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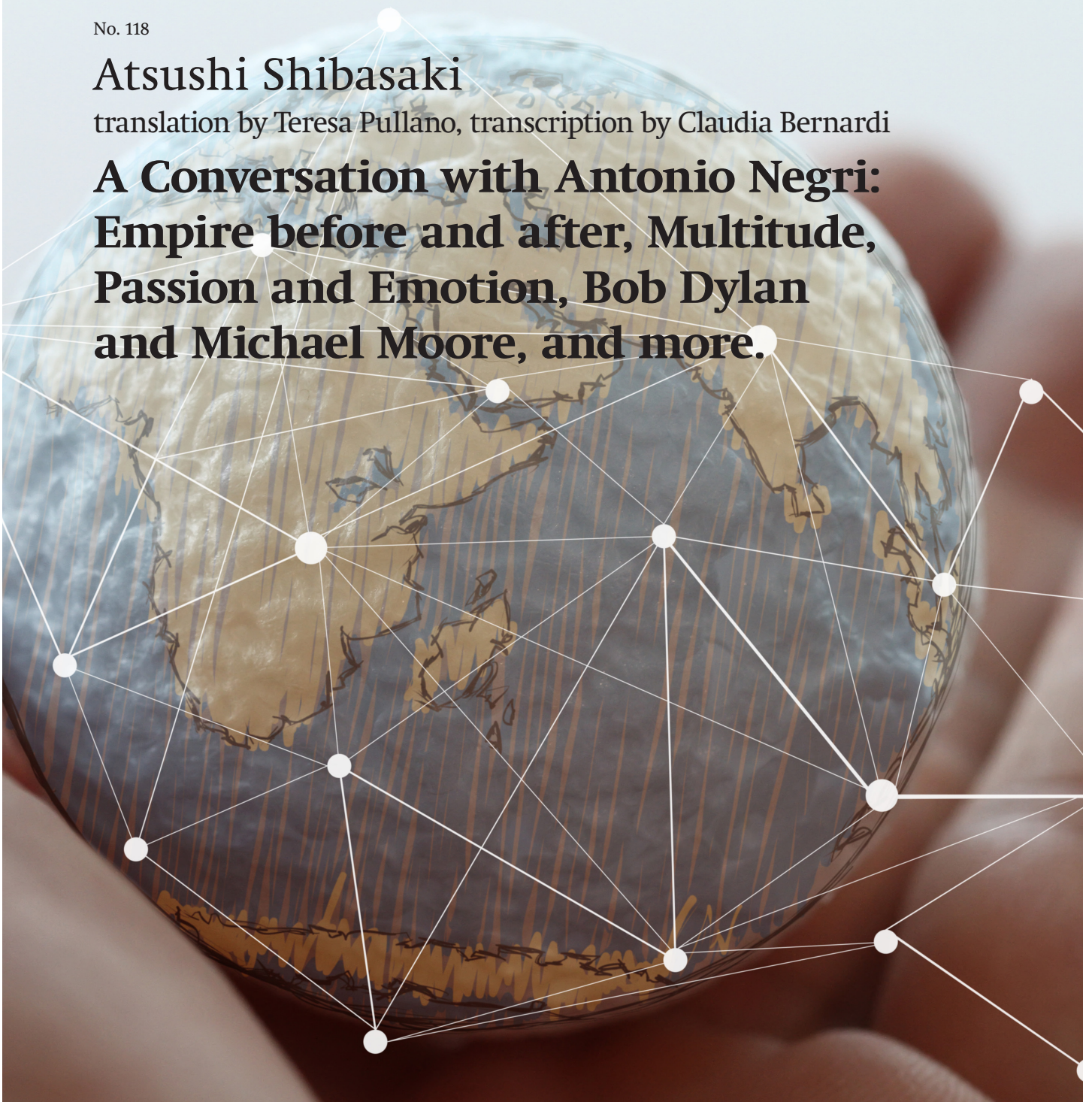
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Atsushi Shibasaki

translation by Teresa Pullano, transcription by Claudia Bernardi

**A Conversation with Antonio Negri:
Empire before and after, Multitude,
Passion and Emotion, Bob Dylan
and Michael Moore, and more.**



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**A Conversation with Antonio Negri:
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Abstract: This is a conversation between Antonio Negri, one of the most preeminent political philosophers, and Professor Atsushi Shibasaki, who was a guest professor at the Institute for European Global Studies during 2017/2018, with a translation by Professor Teresa Pullano. Their talk, which was based on a letter by Professor Shibasaki, deals with a range of issues, from Negri's academic background and his forthcoming book to his view on music and films. In particular, their dialogue extends to reaching a comparison between Negri and Makoto Oda and Yusuke Maki, who are less well-known in Europe but have much in common with Negri's theory and philosophy. Thus, the interview reveals many significant but somewhat overlooked theoretical and philosophical possibilities of cross-cultural interaction between Negri and non-European thinkers.

Keywords: Antonio Negri, Empire and Multitude, Passion and fear in global politics, Encounter between Western and Non-Western Political Philosophy

Antonio Negri is an Italian political philosopher and sociologist. He is the author of over 50 books including *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2003), *Commonwealth* (2009), and *Assembly* (2017), which he wrote together with Michael Hardt.

Atsushi Shibasaki is Professor at the Faculty of Global Media Studies of Komazawa University, Japan. During 2017/2018 he was a guest professor at the Institute for European Global Studies. He has published several books on international relations, international cultural relations, and the study of global relations.

Introduction

On February 7, 2018, there was incredibly heavy snow in France, including in Paris. Professor Teresa Pullano, who had already arrived there, and I, still in Basel, were quite worried about the weather, because we had an appointment to meet Mr. Negri the next day. We incessantly exchanged texts, watching the weather forecasts and the SNCF website, almost overwhelmed by the scenery of the center of Paris covered in snow. I was also checking every blog and SNS posted by Parisians, who shared countless photos of their city, and of their children enjoying the unexpected snowfall. We had to prepare for the worst case: a cancellation of the interview, with the faint hope of postponement to another day. Fortunately, on the next day, the weather did not prevent the train leaving from Basel SBB, and I could finally travel to Paris and join her.

The realization of this conversation was serendipitous. In April 2017, I, professor of Komazawa University, Faculty of Global Media Studies (GMS), started a sabbatical year as a guest professor at the Institute for European Global Studies, University of Basel (EIB), with the warm welcome from the faculty staff. I am an interdisciplinary scholar of history and social science, with a focus on International Cultural Relations (ICR), so I intended to contribute to EIB by submitting papers or lecturing on my historical/theoretical analysis. I had already written some drafts on the history of institutional development of cultural foreign policy in modern Japan.

While carrying out this research, I had already published two studies on the works of Negri-Hardt in Japanese, from the perspective of ICR. In Japan, their work has been widely accepted and highly appreciated, mainly by scholars or critics of Italian/French thought and/or European philosophy, most of whom had strong interest in civil society movements or radical political/societal reforms. However, most social scientists, including scholars of political science and international relations (IR) did not sympathetically introduce or try to adopt the argument proposed in the *Empire/Multitude/Commonwealth* trilogy into their analysis.¹ My studies tried to bridge this gap and aimed at achieving rigid evaluation of their thought/philosophy from my ICR perspective, as readers may partly recognize from this conversation. Following those publications, I had given lectures on Negri-Hardt at my class for years, presented at several academic conferences and seminars, and continued to keep my eyes peeled for their writings.

One morning in September 2017, I was reading *Assembly*, their newest book at that time, when Teresa, my colleague and expert on political and social theory and philosophy, happened to come

¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

into my office.² She noticed its book cover and we started to talk about it. I guess she thought I was a scholar of international history and did not know my interest in political theory. In the conversation, I asked if she had met Negri before and quite accidentally uttered that I wish I could see him. Surprisingly, she told me that she had never met him before, but she might try to reach out to Negri. That is how it all began.

Teresa and her partner Angelo Mastrandrea, an excellent journalist who has published several elaborate books, kindly established contact with Mr. Negri, and I sent him an e-mail. Several days later, I received a reply from him, and he warmly accepted our offer. Then, I started to prepare for it, including learning elementary-level Italian whilst waiting for the time to come. One thing I was worried about was how to introduce myself and how to explain the topic I would like to share with him, because I have a slightly different view of his work, compared to other people who had previously interviewed him. I decided to write a twenty-page long letter explaining who I am, and what issues I would like to discuss in English, and audaciously send it to him.³ Mr. Negri was generous enough to read it prior to our meeting, and during the interview, we three had that letter in front of us for reference, which helped our conversation go so smoothly. Before we started, we were a little nervous, because we could not predict what would happen. However, Mr. Negri welcomed us very warmly with a well-tempered and relaxed manner, and gradually we could relax and enjoy our conversation, which lasted almost three hours. We truly enjoyed our spontaneous intellectual symposium.

Our original aim was to make the conversation as fruitful as possible. However, after looking back at its contents, we recognized that it included many interesting and unique points, most of which had not been dealt with in other interviews. That is why we sought the possibility for publication, and Mr. Negri generously agreed. We plan to publish this interview, both in English and in Japanese. As this arose from the collaboration between professors of EIB and GMS, we plan to print the English version in this EIB journal and the Japanese version in the GMS journal (*Journal of Global Media Studies*).

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Negri, who accepted our sudden offer, and has always been tolerant toward all our suggestions and questions, showing us his open-mindedness.

² Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*, Heretical Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³ Some points in that letter were explored in Atsushi Shibasaki, “Towards Global Multitude and Assembly: An Analysis of the Works of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt,” *Journal of Global Media Studies* 23 (September 2018): 31-55.

I would also like to acknowledge Teresa and Angelo, my fine friends, for without their gentle benignity, this would not have been possible at all. Lastly, I would like to send my warmest appreciation to Claudia for her brilliant transcription.

Atsushi Shibasaki

1. How it all started

Negri: I have read everything you sent.

Shibasaki: Oh, really, I am so glad to know that. I am sorry for writing too many questions and comments on your thought.

Negri: Judging from reading your letter, it is clear that you are a very important scholar. I know very little about Japan. I visited it only once, hosted by the International House of Japan in Tokyo, and then I visited Kyoto.

Shibasaki: You have visited Tokyo three or four years ago, I guess. And you gave several lectures in Tokyo, Kyoto and other places. And you also observed the demonstration of the antinuclear movement in front of the Diet.

Negri: Yes, I participated in the pacifist demonstration against the resumption of nuclear testing.

Shibasaki: And the fight still continues.

Negri: I was unable to go the year before because of Fukushima. And the year before that, they refused my visa.

Shibasaki: I think you have some Japanese scholars, who translated some of your works. And they mainly study European thought and philosophy, Italian history. I would say that most of them are experts in humanities, not social scientists. I guess there have not been so many Japanese social scientists who have an opportunity to see you. I guess one of the reasons for this is that most scholars of social science in Japan, especially scholars of international relations, have not paid much attention to your work, because of your uniqueness, from my impression. For example, your definition of the word 'democracy' is not the same as that of the hardheaded social scientists like those in political science. But as for me, personally I am quite interested in your argument about those concepts and also in the way you argue, because it seems to me that nobody comes close to your level of deep understanding of those concepts, which is firmly based on your deep understanding of the human condition.

Negri: I have a philosophical background, and my approach to the world of politics has been mainly through Marxism, and then through law. In the end, I taught law as a professor in Padua: I taught Doctrine of State. I never understood what kind of discipline it is, even though I had a chair. It is something between political science and constitutional law. My first step into political science was through law. My first papers were about labor in the Constitution, about the regime of parties primarily from a juridical perspective, and also about the theory of sovereignty since modernity. I studied at the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici in Naples, directed by the Italian historian Federico Chabod: one of the people who influenced my thought most. At the beginning, in the sixties and seventies, I studied the concept of the modern state as rationality, which later

led me to study the political thought of Descartes and Spinoza. In the meantime, I wrote *Marx beyond Marx*, and that is when my books started to circulate.⁴

Shibasaki: Now I am beginning to understand the progress of your work, and what in my mind the word ‘interdisciplinary’ means, because I studied the course of international relations in Japan at the University of Tokyo, where the focus of the study of IR was interdisciplinary. Most professors encouraged us to be interdisciplinary but of course not everybody could be so. But I guess I was amongst those who took such advice seriously, and that is why I am really fascinated by your work and arguments especially in how you freely and excellently go beyond such academic boundaries and how originally you create your own work; if my choice of words is correct, I could say that it is truly interdisciplinary.

Negri: Yes, I have read that in the last part of the materials you sent me.

Shibasaki: Maybe I should skip most of my academic history because you have read it all already. I started my carrier as an interdisciplinary scholar of international relations. I think I was among the first to refer to Michel Foucault in the study of the history of Japanese thought. And when I first read your *Empire* in 2000, I was totally shocked and surprised, because in some respects the description of the world in the book somewhat resemble the works in international relations at first glance.⁵ But the construction of your argument was completely different from IR as social science. That is why I started to read your works and past works and to try to analyze them.

Negri: Before writing *Empire*, coauthored with Michael Hardt, I also wrote *Labor of Dionysus*.⁶ Some of my work was already translated into English: the books *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State* and *Marx beyond Marx*.⁷ The British publishing house Polity Press was very interested in my writings during Tony Blair’s first term. They considered my controversy towards PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) useful to their right-wing social-democratic discourse, since it was focused on the new phenomena of industrial reorganization. This ambiguity, however, allowed my work to be translated. At that time, I had already fled to France as a fugitive.

Shibasaki: So that is why I decided to write the first analytical article about your work.⁸ I also started to read your past works. After the publication, I was not sure if I should continue the

4 Antonio Negri and Jim Fleming, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1984).

5 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.

6 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of State-Form*, Theory out of Bounds 4 (Minneapolis et. al.: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

7 Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Antonio Negri and Jim Fleming, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (1991).

8 Atsushi Shibasaki, “The Concept of ‘Empire’ in the Study of International Relations,” in *Teikoku Ron (Discourse on Empire)*, ed. Yamashita Norihisa (Tokyo: Kodansya Sensyo Metier, 2006), Ch. 6.

study about you, but after the publication of *Multitude*, I was asked to write something about you, so I took up my studies again.⁹ I had almost finished my research in 2009 and was about to give a presentation on your thought at an academic conference. However, just one month before the presentation, *Commonwealth* was published.¹⁰ So I read it in that month and amended my presentation, an upgraded version that included my interpretation of *Commonwealth*. And that was published in 2011 as my second paper on your thought.¹¹

Negri: Then we can begin to discuss the issues you raised in your material that I have read.

2. On the concept of Empire, and Empire twenty years later

Shibasaki: Now I have to start with your basic concepts. First is about the concept of Empire. I have heard many critics asking why you chose the word Empire to describe this world. I am afraid that the reason for the choice of the word Empire is too obvious for you, but I would be glad if you could give some explanation of the process of deciding to use this word, and show us if there were any alternative words for Empire in that process?

Negri: Empire was conceived with Michael Hardt when we were working in Paris. We were part of a working community of comrades. The publishing house Éditions du Seuil asked me to write a book about the concept of sovereignty for high school examinations. The concept of Empire emerged from this first reflection on the concept of sovereignty. The impetuous globalization of markets, from the end of the Cold War to the nineties, is somehow regulated by this power. Hence, the concept of Empire hints at a sovereignty that regulates globalization. In fact, Empire is not drawn from the old historical term. I spent a year at the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris, teaching a course on Empire, starting from the problem of sovereignty, since the old concept was not useful anymore. I was elaborating a critique of sovereignty. At that time, I was working extensively on Niklas Luhman and on his school, focusing on the idea of extra-state law germinations. The Italian scholar Maria Rosaria Ferrarese wrote interesting texts on this topic. At the time, we were inspired by Marxist internationalism. This was a not secondary issue, especially for someone who was living in France not for pleasure, but because I had to. Given my

9 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.

10 Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*.

11 Atsushi Shibasaki, "Empire and Multitude," in *Kokusai Seiji Tetsugaku (International Political Philosophy: Nakanishiya Companion to Social Science)*, eds. Daiten Odagawa, Ikuo Gono and Ryosuke Takahashi (Kyoto: Nakanishia Shuppan, 2011), Ch.6.

juridical and political background, I paid attention to the development of private international law, and of trade law. At that time, borders as well as the standard procedures of negotiation among states were coming to an end. This form of production was linked to the expansion of the American juridical language, and to the related forms of justification coming from the USA. I perceived that this fact was really evident.

This was the very moment when Arrighi published *The Long Twentieth Century*.¹² So, we could say that in a certain way the issue of Empire had been coming for some time. I have known Arrighi for a long time; when he joined the autonomous political group in Milan, I was part of Potere Operaio.¹³ He entered this group after coming back from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), where he worked for a while. He was part of a group called Rosso ('red') that joined my collective in Milan. We took up the title Rosso for an important journal that sent us to jail. I was working on Europe, and on how European statehood is built from the outside, from the colonies; for this reason, I studied Arrighi and Lefevre; I also spoke with Sandro Mezzadra about the return of colonial practices nowadays. I know a researcher who is working on English colonial law and its subsequent use (she is the partner of Alberto Toscano). The expansion of English colonial law occurred in India, and she also argues that Israel is currently using these tools against Palestinians.

Shibasaki: I have read Arrighi once and I would re-read it with *Empire* following your advice. One thing that is really impressive is that you are interested in commercial law. I say this because I once studied a scholar named Kotaro Tanaka, who studied commercial law and published the very thick book called *The Theory of World Law*, in the 1930s.¹⁴ He was faced with the issue of the relationship between transnational activities and sovereignty.

Negri: In commercial law it is possible to identify a leap: the way in which the concept of internationality becomes a concept of globality. This is a conceptual leap of very deep meaning. This is what politicians generally do not understand.

Shibasaki: I think that is why mainstream IR scholars like Hans Morgenthau or Kenneth Waltz have a deficiency in describing the world today as a whole, because they stick to the concept of sovereignty and they cannot overcome it. I think you have referred to those works in IR and I would be glad to hear your comments and impressions of their works from your point of view.

¹² Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of our Times*. London/New York: Verso, 1994.

¹³ Potere Operaio (Worker's Power) is a group of revolutionary left-wings founded in 1967 in Pisa. Among them were Oreste Scalzone, Franco Piperno, and Antonio Negri. It played an important role in the revolutionary labor movement in Italy from late 1960s to the early 1970s by organizing protests in factories. The organization disbanded in 1973.

¹⁴ Kotaro Tanaka, *The Theory of World Law (Sekai Ho No Riron)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1932-34).

Negri: I know the works of Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger quite well, since I studied German authors and the idea of ‘Staatslehre’. My first work - my thesis - was about German historicism in the 19th and 20th centuries. I studied this issue thoroughly, as much as Carl Schmitt - whose work was extensively discussed when I was young - and all the intellectuals who were part of the debate on European public law. My work is a radical critique of this thought and moves away from Carl Schmitt’s thought.

Shibasaki: I think that is why I am moved by your argument because I also try to overcome those IR thinkers. Then the last question about the concept of Empire is: Does Empire exist forever, by playing the role you have been describing or will the struggle between Empire and Multitude come to an end? If so, do you have a name for the world after Empire?

Negri: I am currently working, together with Michael, on a text about Empire twenty years later. We are at a preliminary stage.

Shibasaki: Really?

Negri: It is clear that the Empire we expected has not been born at any time. The biggest problem we are facing today is the following: the world is physically more globalized than ever. In fact, nowadays globalization is a logistical issue. Finance, web, and money have made the world more completely interlinked than in any previous time. And yet, we are witnessing the breakdown of national politics built on this globalized world. Some continental maps have emerged, such as the United States, Europe, Russia and/or China; humble Latin America tried, but has already failed. This structure is defined by the friction between two tectonic plates: on one side, the real globalization that actually happened, on the other side, the political plate that is fragmented into continental dimensions. It is clear that it is impossible to think except in global terms. Nowadays, thinking about politics is possible only in a global way. The concept of the nation state no longer means anything. So, we have to work on this friction. Together with Michael Hardt, we are working on three issues: the first is that of armaments. The topic of war, and what is behind it, is close to the issue of fear that you raised too. The issue of nuclear deterrence, which is a crazy problem, cannot be solved without a world government. It is a discourse on pure madness. Then, the second issue is about the Anthropocene, and the third is about global poverty. Facing these three great problems, what does this friction mean? These are issues that cannot be solved without an increase, that is, an intensification of the capacity to hold together the political decision. And since I am a communist, I believe that capitalism cannot do this, because it did not do it before.

Shibasaki: Right. I am very glad to know about your future prospects on this world and am really looking forward to seeing what kind of view you propose. Since I am now trying to construct a

new discipline from international relations to global relations, I would be glad to observe the process of your new perspective, 20 years after *Empire*.

Negri: This is clear. But I don't know to what extent it will ever affect the disciplines. Disciplines are built to avoid these sorts of problems. Disciplines are a form of command that absolutely prevent the abolishment of disciplines themselves. This prevention is aimed at removing class struggle that would otherwise enter the scenario again.

Shibasaki: Right. This is exactly what we are trying to do in Basel: what you mentioned is at the core of our program as a research center, from philosophy to political science.

3. Questions about Multitude

Shibasaki: Then I would like to move on to the question about Multitude. I would like to start with the definition of Multitude. As I have explained in the letter, although the concept Multitude is definitely attractive and persuasive, there are so many people who cannot act as a Multitude. Such as those who wish to but cannot, or who are able to but do not, and those who are neither willing nor able. How do you think about those kinds of people?

Negri: The concept of Multitude cannot grasp these questions, as it goes beyond them. The concept of Multitude is born as a class concept. As Marxists, we were told there was a working class that will take over the world, but we cannot see this working class anymore. Actually, we certainly see the exploitation of workers, but also of society, which involves women and students among others. In the first place, a subject can be defined as a class subject by the exploitation it endures. Nowadays we are facing a Multitude of subjects. We stressed the relevance of the transformation of technologies, and of the analysis of biopolitics. Therefore, the problem of the poor and the very poor is fundamental but marginal, even if ontologically consistent.

Shibasaki: So, the question of the poorest of the poor is marginal by this kind of reasoning, even though it is extremely ontologically fundamental.

Negri: It is evident that the book aimed to transform the concept of Multitude, mostly employed in sociological terms in a political concept. This initial effort engaged in polemics with the Marxist tradition: this led to a proper clash, and to uncountable and endless absurd accusations.

Shibasaki: How do you work with Michael Hardt? After this explanation, I found the concept of Multitude much clearer. You were very clear. Your explanation answers many translation problems.

Negri: I do not think it is a translation problem. I spoke English very well when I was young; but 25 years between prison and exile took away the desire to speak it. I am old now. I read English well, I also write it, I do not have any problems. Michael speaks Italian and French very well. We work in Italian, French and English. Michel writes the final version on the basis of our discussions: we write something, and then we exchange these texts and rework them. We start from a very broad outline that we discuss even for six months, then each of us takes an issue or a chapter and develops it.

Shibasaki: It depends on each book; which part is written by whom.

Negri: For example, now Michael is studying and writing about deterrence, while I am trying to understand whether it is possible to set elements that allow us to create scales of power on a global level. A really small problem indeed... It is common to hear that the United States' power is declining. Its decline is not military, and they rather maintain an important and compelling soft power. China is not on the same level of the United States when it comes to air, to space and to deep sea. China is expanding its economic power, but it is stuck. The classical criteria of military and economic powers now have to be combined. This is a key step to solving problems of consensus. I am reading *The Civil War in France* by Marx again.¹⁵ It seems to me that today, more than ever, we find ourselves in a world in which the monarchic, autocratic and military powers, together with the command over money, are completely globalized. In this scenario, I think it is once again becoming possible to identify class processes and class contradictions. It is interesting to make this kind of outline because a whole series of elements can emerge, while usually they are kept aside despite their importance. These elements can then modify the initial outline: we will review our first version and remake it.

Shibasaki: Thank you for telling me the secret of your collaboration. Maybe it would be better for us to go back to the issue of concept and talk about your collaboration and translation. I really appreciate that the concept of Multitude is so useful and insightful, right on target. But as we were trying to discuss, there are so many people who do not function as a Multitude, first willing but not able, second, able but not willing, third not willing or able (as we have already mentioned). In order to understand those people, maybe past examples such as the story of the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov*, or the book on the *Gleichschaltung* by Milton Mayer (*They Thought they were Free*) would be good guides.¹⁶ So, what do you think about those people who have the possibility to be part of a Multitude but cannot?

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (London: Edward Truelove, 1870-1871).

¹⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1878-1881); Milton Mayer, *They Thought they were Free: The Germans 1933-1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

Negri: The book *Assembly* is already an attempt to approach this issue; the problem about organization. The transition from sociology to politics is called organization. *Assembly* does not solve the problem but sets the conditions under which one can speak about the organization of Multitude. The principles of organization are open problems, also because you cannot identify the problems about organization *a priori*, in advance. It seems to us that the assemblearism of Occupy and of the *indignados* may constitute the grounds on which the Multitude's organization can be developed. I say this with much caution. Because talking about these problems means figuring out what power is, and how to take it. Our relation to power changes as subjects change. This is the biggest problem, for first of all, I am an activist.

4. Passion and emotion

Shibasaki: Then I would like to move to the question about emotion, as I explained it in the letter. The issue of emotion is also important when we think about the power of Multitude. One of the questions is its negative side, about fear and hate.... What about the emotions, in particular about fear? The Multitude rebels against the Empire even through emotions, and by passions. What is the role of the emotion in your thought? One attractive and unique point of your discussion is that you are always trying to invite the element of emotion, such as passion, joy, love or fear into the construction of your argument. This is really original because in the world of normal social science, scholars try to exclude such elements and do not know how to deal with them. They can point out the elements of fear, but they have not succeeded in dealing with emotion adequately. In your argument, emotion or passion is located at the core of the Multitude. That is why I would like to pose some questions. First of all, I would like to ask how you place the element of emotion in your argument.

Negri: I am a Spinozist, as well as a Marxist. Spinoza confronts us with the problem of passions. The issue is more about passions than about emotions. Passions are powers. It is different to conceive passions or emotions. In Spinozist terms, every passion has its equivalent that can be positive or negative. Every time we are afraid, we also have courage. You can find every variation of courage, just like every variation of fear. There are two main and fundamental passions: joy and sadness. And here there is a fundamental philosophical choice: to know which is the best. Stating that joy is better than sadness is based on a material fact, namely on the productivity of labor, on the power of living labor. This is central to Marxism, as well as to Spinozism. Joy is constructive.

Shibasaki: Now I am beginning to understand your theoretical formation, and this is exactly what I would like to hear from you.

Negri: From this perspective, fear is a great enemy, but it is clear that reason will not beat fear. This is because passion includes rationality. In Spinoza's thought, the shift from the *conatus* – that is the desire to live – to the *cupiditas* – the continuity and richness of passions and love – is the same one from the child's to adult's reason; that is the victory of reason. Here, the anthropological issue is truly fundamental. I made this choice as it explains how production, passion, and rationality are increasingly linked within the technological world. The Common can defeat the Empire attempting to control this force. From the ontological point of view, the Multitude can become a hegemonic force. In the concept of Common is grafted the one of Multitude to make it a hegemonic force, where there is no property but use.

Shibasaki: I have cited the unique argument of Masanao Toda in the letter. According to him, reason and emotion are supplementary, not a contradicting or exclusive concept. He also devised a unique theory about emotion and theory in his last days. One of the reasons why he tackled this issue is that this is a common problem of modernity, because modernity has been trying to control or oppress one's emotion. And I think this perspective has something in common with your argument. According to Toda, living in a civilized environment, one has to control one's emotion. And this aspect has something to do with the power of controlling the emotion of Multitude by the Empire.

Negri: It is important that these passions turn into a collective dimension. This mechanism has to be connected to the Common that is a collective, a way of living together. Here there is a strong break with any sort of individualism: from being a child, the man becomes an actor of history through the Common, meaning languages and affects. We live thanks to societies to the same extent as we build these societies. While the individuality is something that has a soul and it is a principle in itself, the singularity is a part of the whole; it is made up of the whole. I guess that in the context of Oriental thought, this is easily understood.

Shibasaki: I think we have much in common in this aspect. And I can find many examples in modern Japanese thought which tackled western individualism from the perspective of singularity, Japanese tradition. I would like to move to the next question. I am sorry to cite so many sentences from *Propos* by Alain.¹⁷ I really like reading him and I have found something to ask you about him, because Alain is also heavily influenced by Spinoza and Descartes in forming his thoughts on emotion or passion, for example what the emotion is to us or how

¹⁷ Alain, *Propos Sur Le Bonheur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928).

to face and overcome emotion. I am afraid that this might be misleading, but I think there are some common perspectives on the idea of controlling emotions between Alain and you. In particular, I would like to ask you about the relationship between your way of argument and the control of emotions, for example, the concept of irresolution by Alain. I wonder whether your way of argument which encourages people to move ahead might be connected to such a way of controlling emotion, without indulging irresolution and abandoning stagnant attitudes, with the aim of changing the world.

Negri: Regarding the issues of the control of passions and the making of a synthesis, that is a sort of dynamic set; I think that among the current neo-stoical attitudes there is the attempt to block irrational forces. Instead, we said that passion and reason are combined. This means that when we talk about control, we are not talking about holding back, rather giving a direction. The problem is that there is no good or evil, rather a direction that we manage to give to our passions. Only through their development can the world exist.

Shibasaki: Now I completely understand. Now we are going to move on to the discussion about hate and fear; there is a passage about fear in *Assembly*.¹⁸ How can we solve the problem of fear today?

Negri: We suffer from fear, and we are subjugated by fear: this is one of the dimensions of our being. What are the uses of fear? This is the issue. Studying the issue of nuclear deterrence is central, since it is a Hobbesian, or Smithian principle to create fear. The question is how to stop fear, if such a thing is possible. We choose to fight against dangers that are overwhelming us, because fearing them becomes unsustainable. These political practices have already been used. When death becomes the limit of fear, then resistance becomes inevitable. It is clear, however, that in the theory of state, the fear is fundamental. Yet, capital cannot eliminate the labor force, because capital does not exist without it. Here stands the greatness of Marxism. Capital can never be a leviathan. This is the very limit of deterrence, a crazy thing that costs 10 percent of the GDP, that raises the level of arsenals, that organizes the threat of death into a possibility of life.

Shibasaki: Do you think the philosophy of Alain or neo-stoicism would be useful for controlling such negative emotions as fear and hate?

Negri: It seems that neo-stoicism is passive, that it is non-productive. It takes away the possibility of shaking that world of labor, which is the only one capable of opposing fear.

¹⁸ Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, 100-102.

Shibasaki: Do you mean that to overcome fear you need to mobilize all those positive elements of emotion?

Negri: Resistance means to defend ourselves against the spread of fear. Resistance is a material block. Let us think of real phenomenology: even under the fascist regime, or under other dictatorial forms, there is always this silent resistance, that it is taught and essential. Just think about wartime acts of sabotage by soldiers, or by women. During the first 13 years of my life I lived through a war under fascism. I remember how we resisted fear. I remember where the armed resistance began in northern Italy.

5. Music and film, Bob Dylan and Michael Moore

Shibasaki: Then I would like to ask you about the role of art. One thing that surprised me when I opened the book *Empire* was to find the lyrics of Ani DiFranco.¹⁹ I am surprised that you listen to her.

Negri: That was a contribution by Michael Hardt.

Shibasaki: Also, in your latest book there is a lyric from “This Land is Your Land”.²⁰ I think you or Michael might like to listen to this kind of music.

Negri: I have read that you work on music, great. Very good.

Shibasaki: Do you think that those songs have influenced you when writing your works?

Negri: Yes, I have always listened to these musicians. I once wrote an article about the relationship between Mahler and the Jamaicans. It was a youthful blunder.

Shibasaki: Sometimes I use some of these songs in my class and ask the students to comment on them. So, if you were a teacher, what kind of music would you recommend to help your students understand your argument?

Negri: I am an old anti-fascist: the songs are those of the Spanish War, the Russian songs, or the ones by Bertolt Brecht. There is an age mismatch.

Shibasaki: I think almost ten years ago, an ex-anti-fascist song was revived by the anti-global

¹⁹ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, epigraph.

²⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, 77. “This Land is Your Land” was originally written by Woody Guthrie in 1940, recorded in 1944, and is contained in the album Woody Guthrie: *This Land is Your Land: The Asch Recordings Volume 1* (1997). Hardt and Negri picked the lyrics from the 1940 version.

warming movement with new lyrics. It is *Bella Ciao*. Then I would like to move on to the question about Bob Dylan. I think you know a lot about Bob Dylan. It was truly a surprise that he received a Nobel Prize for Literature and there is a controversy about it, whether he is worthy of receiving this prize, or whether his art is really literature. As I am now preparing for an academic paper about Bob Dylan, especially about his influence, I would be very glad if you would share your thoughts on him, in general or on his acceptance of the Nobel Prize.

Negri: I very much approve of the award of the Nobel Prize to Bob Dylan. Much better than all those other boring ones. Only one out of five is eligible.

Shibasaki: Recently in the movie *Der Junge Marx*, “Like A Rolling Stone” was cited at the end of the movie.²¹

Negri: The song is very beautiful, despite the fact that the movie is not so important.

Shibasaki: Then I would like to pose some questions about Michael Moore. His documentary movies are so unique and popular, from his first movie *Roger & Me* to the latest *Where to Invade Next*. I have also used his movies in my class, and it gives the students a good starting point to think about this world.²² Since his theme has very close connections to your argument about Empire and Multitude, I would be glad if you could give me some comments about him.

Negri: I have seen almost all of Michael Moore’s documentary films; the only one I missed is *Where to Invade Next*. I am familiar with the great Italian cinema until the 1970s. I also taught at Scuola del Cinema in Rome for a short time.

Shibasaki: Sometimes I use his movies in my classes.

Negri: It is very important to use music and cinema in education, although it depends on the age of the students. Also, in a university context it works for the first few years, and then it becomes more difficult.

²¹ *Der Junge Karl Marx*, directed by Raoul Peck (Diaphana Films, 2017). “Like a Rolling Stone” was written by Bob Dylan in 1965, contained in the album *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965).

²² *Roger & Me*, directed by Michael Moore (Dog Eat Dog Films/Warner Bros., 1989); *Where to Invade Next*, directed by Michael Moore (Dog Eat Dog Films/IMG Films, 2015).

6. Eurocentrism

Shibasaki: What really surprised me when I was reading *Commonwealth* is that you cited some theories or wisdom of non-Western indigenous people and you argued that there is some relevance in such thought to your argument.²³ And of course, your argument is based on your own experience in Italy and Europe, and your study or reading of European thought and philosophy. But in this globalized world, there are so many non-Western people who act as a Multitude. And most of them do not share the history and philosophy of Europe. Then sometimes they learn from their own experience and their tradition, which does not come from the Western world, in order to fight against the Empire. But sometimes they might look for the same answers about how to face or act against the Empire. For example, those who fought the Water War in Cochabamba, I am afraid that they might not read Karl Marx or those thinkers including yourself, but they found the right way to resist power without depending on those intellectual fruits. I also heard that people in Cochabamba utilized their old traditional network to do it. I would never say that your argument is not relevant globally, but I would like to say that there are so many singular people who follow different paths but reach the same conclusion or solution to act as a Multitude and fight against the Empire. So what do you think about those people who walk a different path but find the right and almost the same solution, without leaning on Western tradition (at least not so heavily)?

Negri: We greatly underestimated the cultural aspects in *Empire*, and also in the other books. Hardt and I have been discussing this issue, and you have grasped some of the main critical points of our work. We defined economic and military power, now we are working on the definition of culture. In the last 20 years, cultural production has moved from Hollywood to the Silicon Valley. The embodiment of culture in the web redefines culture itself and opens it up to a plurality. The brand is no longer there, as the internet made it free. Nowadays, it is even more crucial to understand those elements that are put into communication exactly through new technologies. This leap forwards does not necessarily mean an improvement in quality. But this enormous step allows us to re-qualify different cultural elements in a comprehensive discourse, especially if they lead us towards the Common. There is a philosophical thought that must be taken up again: there is a fundamental tension in the mode of production, in communication, and within the desire to live towards the Common. The way in which we work becomes ontologically decisive; it influences everything else. By now labor has become cooperation: it asks singularities to be singular, and to be inventive. Labor is surplus value: it is captured from cooperation, and from its ability to be persistent and intensive. And there are spontaneous and autonomous elements in the constitution of these forms of labor, and of organization for working. It does not mean that

²³ Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 101-112.

labor in the context of the web is free, cognitive and creatively open. But in this new context there are elements that take the form of subtraction from capitalist command to create autonomous spaces.

Shibasaki: Since I am a scholar of international cultural relations, I am so glad that now you and Michael are working on the cultural aspects.

Negri: It is a quite difficult task, as we cannot know everything. It is important that scholars like you are developing this kind of understanding. For this reason, it is quite important to keep in touch, and to implement our work.

7. Comparison with Japanese scholars and activists

Shibasaki: I have cited some examples of the non-Western argument in Japan especially about modernity, which might share some elements with your arguments, from a different path. One of the arguments is made by Professor Yusuke Maki, who started out as a sociologist but who is also heavily influenced by Marxism and has published several books about how to change the world or how to free Japanese society. He also published a very difficult book about Marx. However, after taking his sabbatical leave in Mexico, he was interested in the wisdom of indigenous people and his view was deeply influenced by the works by Carlos Castaneda. And in 1977 he published the book called *Hissing of the Wind*, which became the turning point in his academic life.²⁴ In that book, he tried to reconstruct all the books published by Castaneda, forged his own hypothesis on the theoretical structure of Castaneda, and proposed its essence and further developed his own view about human liberation and social reform based on those implications from Castaneda. He also tried to connect some common arguments between Karl Marx and Castaneda. And one of his arguments is that “Modernity is not universal, indigenous is not particular”. Instead, he insisted that “Modernity IS particular and indigenous IS universal”.²⁵ And such indigenous singularity would change the world. Maki’s perspective reminds me of your argument about singularity and indigenous culture.

Negri: I am a bit skeptical about these issues. Recently I was in Athens for *documenta14*, and they put me together with some indigenous groups, but I do not agree that much.²⁶ There are many

²⁴ Yusuke Maki, *Hissing of the Wind (Kiryu No Naru Oto)* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1977).

²⁵ Maki, *Hissing of the Wind*, 32-33.

²⁶ *documenta 14* was an art exhibition held in Kassel, Germany, and Athens, Greece, in 2017. For details, see the official website (<https://www.documenta14.de/en/>).

peculiarities, many contingencies, and each one demands to be universal. I have gone so far as to say that European thought is not universal, but I am not so self-destructive as to think that indigenous thought is. Let us take them all as individual schools of thought. Moreover, if I may, it is a bit difficult to see universalities through Castaneda and psychedelic mushrooms.

Shibasaki: Another question is based on the passages taken from a book in 1970, written by Makoto Oda.²⁷ He was a famous leader in civil society in post-war Japan and achieved so many historical civil movements. However, he did not act as a so-called charismatic leader or through top-down leadership, rather he always tried to remain one of the leading people. I have cited some of his arguments in one of his most famous books. And I think also there are some similarities between you and Oda. What do you think about his words? Especially his stress on the importance of the possibility of the people who are entangled by powerful authority to entangle back, which seems to describe the same structure between Empire and Multitude, in the sense that Empire tries to control every aspect of life of Multitude, and because of that, Multitude can strike back against every aspect of life.

Negri: I very much agree. The only hesitation in reading your series of notes is that there is no room for class struggle. Reading citations of Oda seems to me like reading some of the best of Marco Pannella.

Shibasaki: Exactly; I think this is one of the weak points in this book. I think he has read Karl Marx or others, but he intentionally does not draw on such works, and constructs only from his own insight and experience.

Negri: The Common is today in various places. One of the key aspects of indigenous movements is the combination of the class dimension with the national-indigenous one. This is what happened, for example, in Bolivia, where I participated in the writing of the Constitution, and also in Venezuela, although in this latter case I am less proud...

Shibasaki: Someday I would like to make a comparison between you and Makoto Oda, based on the concept of resistance.

Negri: These cases take back the Common not as a matter of tradition, of the ancient community, but as a matter of the poor versus the rich, of the exploited versus the exploited. The same happened in Standing Rock. They abandoned an ideology of the Common, or of the ancient common goods linked to race, to the Native Americans. There is a class issue that becomes fundamental. Together with Michael Hardt, I worked with the indigenous people in Ecuador: they are incredible!

²⁷ Makoto Oda, *Ethics and Logic on Social Reform (Yonaoshi No Rinri To Ronri)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972).

Shibasaki: I think that is the key difference between you and Makoto Oda.

Negri: *Life Work and Play*. What I really like about Makoto Oda is his Fourierist attitude, which is very important.²⁸

8. On the issue of dialectical fallacy

Shibasaki: I think there are two characteristics to your argument. The first one is to overturn the relations between modern rules and exceptions in modern society. I really appreciate your configuration on this aspect. But it seems to me that there might be some merit in keeping such principles for the maintenance of modern society. If the Multitude succeeds in overturning the modern rules/exceptions configuration, those merits might be gone. So, it seems to me that the issue is not overturning, but changing the balance. What do you think about this? For example, you have posed the necessity to overturn the modern trinity of ‘identity-sovereignty-property’ into ‘singularity-common-revolution’, but if we are thrown into the zero percent ‘i/s/p’ and one hundred percent ‘s/c/r’ world, we might be at a loss, because we can still enjoy the merits of ‘i/s/p’ while enjoying ‘s/c/r’. So, it might be too sweeping to completely overturn and abandon the merit of the former. What I would like to ask is, do you think that such an act of abandonment is possible?

Negri: You are pretty much criticizing a dialectical residue in my way of arguing. You may be right. It is the dialectical reversal. If you cannot fill in the blanks, you do not give an answer to the problem. It is a question of opening up this real linguistic block. But I have to admit that even your triad of ‘self-state-international relations’ is a bit Hegelian!²⁹ You also make the same mistake. (laughs)

Shibasaki: (laughs)

Negri: You make some self-criticism on your treatment of my argument!

Negri and Shibasaki: (laugh)

²⁸ Taken from three fundamental elements of human life Oda proposed in his book. Oda, *Ethics and Logic*, 111-117.

²⁹ Atsushi Shibasaki, *Self, State, and International Relations: Tomonaga Sanjuro, Immanuel Kant, and the naissance of the worldview in modern Japan (Kindai Nihon no kokusai kankei ninshiki: Tomonaga Sanjūrō to “Kanto no heiwaron”)* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 2009). This book is based on a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Tokyo. For the summarized argument in English see Atsushi Shibasaki, “Tomonaga Sanjūrō’s Epistemology of International Relations: The ‘Self-State-International Relations’ Proto-Paradigm in Modern Japan,” translated by Gaynor Sekimori, *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 159-187 [originally published in *Kokusai Seiji (International Relations)* 156, *Kokusai seiji kenkyū no sentan (The Frontier of International Relations)* 6 March 2009].

Shibasaki: Yes, exactly! At that time, I was convinced that I had found the secret of the configuration of the modern world and that was the ‘self-state-international relations’, but in reality, like you said this was so problematic, and also fell into the dialectical fallacy! And I had no idea about what would happen after this tirade was gone. So that was exactly why I read your book in order to find the answer.

Negri: OK!

Shibasaki: Sometimes I thought your description of Empire and Multitude would be the answer to overcome the tirade!

Negri: There are always certain terminological tricks when we try to construe our argument.

9. Collaboration and translation

Shibasaki: Then we move to the next part, collaboration. This is also one of the most interesting parts to me. As you have already explained, when you and Michael work together, you use three languages: English, Italian, and French. In doing so, do you set any rules for the choice of language in the process? When you work together with him, is there a language that is more important among the three languages you use? Or do you use all of them in your work?

Negri: Italian and English are the main languages we use.

Shibasaki: When you work with Michael Hardt, which language would be the primary one, Italian or English?

Negri: In the end, English is the most important language as the book is written in English.

Shibasaki: I have also noticed that his English is not the typical American English when I read it. It comes from the European tradition.

Negri: Hardt’s English is very classic, not very American. Hardt’s mother was Italian, a second-generation immigrant.

Shibasaki: So, Michael Hardt is your best partner! Since you began publishing your work in English, I imagine more people could access your thought, and more people could respond to you. Do you think that those changes affect you in your thinking?

Negri: Since I moved to France in the 1980s, I undoubtedly changed style, and paid little attention to the small, ancient Italian world. While I was writing Empire, my focus shifted to international phenomena, and my readings on this topic have grown increasingly. Now, most of the literature I read is in English. I read enough French books, but above all international ones.

Shibasaki: I am afraid it is getting late, but still I would like to ask you two more questions. One thing is about translation. As I cited in the example of Stanley Kubrick, there are some people who are very sensitive about the translation of one's work into another language. I would like to know what you think about this. Do you sometimes check the translation of your books, to make sure if it is correctly translated or not?

Negri: I am not really able to follow the translations of my books. The only big problem occurred in China for the translation of *Empire*. Because they are the Empire: the Empire absolutely matches the territory. So, I guess they had to use expedients because saying Empire is saying "China": it is the same word. Then there is the difference between the Mandarin translation, and other abbreviated translations, and then there is the problem of censorship, not only in China. But I found out about these problems only after the book was translated, as I met people who told me about it.

Shibasaki: Have you read the Italian translation of your books with Michael Hardt?

Negri: The Italian translations are usually perfect. *Empire*, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth* were translated by a comrade who unfortunately died: Alessandro Pandolfi was professor of political science at the University of Urbino.

Shibasaki: One of the reasons to acquire the translation is my practice of reading Italian.

Negri: The same is true in French as I checked the translations by myself, except for the first translation of *Empire*. Our French translator works at Yale University, he studied Morgenthau closely. He translated the books *Multitude* and *Declaration*.³⁰ He is a student of Bourdieu.

Shibasaki: It would be very interesting for me to compare the translation because I am a scholar of cultural relations.

10. Education and messages to the student

Shibasaki: Well, I think this is going to be the last question. This is about your view on education and if you would like to convey your message to young students who are going to study this world, including international relations, world politics, *Empire* and *Multitude*. I think you have not explored your ideas on education at length, at least in your recent publication, but it seems to me that in order to change the world by the revolution by *Multitude*, education is the key. So what do you think about the role of education?

³⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo-Navis Author Services, 2012).

Negri: I am a militant, so education is too big a word for me. The fundamental elements of my experience are the continuous communication with and learning from comrades and friends, and the fact that I am continuously learning. It is not an education from above.

Shibasaki: Do you think that education in schools should be like that?

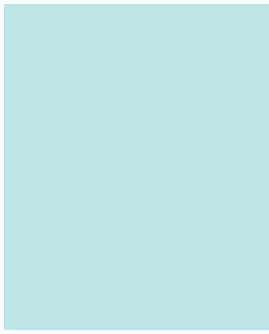
Negri: I am a 1968-inspired activist, I think with great realism that an academic education is useful for class formation, but I know as well that knowledge becomes productive only through sharing and by interaction.

Shibasaki: Thank you so much for everything.

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