

## *Introduction*

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1.

The title of the monographic section of this issue of the «International Gramsci Journal», *Gramsci in France*, accurately reflects its contents. It brings together five papers<sup>1</sup> presented during the symposium *Gramsci en France: depuis 1975 à nos jours*, held on 24 May 2024 at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, and one paper presented during the symposium *Pouvoir et subalternité. Les usages de Gramsci en sciences sociales*, held on 14 June 2025 at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Both initiatives were devised within the framework of, and at the instigation of, IGS-France/Société Gramscienne Française, which was founded on 12 December 2023 as a section of the International Gramsci Society to promote the study of Gramsci's life, work and thought. On this occasion, the members of IGS-France held a general meeting and elected its governing bodies.

2.

The symposium in Lyon was organized by Marie Lucas, Camilla Sclocco and Giuliano Guzzone, with the encouragement and support of Romain Descendre and Jean-Claude Zancarini, and under the patronage of the Laboratoire d'Excellence "Constitution de la Modernité" (Université de Lyon) and the Unité Mixte de Recherche 5206 "Triangle – Action, Discourse, Political and Economic Thought" (ENS de Lyon).

This project arose from different motivations: on the one hand, there was a perceived need to subject the intellectual and political career of André Tosel (1941–2017) to a closer and more thorough histori-

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Settis's paper on *Gramsci et l'École de la régulation* examined the filters and channels through which the themes of *Americanism and Fordism* were absorbed and utilised by the economists of the so-called "School of Regulation": Alain Lipietz, Michel Aglietta, Christian Palloix and Benjamin Coriat. Although in keeping with the theme of the conference, it reiterated findings published elsewhere and could not be included in these proceedings. Please refer to B. Settis, *Usi e letture di Gramsci nelle teorie della regolazione*, in *Egemonia e modernità. Gramsci in Italia e nella cultura internazionale*, a cura di F. Frosini e F. Giasi, Roma, Viella, 2017, pp. 325-42: 332.

ographical examination, and, in particular, the contribution he made to the survival, renewal and «revival»<sup>2</sup> of French Gramscian studies, even in the midst of the crisis that engulfed theoretical Marxism in the 1980s; on the other hand, the aim was to study the dissemination of Gramscian concepts into disciplinary fields other than philosophy and political science, such as the history and sociology of religions, anthropology and ethnology, taking as a point of reference the pioneering yet still «authoritative»<sup>3</sup> study by Hugues Portelli (b. 1947) on *Gramsci et la question religieuse* (1974). These working hypotheses were subsequently incorporated into an *Appel à communications* which took 1975 as its starting point and invited scholars to consider whether, and in what ways, the first critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks*, edited by Valentino Gerratana, had influenced French intellectuals' approach to Gramsci's writings, the circulation of his thought, and the application of his conceptual framework.

Although not without its less convincing aspects, this attempt at synthesis had at least the merit of presenting a broader and more multifaceted picture – from both a disciplinary and methodological perspective – of Gramsci's "reception" in France, whilst avoiding drawing too sharp a distinction between specialist studies *on* Gramsci and "uses" *of* Gramsci. From this point of view, the attempt has not been entirely fruitless: the contributions of André Tosel or Christine Buci-Glucksmann, to name but two, could not be fully understood if their historical-critical and genetic approach to Gramsci's texts and concepts were detached from the urgent need to engage with the major challenges of their time, the search for a theoretical and practical alternative to Althusserianism, the Euro-Communist experiment, the crisis and subsequent disintegration of the international communist movement, and the emergence of a new phase of global capitalism. In the cases of, we are dealing with Gramscian philosophers who have done «more than simply study Gramsci».<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> C. Sclocco, *Gramsci in Francia e la Francia di Gramsci*, «International Gramsci Journal», vol. 5, 2023, n. 5, pp. 95-108: 96.

<sup>3</sup> M. Lucas discusses its significance and limitations in *Religion et hérésies dans la pensée d'Antonio Gramsci*, Paris, Garnier, 2025, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> R. Descendre, *Da Tosel a Gramsci, sulla via della traducibilità*, in *Studi gramsciani nel mondo. Gramsci in Francia*, a cura di R. Descendre, F. Giasi e G. Vacca, Bologna, il Mulino, 2020, pp. 17-31: 17-18.

Moreover, the insights and points for further consideration that emerged from the Lyon seminar led us to draw, with some caution, the following conclusion. The first critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks* had a significant impact, particularly when one considers the contributions of individual intellectuals. However, when viewed in the broader context, it cannot be said that it has altered the framework within which French culture had engaged with Gramsci's thought and works since the 1960s, nor, even less so, that it has sparked anything comparable to a Gramsci *Renaissance* or a «return to Gramsci»,<sup>5</sup> as was to occur later, from the 2000s onwards, with different protagonists and on the basis of various cultural and political factors. If anything, it helped to prolong a phase that was in any case destined to come to an end due to its inherent limitations.

3.

The symposium *Pouvoir et subalternité. Les usages de Gramsci en sciences sociales* was organised by Yohann Douet, Maririta Guerbo and Vincent Heimendinger, under the auspices of the Laboratoire d'Excellence «Constitution de la Modernité» (Université de Lyon), IGS-France (Société Gramscienne Française) and the Institut des sciences juridique et philosophique de la Sorbonne (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne).

The aim of this symposium was to study the reception of Gramsci in the social sciences, particularly in history and anthropology, and to deepen the dialogue between his thought and current research in these disciplines. Beyond its intrinsic intellectual interest, the organisers considered it important to try to strengthen this dialogue in the French context, where it had long remained very weak. Gramsci's thought has had a profound influence on innovative historiographical currents that have now become classic reference points elsewhere, particularly in the Anglophone context (*history from below; subaltern studies*) and in Italy (*microstoria*). Similarly, Gramsci's importance in anthropology is evident in Italy (through the tradition inaugurated by Ernesto De Martino), but his influence now extends well beyond this national tradition and has reached the various fields of the discipline.<sup>6</sup> With a view to studying and strengthening the dialogue between Gramscian thought and the

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<sup>5</sup> See R. Descendre, *Gramsci in Francia: un ritorno*, «International Gramsci Journal», vol. 4, 2022, n. 4, pp. 41-52.

<sup>6</sup> This is clearly shown by Luigigiovanni Quarta's article in the present issue, which is linked to his presentation at the symposium.

social sciences, the symposium therefore brought together, alongside philosophers and specialists in Gramsci's thought, researchers in anthropology and history.<sup>7</sup>

One of the guiding threads of the symposium, and also one of Gramsci's essential contributions to the social sciences, is what might be called the *antinomy of subalternity*. On the one hand, Gramsci highlights the *necessity* to study from below the ways of life, practices and struggles of subalterns; on the other hand, however, he emphasises the *difficulty* of attaining such knowledge from below, precisely because of what characterises subalternity: the "fragmented" character of subaltern groups, the rarity of the documents they leave in history, and the categories and narratives imposed by power. Without, of course, denying this overwhelming weight of power, with its effects of fragmentation and concealment of every subaltern activity or thought, the challenge is to recover, as far as possible, what subaltern lives and experiences contain in the form of traces of autonomous activity. It is this Gramscian intuition that the symposium sought to trace in numerous historical and anthropological works, past and present.

The objective was also to clarify the always complex relationship between political discourse and scientific discourse. For Gramsci, the resolution of the antinomy of subalternity is definitively achieved only through the political, revolutionary overcoming of subalternity, that is, through the establishment of a new hegemony and the emancipation of the subalterns. As regards historical and anthropological works inspired by Gramsci, they certainly look favourably on subaltern struggles, but they remain works of social science, rather than the elaboration of a political thought. In short, the use of Gramscian thought in the social sciences requires genuine *translations*, which opens up a set of debates on their greater or lesser fidelity.

#### 4.

Anthony Cr ez egut's contribution, which builds on previous research,<sup>8</sup> sheds new light, drawing on archival documentation and the

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<sup>7</sup> Riccardo Ciavolella, Delphine Frasch, Marie Lucas, Isabelle Merle, Luigigiovanni Quarta, Gianfranco Rebutini, and Giacomo Tarascio spoke during the symposium. The details of the presentations are available at the following address: <https://philosophie.pantheonsorbonne.fr/evènements/pouvoir-et-subalternite.-usages-gramsci-en-sciences-sociales>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Cr ez egut, *Les  uvres de Gramsci en France. Enqu ete dans les labyrinthes de l' dition*, «Mil Neuf

testimonies of some of the key figures, on the political and cultural factors – partly linked to Althusser’s legacy – which, during the 1970s, influenced, hindered and significantly delayed the production of a complete edition of the *Prison Notebooks* in French, modelled on the edition promoted in Italy by the Istituto Gramsci.

The essays by Vincent Charbonnier and Paolo Desogus focus on the figure of Tosel. The first demonstrates how Eric Weil’s concept of “action” and Gramsci’s “praxis” jointly influenced and guided Tosel in his endeavour to rebuild Marxist philosophy on new foundations. The second places the concept of “catharsis” at the heart of Tosel’s engagement with Gramsci, arguing that the dialectical nature of Gramscian Marxism and its value as a theoretical and political alternative to the ideologies of neoliberal globalization – postmodernism and post-structuralism – are fully expressed in it.

The following contributions focus not on individual stories, but on collective trajectories and works. Federico Di Blasio traces the debate that took place between 1975 and 1979 between Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Nicos Poulantzas on Gramsci’s concept of the “war of position”, showing how, whilst drawing on the critical insights of the Gerratana edition, it was primarily influenced by the debate on Euro-Communism, which also involved the critical voice of Althusser. Giuseppe Cospito, on the other hand, analyses Gramsci’s presence in the *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, published by Gérard Bensussan and Georges Labica in 1982 and reissued, with additions, in 1985, highlighting the diversity of its sources: from the thematic edition of the *Prison Notebooks* to the critical edition of 1975, from French-language anthologies based on the former to the partial translation of the latter, from “official” communist historiography to a body of literature with little or no sympathy for the philosophy of praxis (from Althusser to Perry Anderson): in short, a “second-hand” Gramsci, more frequently cited than truly understood.

Luigigiovanni Quarta’s contribution examines what Gramsci’s thought can provide to anthropology, particularly with regard to the central issue of culture. Quarta acknowledges that Gramsci does not use the term “culture” in the disciplinary sense attributed to it by anthropology; yet he argues that the entirety of Gramsci’s reflections on history, social relations, ideology, praxis and contradiction allows us to

rethink culture in a fully historicist sense. Against any tendency to reify or essentialize culture, Gramsci enables us to conceive of it as a process immanent to human activity: a relational, conflictual and ever-evolving reality, inseparable from social practices and historical transformations. It is in this sense that Quarta outlines a *fully historicist anthropology*.

The final text of the monographic dossier is not directly linked to either of the two symposia organized by IGS-France/Société Gramscienne Française, but the author is an active member of this association and has been conducting research on Gramsci in France for over a decade. The article is therefore entirely appropriate for this publication, and furthermore serves as a bridge with the dossier on *Gramsci and “philosophy”*.<sup>9</sup> In his contribution, Yohann Douet argues, for his part, that Gramsci sketches out a philosophy of history of a new kind. The philosophy of *praxis* certainly entails a rejection of all dogmatic frameworks imposed on history. However, according to Douet, this does not mean abandoning the classic problems of the philosophy of history, such as those concerning its meaning, its driving logic and its subject or subjects. Rather, Gramsci redefines them in depth, insofar as they are always conditioned by relations of forces and socio-political struggles, within which the philosophy of history itself is situated and produces effects. This is why this new kind of philosophy of history turns out to be practical, immanent, reflective, open and, in a word, *democratic*. In the *Archive* section, we publish the English translation (by Derek Boothman) two entries from the *Dizionario gramsciano 1926-1937 – Fordism and Jacobinism* – written by Giorgio Baratta and Rita Medici respectively.

5.

The miscellaneous section consists of three essays. The first, by Joseph Francese, is a careful reconstruction of Tat’jana Schucht’s activities between September 1928 and December 1930, that is between the time when she was taken on at the Soviet Trade Delegation in Milan and that when, after losing her post there, she was taken on by the Soviet Embassy in Rome. Tanja’s conduct in this period shows that she had acted according to a precise end – that of remaining in Italy as the indispensable link between the PCd’I and the Gramsci in prison, and how obtaining this was the fruit not only of a choice external to her, but to

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<sup>9</sup> «International Gramsci Journal», vol. 5, 2024, n. 4.

a large and possibly predominant extent of her own ability and tenacity in convincing her interlocutors. What emerges is radically different from the traditional picture of a Tat'jana devoted solely to others and limited to feelings of humanity and to faithfulness to the family.

Nerio Naldi's article, part of a wider research project regarding the conditions under which Gramsci worked in prison, adds important new information to what we know of the availability in his cell of books, reviews and notebooks. Already an object of discussion, this aspect is not of secondary importance, given that the accessibility and number of texts for study reflects immediately on the rhythm and at the same time on the method of Gramsci's work. Naldi shows that in general there was a wide measure of discretion on the part of the prison authorities as regards the possibility of writing and studying in the cell, and that for long periods (between 1928 and 1933, that is while Gramsci was imprisoned in Turi), this availability of means was relatively broad. However, as regards the attempts to communicate clandestinely with the outside, permission was repeatedly subjected to more or less rigid and lasting restrictions, and the effect of these can be seen in the concrete work on the *Notebooks*.

In the last article in the Miscellany Section, Francesco Pontarelli reconstructs the penetration and utilization of the category of *passive revolution* in the critical analysis of the historical processes that took place in South Africa after the end of Apartheid. Noting that this category, more than others, was – among those coined and redefined by Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks* – used in an extensive fashion and diluted in approaches of little heuristic capability, including its application as regards the South African situation. Pontarelli proposes a new reading of the category itself. If connected to a dialectical approach, and linked to the general question of the formation and self-formation of the working classes, the category of passive revolution is able to offer a renewed perspective of analysis of the South African liberation movement, since it can show up both the indisputable potentialities and the limits, due in fact to the lessening of attention to the formation of a new political culture within the movement itself.