International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Vol. 24, Issue 04, 2020
ISSN: 1475-7192

The Resistance of the Multitude in the Age of Empire

[1]Dr. Onur Bilginer

ABSTRACT--*In Empire, Hardt and Negri (2000) argue,national and supranational entities that coexist within the new global order operate under "a single logic of rule," which is composed of "a new inscription of authority and a new design of the production of norms and legal instruments of coercion that guarantee contracts and resolve conflicts" (pp. xii, 9). As opposed to David Harvey's New Imperialism, which depicts "a US-style hegemony over world affairs" established by "powerful financial centers and governmental institutions," Hardt and Negri's Empire neither sees this logic of rule as imperialist nor defines the U.S. as a hegemonic power (Allen, 2004, pp. 22-3). Rather, they associate imperialism with fixed territories and nation-states (i.e., Great Britain in the nineteenth century and the U.S. in the twentieth century) and then specify four main characteristics of Empire.*

Keywords-- *Resistance, Ages, Empire*

I INTRODUCTION

First of all, Empire has no territorial boundaries. It is decentered and deterritorialized for the purpose of managing "hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of commands" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. xii, xiii). It is an all-encompassing apparatus of rule that operates over the world population. Second, it does not have a historical regime. It exists outside of history and has no temporal limits. Third, it is identified with biopolitical production, whose task is not only to regulate social interactions but also to rule over man's nature. Finally, there is an enduring contrast between the practice of Empire and its discourse. Despite Empire's brutal methods, it always appears "dedicated to peace–a perpetual and universal peace outside of history" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xv).

Hardt and Negri's account of Empire as a new logic of rule aiming at the control of the global society declares that we have entered into a new phase of bio-power. On the one hand, Empire is viewed as a "society of control." The productive forces of global capitalism in Empire are governed by a new paradigm of power, which signals an "epochal passage in social forms from disciplinary society to the society of control" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 22-3). On the other hand, the dispersion of Empire's apparatuses is not only achieved by disciplinary institutions (i.e., schools, prisons, hospitals and so forth) and relevant discourses but also advanced by the flexible and fluctuating networks of command that seek to regulate life from its interior and to penetrate into the depths of human consciousness (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 23-4). So they argue with Foucault that power is everywhere and comes from everywhere, adding that power also operates at the global scale. However, Hardt and Negri allude to a paradox—a paradox of power which was latent in Foucault's writings but made explicit by Deleuze and Guattari. According to this paradox, the new paradigm of power cannot but unify the distant social

[1]*Department of Sociology, Başkent University*

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

categories, forces, and networks by intending to control every aspect of life. Nevertheless, as power seeks to absorb, articulate and rearticulate distant groups, forces, and networks, it brings into being a new context in which power can no longer mediate between them.

From the power paradox aredrawn two rival approaches. First, the rise of Empire as a society of control is a response to the multitude's desire for putting an end to colonialism and imperialism (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 43). If so, it is the multitude's struggles that brought Empire into existence in the first place. Second, it is the global networks of Empire that have created a small affluent class by extracting the wealth created by the multitude. The relations of exploitationunavoidably forced the multitude to revolt. The multitude's resistancesare then either the begetter or the slayer of Empire. In either case, Hardt and Negri contend, the real emancipation resides only in the multitude's power to act, which "is constituted by labor, intelligence, passion, and affect" (2000, p. 358). According to them, Empire is nothing but a parasite. It is regulatory but not constituent. It is passive and negative. Its commands are interventionist and responsive to the acts of the global multitude. Given the reactionary attitude of the Empire, the resistance of the multitude is then "primary with respect to power." (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 64). It precedes Empire's logic of rule in terms of significance

Hard and Negri also argue the multitude must achieve more than pure resistance. The principal political task of resistance is to reorganize the global forces of the multitude and redirect them toward new ends. In specific, the new political subjectivity called the multitude must construct an alternative way of living by inventing 'new democratic forms and a new constituent power' based on equality and freedom (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. xv, xvi, 67; 2004, p. xi). This line of political reasoning relies on two methodological styles. The first is critical and deconstructive. The other is constructive and ethico-political. The first considers "the need for a real ideological and material deconstruction of the imperial order," and the other aims to "lead the processes of the production of subjectivity toward the constitution of an affective social, political alternative, a new constituent power" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 47). Both styles bring us to the conclusion that no one really exists outside of Empire and the alternatives must be built from below by the forces of the global multitude, acting within the confines of given conditions. But whatdo they mean by the multitude?

For Hardt and Negri, the multitude is not identical with the "people," the "mass" or the "working class." It differs from them at a conceptual level. The multitude is first and foremost comprised of multiple differences. But it does not reduce the diversity of differences to a single identity (as in the people). Nor does it imply indifference to the existing differences (as in the mass). They use the concept of the multitude to highlight the open and expansive networks of the global society, which "act in common while remaining internally different." (2005: xiv) So the concept of the multitude intimates the co-existence of unity and plurality, of commonality and singularity, without reducing one to the other. Oddly enough, they still insist that the multitude is "a class concept" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 103). Only that the use of "class" does not refer to the industrial working class in its traditional Marxist sense.

The multitude constitutes the new proletariat. The term stands for "a broad category that includes all those whose labor is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 52). Soit includes not only the industrial workers, immaterial workers, migrants, agricultural workers but also "the poor, the unemployed, the unwaged, the homeless, and so forth," and thus all the classes "in social production." (Hardt & Negri, 2004, pp. 129,158). In other words, Hardt and Negri

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

(2000) challenge the privileged position of industrial workers within the proletariat on the belief that industrial working class has disappeared, "lost its hegemonic position, and shifted geographically" in the post-Fordist era (p. 256). In its stead, the immaterial labor employed in the production of information, communication, and cooperation has gained the hegemonic position by progressively dominating the labor market, imposing "a tendency on other forms of labor and society itself," and expressing its own interests more and more in the new social movements (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 109).

For Hardt and Negri, these new social movements have three main characteristics in common. First, they emerge out of the prevailing local conditions.[2] They consist of radical and powerful struggles but predominantly remain separate from other movements in different regions of the world. The anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa, the Tiananmen Square events, the Intifada against Israel, feminist movements, the EZLN, the May 1992 revolt in Los Angeles, and the events in Seattle in November 1999 are a few examples of this sort (Hardt & Negri, 2004, pp. 84, 86, 213, 214). So they are not necessarily linked horizontally by a cycle of struggles. Briefly, the new social movements are different mainly because they aim at the imperial machine. They "leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 55).

II RESULTS

As a result of it, second, these network struggles of the multitude are not divorced from one another on economical, political, and cultural grounds. Contrarily, they have been subsumed under biopolitical struggles waging a single war on biopower. By taking this step and then defining global capitalism as one giant imperial machine, Hardt and Negri not only put the old Marxist strategies into question but alsoleave no difference between the First World and the Third World (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 264). This is so because the imperial machine can be attacked from any geographical region. There is no outside to biopower and no need to search for weak links to start a revolution.

The third characteristic of "new figures of struggle and new subjectivities" is that they "are produced in the conjuncture of events, in the universal nomadism, in the general mixture and miscegenation of individuals and populations, and in the technological metamorphoses of the imperial biopolitical machine" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 61). The global multitude existing "*within* Empire and *against* Empire" are then constituted by "desertion, exodus, and nomadism" and endowed with the task of creating and organizing powerful singularities in favor of cosmopolitical liberation (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 212). In a nutshell, the mobility and migration of labor altered the class composition of labor and served to develop a new strategy for liberation. However, Hardt and Negri (2000) also predict that the multitude's biopolitical struggles will eventually lead to "a necessarily violent and barbaric passage" to an absolute democracy (pp. 214-5).[3]

[2] Note that Hardt and Negri find localist resistance false and damaging. It is false because the localist position misconceives the tension between local identities and global forces of capital. It is damaging because the production of locality "misidentifies and thus masks the enemy" (2000, p. 45). In other words, they oppose the type of resistance that seeks a political niche uncontaminated with the networks of Empire. For the localist strategy is simply impossible. No one can exist or speculate outside of Empire. Hardt and Negri use a similar line of reasoning to criticize the tradition of social contract theory—that subjects cannot exist "presocially and outside the community" in order for imposing "a kind of transcendental socialization on it" (2000, p. 353).

[3] As a matter of fact, Hardt and Negri propose three principles for the democratic use of violence. The first two suggest that the use of violence must be subordinated to politics and limited only to defensive purposes. According to the third principle, means and ends should never be separated from each other.

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

In transition from biopower to an absolute democracy, neither *Empire* nor *Multitude* provides "a concrete program of action" or "a concrete elaboration of a political alternative to Empire" (2005, p. xvi; 2000, p. 206). In the absence of an action plan, Hardt and Negri resort to emotional motives. For example, the foundation of the multitude's democratic will to power is believed to be an act of love (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 353).Evidently, an abstract notion of love is insufficient for mobilizing the multitude. So, they add, the multitude will act out of grievances, rage, and violence as well. But whatever the motives are, the acts of the multitudemust always be constitutive rather than destructive.

Overall, in the absence of an action plan, Hardt and Negri want us to count on the will of the global multitude to resist, struggle and revolt against the amorphous and decentered mechanisms of the imperial machine. Soan alternative will eventually rise in practice and all we can do is to keep our faith in the multitude's 'will to be against' (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 210). Only toward the end of *Empire*, they mention some of the demands to be possessed by the multitude, such as global citizenship, social wage (a guaranteed income for all), and the right to reappropriation of the means of production (2000, pp. 400-7). These demands are portrayed as the pillars of a radical resolution to the crisis of democracy, which have increasingly deepened by the ills of biopower, modern sovereignty, representational systems, economic administration, and wars.

That being said, many critics findtheir arguments problematic on different levels. For example, Ranabir Samaddar (2004) claim that Hardt and Negri add nothing substantive to the works of Michael Mann, Charles Tilly and Etienne Balibar thatexplain the violent origins of democracies (p. 4942). Charles Tilly (2002) condemns *Empire* for driving the reader into "hazy seas and nothingness beyond" (p. 224). For Tilly, the poststructuralist thesis that we cannot but act within the singular space of Empire must be deserted. This is mainly because it overwhelms all external criteria for judging political systems. Timothy Brennan (2003) takes issue with the arguments of *Empire* and rejects them as being tautological, unhistorical, analytically confusing, and misguided. Similarly, Alexander Motyl (2006) finds the central theses in *Empire* and in *Multitude* unjustified with data—and theoretically circularin the sense that things have to happen as they happened because they were unavoidable (p. 237). Last but not least, feminist critics like Mary Hawkesworth (2006) accuse their proposals of bearing "disturbingly gendered characteristics" (p. 357).

Here, I would like to focus particularly on Laclau's criticism that "Empire belongs to the whole tradition of modern political philosophy, which is profoundly metapolitical" (2001, p. 3). To be more specific, Laclau raises objections to their assertion of an unmediated and spontaneously constructed universality that leads to an ethics of positive affirmation of being. As opposed to Hardt and Negri, Laclau rightfully claims that there is an element of negativity in socio-political world that cannot be eliminated by the affirmation of immanence. In other words, if we take the multitude as "an actual historical subject of what [Hardt and Negri] conceive as the realization of a full immanence," the political becomes almost unthinkable (Laclau, 2001, p. 5). The element of negativity is then required not only for the construction of political subjectivity but also for the making of political resistance. But when negativity is traded for positivity, the multitude becomes a metapolitical or a fanciful construction. It is indeed metapolitical because the unity of the multitude is assumed to have resulted"from the spontaneous aggregation of a plurality of actions which do not need to be articulated with one another" (Laclau, 2001, p. 6). But ifwe take universality as a historical construction out of heterogeneous elements, the network struggles of the multitude that are uncoordinated in a field of immanence occur as an irony. It is an irony because how

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

biopolitical struggles are formed in the first place or how uncoordinated struggles can leap vertically on the global level and attack to the nerve centers of Empire are left unattended. Simply put, Laclau seems right in contesting Hardt and Negri's understanding of new social movements that look like a "gift from heavens" (2001, p. 9).

Hard and Negri seek to protectthemselves from criticisms,arguing that the new social movements must rest on "revolutionary realism" that calls for critical-practical activity. Accordingly, the global multitude immersed in revolutionary realism have to produce and reproduce the desire not only for self-transformation, hybridization, and transvaluation but also for the equality of various forms of labor and the free exchange and communication of labor. Even though they lack a common will, the multitudemust also separate themselves from "the immediate situation and tirelessly construct mediations [and] feigning (if necessary) coherence" and learn to play "different tactical games in the continuity of strategy" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 356). At this point, the advocacy of revolutionary realism has a Tocquevillian moment. Like Tocqueville's slow and relentless revolution outlined in *The Ancien Regime and the Revolution*, Hardt and Negri see the mobility of the living labor (i.e., hybridization, exodus and flight) both as a sign of an on-going social revolution and as the sole productive and creative force behind democratization. To put it differently, the global multitude are caught up in the middle of a long-term revolution that is gradually but substantially altering the world they live in. Following Gramsci, Negri calls it a "passive revolution" (Landy, 1994, p. 75). And yetnew social movements need to go beyond passive revolutions. They mustquestion the efficacy of political parties and labor unions, and eventually remove modern sovereignty, the state authority, representational systems, etc., in favor of a full and absolute democracy.

To conclude, given that the multitude do not live or act under similar circumstances, it is not easy to predict which political instruments are to be utilized or where and when their use becomes desirable either from the vantage point of political efficacy or from the vantage point of democratic ideals. In a word, the concept of the multitude raises more questions than it answers. First of all, the notion of all-inclusiveness is too elusive without a normative criterion to discern the differences between or within the constituent parts of the multitude. Second and in relation to the first, the network struggles of the multitude appear as ametapolitical construction without a theory of political articulation that seeks to bringthe fragmented groups or subjects together. In brief, it fails to explain how to overcome the ideological divides and contestation within the multitude. Third, the affirmative space of biopolitics and the multitude's political appetite for a full and absolute democracy are not as convincing as the other poststructuralist accounts, say, the post-Marxist advocacy of adversarial politics and agonistic democracy. For example, whereas Laclau and Mouffe start with a constitutive outside and an irreducible negativity and describe the unity of a "people" as an outcome of the political process of hegemonic articulation, Hardt and Negri maintain that there is no outside of Empire and take the unity of the "multitude" as something given. In a sense, the concept of the multitude is used to explain everything and hence explains nothing. At bestthe concept of the multitude might restore our political faith in the possibility of a better world and/or create a new political myth for raisingthe level of our commitment to an ideal democracy (Ricciardi, 2007, p. 1145; Mazzarella, 2010, p. 714; Brennan, 2003, p. 342).

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

III CONCLUDING REMARKS

Laclau and Mouffepropose a post-Marxist conception of resistance relying on a theory of hegemonic articulation of difference, that is, of dislocated and dismantled subjects and fragmented resistances. For them, the new political strategy has to be discursive rather than ideological. They reject the ideological will to represent the entire body politic on the account that it is simply unattainable. This is so because, they suggest, there always exist particularities aiming to leap from the peripheral to the center, from the singular to the universal. However, they also regard political ideology as inevitable. So they conclude that political ideologies will continue to be a part of our lives despite their limitations. Even though they are not entirely wrong, one may raiseat least two objections to their account. First, the post-Marxist discursive theory is stripped of class analysis and class antagonism. The discursivetheory starts its analysis with the recognition of consumerist society, where every individual is considered to be equal as a consumer and every difference as politically significant. Second, the recognition of differential positions leads to the idea of fragmented resistances to be articulated. But we may argue that political resistance is sometimesmoreunitary than they would accept.

Unlike Laclau and Mouffe, Hardt and Negri (2004) do not describe the multitude as “merely a fragmented and dispersed multiplicity” (p. 105). Whereas the post-Marxist theorists see the creation of a “people” as a byproduct of political activism, Hardt and Negri take the unity of the multitude for granted. For Laclau and Mouffe, a “people” is constantly being molded by the ever-present antagonisms and the articulatory practices. In their views, a“people” can never fully achieve a fixed identity due to two reasons. First, there is no politics without adversary. Second, not all competing interests can be fully reconciled in the political sphere. Asthese reasons drive Laclau and Mouffe to the advocacy of a radical and representative democracy, Hardt and Negri dispute the representational systems in defense of a full and absolute democracy. However, they do not specify how the global multitude can manage to institute a fully democratized society.

They celebrate the resistance of the multitude as being biopolitical, constitutive, self-organized, decentered and non-hierarchical. They differ the network struggles from the non-democratic forms of networks that are self-serving and destructive, like drug cartels and al-Qaeda. The democratic network struggles are not structured and organized uprisings against the imperial machine. They are rather viewed as powerful events that “signal a new kind of proletarian solidarity and militancy” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 54). In theory, the network struggles are the combination of political, economic and cultural struggles aiming to bring about a paradigm shift in the international disciplinary regime. But it remains a question whetheror not the global multitude(described as a biopolitical self-organization and designated as the new revolutionary agent)do exist. If not, it is merelya metapolitical construction. Finally, Hardt and Negri’s rhetoric used to underscore the singularity or unity of uncoordinated social categories, i.e., the global multitude, may serve as a political myth to bring people together or restore their faith in solidarity and resistance. However useful it might be, political resistance cannot thrive solely on a myth.

REFERENCES

1. Allen, J. (2004). The whereabouts of power: Politics, government and space.*GeografiskaAnnaler*, 86 B (1), 19-32

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020

2. Brennan, T. (2003). The Empire's new clothes. *Critical Inquiry*, 29 (2), 337-367
3. Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
4. Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.
5. Hawkesworth, M. (2006). The gendered ontology of "Multitude." *Political Theory*, 34 (3), 357-364
6. Laclau, E. (2001). Can immanence explain social struggles? [Review of the book *Empire* by M. Hardt & A. Negri]. *Diacritics*, 31 (4), 2-10.
7. Landy, M. (1994). "Gramsci beyond Gramsci": The writings of Toni Negri. *boundary 2*, 21 (2), 63-97
8. Mazzarella, W. (2010). The myth of the Multitude, or, who is afraid of the crowd? *Critical Inquiry*, 36 (4), 697-727
9. Motyl, A. (2006). Is everything Empire? Is Empire everything? *Comparative Politics*, 38 (2), 229-249
10. Ricciardi, A. (2007). Immanent miracles: From De Sica to Hardt and Negri. *MLN*, 122 (5), 1138-1165
11. Samaddar, R. (2004). Empire after globalization: Some comments.*Economic and Political Weekly*, 39 (45), 4942-4944
12. Tilly, C. (2002). Empire [Review of the book *Empire* by M. Hardt & A. Negri]. *Cnadian Journal of Political Science*, 35 (1), 224-225
13. R. DENICASHELUS, B.DEEBIKAA, and S.HARIRAM. "EMBEDDED ASSISTIVE STICK FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE." International Journal of Communication and Computer Technologies 7 (2019), 8-12. doi:10.31838/ijccts/07.02.03
14. Tressoldi, P., Pederzoli, L., Caini, P., Ferrini, A., Melloni, S., Richeldi, D., Richeldi, F., Dum, G.M. Mind-matter interaction at a distance of 190 km: Effects on a random event generator using a cutoff method (2014) NeuroQuantology, 12 (3), pp. 337-343.
15. Trojaola Zapirain, B., Carminati, F., Gonzalez Torres, M.A., de Mendivil, E.G., Fouassier, C., Gex-Fabry, M., Martin, F., Labarere, J., Demongeot, J., Nora Lorincz, E., Galli Carminati, G. Group unconscious common orientation: Exploratory study at the basque foundation for the investigation of mental health group training for therapists (2014) NeuroQuantology, 12 (1), pp. 139-150.

DOI: 10.37200/IJPR/V24I4/PR201048
Received: 22 Oct 2019 | Revised: 13 Sep 2019 | Accepted: 15 Jan 2020