

# International Gramsci Journal

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Volume 3

Issue 1 *Joseph A. Buttigieg / Subaltern groups and hegemony / Gramsci outside Italy and his critiques of political economy and philosophy / Reviews*

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Article 1

2018

## Cover Page

Derek Boothman

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# INTERNATIONAL GRAMSCI JOURNAL

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## ***JOSEPH A. BUTTIGIEG / SUBALTERN GROUPS AND HEGEMONY / GRAMSCI OUTSIDE ITALY AND HIS CRITIQUES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND PHILOSOPHY / REVIEWS***



***Joseph A. Buttigieg, 1947-2019  
President, International Gramsci Society***

ISSN: 1836-6554

***INTERNATIONAL GRAMSCI SOCIETY***

2018

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## Editorial

Derek Boothman

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# Editorial

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## *Editorial*

As this number of the *International Gramsci Journal* was about to go on line, we received the news of the death of Joseph A. Buttigieg, President of the *International Gramsci Society* and, naturally, a member of the Editorial board/Comitato scientifico of the journal, the *IGJ*'s official organ. Joe was both exceptional and irreplaceable as a scholar and as a person, in his generosity, his all-round knowledge and his humanity. The most sincere condolences of the *IGJ* go to his wife Anne, who is herself recovering from surgery, to his son Pete and to the members of his family. We here pay tribute to Joe Buttigieg (the suffix “-igieg” to his name, as he used to explain, is the Maltese form of the Arabic “Aziz”) by publishing various contributions on and by him. The first are two obituaries by members of our Editorial board: in Italian, we print Guido Liguori's Italian article from the 29 January issue of “Il Manifesto” while the English obituary is by Peter Mayo, a collaborator of Joe's on several projects and, like him, Maltese by birth. We then carry articles by Joe himself.

It had already been decided, with thanks to the editors of the *Dizionario gramsciano*, to publish in English as a useful clarification of Gramsci's concepts, the entries on the two subject matters of the articles most frequently downloaded by *IGJ* readers. Part 2 therefore opens, in Buttigieg's original English version *Subaltern / subalterns*, a subject on which he frequently intervened to challenge readers' misunderstandings and misreadings of Gramsci regarding the nature of these strata. In sending the article, Joe added that the immunotherapy / chemotherapy he had been undergoing was “encouraging”, a hope which tragically however proved not to be the case. We then publish in translation Giuseppe Cospito's entry *Hegemony*, the “twin” entry to Joe's, thereby making these two essential contributions available to an English-reading public, as well as to those relying on the Italian and Portuguese editions of the *Dictionary*.

Part 3 then opens with Joe's written-up version of the talk he gave at a seminar and book presentation in May 2017 at Perugia's *University for Foreigners (Università per Stranieri)*. This deals with the history of the publication of Gramsci's writings in English, a language on which many people rely for access to Gramsci's writings and publications on him. Typically, Joe downplays his own role as translator into English of Valentino Gerratana's 1975 *Critical*

Edition of the *Prison Notebooks*, now sadly interrupted at Notebook 8. Neither does he mention his numerous authoritative articles on Gramsci's writings and their uses and misuses. We have been exceptionally scrupulous in editing these contributions for publication, merely correcting a few technical slips and, for the Perugia presentation, introducing sub-headings, an abstract and a bibliography of the books referred to. The section continues with an interview in German, and its English translation, with Walter Baier, presently the coordinator of the *Transform!Europe* network, a former national chairperson of the Austrian Communist Party, and someone known internationally as an authoritative spokesperson for an anti-dogmatic Marxism. This comes out forcefully in his comparative discussion of the influence exerted in Austria by Gramsci and by the native Austro-Marxism, the leading left socialist current outside the Third International; both outlooks are here contrasted with the rigidity of those in Austria who, ousting such internationally prestigious figures as Ernst Fischer and Franz Marek, came increasingly to control the post-war Communist Party. Then, by kind permission of the *Fondazione Istituto Gramsci*, commissioners of the translation, we publish in Italian the analysis contained in Peter D. Thomas's volume *The Gramscian Moment*, of Gramsci's joint critique of economic science and of philosophy. Thomas, one of the leading Gramscian scholars of his generation, was awarded the Giuseppe Sormani Prize for this volume, as the best book on Gramsci in the period 2007-2011. His contribution forms, then, a follow-up to Nerio Naldi's well-received English-language review (*IGJ*, no. 8) of Giancarlo De Vivo's *Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa*, and at the same time is a rejoinder to Perry Anderson's oft-cited claim that Gramsci was silent on economic problems.

The final part of the journal is devoted to reviews (touching both on philology and on social justice): by Giacomo Tarascio of David Kreps's edited collection of essays *Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment*; by Takahiro Chino of Guido Liguori's *Gramsci's Pathways*, a slightly enlarged edition of author's original *Sentieri gramsciani*; and by Lorenzo Fusaro of Alfonso Gonzales's *Reform without Justice*.

Last, we apologize to the author and to readers for publishers' errors, not removed, in Jonas Sylvests's *Labour Movements in Turkey* in *IGJ* 8; the corrected version is on line as from this issue (*IGJ* 9).

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# Necrologio: Joseph A. Buttigieg

Guido Liguori

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# Necrologio: Joseph A. Buttigieg

## **Abstract**

Questo articolo è il necrologio di Joseph A. Buttigieg, Presidente dell'International Gramsci Society, ad opera di Guido Liguori, autore di diverse pubblicazioni su Gramsci e Presidente dell'IGS-Italia

## **Keywords**

Buttigieg, Italy, intellettuale organico

## ***Necrologio: Joseph A. Buttigieg***

Guido Liguori

Joseph A. Buttigieg, Joe per gli amici, per chi lo conosceva e gli voleva bene, si è spento domenica 27 gennaio scorso all'età di 71 anni. Era nato a Malta nel 1947, ma da molto tempo viveva e lavorava negli Stati Uniti, dove era approdato ancora giovane, dopo aver studiato in Francia e nel Regno Unito. E dove si era sposato e aveva iniziato a insegnare. Professore emerito di letteratura all'università di Notre Dame, a South Bend (Indiana), era autore di saggi e libri sull'estetica di James Joyce (*A Portrait of the Artist in Different Perspective*), sul postmodernismo e su altri autori e correnti letterarie e culturali del Novecento.

A questa sua attività di storico, teorico e critico della letteratura, e alla sua appassionata attività di docente universitario, impegnato anche in ruoli di coordinamento e direzione, Buttigieg affiancava una grande passione per Gramsci, di cui era uno dei più insigni studiosi. Grazie a Edward Said, la prestigiosa Columbia University Press gli aveva affidato la traduzione dei *Quaderni del carcere* in lingua inglese, edizione ancora in corso per via degli accurati studi intrapresi per mettere a punto apparati critici in grado di restituire ai lettori di lingua inglese il background culturale e politico del grande pensatore sardo.

Buttigieg era stato, alla fine degli anni Ottanta, con John Cammett e Frank Rosengarten, tra gli ideatori e iniziatori statunitensi della *International Gramsci Society (Igs)*, l'associazione che riunisce studiosi e appassionati di Gramsci ovunque nel mondo. Della *Igs* Joe era stato prima segretario, poi presidente, e aveva presenziato a tutti i suoi più importanti appuntamenti inter-nazionali, a partire dai convegni di Napoli e Rio, nel 1997 e 2001, a quello di Cagliari-Ghilarza del 2007, fino ai recenti incontri di Roma e di Campinas, in Brasile, nel 2017.

Pacato, sorridente, ottimista, ma anche estremamente serio e competente, generoso nell'aiutare studiose e studiosi, aperto all'incontro con diverse culture e contesti, Buttigieg era invitato in molti paesi dei cinque continenti, soprattutto per parlare di Gramsci e del suo insegnamento, di come «tradurlo» nel mondo di oggi.

In Italia era di casa, fin da ragazzo, avendo viaggiato ripetutamente per la penisola dalla vicina Malta in compagnia del padre.

La conoscenza della nostra lingua e della nostra storia e cultura ne avevano fatto un interlocutore privilegiato per molti politici e intellettuali critici: vicino alla International Gramsci Society Italia, membro della commissione per l'edizione nazionale delle opere di Gramsci promossa dalla Fondazione Gramsci, membro della redazione della rivista *Critica Marxista* diretta da Aldo Tortorella, Buttigieg era un intellettuale comunista non dogmatico, democratico, sempre dalla parte delle classi subalterne e teso a comprendere le novità di questo «mondo grande e terribile, e complicato», per usare le parole di quel Gramsci che tanto amava e non si stancava di riproporre.

Non si dimenticherà facilmente il suo sorriso, che riassumeva la sua disponibilità umana e politica, il suo essere un «intellettuale organico» di tipo gramsciano, nei modi e nelle forme per tanti versi nuove che il mondo di oggi richiede.

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# International Gramsci Journal

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Article 5

2018

## Obituary: Joseph A. Buttigieg (1947-2019)

Peter Mayo

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## Obituary: Joseph A. Buttigieg (1947-2019)

### Abstract

This is an obituary of Joseph A. Buttigieg by a long-time collaborator and friend of his, Professor Peter Mayo of the University of Malta, who apart from – and often overlapping with his Gramsci studies – carries out specialist research and teaching on educational matters.

### Keywords

Buttigieg, Gramsci, literature, prison notebooks, culture, politics

## ***Joseph Buttigieg (1947-2019)***

Peter Mayo

We have received the devastating news of the passing away of a great friend and scholar of international repute: Professor Joseph A. Buttigieg, Emeritus Professor at the Notre Dame University, Indiana, USA and alumnus of the University of Malta, the Jesuit-run Heythrop College and SUNY at Binghamton.

The feeling right now is that of shock and disbelief. Only last week I tried skyping him to congratulate him on his son, Pete Buttigieg, Mayor of South Bend, Indiana who was globally in the news, speaking about his intentions to run for US President.

It was only in 1993 that I got to know him thanks to his brother Franco who was about to write a long essay under my supervision. I had just returned from Canada, working on my PhD. A year earlier, after having written my comprehensive exam, feeling great about having scoured the vast literature on Gramsci, I spotted a copy of his annotated and translated Vol. 1 of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in a prominent Toronto bookstore. My immediate reaction was "Darn! I missed this one." The surprise was even greater when I spotted the author's surname "Buttigieg." My immediate reaction was "This must be an American of Maltese descent" only to be told by Professor Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci, months later, over here, that Joe Buttigieg is a graduate of our university who had visited Moscow in his research on Gramsci to meet the latter's son Delio. He therefore met Professor Schembri Bonaci, who was then Maltese Ambassador to the Soviet Union. I later discovered that Joe is the brother of a keen Manchester United supporter, John Buttigieg who I have known for many years. What a small world! Joe too was an avid United fan, by the way.

While John was close to Beckham, Ferguson and Neville (Gary), Joe, for his part, was close to a number of literary theorists such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. He was ensconced at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana where he was William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English and Director of the Hesburgh-Yusko Scholars Program at the same university. In addition, he was a fellow in the University of Notre Dame's Nanovic Institute for European Studies

and Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies besides serving as the Director of the Stamps Scholars Program inside the same institution.

From that first meeting inside my then university office, in the presence of colleague and friend, Professor Ronald G. Sultana, a book project emerged involving another friend and colleague Professor Carmel Borg who I put in contact with Joe from Toronto where Carmel was studying. Together, Joe, Carmel and I edited *Gramsci and Education* published by Rowman & Littlefield (2002). Using our respective contacts, we attracted some of the top names in critical education and Gramscian scholarship. Of course Joe had produced other books including Vol II and III of his projected monumental five volume work in English based on the 4 volume Critical Edition of the *Prison Notebooks* by Antonio Gramsci (Columbia University Press) and *Portrait of the Artist in Different Perspective*, the latter on the aesthetics of James Joyce. In addition, he had numerous articles published in different journals, including the highly prestigious *Boundary II* and *Daedalus*, and in different languages.

He wrote extensively on literary and critical theory and the relationship between culture and politics.

We have lost a great scholar of the old school. He had broad background knowledge which extended well beyond Gramsci. He was one who not only absorbed and imparted knowledge but also produced it in top notch journals, books, periodicals and other outlets, including various recorded seminars which can be accessed online.

His departure at 71 marks a great loss for his Alma Mater, the University of Malta which he continued to serve in different ways: as External Examiner for PhD theses and as guest speaker at seminars, at least one of which can be accessed online. In 1994, he delivered two talks to large audiences at the University of Malta, one on Literary Theory and one on Gramsci in the USA. He came over from Rome as guest of the University's Department of English. The Gramsci in the USA talk, based on a paper subsequently published in a book edited by Eric Hobsbawm, was delivered at a Philosophy Society session. He was also a great commentator on current American politics about which he spoke publicly and even wrote articles in several international outlets, including *Critica Marxista*.

On a personal level he was affable, often smiling and cracking jokes. Nothing gave him more pleasure than seeing excellent cultural productions, especially books, coming out of people ensconced in his country of birth. Joe was always supportive of the efforts of fellow Maltese and very generous at opening doors for young and old alike. I can personally vouch for that he wrote a very generous endorsement to my early Gramsci and Freire book (Zed) and an insightful preface, with very generous comments, to my 2015 book *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci* (Routledge), the latter some months after one of our last meetings - his mother's funeral inside the Mosta Dome. We might have met later for probably one last time.

I shall never forget one anecdote he told me during our first meeting in 1993. He was about to leave for the USA to carry out doctoral work at SUNY. His former professor of English at the University of Malta apparently tried to dissuade him from going to the USA encouraging to remain here where he "will be a big fish in a small pond". These of course were different times in comparison to the last twenty years characterized by the island's connectivity that allows persons ensconced here to establish themselves internationally. Joseph's response to this suggestion was typical of the man's witticisms: "I'd rather be a medium fish in a large pond". We all know that Joe shirked no formidable international challenges. Indeed a medium or large fish he proved to be. Suffice to mention the tributes that have been pouring in from all parts of the world, also judging from the media coverage his passing attracted in his homeland's media. He was a big fish in both a large and small, albeit globally connected, pond.

My condolences go to his widow Anne, his son Pete, and his brothers, sisters and all those who worked closely with him. The Left has lost a great scholar of genuinely international acclaim; I have lost a great friend, collaborator and mentor. May he rest in peace.

# International Gramsci Journal

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Article 6

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## Dizionario gramsciano / Gramsci dictionary: subaltern / Subalterns

Joseph A. Buttigieg

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## Dizionario gramsciano / Gramsci dictionary: subaltern / Subalterns

### Abstract

The Dizionario gramsciano entry, in the original English “Subaltern / Subalterns”, deals with different subaltern groups and classes, in particular those discussed in the late, monographic Notebook 25 titled “At the Margins of History. (History of the Subaltern Social Groups)”. The concept of a subaltern social group or class encompasses, but goes much wider than, the working class or proletariat. The subaltern groups mentioned by Gramsci go from the classical world in the “West” (ancient Rome in particular), through the Middle Ages to the modern era. A key historiographical and conceptual reference point for him, regarding the struggle – or lack of struggle – for hegemony by the subalterns lay in the movement for unification of the modern Italian State. As early as the first notebook, we read that the most progressive forces of the Risorgimento, embodied in the “Action Party”, were subject to “the initiative of the dominant groups”, represented by the “Moderates”, and as such its leading organs resembled subaltern groups. The history of the subaltern groups is “necessarily fragmented and episodic”, the groups themselves being separate from one another, having various degrees of marginality and of socially subaltern nature, albeit with tendencies towards unification. These tendencies are however “continually broken up through the initiative of the dominant groups”, with any “spontaneous’ movement on their part being countered by a reactionary movement of the right of the dominant classes”. Spontaneity must be integrated with conscious leadership – the task of any political party constructing an alternative hegemony on the side of the subalterns.

[N.b. All footnotes in Buttigieg’s contribution are editorial additions; other editorial additions in the text are given in square brackets, whereas curly brackets are used to indicate the author’s textual abbreviations.]

### Keywords

Subaltern groups, subaltern classes, margins of history, fragmentation, spontaneity

## ***Gramsci Dictionary / Dizionario gramsciano: Subaltern /subalterns***

Joseph A. Buttigieg

Throughout his pre-prison writings, in his letters, and on several occasions in the *Quaderni*, Gramsci uses the words subaltern(s) and subalternity (*subalterno*; *subalterna*; *subalterni*; *subalterne*; and *subalternità*<sup>1</sup>), either in their most obvious sense or in a relatively uncomplicated (though not always conventional) figurative manner. These cases merit attention insofar as they might clarify some important Gramscian concept or amplify our understanding of his way of thinking – as, for example, in Q1§43 (*QdC* p. 37 [PN Vol. 1, p. 133]<sup>2</sup>) where he draws an analogy between certain types of intellectuals and “junior officers in the army” [*ufficiali subalterni nell’esercito*]; they are, however, distinguishable from and not to be conflated with those moments in the *Quaderni* that mark the emergence and gradual elaboration of the basic lineaments of an original theory concerning various aspects of the relations between the dominant classes and subordinated social groups in political as well as in civil society. The essential elements of this theory are laid out, albeit sketchily and unsystematically, in one of the later and shorter *quaderni “speciali”* [“special” notebooks] under the general title *Ai margini della storia. (Storia dei gruppi sociali subalterni)* [“At the Margins of History. (History of the Subaltern Social Groups)”] (Q25§§1-8; *QdC*, pp. 2279-94).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With the aid of an electronic edition of the *Notebooks*, we now know that the noun “subalternità” occurs however on just one occasion there, as “subalternità intellettuale”.

<sup>2</sup> PN will be used to indicate Joseph Buttigieg’s English translation of the Gerratana “Critical Edition” of 1975 (*QdC* in the text) for the Columbia University Press, New York (Vols. 1, 2 and 3 published in 1992, 1996 and 2007 respectively).

<sup>3</sup> In English, for Q25§1 (*Davide Lazaretti*), see Gramsci *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (trans. D. Boothman, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1995, pp. 50-55; henceforward in the text *FSPN*) or, for the first draft, in PN, Vol. 2, pp. 18-20 (Q3§12); for Q25§2 (*Methodological criteria*), Q25§4 (*Some General Notes on the Historical Development of the Subaltern Social Groups in the Middle Ages and in Rome* [partial translation]) and Q25§5 (again *Methodological Criteria*), see “International Gramsci Journal” (hereafter *IGJ*), Vol. 1, No. 2, 2010 (collective project by advanced translation students of the University of Bologna) and *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (hereafter in the text *SPN*), trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 52-4. A brief extract from Q25§2 is also found on pp. 54-5 of *SPN*. In a somewhat abbreviated form, Q25§6 appears as a first draft in Q3§98 and Q3§99, PN, Vol. 2, pp. 95-6, while short parts of Q25§7 appears in this same volume of Buttigieg as first drafts (Q3§69, p. 67; Q3§71, pp. 67-8; and Q3§75, p. 72).

In Q§25 Gramsci reproduces and consolidates, with some amplifications, thirteen notes from Q1 and Q3, all of them composed in 1930, and one note from Q9 written in 1932. It is the only “special” notebook on a topic that does not appear among the “main topics” on the first page of Q1 or the “main essays” and “subject groupings” listed in Q8. Since the last of these three lists was drafted in the spring of 1932, it appears that Gramsci recognized the importance of studying the specific characteristics of subalternity within the political and social order rather late in the course of his work on the *Quaderni*. Several other notes, besides the ones assembled in Q25, are pertinent to Gramsci’s treatment of the “subaltern social groups” (or “classes”, as he calls them in the earlier *Quaderni*),<sup>4</sup> including some that deal with closely related issues such as the detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people, education reform, “common sense”, folklore, and representations of the “humble” in literary works. (See, in particular, the note “Popular Literature. Manzoni and the ‘humble’”, Q14§39, *QdC* p. 1696).<sup>5</sup>

It is futile to search for or attempt to formulate a precise definition of “subaltern” or “subaltern social group (class)” as conceived by Gramsci, since in his view they do not constitute a single, much less a homogeneous, entity – which is precisely why he always refers to them in the plural. The category of “subaltern social groups (classes)” encompasses many other components of society besides the “working class” or “proletariat.” Gramsci does not employ “subaltern(s)” as a substitute or a cipher for “proletariat”, whether to evade the prison censor or for some other reason. It is likely, however, that the change to “groups” in Q25 from “classes” in the original versions of the same notes reflects Gramsci’s increasingly cautious attitude toward the surveillance apparatus in Formia.

A distinguishing characteristic of the subalterns and the subaltern groups is their separatedness one from another (*disgregazione*). Not only are there multiple subaltern social groups or classes “subaltern social groups (or classes)”, but they are also disconnected and quite different from one another: while some of them may have achieved a significant level of organization, others might lack all cohesion,

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<sup>4</sup> In fact not only the earlier ones but right up to the last notebook.

<sup>5</sup> In English, see Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith, trans. W. Q. Boelhower, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, p. 294.



and within the groups themselves there exist various degrees of subalternity and marginality. A look at past revolutions, Gramsci points out, would reveal that [there were] “various subaltern classes {...} ranked according to their economic position and homogeneity” (Q3§48, *QdC* p. 332 [PN Vol. 2, p. 52]). The *disgregazione* of the subaltern strata of society was a preoccupation of Gramsci’s since his days as a journalist and party leader. In *Alcuni temi della quistione meridionale* [*Some Aspects of the Southern Question*] he defined the Mezzogiorno as “a great social disintegration” (“*una grande disgregazione sociale*”) with a “great amorphous disintegrated mass of peasants” (Gramsci, *La Costruzione del Partito Comunista*, Torino, Einaudi, 1971, p. 150).<sup>6</sup> Lack of cohesion and organization renders the subalterns politically impotent; “incapable of giving a centralized expression to their aspirations and needs” (*loc. cit.*), their rebellions are doomed to failure. To be sure, the revolutionary actions of the well-organized Factory Councils (*Consigli di fabbrica*) of Turin also resulted in defeat, but Gramsci attributed that defeat to the divisions fomented among the industrial working class by the promoters of corporativist reformism. In the essay on the *Southern Question*, Gramsci does not use the term “subaltern(s)”, but in it he provides a concrete illustration *ante litteram* of his observations in the note on *Methodological Criteria* (originally titled *History of the Dominant Class and History of the Subaltern Classes* [*Storia della classe dominante e storia delle classi subalterne*]) in Q25:

The history of the subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. It is undoubtedly the case that in the historical activity of these groups there is a tendency toward unification albeit in the provisional stages, but this tendency is continually broken up through the initiative of the dominant groups [...] The subaltern groups are always subject to the initiative of the dominant groups, even when they rebel and are in revolt [...] (Q25§2, *QdC* p. 2283).<sup>7</sup>

The outward expression of the subalterns’ discontent with their exploitation, impoverishment, and marginalization often takes the form of spontaneous rebellion. Spontaneity, by itself, is not only

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<sup>6</sup> Gramsci, *Selected Political Writings 1921-1926*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1978, p. 454.

<sup>7</sup> In English *IGJ*, Vol. 1, no. 2, April 2010, p. 4, with two adjustments to the wording here included; also in *SPN*, p. 55.

ineffectual but counterproductive. Gramsci explains the negative effects of “so-called ‘spontaneous’ movements” in a note on “Spontaneity and conscious leadership” (not included in Q25):

It is almost always the case that ‘spontaneous’ movement of the subaltern classes is matched by a reactionary movement of the right wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons: an economic crisis, for example, produces, on the other hand, discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements and, on the other, conspiracies by reactionary groups, which take advantage of the objective enfeeblement of the government to attempt coups d’État” (Q3§48, *QdC* p. 331 [PN Vol. 2, p. 51]).<sup>8</sup>

This does not mean, though, that the spontaneous feelings of the subaltern classes should be ignored, much less repudiated; rather, Gramsci maintains, spontaneity needs to be harnessed and integrated with conscious leadership (*direzione consapevole*). This is the task of the political party that struggles for hegemony on the side of the subalterns – a party, furthermore, that aims at the unity of theory and practice. Gramsci recalls how “this element of ‘spontaneity’ was not neglected, much less disdained” by the “Turin movement” (i.e. the *Ordine Nuovo* group); to the contrary, it

was *educated*, it was given a direction, it was cleansed of everything extraneous that could contaminate it, in order to unify it by means of modern theory {i.e. Marxism} but in a living, historically effective manner (Q3§48, *QdC* p. 330 [PN Vol. 2, p. 50; *SPN*, p. 198]).

This unity of spontaneity and “conscious leadership”, Gramsci goes on to explain,

is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, insofar as it is mass politics and not mere adventure by groups that appeal to the masses (*loc. cit.*).

The core issue for Gramsci – not only in his notes on the subalterns, but also in countless other pages of the *Quaderni*, including many of those devoted to his reflections on philosophy, the modern prince, and the intellectuals – is how to bring an end to subalternity, that is, to the subordination of the majority by a minority.

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<sup>8</sup> There is a slightly different wording in *SPN*, p. 199.

Obviously, this cannot be achieved as long as “the subaltern groups are subject to {...} the initiative of the dominant groups” (Q25§2; [IG], April 2010, p. 4)). The condition of subalternity can only be overcome through the attainment of autonomy and that, according to Gramsci, can only come about through a lengthy process and a complicated struggle. In order to engage in a successful struggle against the existing power structure, it is necessary, first of all, to understand precisely what makes it so resilient and durable. The dominant classes in modern states do not hold on to power solely, or even primarily, because of their hold on the coercive apparatuses of the government. As Gramsci explains in one of the most quoted passages of the *Quaderni*, the modern state is buttressed by “a sturdy succession of fortresses and emplacements” (Q7§16, *QdC* p. 866 [PN Vol. 3, p.169])<sup>9</sup> – i.e. civil society. The governing class does not – and, certainly, it does not want to appear to – have exclusive or absolute control over civil society; if it did, it would not be able to claim that it governs with the freely given consent of the people. What it has instead is a formidable array of institutional and cultural mechanisms that enable it directly and indirectly to disseminate its world-view, inculcate its values, and mold public opinion. Gramsci calls this “the ideological structure of a ruling class (*classe dominante*) {...}”: that is the material organization meant to preserve, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological ‘front’” (Q3§49; *QdC* p. 332 [PN Vol. 2, p. 52]).

To be effective, then, the struggle against the configuration of power that perpetuates subalternity needs to be directed against this ideological “front” – hence, the proper strategy is not a frontal attack against the seat of power (the toppling of which alone does not result in fundamental change) but a “war of position” on the terrain of civil society. In light of this, Gramsci poses the following question: “What can an innovative class set against the formidable complex of trenches and fortifications of the ruling class?” His answer:

The spirit of cleavage – that is, the progressive acquisition of the consciousness of one’s own historical identity – a spirit of cleavage that must aim to extend itself from the protagonist class to the classes that are its potential allies: all of this requires complex ideological work” (Q3§49; *QdC*, p. 333 [PN Vol. 2, p. 53]).

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<sup>9</sup> SPN’s alternative translation is: “a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” (p. 238).

The “innovative and protagonist class” to which Gramsci refers in this passage is the organized industrialized working class, itself a subaltern group but one that emerged out of the most advanced structure of capitalist production. As Marx and Engels pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto*, one of the unintended effects of industrial modernization and capitalist competition is to intensify the forging of ties among workers. The best organized workers’ association or party, the one that has achieved the highest degree of autonomy from the dominant social groups is best positioned to assume the leading role in the struggle for hegemony. This, of course, is the kind of party Gramsci undertook to construct, first through his work within the *Ordine Nuovo* group and subsequently as a leading member of the PCd’I. His conviction that the necessary first stage in the struggle against subordination is “the progressive acquisition of the consciousness of one’s own historical identity” motivated much of his political activity. It is a conviction that he articulated forcefully and with great clarity in an article he published in *Il Grido del Popolo* in 1916, when he was only 25 years old. Some of the phrases he employs in the article are almost identical to the ones he uses in the *Quaderni*.

“*Socialism and culture*” merits reading alongside the notes on the subalterns in the *Quaderni* not because it foreshadows the ideas expressed in them but because in some important respects it helps elucidate them. Socialist culture, Gramsci writes in his article,

is the acquisition of one’s own identity; it is the conquest of a higher consciousness (*coscienza*), with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one’s own historical value, one’s own function in life, one’s own rights and obligations. But none of this can come about through spontaneous evolution {...}” (Gramsci, *Cronache Torinesi* [hereafter *CT*], ed. S. Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1980, p. 100).<sup>10</sup>

Pursuing a decidedly Vichian interpretation of history, Gramsci goes on to explain how through the gradual growth of a consciousness of its own value, humanity gained its independence

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<sup>10</sup> In Italian also in *Scritti giovanili* (hereafter *SG*), Torino, Einaudi, 1972 (1958<sup>1</sup>) pp. 22-6; cf. in English *Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920* (hereafter *SPW 1910-1920*), ed. Q. Hoare and trans. J. Mathews, London Lawrence and Wishart, 1978, p. 11; the first part of Mathews’ translation is here modified to bring it into line with the wording later used by Gramsci in the *Notebooks*, following Joseph Buttigieg’s translation.

from the laws and social hierarchies imposed by minorities in previous historical periods. Furthermore, this development of consciousness does not come about as an imposition by some law of psychological necessity but as a result of intelligent reflection on the prevailing conditions and on how to transform them advantageously. Gramsci draws an important lesson that can be read as a succinct expression of the political program that gave shape to his life's work: "This means that every revolution has been preceded by an intense labor of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas amongst masses of men, who are at first resistant, and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves, who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition" (CT, p. 101; [SG, p. 24; SPW 1910-1920, p. 12]).

Revolutions do not occur spontaneously, Gramsci never tired of repeating, nor are they the inevitable consequence of immutable economic or other laws. (The many pages in the *Quaderni* devoted to the critique of Bukharin are motivated by the impulse to eliminate the notion that the subalterns will be liberated from their misery by the unstoppable march of history.) Revolutions are consciously prepared and made by humans who, having gained a deep awareness of their value and worked hard at cultural transformation, succeed in organizing fellow humans and infusing them with the same ideas and values so that they can establish a new civilization. In "*Socialism and Culture*", Gramsci illustrates this process by reference to the successful bourgeois revolution – the French Revolution. The Enlightenment brought about a unified consciousness – "a bourgeois spiritual International", Gramsci calls it citing De Sanctis – which prepared the way for the final acquisition of power.

The bayonets of Napoleon's armies found their road already smoothed by an invisible army of books and pamphlets, that had swarmed out of Paris from the first half of the eighteenth century and had prepared both men and institutions for the necessary renewal (CT, p. 102 [SG, p. 25; SPW 1910-1920, p. 12]).

Gramsci's account of the French Revolution is meant to serve as an illustration of the path that the proletarian party needs to follow

– i.e., to give priority to disseminating its own worldview and transforming the way people regard themselves and interpret their world. One indication out of many that Gramsci was still thinking along the same lines when composing the notebooks are his numerous notes on the kind of journalism and publishing initiatives that were needed to enable the party to reach the widest possible readership among the popular classes.

In Q25, Gramsci proposes a study of the “innovative Italian forces that led the national Risorgimento” in order to understand the process by which “innovative forces” that were at first “subaltern groups” succeeded in becoming “leading and dominant groups” (“gruppi dirigenti e dominanti”: Q25§5; *QdC*, p. 2289).<sup>11</sup> Of particular interest to Gramsci are the

phases through which they {the innovatory forces} acquired 1) autonomy vis-à-vis the enemies they had to defeat and 2) support from the groups which actively or passively assisted them; for this entire process was historically necessary before they could unite in the form of a State (*loc. cit.*).

The copious notes that Gramsci composed on the Risorgimento in other parts of the notebooks constitute, in fact, the groundwork for this historiographical project. One of those notes is especially pertinent; it appears very early in the first notebook and is entitled “Political class leadership before and after assuming political power” (*Direzione politica di classe prima e dopo l'andata al governo*) (Q1§44, *QdC* pp. 40-54 [PN Vol. 1, pp. 136-51]) – it is also the starting point of Gramsci’s development of his distinctive concept of hegemony. Why, he asks, were the Moderates in a position to come to power after the Risorgimento and what were the causes of the Action Party’s failure? He arrives at four conclusions in particular that, as one can readily see, constitute the nucleus of his thinking on the cultural-political strategy that his party had to adopt if it were to successfully lead all subaltern social groups in the struggle for hegemony: (a) the Moderates were organically linked to the class they represented and were its intellectual avant-garde; (b) even before they acquired government power, the Moderates had achieved “political hegemony” by establishing themselves as the leaders of the allied

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<sup>11</sup> The 1971 *SPN* translation, p. 53, renders “dirigenti e dominant” as “hegemonic and dominant groups” rather than the exact wording used in the current article.

classes and attracting to them other intellectuals from different strata in the camps of education and administration – they achieved this on the terrain of civil society; (c) the Action Party failed to establish organic links with the social groups it putatively represented and, in fact, “did not found itself specifically upon any historical class” (Q1§44, *QdC*, p. 41 [PN Vol. 1, p. 136]) – nor did it satisfactorily articulate the aspirations of the popular masses and, especially, of the peasantry (*contadini*); (d) far from assuming a position of leadership, the “leading organs {of the Action Party} in the final analysis resolved themselves according to the interests of the Moderates” (*loc. cit.*) – which is another way of saying that the Action Party lacked “the spirit of cleavage” and, in this respect, resembled subaltern groups that are “subject to ... the initiative of the dominant groups.”

The program of research on the history of subaltern classes that Gramsci outlines in Q25 is by no means limited to the study of those groups and classes that emerged out of subalternity and became hegemonic. He is also interested in the history of subaltern struggles from antiquity to the present. History, however, is written from the viewpoint of the victors, which is why the historical archive does not readily yield reliable information on the topic – the history of subaltern social groups, one might say, is a subaltern form of historiography. Hence, Gramsci writes, “Every trace of autonomous initiative on the part of the subaltern groups is therefore of inestimable value for the integral historian” (Q25§2, *QdC*, p. 2284; [SPN, p. 55]). The notebook contains three notes that pertain to this aspect of the history of subaltern groups: one on Davide Lazzaretti; another on the “development of the subaltern social groups in the Middle Ages and in Rome” (Q25§4, *QdC*, pp. 2284-87 [IGJ, no. 2, April 2010, pp. 6-8]) which, among other things, deals with the rise of the popular classes in the medieval communes – on which Gramsci also wrote elsewhere in the *Quaderni*; and a third on utopias and philosophical novels which, in Gramsci’s view, indirectly and unintentionally reflect “the most elementary and profound aspirations of the subaltern, even lowest, social groups, even those of the lowest ranking” (Q25§7, *QdC*, p. 2290). The note on Lazzaretti, which Gramsci places first in this “special” notebook, brings into relief most directly one of Gramsci’s central theses: the dominant culture marginalizes subaltern social groups by

erasing the political and historical significance of their thoughts and actions. At the very beginning of this note, Gramsci alludes to two works on the leader of the Lazzarettist movement – Andrea Verga’s *Davide Lazzairetti e la pazzia sensoria* (*Davide Lazzairetti and Sensorial Madness*) and Cesare Lombroso’s *Pazzi e anormali* (*The Mad and the Abnormal*) – and then makes the following observation:

Such was the cultural habit of the time: instead of studying the origins of a collective event and the reasons why it spread, the reasons why it was collective, the protagonist was singled out and one limited oneself to writing a pathological biography, all too often starting off from motives that had not been confirmed or that could be interpreted differently. For a social élite, the members of subaltern groups always have something of a barbaric or a pathological nature about them (Q25§1; *QdC*, p. 2279 [*FSPN*, p. 50]).

The explanations of the social élite and its intellectuals have a double effect: they conceal the roots and the seriousness of the general social, economic, and political malaise of which the rebellions and uprisings of subaltern groups are an expression, and they consign the subalterns themselves to the periphery of culture and politics by classifying them as bizarre, unbalanced, atypical – mere curiosities. Herein lies one of Gramsci’s most significant insights: one of the greatest difficulties that subaltern social groups face in challenging the prevailing hegemony is finding a way past the barriers that prevent them from being heard.



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# Dizionario gramsciano / Gramsci dictionary: Hegemony

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## Dizionario gramsciano / Gramsci dictionary: Hegemony

### **Abstract**

Hegemony is by now the most widely used concept of all those found in the Prison Notebooks and developed there by Gramsci. The first use in the Notebooks occurs very early on, purely in the sense of a political hegemony exercised by the so-called “Moderates” in the Risorgimento. There is no unique meaning attached to “hegemony” but an oscillation between a narrow “leadership” as contrasted with “domination” and a broader one which includes both “leadership” and “domination”, leading the allied classes or groups and dominating the opposing ones: in Gramsci’s words, the “‘normal’ exercise of hegemony” is characterized by a “combination of force and consent”. Hegemony is exercised across a variety of fields – not solely political as in the first use of the term, but “political-intellectual”, “intellectual, moral and political”, “politico-cultural” and “cultural”. And the content of political hegemony “must be predominantly of an economic order”. The intellectuals, as defined and discussed by Gramsci in the Notebooks, occupy a particular role in the exercise of hegemony in society by the dominant group and in the domination over society embodied by the State. In a struggle for hegemony, a subaltern group must go beyond the economic-corporative phase, to advance to “political-intellectual hegemony in civil society and become dominant in political society”. Hegemony is intimately connected with democracy, such that in a hegemonic system “there is democracy between the leading groups and the groups that are led”.

[N.b. All footnotes in Cospito’s contribution are editorial additions; other editorial additions in the text are given in square brackets, whereas curly brackets are used to indicate the author’s textual abbreviations.]

### **Keywords**

Hegemony, domination, consent, civil society, political society, State.

## *Gramsci Dictionary / Dizionario gramsciano: Hegemony*

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The first occurrence of the lemma “hegemony” appears in Q1§44, *QdC* p. 41 [in English *PN* Vol. 1, p. 137],<sup>1</sup> where we meet the expression “ ‘political hegemony’ ”, introduced by Gramsci in inverted commas to indicate the particular connotation, as compared with the generic meaning of “pre-eminence”, “supremacy”, found when following up after the continuation of the same note, ending in the constitution of an extremely broad spectrum of meanings in various contexts ranging from the economic to literature, from religion to anthropology, from psychology to linguistics. We are moreover dealing with distinctions which, to use Gramscian terminology, are “methodological” and not “organic” (cf. Q13§18, *QdC* p. 1590 [*SPN*, p. 160]), as comes over clearly right up to the last occurrence of the term (Q29§3, *QdC* p. 2346):

Every time the question of language surfaces {...} it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular masses, in other words to reorganize the cultural hegemony [*SCW*, pp. 183-4].

*Cultural* hegemony which in its turn must not be contraposed to *political* hegemony, as evidenced by the use of expressions such as “politico-cultural hegemony”, “political-intellectual” and “intellectual, moral and political” hegemonies, and similar ones, in addition to the thesis according to which “the philosophy of praxis conceives the reality of human relationships of knowledge as an element of political ‘hegemony’” (Q10II§6, *QdC* p. 1245 [*FSPN*, p. 306]).

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<sup>1</sup> *PN* will be used to indicate Joseph Buttigieg’s English translation of Gerratana’s Critical Edition of 1975 (*QdC* in the text) for the Columbia University Press, New York (Vols. 1, 2 and 3 published in 1992, 1996 and 2007 respectively). *SPN* will be used to refer in the text to *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith, 1971; *SCW* for *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith, trans. W. Q. Boelhower, 1985; and *FSPN* for *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. D. Boothman, , 1995. The last three volumes are all published in London by Lawrence and Wishart.

As regards the meaning to be attached to the term “hegemony”, from the start (Q1§44, *QdC* p. 41) Gramsci oscillates between a more restricted sense of “leadership”, contraposed to “domination”, and a broader one that includes both (leadership plus domination). Indeed he writes that a

class is dominant in two ways, namely it is “leading” and “dominant”. It leads the allied classes, it dominates the opposing classes. Therefore, a class can (and must) “lead” even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant but it also continues to “lead” [*PN* Vol. 1, p. 136-7].

The oscillation continues in the following notes, thereby creating not a few difficulties of interpretation, which may be resolved at least in part by reference to the context. In Q1§48, *QdC* p. 59 [*PN* Vol. 1, pp. 155-6], for example a distinction is drawn between the “‘normal’ exercise of hegemony on the now classic terrain of the parliamentary regime [...] characterized by a combination of force and consent which balance each other” (hegemony as leadership plus domination), and situations in which “the hegemonic apparatus cracks and the exercise of hegemony becomes ever more difficult” (hegemony vs. domination). Such situations, defined there as a “crisis of the principle of authority” - “dissolution of the parliamentary regime” and later as an “organic crisis” or explicitly as a “crisis of hegemony” (Q13§23, *QdC* p. 1603 [*SPN*, p. 210]), may be assimilated to those in which the State is not fully developed; such was the case of the United States, in which (Q1§61, *QdC* p. 72 [*PN* Vol. 1, p. 169]) “hegemony is born in the factory and does not need so many political and ideological intermediaries”, since “there has not yet been (except sporadically, perhaps) any ‘superstructural’ blossoming; therefore, the fundamental question of hegemony has not yet been posed”. In Q6§10, *QdC* p. 692 [*PN* Vol. 3, p. 10] Gramsci was to say that “America has yet to surpass / overcome the economic-corporative phase, which Europe traversed during the Middle Ages”; in Q8§185, *QdC* p. 1053, the judgment is extended to any new State form:

If it is true that no type of State can avoid passing through a phase of economic-corporative primitivism, one can deduce that the content of {...} political hegemony {...} must be predominantly of an economic order [*PN* Vol. 3, p. 342].

The terrain on which the “struggle for hegemony” takes place is that of civil society (Q4§46, *QdC* p. 473 [PN Vol. 2, p. 197]). The relation between hegemony and civil society had already been dealt with in some detail in Q4§38, pp. 457-60, devoted to the “*Relations between structure and superstructures*”. In this paragraph Gramsci distinguishes between three moments: the first is “closely linked to the structure”; the second “is the political ‘relation of forces’”; the third is the “relation of military forces”. The second moment passes through different phases, culminating in the

most patently “political” phase {...} in which previously germinated ideologies come into contact and confrontation with one another, until only one of them – or, at least, a single combination of them – tends to prevail, to dominate, to spread across the entire field, bringing about, in addition to economic and political unity, intellectual and moral unity, not on a corporate but on a universal level, of hegemony [PN Vol. 2, pp. 179-83].

At this point the group that up to then had been subaltern can leave behind “the economic-corporate phase in order to advance to the phase of political-intellectual hegemony in civil society and become dominant in political society”. This subject is developed especially in Notebook 6 (Q6§24, *QdC* p. 703 [PN Vol. 3, p. 20 and *FSPN*, p. 75] where Gramsci is at pains to indicate the “sense it {civil society} is often used in these notes (that is, in the sense of the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the whole of society)”; in Q6§81, *QdC* p. 751 [PN Vol. 3, p. 64; *SPN* p. 245], even from the title we see the nexus that is formulated between *Hegemony (civil society) and the separation of powers*. In Q7§83, *QdC* p. 914 [PN Vol. 3, p. 213], speaking of “what is called ‘public opinion’” Gramsci notes that this “is tightly connected to political hegemony, in other words it is the point of contact between ‘civil society’ and ‘political society’, between consent and force”. As compared with the previous identification between hegemony and civil society, the apparent contradiction is resolved by taking into account the polysemy of the two concepts and that of State: in a series of notes, in fact, Gramsci intends “State = political society + civil society, that is, hegemony protected by the armor of coercion” (Q6§88, 763-4 [PN Vol. 3, pp. 75-6; *SPN*, p. 262-3]). In another group of notes devoted to the critique of Croce’s ethico-political history, read as an attempted, albeit partial and unilateral,

‘translation’ of the concept of hegemony, Gramsci on the other hand opposes the excessive contraposition between “the aspect of history that is related to ‘civil society’, to hegemony” and “the aspect of history related to state-governmental initiative” (Q7§9, *QdC* p. 858 [PN Vol. 3, p. 161]), and insists on hegemony as the element that forms the juncture between civil society and political society. Moreover, different from Croce, the refusal to contrapose the two aspects does not imply their crude identification, as proposed by Gentile, for whom Gramsci claims (Q6§10, *QdC* p. 691)

hegemony and dictatorship are indistinguishable, force is no different from consent; it is impossible to distinguish political society from civil society; only the State exists and of course the State-as-government” [PN Vol. 3, p. 10]).

However at the moment when Gentile’s position is unmasked as a mere hypostatization of the totalitarian regime imposed by the Fascist Party, Gramsci distinguishes between situations in which “the given party is bearer of a new culture and one has a progressive phase” from others in which “the party in question wants to prevent another force, bearer of a new culture, from becoming itself ‘totalitarian’ – this is an objectively regressive and reactionary phase” (Q6§136, *QdC* p. 800 [PN Vol. 3, p. 108]). The difference between fascist totalitarianism and communist totalitarianism consists therefore in the fact that while the former tends to reabsorb civil society within the State, reducing hegemony to force, in the latter,

it is possible to imagine the State-coercion element withering away gradually, as the increasingly conspicuous elements of regulated society (or ethical State or civil society) assert themselves. {...} In the theory of the State → regulated society (from a phase in which State equals Government to a phase in which State is identified with civil society), there must be a transition phase of the State as night watchman, that is of a coercive organization that will protect the development of those elements of regulated society that are continually on the rise and, precisely, because they are on the rise, will gradually reduce the State’s authoritarian and coercive interventions

up to “an era of organic freedom” (Q6§88, *QdC* p. 763-4 [PN Vol. 3, pp. 75-6; *SPN*, p. 263]). Starting from Q6§138, *QdC* p. 802 [PN Vol. 3, p. 109], Gramsci describes the long struggle to install this new model of social organization with the concept of the war of position, which requires “an unprecedented concentration of hegemony”. In Q8§52, *QdC* p. 973 [PN Vol. 3, p. 266], this strategy is contraposed

to Trotsky's strategy of the permanent revolution: the "1848 concept of the war of movement is precisely the concept of permanent revolution: in politics the war of position is the concept of hegemony".

As for the protagonists of this war, in the initial stage of Gramsci's prison reflections, his attention seems centred on the class. In Q1§44, *QdC* p. 40 we read that

the whole problem of the various political currents of the Risorgimento {...} is reducible to the following basic fact: that the Moderates represented a relatively homogeneous class, and therefore their leadership underwent relatively limited oscillations, whereas the Action Party did not found itself specifically upon any historical class and the oscillations which its leading organs underwent resolved themselves, in the last analysis, according to the interests of the Moderates [*PN* Vol. 1, p. 136].

This is a vision that, in presupposing a somewhat mechanical nexus between the structure and the superstructure, would reduce the struggle for hegemony to an epiphenomenon of the class struggle on the terrain of the relations of production. Afterwards, Gramsci would attenuate this rigidity, writing in Q6§200, *QdC* pp. 839-40 that in

the development of a national class, one must take into account not only the process of its formation within the economic sphere, but also its parallel growth in the ideological, juridical, religious, intellectual, philosophical, spheres etc. {...}. Still every movement that is the bearer of a 'thesis' leads to movements of 'antithesis' and {then} to partial and provisional 'syntheses' [*PN* Vol. 3, p. 143].

In the meantime Gramsci had developed a further agent of hegemonic influence, represented by the intellectual. Already tangible as from the note of Q1§44, *QdC* p. 41 [*PN* Vol. 1, p. 137], where the leaders of the moderate party were defined as "organic intellectuals" or "condensed" ones, a "vanguard" of their own class; as from Q4§49 (*QdC* pp. 474-84 [*PN* Vol. 2, p. 199-210]) the weight of the intellectuals assumes a notable increase equally with the extension of the concept itself, up to the point of including not only professional, industrial, scientific, ecclesiastical, clerical intellectuals and so on, concluding in the second draft (Q12§1, *QdC* p. 1516 [*SPN*, p. 9]) that "all men are intellectuals", even though "not all men have in society the function of intellectuals". As from the A text [a first draft text – tr. note] of Q4§49, *QdC* p. 476, Gramsci attributes to the intellectuals

a function in the ‘hegemony’ that is exercised through-out society by the dominant group and in the “domination” over society that is embodied by the State and this function is precisely “organizational” or “connective” [PN Vol. 2, p. 200].

The study of the role of the intellectuals as “functionaries” or, as he was to say in the C text, [the second draft text – tr. note] (Q12§1, *QdC* p. 1519 [SPN, p. 12]) “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government”, involves going into detail into another subject sketched out in Q1, viz. *hegemonic apparatuses* or *systems*: first of all this means the scholastic system in the broadest meaning of the term, from the moment when (Q10II§44, *QdC* p. 1331 [SPN, p. 350]) “every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily a pedagogical relationship”; thus, journalistic undertakings, the legal organizations – repressive and non-repressive – but also, as noted in Q8§179, *QdC* p. 1049 [PN Vol. 3, p. 338], “numerous other so-called private initiatives and activities” including “charitable institutions and legacies to charity” (Q14§56, *QdC* p. 1715 [FSPN, p. 154]). The progressive loss of importance of class, compared to intellectuals, in the exercise of hegemony, to be correlated to his frequent substitution of ‘group’ or ‘social grouping’ (e.g. in his rewritten version of Q1§44 (*QdC* pp. 40-54 [PN Vol. 1, pp. 136-54]) in Q19§24 ({*QdC* esp. pp. 2010-11} [SPN, esp. pp. 57-9]), makes it possible to establish a less mechanical connection between the economic plane and the hegemonic one; it is indeed true, as one reads in Q4§49, *QdC* pp. 474-6, that

every social group, coming into existence on the primal basis of an essential function in the world of economic production creates together with itself, organically, a rank or several ranks of intellectuals;

however,

the relationship between the intellectuals and production is not as direct as in the case of the fundamental social groups, but mediated {...} by two types of social organization: (a) by civil society {...} {and} (b) by the State

as well as by the existence of “pre-existing categories of intellectuals” which represent “a historical continuity uninterrupted



even by the most complicated changes of social and political forms” [PN Vol. 2, pp. 199 and 200]<sup>2</sup>.

One must, moreover, consider the progressive emergence, starting with Q5§127, *QdC* p. 662 [PN Vol. 2, p. 382}, of the role of the party understood as the “modern Prince”, from the moment that “in reality in certain States, the ‘head of State’ {...} is precisely the ‘political party’” which holds “*de facto* power”, and exercises the hegemonic and thus the equilibrating function between different interests in “civil society”. The party presents itself as the bearer of a new model of *substantial* democracy, different from the previous one, if not totally antithetic as compared with the *formal* parliamentary one, as is demonstrated in a series of late notes in which this latter is re-valued in contraposition to tacit or implicit “black parliamentarism”, represented by fascist corporativism but which may also be imputed to Stalin’s regime (“the self-criticism of self-criticism”, the “liquidation” of Trotsky and so on: Q14§74 and Q14§76), in which it is clear that “care must be taken to exclude the slightest appearance of support for ‘absolutist’ tendencies” [SPN, pp. 255-7].<sup>3</sup> This allows Gramsci to create a nexus (Q8§191, *QdC* p. 1056) between

*Hegemony and Democracy.* Among the many meanings of democracy, the most realistic and concrete one, in my view, is that which can be brought into relief through the connection between democracy and the concept of hegemony. In the hegemonic system, there is democracy between the leading groups and the groups that are led [PN Vol. 3, p. 345; see also SPN, footnote on p. 56].

This is the particular meaning attached by Gramsci to “democratic centralism”, which “consists in a critical research [...] to separate out the ‘international’ and ‘unitary’ element in national and localistic reality” (Q9§68, *QdC*, p. 1140).<sup>4</sup> Gramsci returns to this nexus between the national and international elements in paragraphs leading up to Q14§68, *QdC* p. 1729 [SPN, pp. 240-41]: “To be sure, the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is ‘national’ {...}. It is in the concept of hegemony that those exigencies are knotted together”.

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<sup>2</sup> Readers may wish to compare this with its well-known second draft in Q12§1 that begins the text of the SPN volume (pp. 5-7).

<sup>3</sup> Here, in line with the manuscript of the *Quaderni*, the plural “tendencies” is written, rather than the singular of the SPN translation.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the second draft of this passage, included with rewrites of other previous paragraphs, now in Q13§36 (SPN, pp. 185-90: here pp. 189-90).

The centrality of the role of the party in the struggle for hegemony makes the relationship between the structural plane and the super-structural ones less mechanical; moreover, as from Q7§24, *QdC* p. 871, Gramsci has recourse precisely to the concept of hegemony to combat

the assumption (put forward as an essential postulate of historical materialism) that one can present and explain every political and ideological fluctuation as a direct expression of the structure [*PN* Vol. 3, p. 173].

From this stems the critique of any economistic interpretation of historical materialism, which becomes ever more stringent as Gramsci realizes how widespread this is and what sort of obstacle it represents on the way towards the attainment of ideological hegemony by the philosophy of praxis. Different, for example, from the claim in Q4§14, *QdC* p. 436, that “historical materialism is not subjected to hegemonies, it has itself started to exercise a hegemony over the old intellectual world” [*PN* Vol. 2, p. 156], in Q16§9, *QdC* p. 1860-61 – in an innovation as compared with the first draft text of Q4§3 – Gramsci here instead recognizes that this

is the conception of a subaltern social group, deprived of historical initiative, in continuous but disorganised expansion, unable to go beyond a certain qualitative level, which still remains below the level of the possession of the State and of the real exercise of hegemony over the whole of society [*SPN*, p. 396].

It is not, then, for Gramsci a question of going beyond the horizon of Marxism, so much as returning to the original sources: hence the attribution, beginning with Q4§38, p. 465 [*PN* Vol. 2, p. 187], of the paternity of the very concept of hegemony, which indeed represents “Ilyich’s greatest contribution to Marxist philosophy, to historical materialism: an original and creative contribution”. And it is precisely through Lenin that Gramsci returns to Marx: in Q10II§41x, *QdC* p. 1315, again with an innovation as compared with the first draft text, he in fact writes that already in Marx there is “contained in a nutshell the ethico-political aspect of politics or theory of hegemony and consent, as well as the aspect of force and of the economy” [*FSPN*, p. 399].<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The last word in the original (*economia*) could also be interpreted “economics”, in the sense of subjection to “economic laws”, the choice which was made in *FSPN*.

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## Gramsci in English

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## Gramsci in English

### Abstract

The article retraces the how Gramsci's major writings, mainly though not exclusively from the Prison Notebooks and then the Prison Letters, were made available to Anglophone readers. The main process got underway in the later 1950s in the attempt to present a non-dogmatic Marxism. As such, a major contribution came somewhat later from another source, John Cammett's 1967 book Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism. The British "New Left Review" was instrumental around this time in publishing some material and paving the way for the influential 1971 anthology *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, followed by an English version of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* and by selections in the late 1970s from the pre-prison writings, namely journalistic articles and other political interventions; this was integrated by a Cambridge University Press volume published in 1994. The 1970s saw partial translations of the Prison Letters, and a full version in 1994. In the meantime a volume *Selections from Cultural Writings* appeared in the mid-80s and *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks* in 1995, preceded somewhat earlier by the first volume of Buttigieg's own integral translation of Valentino Gerratana's 1975 critical edition of the Notebooks, now interrupted as work was proceeding beyond Volume 3. A recent addition in volume form is *A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-Prison Letters*; the title's opening phrase is taken from Kipling, and was often used by Gramsci and his wife, Juliya (Jul'ka), in the letters they exchanged before Gramsci's arrest.

### Keywords

Gramsci in English translations, Prison Notebooks, Prison letters, Pre-prison letters, anthologies, integral translation of Notebooks.

## ***Gramsci in English***

Joseph A. Buttigieg

### *1. The early translations in English*

Allow me to start by stating the obvious: English translations and editions of Antonio Gramsci's works are important not only because they make his writings available to many millions of readers in the Anglophone world – the U.K., Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the U.S., and several Caribbean nations – but also because countless readers from certain parts of the world are more likely to acquaint themselves with Gramsci through English translations rather than the original Italian or any of the other languages into which substantial parts of his corpus have also been translated (i.e., Spanish, French, German, Portuguese). I am thinking here of places like India, Pakistan, South Africa as well as former British colonies in the African continent, parts of the Arab world, and also countries like Turkey and China. Another consideration to bear in mind: all English translations of Gramsci published thus far have originated either in the United Kingdom or in the United States. To some degree, at least, they are influenced by or reflect in some way or another the socio-cultural and political interests and preoccupations prevailing in those two countries at the time of their production. Yet, when these editions travel beyond the immediate context of their production, very complex processes come into play, so that it would be simplistic to consider only the influence that the British or American translators/editors exercise over readers of their work elsewhere. One need only think of the group of scholars in Calcutta whose reading of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* inspired them to probe into (and elaborate) Gramsci's concept of subalternity and whose publications, in turn, travelled to the U.S. and the U.K. prompting new readings and analyses of Gramsci's text, first by British and American critics and theorists and, before very long, by many others in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere.

In her introduction to *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* which was published in 1979, when Gramsci's influence on Marxist thought in the Anglophone world was starting to eclipse that of Althusser, Chantal Mouffe observed:

... since his death in 1937, Gramsci has been subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations, ultimately linked to the political line of those who claimed or disclaimed him. So we have had the libertarian Gramsci, the Stalinist Gramsci, the social democratic Gramsci, the Togliattian Gramsci, the Trotskyist Gramsci, and so on.

The first attempt to translate Gramsci into English was made during the Cold War and had a political purpose: to oppose the demonization of Marxism as indistinguishable from Stalinism and Soviet totalitarianism. When in 1957 Carl Marzani, in his slim volume *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*, introduced U.S. readers for the first time to the principal motifs in the *Quaderni del carcere*, it was Gramsci's "difference" from Marxist stereotypes that he chose to highlight.

To speak of Gramsci as a Marxist with an open mind may strike many people as a contradiction in terms, because the behavior of a considerable number of Marxists has bolstered ruling class propaganda that Marxism is a dogma. Marxism is not a dogma though there are Marxists who are dogmatists, just as science is not a dogma though there are scientists who are dogmatists.

This is not to say that Marzani's presentation of Gramsci as a different, undogmatic Marxist had any noticeable effect on the reception of Gramsci in the U.S. His 64-page booklet consists of little more than a few illustrative passages extracted from the first Italian thematic edition accompanied by some commentary and published by a small publisher, Cameron Associates, little-known outside leftist circles. Moreover, 1957 – the year after the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary and the suppression of a workers' uprising in Poland – was an inauspicious time to call attention to the positive merits of any Marxist thinker, especially one who was so closely associated with the founding of a powerful communist party. (Angus Cameron who was a brilliant editor at Little, Brown, and Co. founded his publishing house after he was blacklisted during the height of McCarthyism. An American born in Rome, Marzani was also a victim of anti-communist witch hunts and spent two or three years in prison because of his political affiliations.) Marzani's original plan was to translate entire volumes of Platone's thematic edition; he abandoned his effort upon learning "that a volume of Gramsci's selected works would be brought out by International Publishers."

The volume of selected works to which Marzani refers was, in fact, brought out in 1957 by Lawrence and Wishart, the publishing house of the British Communist Party, and by its New York counterpart, International Publishers. Titled *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* it was edited and translated by Louis Marks – although a brief note on the verso of the title page states: “This selection of writings by Antonio Gramsci was made with the approval of the Istituto Gramsci at Rome.” The selection, in reality, had more to do with the struggles among different currents within Communist and Marxist circles in Britain and their reaction to the invasion of Hungary and Khrushchev’s so-called secret speech. Were it not for the last two developments the British Communist Party and its publisher would not have allowed Marks’ selections from the heterodox Gramsci to be published. The volume itself is divided into three sections the first two of which has its own Introduction. Part I consists of pre-prison texts “Two Editorials from *Ordine Nuovo*”, “The Programme of *Ordine Nuovo*”, and “The Southern Question”. Parts II and III contain selections from the *Quaderni*: Part II: “The Study of Philosophy and of Historical Materialism”, “What is Man?”, “Marxism and Modern Culture, Critical Notes on an Attempt at a Popular Presentation of Marxism by Bukharin”, “The Formation of Intellectuals”, “The Organization of Education and Culture”; and Part III: “The Modern Prince: Essays on the Science of Politics in the Modern Age”. (Note that the rubrics are not Gramsci’s and that selections from the *Quaderni* are all derived from two volumes of Platone’s edition – i.e. *Il materialismo storico . . .*, and *Note sul Machiavelli* – except for the excerpts on the intellectuals and education which are extracted from *Gli intellettuali*. There are some oddities in translation, as well; for example: “philosophy of action” rather than praxis. Also, some misinformation: Gramsci never mentions Marx and Engels in his notebooks.) The Introduction to Part I stresses Gramsci’s similarity with Lenin:

The essentially new feature which Gramsci brought to the Italian socialist movement from his study of Marxism was the concept of the struggle for power, as distinct from the struggle to defend or improve the immediate economic conditions of the working class. [...] Since the beginning of the century Lenin had been fighting the distortions of Marxism carried out by the leaders of the International. In Italy, Gramsci was the first to realize the para-

mount importance of this fight. [...] The historical organization from which Lenin developed the theory of the proletarian dictatorship was the soviet.

For Gramsci, “the Italian equivalent of the soviet was the factory Internal Commission” which “rapidly changed character and in the form of the Factory Councils movement at Turin emerged as a powerful weapon of the industrial working class.” The shorter introduction to Part II contains biographical information related to Gramsci’s imprisonment and the harsh conditions under which the *Quaderni* were composed. It then remarks very briefly on

the broad scheme of work embracing the whole modern development of Italian society, especially in its cultural aspects. The subjects covered show the immense breadth of his interests and knowledge [...].

The politics and biases behind Marks’ selection are well described by David Forgacs in his essay on English editions of Gramsci in *Gramsci nel mondo*:

Senza voler ridurre il significato di questo volume alla congiuntura di allora, sembra lecito osservare che l’inclusione delle note sulla filosofia della prassi e il senso comune, come del resto quelle contro la sociologia marxista di Bucharin, aveva un preciso riscontro nella valorizzazione della prassi e dell’azione politica delle classi subalterne portata avanti da Hill e Hobsbawm e altri [incluso Louis Marks] in campo storiografico. Alla stessa tregua, l’inclusione accanto a questi testi di una scelta di scritti del primo *Ordine Nuovo* e del saggio del 1926 sulla questione meridionale [...] serviva a garantire il legame tra Gramsci dei Quaderni e la tradizione rivoluzionaria leninista tramite la politica del fronte unito. La pubblicazione di questo Gramsci quindi, faceva parte sì del processo di disgelo e rinnovamento teorico all’interno del marxismo dopo il 1956, ma al tempo stesso serviva a riaffermare la legittimità di una tradizione comunista non staliniana nello stesso ambiente. Insomma questo Gramsci era indubbiamente un uomo della sinistra e per la sinistra; la scelta di testi e il modo di presentarli erano tali da rendere quasi impossibile altri tipi di lettura e appropriazione.

In the end, it is not surprising that Louis Marks’s volume had little impact outside leftist circles.

## 2. *The 1970s and 1980s*

Gramsci’s fortunes in the Anglophone world changed drastically in the 1970s and 1980s. The major turning point came, in very large measure, with the publication, in 1971, again by Lawrence & Wish-



art / International Publishers, of Quintin Hoare's and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Again, internal leftist politics were at play. The "New Left Review" and intellectuals associated with it (among others, Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson) had developed a serious interest in and deep knowledge of Gramsci's work, and in the late sixties the review itself published English translations of several articles from *L'Ordine Nuovo*, even as traditional and orthodox Marxists still regarded the Italian with suspicion. In the U.S., too, the Marxist-Leninist mainstream (especially those affiliated with the Communist Party) regarded Gramsci with suspicion, or at least with a certain degree of caution. This is one of major reasons why the left in the U. S. did so little to promote knowledge of Gramsci and his work until John Cammett published *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (1967). Cammett's book was favorably reviewed in scholarly journals as well as in mainstream periodicals, and deservedly so, for it is a thoroughly researched and well written study. For one reviewer, however, Cammett's book was not only a meritorious scholarly work but a potentially powerful stimulus for revitalizing the U. S. left. From the very first paragraph to its last sentence, Eugene Genovese's review-essay, *On Antonio Gramsci* is provocative, polemical, and impassioned.

That the work and indeed the name of Antonio Gramsci remain virtually unknown to the American Left provides the fullest, if saddest, proof of the intellectual bankruptcy of 'official' Marxism and its parties old and new. [...] It is nothing short of a disgrace that the greatest Western Marxist theorist of our century remains untranslated, unread, and undiscussed. Professor Cammett's excellent book brings this shabby game to a close.

Many other factors helped prepare the ground and intensify the demand for a substantive edition of Gramsci's work in English, including the various leftist currents independent of disciplined political parties sweeping through Europe and the U.S. In the end, Maurice Cornforth, director at the time of Lawrence and Wishart, was confronted with a stark choice: either have the publishing house of the British Communist Party bring out Gramsci or lose him to the "New Left Review" (which in 1970 published Tom Nairn's translation of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*). David Forgacs quotes the following from a letter by Cornforth to the French Marxist philosopher Lucien Sève in 1970:

I might add, in confidence, that we succeeded just in time in obtaining from the Istituto Gramsci the rights to publish Gramsci in English – otherwise Gramsci would have been taken over by our friends of the New Left, and be presented not as a Communist but as “New Left”.

Hoare and Nowell-Smith made a genuine effort to avoid bias. Toward the end of their lengthy Introduction, they write:

We decided from the outset that there should be no attempt to offer any general interpretation of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* themselves, or any attempt to discuss the significance of his thought within Marxism as a whole. Gramsci has perhaps suffered more than any Marxist since Lenin from partial and partisan interpretation, both by supporters and opponents; the *Prison Notebooks* themselves, read seriously and in all their complexity, and are the best antidote to this.

Needless to say, no anthology of Gramsci’s writings – or of any other significant writer, even one whose texts do not present the numerous complex problems that the *Quaderni* do – is immune to criticism, even if only because the selection of what to include and what to leave out entails a judgment as to what is more or less significant. In Gramsci’s case the problems are compounded by the fragmentary nature of the notebooks, his manner of composition, etc., as well as the obstacles that stand in the way of making his work accessible to the non-expert reader. The tremendously high level of philological rigor and sophistication that characterize the best Gramscian scholarship today make it hard to fully appreciate the magnitude of Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s efforts and the great merits of their anthology. To be sure, it has more than a few times been used regrettably and irresponsibly but the fault generally lies in the lack of judiciousness and thoroughness of the reader.

In their Preface, Hoare and Nowell-Smith explain the complexities of Gramsci’s text and warn their readers of potential pitfalls. They draw attention to the note on *Questions of Method* which, they explain, is a

warning, ostensibly about Marx but equally if not more applicable to himself, against confusing unfinished or unpublished work with works published and approved by an author during his lifetime.

They explain the procedures they used to deal with the fragmentariness of the original and the problems of ordering or collocating them. They are correct to point out that:

Short of a literal reproduction of all these texts, or a massive critical apparatus, out of place in an edition of this size and scope, there is clearly no alternative to a reordering of some kind, aimed at presenting to the reader a selection of texts which is reasonably comprehensive and coherent as possible.

Hoare and Nowell-Smith did not adhere slavishly to Platone's thematic edition, even though that was their primary source; their priority was to make things easier for the reader by giving the collocation and grouping of notes greater thematic coherence. There is no reason to disagree with Forgacs's judgement:

*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* era e rimane a mio parere una bella edizione [...] con un ottimo apparato di note esplicative e soprattutto con una scelta coerente di testi. Rispetto alle edizioni tematiche italiane, infatti, quello che colpisce ancora oggi è la coerenza dell'organizzazione del materiale, la chiarezza e l'immediatezza con cui sono stati identificati alcuni nodi centrali del grande tessuto dei *Quaderni* (intellettuali, egemonia, rapporti di forza, società civile, filosofia della prassi, linguaggio, senso comune) e l'aver colto in pieno l'importanza e la novità dell'analisi gramsciana della storia italiana post-risorgimentale e dell'americanismo e fordismo.

The publication of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections* generated widespread interest, further bolstered by Eric Hobsbawm's review-essay, *The Great Gramsci*, in "The New York Review of Books". Hobsbawm's stress on the enormous value of Gramsci's contribution to Marxist political theory attracted new readers to Gramsci, especially from the left of the political spectrum. At the same time, cultural studies and the study of the relationship between culture and politics were gaining ground very fast, first in the UK (led by Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall) and before too long in the U.S. This development spurred even further the turn to Gramsci. His theory of hegemony and his treatment of civil society circulated widely. Yet, most of Gramsci's specific writings on culture remained largely unknown because untranslated. It was this lacuna that David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith sought to remedy with their *Selections from the Cultural Writings* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985). The volume is divided into 10 sections, the first of which "Proletarian Culture"

consists of selections from the pre-prison writings and includes a good number of theater criticism and play reviews. The items from the other nine sections are all extracted from the *Prison Notebooks*; some of them are gathered under broad rubrics, such as “Problems of Criticism,” “Language, Linguistics, and Folklore,” “People, Nation and Culture,” “Father Bresciani’s Progeny,” “Popular Literature,” and “Journalism.” Other sections are devoted to more specific topics: “Pirandello”, “Canto X of the Inferno”, and “Manzoni”. This is how the editors position their volume vis-à-vis Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s:

If – as we have maintained – it is true that the broad area of culture covered in this volume is only a part of what for Gramsci was a single, wider field, that of ‘superstructures’ in general, then it is important that this book should be read in conjunction with Gramsci’s other writings, particularly those on the intellectuals, hegemony and the study of philosophy.

This anthology received limited attention, probably because of Anglophone reader’s lack of familiarity with and interest in the Italian cultural context in which much of its contents are rooted. Without in any way diminishing the value of the Forgas / Nowell-Smith anthology, it is fair to state that it not so much opened new avenues in Gramscian studies as it confirmed the widespread perception that Gramsci’s importance rested primarily on his demonstration of the very close relationship between culture and politics.

3. *The third “Selections” volume; the integral translation of the Notebooks.*

By contrast, the third volume of “selections” published by Lawrence and Wishart broke new ground by bringing into bold relief major aspects of Gramsci’s work that had hitherto been largely ignored by or unknown to readers of English. Derek Boothman’s *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, first published in 1995 (the U.S. publisher was the University of Minnesota Press), comprises six sections. The first is on religion and the second on “Modern Educational Principles” – religion is a very important dimension of Gramsci’s analysis of ideology that is all but totally absent in the earlier “selections”, whereas education appears in Hoare and Nowell-Smith’s anthology in the opening section in

combinations with the notes on intellectuals. The third and fourth sections of Boothman's edition are devoted to Gramsci's notes on economics. These two sections (together with the essays that Boothman published elsewhere on the topic) are of a level of importance that can hardly be overestimated. They provided a much needed corrective to the prevailing view of a "culturalist" Gramsci, the theorist and analyst of superstructures.

Similarly, the fifth section on "Science, Logic, and Translatability," opened up a whole new area of inquiry, as evidenced by the degree of attention that has been given to "translatability" over the past decade and the profound effect it has had on Gramscian studies generally. (Here, too, Boothman contributed important articles in scholarly journals, in addition to the translated notes and the treatment of the topic in his Introduction.)

The last two sections of Boothman's *Further Selections* are devoted to Gramsci's critique of Croce. Why, one could be tempted to ask, should the notes on Croce matter much to Gramsci's readers in English? Croce, after all, has never been more than a minor or peripheral thinker outside of Italy. Yet, these notes are of supreme importance; without the one cannot grasp a core aspect of Gramsci's project which is to affirm the autonomy or independence of Marxism as a complete and self-sufficient philosophy or conception of the world. It is a project inspired by Antonio Labriola and occupies an especially prominent place in the *Quaderni*. Gramsci approached the task by dividing it into two parts: (a) a critique of the positivist and scientistic distortions of Marxism—and for this he uses Bukharin's "manual" (i.e. *Historical Materialism*) as the negative paradigm; (b) a critique of the idealist distortion of Marxism, of which Croce is the prime instance. Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections* includes Gramsci's critique of Bukharin; without the notes on Croce, however, the basic character and importance of Gramsci's philosophical project cannot be fully understood and appreciated.

An especially valuable aspect of Boothman's *Further Selections* is its confirmation and illustration of what, in my view at least, is the most distinctive characteristic of Gramsci's way of thinking – that is, its non-dogmatic nature. As Boothman writes in his Introduction:

That the “open Marxism” associated with Gramsci is no skin-deep cosmetic operation, but part and parcel of his overall stance (that includes his dialectical relationship with European liberal thought, with Croce as his main point of reference, as Hegel was for Marx), is evident everywhere but, in particular, is theorized explicitly in the notes on translatability.

There is another major contribution which Boothman’s *Further Selections* makes that is of a transformative nature for the appreciation and understanding of Gramsci by those who read him only in English. In his Introduction, in the disposition or arrangement of materials, and in the rich critical apparatus, Boothman greatly heightens the reader’s awareness of the complex structure of the *Quaderni*, the importance of attending to the chronology of the composition of its parts, and the need to pay attention to what one might call the materiality of the text in all interpretations of it. All of this constitutes a much-needed antidote to partial or selective readings of Gramsci’s texts that, unfortunately, are all too common in the Anglophone literature on Gramsci – to say nothing of instrumental readings. I need only mention, by way of illustration, the immense influence still being exercised by Perry Anderson’s long essay, *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, despite the refutations of its central thesis by Gianni Francioni and Peter Thomas, both of which are based on philologically rigorous, diachronic analyses of the *Quaderni*.

Three years before the appearance of *Further Selections*, Columbia University Press published the first volume of the integral critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks* in English translation. There, too, the Introduction is almost entirely devoted to “Gramsci’s Method.” Both editions, then, simultaneously reflect and seek to facilitate a major turn in Gramsci-studies and, especially, in the reading and interpretation of the *Quaderni*. This is best described, perhaps, as a “philological turn,” and its results have truly remarkable. Though pushed forward primarily by the collaborative efforts of Italian scholars – see, for example, the *Dizionario Gramsciano* and the *Edizione nazionale* of Gramsci’s complete works – the results of this turn are increasingly visible among scholars writing in English.

#### 4. *Other writings of Gramsci in English translations*

Now, I would like to turn attention, albeit rather briefly, to other writings by Gramsci, besides the *Prison Notebooks*, that have

appeared also appeared in English. Chief among these is Frank Rosengarten's edition of the *Letters from Prison*, also published by Columbia University Press (1994). It is an edition of exceptional thoroughness and rigor and included letters that had not yet been published in Italy. Surprisingly it did not have the same success in terms of sales as the *Prison Notebooks*. I suspect that the primary reason is that it was promoted very poorly. Still, English readers have access to this indispensable companion to the *Prison Notebooks*. (There had been two earlier selections from the *Lettere dal carcere* by Hamish Henderson and Lynn Lawner, neither of which had a significant impact.)

With the much more recent publication of Derek Boothman's translation / edition of the pre-prison letters – *A Great and Terrible World* (Lawrence and Wishart, 2014) – it can be said that all the important Gramscian texts are now available in English. In the opening paragraph of his superb "General Introduction," Boothman writes: "The present volume fleshes out what the English-speaking world knows of him, both politically and personally." Since, as Boothman also points out, "a collection of letters is also a biography," this edition is especially welcome for adding to our knowledge of Gramsci's biography, which is one of the weaker areas of Gramsci-studies in English. At the same time, it also likely to draw greater attention to Gramsci's pre-prison political activities and writings, about which relatively little has been written in English, even though the earliest book on Gramsci published in the United States – John Cammett's *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (1967) – deals almost exclusively with salient aspects of that phase of Gramsci's life and work. The main reason why Gramsci's pre-prison writings call for deeper and more thorough analysis is provided by Boothman, again in his *Introduction*:

There is a general tendency to see Gramsci as the author of concepts that emerge full-blown from the pages of his *Prison Notebooks*; insufficient attention is paid to the genesis that lends them their substance or to their non-static, ongoing, evolutionary nature.

The basic materials for studying Gramsci's pre-prison writings and arriving at a better appreciation of the genealogy of his concepts and, thus, of the open-ended intellectual explorations and elaborations that characterize his non-dogmatic thought, have been

available in English for a long time. More than four decades ago, and just four years after the appearance of Hoare and Nowell-Smith's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone edited a selection of Gramsci's pre-prison writings (translated by various hands) that was published by Telos Press with the title *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (1975). Paul Piccone, an Italian-born (from Aquila) academic and, later, independent intellectual, brought to the U.S. by his parents as a teenager, was the founding editor of the quarterly journal *Telos* which started by promoting anti-Stalinist Hegelian-inspired Western Marxism and ended up extolling Carl Schmitt. The 158-page book contains fifty articles and essays composed by Gramsci before his arrest. They are grouped together under five broad rubrics: "Culture", "Philosophy", "History", "Problems of Italian Politics", and "Problems of the Russian Revolution". The selection includes a significant number of pieces that anticipate some of the major motifs of the *Prison Notebooks*, but not the unfinished essay on the Southern Question. Notwithstanding its merits, this first translation into English of some of Gramsci's pre-prison is marred by significant shortcomings. The arrangement of the material is non-chronological, obscuring the context in which each article is written. Thus, for example, *The Revolution Against Capital* (1917) appears in the final section, whereas *Our Marx* (1918) is the opening article in the volume. Also, Gramsci's earliest known political text, *Oppressed and Oppressors* (1910), is placed at the very end of the volume in the section on "Problems of the Russian Revolution." The Introduction also betrays an ideological bias insofar as it sets up Gramsci as an exponent of a Marxism preferable to Lenin's, Lukacs's, and Korsch's versions. The editors also deemed it "superfluous [...] to attempt to provide the kind of biographical and historical background to Gramsci necessary to appreciate the following essays."

Spurred by the growing interest in Gramsci generated in large measure by Tom Nairn's translation of Giuseppe Fiori's biography, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (1970), the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), and Eric Hobsbawm's [afore-mentioned] review-essay occasioned by it – *The Great Gramsci*, in "The New York Review of Books" – Lawrence and Wishart / International Publishers brought out a large selection from the pre-prison



writings in two volumes, both edited by Quintin Hoare: *Selections from the Political Writings: 1910-1920* (1977) and *Selections from the Political Writings: 1921-1926* (1978). Although the two volumes do not have an elaborate critical apparatus, the annotations and relatively brief Introduction, the chronological order of the texts, and the general rubrics under which they are clustered help contextualize the writings. Historical contextualization is also greatly enhanced by the inclusion of important texts by Bordiga, Tasca, and Togliatti. Thus, for example, section 4 of the first volume, entitled “Bordiga’s Polemic,” consists entirely of articles and letters (to the Third International) by Bordiga, pertaining to questions surrounding workers’ councils, the seizure of factories, etc. This is immediately followed by a section on *The Debate with Tasca* which included, among other things, a piece by Tasca on *Political and Trade-Union Significance of the Factory Councils*, and another on *Polemics over the L’Ordine Nuovo Programme*. Likewise, included in the second volume one finds, among other items, Bordiga and Terracini’s *Theses and Tactics of the PCI* (“Rome Theses”) and the *Minutes of the Political Commission nominated by the Central Committee to finalize the Lyons documents*. These additional texts provide important context or background but today they seem dated and it is doubtful that they hold any interest for the general reader. A later anthology, *The Pre-Prison Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), edited by Richard Bellamy overlaps in part with Hoare’s volumes, but it contains a considerable amount of previously untranslated material.

There is no time to discuss David Forgacs’s *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), other than to say that although it contains no new materials, it is a valuable contribution to the effort to disseminate Gramsci’s work, making it accessible to a broader spectrum of general readers and to undergraduate students. It also has the merit of including selection from the pre-prison years as well as from the *Prison Notebooks*.

##### 5. *The possibility – and need – to study Gramsci in English*

Now that almost all of Gramsci’s writings are available to English readers, it is reasonable to expect that the study of Gramsci in English, which is already robust, will acquire greater sophistication and range. Range is crucial because there are aspects

of Gramsci's work that are not yet fully appreciated and, yet, can provide very valuable insights into some of the most urgent questions of present time. Just to use the U.S. as an example: insights can be gained into the socio-cultural and political currents that have culminated in Donald Trump's triumph by carefully studying Gramsci notes on journalism (apropos of so-called "fake news"), the national-popular, the importance of organization and political parties, Lorianism, and civil society (which should induce a closer scrutiny of the processes of its corruption). If Gramsci's thought is brought to bear on current issues, it might be possible to bring him out of academia into the much vaster "mondo grande e terribile" ["grand and terrible world"].

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# Gramsci war ein Schibboleth

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# Gramsci war ein Schibboleth

## **Abstract**

Antonio Gramsci setzte sich Zeit seines Lebens wenig mit den politischen Vorgängen Österreichs auseinander. Seine posthum veröffentlichten Schriften hatten zudem einen vergleichsweise geringen Einfluss auf die politische Landschaft Österreichs links der Mitte. Dessen ungeachtet nimmt das folgende Interview mit dem ehemaligen KPÖ-Vorsitzenden Walter Baier einige Berührungspunkte und Bezugnahmen zwischen Gramsci und der österreichischen Linken im Verlauf des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in den Blick. Diese Berührungspunkte umfassen 1) Gramscis Aufenthalt in Wien 1923-1924 sowie sein kritisches Verhältnis zum Austromarxismus in philosophischer und politischer Hinsicht; 2) den peripheren Einfluss von Gramscis Denken auf den vorgezogenen Eurokommunismus in der KPÖ zwischen 1965 und 1969, der vor allem dem Wirken von Franz Marek geschuldet ist; 3) die Anfang der 1980er Jahre erfolgte marxistisch-leninistische Gramsci-Rezeption seitens der KPÖ-Führung, die als Abwehrversuch gegenüber heterodoxen Marxismus-Interpretationen innerhalb und außerhalb der eigenen Partei intendiert war; 4) sowie die mögliche Bedeutung Gramscis für einen integralen Sozialismus im Sinne Otto Bauers, verstanden als revolutionär-transformatives Projekt für das beginnende einundzwanzigste Jahrhundert.

## **Keywords**

Bauer, Gramsci, Austromarxismus, integrale sozialismus, KPÖ

## **„Gramsci war ein Schibboleth“**

Interview mit Walter Baier zur Gramsci-Rezeption in der KPÖ,  
von Stefan Pimmer

*Ein erster Berührungspunkt zwischen Gramsci und Österreich ergab sich Ende November 1923. Nach eineinhalbjährigem Aufenthalt in der Sowjetunion wurde Gramsci von Moskau nach Wien gesandt, um von dort aus die KPI neu auszurichten und an den Kurs der Komintern heranzuführen. Italien wurde damals schon seit mehr als einem Jahr vom Faschismus regiert. In Österreich hingegen gelang es der Sozialdemokratie, im Windschatten der Oktoberrevolution eine progressive Sozialpolitik durchzusetzen, zwischen 1918 und 1920 auf Bundesebene und bis 1934 im „Roten Wien“. Gramsci zeigte sich von diesem sozialreformerischen Projekt jedoch wenig beeindruckt. Obwohl seine Wiener Zeit in intellektueller Hinsicht außerordentlich bedeutsam war, gibt es keine schriftlichen Dokumente, in denen er sich mit den politischen Vorgängen in Österreich und Wien ausführlicher auseinandersetzte. Gerade aus einer hegemonietheoretischen Perspektive wäre jedoch interessant gewesen, das „Rote Wien“ näher zu untersuchen. Wie könnte Gramsci dieses sozialreformerische Projekt eingeschätzt haben, ausgehend von seinen politischen Erfahrung in Italien und seinem später im Gefängnis entwickelten Begriffsinstrumentarium?*

Die Frage ist interessant aber schwer zu beantworten. Es gibt die Auffassung, dass Otto Bauer das sozialdemokratische Pendant zu Antonio Gramsci bildet. Das halte ich aus einer Perspektive für zutreffend, nämlich, dass beide auf die Unmöglichkeit einer Übertragung der sowjetischen Erfahrung nach Westeuropa hingewiesen haben. In der Komintern hätte diese Ansicht eigentlich einen paradigmatischen Wechsel erfordert. Aus sozialdemokratischer Perspektive war das Besondere an Bauer und seinen AnhängerInnen, dass sie im Unterschied zum Mainstream der Sozialdemokratie ihre Solidarität mit der Sowjetunion in den 1920er Jahren aufrecht erhalten haben. Das kann man sowohl seinem Buch „Die österreichische Revolution“ als auch der Broschüre „Bolschewismus oder Sozialdemokratie?“ entnehmen. Die ambivalente Haltung gegenüber dem Bolschewismus nähert Bauer an Gramsci an. Man kann allerdings, und das ist meine Sicht, Bauer

auch als den österreichischen Lenin betrachten, allerdings einen mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen, weil ihn die historische Lage der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie dazu nötigte, ähnlich wie Lenin alle Probleme revolutionärer Strategie und Taktik zu durchdenken. Bei ihm geschah dies aber, und das ist das umgekehrte Vorzeichen, immer unter dem Gesichtspunkt zu beweisen, dass es im gegebenen Augenblick unmöglich wäre, den revolutionären Bruch mit dem Kapitalismus herbeizuführen. Diese Haltung musste seine kommunistischen ZeitgenossInnen erbittern und zu energischem Widerspruch herausfordern. Allerdings sagt das nichts darüber aus, ob Bauers Argumente stichhaltig waren oder nicht, und es ändert auch nichts an der Scharfsinnigkeit seiner Analysen, die bei heutiger Lektüre besonders ins Auge sticht. Ich persönlich halte beispielsweise die Sichtweise Bauers auf die Vorgänge in Österreich 1918 und 1919 sowie seine Kritik an den KommunistInnen für zutreffend. Ich glaube, dass die Idee, die auf der Straße liegende Macht zu ergreifen und eine Diktatur des Proletariats auszurufen, wie es die KommunistInnen wollten, zu dem Desaster geführt hätte, das Bauer vorhersah.

Insoweit war Bauers Weg einer Transformation, der für ihn revolutionär war, meines Erachtens realistischer. Darin besteht auch eine Nähe zu Gramsci. Ich glaube allerdings auch, dass Gramsci die AustromarxistInnen in zweierlei Hinsicht kritisiert hätte. Gramsci war Revolutionär, und die AustromarxistInnen neigten dazu, den revolutionären Augenblick in eine unbestimmte Zukunft zu verschieben. Das hätte ihm wohl nicht gefallen. Andererseits aber hätte der Gramsci der Gefängnishefte möglicherweise den Verbalradikalismus und die Strategie der AustromarxistInnen als sektiererisch kritisiert. Die austromarxistische Politik, die nach dem Ausscheiden aus der Koalitionsregierung die gesamte Periode der 1920er Jahre auszeichnete, beinhaltete einen scharfen Gegensatz zum katholischen und agrarischen Österreich. Im Grunde genommen isolierten die Christlich-Sozialen die Sozialdemokratie in Wien und einigen großen Städten, was einerseits das großartige kommunalpolitische Experiment des „Roten Wien“ ermöglichte. Andererseits aber entfremdete sich die Sozialdemokratie durch ihren Verbalradikalismus von einem Teil der städtischen Mittelschichten, die sie den Christlich-Sozialen und später den Nazis überließ, und reagierte seit Beginn der 1920er Jahre mit großem

Unverständnis darauf, dass das katholische und agrarische Österreich in immer schärfere Opposition zu ihr und dem mit ihr identifizierten „Roten Wien“ stand. 1926 versuchte Otto Bauer mit einem neuen Parteiprogramm, dem berühmten Linzer Programm, eine Öffnung zur katholischen Bauernschaft. Diese Bestrebung wurde jedoch durch den Verbalradikalismus, zu dem er sich in der Konkurrenz mit der KPÖ veranlasst sah, überschattet. Und das war eigentlich das Gegenteil einer gramscianischen Hegemoniekonzeption. Diese besteht ja darin, über Bündnisse und weltanschauliche Einbeziehung des populären Alltagsverstands die eigene ideologische und politische Basis zu verbreitern. Was das „Rote Wien“ betrifft, wäre Gramscis revolutionäre Leidenschaft über die tatsächlichen Reformvorhaben hinausgegangen. Ab den 1920er Jahren kann man meines Erachtens sagen, dass es trotz aller Attraktivität ein zum Scheitern verurteiltes reformistisches Projekt war. Man sieht das an den Gemeindebauten, die allgemein mit den Errungenschaften des „Roten Wien“ identifiziert werden. Sie drücken in ihrer Architektur aus, dass die Arbeiterbewegung sich in ihnen als ihren Festungen verschanzen könnte. Das wurde übrigens von Theodor Körner, dem militärpolitischen Berater des sozialdemokratischen Wehrverbands, dem Schutzbund, als eine Fehlorientierung kritisiert, nämlich zu glauben, dass die Revolution in Österreich mit militärischen Mitteln, zumal mit einer defensiven militärischen Strategie, siegen könne. Auch hier hätte Gramsci den austromarxistischen Führern widersprochen. Insoweit ist es schwer, diesen Vergleich vorzunehmen, weil es keine klare Frontlinie gibt. Auf der einen Seite hätte sich Gramsci in Bezug auf das „Rote Wien“ sicher links von der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie positioniert. Auf der anderen Seite hätte der Hegemonietheoretiker die sozialdemokratische Vorstellung, dass fünfzig Prozent der Wählerstimmen ausreichen, um den Sozialismus einzuführen, von „rechts“ kritisiert.

*Das Projekt des „Roten Wien“ war wesentlich getragen von den Ideen des Austromarxismus rund um Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Rudolf Hilferding und Karl Renner. Gramsci hatte zwar keine umfassenden Kenntnisse über deren Schriften, stand dem Austromarxismus jedoch tendenziell ablehnend gegenüber. Seine in den Gefängnisheften geäußerte Kritik konzentrierte sich vor allem auf den Versuch der Austromarxisten, die Lehren von Marx mit jenen von Kant*



*in Verbindung zu bringen. Demgegenüber beharrte Gramsci auf der Originalität und Eigenständigkeit einer marxistischen Philosophie, wie sie von Antonio Labriola angedacht worden war. Einmal abgesehen von dieser philosophisch grundierten Kritik: welche Gemeinsamkeiten bzw. welche Unterschiede siehst du zwischen Gramscis Reformulierung des Marxismus als Philosophie der Praxis und dem Austromarxismus, nicht nur in philosophischer, sondern auch in politischer Hinsicht, etwa in Bezug auf die nationale Frage, das Problem der Hegemonie, des Staates oder jenes der Demokratie?*

Zum einen ist es unmöglich, vom Austromarxismus als einer Einheit zu reden, weil dieser eine Spannbreite an theoretischen Positionen beinhaltet. Zum anderen glaube ich, dass der Hegemonie-Begriff eigentlich neu-kantische Züge in sich trägt. Die epistemologische Idee dahinter ist ja, dass Bedeutung aus dem ideologischen Kampf hervorgeht, dass also Wirklichkeit nicht einfach aufgefunden wird, sondern erst durch kollektive Ideologien entsteht. Ich persönlich halte die Synthese bei Max Adler von Neukantianismus und marxistischem Denken eigentlich für vielversprechend, obwohl manches der damaligen Zeit geschuldet und recht abstrakt formuliert ist. Bei Gramsci findet sich in den Gefängnisheften die Bemerkung, dass man Lenins Philosophie eher in seiner praktischen Politik als in seinen philosophischen Werken auffindet, was offensichtlich eine Kritik an „Materialismus und Empiriokritizismus“ darstellt. Andererseits gibt es von Gramsci eine scharfe Frontstellung gegenüber kantianischen Interpretationen des Marxismus. Ich glaube, dass er diesbezüglich über seine eigene Intention hinauschießt. Wenn man „Die österreichische Revolution“ von Otto Bauer liest, die 1921 entstanden ist, so finden sich viele Aspekte, die auch bei Gramsci auftauchen. Jedoch sind sie bei Bauer zum Teil konkreter formuliert, weil sich hier der Führer einer Partei äußert, der zu der Zeit vierzig Prozent der Bevölkerung tatsächlich repräsentierte, und dabei in ständigem Austausch mit dieser Bewegung stand. Zudem war auch der historische Moment äußerst anspruchsvoll. Man findet in diesem Buch alle möglichen Etappen einer revolutionären Auseinandersetzung, vom Gleichgewicht der Klassenkräfte, das seinen Ausdruck in einer Koalitionsregierung findet, über die Volksrepublik, die in eine soziale Demokratie übergehen sollte, bis

zur Defensive, die dadurch entsteht, dass das Gleichgewicht der Klassenkräfte von rechts aufgehoben wird. All das wird durchdacht. Und meiner Meinung nach läuft es auf eine Konkretisierung der Idee des Stellungskriegs hinaus. Es gibt manche Formulierungen in „Die österreichische Revolution“, die eigentlich von Gramsci sein könnten. Ich glaube, es kommt sogar einmal der Begriff der Hegemonie vor. Also diesbezüglich sind sich Bauer und Gramsci sehr nahe. Aber der Impuls, aus dem „Die österreichische Revolution“ und noch mehr das Linzer Programm von 1926 geschrieben wurden, war meines Erachtens eher ein leninscher als ein gramscianischer.

Je mehr die österreichische Sozialdemokratie im Lauf der 1920er Jahre in die Defensive gedrängt wurde, desto mechanischer und machiavellistischer wurde ihr Politikverständnis. Dies war während der Periode der revolutionären Gärung nach dem Krieg noch nicht der Fall gewesen. In „Die österreichische Revolution“ beschreibt Bauer zum Beispiel sehr detailliert, dass der nach 1919 auf der Grundlage einer Koalition mit den Christlichsozialen gebildete Staat mangels Machtmitteln nur durch Konsens herrschen konnte. Das ist gramscianisches Denken. Aber als dann die Sozialdemokratie aus der Koalitionsregierung ausschied, verschob sich die Debatte auf die machtpolitische Ebene. Und das bewirkte im Grunde genommen einen Rückzug auf jene Positionen, die sich im Linzer Programm von 1926 wiederfinden: dass also, wenn die herrschende Klasse die Demokratie nicht respektiert, die Sozialdemokratie ihren Widerstand mit den Mitteln der Diktatur brechen würde. So erhielt die repressive Qualität des Staates und allgemein die Machtfrage gegenüber der Hegemoniefrage ein Übergewicht. Das politische Problem, als Massenpartei trotz einer eindrucksvollen WählerInnenbasis sich in einer politischen Isolierung zu befinden, konnte so nicht konzeptualisiert werden.

*Über die Grenzen von Österreich hinaus ist heute wenig bekannt, dass es in der KPÖ einen vorgezogenen Eurokommunismus gab. Nach dem Ende des Nationalsozialismus hatte sich in der Partei der aus dem Moskauer Exil zurückkommende und der KPdSU hörige Flügel durchgesetzt. Die damit verbundene dogmatische Ausrichtung war entscheidend dafür verantwortlich, die KPÖ in der Öffentlichkeit zu diskreditieren und die Partei in die politische Bedeutungslosigkeit zu führen. Nach einer ersten schweren Krise 1956 im*

*Zusammenhang mit dem XX. Parteitag der KPdSU und der blutigen Niederschlagung des reformkommunistischen Projekts in Ungarn mehrten sich im Lauf der 1960er Jahre wieder jene Stimmen, die sich für eine kritische Distanz zu Moskau und eine ideologisch-politische Neuorientierung der KPÖ einsetzten. Am 19. Parteitag im Jahr 1965 wurde diese Neuorientierung tatsächlich beschlossen: trotz Widerstands vonseiten des moskautreuen Flügels wurden Autonomie und demokratischer Sozialismus zu zentralen Bezugspunkten, die die Parteipolitik bis zum 20. Parteitag 1969 bestimmten. Die österreichische Vorwegnahme des Eurokommunismus ist wahrscheinlich auch jene Phase, in der Gramsci zum ersten Mal eine bedeutende Rolle in den parteiinternen Auseinandersetzungen spielte. Welchen Einfluss hatte die Figur Gramscis auf die Vertreter dieses Reformprojekts und ihre politischen Positionen?*

Ich glaube der Einfluss Gramscis auf den österreichischen Eurokommunismus war sehr peripher und kam im Wesentlichen über Franz Marek. Dieser hatte 1951 einen schweren Autounfall in Italien und kam während des dadurch bedingten längeren Spitalsaufenthaltes mit den Schriften Gramscis in Berührung.<sup>1</sup> Ich sehe im kommunistischen Reformversuch im Österreich der 1960er Jahren, der die Krise des Parteikommunismus im Westen sehr frühzeitig ausdrückte, aber vor allem eine untergründige Wirkung des austromarxistischen Erbes. In der KPÖ gab es nach 1945 auf der einen Seite die RückkehrerInnen aus der sowjetischen Emigration, aus der sich die engere Parteiführung rekrutierte. Das waren mit der Ausnahme von Ernst Fischer Altkommunisten, die der Partei in den 1920er Jahren, also vor 1934 beigetreten waren. Und auf der anderen Seite gab es eine einflussreiche Gruppe großteils jüdischer RückkehrerInnen aus der englischen und anderen Emigrationen. Deren intellektuelle Biographien waren austromarxistisch beeinflusst. Manche hatten an der Universität die Lehrveranstaltungen Hans Kelsens besucht und sich mit seinem politischen Liberalismus vertraut gemacht.

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<sup>1</sup> Zur politischen Biographie Franz Mareks und seiner Aneignung Gramscis siehe Maximilian Graf/Sarah Knoll, „Beruf und Berufung Kommunist“, *Franz Marek (1913-1979) – Eine biographische Skizze*, in: Marek, Franz: *Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Lebenserinnerungen und Schlüsseltexte*, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Maximilian Graf und Sarah Knoll, Wien, Mandelbaum Verlag, 2017, S. 15-103.

Die KPÖ war nach 1934 und erst recht nach 1945 durch beide Flügel der Sozialdemokratie majorisiert, sowohl durch GewerkschafterInnen, KommunalpolitikerInnen und OrganisatorInnen als auch durch jene Intellektuellen, die 1934 und 1938 in die KPÖ übertraten. Allerdings waren die politisch und organisatorisch engagierten Personen, die nach 1945 die Mehrheit der Partei organisierten, gegen den Austromarxismus eingestellt. Sie hielten Otto Bauer für den Hauptverantwortlichen der Niederlage der österreichischen ArbeiterInnenbewegung. Eine austromarxistische Kultur bestand jedoch unter der Oberfläche fort. Und aus dieser Tradition konnten auch viele Intellektuelle, die sich Ende der 1950er Jahre von der offiziellen Parteilinie distanzieren, bei den Versuchen schöpfen, die verstörenden Episoden wie etwa die sowjetischen Schauprozesse der 1930er Jahre, den XX. Parteitag der KPdSU und den Einmarsch der Sowjetarmee in Ungarn im Jahr 1956 zu interpretieren. In diesem Zusammenhang ist Herbert Steiners 1967, also zum 50. Jahrestag der Oktoberrevolution in einer Sondernummer der Theoriezeitschrift „Weg und Ziel“ publizierte Arbeit „Am Beispiel Otto Bauers - die Oktoberrevolution und der Austromarxismus“ bemerkenswert.<sup>2</sup> Darin greift Steiner Bauers grundsätzlich positive Haltung gegenüber der Sowjetunion auf, um sein Lebenswerk in der kommunistischen Öffentlichkeit vorsichtig zu rehabilitieren. Der Zeitpunkt dieser Veröffentlichung, die nicht ohne Zustimmung der Parteiführung erfolgen konnte, ist meines Erachtens ein Hinweis für den Einfluss des Austromarxismus auf die damalige Neuorientierung der KPÖ.

*Nichtsdestotrotz war Gramsci durch die Bemühungen von Marek innerhalb der Partei kein Unbekannter. Auch „Weg und Ziel“, die von Marek geleitete theoretische Zeitschrift der KPÖ, war in gewissem Sinn gramscianisch ausgerichtet. Hat es damals vonseiten des dogmatischen Flügels der KPÖ Versuche gegeben, die eurokommunistische Aneignung Gramscis zu diskreditieren?*

Mir ist nichts davon bekannt, ich würde es auch für sehr unplausibel halten. Ich glaube, dass Gramsci nicht die zentrale Achse der Auseinandersetzung war. Zudem besaß die Figur

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Steiner, *Am Beispiel Otto Bauers – die Oktoberrevolution und der Austromarxismus*, in: „Weg und Ziel“, Sondernummer, Nr. 21, Juli 1967, S. 3-22.

Gramscis durch seine Kerkerhaft und das große Prestige, das ihm innerhalb der KPI zukam, großes Ansehen. Meines Erachtens war es damals undenkbar, Gramsci zu attackieren. Und außerdem muss man hinzufügen, dass die Gefängnishefte und andere Schriften in Österreich zu dieser Zeit nicht bekannt waren. Marek beklagte selbst immer wieder, dass Gramsci außerhalb von Italien nicht gelesen wurde. Allerdings verabsäumte er selbst, größere Übersetzungen zu initiieren. Mein Gefühl ist, dass Marek diesbezüglich mehr hätte tun können.

*Der 20. Parteitag der KPÖ 1969 endete mit einem Pyrrhussieg des dogmatischen, moskautreuen Flügels: er bedeutete nicht nur das Ende des kommunistischen Reformprojekts, sondern führte auch zu einer faktischen Spaltung der Partei. Mit dem Abbruch des Austro-Eurokommunismus und dem Ausschluss von Ernst Fischer, Franz Marek und vielen anderen endete auch wieder die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Denken Gramscis. Michael Graber<sup>3</sup> erwähnt diesbezüglich, dass zwischen 1969 und 1981 lediglich ein Gedenkartikel zu seiner Person erschien. Erst Anfang der 1980er Jahre wurde Gramsci in der KPÖ wieder zum Thema: und zwar in Form einer „Verteidigung“ seines Denkens aus marxistisch-leninistischer Perspektive. Wie sah diese „Verteidigung“ genau aus, welche Konzepte Gramscis standen dabei im Mittelpunkt? Wer waren deren Protagonisten und was waren die Gründe hinter dieser marxistisch-leninistischen Gramsci-Rezeption? Oder anders gefragt, gegen wen war diese Rezeption gerichtet?*

1976 gab es unter Kreisky eine Linkswende in den sozialdemokratischen Jugendorganisationen, die zum Teil von Josef Hindels patroniert wurde. Die Ambition dieser Linkswende war es, ausgehend vom Verband Sozialistischer StudentInnen, der die Führung in der Sozialistischen Jugend übernommen hatte, eine linkssozialistische Strömung zu bilden. Diese linkssozialistische Strömung stützte sich theoretisch auf den Austromarxismus und wollte international eine Referenz zum Eurokommunismus herstellen. In diesem Rahmen gab es 1978 und 1981 Konferenzen mit internationaler Beteiligung, die zum Ziel hatten, diesen Brückenschlag zwischen Austromarxismus und Eurokommunismus

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Graber, *Zur Gramsci-Rezeption in der KPÖ*, <http://www.kpoe.at/home/positionen/geschichte/antonio-gramsci/2011/zur-gramsci-rezeption-in-der-kpoe> (18.9.2018).

theoretisch zu untermauern. Die italienische KP zeigte sich an dieser Linkswende in der Jugendorganisation einer einflussreichen sozialdemokratischen Partei Europas interessiert. Sie nahm sie ernst: zum einen aus politischen Gründen, weil sie sich zur Sozialdemokratie öffnen wollte; aber es bestand auch ein theoretisches Interesse, weil der Putsch in Chile 1973 einige wichtige staats-theoretische und strategische Fragen aufgeworfen hatte, vor die sich die KPI in ihrer politischen Orientierung auf einen historischen Kompromiss mit den Christdemokraten gestellt sah, und für deren Beantwortung sie sich aus einer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Austromarxismus Anregungen erhoffte.

Da zur selben Zeit die sozialistischen und die kommunistischen StudentInnen miteinander in der Hochschulpolitik eng zusammenarbeiteten, schwappte diese Debatte auch in die KPÖ über. Und in diesem Kontext kam es auch zu einer Beschäftigung mit Gramsci seitens des Marxismus-Leninismus. Die Texte, die vom damaligen Parteiideologen Ernst Wimmer Anfang der 1980er Jahre zu Gramsci verfasst wurden,<sup>4</sup> muss man primär als Abwehrversuche verstehen. Erstens versuchte Wimmer, Gramsci auf jene Aspekte zu reduzieren, die mit dem marxistisch-leninistischen Dogma gerade noch vereinbar waren. Daher kam auch dieser Gestus, Gramsci als Marxisten-Leninisten vorzustellen. Wenn man Wimmers Texte mit dieser Problematik vor Augen jedoch aufmerksam liest, wird man feststellen, dass es ihm eigentlich darum ging, Gramsci zwar als klugen Autor darzustellen, der einige interessante Beiträge zu den unterschiedlichen revolutionären Bedingungen in Ost und West und zum Thema der Hegemonie verfasst hatte, dass seine Schriften ansonsten aber uninteressant wären. Das war Wimmers grundsätzliche Haltung.

Aber die Dinge besitzen halt ihre eigene Dialektik: erstens war die gramscianische Sprache für uns junge KPÖ-Mitglieder eine Möglichkeit, aus dem hölzernen Marxismus-Leninismus-Sprech auszubrechen, das interessierte uns; und zweitens war auch die Gramsci-Diskussion in Deutschland, die von den Jungsozialisten und dem intellektuellen Spektrum um die DKP herum vorangetrieben wurde, auch für uns in Österreich zugänglich. In diesem Kontext begann Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Gramscis Schriften zu publizieren und Texte über ihn zu verfassen, die ihn bald in

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst Wimmer, *Gramsci und die Revolution*, Wien, Globus Verlag, 1984.

Gegensatz zur damals vorherrschenden Ideologie der DKP brachten. Die Bücher von ihm und von einigen anderen wurden jedoch publiziert, da auch die Buchverlage in Parteinähe nicht von einem Moment zum anderen die ideologischen Vorgaben des Parteivorstands nachvollziehen konnten oder wollten. Diese Publikationen öffneten eine Tür, so etwa das Buch von Christine Buci-Glucksmann zu Gramscis Staatsverständnis<sup>5</sup> und jenes von Sabine Kebir zu Gramscis Kulturkonzeption.<sup>6</sup> All das erzeugte über die Intentionen von Wimmer hinaus eine ideologische Offenheit in der KPÖ. Erstens war Gramsci ja durch Wimmer legitimiert worden, und zweitens führte es dazu, dass auch in der KPÖ dissidente Meinungen mit einem bestimmten theoretischen Anspruch und mit Bezug auf Gramsci vorgebracht werden konnten. Mit Bezug auf Otto Bauer konnte nämlich zu diesem Zeitpunkt wieder gar nichts vorgebracht werden. Bauer war neuerlich zu einer *persona non grata* erklärt worden. Mit Gramsci aber konnte man da und dort zu bedenken geben und kleine Brüche erzeugen, die sich dann später fortsetzten und ausweiteten.

*Die KPÖ hielt bekanntlich bis zum Fall der Berliner Mauer an ihrer dogmatischen Ausrichtung fest und wurde durch den Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion in eine tiefe Krise gestürzt. Diese war zugleich Ausgangspunkt eines Erneuerungsprozesses: am Grazer Reformparteitag 1991 kam es nicht nur zum ersten Mal zu einer expliziten Verurteilung der Verbrechen des Stalinismus, sondern auch zu einer Abkehr vom Marxismus-Leninismus und zu einer ideologischen Öffnung. Diese Orientierung wurde durch den 29. Parteitag im Jahr 1994 bestätigt, an dem du auch den Bundesvorsitz übernahmst. Deine Zeit an der Spitze der KPÖ war neben der Enteignung des Finanzvermögens vonseiten der BRD durch den Versuch des dogmatischen Flügels geprägt, den Reformkurs rückgängig zu machen. Dieser Konflikt wurde schließlich am 33. Parteitag Ende 2004 durch den Ausschluss mehrerer Vertreter des dogmatischen Flügels entschieden. Spielte die Figur oder das Denken Gramscis bei diesem Erneuerungsprozess irgendeine Rolle? Wenn ja, in welcher Form? War Gramsci während dieser Zeit etwa Bezugspunkt ideologischer Debatten? Und hast du dich selbst in deiner Arbeit als Bundesvorsitzender der KPÖ an gramscianischen Überlegungen oder Begriffen orientiert?*

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<sup>5</sup> Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci und der Staat: für eine materialistische Theorie der Philosophie*, Köln, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Sabine Kebir, *Die Kulturkonzeption Antonio Gramscis*, München, Damnitz Verlag, 1980.

Man muss verstehen, dass es im Zuge des kommunistischen Zusammenbruchs in Osteuropa auf dem Gebiet der Theorie drei unmittelbare Reaktionen gab. Die erste bestand in der Strategie eines „Augen zu und durch“, die zweite Reaktion beinhaltete die Abkehr vom Marxismus und von jedem sozialistischen Begehren, und die dritte Reaktion war es, einzelne, verteidigbare Rückzugspositionen zu definieren. Eine naheliegende Rückzugsposition war das In-Erinnerung-Bringen des kategorischen Imperativs, den Marx in „Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie“ formuliert hatte, nämlich alle Verhältnisse umzuwerfen, in denen der Mensch ein erniedrigtes, ein verlassenes und geknechtetes Wesen ist. Das war eine Position, von der aus man versuchen konnte, den Marxismus zu affirmieren und zu erneuern. Diejenigen, die sich vorher mit Gramsci, wenn auch nur rudimentär beschäftigt hatten, konnten sich auf einen kommunistischen Intellektuellen berufen, der weit über den kommunistischen Rahmen Anerkennung fand und mit dem sich Verschiedenes argumentieren ließ, vor allem auch eine Kritik am Dogmatismus und am Staatssozialismus. Ich persönlich setzte mich mit Gramsci parallel zu der Debatte in der KPÖ auseinander. Mein erstes Buch, das ich über ihn las, war „Antonio Gramsci, eine kritische Würdigung“ von Perry Anderson, das 1979 auf Deutsch erschien.<sup>7</sup> Die Gramsci-Literatur wurde zwar auch im deutschsprachigen Raum in den darauffolgenden Jahren immer reichhaltiger. Allerdings erschienen die Gefängnishefte im Argument-Verlag erst zwischen 1991 und 1999. Das Verständnis von Gramsci bis Ende der 1990er Jahre war also rudimentär, es war mehr Intuition als Kenntnis. Aber auch die Intuition warf einige Fragen auf. Ich würde sagen, dass Gramsci ein Instrument in der ideologischen Debatte war. Gramsci war ein Schibboleth: wer sich auf ihn bezog, ordnete sich einer ganz bestimmten Denktradition zu. Es gab natürlich alternative Angebote der Lektüre Gramscis, die zurück in die Orthodoxie führen wollten, wie jenes des kürzlich verstorbenen Domenico Losurdo. Aber das fand man alles relativ rasch heraus. Und dann war natürlich auch von Bedeutung, dass in den 1990er Jahren die italienische *Rifondazione Comunista* das Paradigma einer sich neu konstituierenden und sich zumindest teilweise in gramscianischer Tradition definierenden Partei war. Insofern war Gramsci damals wichtig. Viele verdanken Wolfgang Fritz Haug die

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<sup>7</sup> Perry Anderson, *Antonio Gramsci: eine kritische Würdigung*, Berlin, Olle & Wolter, 1979.



Einführung in Gramscis Denken, aber auch den Hinweis auf Brechts Bedeutung als Philosophen. Durch Frigga Haug entdeckten wird die Bedeutung Rosa Luxemburgs für eine Erneuerung des Marxismus. Ich selbst hatte an einem bestimmten Punkt das Gefühl, dass die Auseinandersetzung mit Gramsci einigermaßen saturiert war, und wendete mich Brecht zu. Und nach Brecht landete ich dann beim Austromarxismus, weil ich zur Meinung gelangte, dass man nur dann eine Chance hat, die Ideologie der eigenen Bewegung zu verstehen, wenn man ihre theoretischen Traditionen kennt. Mein hauptsächliches Anliegen bestand darin zu rekonstruieren, an welcher Weggabelung die Idee der Selbständigkeit einer revolutionären Partei gegenüber der Sozialdemokratie in Dogmatismus abgeglitten war. Im Zuge dieser Fragestellung landete ich bei Otto Bauer und seinem integralen Sozialismus, und über den integralen Sozialismus beim Austomarxismus allgemein. Gramsci stand am Beginn eines Weges, aber er war ein Autor unter anderen.

*1992 gab es den ersten, von der KPÖ organisierten Gramsci-Kongress in Österreich. Von wem wurde dieser Kongress organisiert? Und spielte er im parteiinternen Neuerungsprozess eine Rolle?*

Ich war damals in der Führung der KPÖ für die Organisation der theoretischen Arbeit zuständig. Der damalige Parteivorsitzende Walter Silbermayr war Politiker mit theoretischem Interesse, aber vor allem damit beschäftigt, pragmatische Auswege aus der damaligen Identitätskrise der KPÖ zu suchen. In der Debatte mit ihm war mein Bemühen, von links Druck auf ihn auszuüben und theoretische Fragestellungen vermehrt in den Mittelpunkt zu rücken. Daher schlug ich ihm vor, einen Gramsci-Kongress zu organisieren, und darauf haben wir uns auch geeinigt. Silbermayr trat jedoch kurz darauf zurück und die Dinge nahmen einen anderen Verlauf. Ich selbst wurde Sekretär der KPÖ, Julius Mende wurde für Theorie verantwortlich und übernahm auch die Redaktion von „Weg und Ziel“. In diesem Kontext organisierte Mende den Gramsci-Kongress 1992. Mende war ein Künstler und Kulturtheoretiker. So erhielt der Kongress eine kulturtheoretische Orientierung. Die Ergebnisse wurden schließlich in einem Sammelband mit dem Titel „Kulturen des Widerstands. Texte zu Antonio Gramsci“ veröffentlicht.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Johanna Borek/Birge Krondorfer/Julius Mende (Hg.), *Kulturen des Widerstands: Texte zu Antonio Gramsci*, Wien, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1993.

*Die KPÖ begeht im November 2018 ihr hundertjähriges Bestehen. Die Gründe zum Feiern halten sich jedoch in engen Grenzen: nach den ersten hundert turbulenten Jahren ist die Partei nach wie vor politisch marginalisiert. Die globalen Krisenprozesse seit 2008 konnten von linker Seite nicht genutzt werden, sondern führten im Gegenteil zu einem Aufstieg rechter und rechtsextremer Kräfte. Die SPÖ hat längst ihre historische Bedeutung eingebüßt, die Grünen scheiterten bei der letzten Nationalratswahl 2017 an der 4-Prozent-Hürde. Gleichzeitig ist bisher kein Projekt einer linken Neuformierung zu erkennen, das in nächster Zukunft in der Lage wäre, dem Rechtsruck auf breiter Basis entgegenzuwirken. Du hast für diese schwierige und gefährliche Ausgangslage in Anlehnung an Otto Bauer die Idee eines integralen Sozialismus vorgeschlagen, als Versuch einer Synthese zwischen den historischen Strömungen der ArbeiterInnenbewegung unter Einbeziehung unterschiedlichster sozialer Bewegungen.<sup>9</sup> Welchen Beitrag könnte Gramsci zu einem solchen integralen Sozialismus liefern?*

Das Faszinierende am integralen Sozialismus ist, dass er die Umkehr eines leninschen Begriffs darstellt. Beide gehen von der historischen Berechtigung beider Strömungen, also der reformistischen und der revolutionären Strömung, innerhalb der ArbeiterInnenbewegung aus. Was dann später in einer wahrscheinlich auch von Lenin vielleicht sogar selbst intendierten Vergrößerung des achten Abschnitts von „Der Imperialismus als höchstes Stadium des Kapitalismus“ übrigblieb, war ja die Verrats-These. Doch Lenin sagt eigentlich etwas Anderes, dass nämlich die Abkehr der Sozialdemokratie von ihren revolutionären Zielen nicht aus Verrat erklärt werden kann, sondern materielle Ursachen in den geänderten Lebensumständen der Arbeiterklasse hat. Gerade daraus leitete Lenin die Notwendigkeit eines unerbittlichen Kampfes der Revolutionäre gegen den sich ständig erneuernden Reformismus ab. Otto Bauer ging von derselben Prämisse aus. Er gelangte aber in seinem Buch „Zwischen zwei Weltkriegen“, das 1936, also zwei Jahre nach der Niederlage im kurzen österreichischen Bürgerkrieg erschien, zur gegenteiligen Schlussfolgerung. Wenn der Reformismus in der Sozialdemokratie tatsächlich materielle

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Baier, *Integraler Sozialismus und radikale Demokratie* in: Walter Baier/Lisbeth N. Trallori / Derek Weber (Hg.), *Otto Bauer und der Austromarxismus*, Wien, Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008, S. 17-31.

Ursachen hatte, musste man diese zur Kenntnis nehmen und daraus eine politische Aufgabe machen. Insoweit ist der integrale Sozialismus ein wichtiger Begriff: er belehrt darüber, dass es unfruchtbar ist, Unterschiede in der ArbeiterInnenbewegung primär durch das Fehlverhalten von Führungen erklären zu wollen, sondern dass diese Unterschiede vielmehr als Ausdruck der widersprüchlichen Klassenlage zu verstehen sind. Was Bauer daher vorschwebte, und was er als integralen Sozialismus bezeichnete, war eine höhere Synthese aus revolutionärem und reformistischem Sozialismus. Das ist fruchtbar, aber darüber hinaus muss der Begriff erweitert werden. In der heutigen, sozial und politisch ausdifferenzierten Landschaft kann die Integration nicht auf die zwei historischen Strömungen der ArbeiterInnenbewegung beschränkt werden. Der integrale Sozialismus impliziert eine Pluralität, verstanden als ein Merkmal eines revolutionären transformativen Projekts. Und wie kann man sich diese Pluralität vorstellen? Ich verwende dafür den von Gramsci geprägten Begriff des historischen Blocks, nämlich ein zielgerichtetes politisches Wollen, das sich aus sozial und ideologisch unterschiedlichen aber in der materiellen Wirklichkeit der Gesellschaft und in den Produktionsverhältnissen verankerten historischen Strömungen formt. Für mich ist das der Kern des historischen Materialismus-Verständnisses von Gramsci. Eine politische Partei wäre demnach der subjektive Ausdruck eines solchen historischen Blocks. Ich glaube, dass man damit die Neubegründung einer radikalen revolutionären Partei denken kann. Das würde auch den Platz des Marxismus im Rahmen einer solchen Neukonzeption einer sozialistisch-integralen Bewegung bestimmen. Insofern ist beim Begriff des integralen Sozialismus viel Gramsci enthalten.

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# Gramsci was a Shibboleth

Walter Baier

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# Gramsci was a Shibboleth

## **Abstract**

During his lifetime, Antonio Gramsci concerned himself little with political events in Austria. Similarly, his posthumously published writings had little influence on the left-of-centre political landscape in that country. Nevertheless, the following interview with Walter Baier, former Chairman of the Austrian Communist Party, examines some of the points of contact and connections between Gramsci and the Austrian Left during the twentieth century. Such points of contact include a) Gramsci's stay in Vienna between 1923 and 1924 and his critical relationship with Austro-Marxism from a philosophical and political point of view; b) the peripheral influence of Gramsci's thought on early Eurocommunism in the Austrian Communist Party between 1965 and 1969, which was due above all to the efforts of Franz Marek; c) the Marxist-Leninist reception of Gramsci's work by the leadership of the Austrian Communist Party which took place at the beginning of the 1980s and was intended as a defensive manoeuvre to counter heterodox interpretations of Marxism within and outside the party; and d) the possible significance of Gramsci for Otto Bauer's concept of integral Socialism, seen as a revolutionary transformational project for the incipient twenty-first century.

## **Keywords**

Bauer, Gramsci, Austro-Marxism, integral socialism, KPÖ

## ***Gramsci was a Shibboleth***

Interview with Walter Baier on  
Gramsci's reception in the KPÖ:  
conducted by Stefan Pimmer

*An initial contact between Gramsci and Austria took place at the end of November 1923. After an eighteen-month stay in the Soviet Union, Gramsci was sent from Moscow to Vienna, from there to reorganize the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), and to align it with the Comintern. At that time Italy had already been under Fascism for more than a year. In Austria however, in the wake of the October revolution, the Social Democrats had succeeded in imposing progressive social policies, between 1918 and 1920 at a federal level, and up until 1934 with their Red Vienna experiment. Gramsci seemed however unimpressed by this social reform project. Although from an intellectual point of view his time in Vienna was extraordinarily significant, no written documents exist where he deals in any detail with the political events in Austria and Vienna. Especially from the perspective of the theory of hegemony, it would have been interesting if he had examined the Red Vienna experience more closely. How might Gramsci have considered this social reform project, given his political experiences in Italy and the conceptual framework he later developed in prison?*

This is an interesting question, but it is a difficult one to answer. One view is to consider that Otto Bauer represents the social democratic counterpart of Antonio Gramsci. From one perspective I find this accurate, since they both pointed out the impossibility of transferring the Soviet experience to western Europe. For the Comintern, this view would have required a paradigm shift. From a social democratic perspective, what was special about Bauer and his followers was that, unlike mainstream social democracy, they maintained their solidarity with the Soviet Union in the 1920s. This can be gathered from his longer work *The Austrian Revolution* and the shorter *Bolshevism or social democracy?*. His ambivalent attitude towards Bolshevism brings Bauer closer to Gramsci. However in my view, Bauer can also be seen as an Austrian Lenin, albeit with an inverted sign: the historical situation of Austrian social democracy obliged him, similarly to Lenin, to reflect on all the issues of revolutionary strategy and tactics. In Bauer's case however (and this

is the inverted sign), it was about demonstrating that at that given moment, a revolutionary break with capitalism was unachievable. This stance obviously antagonized his Communist contemporaries, and led to vigorous opposition. However that tells us nothing about whether Bauer's arguments were valid or not, nor does it alter the perspicacity of his analysis, which is striking, especially when read today. For example I agree with his views on the events in Austria in 1918 and 1919, and his criticism of the Communists. I believe that the idea of seizing power from the streets and proclaiming the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Communists wanted, would have led to the disaster that Bauer predicted.

In this respect, Bauer's choice of a transformation – for him a revolutionary choice – was in my opinion more realistic. Here too, there is proximity with Gramsci. However I also believe that Gramsci would have criticized the Austro-Marxists on two counts. Gramsci was a revolutionary, while the Austro-Marxists were inclined to put off the revolutionary moment until some undefined future time. This is something he would surely not have liked. On the other hand, the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks* would possibly have criticized the Austro-Marxists' verbal radicalism and strategy as sectarian. The Austro-Marxists' policy, which after their withdrawal from the coalition government marked all the 1920s, alienated the Catholic and agrarian parts of Austria. The Christian Social Party essentially isolated the Social Democrats in Vienna and several large cities, which on the one hand made possible the astonishing local political experiment known as Red Vienna. On the other hand however, the Social Democrats' verbal radicalism alienated part of the urban middle classes, who abandoned them for the Christian Social Party and later for the Nazis; and from the beginning of the 1920s on, the Social Democrats reacted with growing incomprehension to the fact that Catholic and agrarian Austria was increasingly opposed to them, and to the Red Vienna experiment that they represented. In 1926, Otto Bauer tried to open the party up to Catholic rural society with a new party programme, the famous Linz Programme. However, this effort was overshadowed by the verbal radicalism he felt obliged to embrace as he competed with the KPÖ. And that is the exact opposite of a Gramscian conception of hegemony. This consists of broadening your own ideological and political base by means of alliances and

the ideological inclusion of popular common sense. As regards Red Vienna, Gramsci's revolutionary passion would have gone further than the actual reform project in fact did. From the 1920s on, and despite its attractiveness, this reform project was destined to fail. That is apparent from the architecture of the social housing, the building of which was paradigmatic of Red Vienna's achievements. Their design suggests the idea that the workers' movement would be able to retreat to them as if to their fortresses. Incidentally, this was criticized by Theodor Körner, the military and political adviser of the Social Democratic defence association *Der Schutzbund*, as a move in the wrong direction, doubting that a revolution in Austria could be brought to victory by means of a defensive military strategy. Here too, Gramsci would have criticized the Austro-Marxist leaders.

In any case it is difficult to make this comparison, because the differences between the two are all but clear-cut: on one hand, the passionate revolutionary Gramsci would have certainly positioned himself with respect to Red Vienna to the left of the Austrian Social Democrats. On the other hand, the theorist of hegemony would have criticized, so to speak, from the "right" the Social Democratic idea that fifty per cent of the electorate is sufficient to establish socialism.

*The Red Vienna project was essentially sustained by the Austro-Marxist ideas of Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Rudolf Hilferding, Karl Renner and others. Gramsci had no comprehensive knowledge of their writings and tended to stand in opposition to Austro-Marxism. His critique in the Prison Notebooks concentrated principally on the Austro-Marxists' attempt to link the teachings of Marx to those of Kant. Gramsci insisted on the originality and autonomy of a Marxist philosophy as developed by Antonio Labriola. Apart from this philosophy-based critique, what commonalities or differences do you see between Gramsci's reformulation of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis and Austro-Marxism, not only from a philosophical but also a political point of view, for example in relation to the national question, the problem of hegemony, the State or that of democracy?*

First of all, it is impossible to talk about Austro-Marxism as a single entity, as it included a wide range of theoretical positions. Secondly, I do believe that the concept of hegemony contains some



Neo-Kantian features. The epistemological idea behind it is that meaning arises out of ideological struggle, that is to say, reality is not simply found, but rather comes into being through collective ideologies. For me Max Adler's synthesis of neo-Kantianism and Marxist thought is highly promising, although much indebted to that particular time and formulated in a highly abstract manner. Gramsci notes in the *Prison Notebooks* that Lenin's philosophy is to be found rather in his practical politics than in his philosophical works, and this obviously represents a criticism of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. On the other hand, Gramsci adopts a hostile stance toward Kantian interpretations of Marxism. I believe that in this respect he goes beyond his own intentions. If you read *The Austrian Revolution* by Otto Bauer, which he wrote in 1921, you will find many aspects that also crop up in Gramsci. Yet Bauer formulates them in part in a more concrete form, because they were the expression of the theorizing of a party leader who at the time actually represented forty per cent of the population, and was therefore in constant communication with that movement. In addition, it was an extremely challenging historical moment. In this book you will find all the possible stages of a revolutionary struggle, from the equilibrium of class forces that finds expression in a coalition government, through to a people's republic, which was supposed to transform into a social democracy, and finally the defensive phase after the equilibrium of class forces is subverted by the right. All of this is covered. And in my opinion it boils down to a concrete manifestation of the idea of war of position. There are a number of formulations in *The Austrian Revolution* that could indeed be Gramsci's. I even believe that once the concept of hegemony makes an appearance. So in this respect Bauer and Gramsci are very close. But the impulse that led to *The Austrian Revolution* and even more to the writing of the 1926 Linz Programme was in my opinion a Leninist rather than a Gramscian one. The more that Austrian Social Democrats were forced onto the defensive during the 1920s, the more mechanical and Machiavellian became their understanding of politics. It had not been so during the post-war period of revolutionary ferment. In *The Austrian Revolution* for example, Bauer describes in great detail how, in the absence of the means of power, a State founded on the basis of a coalition with the Christian Social Party could govern only through consent. This

is Gramscian thinking. But when the Social Democrats withdrew from the coalition, the debate shifted to the level of power politics. And ultimately, this gave rise to a retreat to the positions contained in the 1926 Linz Programme: should the ruling class not respect democracy, social democracy would smash their resistance using the means of dictatorship. Thus the repressive nature of the State and in general the question of power would be given priority over the question of hegemony. The political problem of a mass party finding itself isolated, despite an impressive electoral base, could not be conceptualized in this way.

*It is little known beyond Austria's borders that an early form of Eurocommunism existed in the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ). After the demise of National Socialism, those returning from their Moscow exile, who were obedient to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), took control of the party. Their dogmatic orientation was predominantly responsible for discrediting the KPÖ with the public and for leading the party towards its loss of political significance. After an initial serious crisis in 1956 in relation to the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPSU and the bloody repression of the communist reform project in Hungary, during the 1960s there was a gradual increase in voices calling for critical distance from Moscow and a new ideological and political orientation of the KPÖ. At the 19<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1965, this new orientation was indeed adopted: despite resistance from the wing that was faithful to Moscow, autonomy and democratic socialism, which were to determine party policy until the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1969, became central points of reference. This phase of Austrian anticipation of Eurocommunism probably coincides with the first time Gramsci played a significant part in internal party discussions. What influence did the figure of Gramsci have on the representatives of the reform project and their political positions?*

I believe that Gramsci's influence on Austrian Eurocommunism was extremely peripheral and came primarily through Franz Marek. In 1951 Marek had a serious car accident while in Italy and during his extended hospitalization there, came into contact with Gramsci's writings.<sup>1</sup> I see in the Austrian attempt in the 1960s to reform

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<sup>1</sup> For the political biography of Franz Marek and his appropriation of Gramsci see Maximilian Graf/Sarah Knoll, *Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Franz Marek (1913-1979) – Eine biographische Skizze* in *Franz Marek: Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Lebenserinnerungen und Schlüsseltexte*, ed. and introduction Maximilian Graf and Sarah Knoll, Wien, Mandelbaum Verlag, 2017, pp. 15-103.

communism – a very early expression of the crisis of western communist parties – also the subterranean effect of Austro-Marxism's legacy. In the KPÖ after 1945 there were on the one hand those returning from emigration to the Soviet Union, from among whom the inner party leadership was recruited. With the exception of Ernst Fischer they were traditional communists, who had joined the party in the 1920s, thus prior to 1934. On the other hand, there was a highly influential group of (in the main Jewish) returnees from emigration to England and elsewhere. Their intellectual biographies were influenced by Austro-Marxism: many had attended Hans Kelsens' university lectures and become familiar with his political liberalism. After 1934 thousands of social democrats entered the illegal KPÖ and made up the majority of its active members, representing two different cultures, trade unionists, municipal politicians and organizers on the one hand, and intellectuals who in 1934 and 1938 switched to the KPÖ on the other hand. However the politically and organizationally-engaged people who organized the party's majority after 1945 were opposed to Austro-Marxism. For them, Otto Bauer bore the main responsibility for the defeat of the Austrian workers' movement. Yet an Austro-Marxist culture continued to exist beneath the surface. And it was in this tradition that many intellectuals, who at the end of the 1950s had distanced themselves from the official party line, made attempts to interpret unsettling events such as the Soviet show trials of the 1930s, the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPSU and the Soviet army's march into Hungary in 1956. In this context, Herbert Steiner's work *On the example of Otto Bauer – the October Revolution and Austro-Marxism*, published in 1967 (thus coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution) in a special issue of the theory journal "Weg und Ziel", is remarkable.<sup>2</sup> In this article, Steiner highlights Bauer's fundamentally positive attitude towards the Soviet Union in order to cautiously rehabilitate his life's work in the communist sphere. The date of this publication, which could not have taken place without the consent of the party leadership, is in my view an indication of the influence of Austro-Marxism on the reorientation of the KPÖ at that time. And that is why, in my opinion, the influence of Austro-Marxism is more

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Steiner, *Am Beispiel Otto Bauers – die Oktoberrevolution und der Austromarxismus* in "Weg und Ziel", Sondernummer, No. 21, July 1967, pp. 3-22.

important in explaining the history of the KPÖ than that of Gramsci. Of course Gramsci stood in high regard, given the mood at that time within the international communist movement, where the PCI enjoyed great prestige not only because of its strength, but also thanks to Togliatti and his Yalta Memorandum.

*Nevertheless thanks to Marek's efforts, Gramsci was not unknown within the party. Indeed, the theory journal of the KPÖ "Weg und Ziel", which Marek edited, was in a certain sense aligned with Gramsci. Were there attempts at that time by the dogmatic wing of the KPÖ to discredit the Eurocommunist appropriation of Gramsci?*

I know of none, and I would consider it implausible. I don't think Gramsci was the central element of the discussion. Besides, because of his imprisonment and the great prestige that accrued to him in the PCI, the figure of Gramsci enjoyed wide esteem. In my opinion at that time it was unthinkable to attack Gramsci. And I must add that the *Prison Notebooks* and other writings were unknown in Austria at that time. Even Marek often lamented the fact that Gramsci was not being read outside Italy. Yet Marek did nothing to encourage translations. My feeling is that in this respect Marek could have done more.

*The 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the KPÖ finished with a Pyrrhic victory of the dogmatic wing, which was faithful to Moscow: this meant not only the end of the communist reform project but also led to a de facto split in the party. With the abandonment of Austrian Eurocommunism and the exclusion of Ernst Fischer, Franz Marek and many others, the engagement with Gramsci's thought also came to an end. Michael Graber<sup>3</sup> mentions in this connection that between 1969 and 1981 only one article commemorating Gramsci appeared. Not until the beginning of the 1980s did Gramsci again become topical, in the form of a "defence" of his thought from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. What exactly was this "defence" like, and which of Gramsci's ideas were focused on? Who were its protagonists and what were the reasons behind this Marxist-Leninist reception of Gramsci? Or to put it another way, against whom was this reception directed?*

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Graber, *Zur Gramsci-Rezeption in der KPÖ*; <http://www.kpoe.at/home/positionen/geschichte/antonio-gramsci/2011/zur-gramsci-rezeption-in-der-kpoe> (18.9.2018).

In 1976 under Kreisky's leadership there was a shift to the left in the Social Democrats' youth organizations, which in part was sponsored by Josef Hindels. This shift to the left aimed to construct a leftist wing in the socialist movement, starting from the Association of Socialist Students, which had taken over the leadership of the Socialist Youth Movement. The theoretical basis of this left-leaning movement was Austro-Marxism and its plan was to establish a reference to Eurocommunism at an international level. In this context, between 1978 and 1981 conferences with international participation were held, with the aim of providing theoretical support for bridge-building between Austro-Marxism and Eurocommunism. The PCI showed interest in this leftward shift of the youth organization of an influential European social democratic party. It was taken seriously. This was firstly for political reasons, because the PCI wished to open up towards social democracy. But there was also a theoretical interest: the 1973 putsch in Chile had raised a number of important State theoretical and strategic issues that the PCI found itself facing given its political orientation toward a historic compromise with the Christian Democrats, and it hoped to find suggestions on how to deal with them from an engagement with Austro-Marxism.

Since at this same time socialist and communist students were closely collaborating over higher education policy, the debate also spilled over into the KPÖ. This was the context for an engagement with Gramsci from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. The texts written at the beginning of the 1980s by the then party ideologue Ernst Wimmer<sup>4</sup> should be seen mainly as a defensive attempt. First Wimmer tried to reduce Gramsci to those aspects that were still compatible with Marxist-Leninist dogma. This led to him presenting Gramsci as a Marxist-Leninist. However if you read Wimmer's texts carefully with this in mind, you realise that he was trying to present Gramsci as just a clever author who had made a few interesting contributions about the differing revolutionary conditions in the East and the West and on the subject of hegemony, but whose writings were otherwise uninteresting. This was Wimmer's fundamental attitude.

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst Wimmer, *Gramsci und die Revolution*, Wien, Globus Verlag, 1984.



But things possess their own dialectic. Firstly, Gramsci's language presented us young KPÖ members with the possibility of freeing ourselves from the wooden jargon of Marxism-Leninism, and that interested us; and secondly, the discussion about Gramsci that was being carried forward by the young socialists in Germany and the intellectual milieu around the German Communist Party (DKP), was accessible to us too. This was the context in which Wolfgang Fritz Haug started to publish Gramsci's writings and producing texts about him which rapidly placed him in opposition to the DKP's dominant ideology. His books, and those of a few others, were however published, since even publishers close to the party could or would not follow from one moment to the next the ideological prescriptions of the party leadership. These publications, such as Christine Buci-Glucksmann's book about Gramsci's concept of the State<sup>5</sup> and Sabine Kebir's on Gramsci's concept of culture<sup>6</sup> opened up a door. All this created an ideological openness in the KPÖ beyond Wimmer's intentions. Firstly, thanks to Wimmer, Gramsci was legitimated and secondly, this also meant that dissenting opinions with a certain theoretical claim and a connection to Gramsci could be put forward in the KPÖ. Absolutely nothing with a connection to Otto Bauer could be put forward – Bauer had again become *persona non grata*. With Gramsci though, it was possible there and then to point things out and create small cracks that remained and later grew wider.

*As is known, the KPÖ held on to its dogmatic orientation until the fall of the Berlin wall and was thrown into a deep crisis by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The latter event was at the same time the point of departure for a process of renewal: the 1991 reform-oriented party congress held at Graz produced, for the first time, an explicit condemnation of the crimes of Stalinism, a renunciation of Marxism-Leninism and an ideological opening. This orientation was confirmed at the 29<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1994, where you yourself took over the party leadership. Your time at the head of the KPÖ was characterized, alongside the expropriation of the party's financial assets by the FRG, by the dogmatic wing's attempt to undo the reform course. Did the figure of Gramsci or his thought play any role at all in the renewal process? If so, in*

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<sup>5</sup> Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci und der Staat: für eine materialistische Theorie der Philosophie*, Köln, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Sabine Kebir, *Die Kulturkonzeption Antonio Gramscis*, München, Damnitz Verlag, 1980.

*what form? During this period was Gramsci in any way a point of reference for ideological debates? And were you oriented by Gramscian reflections or concepts in your work as the federal chairman of the KPÖ?*

It must be understood that in the wake of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe there were three immediate reactions in the theoretical field. The first consisted of a strategy of “Close your eyes and carry on!”. The second included the renunciation of Marxism and all socialist demands, while the third reaction was to identify individual, defensible, fall-back positions. An obvious fall-back position was the revival of the categorical imperative that Marx had formulated in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, namely, to overthrow all conditions in which human beings are debased, neglected or enslaved. From such a position one could attempt to reaffirm and renew Marxism. Those who earlier had engaged with Gramsci, even if in a rudimentary fashion, could refer to a communist intellectual who was well-known far beyond the communist fold and with whom something different could be argued, in particular a critique of dogmatism and State socialism. I became interested in Gramsci at the same time as the debate was taking place in the KPÖ. The first book I read about him was *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, by Perry Anderson, which appeared in German in 1979.<sup>7</sup> Gramsci's books became increasingly plentiful in German-speaking countries in the following years. However the *Prison Notebooks* were not published by the Argument-Verlag until between 1991 and 1999. Thus up to the end of the 1990s the understanding of Gramsci remained rudimentary – there was more intuition at work than knowledge. Yet even intuition raised some issues. I would say that Gramsci became an instrument in the ideological debate. Gramsci was a Shibboleth: anyone referring to him was placing himself or herself within a very particular tradition of thought. Of course alternative readings of Gramsci that led back to orthodoxy were available as well, such as that of the late Domenico Losurdo. But all this became known quite rapidly. And also significant was the fact that the Italian *Rifondazione Comunista* party provided the paradigm of a newly-constituted party which at least in part defined itself as being in the

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<sup>7</sup> Perry Anderson, *Antonio Gramsci: eine kritische Würdigung*, Berlin, Olle & Wolter, 1979 [original *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* in “New Left Review” 1/100 (Nov.-Jan. 1976-77), pp. 5-78].

Gramscian tradition. To this extent, Gramsci was important at this time. Many have Wolfgang Fritz Haug to thank for introducing them to Gramsci's thought, but also for indicating Brecht's significance as a philosopher. And Frigga Haug led us to discover the significance of Rosa Luxemburg for a renewal of Marxism.

At a certain point I had the feeling that the discussion of Gramsci had to some extent reached saturation point, and I turned to Brecht. After Brecht I ended up with Austro-Marxism, because I reached the conclusion that the only way to understand the ideology of one's own movement is to know its theoretical traditions. My main concern was to reconstruct at what fork in the road the idea of the autonomy of a revolutionary party vis-à-vis social democracy had drifted into dogmatism. This question led me to Otto Bauer and his integral socialism, and from integral socialism to Austro-Marxism in general. Gramsci was at the beginning of the road I took, but he was one author among many.

*In 1992 the first Gramsci conference organized by the KPÖ took place in Austria. Who organized this conference? Did it play a role in the renewal process within the party?*

At that time I was a member of the leadership of the KPÖ and responsible for organizing theoretical work. The party chairman Walter Silbermayr was a politician with theoretical interests, but most of all he was occupied with finding pragmatic ways out of the KPÖ's identity crisis of the time. My endeavour in the debate with him was to exert pressure from the left, and to increase focus on theoretical questions. For this reason I suggested organizing a Gramsci congress, and we agreed to do so. However shortly thereafter, Silbermayr resigned and things played out differently. I became the secretary of the KPÖ, and Julius Mende took over responsibility for theoretical issues and also as editor of "Weg und Ziel". This was the context in which Mende organized the 1992 Gramsci conference. Mende was an artist and a cultural theorist. Therefore the conference received a cultural theory orientation and its contributions were published in a volume entitled *Cultures of resistance. Writings on Antonio Gramsci*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Johanna Borek/Birge Krondorfer/Julius Mende (eds.), *Kulturen des Widerstands: Texte zu Antonio Gramsci*, Wien, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1993.



*In November 2018 the KPÖ will celebrate one hundred years of existence. The reasons for celebration are however extremely limited: after a turbulent first hundred years the party is now politically as marginalized as ever. The left has been unable to exploit the global crises which after 2008 have instead led to the rise of forces on the right and to right-wing extremism. The Social Democratic Party of Austria has long since lost its historical significance, and the Greens failed to clear the 4% threshold at the last parliamentary elections in 2017. At the same time there are no signs of a project for establishing a new, broad-based, leftist party capable in the near future of counteracting the shift to the right. For this difficult and dangerous starting point, and in alignment with Otto Bauer, you have put forward the idea of an integral socialism, as an attempt to reach a synthesis between the historical tendencies within the workers' movement and involve a wide range of different social movements.<sup>9</sup> What contribution could Gramsci offer to such an integral socialism?*

What is fascinating about the idea of integral socialism is that it represents the reverse of a Leninist concept. Both Lenin and Bauer assume a historical legitimation of the reformist and the revolutionary tendencies within the workers' movement. What then later survived as a simplification, probably also intended by Lenin himself, of the eighth chapter of *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, was of course the betrayal theory. However in actual fact what Lenin says is something quite different, namely that the renunciation by social democracy of its revolutionary goals can be explained not by betrayal, but by material causes within the changed living conditions of parts of the working class. It was precisely from here that Lenin derived the need for relentless struggle by revolutionaries against continually self-renewing reformism. Otto Bauer started from the same premise. But in his book *Between Two World Wars* which appeared in 1936, two years after defeat in the short Austrian civil war, he reached the opposite conclusion. If both social democracy's reformism and communism's "revolutionism" have material causes, neither of them can simply be abolished but must be acknowledged as dimensions of any transformative strategy towards socialism. In this regard, integral socialism is an important concept: it shows that attempting to explain differences in the

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Baier, *Integraler Sozialismus und radikale Demokratie*, in: Walter Baier/Lisbeth N. Trallori/Derek Weber (eds.), *Otto Bauer und der Austromarxismus*, Wien, Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008, pp. 17-31.

workers' movement by the mistakes of their leaders is sterile and that these differences should be understood rather as the expression of a contradictory class situation. What Bauer had in mind and what he indicated as integral socialism, was a higher synthesis of revolutionary and reformist socialism. That is a fruitful concept but it needs to be expanded. In today's social and political landscape integration cannot be limited to the two historical tendencies of the workers' movement. Integral socialism implies a plurality, understood as the mark of a revolutionary project of transformation. And how can we imagine this plurality? I use Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc, namely a goal-oriented political will, which is formed out of socially and ideologically diverse historical tendencies anchored to the material reality of society and production relations. For me, that is the nucleus of Gramsci's idea of historical materialism. A political party would be the subjective expression of such a historical bloc. I believe that in this way it is possible to imagine the founding of a radical revolutionary party. It would also define the place of Marxism within the framework of such a new conception of a socialist integral movement. In this respect, the concept of integral socialism includes much of Gramsci.

*Translation by Chris Dennis*

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<sup>10</sup> [We here list only books by Bauer referred to in the interview – editorial note]

2018

# Critica dell'economia politica e critica della filosofia nei Quaderni del carcere

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# Critica dell'economia politica e critica della filosofia nei Quaderni del carcere

## **Abstract**

This text reconstructs the integral relationship between the development of Gramsci's notion of the philosophy of praxis's "new concept of immanence" and his novel reflections on the theoretical significance of classical political economy and its critique. Against perspectives that argue for an opposition within Marxism between philosophy and the critique of political economy, this text argues that Prison Notebooks instead present a powerful argument for their complementary development in a genuinely critical Marxist social and political theory.

## **Riassunto**

Questo testo ricostruisce il rapporto integrale tra lo sviluppo della nozione gramsciana del "nuovo concetto di immanenza" della filosofia della praxis e le originali riflessioni di Gramsci sul significato teorico dell'economia politica classica e la critica ad essa. Contro le prospettive che sostengono l'opposizione dentro il marxismo tra la filosofia e la critica dell'economia politica, in questo testo si sostiene invece che i Quaderni del carcere presentano un potente argomento a favore del loro sviluppo complementare in una teoria marxista sociale e politica genuinamente critica.

## **Keywords**

New concept of immanence, critique of political economy, critique of philosophy, philosophy of praxis, Ricardo, Sraffa.

## ***Critica dell'economia politica e critica della filosofia nei Quaderni del carcere<sup>1</sup>***

Peter D. Thomas

L'aspra critica gramsciana dell'«economismo» è stata spesso equiparata, erroneamente, a un'insofferenza politicista verso le questioni relative all'economia (politica), o interpretata come la conferma dell'idea che, citando Perry Anderson, «il silenzio di Gramsci sui problemi dell'economia fu pressoché totale»<sup>2</sup>. Nulla di più lontano dal vero, come affermano Boothman e Krätke in tempi più recenti<sup>3</sup>. È evidente che all'inizio della sua prigionia Gramsci considerava lo studio degli argomenti economici una priorità intellettuale, politica e personale, come dichiarò con chiarezza in una lettera del 9 dicembre 1926: «1° star bene per stare sempre meglio di salute; 2° studiare la lingua tedesca e russa con metodo e continuità; 3° studiare economia e storia»<sup>4</sup>.

La recezione internazionale dei *Quaderni del carcere* gramsciani a partire dagli anni Settanta del secolo scorso, è stata segnata, in particolare nel mondo anglofono, da una loro interpretazione come esempio paradigmatico di una specie di «marxismo culturale», emerso dopo le sconfitte dei movimenti rivoluzionari degli anni Venti. In questa narrativa periodizzante si sostiene che la focalizzazione sulla politica «reale» dei teorici marxisti nel tardo Ottocento e all'inizio del Novecento, sia stata progressivamente rimpiazzata da un ritorno a temi filosofici o addirittura «idealisti». Un tale «marxismo occidentale», tuttavia, viene anche nettamente

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<sup>1</sup> Il testo è una traduzione della quinta sezione del capitolo 8 del volume *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy Hegemony and Marxism* (Brill, 2009, pp. 347-62). Con l'eccezione dei due capoversi introduttivi e i capoversi conclusivi, non ci sono revisioni o integrazioni al testo della pubblicazione originale. Tuttavia nel periodo intervenuto da allora ci sono state considerevoli addizioni alle nostre conoscenze sullo studio fatto da Gramsci della critica dell'economia politica. In particolare, il volume di Giuliano Guzzone, «Tra filosofia della praxis e critica dell'economia politica: il problema scientifico dell'economia nei *Quaderni del carcere* di Antonio Gramsci» (Tesi dottorale, Scuola normale di Pisa, 2015) rappresenta un contributo apripista i cui risultati hanno ridefinito il campo di ricerca.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson 1977, p. 97, n.1 [Anderson 1976, p. 75, n. 1]; cfr. Haug 2006, p. 67. Ruccio 2006 afferma ancora che i *Quaderni del Carcere* trattano la critica dell'economia politica in modo limitato.

<sup>3</sup> Si veda l'Introduzione del curatore in A. Gramsci, 1995, pp. XXXIV-XLV; M. R. Krätke, 1998 e 2011; cfr. anche N. Badaloni, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Si veda A. Gramsci, 1975a (1965<sup>1</sup>), p. 11.

distinto dal marxismo «classico» che si pensa lo abbia preceduto, a causa del suo trascurare (relativamente o totalmente) la critica dell'economia politica. In una tale prospettiva manichea, la critica dell'economia politica e la critica della filosofia vengono rappresentate come operazioni fondamentalmente incompatibili.

In questo testo il mio scopo è quello di dimostrare che, lungi da opporre la critica dell'economia politica a quella della filosofia, i *Quaderni del carcere* di Gramsci presentano, invece, un potente argomento per il loro sviluppo complementare nell'ambito di una teoria marxista sociale e politica genuinamente critica. In particolare, la ricerca di Gramsci sul nuovo concetto di immanenza implicito, egli sostiene, nella filosofia della praxis fornisce un esempio della misura in cui la critica dell'economia politica deve necessariamente e simultaneamente essere anche la critica di tutta la filosofia precedentemente esistita. È l'integrazione dialettica di tali orientamenti, piuttosto che una loro separazione antinomiana, che costituisce il tratto distintivo della rivoluzione politico-filosofica inaugurata dal *Weltanschauung* marxista.

Uno dei primi impegni intellettuali nel progetto dei *Quaderni del Carcere* è naturalmente la traduzione della «Prefazione» del 1859 a *Per la Critica dell'Economia Politica*. Nel corso degli anni Gramsci torna incessantemente sui temi in essa toccati, mettendone alla prova le ipotesi in prospettive diverse, meditando sulle sue conseguenze teoretiche ed applicando a casi di studio storici e concreti i principi che credeva di avervi trovato (particolarmente il concetto di rivoluzione passiva). Inoltre, anche un rapidissimo esame dei *Quaderni del Carcere* è sufficiente a riscontrare una gran quantità di materiale direttamente o indirettamente collegato a questioni economiche. Il celebre Quaderno 22 dell'inizio del 1934 su «Americanismo e Fordismo» è soltanto la punta di un iceberg di ricerche chiaramente segnalate nei titoli ricorrenti di una serie di note: «Punti di meditazione per lo studio dell'economia»<sup>5</sup>, «Noterelle di economia»<sup>6</sup> e altre note specifiche (ad esempio «Machiavelli come "economista"»<sup>7</sup> e altri appunti precedenti su Graziadei, della fine del 1930 e 1931<sup>8</sup>). Come osserva Krätke:

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<sup>5</sup> A. Gramsci, 1975b, Q10II§25; Q10II§37i; Q10II§27; Q10II§23; Q10II§30; Q10II§32; tutti risalgono alla metà del 1932.

<sup>6</sup> Q10II§15; Q1543; Q15§45.

<sup>7</sup> Q8§162.

<sup>8</sup> Q7§23; Q7§27; Q8§166; Q7§30.

I quaderni contengono numerosi appunti e considerazioni sull'economia (politica), sulla critica del modo di pensare economico e sul rinnovamento dell'economia «critica» (cioè marxista), a riprova di uno studio prolungato della letteratura disponibile sulla materia e di un confronto serio con la storia e la logica della scienza economica [...]. In questi brani Gramsci si occupa della storia economica dell'Italia e di altri Paesi, del corso della crisi economica internazionale, dello sviluppo dei finanziamenti statali in Italia e altrove. Affronta il recente sviluppo della teoria economica, riflette sulle basi di una scienza indipendente dell'economia, commenta le critiche alla teoria economica di Marx [...], si immerge nell'importanza filosofica delle scoperte degli economisti classici.<sup>9</sup>

Non è eccessivo affermare che fra tutti gli esponenti del cosiddetto «marxismo occidentale» (forse a eccezione di Adorno), Gramsci è quello che più di ogni altro dimostra di conoscere a fondo e di confrontarsi seriamente con i temi del cosiddetto «marxismo classico» derivanti dalla critica dell'economia politica. Se consideriamo che Anderson attribuisce al prigioniero sardo un'importanza fondamentale per il marxismo occidentale nel suo complesso, avendo Gramsci incarnato nella sua stessa vita la transizione da politico militante a studioso (che Anderson considerava il tratto caratteristico della teoria marxista in Occidente durante il periodo stalinista e post-stalinista), conoscere la complessità del pensiero economico gramsciano dovrebbe bastare a fornire lo spunto per ridiscutere la tesi influente, contenuta in *Il dibattito nel marxismo occidentale* [*Considerations on Western Marxism*], che descrive lo sviluppo «post-classico» del marxismo come sempre più incentrato sulla «filosofia», anziché su politica ed economia. In breve, lo scarso interesse di Gramsci per i problemi economici è un falso mito, così come l'opposizione binaria che vorrebbe dipingere le tematiche filosofiche come inadeguate per l'elaborazione della critica dell'economia politica e della pratica politica marxista.

*«Immanenza speculativa e immanenza storicistica o realistica»*

Il contesto in cui Gramsci scrive molti dei suoi appunti di economia e, soprattutto, cerca di integrare la critica dell'economia politica nella ricerca di possibili precursori teoretici del nuovo concetto marxista di immanenza ci offre un'ulteriore riprova dell'unità di intenti tra i suoi impegni filosofici e politico-economici. Infatti il quaderno in cui Gramsci formula molte delle sue

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<sup>9</sup> M.R. Krätke, *Antonio Gramsci's Beiträge*, cit., p. 54.

annotazioni sulla storia dell'economia, sui presupposti filosofici dell'economia politica e in particolare sull'economia politica marxista è proprio il Quaderno «filosofico» numero 10 del 1932, accanto al Quaderno 11 (anch'esso del '32) indubbiamente il suo intervento filosofico più sistematico e approfondito. Inoltre, aspetto ancor più importante, buona parte degli appunti di economia dovevano servire a confutare alcuni elementi della poliedrica critica mossa da Croce a Marx e che non comprendeva soltanto obiezioni di natura filosofica, ma anche critiche di argomenti strettamente economici. Nonostante definisse il pensiero di Marx una «non filosofia», il Croce filosofo sentì comunque il bisogno di scendere nell'arena in cui all'epoca si discuteva della validità scientifica delle tesi marxiane, in particolare quelle sulla teoria del valore e sulla tendenza al calo del tasso di profitto. È proprio nel bel mezzo della sua critica al sistema filosofico di Croce, nella seconda metà del maggio 1932, che Gramsci si dedica con maggiore intensità allo studio dell'economia, mettendo assieme questi due filoni di ricerca nel paragrafo intitolato «*Introduzione allo studio della filosofia. Immanenza speculativa e immanenza storicistica o realistica*», in cui formula una sorprendente equazione: «In un certo senso mi pare si possa dire che la filosofia della praxis è uguale a Hegel + Davide Ricardo<sup>10</sup>».

A prima vista Gramsci sembra riferirsi all'importanza della teoria ricardiana del valore nella formazione del pensiero di Marx, più generalmente riassunta nella vulgata marxista con la dicitura «economia politica inglese» e considerata una delle tre «fonti» che costituivano la nuova *Weltanschauung*, accanto a «politica francese» e «filosofia classica tedesca». In effetti però, nell'esplicitare le motivazioni alla base dell'equazione appena proposta, Gramsci mostra con chiarezza di avere in mente qualcosa di alquanto diverso dalla «classica» terna di elementi:

Il problema è da presentare inizialmente così: i nuovi canoni metodologici introdotti dal Ricardo nella scienza economica sono da considerarsi come valori meramente strumentali (per intendersi, come un nuovo capitolo della logica formale) o hanno avuto un significato di innovazione filosofica? La scoperta del principio logico formale della «legge di tendenza», che porta a definire scientificamente i concetti fondamentali nell'economia di «homo oeconomicus» e di «mercato determinato» non è stata una scoperta di valore

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<sup>10</sup> Q10II§9. Louis Althusser riformula questa frase come «La filosofia marxista consiste nel generalizzare Ricardo»: si veda L. Althusser ed É. Balibar, *Leggere il Capitale*, p. 92.



anche gnoseologico? Non implica appunto una nuova «immanenza», una nuova concezione della «necessità» e della libertà ecc.? Questa traduzione mi pare appunto abbia fatto la filosofia della praxis che ha universalizzato le scoperte di Ricardo estendendole adeguatamente a tutta la storia, quindi ricavandone originalmente una nuova concezione del mondo. Sarà da studiare tutta una serie di quistioni [...]»<sup>11</sup>

Il 30 maggio 1932 (quindi nello stesso periodo in cui scriveva il brano appena citato, o forse poco più tardi) Gramsci parlò di questa sua intuizione in una lettera a Tan'ja, chiedendo di comunicarla anche a Sraffa. Alla luce della grande amicizia e generosità di quest'ultimo, che allora si trovava a Cambridge dove lavorava alla sua edizione delle opere complete di Ricardo<sup>12</sup>, Gramsci non avrebbe potuto trovare interlocutore migliore<sup>13</sup>.

Ti voglio riferire una serie di osservazioni, perché, se del caso, le riscriva a Piero domandandogli qualche indicazione bibliografica che mi permetta di allargare il campo delle meditazioni e di orientarmi meglio. Vorrei sapere se esiste una qualche pubblicazione speciale, anche in lingua inglese, sul metodo di ricerca nelle scienze economiche proprio del Ricardo e sulle innovazioni che Ricardo ha introdotto nella critica metodologica. [...] Il corso delle mie riflessioni è questo: - si può dire che Ricardo abbia avuto un significato nella storia della filosofia oltre che nella storia della scienza economica, dove è certo di primo ordine? E si può dire che Ricardo abbia contribuito a indirizzare i primi teorici della filosofia della praxis al loro superamento della filosofia hegeliana e alla costruzione del loro nuovo storicismo, depurato di ogni traccia di logica speculativa? A me pare che si potrebbe tentare di dimostrare questo assunto e che varrebbe la pena di farlo. Prendo io spunto dai due concetti, fondamentali per la scienza economica, di «mercato determinato» e di «legge di

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<sup>11</sup> Q10II§9; cfr. Q11§52.

<sup>12</sup> D. Ricardo, *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, a cura di P. Sraffa con la collaborazione di M. H. Dobb, 11 voll., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press for the Royal Economic Society, 1951-73.

<sup>13</sup> Alcuni lavori recenti hanno sottolineato l'importanza, sia personale che politica, dell'amicizia di Sraffa per Gramsci (cfr. L. Fausti (1998); J. B. Davis (2002); A. Sen (2003); A. Rossi e G. Vacca (2007)). Sraffa seguì con grande interesse il progetto intellettuale di Gramsci, ponendogli domande pertinenti nei momenti decisivi. Secondo Anderson, il rapporto tra Gramsci e Sraffa era una combinazione di «amicizia personale» e «totale assenza di comunicazione intellettuale [“personal intimacy and intellectual separation” – n.d.r.]. Le opere di Gramsci e Sraffa non hanno la benché minima connessione reciproca». Non si vedono collegamenti, neppure remoti, tra gli universi delle loro rispettive opere» (Anderson 1977, loc. cit.; Anderson 1976, loc. cit.). Come osserva Gerratana, «Nella sua sommarietà questo giudizio è inaccettabile, e può essere facilmente confutato con semplici dati di fatto» (V. Gerratana, Introduzione a *Gramsci e Sraffa* a P. Sraffa, 1991, p. XIII). Come vedremo tra breve, i momentanei intervalli nelle comunicazioni tra i due erano un problema esterno, imposto dalla distanza e dalla censura carceraria.

tendenza» che mi pare siano dovuti al Ricardo e ragiono così: - non è forse da questi due concetti che si è preso motivo per ridurre la concezione «immanentistica» della storia, - espressa con linguaggio idealistico e speculativo dalla filosofia classica tedesca, - in una «immanenza» realistica immediatamente storica, in cui la legge di causalità delle scienze naturali è stata depurata del suo meccanicismo e si è sinteticamente identificata col ragionamento dialettico dell'hegelismo? - Forse tutto questo nesso di pensieri appare ancora un po' torbido, ma mi importa appunto che sia compreso nel suo insieme, sia pure approssimativamente, per quanto basta per sapere se il problema è stato intravisto e studiato da qualche studioso di Ricardo. [...] Che l'economia classica inglese abbia contribuito allo sviluppo della nuova filosofia è comunemente ammesso, ma si pensa di solito alla teoria ricardiana del valore. A me pare che si debba vedere più oltre e identificare un apporto che direi sintetico, cioè che riguarda l'intuizione del mondo e il modo di pensare e non solo analitico, riguardante una dottrina particolare, sia pure fondamentale<sup>14</sup>.

Inizialmente, Sraffa salutò le domande e le ipotesi di Gramsci con entusiasmo e coinvolgimento. «Nino può immaginare quanto mi abbiano interessato le sue osservazioni», scrisse in una lettera a Tan'ja il 21 giugno 1932, che lei a sua volta trascrisse a Gramsci il 5 luglio<sup>15</sup>. Anche se non si sentiva in grado di dilungarsi in commenti (a causa della sua scarsa conoscenza delle opere di Marx ed Engels), Sraffa sembrava colpito in particolare dal modo nuovo in cui Gramsci tentava di mettere in relazione il pensiero di Ricardo con quello degli autori del *Manifesto*.

... – Alla principale osservazione, riguardante il significato del Ricardo nella storia della filosofia, bisogna che ci pensi bene – e per comprenderla bene bisogna che io studi più che gli scritti di Ricardo, quelli dei primi teorici della filosofia della praxis<sup>16</sup>.

Riguardo invece le ipotesi di Gramsci nella loro sostanza, che toccavano temi ben più attinenti alle sue competenze e al suo campo di ricerca, Sraffa iniziò a mostrarsi dubbioso:

Vorrei però avere qualche spiegazione di due concetti di «mercato determinato» e «legge di tendenza», che Nino chiama fondamentali e che, metten-

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<sup>14</sup> Lettera a Tan'ja, 30 maggio 1932 in A. Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, cit., pp. 628-30.

<sup>15</sup> Si tratta di una delle lettere più lunghe tra quelle inviate da Sraffa a Gramsci, tramite Tan'ja. È importante notare che inizia con una lunga discussione su Croce prima di passare all'idea di Gramsci a proposito di Ricardo. Tuttavia, resasi conto dell'importanza dell'argomento, Tan'ja invertì l'ordine dei temi nella sua trascrizione. (Cfr. P. Sraffa, *Lettere a Tania*, cit., pp. 72-5.)

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p.74.

doli fra virgolette, sembra attribuire loro un significato tecnico: confesso che non capisco bene a che cosa si riferiscano, e quanto al secondo, io ero abituato a considerarlo piuttosto come una delle caratteristiche dell'economia volgare<sup>17</sup>.

Passando infine a Ricardo, lo scetticismo della risposta di Sraffa sembrerebbe indicare che le ipotesi di Gramsci, per quanto stimolanti, fossero in ultima analisi un volo di fantasia privo di basi storiche concrete<sup>18</sup>.

Ad ogni modo è molto difficile apprezzare l'importanza, se vi è, di Ricardo, perché egli stesso, al contrario dei filosofi della praxis, non si ripiegava mai a considerare storicamente il suo proprio pensiero. In generale poi egli non si pone mai dal punto di vista storico e come è stato detto considera come leggi naturali ed immutabili le leggi della società in cui vive. Ricardo era, e restò sempre, un agente di cambio di mediocre cultura [...] dai suoi scritti è chiaro, mi sembra, che l'unico elemento culturale che vi si può trovare, è derivato dalle scienze naturali<sup>19</sup>.

Gramsci non rispose alla richiesta di chiarimenti dell'amico; in realtà non è escluso che non abbia neppure avuto la possibilità di leggere quella lettera. Infatti, proprio nel periodo in cui arrivò (trascritta da Tan'ja), la sorveglianza nel carcere aumentò. Il 12 luglio 1932, dopo il lungo e infervorato scambio epistolare su Croce del periodo immediatamente precedente, Gramsci si sentì in dovere di esortare Tan'ja a non scrivere di nulla al di fuori delle «cose famigliari».

#### «Mercato determinato»

Possiamo tuttavia risalire all'importanza dell'ipotesi di Gramsci attraverso altre lettere e annotazioni scritte in quello stesso periodo. Anche supponendo che volesse soltanto essere gentile e delicato nei confronti dell'amico in isolamento forzato, è piuttosto sorprendente

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. D. Boothman, *Gramsci als Ökonom* in «Das Argument», 185, 1991, pp. 61-4.

<sup>19</sup> P. Sraffa, *Lettere a Tania*, cit., 1991, p. 74. Nonostante il suo scetticismo, Sraffa indicò a Gramsci (come richiestogli) una lunga lista di riferimenti a studi su Ricardo ed altra letteratura pertinente. Vi si trova, tra l'altro, la seguente nota bibliografica: «Inoltre è stato pubblicato dal Kröner a Lipsia un volume del Marx intitolato *Der historische Materialismus - die Frühschriften*, a cura di S. Landshut e J.P. Mayer; esso contiene, oltre alla *Kritik der begelschen Staatsphilosophie*, e a molti articoli della *Rheinische Zeitung* e altri scritti minori, un lungo scritto *inedito* del 1844, intitolato *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie: über den Zusammenhang der Nationalökonomie mit Staat, Recht, Moral, und bürgerlichem Leben*, che occupa quasi 100 pagine. Questo scritto non l'ho ancora letto, ma evidentemente deve essere essenziale per chiarire la questione» (*Ibidem*, pp. 74-5).

che Sraffa abbia avuto la sensazione di non capire cosa Gramsci intendesse dire con quei virgolettati a proposito dell'importanza filosofica dei concetti ricardiani di «mercato determinato» e «legge di tendenza»: non solo perché all'epoca Sraffa stava lavorando sui testi di Ricardo ed era quindi nella posizione ideale per «intuire» ciò che Gramsci aveva in mente, ma anche perché Gramsci sembra aver ricavato l'idea che Ricardo abbia avuto un peso anche filosofico sulla filosofia della praxis non da uno studio approfondito degli scritti di Ricardo (a cui non aveva accesso, almeno in carcere), bensì da un libro consigliato proprio da Sraffa: *Histoire des doctrines économiques* di Gide e Rist<sup>20</sup>. Nel marzo del 1932, Gramsci sostenne l'equivalenza tra il metodo del «supposto che» e il concetto di «mercato determinato»:

*Noterelle di economia. Ugo Spirito e C.* L'accusa all'economia politica tradizionale di essere concepita «naturalisticamente» e «deterministicamente». Accusa senza fondamento, perché gli economisti classici non si debbono essere preoccupati molto della quistione «metafisica» del determinismo e tutte le loro deduzioni e calcoli sono basati sulla premessa del «supposto che». Cos'è questo «supposto che»? Lo Jannacone, recensendo nella «Riforma Sociale» il libro dello Spirito, definisce il «supposto che» come un «mercato determinato» e questo è giusto secondo il linguaggio degli economisti classici. Ma cos'è il «mercato determinato» e da che cosa appunto è determinato? Sarà determinato dalla struttura fondamentale della società in quistione e allora occorrerà analizzare questa struttura e identificarne quegli elementi che, [relativamente] costanti, determinano il mercato ecc., e quegli altri «variabili e in isviluppo» che determinano le crisi congiunturali fino a quando anche gli elementi [relativamente] costanti ne vengono modificati e si ha la crisi organica.<sup>21</sup>

Come osservano sia Frosini sia Krätke, l'identificazione del metodo dell'astrazione di Ricardo nella formula «supposto che»

è ricavato quasi alla lettera dal manuale di Gide/Rist, che Gramsci aveva a disposizione: in quel testo, tale metodo viene definito «ipotetico» e si afferma persino che Marx ne fu «ispirato» (cfr. Gide/Rist 1929, 161 e seg.)<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> Q8§216. Gramsci usa per la prima volta il concetto di «mercato determinato» poco più di un anno prima (nel febbraio 1931) mentre discute su Graziadei; e lo fa in modo tale da criticare implicitamente la formulazione speculativa del concetto in «economia pura» (la «realtà [...] non è mai «pura»» (Q7§30). Frosini (2004) ricostruisce la trasformazione di questo termine, da parte di Gramsci, in una categoria essenziale dell'economia «critica» (cioè marxista).

<sup>22</sup> M.R. Krätke, *Antonio Gramsci's Beiträge, cit.*, p. 79 e *Antonio Gramsci's contribution, cit.*, p. 90.

Pertanto l'ipotesi di Gramsci non è né incomprensibile come sembrava a Sraffa, né innovativa come suggerito da altri commentatori<sup>23</sup>; è invece una ripetizione quasi letterale di una posizione forse esagerata, ma di sicuro già presente nella letteratura accademica dell'epoca. Dunque non è necessario soffermarsi a lungo sulla veridicità dell'affermazione di Gramsci, che a grandi linee offre elementi interessanti, sebbene imprecisi, per esaminare un momento decisivo nello sviluppo della teoria economica<sup>24</sup>.

*«Leggi di tendenza» del «mercato determinato»: «filologia» dei «rapporti di forza».*

Ben più importanti della correttezza o meno di queste proposte per comprendere la storia del pensiero economico sono i motivi che spingono Gramsci a soffermarsi su questa formulazione e le conclusioni teoretiche che ne ricava per la comprensione della natura della filosofia della praxis come forma di pensiero e concezione del mondo. Il concetto di «mercato determinato», inteso come costruzione teoretica secondo il metodo attribuito da Gramsci a Ricardo e non in termini di mercato «puro», porta Gramsci a postulare una concezione non speculativa di «leggi di tendenza» valide all'interno di determinate formazioni sociali (o «mercati determinati»), storicamente delimitate, sotto forma di «rapporti di forza». Il brano cruciale è dell'aprile 1932 (il mese successivo a Q8§216 e precedente a Q10II§9 e alla lettera a Tan'ja e Sraffa).

*Scienza economica.* Concetto e fatto di «mercato determinato», cioè rilevazione che determinate forze sono apparse storicamente, il cui operare si presenta con un certo «automatismo» che consente una certa misura di «previdibilità» e di certezza per le iniziative individuali. «Mercato determinato» pertanto equivale a dire «determinato rapporto di forze sociali in una determinata struttura dell'apparato di produzione» garantito da una determinata superstruttura

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<sup>23</sup> D. Boothman, Introduzione a Gramsci, 1995, *cit.*, pp. XXXVIII e 512.

<sup>24</sup> Krätke osserva che «il pensiero basilare di Gramsci è del tutto corretto, ma da uno scrutinio minuzioso emerge qualcosa di molto diverso: Marx aveva bisogno dell'economia politica classica nel suo complesso; Ricardo non è che una componente di essa [...] Tutti gli economisti politici classici, come i loro precursori, ragionano regolarmente in questo modo "teoretico" ("quale sarebbe il caso, se ...?"). Essi operano sulla base di supposizioni formulate più o meno chiaramente» (M.R. Krätke *Antonio Gramscis Beiträge*, *cit.*, pp. 78-9; cfr. anche Krätke, *Antonio Gramsci's contribution*, *cit.*, p. 90). Come segnala ancora Krätke, ben più determinante per lo sviluppo della teoria economica marxista è l'introduzione da parte di Marx di una dimensione storica in tali processi di costruzione di modelli teoretici.

giuridica. [...] La «critica» della scienza economica parte dal concetto della «storicità» del «mercato determinato» e del suo «automatismo», mentre gli «economisti» puri pongono questi elementi come «eterni», «naturali»; analizza i rapporti delle forze che «determinano» il mercato, valuta le loro «modificabilità» connesse all'apparire di fattori nuovi e al loro rafforzarsi e presenta la «caducità» e la «sostituibilità» della «scienza» criticata: la studia come «vita» ma anche come «morte», e trova nel suo intimo gli elementi del suo superamento immancabile da parte di un «erede» che sarà «presuntivo» finché non avrà dato prove manifeste di vitalità ecc.<sup>25</sup>

Un «mercato» (o più genericamente una formazione sociale) è dunque «determinato» in quanto costituito da rapporti di forza, a loro volta determinati dal loro funzionamento all'interno del mercato (o formazione sociale). La determinazione di tale formazione sociale, sia in senso reale che in senso logico, avviene attraverso l'identificazione di questi rapporti di forza per cogliere la formazione stessa nella sua «storicità», vale a dire secondo le dinamiche storiche che costituiscono il suo presente «impuro», ma anche secondo le dinamiche storiche già operanti al suo interno che portano a «modificabilità» future.

Gramsci ha così individuato una definizione non metafisica e non speculativa di «mercato determinato» continuando la «traduzione» (secondo Gramsci già presente *in nuce* in Ricardo) di un'ipotesi potenzialmente speculativa in termini realistici e storici<sup>26</sup>. Qui, di fatto, il «supposto che [...], allora» è diventato (o meglio, è

<sup>25</sup> Q8§128.

<sup>26</sup> La «serie di quistioni» da studiare di cui Gramsci parla in «*Introduzione allo studio della filosofia. Immanenza speculativa e immanenza storicistica o realistica*» (Q10II§9) espone, nello stile classico dell'*Ideologiekritik*, sia le ragioni storiche per la comparsa dell'ipotesi ricardiana sia, almeno implicitamente, la sua successiva degenerazione nella teoria economica borghese prima di essere «salvata» dall'*Aufhebung* della filosofia della praxis: «1) riassumere i principî scientifici-formali del Ricardo nella loro forma di canoni empirici; 2) ricercare l'origine storica di questi principî ricardiani che sono connessi al sorgere della scienza economica stessa, cioè allo sviluppo della borghesia come classe “concretamente mondiale” e al formarsi quindi di un mercato mondiale già abbastanza “denso” di movimenti complessi perché se ne possano isolare e studiare delle leggi di regolarità necessarie, cioè delle leggi di tendenza, che sono leggi non in senso naturalistico o del determinismo speculativo, ma in senso “storicistico” in quanto cioè si verifica il “mercato determinato”, ossia un ambiente organicamente vivo e connesso nei suoi movimenti di sviluppo. (L'economia studia queste leggi di tendenza in quanto espressioni *quantitative* dei fenomeni; nel passaggio dall'economia alla storia generale il concetto di quantità è integrato da quello di qualità e dalla dialettica quantità che diventa qualità [*quantità = necessità; qualità = libertà*]. La dialettica [variante interlineare: “nesso dialettico” – n.d.t.] quantità-qualità è identica a quella necessità-libertà); 3) porre in connessione Ricardo con Hegel e con Robespierre; 4) come la filosofia della praxis è giunta dalla sintesi di queste tre correnti vive alla nuova concezione dell'immanenza, depurata da ogni traccia di trascendenza e di teologia» (Q10II§9; cfr. Q11§52; cfr. anche Frosini 2003, pp. 143-9).

tornato ad essere) «osservando che [...], allora». Tre condizioni impediscono all'osservazione di (ri)cadere nella consacrazione speculativa. Primo: l'atto dell'osservazione, anziché rivendicare un punto di vista «sovrastorico», al di fuori o al di sopra della formazione sociale<sup>27</sup>, riconosce la propria parzialità, cioè il fatto che, in quanto «critica», è esso stesso un determinato rapporto di forze all'interno della «storicità» e dell'«automatismo» del «mercato determinato». Secondo: di conseguenza, ciò che viene osservato non è una condizione statica vista come un «oggetto» da un «soggetto» posto al suo esterno, bensì i processi dinamici o rapporti di forze che producono ciascuna configurazione data, visti da una determinata posizione al loro interno. Terzo, la supposizione che deriva da una tale osservazione non mira alla semplice riproduzione mimetica in termini teoretici di ciò che viene osservato, ma piuttosto a delinearne le sue «possibilità di modificabilità».

Dal «processo meccanico di generalizzazione astratta» che Gramsci trova sia nella sociologia di Michels, sia nell'astorico «mercato determinato» dell'economia «pura», inconsapevole di essere soltanto «un duplicato del fatto stesso osservato» e dunque una forma speculativa dei rapporti di forza che lo hanno determinato<sup>28</sup>; e dal «concetto» crociano che si auto-definiva «immanente» alle semplici «rappresentazioni», Gramsci è arrivato a ciò che Marx descriveva come «astrazione determinata». La generalità di una determinata formazione sociale viene qui colta come esempio della combinazione dei singoli elementi che l'hanno fatta sorgere, e non nel senso di «portata causativa» di «leggi astratte» che «rassomigliano stranamente alle idee pure di Platone che sono l'essenza dei fatti reali terrestri».<sup>29</sup> Le «leggi di tendenza», concepite come traduzione teoretica dei «rapporti di forza», diventano qui «l'espressione metodologica dell'importanza che i fatti particolari siano accertati e precisati nella loro inconfondibile "individualità"». Vengono colte inizialmente nella loro «certezza», non nella loro «verità»: in altre parole, sono un metodo «filologico» per lo studio della storicità delle formazioni sociali.

Da queste considerazioni si può trarre argomento per stabilire ciò che significa «regolarità», «legge», «automatismo» nei fatti storici. Non si tratta di

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<sup>27</sup> Q11§14.

<sup>28</sup> Q11§26 nota I, pp. 1433-4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

«scoprire» una legge metafisica di «determinismo», e neppure di stabilire una legge «generale» di causalità. Si tratta di vedere come nello sviluppo generale si costituiscono delle forze relativamente «permanenti» che operano con una certa regolarità e un certo automatismo. Anche la legge dei grandi numeri, sebbene sia molto utile come termine di paragone, non può essere assunta come la «legge» dei fatti sociali<sup>30</sup>.

Nella ricerca da parte di Gramsci della nuova filosofia marxiana dell'immanenza, il brano appena citato ha un'importanza enorme. All'accusa di determinismo metafisico mossa da Croce, Gramsci risponde che il determinismo studiato dai filosofi della praxis è il determinismo della «cosa in sé», i processi immanenti ad essa che possono essere «rappresentati» teoreticamente in una «legge di tendenza» storica e non speculativa.<sup>31</sup> Rifiutando l'immanenza di un pensiero astratto all'essere, Gramsci ha ora individuato una metodologia che non mira a dimostrare che l'immanenza dell'essere al pensiero è una generalità astratta (tesi che di per sé può essere recuperata attraverso una lettura differenziata, ad esempio, di Hegel, teorico dello Spirito oggettivo). Gramsci intende invece dimostrare che l'essere *nella storia* è già immanente al pensiero (nel senso che il pensiero si forma sulla base di esperienze storiche determinate) e, ancor più importante, che la *teoria stessa* è una forma particolare dell'essere storica, ovvero *una pratica*, che in ogni momento della sua elaborazione resta immanente a tale esperienza storica, non trascendente ad essa. Qualsiasi pretesa, da parte della teoria, di trascendere la sua determinatezza storica viene spiegata in termini di espressione e modo di unificazione degli interessi di classe in una forma teoretica *politicamente* surdeterminata<sup>32</sup>. La sfida diventa ora fare in modo che questa ridefinizione dello status della teoria funzioni in un modo non speculativo che sia adeguato a produrre una teoria tesa a rafforzare le dinamiche trasformative già in atto, anziché a congelarle nella fossilizzazione di un presente eterno.

Gramsci conclude questa annotazione dell'aprile 1932 affermando che

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<sup>30</sup> Q8§128.

<sup>31</sup> Non a caso, immediatamente dopo avere identificato questo concetto «storicistico», e non «speculativo» o «naturalistico», di leggi di tendenza (Q10II§9; cfr. sotto), Gramsci intensifica la sua critica della lettura di Marx proposta da Croce, insistendo inoltre sulla natura teleologica, trascendentale e, in ultima analisi, metafisica dell'immanenza assoluta di Croce.

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. il già citato Q10I§8, in cui Gramsci spiega la «concezione soggettiva della realtà» come «fatto storico», come «soggettività storica di un gruppo sociale», «da forma di un contenuto concreto sociale».



Occorrerà studiare l'impostazione delle leggi economiche così come fu fatta da Davide Ricardo (il cosiddetto metodo del «posto che»): in essa certo è da ritrovare uno dei punti di partenza delle esperienze filosofiche di Marx ed Engels che portarono allo sviluppo del materialismo storico<sup>33</sup>.

Nonostante l'impressione che si ricava da una rapida lettura di questi brani, in un primo momento Gramsci *non* intendeva proporre una nuova lettura dell'importanza di Ricardo per il pensiero di Marx. Ancora una volta la sua è un'affermazione euristica, non definitoria: essa indica una direzione di ricerca e non un risultato acquisito, un «concetto pratico». Parafrasando la famosa definizione di ortodossia marxista data da Lukács nel saggio che apre il suo *Storia e coscienza di classe*, potremmo dire che a Gramsci interessa più il «metodo» che la validità o meno di questa o quella tesi. Tuttavia, alla fine di maggio 1932, quando scrive a Tan'ja / Sraffa per chiedere chiarimenti, il pensiero di Gramsci è già andato oltre la questione del contributo di alcuni metodi o concetti specifici da parte di Ricardo. Ora il suo scopo sarà esaminare le implicazioni di una tale economia politica «filologica» per la natura della filosofia della praxis come concezione del mondo, riconoscendo nella politica francese e, soprattutto, nell'economia politica inglese (in particolare Ricardo) il «momento sintetico unitario» del «nuovo concetto di immanenza» che rese possibile l'integrazione e la trasformazione di tre movimenti socio-politici, inizialmente ben distinti, in altrettanti elementi della nuova *Weltanschauung*, in rapporti di traduzione (potenzialmente) ancora in corso.

*Tre fonti del marxismo o «processo storico ancora in movimento»?*

*L'immanenza quale «momento sintetico unitario» della filosofia della prassi.*

Le righe nel paragrafo intitolato «Introduzione allo studio della filosofia. Immanenza speculativa e immanenza storicistica o realistica» che precedono la celebre equazione «filosofia della praxis = Hegel + Davide Ricardo» sottolineano precisamente questa problematica teoretica quale orizzonte della ricerca di Gramsci. Il caso specifico di Ricardo è inteso in realtà semplicemente come esempio di un'affermazione più generale riguardo la costruzione ancora in corso della filosofia della praxis.

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<sup>33</sup> Q8§128.

Si afferma che la filosofia della praxis è nata sul terreno del massimo sviluppo della cultura della prima metà del secolo XIX, cultura rappresentata dalla filosofia classica tedesca, dall'economia classica inglese, e dalla letteratura e pratica politica francese. All'origine della filosofia della praxis sono questi tre momenti culturali. Ma in che senso occorre intendere questa affermazione? Che ognuno di questi movimenti ha contribuito a elaborare rispettivamente la filosofia, l'economia, la politica della filosofia della praxis? Oppure che la filosofia della praxis ha elaborato sinteticamente i tre movimenti, cioè l'intera cultura dell'epoca, e che nella sintesi nuova, in qualsiasi momento la si esamini, momento teorico, economico, politico, si ritrova come «momento» preparatorio ognuno dei tre movimenti? Così appunto a me pare. E il momento sintetico unitario mi pare da identificare nel nuovo concetto di immanenza, che dalla sua forma speculativa, offerta dalla filosofia classica tedesca, è stato tradotto in forma storicistica coll'aiuto della politica francese e dell'economia classica inglese<sup>34</sup>.

Qui Gramsci fornisce una versione alternativa della tesi delle tre fonti del marxismo (e delle sue due «parti integranti» successive). Originariamente tale tesi venne formulata per mezzo di una rielaborazione del tema hegeliano/heiniano/marxiano della relazione fra Rivoluzione francese e idealismo tedesco nel saggio di Engels *Ludwig Feuerbach e il punto d'approdo della filosofia classica tedesca*. La metafora architettonica dell'«articolazione» delle tre tradizioni nazionali al fine di produrre un credo binario unitario (filosofia tedesca + politica francese + economia politica inglese = marxismo = materialismo dialettico + materialismo storico) venne ripresa in seguito da Lenin e prontamente divenne un importante articolo di fede del «Diamat» (invocato tra gli altri anche dall'Althusser di *Leggere il Capitale*). Qui Gramsci propone qualcosa di diverso a proposito delle fonti del pensiero di Marx ed Engels, in modo tale da incidere profondamente sulla definizione della nuova concezione del mondo che ne è scaturita. Gramsci sostiene che la filosofia della praxis sia emersa non dall'articolazione esterna di tre correnti di pensiero indipendenti (che restano poi autonomamente efficaci e conservano i rispettivi ambiti di competenza all'interno della nuova *Weltanschauung*), bensì da una surdeterminazione dinamica di due elementi (la filosofia tedesca e la politica francese) attraverso un elemento metodologico del terzo (e precisamente la concezione immanentistica implicita nell'economia politica inglese). Come sostiene Badaloni:

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<sup>34</sup> Q10II§9.

in sostanza, pertanto, Gramsci non solo ribadisce che la filosofia classica tedesca e l'economia politica inglese sono due fonti del marxismo, ma vorrebbe dimostrare che la seconda è un aspetto importante della trasformazione dell'idealismo della prima in una concezione immanentistica<sup>35</sup>.

La filosofia della praxis ridefinisce quindi i campi del sapere preesistenti non come «parti integranti», ma come «momenti» di una sua propria costituzione dinamica surdeterminata. È il «momento sintetico unitario» del nuovo concetto di immanenza che rende possibili simili rapporti di traduzione, perché è solo attraverso un tale metodo di comprensione dell'importanza teoretica dei «rapporti di forza», in seguito «universalizzati» «adeguatamente a tutta la storia»<sup>36</sup>, che i fondatori della filosofia della praxis hanno potuto riconoscere il contenuto sociale comune ai tre diversi «movimenti» culturali precedenti, rielaborandoli così come «momenti» all'interno di una nuova concezione del mondo. Ciascun momento è ora internamente in relazione con gli altri; essi sono cioè reciprocamente immanenti, poiché le pratiche sociali che miravano a comprendere vengono riconosciute come determinate dagli stessi rapporti di forze.

Quest'idea delle origini della filosofia della praxis ha un effetto importante sulla concezione gramsciana della sua natura come concezione del mondo. In quanto concezione del mondo definita da rapporti di traduzione ancora in corso tra diversi momenti teoretici e pratici reciprocamente immanenti, la filosofia della praxis non potrà mai arrivare alla forma sistematica chiusa delle dottrine filosofiche considerate «classiche» (tanto bramata dal «Diamat» e dai suoi numerosi eredi). Proprio in quanto essa è storicismo assoluto fondato su un concetto di immanenza non speculativo né metafisico, la filosofia della praxis rimane un progetto incompiuto che, per definizione, deve cercare di assorbire o di cogliere le nuove iniziative e rapporti di forza che definiscono le sue condizioni di possibilità. Come spesso accade, Gramsci individua i presupposti per una prospettiva contraria alle «correnti principali» del marxismo del suo tempo proprio nel testo di riferimento dell'ortodossia. Subito dopo la sua affermazione sull'importanza «filosofica» di Ricardo, polemizzando contro l'immanenza speculativa di Croce e Gentile, Gramsci passa a una rilettura della celebre frase conclusiva di Engels in *Lud-*

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<sup>35</sup> N. Badaloni, 1981, p. 292.

<sup>36</sup> Q10II§9, p. 1247.

*wig Feuerbach e il punto d'approdo della filosofia classica tedesca: «il movimento operaio tedesco è l'erede della filosofia classica tedesca».*

Come occorre intendere la proposizione di Engels sull'eredità della filosofia classica tedesca? Occorre intenderla come un circolo storico ormai chiuso, in cui l'assorbimento della parte vitale dell'hegelismo è già definitivamente compiuto, una volta per tutte, o si può intendere come un processo storico ancora in movimento, per cui si riproduce una necessità nuova di sintesi culturale filosofica? A me pare giusta questa seconda risposta: in realtà si riproduce ancora la posizione reciprocamente unilaterale criticata nella prima tesi su Feuerbach tra materialismo e idealismo e come allora, sebbene in un momento superiore, è necessaria la sintesi in un momento di superiore sviluppo della filosofia della praxis<sup>37</sup>.

Comprendere la filosofia della praxis come «immanenza assoluta» si rivela quindi il requisito indispensabile per rivitalizzare l'eredità di Marx all'epoca di Gramsci: una rivitalizzazione che è essa stessa la forma della sua vitalità in qualunque epoca storica.

*Critica dell'economia politica come critica della filosofia.*

L'elaborazione ad opera di Gramsci di un concetto di immanenza qualitativamente nuovo, come elemento fondamentale in un'approfondita critica alle basi sociali e alle coordinate concettuali di tutta la precedente filosofia, non si può considerare un impegno “meramente” filosofico o una “ritirata” dagli aspetti centrali di interesse della precedente tradizione marxista. Come dimostrato dallo sviluppo dinamico di questo filone di ricerca nei *Quaderni* nel 1932, la critica dell'economia politica svolge un ruolo cruciale nella critica della filosofia e viceversa. La produttività della prospettiva di cui Gramsci è stato pioniere consiste non solo nella sua capacità di fornire nuove aperture sulla storia della filosofia in generale, o di ridefinire la nostra comprensione della nozione di immanenza, una delle preoccupazioni centrali del pensiero politico radicale contemporaneo. Essa rappresenta anche un caso di studio paradigmatico del modo in cui si dovrebbe ricercare una teoria sociale e politica genuinamente marxista non in particolari campi del sapere, ma nella pratica della critica dialettica, che li unisce nella loro distinzione: un “rinnovamento da cima a fondo del modo di concepire la filosofia” e, insieme, l'economia politica.

*Traduzione italiana di Mattia Antonetti*

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<sup>37</sup> Q10II§10.

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# La complessa convergenza: potenzialità e problematicità di un confronto tra Gramsci e Foucault [recensione del volume “Gramsci and Foucault: a Reassessment”, a cura di David Kreps]

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# La complessa convergenza: potenzialità e problematicità di un confronto tra Gramsci e Foucault [recensione del volume “Gramsci and Foucault: a Reassessment”, a cura di David Kreps]

## **Abstract**

Questo articolo è la recensione da Giacomo Tarascio del volume *Gramsci and Foucault: a Reassessment*, a cura di David Kreps.

## **Keywords**

Gramsci, Foucault, confronto, convergenza, individui, istituzioni.

# ***La complessa convergenza: potenzialità e problematicità di un confronto tra Gramsci e Foucault***

Giacomo Tarascio

Dopo anni di difficoltoso contatto fra due delle riflessioni politiche in primo piano del pensiero critico globale, la letteratura che mette insieme Antonio Gramsci e Michel Foucault ha raggiunto consistenza tale da richiedere le prime mappature e revisioni. È in questo secondo filone che si inserisce *Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment* a cura di David Kreps<sup>1</sup>, un volume che raccoglie lo sviluppo delle idee dei due pensatori all'interno delle sfide della politica globale contemporanea.

Il volume si compone di una prefazione di Stephen Gill, una introduzione di Kreps, otto saggi e un capitolo conclusivo ancora di Kreps. La varietà dei temi contenuti tocca diversi ambiti di ricerca, seguendo l'estesa ricezione che Gramsci e Foucault hanno avuto nelle scienze sociali e umanistiche. Questo volume è dunque l'occasione per affrontare alcuni dei nodi cruciali che emergono dal confronto: verrà dato spazio principalmente all'utilizzo dei concetti gramsciani, evidenziando le problematiche e gli sviluppi potenziali in questo tipo di analisi svolte accanto alla teoria di Foucault.

L'ampiezza dei temi del volume è evidente a fin dalla stimolante prefazione di Gill (*An Archaeology of the Future, to be Excavated by the Post-Modern Prince?*) in cui è proposta, a partire dalla riproposizione del suo "Principe postmoderno", una riflessione su alcuni aspetti della congiuntura globale. Gill si muove in direzione della ricerca di nuove forze nella politica globale, associate a complesse epistemologie e pratiche che riconoscono i limiti delle forme dominanti di sviluppo, nel senso di un diverso ordine mondiale più giusto e sostenibile.

Guardando al potere in "senso macro" si può individuare un ordine globale strutturato gerarchicamente, il quale opera per potenziare sistematicamente il capitale sociale e gli strati sociali

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<sup>1</sup> Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, pp. XXIV-185.

privilegiati. Tuttavia, il potere del capitale e il suo potere disciplinare non sono incontestati, anzi, una delle ragioni per cui tale potere non è egemonico è a causa delle sue conseguenze distributive, che sollevano questioni fondamentali di disuguaglianza e giustizia sociale. Gill ipotizza quindi che l'attuale forma neoliberale di civiltà di mercato sia storicamente specificata combinando il vecchio con il radicalmente nuovo. Tra le forme politiche che caratterizzano la civiltà del mercato diventa centrale la "rivoluzione passiva" definita attraverso Gramsci, in un modo filologicamente poco attinente, come «a non-hegemonic form of intellectual, moral and political change that relied on dominance and the imposition of rule from above, in the absence of consent to the leadership of a ruling class» (p. xvi).

La "posta in gioco" riguarda i nuovi immaginari e meccanismi per il futuro della governance globale, nei quali bisogna cercare forme alternative di potere/conoscenza per sfidare il senso comune neoliberale. Da qui potrebbe emergere una forma innovativa di teoria e prassi globale, illuminando nuovi potenziali per una politica trasformativa che Gill definisce come Principe postmoderno: questo non sarebbe un partito tradizionale ma un processo democratico in formazione locale e plurale, compreso in un comune sviluppo di alternative immaginarie e reali al neoliberismo disciplinare e alla civiltà del mercato.

Nel primo capitolo introduttivo Kreps analizza brevemente la bibliografia che mette insieme il pensiero di Gramsci e Foucault, evidenziando fra le altre la linea interpretativa che caratterizza anche alcuni dei contributi del libro: ovvero la visione bipolare secondo la quale l'attenzione di Foucault si rivolge «to the micro-levels of power over individual bodies», mentre Gramsci rivolgerebbe la sua attenzione «to the macro-level of institutions» (p. 2). Questo tipo di lettura si muove dalla convinzione che la somma dei due pensieri vada oltre gli stessi presi singolarmente, offrendo un'immagine più ampia della società. È evidente come dal lato gramsciano l'impostazione descritta possa portare a disfunzioni interpretative, riducendo il contenuto dei *Quaderni* unicamente al piano delle istituzioni a discapito di una analisi decisamente più articolata. L'attenzione di Gramsci posta al micro livello delle relazioni di potere viene resa evidente dal richiamo a Peter Ives, che mostra i punti di contatto fra le nozioni di "grammatica" e "discorso"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ives 2004.



Queste tensioni si sviluppano, per opposto, anche la lettura alternativa che vede Gramsci e Foucault come «separate worlds» (p. 4) dove l'egemonia si contrappone al discorso. Come rileva Kreps, si viene a creare una divergenza fra paradigmi «within radical thought that has undoubtedly been detrimental to the broader aims of both sides of the divide: social change» (p. 5).

Nel secondo capitolo (*The Politics of Truth: For a Different Way of Life*) Alex Demirović esamina la relazione tra discorso e realtà attraverso le posizioni di Foucault e Gramsci sulla verità, giudicandole complementari. Foucault è interessato a come il dominio nelle relazioni di potere si è formato dal basso, universalizzato e trasmesso da una gamma di differenti pratiche di potere. Razionalità, verità e conoscenza diventano strategie di potere «in the imposition of specific knowledge orders with which the one is dominated by the other» (p. 16). Per Foucault la verità è una forma di violenza che si contrappone alla natura selvaggia della parola, mettendo in discussione le istituzioni che regolano il discorso.

Gramsci, dal suo punto di vista storico, è più interessato al modo in cui un tale discorso può portare poteri di governo molto diversi a un'unione di compromesso e, tuttavia, precaria con i gruppi sociali governati. In questo senso vengono delineati con più profondità i conflitti tra dominio egemonico e i gruppi subalterni che emergono all'interno dell'articolazione del potere. Gramsci analizza i conflitti all'interno della società civile e come gli intellettuali, funzionali alla sovrastruttura, sviluppano i concetti con cui il subalterno è dominato dalla borghesia.

In definitiva Demirović rileva come per Foucault sia concentrato maggiormente sull'etica della verità come posizione individuale, mentre Gramsci è più preoccupato dal problema di una politica della verità, della lotta per i mezzi di conoscenza e della capacità di imporre una certa "realtà oggettiva" all'interno di una lotta egemonica. La scienza costituisce un momento nella formazione di una visione del mondo. Così Gramsci è interessato alla questione della verità come posizione collettiva e pone la domanda nel contesto di un processo generale socialmente appreso.

Nel capitolo successivo (*Rethinking the Gramsci–Foucault Interface: A Cultural Political Economy Interpretation Oriented to Discourses of Competitiveness*) Ngai-Ling Sum esplora ulteriormente la complementarità fra Gramsci e Foucault, sviluppando un approccio

orientato a riesaminare il loro lavoro per connessioni e sinergie. Questo approccio è basato su quello che Gramsci definiva le regolarità del “mercato determinato” e il loro rapporto con lo stato integrale, affiancato a ciò che Foucault chiamava razionalità economica liberale in rapporto con la governamentalità e allo statuto. In particolare Sum si concentra su ciò che riguarda il cambiamento dell’immaginario economico della competitività, lo sviluppo di soggetti competitivi, le tecnologie del discorso di competitività e le più vaste implicazioni per lo stato nel suo senso integrale.

“Gramscianizzando Foucault”<sup>3</sup> e analizzando lo sviluppo dell’agenda emergente dell’economia politica culturale, Sum presenta uno schema euristico di sei momenti “discorsivamente selettivi” nella produzione di egemonie. Quindi illustra questo case study applicandolo ai discorsi sulla “competitività”, attingendo alle analisi di Gramsci sull’americanismo e sul fordismo, oltre che al lavoro di Foucault sul liberalismo.

Nel quarto capitolo (*Power and Resistance: Linking Gramsci and Foucault*) Marcus Schulzke continua in parte sulla prospettiva di Sum, aggiungendo influenze foucaultiane alle teorie di Gramsci. In particolare Schulzke cerca un’interpretazione gramsciana della teoria del potere di Foucault, funzionale a teorizzare una resistenza per superare le numerose forme di potere della vita moderna. In questo senso «Foucault’s theory of power can incorporate Gramsci’s thoughts on political action» and «Gramsci’s social transformation can be further developed with the help of Foucault’s work» (p. 57).

Con la teoria dell’egemonia Schulzke offre una spiegazione dell’agente, delle tattiche e degli obiettivi di resistenza attraverso il partito politico. L’analisi del potere di Foucault trova un limite nella mancanza di una descrizione convincente su come gli individui possano diventare consapevoli dei vincoli disciplinari, potendo quindi agire contro di loro quando non sono in grado di usare il potere intenzionalmente. Gramsci fornisce una forte teoria della resistenza che può colmare questa lacuna, evidenziando come gli attivisti possano appropriarsi del potere per i propri scopi anche quando il potere è al di là del controllo intenzionale.

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<sup>3</sup> “Gramscianizing Foucault” (“Gramscianizzando Foucault”) è un concetto introdotto per prima da David Harris (1992), p. 156.

La forma di partito sviluppata da queste premesse si compone in una struttura unificante, in grado di fornire una strategia per superare le espressioni del potere disciplinare e sostituire l'agente della resistenza. Nel partito «members perform vital roles in challenging hegemony and developing counter-hegemony» (p. 67). L'egemonia sostiene gli interessi delle élites, ma le istituzioni e i valori egemonici assumono esistenza autonoma e per questo non sono controllati direttamente dalle stesse élites: il cambiamento rivoluzionario si trova così nelle istituzioni esistenti, che possono operare per indebolire le élites.

Procedendo in una via opposta Jean-Paul Gagnon (*Building a Gramsci-Foucault Axis of Democracy*) ricerca la costruzione della democrazia direttamente negli individui, senza la mediazione del partito. Infatti, Gagnon costruisce la sua argomentazione sull'idea che «Gramscian and Foucauldian theory support a democracy focused on citizen-experts who actively resist power» (p. 75). A tale scopo vengono analizzati gli oggetti relativi ai parametri associati all'ontologia della democrazia di base nelle opere di Gramsci e Foucault, in particolare politica, cultura, discorso, egemonia e individuo. A questa selezione delle opere primarie segue un'indagine programmatica della letteratura riguardanti il contributo di Gramsci e Foucault alla democrazia, per poi comparare le concezioni democratiche di entrambi.

Di particolare interesse il sesto capitolo di Sonita Sarker (*Subalternity In and Out of Time, In and Out of History*), dove dall'analisi della dialettica della subalternità mostra come questa si trovi in un flusso non strutturato di tempo, al di fuori della storia egemonica. La dialettica viene affrontata in tutta la sua ampiezza per evitare di definire le identità in modo essenzialistico e privo di contesto, in quanto focalizzarsi su una parte della dialettica manterrebbe la gerarchia egemonica tra “powerful” e “powerless”. Seguendo Gayatri Spivak la subalternità viene intesa come una condizione intrinseca nelle identità di gruppo, per cui il subalterno dovrebbe indicare «una posizione senza identità»<sup>4</sup>: dunque non una condizione naturale innata «but made to appear as such as an historically understood position» (p. 92).

Sarker colloca la dialettica della subalternità tra tempo e storia, così le forme egemoniche diventano evidenti come metodi per

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<sup>4</sup> Spivak 2005, p. 476.

cooptare la storia nel dominio della modernità e relegare fuori dal tempo chi non considerato moderno. In questo senso le forze egemoni tentano di eliminare l'opposizione spostando il suo potenziale insurrezionale su una diversa categoria di spazio-tempo: «pluralization can function as a form of colonialism in which diversity can be controlled by hegemonic forces that either subsume it or relegate it to a disempowered zone» (p. 94). Pur con una eccessiva attenzione a isolare i presunti elementi postmoderni nel pensiero gramsciano, sottovalutando ad esempio il concetto di Rivoluzione passiva, l'autrice ricostruisce così una linea di pensiero dal "subalterno" ai foucaultiani "saperi soggiogati". L'analisi di Sarker si conclude nel presente con la descrizione della *Indigenous Women's Network* (Texas, USA) e dell'*International Dalit Solidarity Network* (Copenaghen, Danimarca), definendo la nozione di subalternità nell'attualità.

Il settimo capitolo di Jelle Versieren and Brecht de Smet (*The Passive Revolution of Spiritual Politics: Gramsci and Foucault on Modernity, Transition and Religion*) si occupa delle concettualizzazioni di modernità e transizione nelle analisi gramsciane e foucaultiane. In particolare gli autori si concentrano sulla relazione tra religione e modernità attraverso i diversi casi storici di Francia, Italia e Iran.

Muovendosi da una discussione sulla concezione di modernità di Gramsci, supportata e integrata da un'elaborazione della nozione di egemonia, si evidenzia attraverso Peter Thomas come la metodologia storicistica gramsciana abbia lo status ontologico di una totalità dialettica, organica e aperta<sup>5</sup>. In questo senso Gramsci va oltre la traiettoria archetipica che vede la modernità come una coerente formazione dell'egemonia borghese, dando piuttosto visibilità agli elementi di transizione e rottura che formano una rivoluzione passiva. Al di fuori dei confini della Rivoluzione francese, infatti, «the absence of a political revolution paralleled a lack of cultural-religious transformations that would reorient the dominant feudal worldviews towards bourgeois notions» (p. 117).

Meno convincente appare l'incastro che Versieren and de Smet compiono sul concetto di rivoluzione passiva con quelli di biopotere e governamentalità, nel quale la concettualizzazione gramsciana finisce per perdere la sua base materiale. In questa direzione, dopo aver esaminato la lettura di Foucault della

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas 2009, pp. 8–31.

Rivoluzione iraniana del 1979 come una forma di “spiritualità politica”, si affiancano le concezioni di entrambi su modernità, religione e transizione situando «the praxis of spiritual politics in the fluid zone of transition towards modernity»: la spiritualità politica costituisce così «an unarticulated appeal to an ethics of justice which is rooted in the intersection between the modern and the pre-modern» (p. 125).

Nell'ottavo capitolo (*Post-Neoliberal Regional Integration in Latin America: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América “ALBA”*) Efe Can Gürcan and Onur Bakiner analizzano la contro-egemonia che si sviluppa dall'integrazione regionale alternativa all'egemonia del paradigma neoliberale. La teoria e la pratica dell'integrazione regionale sono diventati campi della lotta dopo il fallimento della ristrutturazione neoliberista in America Latina, emergendo come alternativa politica, economica e culturale all'egemonia ai processi della globalizzazione capitalista. In questo senso la contro-egemonia riguarda «[the] alignment of progressive forces that seek to overcome domination embedded in structures of material production, political decision-making, and the production of knowledge and social values in late capitalism» (p. 131).

Secondo Gürcan and Bakiner la differenza tra Gramsci e Foucault starebbe nell'idea del primo di “resistenza istituzionale” alternativa all'egemonia capitalista, diversa dall'idea del secondo per il quale «there is no standpoint outside of the existing discursive relations that would provide social actors with the leverage to act and think toward human emancipation» (p. 135). Tuttavia, con l'intenzione di accentuare la distanza fra la critica gramsciana e quella foucaultiana i due autori escludono un possibile collegamento comune nel concetto di egemonia, introducendo almeno due discrepanze. Infatti, incrociando il Gramsci dei “Consigli” con quello dei *Quaderni*, in una mano si introduce un momento istituzionale propedeutico alla resistenza il quale però rischia di far precedere la “consapevolezza storica” dall'azione politica. Nell'altra mano si rischia di perdere il valore “relazionale”<sup>6</sup> dell'egemonia, ponendolo dicotomicamente in contrasto con la resistenza e non come un mezzo della stessa.

Nell'ultimo contributo di Heather Brunskell-Evans (*The Hegemony of Psychology: The Practice and Teaching of Paediatrics in Post-Invasion Iraq*)

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<sup>6</sup> Liguori 2015, p. 43.

viene affrontato un caso studio riguardante la riorganizzazione della formazione pediatrica psicosociale nell'Iraq post-invasione. Vengono articolati gli studi gramsciani e foucaultiani rispetto ai tipi di relazioni micro-politiche emerse dal tentativo degli Stati Uniti di cambiare regime. Partendo dall'introduzione del canone scientifico occidentale nella pratica pediatrica irachena Brunskell-Evans si interroga sugli effetti di un sapere normalizzante e funzionale all'occidentalizzazione post-war. È immediato il collegamento con l'analisi foucaultiana dove «the human subject is the product of power there is no place of freedom outside of power to which we can escape» (p. 166), per cui la libertà è raggiungibile con l'indagine critica sulle pratiche concrete del governo liberale.

Il punto di vista gramsciano mostra la sua efficacia nell'analisi psicologica delle relazioni di potere, anche se Brunskell-Evans sembra confinarlo al piano sociale. Da qui viene sviluppata la riflessione sull'idea gramsciana, ripresa da Marx, di natura umana come complesso dei rapporti sociali: da questa definizione segue come «the formulation of psychology was rational in that it released the human being from a previous oppressive interpretive framework» (p. 159). La psicologia fa parte così di quelle conoscenze utopiche, religiose e scientifiche che costituiscono lo sviluppo storico dell'uomo e le trasformazioni verso il raggiungimento della libertà. Brunskell-Evans delinea così una teleologia di fondo, che tuttavia imputa alle stesse note gramsciane, assumendo una lettura determinata dei concetti gramsciani riguardo al caso studio: sotto questa lente la strategia di resistenza gramsciana è da considerarsi ingombrante rispetto a quella foucaultiana, in quanto prima di operare sul piano della liberazione dovrebbe prima collegarsi agli interessi economici capitalisti fino a quando il governo liberale «fails to achieve a free society and reproduces class divisions» (p. 168).

Nelle conclusioni (*The Complexity of Social Systems: Could Hegemony Emerge from the Micro-Politics of the Individual?*) Kreps cerca la via per rileggere Foucault e Gramsci all'interno della teoria della complessità, dove il nominalismo rende il primo adatto a questo approdo mentre la teoria del secondo sarebbe limitata dall'essentialismo. Qui Kreps ricalca l'impostazione critica che Ernesto Laclau e Chantal Mouffe<sup>7</sup> effettuano sul concetto di egemonia, il quale dovrebbe avere validità solo all'interno di una totalità

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Laclau e Mouffe 1985 e Torfing 1999, p. 36.

relazionale che non ha un centro predeterminato, consentendo relazioni di dominio diverse e mutevoli tra le sue parti costituenti<sup>8</sup>. Tuttavia, queste posizioni derivano da una assunzione “statica” delle note gramsciane<sup>9</sup>. Al contrario, da una lettura filologica è possibile vedere come la risposta alle contraddizioni riproposte da Kreps sia superata nella nozione di “rapporti di forze”<sup>10</sup>.

Ricollegandosi al primo capitolo Kreps delinea la teoria della complessità come la possibile confluenza fra la teoria di Gramsci e quella di Foucault, potenzialmente in grado di fornire «a far better picture of society and the relationship between the group and the individual than either does on their own» (p. 179). Dunque se il linguaggio e il discorso sono intesi come un sistema complesso auto-organizzante, «the conditions of possibility for hegemonic articulation become likewise susceptible to complexity theory» (p. 180).

Tutti i saggi del volume si muovono nella direzione di una integrazione teorica fra Gramsci e Foucault, anche se non in forma definitiva ma aperta alla ricerca politica. I risultati sono quindi eterogenei e a volte in reciproche contraddizioni, ma che lasciano intravedere molteplici sviluppi. Tuttavia, rimane evidente un rigido confinamento della teoria gramsciana sul macro-level della politica, al quale si somma spesso una tendenza a foucaultianizzare le note dei *Quaderni*. In questo senso ricade l'uso continuo del termine “contro-egemonia” come formulato da Gramsci quando, al contrario, tale concettualizzazione non esiste nei suoi scritti. Gli autori non sembrano però consapevoli di questo equivoco, mancando così di usare il testo gramsciano con chiarezza.

Questa debolezza nell'uso delle tesi gramsciane è dovuta a una padronanza tratteggiata dei concetti, dalla quale è difficile cogliere l'articolazione e la tensione dialettica. Lo stesso affiancamento alla teoria della complessità non può avvenire se non dispiegando tutta la complessità filologica dello stesso Gramsci, per quanto poco incline a essere riarticolato in un approccio positivista. Dunque è auspicabile che venga sviluppato il solco tracciato da questo volume verso un discorso di ricerca condiviso dei due pensatori, ma questo non può che passare da un'applicazione più articolata e consapevole dei concetti gramsciani.

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<sup>8</sup> Secondo Laclau tale concezione è precisamente ciò che Gramsci intende con la sua nozione di blocco storico (Cf. in Laclau 1981, p. 53).

<sup>9</sup> Frosini 2009, 108-10.

<sup>10</sup> Frosini 2009, pp. 110-15.

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# The Complex Convergence: Gramsci and Foucault

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# The Complex Convergence: Gramsci and Foucault

## **Abstract**

This is a review by Giacomo Tarascio of *Gramsci and Foucault: a Reassessment*, edited by David Kreps

## **Keywords**

Gramsci, Foucault, reassessment, comparison of positions, individuals, institutions.

## ***The Complex Convergence: Gramsci and Foucault***

Giacomo Tarascio

After years of a difficult relationship between the political reflections of two exponents of the utmost importance in global critical thought, the literature that has put Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault together has now reached such a level as to require a first mapping and review. It is here that the volume *Gramsci and Foucault: A Reassessment* edited by David Kreps<sup>1</sup> finds its place, a volume that gathers together the development of the ideas of the two thinkers within the challenges of contemporary global politics.

The volume consists of a preface by Stephen Gill, an introduction by Kreps, eight essays and a final chapter, again by Kreps. The variety of themes concerns different areas of research, following the vast reception that Gramsci and Foucault have received in the social sciences and humanities. This publication therefore offers the occasion to deal with some of the pivotal cruxes, which emerge from this comparison: it will primarily give space to the use of the Gramscian concepts, highlighting the problems and the potential developments in these types of analysis, carried out side by side with Foucault's theory.

The scope of the themes of the volume clearly starts from Gill's enthralling preface (*An Archaeology of the Future, to be Excavated by the Post-Modern Prince?*) in which, beginning from the proposal of his of a "post-modern Prince", a reflection is suggested on a number of potential aspects of the global conjuncture. Gill moves in the direction of researching new forces in global politics, associated with complex epistemologies and practices, which identify the limits of the dominant forms of development, in the sense of a different, fairer and more sustainable global order.

Observing power in a "macro sense" one can identify a hierarchically structured global order, which acts to increase systematically social capital and the privileged social strata. However, it does not mean that the power of capital is uncontested: on the contrary, one

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<sup>1</sup> Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, pp. XXIV-185.

of the reasons why this power is not hegemonic is due to its distributive consequences, which raise fundamental matters of inequality and social justice. Gill therefore speculates that the current neoliberal form of market civilization is specified historically by means of combining the old with the radically new. Among the political forms that characterize this market civilization, “passive revolution” becomes central, defined through Gramsci in a less pertinent philological way as “a non-hegemonic form of intellectual, moral and political change that relied on dominance and the imposition of rule from above, in the absence of consent to the leadership of a ruling class” (p. xvi).

The “stakes” concern the new images and mechanisms for the future of global governance, in which it is necessary to search for alternative forms of power/knowledge to challenge neo-liberal common sense. From this point of view, an innovative form of theory and global praxis could emerge, shedding light on new potentialities for a transformative politics which Gill defines as the post-modern Prince: this is not a traditional party but a democratic process in local and plural formation, included in a common development of imaginary and real alternatives to disciplinary neoliberalism and to market civilization.

In the introductory chapter Kreps briefly analyses the bibliography that connects Gramsci’s and Foucault’s thought highlighting, among other things, the interpretative line, which also characterizes some of the book’s contributions: that is to say, the bipolar concept according to which Foucault’s attention is directed “to the micro-levels of power over individual bodies”, while Gramsci turns his attention “to the macro-level of institutions” (p. 2). This kind of interpretation moves from the belief that a summary of the two thoughts goes beyond them taken singularly, offering a wider image of society. It is evident how, from a Gramscian point of view, the position described could lead to an interpretative dysfunction, reducing the content of the *Prison Notebooks* only to the level of the institution, to the detriment of a certainly more articulated analysis. Gramsci’s attention, directed to the micro level of the relations of power, is made clear by the reference to Peter Ives, which shows the points of contact between

the notions of “grammars” and “discourse”.<sup>2</sup> From the same tensions an alternative, and opposite, line of reading also develops, which sees Gramsci and Foucault as “separate worlds”, (p. 4) where hegemony is in contrast with discursive formations. As Kreps observes, a deviation among paradigms is created “within radical thought that has undoubtedly been detrimental to the broader aims of both sides of the divide: social change” (p. 5).

In the second chapter (*The Politics of Truth: For a Different Way of Life*), Alex Demirović examines the relation between discourse and reality through the positions of Foucault and Gramsci on truth, considering them complementary. Foucault is interested in how dominance in the relation of power is formed from below, universalized and imparted from a variety of different power practices. Rationality, truth and knowledge become power strategies “in the imposition of specific knowledge orders with which the one is dominated by the other” (p. 16). According to Foucault, truth is a form of violence, which is in contrast with the savage nature of the word, calling into question institutions, which rule discourse.

Gramsci is more interested, from his historical point of view, in the way in which such a discourse could bring very different ruling powers to a compromise, but yet precarious unity with those social groups they rule. In this regard, the conflicts between hegemonic dominance and subaltern groups, which arise within the articulation of power, are more deeply outlined. Gramsci analyses the conflicts within civil society and how the intellectuals, functional to the superstructures, develop the concepts with which the subaltern is dominated by the bourgeoisie.

Last, Demirović observes how Foucault concentrates more on the ethic of truth as an individual position, while Gramsci is more concerned with the problem of a politics of truth, of the struggle for the means of knowledge and the ability to impose a certain “objective reality” within a hegemonic struggle. Science represents a moment in the formation of a world vision. Therefore, Gramsci is interested in the problem of truth as a collective position and asks this question in the context of socially assimilated general process.

In the next chapter (*Rethinking the Gramsci–Foucault Interface: A Cultural Political Economy Interpretation Oriented to Discourses of Competi-*

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ives 2004.

tiveness) Ngai-Ling Sum explores further the complementarity between Gramsci and Foucault, developing an oriented approach to re-examine their work in terms of connections and synergies. This approach is based on what Gramsci defined the regularities of the “determinate market” and their relationship to the integral state, placed side by side with what Foucault called liberal and neo-liberal economic rationality in relation with governability and statecraft. Specifically, Sum focuses on what concerns the change of the economic image of competitiveness, the development of competitive subjects, the technologies of the discourse of competitiveness and the wider implications for the state in its integral sense.

“Gramscianizing Foucault”<sup>3</sup> and analysing the development of the emerging agenda of the cultural political economy, Sum presents a heuristic scheme of six “discursively selective” moments in the production of hegemonies. Then she explains this case study applying it to the discourses on “competitiveness”, drawing from Gramsci’s analyses of Americanism and Fordism, in addition to Foucault’s work on liberalism.

In the fourth chapter (*Power and Resistance: Linking Gramsci and Foucault*) Marcus Schulzke goes partly on Sum’s perspective, adding Foucault’s influences to Gramsci’s theories. Specifically, Schulzke searches for a Gramscian interpretation to Foucault’s theory of power, functional to theorizing a resistance to overcome the numerous forms of power in modern life. In this sense, “Foucault’s theory of power can incorporate Gramsci’s thoughts on political action” and “Gramsci’s social transformation can be further developed with the help of Foucault’s work” (p. 57).

With the theory of hegemony, Schulzke offers an explanation of the agent, the tactics and the goals of resistance throughout the political party. Foucault’s analysis of power finds a limit in the lack of a convincing explanation to how individuals could become aware of disciplinary constraints, being able to act against them when they are not able to use power intentionally. Gramsci provides a strong theory of resistance which can fill this gap, highlighting how activists can appropriate power for themselves for their goals even when power is beyond intentional control.

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<sup>3</sup> “Gramscianizing Foucault” is a concept first introduced by David Harris (1992) p. 156.

The form of the party, developed from these premises, is composed in a unifying structure, able to provide a strategy to overcome the expressions of disciplinary power and to replace the agent of resistance. In the party “members perform vital roles in challenging hegemony and developing counter-hegemony” (p. 67). Hegemony supports the interests of the élites, but institutions and hegemonic values acquire an autonomous existence and, for this reason, they are not directly controlled by the élites themselves: revolutionary change is therefore located in the existing institutions, which can work to undermine the élites.

Continuing in an opposite way, Jean-Paul Gagnon (*Building a Gramsci–Foucault Axis of Democracy*) researches the construction of democracy directly in individuals, without the party’s mediation. Indeed, Gagnon builds his argumentation on the idea that “Gramscian and Foucauldian theory support a democracy focused on citizen-experts who actively resist power” (p. 75): for this purpose, he analyses the objects, which relate to criteria associated with the ontology of democracy at the heart of Gramsci’s and Foucault’s work, particularly politics, culture, discourse, hegemony and the individual. Following this selection of the primary works, the author continues with a programmatic investigation of the literature regarding Gramsci’s and Foucault’s contribution to democracy, which compares the democratic concepts of both.

Particularly interesting is the sixth chapter (*Subalternity In and Out of Time, In and Out of History*), in which Sonita Sarker shows how the dialectics of subalternity is located in an unstructured stream of time, outside hegemonic history. Dialectics is addressed in all its breadth to avoid defining identities in a basic way and without a context, since focalizing on a part of dialectics would preserve the hegemonic hierarchy between “powerful” and “powerless.” According to Gayatri Spivak, subalternity is understood as an inherent condition in group identities, so that the subaltern should indicate “a position without identity”:<sup>4</sup> that is to say not an inherent condition, “but made to appear as such as a historically understood position” (p. 92).

Sarker puts the dialectics of subalternity between time and history, so that hegemonic forms become evident as methods to co-opt history in the domain of modernity and to exclude outside time

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Spivak 2005, p. 476.

those not considered modern. In this sense, hegemonic forces try to eliminate opposition, moving its insurrectional potential to a different category of space-time: “pluralization can function as a form of colonialism in which diversity can be controlled by hegemonic forces that either subsume it or relegate it to a disempowered zone” (p. 94). Still with an excessive attention to isolate the supposed postmodern elements in Gramscian thoughts, underestimating for example the concept of passive revolution, the author retraces a line of thinking from “subaltern” to Foucault’s “subjugated knowledge.” Sarker’s analysis concludes in the present with the description of the *Indigenous Women’s Network* (Texas, USA) and the *International Dalit Solidarity Network* (Copenhagen, Denmark), defining the notion of subalternity in a current usage.

The seventh chapter by Jelle Versieren and Brecht de Smet (*The Passive Revolution of Spiritual Politics: Gramsci and Foucault on Modernity, Transition and Religion*) deals with the conceptualizations of modernity and transition in Gramscian and Foucauldian analyses. Specifically, the authors focus on the relation between religion and modernity throughout the different historical cases of France, Italy and Iran. Moving from a discussion of Gramsci’s conception of modernity, supported and integrated with an elaboration of the notion of hegemony, they highlight through Peter Thomas’s thought how the Gramscian historicist methodology has the ontological status of a dialectical, organic and open totality.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, Gramsci goes beyond the archetypical trajectory that sees modernity as a coherent formation of bourgeois hegemony, giving, rather, visibility to the elements of transition and break that give shape to a passive revolution. Indeed, outside the borders of the French revolution “the absence of a political revolution paralleled a lack of cultural-religious transformations that would reorient the dominant feudal worldviews towards bourgeois notions” (p. 117). Versieren and de Smet accomplish a less convincing connection on the concept of passive revolution with those of biopower and governmentality, in which the Gramscian conceptualization loses its material basis. In this direction, after analysing Foucault’s reading of 1979 Iranian revolution, the conceptions of both thinkers on modernity, religion and transition

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Thomas 2009, pp. 8–31.



are placed side by side, collocating “the praxis of spiritual politics in the fluid zone of transition towards modernity”: spiritual politics represents therefore “an unarticulated appeal to an ethics of justice which is rooted in the intersection between the modern and the pre-modern” (p. 125).

In the eighth chapter (*Post-Neoliberal Regional Integration in Latin America: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América “ALBA”*) Efe Can Gürcan and Onur Bakiner analyse counter-hegemony, which develops from the regional integration and is alternative to the hegemony of the neoliberal paradigm. The theory and practice of regional integration became fields for struggle after the failure of Latin America neoliberal reorganization, emerging as a political, economic and cultural alternative to the hegemony of capitalist globalization. In this sense, counter-hegemony concerns the “alignment of progressive forces that seek to overcome domination embedded in structures of material production, political decision-making, and the production of knowledge and social values in late capitalism” (p. 131).

According to Gürcan and Bakiner, the difference between Gramsci and Foucault lies in the idea of the former of “institutional resistance”, which is alternative to capitalist hegemony and different from the idea of the latter, according to which “there is no standpoint outside of the existing discursive relations that would provide social actors with the leverage to act and think toward human emancipation” (p. 135). However, with the intention of increasing the distance between the Gramscian critique and the Foucauldian one, the two authors exclude the possibility of a common connection in the concept of hegemony, introducing at least two disparities. Indeed, crossing in this sense the Gramsci of the “factory councils” with that of the *Prison Notebooks*, on the one hand they introduce an institutional moment, which is preparatory to the resistance but risks making “historic[al] awareness” come first compared to political action. On the other hand, they risk losing the “relational”<sup>6</sup> value of hegemony, in putting it dichotomically in contrast with resistance and not as a means of it.

In the last article, Heather Brunskell-Evans (*The Hegemony of Psychology: The Practice and Teaching of Paediatrics in Post-Invasion Iraq*)

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<sup>6</sup> Liguori 2015, p. 43.

deals with a case study concerning the reorganization of paediatric psychosocial education in post-occupation Iraq. Gramscian and Foucauldian studies are structured in relation to the types of micro-political relations which emerged from the USA's attempt to change the regime. Starting from the introduction of the Western scientific canon in Iraqi paediatric practice, Brunskell-Evans examines the effects of a normalizing, and functional to post-war westernization, knowledge. The connection with the Foucauldian analysis is immediate: where "the human subject is the product of power there is no place of freedom outside of power to which we can escape" (p. 166); therefore freedom is achievable with critical investigations into the concrete practices of liberal government.

The Gramscian point of view shows its effectiveness in the psychological analysis of power relations, even if Brunskell-Evans seems to limit it to a social level. From here, a development takes place of the reflection on the Gramscian idea, taken from Marx, of human nature as the complex of social relations: from this definition, it follows how "the formulation of psychology was rational in that it released the human being from a previous oppressive interpretive framework" (p. 159). Psychology is therefore part of those utopian, religious and scientific fields of knowledge which constitute the historical development of man and the transformations necessary to the achievement of freedom. Brunskell-Evans therefore outlines a background teleology, which nonetheless is ascribed to the same Gramscian notes, assuming a determinate reading of the concepts that are used: under this point of view, the Gramscian strategy of resistance has to be considered unwieldy compared to the Foucauldian one, because, before operating on the level of liberation, it should first connect with capitalist economic interests until the liberal government "fails to achieve a free society and reproduces class divisions" (p. 168).

In the conclusions (*The Complexity of Social Systems: Could Hegemony Emerge from the Micro-Politics of the Individual?*) Kreps searches for the way to re-read Foucault and Gramsci inside the theory of complexity, where nominalism makes the former appropriate to this landing place, whereas the theory of the latter would be limited by existentialism. Here Kreps retraces the critical position, which

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe<sup>7</sup> carry out on the concept of hegemony, which should be valid only inside a relational totality that has no predetermined centre, allowing different and variable relations of dominion among its constituent parts.<sup>8</sup> However, these positions come from a “static” assumption of the Gramscian notes.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, from a philological reading it is possible to see that a successful answer to the contradictions, again suggested by Kreps, is provided by the concept of “the relations of forces”.<sup>10</sup>

Connecting back to the first chapter, Kreps outlines complexity theory as the possible convergence between Gramsci’s theory and that of Foucault, being potentially able to provide “a far better picture of society and the relationship between the group and the individual than either does on their own” (p. 179). Therefore, if language and discourse are understood as a self-organizing complex system, “the conditions of possibility for hegemonic articulation become likewise susceptible to complexity theory” (p. 180).

All the essays in the volume move in the direction of a theoretical integration between Gramsci and Foucault, even if not in a definitive form, but open to political research. The results are therefore heterogeneous and sometimes in mutual contradiction, but they allow various developments to be glimpsed. However, a rigid confinement of Gramscian theory on the macro-level of politics is evident, to which a tendency is often added to Foucauldizing the notes of the *Prison Notebooks*. In this sense, the term “counter-hegemony” is often used as if it were formulated by Gramsci, even if, on the contrary, this conceptualization does not exist in his writings. The authors do not seem to be aware of this misunderstanding, failing therefore to use the Gramscian text with clarity.

This weakness in the usage of Gramscian theses is due to the mastering only in rough outline of the concepts, from which it is difficult to understand the articulation and the dialectical tension. Even the collocation next to complexity theory cannot take place, except by deploying all the philological complexity of Gramsci

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Torfing 1999, p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> According to Laclau such an idea is precisely what Gramsci means with his notion of historical bloc (Cf. Laclau 1981, p. 53).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Frosini 2009, pp. 108-10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-15.

himself, however little **this is** inclined to be reformulated in a positivist approach. It is therefore desirable that the way shown by this volume should be developed in the direction of a research discourse shared by the two thinkers, but this can only pass through a more conscious application of Gramscian concepts.

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## On Guido Liguori's Gramsci's Pathways

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## On Guido Liguori's Gramsci's Pathways

### Abstract

This is a review by Takahiro Chino of Guido Liguori's Gramsci's Pathways, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2015.

### Keywords

Gramsci, extended State, common sense, methodology

# *Paving a New Way to Read Gramsci*

Takahiro Chino

## 1. *Introduction*

*Gramsci's Pathways* by Guido Liguori, a leading Gramsci scholar, who has edited books and published numerous important monographs, articles and chapters in books, is a pleasing addition to the literature on Gramsci. It is a translation of his *Sentieri gramsciani*, with the Preface to the English Edition and two new chapters, Chapters Four and Fourteen, that did not appear in the original version in Italian. In total it has fourteen chapters, half of them being dedicated to the rigorous philological hermeneutic reading of Gramsci. The other half is where he relates Gramsci to those who influenced Gramsci and who are influenced by Gramsci. It provides us not only with a landscape of Gramsci's theoretical developments in the *Prison Notebooks*, but also shows how Gramsci learnt from his forerunners in elaborating them and how they have been appropriated by later thinkers. As such, the examinations by the prominent scholar in this book range from well-known ideas of Gramsci such as the state, civil society, and party to the intellectual history of Gramscian ideas such as hegemony, pragmatism, and ideology.

As this short review of such an absorbing book cannot do justice to all aspects of it, I will limit myself and deliberately focus on some chapters that exemplify the hermeneutic analysis of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. For Liguori's hermeneutic method contains important suggestions for the long-discussed question of how we can read the *Prison Notebooks*, which I believe the readers of Gramsci cannot avoid asking. In my view, the key terms in Liguori's analysis are the "extended state" and "common sense". While the extended state involves many of Gramsci's core ideas such as state, civil society, party, movements and hegemony, common sense is closely related to ideology, conception of the world, good sense, and conformism. As these two key concepts seem to anchor Liguori's thoughtful discussions about Gramsci, I will look at Liguori's analysis of them respectively. In the final section, I will make a few remarks on how to further develop Liguori's proposed approach of going back to Gramsci's texts.

Before starting the body of my review, I need to mention one more aspect: its methodological closeness with the monumental work *Dizionario gramsciano 1926-1937* of 2009, edited by Liguori and Pasquale Voza.<sup>1</sup> As written in the Preface to *Gramsci's Pathways*, Liguori's motives for editing the *Dizionario* seem closely connected to those of writing *Pathways*. When starting seminars for the *Dizionario* in 2001, according to him,

[w]e started out from the conviction that it is today possible to read Gramsci as a great contemporary author – not a politically neutral one, but neither one who can immediately be compressed into present-day political debates. Hence the belief that now we need to “go back to the texts”, to “his” texts, after years and years of interpretations that had built up a long and sometimes fruitful – but now useless – “battle of ideas” on top of them (p. IX).

As this principle seems to straddle both the *Dizionario* and *Pathways*, it would be helpful for us to quickly summarize the two following important characteristics of the *Dizionario* in order to grasp the shared principle. First, the *Dizionario* instantiates how Gramsci defined and used his ideas throughout the *Notebooks*, providing us with a landscape of how Gramsci himself employs a contested idea, such as hegemony. This enables us to narrow down the possible intended meanings of his ideas, while avoiding excessively extending meanings beyond Gramsci's writings. Second, the *Dizionario* illustrates how Gramsci's ideas are not mechanically distinct, but organically interrelated to one another. It helps us understand how throughout the years the web of his ideas, such as the relationship between state and civil society, were developed in the *Notebooks*.

As I will examine below, we can observe that *Gramsci's Pathways* shares these two characteristics with the *Dizionario* and provides a deeper analysis of the *Notebooks* through Liguori's hermeneutic approach.

## 2. *The Extended State*

The first uniqueness I deliberately picked up from *Gramsci's Pathways* is found in Chapter 2. It resides in its focus on the “extended State” as a key phrase in understanding Gramsci's complex, and “organic”, relationship between the State and the economy, and

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<sup>1</sup> Liguori and Voza 2009.



between the State and civil society. It is well known that Gramsci complained about the common understanding of the State as a mere organ of violence.<sup>2</sup> According to Liguori, Gramsci refined the concept of the State to encompass two characteristic traits of early-twentieth-century States.

The first “extension” of the State can be seen in the new relationship between the State and economy. This is intriguing as it is relatively little discussed in comparison with the second extension. States originally separated politics from economics, yet a new relationship between the two terrains emerged in his time. As observed in the cases of Italy, Soviet Russia, and the United States after the crisis of 1929, the State had started to intervene in the economy. Gramsci analyzed that the State had to assume the important role of guaranteeing savings and organizing production, which previously the bourgeoisie controlled according to its private initiative, after observing the Great Crash of 1929 and the market’s failure regarding self-regulation.<sup>3</sup>

However, Liguori quickly adds, Gramsci did not jettison the Marxist assumption of the State as the expression of the economic situation. Gramsci’s civil society is commonly understood as a part of the superstructure, together with political society (the State as violence), and a site for producing people’s consent to the existing governance. Yet, it should be noted, as Liguori emphasizes, that – albeit rarely – Gramsci argued that civil society and the economy could be closely connected with the State, acting as the bond:

between economic structure and the State with its legislation and coercion stands civil society [...]; the State is the instrument of the adequation of civil society to the economic structure.<sup>4</sup>

As Liguori points out, however, Gramsci did not endorse, on the one hand, Fascist corporativism due to its plutocratic character and

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<sup>2</sup> Q15§10, p. 1765; *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (hereafter *SPN*), p. 244. Following convention, quotations from the *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*) are shown by notebook number (Q), passage number (§) and page number. Where English translations are available from *Gramsci's Pathways* and direct quotations are required, I make use of them. Where neither, I quote from English translations of the *Prison Notebooks*.

<sup>3</sup> Q22§14, pp. 2175-8; *SPN*, pp. 313-6.

<sup>4</sup> Q10II§15, p. 1253. The quoted translation is from Liguori (2015, p. 7); [cf. *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 1995 {hereafter *FSPN*}, p. 167, esp. “the State is the instrument for bringing civil society into line with the economic structure”- editorial note].

the finance capital behind it, or New Deal policies as they preserve the class character and exploitation of capitalism (p. 6). Hence, State intervention in the economy does not mean the State's takeover of the economic base. The thrust of Gramsci's argument, according to Liguori, is that "it is certain that the state as such does not produce but is the expression of the economic situation".<sup>5</sup> While Liguori admits that the theoretical importance of Gramsci lies in his articulations of the superstructural elements, he stresses that Gramsci's arguments firmly rested on the Marxist assumption of the determining role of the economic base. This emphasis by Liguori urges us to pay particular (and further) attention to Gramsci's economic theory at large.

The second extension of the State regards the relationship between political society and civil society. As I noted earlier, Gramsci complained about the common view of the State in a narrow sense as violence, as political society in his term. Rather, modern States, in which democracy holds sway, exercise their governance by obtaining people's consent to its existing form. It is important for the governing to make people believe that their needs are somewhat reflected in the policies of the government. Such consent is produced in civil society, via private institutions such as the media and the church that influence people's opinions and views of the world in their daily life. Given this, Gramsci stressed the importance of civil society for modern states: "[...] over its historical development belongs to private forces, to civil society – which is 'State' too, indeed is the State itself".<sup>6</sup> He thus redefined the state in the very relationship between coercion deriving from political society and consent from civil society.

Gramsci portrayed modern States characterized by the relationship between the two as the "integral State". In comprehending Gramsci's arguments about the relationship, Liguori aptly focuses on that term. As Liguori points out, Q6§10 reads "after the French Revolution the bourgeoisie 'could present itself as an integral «State», with all the sufficient intellectual and moral forces needed to organize a complete and perfect society'".<sup>7</sup> Also, in Q6§155, "In politics the error occurs as a result of an inaccurate understanding

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<sup>5</sup> Q10II§41vi, p. 1310; Liguori (2015, p. 3); [FSPN, p. 427].

<sup>6</sup> Q26§6, p. 2302; SPN, p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> Q6§10, p. 691. The quoted translation is from Liguori (2015, p. 16); [cf. the slightly different wording in SPN, p. 271 and in Gramsci 2007, p. 9].

of what the State (in its integral meaning: dictatorship + hegemony) really is?”.<sup>8</sup> As seen in these parentheses, Gramsci called contemporary States that unify coercion and consent (i.e., political society and civil society) the “integral State”.

I agree with Liguori in stressing the importance of Gramsci’s extension of the concept of the State, which has been not fully explored. It was Buci-Glucksmann’s monumental work *Gramsci and the State* of 1975 (translated into Italian in 1976 and into English in 1980) that first provided a theoretical analysis of Gramsci’s idea of the integral State.<sup>9</sup> Her book is still influential in the Anglophone context. In my view, Liguori and Buci-Glucksmann have offered significantly different views of it in terms of the controversial issue of the role of the economic base in Gramsci. This is related to what Liguori calls the first extension that Gramsci’s extended State provided.

Before looking at their differences, let us begin by examining what they agree on as the characteristics of the extended State. In a word, they generally agree on what Liguori calls the second extension (p. 8). They agree that Gramsci revised and updated the concept of the State to account for the growing tendency of governance relying on the people’s consent. In other words, they agree that Gramsci’s extended State is based on his methodological arrangement, as an ideal type, to divide political society, or the State as violence, from civil society, the site of people’s consent. The extended State thus appears as a remedy to the existing, yet outdated and narrow, understanding of the State that exclusively possesses coercive forces. In this sense, they also agree that Gramsci anticipated the emergence of “regulated society” at the end of the growing impact of consent on governance, when the elements of coercion become obsolete and thus disappear.

What they might disagree can be found in their differing understandings of how Gramsci incorporated the role of the economy in this revised view of the State. Crucially, their difference here centres on their views about whether in Gramsci’s Marxism the superstructure is dependent on the economy or not. Liguori emphasizes how the extended State embodied Gramsci’s Marxist conviction that the economy is the ultimate foundation of the superstructure,

<sup>8</sup> Q6§155, pp. 810-11. The quoted translation is from Liguori (2015, p. 17); [see *SPN*, p. 239 or Gramsci 2007, p. 117].

<sup>9</sup> Buci-Glucksmann (1980).

including both political and civil societies. According to him, the extended State exhibits Gramsci's view that the State is the expression of the economy, namely the State broadens its functions by intervening the economy rather than maintaining *laissez-faire*, especially after the Great Depression of 1929. To address this topic, let us look at two arguments propounded by Liguori. First, he points out that in the *Notebooks* there are cases where civil society signifies economic society, apart from its major meaning as a site of private institutions and thus of consent. A prime example of this is a passage that I quoted earlier:

[b]etween the economic structure and the State with its legislation and coercion stands civil society [...] the State is the instrument of the adequation of civil society to the economic structure.<sup>10</sup>

Liguori's quotation ends here, but an important argument could be found right after this:

but the state has to "want" to do that, i.e., the representatives of the change that has already come about in the economic structure have to be in control of the State.<sup>11</sup>

Another example demonstrates how the State has to act in order to prevent another depression in the "Keynesian" phase of the capitalist economy. It does so by rationalizing production, by guaranteeing savings, and by making up for industrial losses and deficits (p. 5).<sup>12</sup> Gramsci's State here works to alter the contents of civil society so that it fits with a new type of economy. It is thus natural to interpret that Gramsci emphasized the relationship between the economy and the State as being closer than that between the superstructural elements, the State and civil society. By this argument Liguori underpins his view that, within the Marxist scheme Gramsci upheld, the State cooperates in the emergence of a new economic structure, being neither dependent on the economic conditions nor led under the consent produced in civil society.

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<sup>10</sup> Q10II§15: 1253. The quoted translation is from Liguori (2015, p. 7); [cf. *FSPN*, p. 167].

<sup>11</sup> Q10II§15: 1253-4; [cf. *FSPN*, *loc. cit.*].

<sup>12</sup> See Q9§8, p. 1101 [first draft or "A text"]: and Q22§14 [second draft or "C text"], p. 2176 [*SPN*, pp. 313-6, esp. p. 315].

On the contrary, Buci-Glucksmann offers a view that Gramsci's extended State does not intervene in the economy as much as Liguori assumes. It should be noted that she agrees with Liguori about the elements of consent in the "extended" State. Yet, she seems not to understand State intervention in the economy as a major characteristic of Gramsci's extended State, as Liguori does. Chapters 3 and 14 of her book emphasize that Gramsci's extended State is a refined Leninist idea that prepares for the withering away of the State by reinforcing the function of consent, namely, of autonomous governance by the people themselves. In this sense, she limits her discussion within the framework that Gramsci developed in a famous argument: the extended State is established by both coercion and consent, yet the elements of coercion gradually disappear, as those of consent become predominant.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, Liguori and Buci-Glucksmann do not illustrate Gramsci's extended State in entirely the same way: Liguori's focus on the relationship between the State and the economy is missing in Buci-Glucksmann's version. It would be beneficial for readers if Liguori could further clarify how his and Buci-Glucksmann's understandings differ, and what would be the wider implication of focusing on the connection between the State and the economy as a characteristic of the extended State, in particular in relation to the withering-away thesis that Buci-Glucksmann emphasizes.

### 3. *Common Sense*

Common sense is another important and extensively discussed idea of Gramsci's. Chapter 6 of *Pathways* challenges a major understanding of it. This interpretation appreciates people's common sense as a reflection of truth against the established philosophy of intellectuals, who claims to exclusively possess truth. In this view, Gramsci's common sense is understood in a positive way, advocating the alteration of power relations underlying the existing relationship between the philosophy of intellectuals and the common sense of the masses.

Given this positive understanding of common sense, Liguori begins by unpacking how Gramsci used the terms of "common sense" and "good sense", respectively. According to him, Gramsci's common sense falls into the following three meanings. First,

<sup>13</sup> Q6§88, p. 763-4, *SPN*, pp. 262-3 [cf. Gramsci 2007, p. 75]; Buci-Glucksmann (1980, p. 282).

Liguori emphasizes that Gramsci generally used the term common sense in a negative way (pp. 90-3; p. 106; p. 111). Second, Gramsci employed it in a descriptive way as a synonym of “culture” or “conception of the world” (p. 88). And third, Gramsci also referred to it as a synonym for good sense in a neutral or positive way (p. 103; p. 109). Liguori then goes on to look at three meanings that Gramsci gave to good sense. The first meaning is a synonym for the third meaning of common sense (p. 103; p. 109). Second, it signifies “culture” or the “conception of the world”, as does the second meaning of common sense (p. 110). The third meaning differentiates good sense from common sense, denoting a better understanding of the world than the common sense that confusingly entails the residues of past philosophies and religions (p. 107).

Liguori’s summary is intriguing in that it underscores the negative meaning of common sense, and that, at the same time, it sheds light on good sense as a better understanding of the world (pp. 108-9). It seems, however, that Liguori might not have fully explained the relationship between common sense (which is generally negative) and good sense (which is generally positive). From my perspective, in Gramsci, it seems not contradictory to look at the generally negative connotation of common sense, and still observe possible elements of good sense in it. They could be compatible. The point is, just as Aristotle did not abandon people’s opinions as nonsense, but rather considered that they may contain some truth, Gramsci also did not jettison common sense, but regarded common sense as an unsorted view that includes a real understanding of the world. Gramsci argued that good sense is the people’s equivalent to philosophy as an ordered perception of the world, while common sense itself cannot be so.

Philosophy is intellectual order, which neither religion nor common sense can be. [...] Moreover common sense is a collective noun, like religion: there is not just one common sense, for that too is a product of history and a part of the historical process. Philosophy is criticism and the superseding of religion and “common sense”. *In this sense it coincides with “good” as opposed to “common” sense.*<sup>14</sup>

Liguori quotes this passage (p. 104), but omits the important sentence that I have emphasized above where Gramsci contrasts good

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<sup>14</sup> Q11§12, p. 1378; *SPN*, pp. 325-6, emphasis by TC.



sense as people's organized understanding of the world with common sense and religion as their disorganized perception.

Therefore, Gramsci argued that appreciating good sense as "intellectual order" does not contradict comprehending common sense itself in a negative way. It could be more helpful for readers if Liguori discussed rather more closely how his general argument that Gramsci's common sense at large has a negative connotation is consistent with his interpretation of Gramsci's appreciation of good sense. All in all, however, Liguori's stress on the negative connotation of common sense works as a strong corrective to the existing literature that has read it in a more positive way.

#### 4. *Further Methodological Inquiry Required?*

Before concluding this short piece, I would like to provide a tiny reflection on Liguori's proposed method to "go back to Gramsci's texts", which I agree with as a doubtlessly welcome trend. As *Gramsci's Pathways* exemplifies, this approach is a helpful way to disentangle still-cryptic texts of the *Prison Notebooks* by revealing the chronological and logical development of Gramsci's thought throughout his years of writing in prison. Observing the textual development from the A texts to C texts, for instance, tells us how he revised his original notes, and how he elaborated the ensemble of his thought, which cannot be reduced a simple textual reading of some keywords. In this sense, this approach helps us better reconstruct what Gramsci was thinking throughout his writing of the entire *Notebooks*. Along with *Gramsci's Pathways*, important recent literature has more or less shared this approach, such as *Le parole di Gramsci*, edited by Fabio Frosini and Liguori; and *Il ritmo del pensiero*, by Giuseppe Cospito, to note only two.<sup>15</sup>

However, I think we are only halfway to the goal of "going back to Gramsci's texts". *Gramsci's Pathways* demonstrates how to do so, yet it does not fully provide us with a proper and solid methodology that materializes this proposal. A philological approach itself, mostly developed by Italian scholars, does not necessarily tell us how ought we to read Gramsci. It is still possible to collect passages from Gramsci to say what we are programmed to say. As this issue of how to read thinkers' texts has been one of the most discussed problems in the history of ideas, we might be able to identify from

<sup>15</sup> Frosini and Liguori (2004); Cospito (2011) [in English Cospito 2016].

such discussion of this problem in general some possible candidates who could help us develop our reading of Gramsci. Here I would like to limit myself to introducing ideas proposed by Leo Strauss and Quentin Skinner, and how they would help us in further promoting Liguori's project of going back to Gramsci's texts.

First, let me explore Strauss's approach that focuses on "literary character" of texts. Leo Strauss was a Jewish political philosopher born in Germany, and is well known for his career as a professor at the University of Chicago. In his *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, he points out that great books have their own "literary character", depending on the difference in the way in which they may be read, something that readers must understand before interpreting them.<sup>16</sup> Looking at Gramsci's *Notebooks* from this perspective, we can see they have their own literary character, which is distinct, for example, from Croce's books, which he continued to revise throughout his lifetime. We may be able to point out two literary characters proper to Gramsci's *Notebooks*. First, the *Prison Notebooks*, as implied in Liguori's approach, are left as a collection of his notes, unedited after the author's death, even though they have since received different levels of editing. Second, stemming from the first, they have a "private" character: Gramsci never considered publishing them as they are.<sup>17</sup> As they are written as Gramsci's private notebooks, they often lack the contexts that would enable us to grasp in what sense Gramsci referred to his ideas. When we write something publicly, we more or less try to translate what we think into a publicly acceptable forms and languages, in order to reach a wider audience. Through this process, written texts go beyond the shared beliefs, languages, and customs of close friends and colleagues. However, the *Prison Notebooks* are considerably lacking in such a process of translation, due to his death and also to the political situation in which, elucidating what he wrote in his notebooks, would put his family in Russia under danger of persecution.

Of course, the *Notebooks* have a surprising degree of logical coherence in terms of their selected topics and his arguments, despite the literary characters of being unedited and private.

<sup>16</sup> Strauss (1988), p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> See, Gramsci's project of writing an *Anti-Croce* based on his notes from Notebook 10 (Q10I§11, *QdC* p. 1234 [*FSPN*, pp. 354-6]; Q8, *QdC* p. 935 [*PN* Vol. 3, p. 231]).



However, seeking logical coherence alone cannot be a satisfactory criterion for reading them, as we can draw it convincingly from the *Notebooks* in various ways, depending on how we are programmed to read Gramsci – even by attributing to him views that he might not hold. If my analysis of these two literary characteristics of the *Prison Notebooks* is appropriate, then what would be a relevant way to accommodate them in order to better interpret Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*? My suggestion is a method proposed by Quentin Skinner, a British intellectual historian, as Skinner's approach limits the possible ways in which they can be read, by rejecting logically possible yet contextually impossible readings.

Let me examine here how Skinner's approach is useful in reading Gramsci. Skinner emphasizes the importance of seeking what the thinker's "intention *in doing* something" was,<sup>18</sup> for they might have failed to do what they originally intended to do. In the case of Gramsci's *Notebooks*, as I noted earlier, he did not intend to publish them in the form we have them now. We tend to look into the *Notebooks* retrospectively, more or less presupposing that his original intentions are included in his achievements. Yet, as Skinner claims, we cannot derive Gramsci's intentions from his achievements. Let me look at an example from Gramsci's first plan of the *Notebooks*, expressed in a letter to Tat'jana Schucht, on 19 March 1927. Typically, his famous phrase to "do something *für ewig*" in the *Notebooks* has often been interpreted as his announcement of launching the project of establishing a monumental achievement. Yet, the four topics he juxtaposed in the letter are more down-to-earth. For instance, his interest in linguistics – nothing "could be more 'disinterested' and '*für ewig*' than that"<sup>19</sup> – suggests that he intended to examine how the Italian language took part in constructing the ruling class's hegemony, although he could not explore this topic thoroughly. By looking at his plan in the letter as well as later plans in *Notebooks* 1 and 8, we can discount the strong reading of the phrase *für ewig* as a plan to seek something eternal or true.

On the contrary, by focusing on his intention to choose those "interrelated" themes, we can see that he wished to pursue the topic of Italian intellectuals – the topic he developed in his last pre-prison

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<sup>18</sup> Skinner (1988), p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Gramsci (1965), p. 58; Gramsci (1994a), pp. 83-4.

article, *Alcuni temi della questione meridionale*<sup>20</sup> – and that of the masses, a part of which was discussed in the “Notes” as its main topic about the Italian peasantry.<sup>21</sup> As Liguori suggests (p. 23; p. 91), Gramsci’s proposed way of reading Marx could be applicable to the research of Gramsci himself:

It is necessary, first of all, to reconstruct the process of intellectual development of the thinker in question in order to identify those elements which were to become stable and ‘permanent.’ [...] Research for the *Leitmotif*, for the rhythm of thought as it develops, should be more important than that for single causal affirmations and isolated aphorisms.<sup>22</sup>

To sum up, Strauss urges us to explore texts according to their literary characters, which are those of being unedited and private in the case of the *Prison Notebooks*. In dealing with these problems, Skinner’s approach urges us to reconstruct the author’s motive in writing them, by analyzing the discourse in which Gramsci was situated and the terms and ideas which were available for him when writing the *Notebooks*. I think these two ways would be also beneficial for Gramsci scholars if we try to “go back to Gramsci’s texts” following Liguori. *Gramsci’s Pathways* provides English-language readers with the prime example of this fruitful approach in Italian scholarship. All in all, as along with other books from the *Historical Materialism* series, this is a welcome addition to the new generation of Gramsci literature.

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<sup>20</sup> [Some Aspects of the Southern Question, in Gramsci (1978), pp. 441-62.]

<sup>21</sup> Gramsci (1996), p. 158; Gramsci 1994b, p. 316.

<sup>22</sup> Q16§2, pp. 1841-2; SPN, p. 382-4. Translation amended by TC.

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## On Alfonso Gonzales's Reform Without Justice

Lorenzo Fusaro

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## On Alfonso Gonzales's Reform Without Justice

### Abstract

This is a review by Lorenzo Fusaro of Alfredo Gonzales's book Reform without Justice.

### Keywords

Trump, migration, transnational capital, integral State, subaltern groups, collective political consciousness.

## ***On Alfonso Gonzales's "Reform Without Justice"***

Lorenzo Fusaro

In the beginning there were just tweets. And so it appeared that Donald Trump's agenda would be confined to the symbolic and that, following the liberal elite, as "Financial Times"'s Philip Stephens put it, "Mr. Trump could somehow be managed through his presidency – that the ignorance and prejudice that inform his worldview could be sidestepped and softened. With enough teeth-gritting indulgence and flattery, the argument has run, the president could be kept within boundaries" (FT 7.7.2018). Yet deeds followed: economic policy included the drastic reduction of taxes that particularly benefited big corporations and high-income brackets (which the liberal elite rarely mentions in its critique). In addition, and as is well known, the imposition of hefty tariffs has been accompanied by – following again the liberal concern – the upheaval or "axing" of the "liberal international order". Crucially, Trump's policies interested, of course, migration. After all, as the US President clearly stated when lecturing British Prime Minister Theresa May, "I won the election over migration" (BBC 13.7.2018). The (in)famous turning point has been his "zero tolerance" approach aimed at dissuading Mexicans, but especially (as we shall see, forcibly displaced) Central Americans attempting to cross the border from Mexico. The brutality of the turn is well captured by the remarks made by Attorney General Jeff Sessions when introducing the new zero tolerance policy:

If you are smuggling a child then we will prosecute you, and that child be separated from you as required by the law [...]. If you don't like that then don't smuggle children over our border (NYT 7.5.2018).

Trump's policies have led several critical authors to signal a shift towards regressive neoliberalism (Fraser 2017), authoritarianism neoliberalism (Bruff 2014, Gonzales 2017), or even fascism. And yet, does the presidency of Donald Trump really represent a fundamental break with previous administrations and in particular the Obama administration? Were we to follow Alfonso Gonzales'

book *Reform Without Justice* published in 2014 by Oxford University Press, the answer is definitively “no”. For as also the subtitle of the book – *Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State* – suggests, the authoritarian turn started long before the Presidency of Donald Trump, albeit the latter added specificities to it. Indeed, as the author puts it clearly in a later text:

Though Obama certainly made some concessions to African American, Latino, and Native American social movements under intense pressure, he nonetheless adhered to an authoritarian neoliberal mode of governance. One must be clear that the authoritarian reconfiguration of the state did not start with Trump’s presidency; it has been an ongoing process that transcends party lines. (Gonzales 2017, p. 151.)

Consider, for example, the topic of migration. Deportations passed from 188,000 in the year 2000 to 410,000 in 2012 – the last year reported in Gonzales’ analysis. Hence the author shows that “the United States has removed more people in the last ten years [2002-2012] than in the last 110 years combined” as, already at the time of writing the book, it spent fifteen times more on migration control than it did in 1986 (p. 2). This increase has been accompanied by the criminalization and detention of migrants long before the installation of Trump at the White House. As also Juaréz, Gómez-Aguíñaga and Bettez (2018) argue “immigrant detention has skyrocketed over the past three decades”. They highlight the widespread privatization of detention centers concluding that “corporate interests have helped to fuel the growth of immigrant detention and to convert the criminalization of immigrants into a profitable industry”. One crucial element within such processes is constituted by the Illegal Immigration Control Act (2005) that purported to, in the words of Gonzales:

Make it a felony to be undocumented; expand border security measures; increase cooperation between federal and legal local police agencies on immigration-law enforcement; broaden the definition of aggravated felony to include certain misdemeanor charges; and expand the definition of human trafficking to include anyone who transports an undocumented person in an automobile, amongst other provisions. (p. 21.)

Gonzales’s great contribution in *Reform Without Justice* is to offer an “organic” grand narrative – to use Gramsci’s vocabulary – that, starting from the topic of migration, attempts to make sense of the

great transformation the US went through over the past few decades. In order to do so, the author draws largely on Gramsci's thought and categories. What also strikes positively is the method of "critical discourse analysis and critical ethnography" that makes the book distinctive and very interesting to read. To give an idea, here is a passage of an interview to Javier, who has been deported to El Salvador as a result of "criminalization by association". Under this praxis, Gonzales explains, migrants are charged with possession of drugs with the intent to sell even if they may have never been in possession thereof:

I went to the US when I was three years old; I got deported when I was 27. I spent most of my life over there. I went to elementary school, middle school; I went to high school, and I worked for KFC. They deported me ... over a mistake over identity, over who had the dope and who was around. They took my papers, they took me to El Salvador, I came over here to the penitentiary, twice to jail over here. (p. 111.)

But let's return to Gonzales' narrative. The issue of the state is taken up in chapter one "State-Civil Society nexus" and reiterated in a more informed way in the final chapter "Beyond Immigration reform". The Homeland Security State, in the words of the author "is an integral racial state that emerged from a contentious history over the politics of race in general and with Latinos in particular" (p. 13). Hence adopting the Gramscian concept of integral state as the unity of civil society and political society, Gonzales presents an original version of the "racial state" compared to existing literature. In particular, the author extends the analysis focusing especially on the so-called anti-migrant bloc, "composed of a constellation of think tanks, intellectuals, grassroots organizations, and politicians operating at both the state and civil society" (p. 22). Their underlying idea is that

the nation is composed of white Americans and those willing to assimilate uncompromisingly into their way of life. And the "enemy" is the "alien" who symbolically is presented as foreign, criminal, and most often Mexican (pp. 41-2).

Gonzales shows how through several means (lobbying, political and economic pressure but also coercion) these ideas have been generalized. Incidentally, the anti-migrant bloc's proposals (such as



the Illegal Immigration Control Act) the author shows, have even been adopted by the Democratic party: “The majority of Democrats rejected only the most draconian aspects of the original bill submitted by the Republican leadership” (p. 43).

Yet the centrality of Latino politics is not discussed only “from above”. Hence Gonzales strongly focuses on the struggles arising from below, going as far as to argue that these represented a “counter hegemonic movement”, only, eventually, to be coopted through a process of passive revolution. More specifically, in chapter two Gonzales gives a vivid and informed account of the 2006 “mega marches” against the Immigration Control Act of 2005. Yet, as the author remarks, “[d]espite the ascendancy of the Latino social bloc, the counter-hegemonic moment was lost almost as fast as the bloc congealed” (p. 68). The result has been a compromise at the expense of the demands posed by the movement:

While this vision of reform included real short-term benefits for a select group of undocumented migrants (such as a work permit and, in some cases a pathway to citizenship) it sacrificed any radical challenge to the authoritarian nature of the homeland security state, the structural causes of migration, or the fundamentally racist policing, detention, and deportation of millions of Latinos and other migrants from other parts of the third world. (p. 122)

Whilst Gonzales’s deployment of Gramsci’s concepts is very promising, the way he does so – and as is usual with Gramsci’s concepts – might be debatable. For example, were we to follow Gramsci’s “*Analysis of situations*”, where the process of attainment of hegemony is discussed, we notice that the author (like Marx) starts from structural transformations in the economy giving rise to a fundamental class that might have the potential to become hegemonic, after going through a complex process of creating “collective political consciousness” (Gramsci 2001, Q13§17, p. 1583; [Gramsci 1971, p. 181]). Even if using the concept of counter-hegemony, Gonzales notes that Gramsci never made use of the latter. Nevertheless, it is perhaps the third moment presented in Gramsci’s “*Analysis of Situations*” that comes closest to the idea of a *counter hegemonic* movement able to challenge hitherto existing hegemony. There Gramsci writes:

A third moment is that in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups, too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures; it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies become "party", come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society – bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups. (Gramsci 2001, Q13§17, p. 1584; Gramsci 1971, pp. 181-2.)

I wonder whether the same could be applied to the sort of sporadic movement, even important as it was, that arose during the period of struggles Gonzales analyses. Would it not be more fruitful to adopt the concept of subalterns? Of course, also the latter concept has led to a series debates within the literature (see Green 2001; Thomas 2018a). As Guido Liguori (2016) argues, a characteristic of subaltern groups is their spontaneity and difficulty to conform a coherent bloc able to successfully challenge the hegemony of the ruling class. As Gramsci maintains, in some instances subaltern struggles might even reinforce existing hegemonic relations (see Gramsci 2001, Notebook 25).

A similar problem might be identified when Gonzales employs the concept of passive revolution in order to characterize the "cooption" of the anti-migrant bloc mentioned above. As is well known the concept of passive revolution has led to an important discussion within the literature. Notably, Gramsci himself uses the concept to characterize, following Cuoco, the specific situation observable in Naples, then the Italian, and later, more generally, the European transition to capitalist modernity (Thomas 2006; see also Thomas 2018b). Whilst here he deals with *epochal changes*, in its more extensive utilization of the concept, Gramsci also analyses changes *within* the same epoch. Interestingly, the concept – we might understand, perhaps, as *permanent* passive revolution – might be interpreted as a permanent way by which the ruling classes exercise hegemony. As a result of the existence of multiple interpretations, Callinicos (2010) has hence noted that there is risk of over-

stretching the concept thereby emptying it of its analytical force. That said, consider that Gramsci uses the concept in its more “extended meaning” in order to characterize mammoth transformations like “Americanism and Fordism” in the United States or fascism in Italy as a *sortie* from the organic crisis that was plaguing “the world as a whole” (Gramsci 2001, Q13§23, p. 1603 [Gramsci 2001, pp. 210-11]). While it might be an interesting exercise to characterize the emergence and maintenance of the Homeland Security State as passive revolution, I wonder whether the concept of passive revolution can be applied to the specific struggle considered by Gonzales in the way he analyses it.

One further big theme that runs through the book – and which covers chapters three and four – is the neo-Gramscian idea of a *fundamental* transformation of global capitalism as theorized by William I. Robinson (2005) amongst others. Gonzales well deploys these arguments in order to analyse the transformations that have occurred in the US (with particular emphasis on Riverside, California), and in Mexico and Central America. The interconnect-edness between neoliberalism in Mexico and Riverside, California, is thus presented as follows:

The ascendancy of neoliberalism in Mexico and economic restructuring in the United States are in fact part of the same process involving the reorganization of capitalist production around the globe to a transnational system of production, trade, finance and labour’. (p. 84.)

But with regards to the international (or transnational dimension) the focus is particularly on El Salvador thereby also capturing the shift of the migrant population: in the year 2000, as the Washington Post reports, 98 per cent of immigrants caught at the border were of Mexican origin, whilst in 2017, 163,000 persons came from Central America (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) and 128,000 from Mexico (Selsky in “Washington Post” 3.7.2018). As Gonzales points out, the war on terror and the “war on drugs”, amongst others, forced the implementation of neoliberal reforms that, actually, might be understood as the root cause for migration. As Gonzales puts it right at the beginning of the book, “[e]conomically displaced people, and those displaced by war, migrated either to the overpopulated urban centers of Latin America or to El Norte” (p. 15).

While the analysis in Chapter 4 “The Geopolitics of the Homeland Security State and Deportation in El Salvador” is relatively brief, Gonzales nonetheless very well captures the complex interconnection between the neoliberal transformation both in the United States, Mexico, Central America and migration. My main concern, when adopting the neo-Gramscian idea of transnational capital in general, is that this notion probably obfuscates economic and geopolitical competition amongst *different* states as well as *imperialism*. Thus, for example, as Josefina Morales’ analysis of NAFTA suggests, the latter, rather than being the result of transnational capital in general, has been a product of *US transnational capital* and *US imperialism*. As she puts it:

NAFTA was one of the mechanisms adopted by US transnational capital and US imperialism to counter the structural crisis of the 1970s, which, in the midst of the monetary and financial crisis, started to make its old pattern of accumulation obsolete. [...] It implied the emergence of new accumulation mechanisms based on a new technological revolution that opened the way to a new international division of labor. (Morales 2017, own translation)

Yet notwithstanding my differences outlined above, I believe that Gonzales’ idea to employ Gramscian concepts in order to analyse the important topic of migration in particular, and the great transformation the US went through over the past decades more generally, is very promising. And in doing so Gonzales has (re-)opened a decisive research agenda that might help us to better understand and change “the great and terrible world” (Gramsci) we are living in.

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