

Empire, Immaterial Labor, the New Combinations, and the Global Worker

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That *Empire* is a major accomplishment—the most comprehensive attempt to date to forge a conceptual arsenal adequate to the dimensions of contemporary pan-capitalism—needs no underlining. My critical comments will focus on one item in its treasure-trove of antiaccumulatory theory: the issue of “immaterial labor.”

For three decades Antonio Negri has sought to define the features of a new revolutionary subject that would succeed the “craft worker” and the “mass worker” and restart the cycle of struggles posited by the autonomist Marxist tradition. In identifying this subject, initially named the “socialized worker,” he came incrementally to accord ever increasing importance to the “intellectual” qualities of a post-Fordist proletariat enmeshed in the computers and communication networks of high-technology capitalism (Negri 1988, 1989; on the “socialized worker” and the autonomist tradition, see Dyer-Witheford 1999). This direction was intensified in the analysis of “general intellect” (the socialized, collective intelligence prophesied by the Marx of the *Grundrisse*) developed by the journal *Futur Antérieur*.¹ Intimately bound up with “general intellect” was what Negri and coauthors such as Michael Hardt and Maurizio Lazzarato termed “immaterial labor”: the “distinctive quality and mark” of work in “the epoch in which information and communication play an essential role in each stage of the process of production” (Lazzarato and Negri 1994, 86). As commodities come to be “less material” and “more defined by cultural, informational, or knowledge components or by qualities of service and care,” so, *Futur Antérieur* claimed, the labor that produces them undergoes a “corresponding” change:

“immaterial labor might thus be conceived as the labor that produces the informational, cultural, or affective element of the commodity” (Virno and Hardt 1996, 262). Negri, Hardt, and Lazzarato insisted that “immaterial labor” was not just a select cadre of technical workers but a *generalized* form of labor-power, a “massified quality of the laboring intelligentsia, of cyborgs and hackers” (Hardt and Negri 1994, 10, 280). The new communicative and technological competencies, while most explicit among “qualified” workers, existed in “virtual” form even within contingent and unemployed labor as the prerequisites of everyday life in high-tech capitalism (Lazzarato and Negri 1994, 87). Nonetheless, there remains a suggestion of a leading sector, since “all of the efforts of the refusal of work of all the other exploited social strata tend to be identified with and converge towards techno-scientific labor” (Hardt and Negri 1994, 281).

Although the *Futur Antérieur* analysis of immaterial labor was developed in the context of European unrests that eventually detonated in the massive French general strikes of 1995–6, it also attracted interest in the transnational venues of cyberspace, where it struck a chord among activists and artists engaged in virtual work and struggle (see Bosma et al. 2000; Terranova 2000). But if “immateriality” roused excitement on-line, it also provoked skepticism on the ground from critics who saw in it a denial of the sweat and blood congealed in all commodities. “Immateriality” could easily be read as occluding some very corporeal components of high-tech work (digital palsy, repetitive strain injury and carpal tunnel syndrome, eyestrain and radiation hazards, ruptured circadian rhythms, terminal isolation, and workplace epidemics of hyperstress), all of which should surely be touchstones of the critique of information capital. These problems persisted despite assertions by Negri and his coauthors that “immaterial labor” doesn’t mean nonmaterial and that “while tending towards immateriality . . . is no less corporeal than intellectual” (Hardt and Negri 1994, 9)—protestations that, though doubtless sincere, seem to shut the stable door of theory after a discursive horse has bolted.

Even more seriously, the priority Negri and his collaborators gave “immaterial labor” seemed to diminish the continued importance in the post-Fordist economy of a vast mass of all too physical and material work—domestically, in the service sector, and internationally, in everything from maquiladora manufacturing to coffee plantations to the trade in body organs. These problems seemed connected to the relatively cursory analysis of the gendered or international dimensions of “general intellect” offered by *Futur Antérieur*—omissions that might be pointedly related to the fact that most of its authors are men, located in Europe or North America. The new circuits of capital, it could be argued, look a lot less “immaterial” and “intellectual” to the female and Southern workers who do so much of the grueling physical toil demanded by a capitalist “general intellect” whose metropolitan headquarters remain preponderantly male and Northern. This was the thrust of a fierce attack by

1. Writings of the *Futur Antérieur* group can be found in the collection edited by Virno and Hardt (1996).

George Caffentzis (1998), who accused Negri of celebrating “cyborgs” and “immaterial labor” while ignoring the “renaissance of slavery” effected by factories, agribusiness, and brothels, and of engaging in a form of vanguardism whose protagonist is now not the “industrial” but the “intellectual” proletariat—a vanguardism which is, however, made peculiarly implausible by the relatively privileged conditions its chosen protagonist enjoys. Negri, Caffentzis says, needs to “expand his revolutionary geography.”

Empire implicitly replies to this challenge, for its topic is nothing less than “globalization”—the new-world-market-order created by the apparent planetary victory of capitalism. In its pages, immaterial labor is thrown to a new level of universality. It is now a central attribute of “the multitude,” the creative, pluralistic, antagonistic force rising up within and against this new world order, variously identifiable in terms of Hardt and Negri’s “Roman” metaphor with slaves, barbarians, or Christians—a force whose rebellions go well beyond Eurocentric boundaries. *Empire*’s inventory of multitudinous outbreaks includes Los Angeles 1992, Tienanmen Square 1989, Chiapas 1994, France 1995, the Palestinian Intifada, the struggles of refugees and “nomadic” immigrant labor, offering a vision of contestation on a truly worldwide scale.

Hardt and Negri have taken note of their critics. They now explicitly distance themselves from the *Futur Antérieur* analysis precisely on the grounds that it is too “incorporeal” and “angelic.” “Immaterial labor” and “general intellect” are subsumed or recontextualized in a new and more “somatic” concept of “biopolitical production,” a Marxian appropriation of Foucault’s “biopower” that proposes as the object of capitalist appropriation not so much “labor power” as “life itself” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 25–31). This is an exciting move that opens toward concrete considerations of the biotechnological revolution (with the jaw-dropping prospect of the transformation of “classes” into “clades”) and toward theoretical linkages with the renewed scrutiny of Marx’s category of “species-being” recently proposed by David Harvey (2000) and others (see John McMurtry 1998).

Yet “immaterial labor” still has a centrality within the new theoretical constellation, though in a revised version. Hardt and Negri now identify three categories of immaterial work: industrial production transformed by computer and communication technologies; “symbolic analytic” work; and emotional labor, work that involves the “production and manipulation of affect,” the generation of a sense of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion (2000, 289–94). This last category had appeared in Hardt and Negri’s earlier formulations, but is now given more attention, particularly in its connection to traditionally female occupations with their burden of caring work. The authors also emphasize the importance of corporeal involvement and bodily presence in this kind of activity. “Immaterial labor” release 0.2 thus appears to answer or disarm accusations of technological avant-gardism, Cartesian dualism, or masculine bias; both sex workers and software developers can now be included.

But there is perhaps a sleight of hand in this expansion. Although “immateriality” is enlarged to embrace “affective,” intensely corporeal, and frequently female work, its defining features continue to be attributes of the “cyborg” worker. Thus we are

still told that laboring practices “all tend toward the model of information and communication technologies,” that “the anthropology of cyberspace is really a recognition of the new human condition,” that it is through the “computerization of production [that] labor tends towards the position of abstract labor,” and so forth (291–2). Analysis that *started* with, say, day-care workers, nurses’ aides, and dancers as its paradigmatic cases, rather than *adding* them later, might not arrive at these conclusions. Moreover, the new catholicism of immateriality comes at a cost. Analysis that puts under one roof multimedia designers, primary-school teachers, machine operatives in a computerized car plant, and strippers (all of whom would fall within the revised definition of immaterial labor) may reveal valuable commonalities, but can also cover up chasmic differences, fault lines of segmentation, veritable continental rifts that present the most formidable barriers for the organization of counterpower.

Consideration of the problems of organizing across difference brings us to a second flaw in *Empire*. Given Hardt and Negri’s continuing insistence on the primacy of “immaterial labor,” a very surprising, almost bizarre aspect of their analysis is its treatment of communication between global struggles. In all analysis of immaterial labor to this point, Negri and his collaborators have emphasized that its crucial capacity—the very quality that capital must expropriate—is its capacity for and access to communication, both in terms of its essentially linguistic and symbolic creativity, and in its familiarity with the technologies of media (see Negri 1989). And this point is emphasized again in *Empire*; media networks, especially digital networks, are the contemporary equivalent of Roman roads, the connective lifelines of power traversing the domain of the new world order. Given this, one might predict that the insurgencies of the multitude would be rife with reappropriations of communication. One would imagine the hordes of immaterial labor, the workers of the World Wide Web, ready with their computational and media know-how, perhaps even faintly remembering some far-distant slogan about losing their chains by uniting one with another, rushing to link their struggles conversationally through the very fiberoptic, televisual, and on-line channels they themselves constructed.

Yet when *Empire* considers the interrelation of global struggles, it suddenly asserts that insurgencies from Chiapas to Paris to Seoul “cannot communicate” with another. Despite all the availability of networks and media, “struggles have become all but incommunicable.” Not only do the various outbreaks lack “a common language” and a “common enemy,” but these absences, rather than being a source of weakness, are, according to Hardt and Negri, a sign of strength. So omnipresent and planetwide are the operations of imperial power that each outburst of revolt, while unable to communicate with the others and constitute a “horizontal” cycle of struggles, can, in its own isolated singularity, “leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level.” Thus, even though the movements of the multitude are all incommunicado one from another, they nevertheless constitute a “new kind of proletarian solidarity” (2000, 54).

This is a declaration that defies a decade and more of radical practice, and it is all the more surprising because it repudiates perhaps the strongest evidence for the impor-

tance of immaterial labor to contemporary subversion. The use of communication networks (including the Internet) to create what Harry Cleaver (1994) has termed an “electronic fabric of struggle” has been a signal feature of the movements against neoliberalism in the 1990s, so much so that we can indicate it in a kind of shorthand. The tricontinental linkages of anti-NAFTA movements; “Zapatistas in cyberspace”; international campaigns supporting the East Timorese and Ogoni; antisweatshop struggles and boycotts; “McLibel”; the networked communication of anti-bioengineering movements; the Jubilee debt abolition campaign; the transnational mobilizations against the WTO, World Bank, IMF, OECD, APEC; the multinational opposition spun from Canada to Malaysia, against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment; the “Battle of Seattle”—all have been movements in which cyberactivism, autonomous media, and infiltration of mainstream channels have been an integral feature. Internet use in particular has profoundly affected their organizational form and the convergence of their demands, not to mention catalyzing a lively discussion of countermeasures and “networks” in the think tanks of Empire (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1993).

All this is widely documented (see Cleaver 1998, 1999; Langeman et al. 2000; Kleine 2000). To give only one instance, Cleaver (1998) has traced how Internet activity supporting the Zapatista uprising emerged out of the linkages between Mexican, U.S., and Canadian movements opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement; immediately catalyzed massive demonstrations of support in places like Italy; in the longer term encouraged the formation of transnational *Encuentros* whose meetings, held first in Mexico and then in Europe, generated an intermingling of activists that then informed mobilizations such as those of the Peoples Global Alliance against the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization; and how, meanwhile, back in cyberspace, the bulletin boards and Web sites associated with Chiapas became the sites for a convergence of communication about other struggles, such as those attempting to save the lives of Mumia Jamal (Philadelphia) and Ken Saro Wiwa (Lagos), to a degree that the sheer influx of communication became a critical problem for those organizers and coordinators of these efforts.

In light of this, Negri and Hardt’s claims about the failure of insurrections against Empire to communicate, or to compose themselves into a cycle of struggle, seems far off the mark. The most generous interpretation of their assertion is as a corrective to cybereuphoria and a salutary recognition of the difficulties that problems of spatial dispersal and temporal desynchronization present even to the networkers of immaterial labor. And it is quite true that Internet activism, for example, is fraught with hazards: technical fetishism, new hierarchies of expertise, health risks, and the “ultimate nightmare,” the creation of “a simulated international radical network in which information circulates endlessly between computers without being put back into a human context” (European Counter Network 1994). But that Net and media activism is no magic bullet against either pancapitalism or the recurrent problems of communist organization does not mean it has not contributed to the creation of what Negri and Hardt seem, against the grain of their own analysis, unwilling to recognize: a global circulation of struggles of which their own book (with its evident wide knowl-

edge of numerous global insurgencies) is itself a manifestation, and whose existence they deny only at the cost of a considerable performative contradiction.

Empire thus presents a puzzling contradiction. On the one hand, it makes a continuing affirmation of the “immaterial labor” thesis, ostensibly expanding the designation to a very broad swath of workers yet still deriving its primary models from those in close proximity to computer and communication technologies. On the other, it offers an “incommunicado” theory of resistances that paradoxically denies the very aspect of immaterial labor other analysts have seen as most important: the communicational circulation of struggle. Is there a key to this strange torsion? There is, and it can be summed up in the phrase “too smooth by half.” Too smooth, that is to say, in the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) speak of planetary capitalism creating a space that is both smooth (presenting an unimpeded global field of accumulation) and striated (in the sense of being savagely segmented by differences on which capital can play). Repeating what is both a weakness endemic to Marxism and perhaps a particular vulnerability in Negri’s work, *Empire* emphasizes the smoothness—the homogenizing effects of global capital—at the expense of the striating divisions. By declaring the centrality of immaterial labor it proposes a consistent, underlying class composition running throughout the multitude. Because this class composition is posited as *already* existing, the successes (or failures) of communication linkages between insurgencies, which might be thought of as playing a critical role in constructing alliances, are devalued. With the very real disjunctions and frictions between different strata of labor occluded, *Empire* can celebrate the spontaneous solidarity of the multitude without descending to the awkward business of sorting out just how much commonality there really is between participants in say the Tienanmen Square revolt, the Intifada, and the French general strike or the Seattle showdown, or how they might actually be tied together.

In reality, there are potentially deep differences and complex contradictions both between and within these revolts. Radical improvement in the conditions of Southern workers may entail sacrifices by their Northern counterparts; moves to global equity can collide with green agendas; Northern antiglobalization mobilizations are not immune from protectionist chauvinism; rebels against authoritarian state socialism may not necessarily and automatically be on-side with revolts against global capital—and so on. To ignore these real and material tensions is simply to hand such issues over for exploitation by nationalists, fascists, and fundamentalists. Such barriers to a “multitudinous” insurgency against capital can be overcome, and Hardt and Negri should be saluted for theorizing in a way that resonates with the spirit moving in the tear gas–shrouded streets of Seattle, Paris, and Seoul. But the project of the multitude is a task of vast articulation between diverse movements whose identity of interests is not immediately given. Because of its overexpanded category of immaterial labor and its consequently simplified notion of planetary class composition, *Empire* masks these difficulties, but its assumption of spontaneous unanimity is one that the vicissitudes of twenty-first-century struggle will certainly reveal as all too immaterial.

In raising these criticisms of *Empire* it is not my intention to reject what remains a tour de force of revolutionary reconception, but rather to suggest three revisions. First, recognizing the real importance of immaterial labor in today's global struggles requires decentering it from the privileged spot to which Hardt and Negri assign it. The problematic of an insurgent multitude is that of recomposing a wide variety of different types of worker, waged and unwaged. This interaction is complex, intractable, and cannot be ironed out by incrementally expanding the concept of immateriality until it includes everyone from programmers to prostitutes. Although there are any number of ways of categorizing the diversity of planetary laborers, we could, very schematically, suggest that the attention paid to "immaterial" laborers be balanced by equal attention to at least two other groups: "material" and "immiserated" workers. If immaterial labor is characterized according to its communicational and affective activity, then material labor is that type of work still primarily focused on shaping the physicality of products (from sport utility vehicles to running shoes to semiconductor chips) which obstinately refuse to dematerialize themselves, and immiserated labor is that part of the labor force which, through various gradations of precarious and contingent employment up to the short- and long-term reserve army of the unemployed, is treated by capital as simply surplus to requirements.

Mirroring the structure of Negri's argument, we can say that tendencies toward "materiality" and "immiseration," like "immaterial" propensities, are latent (shall we say "virtual"?) throughout the entire postindustrial work force. All concrete work is constituted at an intersection of these three vectors, which are not mutually exclusive but are actualized to differing degrees along a continuum. But it is also possible to identify extremes on these continuums among different strata of planetary labor. The spatial concentrations of these extreme forms of labor in particular continents, regions, and urban areas now constitute the "North" and "South" of the global order. If the paradigmatic figures of today's immaterial labor are among the networkers of the World Wide Web, then those of material labor are surely in the manufacturing plants of the maquiladoras, export-processing zones, and new industrial areas, and those of immiserated labor are in the vast tides of the homeless and itinerant who settle in the doorways and alleys of every rural slum and world city.

Once we differentiate these sectors of global labor, it is by no means evident that the struggles of "immaterial labor" are the central ones on which those of other groups, as Hardt and Negri claim, "converge" (1994, 281). On the contrary, it may well be the insurgencies of "immiserated/material" labor (the revolts of the Haitian maker of Disney T-shirts, or of dispossessed peasants in Chiapas, or the East Timorese resistance fighters) that provide the critical points of focus with which radicalized sectors of immaterial labor "identify" and on which they "converge" in solidarity, propelled both by a basic sense of justice and a self-protective resistance against the global "race to the bottom." Guattari and Negri once observed that "the proletariats of the most developed countries are literally terrorized by the spectacle of the extermination by hunger which Integrated World Capitalism imposes on the marginalized . . . countries" (1990, 58). This intimidation is the turning point of capital's control over

the world labor market, and it is on breaking this pivot that many world struggles now converge.

Thus, while immaterial labor *is* privileged in terms of the high-technology capitalist hierarchy of work, the dynamics of struggle against that hierarchy often flow in the reverse direction, from the bottom up. Despite all the panic of music industry oligarchs, capital's anxieties about Napster users probably pale compared with its fears of specters of a cruder and more blood-drenched kind: narco-Marxo-guerrilla land wars in Latin America, labor militancy in the manufacturing zones of Southeast Asia, new cycles of unrest exploding through the Middle Eastern oil proletariat. It is indeed very tempting to reverse the priority Negri gives to immaterial labor, by saying: in the circuits of capitalism, immiserated labor is discarded, material labor produces commodities, while immaterial labor contributes primarily to their circulation (advertising, media, e-commerce). But in the circuit of struggles, it is immiserated labor that generates spontaneous insurgencies (riots, insurrections, land wars), material labor that gives these struggles organizational form (strikes, unions), and immaterial labor that circulates these struggles (media, netwars, etc.). In fact, such a formulation would be absurdly overschematic and hence almost as mystifying as the "immaterial labor" thesis, but it does at least have the advantage of turning our attention to the central problem of mobilization against a world market, which is that of organizing across the "international division of laborers" (James 1986).

Second, Negri and Hardt's "incomunicado" thesis, declaring communication between global struggles both impossible and unnecessary, should be not only abandoned but reversed. To the degree that "immaterial labor" *is* a crucial component of revolt against global capital, perhaps its *main* contribution is that of weaving networks of communications between insurgencies, not just by cyberactivism but in a wide range of autonomous and alternative media (video, film, guerrilla radio, print) that in turn are elements in hybrid networks of pre- and postindustrial communication forms, complex relays that transfer news and information from email exchanges to in-person meetings and back again. Partly alongside, partly separate from the creation of this "electronic fabric of struggle" are struggles *about* the creation of the electronic fabric, contesting the capitalist architecture of the networks, and its classificatory stratifications of access. Together, these do indeed constitute a formidable accumulation of "immaterial" struggles over what communication flows within the new information spaces, what the boundaries of those spaces will be, who will be included, and who excluded.

Only in the context of a project linking widely *diversified* sectors of global labor—material, immiserated, and immaterial—can the problems and prospects of such communication activism be evaluated. Such experiments try to create in cyber- and media spaces a recompositional arena where the fragmentation inflicted by a deterritorialized information capital can be counteracted—a communicational commons within which multiplicitous oppositional forces, diverse in goals, constituency, and organization, can through dialogue, criticism, and debate, discover a new language of alliance. One aspect of this process is the circulation of information, images, and analysis from the geographical zones where the struggles of immiserated and mate-

rial workers are concentrated into the more metropolitan zones where immaterial labor is congregated, to mobilize support for uprisings and to delegitimize the use of imperial force against them. These projects involve creative interactions between “immaterial,” “material,” and “immiserated” workers: activities that crystallize in organizations such as the World Association of Community Broadcasters, Video Terre Monde and Videazimut, the Association for Progressive Communications, the networks of Independent Media Centres, and innumerable, more specific projects.

At the same time, the divisions between immaterial, material, and immiserated labor—with all that these entail in terms of differential access to media technologies and skills—also create evident problems. Reliance on the Internet, for example, can generate elitist forms of “cyber-Leninism” that perpetuate within anticapitalist movements the same patterns of exclusion (of the South, of the poor, and particularly of poor women and minority groups) that shape capitalism’s “information highway” strategies.² This could consign struggles occurring in the “black holes of the information economy” to yet deeper oblivion (Castells 1996). These problems can be recognized without (as in Judith Hellman’s [1999] recent attack on the cyberactivists supporting the Chiapas uprising) reverting to a nostalgic mythicization of some supposed golden age of unmediated, in-person activism.³ The paradox of insurgent organization today is not, as Hardt and Negri suggest, that struggles cannot communicate. It is a more complex and interesting one—namely, that the same communication systems that derive from and reinforce the global divisions of the world market can be made immaterial crucibles in which terrestrial struggles against those same divisions are mixed in powerful recombinations, even while such attempts risk replicating within themselves the very logic against which they contend.

My third, final, and more tentative proposal for revision of *Empire* is that the new planetary subject of insurgency it identifies be named not the “multitude” but the “global worker.” Although *Empire* is heavily committed to the concept of immaterial labor, it also seeks a language that breaks with Marxian terminology, which the authors, understandably, believe is too old, too narrow, too compromised, to contain the amplitude of contemporary movements. Negri also confronted this problem in his “socialized worker” writings (1989); facing an expansion of capital’s valorization process beyond the factory and into society as a whole, and the extension of its temporal measure from the working day to the *life span*, he observed that we have indeed “gone beyond Marx” and might now choose to speak anticapital not as a *worker* but as an *operator* or *agent*. But by retaining the traditional Marxist epithet, he still chose to emphasize “an antagonism which has never ceased to exist”: a conflict between the imperatives of hypercapital and the needs and desires of the social subjects on whose activity it depends. In *Empire*, however, Hardt and Negri go another

2. “Cyber-Leninism” is from a call for papers for a special issue of *Peace Review Journal*, on “social justice movements and the Internet,” edited by Bernadette Barker-Plummer and Dorothy Kidd (October 2000).

3. Hary Cleaver’s response, “The Virtual and Real Chiapas Support Network,” is at <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>.

route and name the insurgent force in the Spinozist language of “multitudes”—a dynamic “constituent power” that resists the fixed forms of “sovereign power.”

In fact, *Empire* is focused heavily on the politico-judicial constitution of the new global order, with relatively little political-economic analysis. As a consequence, the axis of confrontation that emerges is not that between worker and capital but that between multitude and empire, an axis along which any insurgency against the regime of global governance apparently participates. The problem is that, as Michael Weinstein dryly observes, “resistances to pan capitalism are emerging anywhere and they are mainly taking a retrofascist form” (2000, 479). The concept of multitude has a heavily populist tinge and offers very little purchase to distinguish between red-green alliances, neofascist militias, maquiladora strikes, and ethnofundamentalisms, between Chiapas and Ruby Ridge or the Liverpool docks and Waco. The Roman analogy that informs *Empire*, with its implicit appeal to a “barbarian” counterpower, cannot notice that there are barbarians . . . and then there are barbarians, or, perhaps, that there is barbarism—and there is something else, something once called socialism.

I therefore propose retaining the language of the “cycle of struggles,” but revising its sequence so that it now goes “craft worker/mass worker/global worker.” “Global worker” is a name that not only (with a certain classicism) reaffirms the centrality of the contest with capital, but also suggests two critical aspects of that contest’s contemporary condition (see Mandel 1977). First, it acknowledges, in ways that Negri’s “socialized worker” did not, the international dimensions and, in particular, the importance of North/South linkages. Second, since “global” can be taken as referring not just to spatial coordinates but rather to an enveloping, totalizing, or englobing condition, the term can also be taken as affirming Negri and Hardt’s insights about the multi-dimensional nature of the “biopower” that capital now seeks to corral, not just in the workplace but also in homes, schools, training programs, media audiences, and medical experiments and other life-spanning venues. It is also within this renamed process that I would want to recontextualize many of Negri’s most brilliant, earlier insights into the importance of communication, the possibilities of self-valorization, the depth and span of struggle, and the ever changing and renewed forms of contestation.

The “global worker” is not a given but an organizational creation, a project of political recomposition. It emerges at moments, is broken up or retreats, only to reappear at new sites, in new guises. It appears to the degree that the fragmented insurgencies of “immaterial,” “material,” and “immiserated” labor are connected into a movement with the powers and dimensions capable of constituting a truly participative “general intellect” and of reclaiming from below the direction of human species-being that the world market has arrogated to itself. “Multitudes against empire” and “globoworker versus planet capital” are each good but partial slogans for this movement. Neither or both may be adequate to the aspirations for a new human assembly that are now manifest in waves of insurgency that lap and overlap from Montreal to Prague, from ethereal cyberspaces to the desperate street battles of new *Intifadas*. This emerging collective subject seeks its own names in constant communication between singularities separated by great abysses, and in hard controversy between

those with common hopes: this response to Hardt and Negri's extraordinary work is offered as part of such immaterial labor.

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