ALL YOU NEED IS
LOVE

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According to some highly respected members of my tribe, modernity was re-set around 2011, when an actor–network identified as BL released her masterplan for universal LOVE. The story is inherently controversial, but it should start with a brief summary of the plan.

Resumamus. According to BL, the ANTities composing our common universe are perceived as agents insofar as they enter into networks (NET) allowing them to reproduce their existence (REP), metamorphose their identity (MET) and develop habits (HAB) which tend to concatenate chains of heterogeneous operations into units of action. At this first, basic level, these ANTities demonstrate both a capacity to persevere in their own being (comparable to Spinoza’s conatus) and a propensity to (self-)plasticity which allows them to adapt to constantly changing environments.

In the course of this adaptation, they elicit the apparition of three types of “quasi–objects.” Through the zigzagging invention of technical objects (TEC), they devise short–circuits allowing them to fold long series of operations into speedy and seemingly effortless tricks. With the help of fictions (FIC), they sustain worlds capable of living off of their own coherent (self–induced but not autonomous) systems of resonance. Thanks to more or less rigid procedures of reference (REF), they elaborate cognitive constructions allowing them to secure access to phenomena and causalities far removed in space and time. This second level provides the ANTities with various types of extensions of themselves, folding time, space and agency along ever more complex lines and dynamics.

Such foldings generate three types of “quasi–subjects” which, in their turn, further the development of yet more unpredictable extensions of self–plasticity. Through politics (POL), the ANTities circularly convince each other about what ought to be the best common course of actions, speaking obliquely again and again about the same topics always to be reconsidered under a slightly different light, never really agreeing, but producing along the way larger ANTities in which a collection of “I” tends to cohere in a collective assertion of “we.” Through law
(LAW), the ANTities devise (and conform to) certain means meant to validate proper forms of translation through various domains of action, originally heterogeneous to each other. Through religion (REL), the ANTities feel called to be something else (or more?) than ephemeral networks, they gain in subjective consistency by being addressed as “persons,” expected to respond for the purposes and implications of their actions, well beyond their brief individual existence on earth. At this third level, POL, LAW and REL together invest the ANTities’ agency with experiences of subjectivation, which provides them with a very relative, very dubious, but nevertheless very necessary sense of autonomy within the multiple levels of intra-actions constitutive of our multiverse.

In order to articulate more finely and more strongly quasi-objects with quasi-subjects, a fourth level of analysis focuses on the links which tie them together—with the explicit goal of providing an alternative to the operation devoted to economics at the turn of the 21st century. In spite of their necessary sense of relative individual autonomy, quasi-subjects cannot help but experiencing attachments (ATT) to countless other forms of beings: their emotions, passions, desires, needs and interests constantly remind them how dependent they are on each other, as well as on a wide variety of other means of subsistence, comfort and pleasure. ATT accounts for an economy of (often unequal) interdependencies. The management of such complex forms of attachments requires a great deal of organization (ORG): quasi-subjects devise stacks upon stacks of ingenious scripts, in order to ensure that the appropriate elements of their environment will be at the right place at the right time to meet their desires, needs and interests. All scripts, however, were not born equal. Some are broader, more intense, more commanding, more powerful than others: macro-scripts absorb micro-scripts within vertical and entangled trees of inclusion, integration and subordination. ORG accounts for an economics of hierarchical management. There seems to be an irreducible gap, delay and différence between the ever more clever devices invented to manage the organization of our attachments and our intuitive perception of balance and fairness in the exchanges of goods, services and favors. Morality (MOR) manifests itself through the nagging scruple that a transaction may have left one of the parties short-changed, while other parties gained more than their fair share. The face-value of procedural justice constantly needs to be readjusted to the fair value of a more substantive perception of justice, attentive to the
singularity and relative weight of the contracting parties. MOR questions the
dominant accounting procedures in the name of a moral economy.

LOVE claimed to emancipate these twelve modes of existence (REP, MET, HAB; TEC, FIC, REF; POL, DRO, REL; ATT, ORG, MOR) from their current suppression under the collapsing weight of the economic ideology. BL’s masterplan was indeed to re: set modernity, by reversing or bifurcating the evolution that led to the tyrannical and suicidal rule of one undifferentiated “science”—“economics”—deconstructed here as an unstable, indiscriminate and inconsistent mash-up of ATT and ORG, pretending to have set itself free from MOR thanks to a supposedly value-neutral use of REF, and imposing its totalitarian criterion of accounting to areas of concern which, in reality, required other, specific criteria of judgement. In order to operate this re:setting of modernity, LOVE relied on the use of the prepositions (PRE) succinctly described in this summary: these three-letter operators were devised both to ensure the relative autonomy recognized to these various modes of existence, and to help their pluralist articulation within our multileveled forms of collective agency.

Interpretemur. At first, no-one really understood why this impressive and all-encompassing intellectual construction was called “LOVE” (or “AIME” among members of its original French tribe). Some suspected BL to launch yet another remora, provocatively asserting her Christian beliefs in the increasingly anti-religious context of the local intelligentsia. Others imagined her having a good laugh, slightly surprised to see the combinatory dynamics of her acronyms spontaneously assert hippie values she was deeply, if discreetly, fond of. Whether puzzled, amused or disconcerted, no-one really dared to object—and the name caught on: LOVE it would be.

Of course, in this latter-day hippie context, PEACE was the ultimate goal of LOVE. Asserting the plurality of the fourteen modes of existence (4x3+2) was merely a means designed to wage an all-out effort of “diplomacy” designed to bring peace among all Earthbound creatures. LOVE’s fictional anthropologist was supposed to observe those “moderns” who had never been modern in the first place, to record their behaviors, rituals, discourses, myths and beliefs, in order to extract a potentially shareable platform of negotiation from their entanglement of powerful illusions and illusionary powers (a.k.a. “factishes”).
For such types of inter-cultural, inter-national, inter-continental, inter-religious, inter-ideological rounds of talks, negotiated roadmaps and laborious protocols of agreements were all the rage at that time. It had slowly become clear that there was no alternative to diplomacy in the age of the anthropocene: all earthbound ANTi(rities) discovered they were “bound” not merely to coexist and cohabit on earth, but to invent common (and, if possible, consensual) frames of inter-action and intra-actions.

Paradoxically enough, LOVE’s diplomatic endeavor took the form of an epic war staged between BL and DC (a.k.a. Double-Click). If not (yet) a call to arms, LOVE clearly pointed the finger towards a common enemy: DC was unmasked, and tied to the whipping post, as the secret agent who had inspired the moderns in the reckless attitudes and policies that had sacked and wrecked our common Earth (aka “Gaia”). What was DC’s main trick? Short-circuiting (and short-changing) the roundabout ways that defined each mode of existence. Under DC’s nefarious (and illusionary) influence, “things” could get “done” by merely pressing a button (TEC), describing reality (~FIC), being scientific (REF), talking straight (~POL), acting legally (LAW), banning superstition (~REL), calculating interests (ATT), managing rationally (ORG) and paying one’s debts (~MOR).

LOVE was meant to re-set modernity by throwing a wrench in each of these apparently unproblematic automatized (and potentially clickable) mechanisms. The inquiry into the modes of existence brought to light a typical hiatus, a specific trajectory, a particular alteration, under felicitous or infelicitous conditions, within each of these chains and networks of operations, which DC had collapsed into something triggered at a finger’s tip.

LOVE was meant to bring peace on earth by revealing to the moderns that modernity’s backstage did not look so different from what their earlier anthropologists had found in “other” cultures. Once DC’s foolishness was put at bay, the unfolding of the various modes of existence would provide common ground for negotiations between all earthbound cultures. Anthropocene diplomacy could begin.

*Refutemus.* Of course, it soon became clear that BL had gotten it all wrong. First, the actual world was ruled by envy and resentment, not LOVE. It was (and will continue to be) driven by war, exploitation, struggles, fear and
violence, not peace and diplomacy. POL, here reduced to rhetoric, confused the vicious power games fueled by big money and criminal threats (that were real politics) for gentlemen’s conversations tapping around “issues” in search for persuasion (that were mere cover-ups for the wheeling and dealing performed backstage).

Second, and along similar lines of criticism, the deconstruction of economics into three relatively independent modes of existence (ATT, ORG and MOR) simply repeated a well-known, well-meaning, but well-proven ineffective, line of wishful preaches calling for the “moralization” of the economy (MOR as an external counterweight to the inherently self-serving dynamics of ATT+ORG). Here too, the modes of existence were bound to work as smokescreens, hiding heavy infrastructural determinations under the veil of cheap superstructural guilt-psychology.

Third, instead of becoming a tool for empowerment, LOVE merely helped identify more precisely the knots that caused the dominant feeling of powerlessness—without breaking free from the illusionary (and typically modern) hope that rational knowledge would bring effective power by its own magic. Thanks to BL’s brilliant construction, one could understand much more clearly that the overall paralysis and inertia towards industrially-induced climate change was due to the ubiquity of fossil-fueled TEC at the core of REP and HAB, curbing FIC, POL and LAW to perpetuate ORG in a way that polarized ATT against the most legitimate claims of REF and REL, leaving MET to miscarry suicide-bombers. The trap was thus made crystal-clear. The exit, though, was nowhere in sight.

And yet: LOVE did change the world after all… And BL’s intervention—blessed Her initials!—was indeed pivotal in twisting modernity out of its suicidal dementia…

For, according to other (no less respected) members of my tribe, modernity was rather re-set on March 25, 2026, when a splinter group self-named LOVE2 launched a shrewd project which proved much more drastically disruptive than anyone had anticipated.

Fingamus. BL posed as an anthropologist, but her true (and most effective) being belonged mostly to FIC. Her first followers were devotees of REF: they
originally met mostly in universities, in small groups, all over the planet, during a few months between 2012 and 2014, discussing LOVE as if it was yet another “research agenda.” Soon, however, the participants realized REF had become hollow, unless relayed by FIC.

BL herself openly turned into the show-woman she had always been deep inside (MET), writing plays, staging theatrical events, parading in costumes with a spear in her hand. Inspired by her example, more and more folLOVErs used their scholarly identity as a mask allowing them to infiltrate public spaces in which to inject counter-fictions. Only such counter-fictions, made of a strange alloy mixing FIC with REF and MOR, could inspire scripts likely to recast ATT in a light capable of inducing new ORG. While some of these counter-fictions surfed on the development of new TEC, others cultivated a contagious distrust towards DC’s inherent presence in TEC, and strongly relied on the virtues of “unmediated” presence instead.

This generated an internal split between the folLOVErs. Some claimed that TEC, REF, LAW and ORG were irretrievably poisonous, because of the inherent rigidity of their procedures, which made them a natural host for DC. This belief led them progressively to withdraw from participating in any NET beyond a very narrow local scale: POL, ATT and even REL could only be conceived within limited configurations, in zones known as ZAD (Zone à Détruire/Zone à Défendre)—hence their name “Zadists.” Others claimed that the problems faced in the Anthropocene were global in nature, and required to be addressed through the TEC, LAW and ORG most likely to be effective on this global scale. According to these “Accelerationists”, modernity could not be “set back”, by a return to local zones of autonomy, but only “set forward”, by using the increased powers of TEC to accelerate and precipitate changes in POL, LAW and ORG. Of course, both Accelerationists and Zadists were right—as it turned out when LOVE’s most dramatic (and most surprising) blind spot finally came to light.

_**Mediemus.** While LOVE admirably beat around the bush of mediation, it totally missed the crucial point of media power. Given BL’s early flirts with mediology, her strong emphasis on the importance and ubiquity of translation, and her attempt to mobilize several forms of medium (books, exhibits, websites, plays, MOOCs) to bring LOVE to the world, it was extremely curious to see LOVE devote so little attention to media as such.
In a way, of course, LOVE’s main purpose was to develop, refine, enrich our understanding of mediation. The all-out war against DC launched by BL in the name of diplomacy simply reasserted what had become a main tenet of her theory for many years: against the modern hope to master the world at a distance through the use of “intermediaries” (instruments that transmit without transforming), the composition of a common world constantly requires the intervention of “mediators” (subjectified ANtities that necessarily adapt and alter what they translate).

LOVE, however, brought a tremendous improvement to this important but basic intuition. Instead of claiming (generally and unspecifically) that mediation (or translation) “was everywhere,” the fourteen modes of existence provided us with much finer tools that helped discriminate between very different modes of mediation. At the macro-structural level, LOVE brilliantly showed how the quasi-subjects of POL, LAW and REL resulted from the media apparatuses elaborated by TEC, FIC and REF (all “extensions of men” providing instruments capable of “folding time, space and agency”). LOVE also showed how it was this interaction between subjectivations and media (resulting in mediated subjectivities) which steered REP, MET and HAB to produce certain valorizations within ATT, ORG and MOR.

LOVE was indeed media theory in its highest achievements. But it was also destined to be media theory’s swan song. FOLLOWERS soon found out that media theory could no longer have its end in itself (a very modern assumption, once again). Its complement was less media practice (since everybody “practices” media all the time) than MEDIACTIVISM: a tactical disruptive implementation of counter-media devices within mass-media flows.

A turning point was reached when FOLLOWERS, instead of housing erudite scholar exchanges on Harvard campus or at Sciences-Po Paris, resolved to occupy a corner of the Notre-Dame des Landes ZAD, on a contested airport construction site in the North of France. Modernity was re-set (here and elsewhere) by launching IMDs (Improvised Media Device) which worked altogether as hackerspaces, websites, radio stations, nomadic universities, film production cooperatives, MOOC suppliers, and experiments in permaculture.

Zadists thought they had won the day, until an unfortunate series of events—a major accident in a rashly decommissioned nuclear power plant, an epidemics of deadly skin disease suspected to be caused by the ubiquitous presence of
nanoparticles, a terrible drought resulting from the unchecked increase in global warming—proved the Accelerationists right in their claim that there could be no local solution to inherently global problems. Of course, networks had already been built to share information and coordinate actions across various ZADs. But, as Accelerationists were quick to point out, there is a long way from a sum of minoritarian interventions to the transformative power of majoritarian policies. No matter how smart, innovative, inspiring the Notre Dame des Landes IMD could be, it stood no chance against the CNN, CBS, Fox News or TF1 of the world. There could be no re:setting of modernity without re:setting the media. This had to be the most “immediate” goal!

In being (rightly) suspicious towards the notion of representation, in articulating more finely the various modes of mediation, BL left the artificial enhancement of visibility by mass-media apparatuses haunt LOVE as a ubiquitous phenomenon, but as an unattended issue. The power of FIC and REF to steer future forms of LAW, ORG and ATT was hijacked by the current forms of ATT and ORG through their capacity to use TEC in order to enhance visibility according to their agenda—effectively neutralizing POL beyond very limited zones of local diplomacy. Visibility and its correlate, attention, were traded asymmetrically as industrial goods, as if they were one item of trade among others—while they were in fact the crucial factors conditioning the value of all other goods. Zadists and Accelerationists finally agreed: if LOVE were to impact our social evolutions fast and broadly enough to prevent climate change from totally wrecking our life-forms on the planet, it needed to bring mediactivism to a whole other level.

**Mediagamus.** It is only at this point, around the beginning of 2026, that the name finally made sense. Whether BL had planned it all the way from day one remains a mystery. But followers had an illumination when LOVE\textsubscript{2} spelled out the words behind the acronym: the Levelers Of Visibility Enhanced. It wasn’t about theory or practice. It was a matter of hacking. They released a virus. Its first symptom was a sort of whiteout. At the beginning, a simple paleness. In April, 2026, Apple started to recall its entire new generation of iPads, because their colors were not as vibrant as those of the competition. In effect, LOVE\textsubscript{2} had managed to crack the codes of their latest OS, make everything look desperately pale on Apple devices, bringing the firm down in a matter of months.
Then it was Google’s turn. Starting in October 2017, the highest ranked sites on PageRank had started to disappear. At first, they were just harder to access, overloaded, slow: saturated. Then you couldn’t find them at all. Gone! Google was reeling: anything and everything it valued tended to disappear. Ads started to dwindle: nobody wants to disappear.

The same thing was happening to Amazon and Alibaba: the more a product elicited curiosity, the more it was recommended and bought, the quicker it disappeared from our screens. The process was the same every time: colors would go pale, then the image was attacked and devoured by a whiteout produced by saturating its pixels. Within a few months, all the great empires of the digital economy had bitten the dust (and every sector of the economy had been digitalized at this point). Whether they were peddling gadgets, celebrity or exposure, it didn’t matter: whatever they were showing tended to disappear. The trick devised by LOVE2 was terribly simple: concentrated attention caused an overexposure that rendered invisible whatever had its visibility enhanced beyond a certain (very low) threshold. That was the genius of the virus: it had embodied the abstract right to opacity in an algorithm that concretely reconditioned social visibility, i.e., social relations, as a whole.

The disappearance of the overexposed completely redistributed collective attention. Thousands of alternative practices became visible, though only on a small scale and at a local level. Anything that threatened to gain the high ground would be undone, erased, by its very success.

Of course, there were some unfortunate collateral damages. BL’s true name was also erased from the records: too famous for her own sake! Only her initials survived, for initials were immune to the virus (as long as there was no copyright on them). In fact, all celebrities fell into oblivion. Some people minded: “culture,” as they knew it, relied on celebrities, famous writers, canonical artists. They said we lost our collective memory, our sense of “History.” We’re no longer sure what they meant by such words.

From now on, modernity re:sets itself every month or so, depending on the chaotic behavior of attention attractors. There are media, there are masses, there are indeed a lot of memories circulating on our networks—but only at a small scale or for a short time. LOVE2 prevents the massification of media. Visibility can only last as long as it remains minoritarian: majoritarian spells, artificially enhanced or not, are bound to be ephemeral.
LOVE₂ re:sets modernity as tribal and perpetually naive. Are we still modern? Have we ever been? Do we still care? LOVE₂ is about a constant re:setting of the standards of visibility. Is that modernity? It may very well be all modernity ever did—and needed.¹

¹ CREDITS: This film was shot on location in June 2015 starring, in order of apparition, Bruno Latour, Marshall McLuhan, Jussi Parikka, Michael Walzer, le comité invisible, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Ruth Stégassy, Alex Williams, Nick Srnicek, Georg Franck, Benoît Platéus. Many thanks to the following people for various forms of production help: Emiliano Battista, Sébastien Biset, Michael Cuntz, Lorenz Engell, Christophe Leclerc, Anthony Masure, Raphaël Pirenne, Dirk Snauwaert.