes constituted power.

Posthegemony

- Hegemony theory offers us the dichotomy of coercion and consent, and argues that politics is a matter of the construction of antagonism via chains of equivalence.
- Civil society theory offers a privileged space for politics as deliberation and negotiation, ringfenced off from economy or state, or the intrusions of affect.

Posthegemony

- Power is founded neither on coercion nor on consent, but on affects and habits that constitute a particular social subject (the people) and its relation to the state.
- Resistance, likewise, has nothing to do with conviction or belief, but on affects and habits that constitute an alternative social subject (the multitude) not tied to the state.

Latin America

- Latin America offers a particularly good vantage point from which to understand the failures of hegemony, and downfall of all versions of the social pact.
- This despite the fact that it is also the favored locale for the populism upon which hegemony theory is modeled, as well as inspiration for influential versions of civil society theory.

Latin America

1492-2002: A history of the multitude and the failure of any and all hegemonic pacts.

- 1492: Columbus and the Requerimiento
- Argentina 1972: Peronism(s)
- Ayacucho 1982: Sendero Luminoso
- Escalón 1989: The FMLN
- Chile 1992: New Social Movements
- 2002: Chavismo with and without Chávez

Latin America

Latin America

Posthegemony is:

- a critique of hegemony theory
- a proposal to rethink social order
- an alternative narrative of power
- an alternative narrative of resistance
- a theory of ambivalence

Posthegemony is not:

- against hegemony
- after hegemony
- a celebration of itself
- any particular political project
- a guide or a plan
- a closed text, or the last word

Criticisms

- “Romanticism of the multitude.” But this misses the place of ambivalence in the theory of posthegemony. The multitude can be good or bad. And it lies behind every other collective subject, every instance of constituted power. The point is simply that we should attend to the multitude, rather than to these derived, “quasi-” subjects.

Criticisms

- “Ultraleftism.” But this misses the fact that posthegemony is not a political program. Indeed, in some ways it is not political at all: it’s better to think of it as infra-political, i.e. an investigation into the conditions of possibility of the political. And if anything, the insistence on the state is what is anti-political. For posthegemony, “something always escapes.”

Criticisms

- “Mis-reading or insufficient reading.” Fair enough in some ways. But the theory ultimately stands or falls on its account of historical moments and/or political movements, and these have not been sufficiently challenged. Beyond that, there is only so much that can be done in 350 pages…

After Posthegemony

The legacies of subaltern studies:

- Decolonialism: A somewhat Manichean iteration of an identity politics of location.
- Marxism: Extrapolating from some aspects of the Left Turns (García Linera, chavismo).
- Infrapolitics: Drawing on Derrida and Heidegger to caution against mobilization.
- Posthegemony.

After Posthegemony

- More reading: constructing a genealogy of precursors. Towards a posthegemonic Gramsci. Or a network of fellow travellers. There is nothing particularly unique about it.
- More history: 1545-1945. For an archaeology of the different modes of power under colonialism and early independence. Tracing the red thread of the multitude. Meta-history.

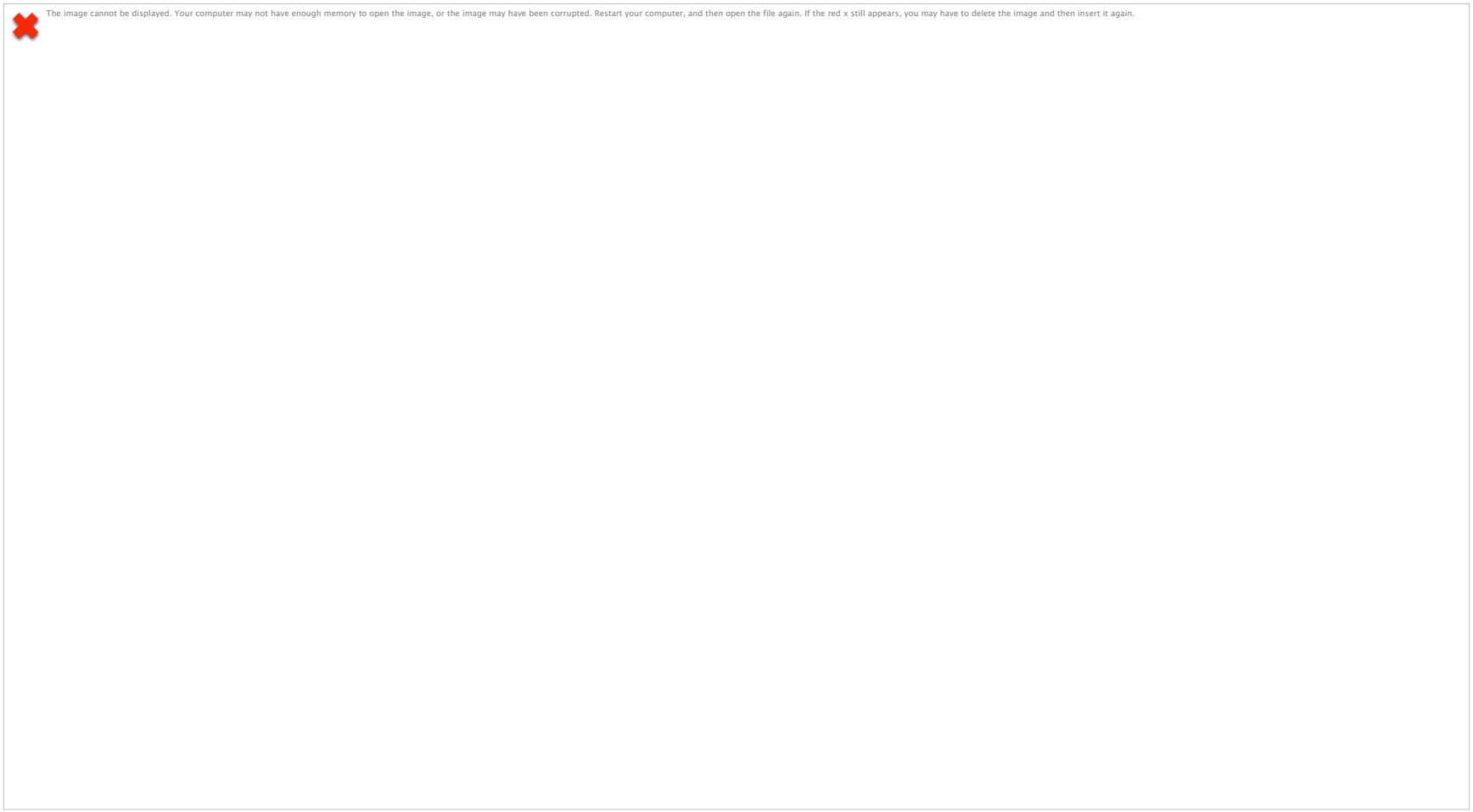
After Posthegemony

- More theory: what then is the role of hegemonic projects? What difference does the refusal of consent make? From ideology and consent to alibi and distraction.
- More literature: rethinking the privileged role of culture and the power specific to it. Tracing affect, habit, and the multitude through the Latin American canon.

After Posthegemony

- More politics: There have been dramatic changes in the political scene over the past five years or more. In the Middle East, the Arab Spring / ISIS. In Europe, anti-establishment mobilization, Syriza / Podemos. In Latin America, the (possible) decline of the Left Turns. In North America, Occupy / Trump.

After Posthegemony



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