

Antonio Negri (1933-)

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Description Antonio Negri is an Italian political philosopher (b. 1933), best known for *Empire* (2000), a book on globalization that he co-authored with American cultural critic, Michael Hardt. Antonio Negri is a controversial figure whose life and political activity are difficult to separate from his academic work and writing. Author of books on Descartes, Spinoza, and Machiavelli, in addition to works on the philosophy of time and the state-form, Negri first came to public attention as an activist during the political turbulence of late 1960s and 70s in Italy. He was a key member and leading theorist of the radical left-wing organizations Potere Operaio (1969-73) and Autonomia Operaia (1973-79), which argued for a revolutionary decoupling (the "autonomy" in autonomia) of workers from capitalist production. In a context in which the Italian Communist Party (PCI) had become intent on gaining state power through electoral victory (becoming a proponent of so-called "eurocommunism"), these organizations emphasized the need for more radical theory and action in order to bring about truly revolutionary social change. The kidnapping and murder of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978 by another, extreme left-radical group, the Red Brigades, led to sweeping arrests of leftists in Italy, including Negri, who was falsely charged and sentenced to prison as a terrorist. Released from prison in 1983 after winning a seat as Radical MP, Negri fled to France, where he remained until returning voluntarily to Italy in 1997 to serve out a sentence for the "moral culpability" of his writings in the anti-state activities of the Italian left. His recent writings, including *Empire* and the more recent *Multitude* (2004), can be seen as an attempt to extend his earlier political theories to take into account the political problems and possibilities for radical change introduced by a capitalism that has become truly global.