

Summary of Commonwealth (Hardt and Negri 2009)

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After *Empire* in 2000 and *Multitude* in 2004, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri completed their trilogy with “*Commonwealth*” in 2009. In *Commonwealth*, the authors want to undertake an ethical project of the multitude¹ within and against the Empire² in order to create an alternative project and to institute a world of common wealth (cf. Hardt and Negri 2009, vii). By the common Hardt and Negri (2009, viii) mean “first of all, the common wealth of the material world—the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all nature's bounty—which in classic European political texts is often claimed to be the inheritance of humanity as a whole, to be shared together. We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth.” This book primarily develops a philosophical, historical, economic, and political approach and is based on theorists such as Spinoza, Marx, and Foucault. It also contains many illustrative examples of

¹ The multitude is “the living alternative that grows within Empire ... and provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together. The multitude too might thus be conceived as a network: an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common. The multitude, in contrast, is many. The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity-different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences. In the multitude, social differences remain different. The multitude is many-colored, like Joseph's magical coat. Thus the challenge posed by the concept of multitude is for a social multiplicity to manage to communicate and act in common while remaining internally different. The multitude ... is an open, inclusive concept. It tries to capture the importance of the recent shifts of the global economy: on the one hand, the industrial working class no longer plays a hegemonic role in the global economy, although its numbers have not decreased worldwide; and on the other hand, production today has to be conceived not merely in economic terms but more generally as social production—not only the production of material goods but also the production of communications, relationships, and forms of life. The multitude is thus composed potentially of all the diverse figures of social production. Once again, a distributed network such as the Internet is a good initial image or model for the multitude because, first, the various nodes remain different but are all connected in the Web, and, second, the external boundaries of the network are open such that new nodes and new relationships can always be added.” (Hardt and Negri 2004, xiii-xv)

² “The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire ‘civilized’ world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of Empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside of history.” (Hardt and Negri 2000, xiv-xv)

social life. The book is divided into six (in my point of view not always connected) parts. The first three parts contain a philosophical and historical exploration and focus on the republic (part 1), modernity (part 2), and capital (part 3). The last three parts contain a political and economic analysis and focus on the returning of the Empire (part 4), ask what is beyond capital (part 5) and conclude with a discussion of contemporary possibilities for revolution (part 6). Each part contains three sub-sections. At the end of each part is a section that theorizes a central term mentioned in this part more in detail and can together with the Intermezzo (a section which stands between the third and the fourth part) also be read as one continuous investigation. The following summary is structured according to this conception.

PART 1: REPUBLIC (AND THE MULTITUDE OF THE POOR)

1.1 REPUBLIC OF PROPERTY (3-21)³

The authors criticize contemporary popular and scholarly discourses which mystify the relation between capital and law. Therefore, Hardt and Negri's first aim is to highlight the relationship between capital and law, hence between economy and politics. They want to undertake a shift from a transcendent analysis to a transcendental critique. "Our transcendental critique must show how capital and law intertwined together—what we call the republic of property—determine and dictate the conditions of possibility of social life in all its facets and phases." (8)

Furthermore, modern society is based on the right of private property and creates a republic of property which excludes those without property: "a 'people of property' face off against 'a multitude of the poor'" (9). The republic of property emerged historically as the central idea primarily after the U.S. and French revolution and remains the foundation of every modern political constitution. Private property became an individual right. "Homo politicus becomes nothing other than Homo proprietarius." (11) In addition, with the motto "sapere aude" (dare to know), Kant was being seen as one of the main "prophet(s) of the republic of property" (15) during the Enlightenment. In contrast, Hardt and Negri want to offer an alternative reading of Kant in order to develop foundations to act autonomously. Therefore, it is necessary to change the motto "dare to know" into "know how to dare". "We will try instead in the pages that follow to develop the method of the minor Kant, for whom daring to know requires simultaneously knowing how to dare. This too is an Enlightenment project, but one based on an alternative rationality in which a methodology of materialism and metamorphosis calls on powers of resistance, creativity, and invention. Whereas the major Kant provides the instruments to support and defend the republic of property even up to today, the minor Kant helps us see how to overthrow it and construct a democracy of the multitude." (21)

1.2 PRODUCTIVE BODIES (22-38)

The Marxist critique of property allows analyzing the private property in the context of the capitalist production. It also allows studying capitalism as a system which produces relations of exploitation and commodifies humans and bodies. Nevertheless, traditional Marxist representatives such as Althusser, Horkheimer, and Adorno tend to

³ The following references relate to Hardt and Negri (2009).

focus on the material structure in capitalist societies and tend to overlook the importance of analyzing “the standpoint of bodies” (24). In contrast, some Italian Marxist approaches, Marx’ early writings, second wave feminist thoughts, and antiracist approaches “adopt the standpoint of bodies to recognize both the structures of domination and the possibilities for liberation struggles” (26). According to Hardt and Negri, it is important to undertake both a critique of property and a critique of bodies nowadays. Furthermore, Foucault’s analysis of power, biopolitics, and the production of subjectivity is appropriate in order to study contemporary forms of capitalist societies (more in detail about this argument is outlined in the section at the end of this part).

1.3 THE MULTITUDE OF THE POOR (39-55)

Hardt and Negri stress that the multitude of the poor stands opposite to the republic of property which was described in section 1.1. The republic of property preserves their property against the poor. Hence, there is a struggle between the rich and the poor, “between those who have no part in the management of the common and those who control it” (45). The poor are located no longer at the geographical borders of capitalist production, but more and more at its heart. For Hardt and Negri, Spinoza offers a theoretical framework in order to study the struggle between the multitude of the poor and the republic of the property: “This radical inclusiveness is one element that clearly marks Spinoza’s multitude as a multitude of the poor—the poor conceived, once again, as not limited to the lowest in society but open to all regardless of rank and property. Spinoza, finally, makes the essential and decisive step of defining this multitude as the only possible subject of democracy.” (43) Beside Spinoza, Marx also offers to a certain amount a great theoretical framework in order to investigate the relationship between poverty, power, and private property: “We maintain, though, that our approach is just as materialist as traditional Marxist analyses, but in part because of the changing nature of labor and exploitation, which we engage in detail in later chapters, we break down some of the boundaries conventionally drawn around the working class.” (54f.)

DE CORPORE 1: BIOPOLITICS AS EVENT (56-66)

In the first additional section of this book, Hardt and Negri introduce Foucault’s terms of biopower and biopolitics as two “powers of life” (57) and undertake an interpretation of this terms which differs significantly from traditional interpretations of Foucault’s approach. Biopower can be described with the following characteristics: disciplinary regime, architectures of power, affirmative power, and power over life. Biopolitics can be described with the following characteristics: resistance, counterpower, alternative production of subjectivity, autonomy, innovation, queer event, network, political strategy, bodies in struggle, and shattering ruling identities and norms. Hardt and Negri summarize: “To mark this difference between the two ‘powers of life’, we adopt a terminological distinction, suggested by Foucault’s writings but not used consistently by him, between biopower and biopolitics, whereby the former could be defined (rather crudely) as the power over life and the latter as the power of life to resist and determine an alternative production of subjectivity.” (57)

PART 2: MODERNITY (AND THE LANDSCAPES OF ALTERMODERNITY)

2.1 ANTIMODERNITY AS RESISTANCE (67-82)

According to Hardt and Negri, antimodernity is a form of resistance internal to modernity. “Forces of antimodernity ... are not outside modernity but rather entirely internal to it, that is, within the power relation.” (67) Antimodern forces such as slave resistance and resistances to colonial domination are a “matter not of knowing but of doing” (80).

2.2 AMBIVALENCES OF MODERNITY (83-100)

Hardt and Negri emphasize that the Marxist tradition understands modernity contradictory: On the one hand, modernity can be seen in the context of progress, on the other hand, modernity is linked to capitalist control and exploitation. It is a dialectical struggle between modernity and antimodernity, progress and barbarism, reason and madness. “This gives us two positive tasks for an analysis of the forces of antimodernity. The first is to pose a clear distinction between reactionary antimodern notions of power that seek to break the relationship by freeing the sovereign and liberatory antimodernities that challenge and subvert hierarchies by affirming the resistance and expanding the freedom of the subordinated. The second task, then, is to recognize how this resistance and freedom always exceed the relationship of domination and thus cannot be recuperated in any dialectic with modern power. These monsters possess the key to release new creative powers that move beyond the opposition between modernity and antimodernity.” (100)

2.3 ALTERMODERNITY (101-118)

The concept of altermodernity marks a shift from resistance to alternatives and is developed in analogy to alterglobalization (from altermondialiste created by French social movements). Altermodernity differs from modernity insofar as it breaks with modern power relations and it differs from antimodernity insofar as it also includes a revolutionary transformation. Hardt and Negri accentuate that the concept of altermodernity represents a dialectics between modern society and antimodern resistance. The concept also differs from hypermodernity (Beck, Habermas) and postmodernity (Loytard, Rorty, Baudrillard, Vattimo). Altermodernity composes a dispositif (“the material, social, affective, and cognitive mechanisms or apparatuses of the production of subjectivity” [x]) for the production of subjectivity. Altermodernity (1) represents an alternative line within European Enlightenment, (2) is based on worker’s movements, and (3) recognizes the importance of the common as form of life. “This conception of altermodernity gives us a preliminary way to pose the distinction between socialism and communism: whereas socialism ambivalently straddles modernity and antimodernity, communism must break with both of these by presenting a direct relation to the common to develop the paths of altermodernity.” (107) The multitude’s political concept is (or should be) altermodernity. The multitude of altermodernity struggles against the republic of property (which was outlined in section 1.1.) in order to create alternative social relations based on the common. In this context, intellectuals have to indicate social failures, unmask illusions, and offer new practices of knowledge in a process of co-research, where “there is no place for vanguards here or even intellectuals organic to the forces of progress in the Gramscian sense” (118).

DE HOMINE 1: BIOPOLITICAL REASON (119-130)

The changing concept from antimodernity to altermodernity also includes a biopolitical conception of rationality. Hardt and Negri therefore want to “look for a truth and rationality outside” (119). The biopolitical reason can be found in the production of subjectivity, where a transformation of reality and production of new truth is (or will be) taking place. The overall aim is a collective practice not of being common, but of making common. As a result, Hardt and Negri conclude: “What are lacking are revolutions. We have to stop focusing on the haystack and find the needle. This will succeed or fail with the fluctuating fortunes of revolution.” (128)

PART 3: CAPITAL (AND THE STRUGGLES OVER COMMON WEALTH)

3.1 METAMORPHOSES OF THE COMPOSITION OF CAPITAL (131-149)

Hardt and Negri manifest three transformations of labour in the modern capitalist production: (class) The current production process is more based on immaterial factors and goods such as information, knowledge, and social relationships and includes forms of affective and cognitive labour and service work. (gender) The capitalist production process tends to become feminine. This includes a greater amount of women in the wage labour market as well as the fact, that traditional “women’s work” is becoming increasingly central. (race) An increasing proportion of both legal and illegal migrants are employed in the process of production around the world. It also generates ideological conflicts within classes. Furthermore, neoliberal forces strive to transform common goods such as public industries, public welfare structure, and public transportation networks as well as natural resources into private properties. Hence, current capitalist accumulation expropriates and destroys the common. Hardt and Negri emphasize that not only labour power but the whole social life is subsumed under capital nowadays. Based on these findings, the authors list some effects: precarity, flexibility, new regime of time, mobility, poverty of time and space, control, and surveillance. Altogether, these metamorphoses characterize what Hardt and Negri call “a biopolitical turn of the economy” (132).

3.2 CLASS STRUGGLE FROM CRISIS TO EXODUS (150-164)

In the context of biopolitical production, class struggle takes the form of exodus. “By exodus here we mean, at least initially, a process of subtraction from the relationship with capital by means of actualizing the potential autonomy of labor-power.” (152) Therefore, Hardt and Negri claim that we have to recreate the common and to find again the field of battle.

3.3 KAIROS OF THE MULTITUDE (165-178)

The authors consider that the objective conditions (which were outlined in section 3.1) for a transformation from biopolitical production into a common world already exist. But the transformation does not happen by itself, because it depends on subjective factors too. Hardt and Negri call this the kairos of the multitude: “The kairos—the opportune moment that ruptures the monotony and repetitiveness of chronological time — has to be grasped by a political subject.” (165) By discussing

some critical points from Laclau, Balibar, Žižek, and Badiou to their concept of the multitude, Hardt and Negri also outline some characteristics of the kairos and the political organization of the multitude: (1) the multitude is not a spontaneous political subject but a project of political organization, (2) the multitude is not fix or static but permanently transformed, (3) the multitude is able to organize itself through cooperation of singularities in the common, (4) the multitude acts within and against the existing framework, and (5) the political orientation is defined in the making (and not being) of the multitude.

DE SINGULARITATE 1: OF LOVE POSSESSED (179-188)

In this section at the end of part three, Hardt and Negri introduce the term love. They stress that love could be an essential concept for philosophy and politics in order to form the multitude and to create autonomous types of resistance. But, love is still missing in contemporary political concepts. The authors mean with the concept of love different forms of love such as love of nature, love of the common, love to being, and romantic love. “What we are looking for—and what counts in love—is the production of subjectivity and the encounter of singularities, which compose new assemblages⁴ and constitute new forms of the common.” (186)

INTERMEZZO: A FORCE TO COMBAT EVIL (189-202)

This section marks the transition from the last three parts with a philosophical and historical exploration to the next three parts with a political and economic analysis. In this intermezzo, an anthropological approach is outlined which discusses the conception of man whether humans are good or evil. According to Hardt and Negri, the question of good or evil human nature is a mistake. It is rather to ask what human nature can become. “The struggle to combat evil thus involves a training or education in love.” (195)

PART 4: EMPIRE RETURNS

Part four primarily contains a political analysis of contemporary society.

4.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF A FAILED COUP D'ETAT (203-218)

In this section it is shown, with reference to many illustrative examples, that the current nation-states (predominantly the U.S.) are failed states. Examples such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the

⁴ Although Hardt and Negri (45, 123f., 186ff., 223ff., 233f., 247, 256, 315, 340, 357) use the term assemblages with reference to Deleuze and Guattari through their book, they do not explain the concept. An assemblage is an entity that consists of different flowing objects or multiple phenomena and processes that work together. An assemblage contains multiple discrete assemblages and it is at the same time part of a greater assemblage. “Lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage ... As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs ... An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections ... An assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4, 8, 23)

invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Latin American support of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreement, and the Hurricane Katrina in 2005 are listed. “Now that the coup d’etat has failed and the attempt to establish the unilateral control of the United States over global affairs has been all but aborted”, summarize Hardt and Negri (209), “we need to detail the breakdown in military, economic, political, and moral affairs in order to analyze the current state in which this leaves the imperial system.”

4.2 AFTER U.S. HEGEMONY (219-233)

According to Hardt and Negri, a new global political (dis)order emerged and substituted the U.S. hegemony some years ago. It already exists a complex, but fragile and incomplete network of global structures, authorities, and norms with a strong dependence on the economic market. This new global (dis)order fits perfectly into the neoliberal system with new cycles of accumulation. “In certain respects, after the failure of the U.S. coup d’etat, collective capital has taken the reins of managing the economic, social, political, and military crisis.” (227) Although there is no hegemonic nation-state in the (dis)orderd world of global governance any longer, divisions and hierarchies between and within nation-states are still predominant. This can be seen in the new scramble for Africa, in which European nation-states distinguish the continent into colonies.

4.3 GENEALOGY OF REBELLION (234-248)

The overall aim of this section is to study a political anthropology of resistance. Hardt and Negri stress that rebellious consciousness is not only limited to workers nowadays. In the biopolitical regime, indignation does exist in many social spheres and rebellion is therefore possible in all different forms of life – with the enslaved, the oppressed, and the exploited. Because the metropolises have become the centres of biopolitical production in the new regime, the metropolises should also be the predominantly focus in order to organize the multitude. In conclusion of this section, the authors summing up: “The only possible basis resides in the global movements of populations and their refusal of the global norms and rules of exploitation. Carrying rebellion onto the terrain of global social space on a cosmopolitical level means passing through the deepening of local resistances in the productive social networks, in the banlieux, the metropolises, and all the networks that connect the proletariat in its process of making the multitude. Constructing global public space requires that the multitude, in its exodus, create the institutions that can consolidate and fortify the anthropological conditions of the resistance of the poor.” (247)

DE CORPORE 2: METROPOLIS (249-262)

Also in this concluding section, a central term mentioned in the previous part is theorized more in detail. For Hardt and Negri, the metropolis is the “skeleton and spinal cord of the multitude” (249). The multitude depends on the metropolis and the metropolis cannot exist without the multitude including social relations, knowledge, and cultural circuits: “the metropolis is to the multitude what the factory is to the industrial working class.” (250) The metropolis is the central space of production (production of the common), encounters (singularities are organized politically), as well as antagonism and rebellion (against the violence of hierarchy and control).

PART 5: BEYOND CAPITAL?

Whereas part four was focused on politics, part five primarily contains an economic analysis of contemporary society.

5.1 TERMS OF THE ECONOMIC TRANSITION (263-279)

The authors stress that capitalism is in crisis. The capitalist crisis is caused by the incapacity of neoliberalism. Biopolitical production constitutes a problem for capital and the neoliberal regime has no answer to this problem. Neither capitalist neoliberalism, nor the “third way” by Giddens and Blair or socialism can manage the biopolitical regime. Biopolitical production is associated with the common. Based on ideas of Dyer-Witherford, Hardt and Negri assume that the common belongs to communism: “Sometimes when a concept has been so corrupted, it seems one ought to abandon it and find another way to name what we desire. But instead, in this case at least, we find it better to struggle over the concept and insist on its proper meaning. At a purely conceptual level we could begin to define communism this way: what the private is to capitalism and what the public is to socialism, the common is to communism.” (273)

5.2 WHAT REMAINS OF CAPITALISM (280-295)

According to the authors, in the era of biopolitical production, we have to rethink the concept of economic cycle. Therefore, a new *tableau economique* (an economic model first described by Quesnay) is necessary, which also considers qualities of the common. Because capital in biopolitical production increasingly contains antagonism and resistance, Hardt and Negri instead outline a table of struggles. The table of struggles includes (1) the defence of the freedom of biopolitical labour (the common against work), (2) the defence of social life (the common against wage), and (3) the defence of democracy (the common against capital).

5.3 PRE-SHOCKS ALONG THE FAULT LINES (296-311)

“We are not preaching apocalypse but simply reading the symptoms of capital's illness with two basic assumptions: capital will not continue to rule forever, and it will create, in pursuing its own rule, the conditions of the mode of production and the society that will eventually succeed it. This is a long process, just as was the transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production, and there is no telling when it will cross the crucial threshold, but we can already recognize—in the autonomy of biopolitical production, the centrality of the common, and their growing separation from capitalist exploitation and command—the makings of a new society within the shell of the old.” (301) In this context, Hardt and Negri discuss the relationship between reformist and revolutionary political notions and develop a dialectical concept of reformist revolution in order to manifest the autonomy of the multitude, educate and train humans, organize social encounters and to create the common. The following claims can be outlined: physical infrastructure (clean drinking water, basic, sanitary conditions, electricity, access to affordable food, and other necessities to support life), social and intellectual infrastructure (linguistic tools, affective tools for constructing relationships, tools for thinking), physical layer (including access to

wired and wireless communication networks such as the Internet), open logical layer (for instance, open code and protocols), open content layer (such as cultural, intellectual, and scientific works), open scientific research, technological requirements, immaterial infrastructure (freedom of movement, freedom to migrate, freedom to stay in one place, freedom of space), minimum guaranteed income on a national or global scale paid to everyone regardless of work, basic minimum of life, autonomy and control over time, power to construct social relationships and create autonomous social institutions, participatory democracy at all levels of government to allow the multitude to learn social cooperation and self-rule.

DE HOMINE 2: CROSS THE THRESHOLD! (312-324)

The law of value in its classical formulation is in a crisis, articulate Hardt and Negri, and is not appropriate to measure the value of biopolitical production. Therefore, a new theory of value is necessary that refers to life activity as a whole. “All this means that a theory of value can and should be construed as a dispositif that, breaking away from determinism, redefines the temporality and spaces of life in creative terms. To exceed is a creative activity. A new theory of value has to be based on the powers of economic, political, and social innovation that today are expressions of the multitude's desire.” (319) This includes a series of political positions: (1) labour-power against exploitation, (2) singularity against identity, and (3) the common against the republic of property.

PART 6: REVOLUTION

6.1 REVOLUTIONARY PARALLELISM (325-344)

At the beginning of this section the authors focus on the importance of identity politics in order to be aware of our own position in modern society. Hardt and Negri afterwards combine identity politics with revolutionary claims and conclude: “Revolution is not for the faint of heart. It is for monsters. You have to lose who you are to discover what you can become.” (339f.) Also interesting in this section is the authors critique on Žižek’s notion of the dominant role of class in contrast to race and gender in modern society. It gets clear how Hardt and Negri understand the class-race-gender relationship: The authors manifest a relative autonomy of each. “To claim this parallelism means, obviously, that no one domain or social antagonism is prior to the others ... One of the most significant challenges of revolution today, then, which this parallelism of singularities suggests, is that revolutionary action cannot be successfully conducted or even thought in one domain alone. Without its parallel developments any revolutionary struggle will run aground or even fall back on it self. A revolutionary race proposition that ignores or even exacerbates gender hierarchies will inevitably be blocked, as will a class proposition that fails to keep up with its parallels in the racial domain. Multiplicity and parallelism set the standard for evaluating revolutionary politics today: the multiple parallel paths of liberation either proceed through correspondences or do not proceed at all.” (342f.)

6.2 INSURRECTIONAL INTERSECTIONS (345-360)

Some claims of the political organization of the multitude are drawn: Although the regime of biopolitics has developed new asymmetrical power relations, it also enables

a new process of democratic decision-making that includes elements of cooperation, autonomy, and network building. “The emerging hegemony of biopolitical production today brings with it new democratic capacities.” (352) In addition, although the multitude has no interest in taking control of the state apparatuses, political engagement with state institutions is no doubt useful for struggles against the Empire. “Institutions thus conceived are a necessary component in the process of insurrection and revolution.” (357)

6.3 GOVERNING THE REVOLUTION (361-375)

In this section, Hardt and Negri discuss the question how the revolution should be governed and conclude: “On the one hand, the process of transition is not spontaneous but must be guided according to a political diagonal. On the other hand, however, allowing any social identity or vanguard group or leader to take control of the process undermines the democratic function the transition must serve. There seems to be no path for the revolutionary process to walk between the danger of ineffectiveness and disorder on the one side and that of hierarchy and authority on the other.” (364) In addition, Hardt and Negri discuss the question whether revolution should have to be violent and are summing up: “Gramsci has nothing in principle against armed struggle—and neither do we. The point is simply that arms are not always the best weapons. What is the best weapon against the ruling powers—guns, peaceful street demonstrations, exodus, media campaigns, labor strikes, transgressing gender norms, silence, irony, or many others—depends on the situation.” (368)

DE SINGULARITATE 2: INSTITUTING HAPPINESS (376-386)

In the last section of this book, the term happiness is introduced. Hardt and Negri claim that happiness should become a political concept. Happiness is a pleasure, a public and collective good, and includes an active institutional character. “What it does mean, though, is that change is possible at the most basic level of our world and our selves and that we can intervene in this process to orient it along the lines of our desires, toward happiness.” (378)

In conclusion, the first three parts contained a philosophical and historical exploration and were focused on the republic (part 1), modernity (part 2), and capital (part 3). The last three parts contained a political and economic analysis and were focused on the returning of the Empire (part 4), asked what is beyond capital (part 5) and concluded with a discussion of contemporary possibilities for revolution (part 6). Hardt and Negri tried to undertake an ethical project of the multitude within and against the Empire in order to create an alternative project and to institute a world of common wealth. In the introduction, the authors mentioned that their “challenge will be to find ways to translate the productivity and possibility of the poor into power” (xi). As outlined in chapter six, Hardt and Negri found these ways in revolutionary notions.

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