



The Mimetic Turn of Economy

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Instead of speaking about a linguistic turn in the economy and production in the so called Post-Fordist society, information society or knowledge economy, we should frontally talk about *the mimetic turn of economy* and organizing in general. Mimesis is a Greek word for imitation. It is well known that Plato chased out art from the ideal republic because of its mimetic nature: art is not looking after the real names or real numbers of beings, but imitating only some of their external or visible aspects like colour, sound and form. It is not possible to organize good life on the basis of constantly transforming compositions of individuals and things.

In the mimetic turn of economy art and production of value blend in and become inseparable. This reveals the intimate interconnectedness between the concept of value, art and imitation.

The mimetic turn means that the organization of the elementary human faculties, the general preconditions of human action and knowledge (rather than the actual and specific actions and tasks) become the central question of value creation. What is at stake in imitation is just a general human disposition to react to the things that do not belong into its immediate environment, to the things that do not have any specific and foreseeable meaning. Indeed, what is imitation? It is basically unification or identification that does not have any external reasons, or its reasons are completely trivial.

When looking at the contemporary economy, it is quite evident that the mechanisms of creation of value are changing. This is due to the growing importance of knowledge and communication in the process of valorization. Today knowledge and communication are immediate forces of production and controlling the production of knowledge, its transmission and access to it are central political questions.

The theories of value we find in classical (or Marxist) political economy or in the actually dominant economics tradition are not able to explain the process in which knowledge is transformed into value, because they ignore the *directly social nature of value*. The reason to the immediately social nature of value is a consequence of *vergesellschaftung* of production and labor – even if the word ‘socialization’ is not a good word to explain the change, because it implicates that before the production of

value was not social, but in some way individual, which, of course is not true. The transformation has led to a disappearance of specific place and time for production.

The immediate social character of value and its creation in social cooperation have led economists like André Orléan to speak about the need to have ‘humility in economics’ (Orléan, 2002). The expression has important methodological connotations. According to Orléan economics has come to the point in which it must include among the conditions that affect economic fluctuations the knowledge of persons, their beliefs and the way they understand their surroundings and justify their actions. Production of economic value and production of society have a tendency to become one.

This means that economy and economics have to move from the limited sphere of rationality towards *the totality of social life*. They blend into the society and become part of the production of society, or part of that what is called ‘biopolitical production’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000).

In the knowledge economy labor force, instead of being a physical or biological (organic) concept, has revealed its purely mental and potential nature that has no existence outside social cooperation (Lazzarato, 2002; Virno, 2002). This social cooperation has a mimetic nature in the sense that it is based on the elementary human disposition to imitate others.

In the field of economy mimetic behavior challenges the neoclassical assumptions of human beings as perfectly rational animals as well as the idea of market quotation as a complete synthesis of all financial information (Shefrin, 2001).

As Orléan (1999) suggests, it is in the nature of the financial markets to function on the basis of the mass behavior of the investors. To function properly the financial economy depends on the mimetic mass behavior based on the *deficit of information* (Marazzi, 2002). The lack of information has also this meaning: lack of pre-established order. As Gilles Deleuze pointed out information is basically a command or an edict.

What characterizes mimetic behavior is the *deficit of information* or lack of information. In short: *imitation begins where information ends*.

This means that imitation indicates the specific ‘place’ where value is created in the social cooperation (Orléan, 1999; Marazzi, 2002). This ‘place’ is a threshold on which human animal reacts (or opens up) to that which is not information and has no predetermined meaning, i.e. to the world that is not ordered and has to be created.

Information in this sense is nothing else but commands or inputs that order human action, and, correspondingly, imitation starts when command, or information, loses its credibility.

Mimesis or imitation does not find its expression in any specific activity but in the *absence of specific activity or information*.

If mimesis is defined as the deficit of information, then mimetic action and the new *mimetic methods* to organize and control this action grow out from *the crisis of transmitting information*.

Typical mimetic behavior takes place when people run in the same direction where the others are running not knowing why they are running and where the others are going. They *trust* that the others know as the others trust that they know. This trust does not have any positive content as information; it is based on *formal expectations* of how people in general act or think. These formal expectations *constitute the general conditions of action and knowledge*. They form the only, even if theoretical, possibility to control and guide mimetic behaviour.

The deficit of information constrains people to navigate in the world with the help of the most elementary human faculties that do not transmit any specific information. This underlines the importance of developing the *general capacities to respond to every possible situation*.

The management of imitation is possible only through the management of these general capacities or general conditions of human action and communication (the faculty of language, the ability to communicate, to think and remember, the ability to learn and to relate to 'the presence of others').

The *general conditions* and attempts to organize them in organizational practices, in politics and social life at large form the basis to the mimetic methods that are used to transform the social cooperation between preordained, meaningful and productive services. It seems to be extremely important to study *how are the general conditions (of knowledge and action) created, what is their role in innovation process, in what ways they measure and condition knowledge and how they are organized and managed*.

If in the industrial era the basic acts of organizing were restricted to the level of assignments, action and information, now the main focus of organization is on the level of possibilities and contexts of actions and information without paying much attention to the outcomes or meanings.

This could be said in the following way: If money functions on the level of completed actions and autonomous products in a sense that money is able to organize only that which is already complete, the new principle of organizing functions on the level of incomplete actions, incomplete information and constantly changing assignments typical to the new societies of control: "In the societies of control we never complete anything" (Deleuze, 1990). This means that the *arkhe, the very origin* of organizing in contemporary economy is *the lack of information*.

From here grow the new methods of organizing work and production in contemporary society. Organizing does not mold, but models action and information. It is mimetic in its nature.

But the lack of information is also the structural precondition for arbitrary power or *Empire* as a political organization. Every empire has to create means of control that do not have a need to 'know everything'. The operations of an empire are always

demonstrative. An empire has to demonstrate or show its power. This structural need to demonstrate power increases the spectacular violence of its police actions, especially in the globalized society of communication.

In the end of the *Capturing the moving mind*, we can ask what kind of counter-demonstration the conference was to the spectacular logic of empire? Or: What could be counter-organizing?

No doubt one of the key concepts of counter-organizing is the concept of intuition. To study the laws of intuition means to study the very laws of the coming political organization that can escape the spectacular logic of empire.

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