



to note that this is a — post-Marxist — theory of globalization that explicitly denies the possibility of counter-hegemony at the global level.

In summary, this is a thought-provoking new publication: it will be widely read and debated. For me, the book raised more questions than it answered. For example, is it sufficient to iterate, in a climate of domestic consensus, the continued importance of the Left/Right distinction as a means of facilitating constructive partisan conflict? Or does this need to be accompanied by a more spirited defense of the emancipatory aims of the Left? Similarly, is the transformation of ‘antagonism’ into ‘agonism’ an end in itself as Mouffe suggests? Or is this really a strategic question, that is, an appropriate objective in some contexts but (perhaps) not in others (such as the exploited and impoverished areas of the global south)? It is a virtue of this book to invoke these sorts of reflections.

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Books for Burning

Antonio Negri

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This book brings together a number of Antonio Negri’s controversial essays from the 1970s. The title of this book is somewhat misleading, as the essays collected here are not primarily about either democracy or civil war. Rather, they attempt to derive a strategy for social transformation (conceived in orthodox Marxist terms) from an analysis of economic changes in what might be called the transition to postmodern capitalism. The texts (along with others by the likes of Raniero Panzieri and Sergio Bologna) served as the theoretical underpinnings for *autonomia*, a Marxist current heavily involved in the social upheavals in 1970s Italy. Not for the faint-hearted either theoretically or politically, these essays offer an uncompromisingly radical (if at times somewhat Leninist) political perspective enmeshed within an erudite and conceptually dense discourse of continental philosophy and theoretical Marxism.

One major strength of these essays is that they recognize and theorize tendencies in contemporary capitalism ahead of their time. The descriptions of the functioning of capitalism are in many ways profound, even prophetic; Negri discusses changes in the world economy which it took the rest of academia another 20 years to recognize — as for instance when he writes of the rise of transnational corporations and the resultant crisis of the nation-state



(pp. 24, 166–167). Negri attempts to draw a political perspective from such changes, arguing that capitalism is becoming increasingly violent and irrational because of the collapse of the functioning of the law of value. In place of this law, capitalism falls back on ‘command’, in which the state plays a ‘monstrous role as the technical organ of domination’ (p. 5). Paradoxically, this increasingly powerful state does not become autonomous, but rather, is fused ever more closely into capitalist social production. The state and civil society are fused in the form of social production, the illusion of equality is lost even as an illusion, and the state loses its autonomy and becomes a direct and conscious agent of capitalist domination and despotism (pp. 208–209).

Against this social domination, Negri counterposes working-class self-activity in the forms of sabotage, refusal of work, self-valorization, and appropriation. Class self-valorization is about refusing capitalist recomposition by insisting on one’s separateness from it; ‘I am *other* — as is the movement of that collective practice within which I am included. I belong to the *other workers’ movement*...I have the sense of having situated myself at the extreme limit of meaning in a political class debate’ (p. 237). Although the scarcity of empirical materials belies the theory’s rootedness in the industrial sociology of its day, it is clear that Negri is establishing a theory of the micropolitics of everyday life as a form of class struggle. Everyday resistance in the workplace is conceived as a form of direct struggle against capitalist command, ‘an antagonistic reappropriation of the productive forces’ which opens up the possibility of communism (pp. 152–153). The construction of autonomous spaces and non-capitalist types of valorization are also crucial. There is a danger, however, that capitalist command will suppress these resistances, leading to a need for an organization (a ‘party’, though not in the classic sense) which has a role of ‘rupturing capitalist restructuring, command, and stabilization’ (p. 156), and defending the frontiers of self-valorization (p. 276).

Though politically inspiring and full of insights, and though often far more radical in their political implications than Negri’s more recent work, these essays are not without substantial weaknesses. Firstly, while Negri rightly emphasizes the politicality of everyday acts of refusal, he exaggerates the extent to which these are informed by a conscious opposition to capitalism as a whole, and thus underestimates the forces of ideological recuperation. Secondly, he tends to exaggerate the importance of the moment of rupture in political action, ignoring the importance of ambiguities and catachresis as ways of constructing the possibility of subjective escape. Thirdly, Negri avoids difficult questions about post-revolutionary society, placing an unfounded reliance on the supposed ontological destiny of the working-class and sometimes slipping into a contradictory insistence on the post-revolutionary continuation of existing practices that is barely disguised beneath Hegelian prose. Fourth, the focus of the texts is very narrow, yet the theoretical aspiration is broad. Negri effectively theorizes changes



in Italian, and maybe western, capitalism, but his attempts at theoretical totalization render certain of his conclusions Eurocentric and incomplete. These problems do not, however, affect the fundamental significance of these texts, which is in the insistence on autonomy and social transformation in response to domination, an insistence that is as vital today as when the texts were written.

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Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language, and the Politics of Calculation

Stuart Elden

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Stuart Elden has produced a textually rich, logically rigorous, always erudite, and ultimately quite significant book that takes on the relationship between Heidegger's thought and 'the political'. For a rather large group of scholars and students, this text must simply be essential reading; that group includes all Heidegger scholars (the largest subset) along with anyone who has grappled with Heidegger's thought in relation to the concerns of the field of political theory.

This is a powerful and important yet sometimes puzzling text. The text proves puzzling — and perhaps productively so — because of the title: it tells you where the book winds up, but does not quite describe what the book is 'about'. And because the text eschews a linear logic of argumentation, one does not quite know where one is headed until one gets there. To put this differently, the three main chapters of the book, despite generally following chronology, fit together like pieces of a puzzle. In Chapter one, Elden provides a detailed reading of Heidegger's early lecture courses (from the mid 1920s) on Aristotle. Against the prevailing view in the literature that Heidegger has no proper political thought, Elden convincingly demonstrates that Heidegger's engagement with Aristotle opens up a productive thinking of the political. This encounter with the political emerges most strikingly in the form of a concern with being-together (*Mitsein*), thought not as being-in-the-world but as being-in-the-*polis*. However, contends Elden, Heidegger does not pursue this promising line of thought, both because he restricts his treatment of Aristotelian *phronesis* to the ontological level — thereby covering over the particular political rendering of *phronesis* in Aristotle — and because *Being and Time* drops the thinking of being-in-the-*polis*.

These are the lacunae that render Heidegger's political thought during the Nazi period — the subject of Chapter two — problematic for reasons that go