

Michael Hardt talk

Intro

Empire a retrospective

Toni's presence/absence

//Hardt takes podium

no personal reflections, but thank you

--not a proper paper, but a framework for responding/responses to papers of the last 2 days bring up

Two frameworks:

(but before that: putting a 'closure' on the project = allows distance

- three books that dominated intellectual lives for 15 years
- a long time
- only now able to get some distance

tim murphy's paper:

- insisted no book can be attributed to a subject
- is starting to feel estranged from his own books

quite pleased in the way that the books (empire in particular) have been useful

- some ways matter the most, maybe not most obvious
 - positive & negative ways
- positive:
 - friend working on diss with autonomist marxism
 - parents agreed with him after Empire came out
- negative:
 - even more important
 - press board at Duke U P

- after empire: long period where each month, 10 projects each time
 - game for a while – which book will start with “empire says the world is the same”
 - -empire was a negative foil

two general ways of thinking about the project as a whole

- (and within those ways, situate/respond/appreciate interventions)

1) non-liberal theory of political pluralism

- liberalism: the anglo-american political variety (not the economic)
 - seems to have a monopoly on pluralism
 - has distinguished itself on the left by that pluralism
- importance of the prof: theory of plurality that isn't liberal
- TWO WAYS:
 - i) concept of Empire
 - ii) concept of multitude
 - EMPIRE:
 - trying to contrast is both
 - a theory of sovereignty (as unitary rule)
 - conception of global order that used to go in IR as 'realist' – thinking of it in terms of nation-states as the only important actors
 - not globe homogeneous
 - series of unequal powers that have to collaborate to make the global system
 - involve nation-states (some more than others)
 - *but also, corporations
 - -supra-national organizations
 - NGO/media, etc
 - ex:
 - similar move in Foucault with lectures from sov to govtly
 - even more clearly, “governance” not government in legal theory, etc

- the establishment of juridical structures neither in domestic or international law, but multilevel distributed system
 - Joe Nye – administration political scientist
 - Three-level chess game.
 - Play the game on each level, but between the levels
 - Top level, you think of US unilateralism
 - But on a second-level, it's multipolar world
 - Third level, no centers of power, distributed
 - *have to think of the dynamics of global power in the whole thing

seems like none of the papers in the last 2 days *really* grappled with the notion of Empire

- there's a lot that's changed since the book
- not completely absent, but less present...
- how Hardt sees that – (US War on Terror)
 - when the book came out...before 9/11, curiosity
 - after full war on terror: there was a certain 'comfort' that old concepts work
 - Bush did have a properly imperialist imaginary
 - Tariq Ali seemed to make convincing argument (Like Bush Cheney are trying to prove Empire wrong)
 - But as US unilateralism started to fail – it became clear that 'proof by negative' – the exhaustion of US unilateralism came to its end
- plural form of government is almost taken for granted now

But as a challenge for liberalism again (system of global governance)

- it's faced with the question of: can it act in common?
- specifically: whether 'empire' can act in response to the financial crisis?
 - not just specific state actors, but empire as a whole
 - *challenge for the concept
 - *challenge for the emerging global order

2) Multitude: theory of political pluralism/multiplicity

- general notion: political subjectivity doesn't require unity/homogeneity
- both internal differences and multiplicity are characteristic of a possible political subject
- it's in that way they contrast multitude with people
 - class as a relative homogeneous entity, party as a centralized-unifying mechanisms of organization
 - multitude as a way of thinking of people as a multiple, class as internally differentiated/multiple, and party as not-centralized but multiple
- like empire, not sameness/homogeneity
 - thinking of internally different and hierarchical multiplicity – how it can act together
- → Q of organization/effectiveness
 - a number of interventions in the last two days are trying to think through these questions
 - organization – effectiveness of the multitude
- example that was clarifying:
 - in 2002/3/4, was reading texts in Bolivia about the struggles (2000 chocabomba, 2003 'war on gas')
 - easily recognize these struggles, reproduced around the world
 - IMF told the bolivian government that their water prices were 'irrational' – delivery of gas was too expensive – 'recommended' to privatize
 - consortium 'rationalized' the pricing (4x)
 - struggles resulted → morales 2004
 - were talking about them as 'multitude-form'
 - first reaction = flattery (they weren't!)
 - not from them/Spinoza, but from a bolivian sociology from the 80s (rene zapaleta)
 - he wrote about it with a note of regret
 - miners were no longer leading the working class
 - what had emerged (he was lamenting) was a multitude form, not a class form
 - related it to the social form from which it grew

- avoid capture involved in the network society
 - or even Wu Ming
- Miriam and sexual difference for a style of embodied multitude
 - emphasize that the multitude can never be a unity
 - or that the point of organizing is to never become a unity
 - **one of the equivocations that the discussions lead to
 - notion of embodied multitude with sex diff this way = a guide toward the non-unification of the multitude

non-liberal political pluralism

- short form:
- liberalism conceives of pluralism in terms of
 - power: neutralizing power (sep of power, etc)
 - thinks of preventing power through separation
 - notion fo empire, etc – doesn't lessen the domination by any separation among the powers... in fact – some of its effectiveness is in its multiplicity
 - phil level: is a notion of sovereignty possible *not* in the one who decides

problem facing multitude (virno)

- there's nothing that guarantees that the multitude will be politically progressive
- question: political direction and effectiveness (both q)
 - are still in progress

The way they work – they start writing letters back and forth after they end book

- then they write the next book
- End of Empire: keep talking about multitude but it remains at a poetic level...
 - ok: next book ... multitude
- End of Multitude: keep talking about the common, what do we mean?
- now, they've stopped...but

Questions still remain: emp/mult

- as multiplicities – what the mechanisms and power for action

****2nd way thinking about project in retrospect

- ok, not just non-lib pluralism
- **bases of communism as a concept, a practice maybe
- often said that a lot of the project is about rethinking the political vocabulary
 - the ones we seem we need the most need for
 - either corrupted or inaccessible
 - obvious: democracy
 - you either bail and invent a new one, or you fight over the concept itself
 - usually did the 2nd
 - others: love, poverty
- communism because now that the seemingly accepted term is the opposite of what it means
 - media: total control by the state
 - we think of it as the opposite
- there, one could stop and invent a new one
- why keep it?
 - The terms already embedded with a long history
 - abandoning the history might happen with abandoning the term
 - not about honoring it, but valorizing and making use of it
- what does that mean?
 - via tim murphy: Empire not a communist manifesto?
 - zizek wrote an article in a german newspaper and said “new communist manifesto of the 21C”
 - then wrote another one... people are taking it as the comm man of the 21C how could they!
 - outlining what the elements of a comm manifesto
 - even witho the term, trying to rethink the essential elements of communism
- *****SEVEN
 - contemporary analysis of labor

- critique of cap itself
- K of mod
- abol prop
- abol st8
- theory of org
- revolution

contemporary analysis of labor

- a lot of the books, as a lynchpin, an attempt at a project of class analysis
 - asking what contemp class comp is
 - how do people work today
 - how is it diff
- they said:
 - primary argument:
 - living in a period of passage from industrial production (hegemonic) to immat/biop production is hegemonic
 - (the pre-argument, non-controversial: for the last 150 years industrial production was hegemonic
 - not that most people in the factories
 - RATHER, the mechanical.social.wage.temporal relations have been imposed over each other, and society as a whole
 - ex: EP Thompson on clocks
 - hypothesis: no longer the dominant position
 - what is emerging = immat prod (bad term)
 - but aimed toward goods that are in large part immaterial
 - the labor itself isn't immaterial, but the products are in part (which is why he thinks it's a bad term)
 - software production, healthcare, fast food, flight attendants
 - production of ideas, code, images, affects
 - **qualities of this production are now becoming generalized

- not that fewer people in the factory, but that the factory has become subordinated within a new economic formation
 - qualities of this biopolitical production are progressively imposed
 - Two things:
 - a whole series of people make this argument.
 - 1) one criticism is about its relative 'incoherence' or 'ambiguity'
 - links together things that are complicated: geography, communication, etc
 - might say software worker not like someone at 7-11 even though both affective labor?
 - response:
 - 1) analytical usefulness
 - 2) political effects
 - one response: Michael demming (yale)
 - "one could, and critics have, could make fun of all three terms for their incoherences and ambiguities. But before you get too comfortable..."
 - **service work**
 - has equally ambiguous/incoherent meanings
 - should question those general categories of labor
 - and a challenge of a better term (neither immat or bioP production have best effectiveness, but can't think up something better)
- Miriam and sexual difference:
 - For him – partly because he was trained/closer to anglo-american stream of socialist feminism (than fr/ital. fem) that the sexual division of labor is far more central than sexual difference

- sexual division of labor → affective labor
 - socialist feminists from the 80s
 - debates around care, etc
- and recent book by Rothschild on flight attendants, legal assistants, etc
- their use of affective labor = cognitive...
-

critique of capital itself

- think of BioP prdxn and critique BioP prdxn
- Marazzi's insistence of the correspondence between finance and biopolitical production
 - starting from the recognition, we can no longer think about finance as fictional and industry as real economy
 - that no longer explains how the contemp cap econ works
 - finance is not fiction or even derivative of the real econ
 - in its immat, it corresponds to immat labor
 - it seems super-suggestive
 - attracted to the immeasurability of this kind of production
 - even, specific financial instruments as trying to measure that immeasurability
 - give measure, then make marketizable the immeasurable production that happens with BioP Prodxn
- another move: contemp move of cap from profit to rent [from surin]
 - polemical, because cap was from rent to profit
 - rentier to profit
 - keynes says: useless investor will die out, then owner who does production
 - now: from profit to rent?
 - Rent generated.
 - partly meant = relative autonomy of BioP P
 - rather than capitalist being internally directive
 - ie: CVI on co-operation

- orchestra conductor or general on battlefield
 - now the capitalist is external to the process, and only seeks rent
- A2 zizek critique
 - Zizek: make same mistake marx makes, to believe that capital could create the conditions for its own overthrow
 - True! That is a basis of the critique of capital.
 - Not a critique to something where we are external
 - but we are 'within and against it'
 - need to use its own mechanisms against itself

K of mod

- where juan-carlos Valencia fits in
 - his paper: latin American tradition
 - 'coloniality of power' 'de-colonial thought'
 - pose: you can't think modernity without also thinking coloniality
 - inextricably combined
 - and... modernity and race
 - any proj of lib
 - also a K of modernity
 - also agree that marx/Marxism have an ambivalent relationship to this
 - not one-sided
 - but relationship in marx work, and then Marxists, state-socialists
 - complete repetition of the 'development of modernity in all of its forms' including the racist, colonial form of thought
 - talking about coloniality/racism in this way
 - don't pose it as an ideology or mode of thought
 - but a structure of social practices/institutions
 - that's what makes it inextricable from modernity
- Hardt thinks JCV was generous
 - even in the course of the writing the books, have learned more about more use/recog colonial trad

- in addition: black radical tradition

abol prop

- theory of the common
- claim that BioP P is increasingly reliant on/directed toward the common
 - increasingly central in capitalist production
- more prominent argument:
 - re-focus thinking on property itself
 - proposing the common as a rejection of both pub/priv property

abol st8

- involve a proposition of freedom, democracy, and org of democ
- institutions of the common
- but also: #6 theory of org

theory of org

*problem that troubles him:

- in terms of theory of org

every time a theory of contemp class comp, always seems to imply a political organization or vanguard

- for instance: arguing for a passage (just in recognizing the reality)
 - from a phase of industrial production organized/imposed qualities on/cast new light, all form of econ
- now: biopolitical is doing the same thing, recasting agriculture, etc
 - that sounds like, then, a claim about the vanguard of immaterial workers
 - the empirical claim implies its organization

DOESN'T WANT IT TO IMPLY IT!!

- Hardt wants to be completely anti-vanguardist

Hardt doesn't want people to think he wants the Microsoft workers of the world to lead the rev

- But people keep asking the question so much, maybe he has a bigger problem he hasn't noticed.

revolution

- arguing against thinking of comm in the future tense
- have to think of communist as already existing in the world
 - thinking of examples of it already existing
- MH: it goes even further
 - if you pose it also in the future, the future eclipses everything in the present
 - posing a notion of transition as purgatory sometimes leading to the shining future
- Very happy of thining about comm in the present (or its pre-req)
- still tied to the notion of rev, creation of a better/diff world
-
- would need all of these things!

- need
 - revolt,
 - event,
 - prep of institutions/alt
- but a theory of the event
 - neither mysterious
 - or deferring to the future
- example: romano alquati (soc in fiat plant – co-research)
 - in the interview, he was asked about the origin of workerist politics. The event at piazza in turin, where the trade union negotiated a deal with the company and the workers felt betrayed. They didn't go the factory but destroyed the trade union
 - opened a long season of workers struggles
 - asked about it...
 - he says: "we didn't expect it, but we prepared for it!"
 - that's what Michael is thinking about
 - most fashionable theories of event, act comes after the event
 - ie: badiou
 - much more interested in the aporia of the event

- he says: you can prepare for the event without expecting it!
- preparing for it, without knowing what it will be

all of this is perhaps what they could have done

- could have spared you all of the pages... could have instead written a manifesto

Q: Wallerstein was trying to talk about the left in terms of the multitude and what would it mean for the multitude to coalesce, given the dictates of the multitude.

- Two examples: world social forum, the Zapatistas

What gives you hope? Do you want to talk about it?

MH: Hope's an annoying word. Second, dangerous terrain of examples with the network. Ends of referring to limited populations, or can... Hesitant to give the internet examples. Zapatistas have almost that same danger. Very small specific group – often saying not presenting selves as example, don't reproduce us... There's a trap of those examples.

Bolivian example. Seems more open and inspiring...

- Put it this way – other examples?
- Often got the question (in a nice way) why are you so optimistic?
 - Hate it! Think they're really saying that 'pretending that things are going OK when it really sucks.'
 - But more a confidence that people always revolt. Foucault said that. That's where the organizing has to start.
 - Not that the spontaneity necessarily works, but at least they revolt.

Q Terry: Is the problem of looking for something generalizable? Isn't the problem to just have one big world picture. Struck by reference to Nye on the three levels of chess. ...

What would a manifesto look like if it worked on those three levels?

MH: I don't know!

Terry: That would be the thing to do.

MH: I don't have a good answer. IN a general way, it is more that we don't yet have a form. We're dealing with either the complexity of describing how a distributed form of power works. Or, articulating the effectiveness of multitude as subject. It might require a different literary form. Maybe it's not a coincidence that we're not yet writing a manifesto...

Q: struck by one of the thoughts – can be hopeful even without expectation. I was thinking of not being hopeful, nor a belief in hope. Indian song: if you think you can buy me, that's wrong. You bought my compliments, not my hope. Doesn't want to be in a position where he can't do anything.

MH: don't know how to answer... it's nice. Wouldn't say that there's nothing to do. But rather that I was trying to think that radical transformation happens. I think it does make sense to talk about events that radically change our perceptions of the world, etc. And it does make sense to say that they do come from the outside. And yet, one can nonetheless prepare for them.

Q: Action. In commonwealth, talk about the rise of the urban. How the urban is the space of the multitude. This isn't urban in a physical sense, but the metaphorical space of immaterial labor, etc. And also... what does it say that in the West cities are shrinking?

MH: Think right, maybe not the great answer, but answering the second with the first. The Metropolis is a situation of intersection and communication. An experience of that. Not the greatest way – marx in 18th brumaire, talking about the conserve/reactionary nature of the rural pop. Is because they don't communicate. The urban comm, the rural are isolate, etc. Can't act as a class. If we think of the urban that way, the state of communication/sharing of the common. If think of metropolis as a reservoir of the common, then metrop isn't just the built env, but cultural/social fabric – then it extends well beyond the limits of Detroit.

Also important... insist often the positive aspects of the common, but also negative forms of the common. It's not in of itself good, but the terrain on which we struggle. Think of the metropolis in this way too. Enormous negative forms in metropolis.

Q: place for nature/culture in the manifesto?

MH: example: paolo virno

- something about Copenhagen
- interesting how the anti-cap and eco movements were meeting/working together
 - having some conflicts because anti-cap think of a common that's unlimited, etc
 - and the eco was thinking of common that was very limited – earth, water, atmos
 - slogans seemed to conflict
 - "we want everything for everyone"
 - eco: that's destruction
- Virno: one group can say "bio-politics" the other can say "bio-Politics" but no one can say both!
 - Totally right!
- Example that of course we have to..

my question:

noting a lot of straw positions

- 1) "there is not outside"
- --materialist, perspectival
- but wouldn't we have there's no inside?

workerist/post-workerist, the slogan of inside and against is a determining one...

--topography of revolt

- claim that the most powerful point to resist is from within a form of power (tronti – it's not from capital that the strongest revolt is mounted...)
- both within but not of

to assume a homogeneity, but an absolute belonging? Not think that one could be in but not of?

topological metaphor: mislead discussion....

Q:

1) following alex Galloway and Eugene thacker:exploit

--immaterial workers? seems one portal...

2) problem of measure and measurability – production of affects. Is the problem of aesthetics of bioP of qual/quantity, etc, think of things in terms of critique? What would it look like to have creative critical methodologies?

--

MH:

using the system for its system... gravediggers aren't the best metaphor...

maybe it only creates its own gravediggers, we need to create the rest?

--prefig 'in the shell of the old'

Q: two – would have included equality and class-less society. They were missing. Why? (remembering arendt debate)

Other q = Bolivia and worker's org and the st8.

Not accounted for in the bolivian narrative, and the commonwealth -- after 2005, people are inside the state. If anything empire is a theory of the st8 is an absolute no-no? [MH: no no no no...] but that the state is a trap.

Multitude would have to 'flow around' and not 'into' the state?

MH: equality + freedom. First of all, there's a rem of cold war thought that freedom/equality as mutually excluded, but we need both of them. Was thinking of abol of the st8 as part of that... Rather than a goal, it can be a means – can be an occupation. The danger is that you become the state. And it becomes an endpoint and not a means. But his feeling is a similar debate. Someone was criticizing him for talking about insurrection/insurgency etc after 9/11. Says it's stupid to talk about it. Instead.. you should council the US state in making them less bad. Sure.. I guess that can be fruitful. That's super useful. Another thing that's super-useful. I think you can work with and council the bolivian government, etc

etc, (he seems to have a fetish for international intellectuals). And there's a third way ... (you can cast your lot), and you cast your lot with those who fight. Don't mean it as a prescription (like that the other ones are wrong/bad). Being too weak? Tendency to answer to question is to adopt a compromise position that's not his own...

"de-colonizing the state" the terms we should use?

***NOT "purity of non-stateness" (of Holloway or Beasley-murray)

Q: Tim: vocabulary... terms... anti-globalization

MH: great conceptual victory to generalize the notion of alter-globalization. There was a term in the media: anti-globalization (media and movement types). Contrad was felt between a localism and the actual practices/aspirations which were globalizing. Not brilliant, but the conceptual work done in movements. Usually done collectively and internally. Not that we're not smart enough, but that it has to work a different way.

Q: immat and losing direction. What about financial market?

MH: Yes! CM is good. Formal correspondence between bioP P and financial activities. And of course, a disciplinary mechanism. Point before was that it's a relatively external and impersonal disciplinary mechanism. And in that way, different. Different than the image of cap/entrepreneur – discipline that is external to the production process, but perhaps an even more severe discipline and control.

Galloway – protocol. Can be even more severe.