

Affective Labour Michael Hardt

Hardt states that currently “providing services and manipulating information are at the heart of economic production” (page 2 of 9). “(P) roviding services” sounds altruistic. Manipulating information sounds, well, manipulative, directing traffic from top down.

I think of service economies, everything from essential health services to the service industry itself. I used to work in the service industry so I ponder its relationship with affect. I think of the etymology of “service” which shares roots with “servant”.

So the affect economy is not homogenous, and not only when manipulative enterprises disguise themselves as empathetic. The entertainment industry occupies a sizable percentage of the affect economy. “The entertainment industry and the various culture industries are ... focussed on the creation and manipulation of affects”. (page 5 of 9). The entertainment industry comes in many guises. Industry refers to manufacturing. But “cultural industries” primarily refers to communications - broadcasting, and infotainment - not to modernist art practices which disdain audiences. Entertainment industries create what some call communities, and what others “markets”.

Community and market might seem oppositional - community implies solidarity against Social Darwinism. But “community” is also exclusionary. Are you part of “the community”? Do you consume my product? “Affective labour is itself and directly the constitution of communities and collective subjectivities”. (page 1 of 9). Solidification of a common cause might be at play here but so might the creation of niche markets .

Hardt makes it clear that within affective economies there are still McJobs. Industrial labour is hardly a thing of the past, but production leading market (Fordist) has been succeeded by market leading production (Toyotist), resulting in downsizing and outsourcing of labour . Class divisions exist between Affective economies and Industrial counterparts as well as within Affective economies themselves. Still, affectivity can be initiated from bottom up rather than top down; and this can generate non-governmental and non-corporate activities beneficial to citizens not in clear-cut power positions. Well, this *is* encouraging.

Emma Goldman wanted no part of any revolution without dancing. What might be meant by “dancing”? Playing with (or manipulating) information? Creating temporary autonomous zones? Defining one's own bureaucratic language? Being able to perceive subversive micro-rhythms within apparently uniform grids? Hopefully, all of these possibilities and more.

**Pub. In Reading/Feeling If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to be Part of Your
Revolution**