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RETHINKING HEGEMONY

AS AN EDUCATIVE-FORMATIVE PROBLEM:

GRAMSCI, POST-MARXISM, AND RADICAL DEMOCRACY

REVISITED

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DEBBIE J. HILL

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ABSTRACT

There has been a move in recent times to utilize Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony as a central feature of a revisionist movement known as 'post-Marxism'. Post-Marxism employs hegemony in support of its thesis of the impossibility of a homogeneous social order. It does this by interpreting the concept as one that encourages society to be viewed as a horizontal space within which is constituted a 'suturing' of various groupings connected agonistically though a shared allegiance to what post-Marxists now call the 'radical' principles of democracy. By their own assessment, the Gramscian concept has thus become fundamental to the theoretical dismissal of the historical aspirations of socialism, prompted no less by their anti-democratic interpretation of Marxist theory with its alleged modernist, essentialist focus.

This thesis has been written in opposition to this displacement of hegemony from the historical materialist foundations that underpin Gramsci's own distinctive usage of the concept. My opposition centres particularly on the post-Marxist renunciation of the philosophical assumptions upon which socialism is founded, and upon the inevitable loss of the distinctive nuances of hegemony as a concept centring on the problem of the pathological reach of a capitalist epistemology and ontology upon human identity. As I argue within this thesis, it is precisely the impress of capitalism's economic and extra-economic aspect upon humanity's own cognitive and moral capacity – upon its relational and valuational capability – which Gramsci's writings attempted to articulate. In this respect, Gramsci differentiated himself in Marxist circles by the depth of his insights into Marx's historical materialist method and the practical reasoning ('praxis') that this methodology simultaneously engendered. Explaining this method, and the problem of education that this perspective further implies, is therefore the aim of this thesis. As I argue here, his entire written legacy reflects his historical materialist allegiance: the problem of 'education' as no less than the educative-formative problem of practical reasoning.

In defending Gramsci's own historicist, dialectical and organic worldview, I argue here that the fullest extent of capitalism's sway, and its permeation into every aspect of cultural and social practice, remains seriously under-theorized within post-Marxist discourse: that, rather ironically, the very associational preferences sanctioned by post-Marxist adherents lend further weight to the merits of Gramsci's assessment of the normative power of existing forms of thought to distort mankind's

own socio-human potential. As I endeavour to illustrate within this study, Gramsci conceived the problem of ‘democracy’ as essentially one of overcoming the cognitive and moral submissiveness that pervades our ‘normal’, everyday worldview. Insofar as this worldview is embedded into the deepest recesses of our language and psychology, Gramsci’s historiographical method – that of mapping these multiple aspects of capitalist dominance and social containment and modelling the value of criticality in relation to one’s historical and social insights – should be viewed simultaneously as his practice of a new, democratic politics. The work presented here is therefore a study that re-examines and re-clarifies the concept of hegemony in relation to this goal.

* * * * *

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In similar fashion, Colin Lankshear and Jim Marshall are two significant academic influences from my past who deserve no small measure of thanks for their role in my earlier academic growth. I have Colin to thank for introducing me to Gramsci and Jim for prompting me to research further into Marxist theory. I am pleased to be provided with this opportunity to further extend a public acknowledgment to them both for their respective roles in my professional development. Were it not for their inspirational research endeavours, the New Zealand research community would have far fewer political educational theorists. It would therefore not be an exaggeration to say that a whole generation of scholars is richer for their contribution to critical educational theory.

Within my own institution, the University of Waikato, Graham Oliver's presence here cannot be understated. Charged with the unenviable task of transforming a part-time, aspiring philosopher into a full-time, relatively proficient one, Graham's cogent insights regarding the nature of education and its purpose have contributed significantly to my own considerable intellectual development over these past ten years. I cannot thank him enough for that and for his passionate, almost obsessive, defence of a broader, more robust concept of education than the one that is esteemed more universally today.

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The role of family must never be underestimated in the writing of a thesis of this nature. After obligations to full-time work commitments have been satisfied, the time and energy that might usually be given over to family activities has had to be relinquished in the interests of furthering this research. Much of this thesis has been written by extending working days into working nights and working nights still further into working weekends. For the significant sacrifice that my family has had to make, I offer them my heartfelt thanks. To Greg Lee, my long-standing – and long-suffering – partner, and to Des, Amy and Victoria and all my other unfortunate non-academic friends, I extend to you collectively my most sincere thanks and gratitude for your patient forbearance. I dedicate this thesis to you all, and most especially to the memory of my old friend and ally, Eric Braithwaite who sadly, never lived to see this work's completion.

It is also with regret that I learned only recently of the death of a number of Gramscian scholars whose work I have come to admire greatly. The tremendous insights of Robert Dombroski, Guissepe Fiori and Dante Germino, in particular, have proven immensely valuable to the evolution of my own ideas. Their passing is indeed a sad event. It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to the work that these scholars began: that it continues their legacy by bringing into public view the significance of Gramsci's ideas in relation to our own contemporary struggles. In this respect, the qualities of personality and character which Gramsci himself exemplified were qualities synonymous with the continuous scrutiny of the terms and conditions of how we construct knowledge and value life, accordingly. His work is therefore timeless: a fitting exemplar of a cognitively and morally defiant epistemology and practice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

English translations of Gramsci’s writings that have been referred to in this thesis have been abbreviated as follows:

MP (1957b) *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (Louis Marks, Ed. & Trans.). New York: International Publishers.

SPN (1971). *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans.). New York: International Publishers.

HPC (1975). *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (Pedro Cavalcanti & Paul Piccone, Eds. & Pierluigi Molajoni, Mary Ann Aiello-Peabody, Paul Piccone, & John Thiem, Trans.). Saint Louis: Telos Press.

SCW (1985). *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From The Cultural Writings* (David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Eds. & William Boelhower, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

SPW 1 (1977/ 1990a). *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920): With additional texts by Bordiga and Tasca* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & John Mathews, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1977)

SPW 2 (1978/ 1990b). *Selections from Political Writings (1921-1926): With additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1978)

PN 1 (1992). *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks (Volume I)* (Joseph A. Buttigieg & Antonio Callari, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

PPW (1994a). *Antonio Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* (Richard Bellamy, Ed. & Virginia Cox, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LFP 1 (1994b) *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volume I)* (Frank Rosengarten, Ed. & Raymond Rosenthal, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

LFP 2 (1994c). *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volume II)* (Frank Rosengarten, Ed. & Raymond Rosenthal, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

PN 2 (1996). *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks (Volume II)* (Joseph A. Buttigieg, Ed. & Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

-----INTRODUCTION-----

'NEW TIMES', TURBULENT TIMES

There is today wide agreement that the left-wing project is in crisis. New antagonisms have emerged – not only in advanced capitalist countries but also in the Eastern bloc and the Third World – that require the reformulation of the socialist ideal in terms of an extension and deepening of democracy.

(Laclau & Mouffe in Mouffe, 1992a: p.ii¹)

The problem is moral more than it is [a question of] mechanical organization: it is a problem of responsibility, of culture, of the deepening of the socialist consciousness.

(Gramsci, 15 June 1918, cited in Germino, 1990: p.79²)

1. Introduction: 'New Times', Turbulent Times

As any recent review of mainstay theory will now confirm, a deep and outspoken pessimism for the precepts of socialism exists within certain quarters. Symptomatic of such crisis, there has been a plethora of works directed to the problem³. This situation in many ways simply epitomizes the mood of a new generation of intellectuals⁴, themselves struggling against the tide of historical orthodoxy. Arguing the need to go back to 'the fork in the road', as it were, what is advocated repeatedly is an extension and deepening of 'existing' democracy rather than a deepening of

¹ Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992a).

² Dante Germino, *Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

³ Among these, in chronological order, see Louis Althusser, *Power and Revolution in Post-Revolutionary Societies* (London: Ink Links, 1979); Paul M. Sweezy, 'A Crisis in Marxian Theory' (*Monthly Review*, 31, 2, 1979: pp.20-24); Stanley Aronowitz, *The Crisis in Historical Materialism* (New York: Praeger, 1981); Alex Callinicos, *Is There A Future For Marxism?* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Norberto Bobbio, *Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy* (Roger Griffin, Trans., Cambridge: Polity, 1987a. Original work published 1976); Gregor McLennan, 'Post-Marxism and Retro-Marxism: Theorizing the Impasse of the Left' (*Sites*, 23, 1991: pp.46-62); Joseph McCarney, *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism* (London: Verso, 1992); Norman Geras, 'Democracy and the Ends of Marxism' (*New Left Review*, 203, 1994: pp.92-106); Ronald Aronson, 'Towards a Relativized Marxism' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 9, 3, 1996/97: pp.68-76); Antonio Callari, 'Aronson's Marxism is Dead. Long Live Marxism' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 9, 3, 1996/97: pp.79-84); Gregor McLennan, 'Post-Marxism and the "Four Sins" of Modernist Theorizing' (*New Left Review*, 218, July/August 1996: pp.53-74); Daniel T. McGee, 'Post-Marxism: The Opiate of the Intellectuals' (*Modern Language Quarterly*, 58, 2, 1997: pp.201-225); Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Žizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000); and Stuart Sim, *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁴ A number of writers have advanced this thesis. See especially, Edward and Ronald Chilcote, 'The Crisis of Marxism: An Appraisal of New Directions' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 5, 2, 1992: pp.84-106) for an overview of the various commentators who promote this perspective.

'socialist consciousness', as Gramsci (above) seemed at pains to advise. The continuous review of the relationship between democracy, capitalism and socialism has therefore become an all-too-common feature of the contemporary Marxist literature⁵, with left-wing supporters of poststructuralist theory advancing a thesis that is noted for its very rejection of the 'Marxist/ communist/ socialist' project as a serious 'post-millennium' proposition⁶. In this respect, my own study is offered in an attempt to explore the mounting concerns that are being expressed against socialist theory and the form that future left-wing struggle should ultimately take. With a focus specifically on the work of Antonio Gramsci, it critically examines what there is to gain and, more significantly, *to lose*, by socialism being reconstituted as a 'radical' form of democracy.

As much of the literature reveals, the reasons for this promotion of radical democracy over traditional socialist solutions are both multiple and complex⁷. That said, a prominent catalyst has almost certainly been the more recent democratic victories within 'actually existing' communist states; states that were perceived previously as the 'totalitarian prisons' of Soviet-style, socialist politics⁸. New mutations in social struggle (the feminist movement, racial equality movements, the ecological movement and so forth) have contributed similarly to socialism's demise insofar as the theoretical foundations for the growth of such movements have arisen from the

⁵ Efforts to create a liberal/ socialist synthesis are certainly not new. As Perry Anderson has pointed out in his article 'The Affinities of Norberto Bobbio' (*New Left Review*, 170, July-August 1988: pp.3-36), many prominent 'liberals' such as John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey tended to develop what could be considered strong socialist sentiments in the course of their lives. They endorsed socializing the means of production not only to guard against the dangers of state expansion but also to protect individual liberty and entitlement. In Anderson's article, he focused particularly on two key works by Bobbio (*Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1976/1987a; and *The Future of Democracy: A Defence of the Rules of the Game*. London: Polity Press, 1984/1987b) which represented yet a further and, in Anderson's view, unsuccessful attempt to create a liberal/ socialist synthesis.

⁶ For an excellent introductory overview of the work of two of these most prominent theorists, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, see Paul Bowman, 'Laclau, Mouffe and Post-Marxism' (Bath Spa University College, Cultural Studies Web Site, 2002). A variety of opinion exists, however, as to whether this group of poststructuralist advocates who call them post-Marxists can actually be regarded as 'left-wing' at all. To the extent that their position could be said to lie to the extreme 'right' of left, some have argued that they are more closely aligned to liberalism than to Marxism in the final analysis. See especially Norman Geras, 'Post-Marxism?' (*New Left Review*, 163, 1987: pp.40-82) and Norman Geras, 'Ex-Marxism Without Substance: Being a Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe' (*New Left Review*, 169, 1988: pp.34-61).

⁷ This is not to say that the only criticism of socialism comes from those best characterized as post-structuralist or 'Nietzschean' in their outlook. In his 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press), Francis Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy constitutes the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' being the political model that is 'the least riddled by internal contradictions' (p.xi). Although Fukuyama concedes that liberal democracy is 'not without injustice or serious social problems', his thesis is essentially a rejection of Marx's vision of human progress in favour of what he argues is an anti-linear and anti-teleological alternative.

⁸ For a valuable overview of the crisis, see Aronowitz's second chapter (*op. cit.*, 1981: pp.9-44). As Aronowitz explains, actual socialist regimes stood as living contradictions to the portrait of hope painted by the founders of socialism; as '*obstacles* for achieving human freedom, rather than its bearers' (emphasis in the original, p.10).

advocacy that there are plural forms of marginalization. This has led quite logically to the displacement of the belief in the primacy of economic struggle and class struggle, more especially⁹. The latter is now even branded by some as a 'negative' form of struggle, allegedly representative of an 'essentialist' and 'totalizing' (totalitarian) political vision. Collective ascriptions such as 'the masses' or 'the bourgeoisie' are now regarded as outdated and ubiquitous terminology with little or no practical meaning. In this connection, socialist theorizing that neither reflects nor respects the aspirations of a contemporary pluralist society has been seen to have lost its viability. The more conservative classical strands of Marxism¹⁰ – strands deeply infused with referents perceived to be representative of an orthodox and outmoded nineteenth century style of thinking – have thus been found to be decidedly wanting. This is especially so given the contemporary dominance of post-Enlightenment and postmodernist perspectives.

In fact, several of these poststructuralist advocates have expressed a deliberate preference to reject the Marxist banner entirely and to identify themselves as 'post-Marxists in celebration of their difference'¹¹. Abandoning what they perceive as tired and antiquated modernist assumptions, this prefix is taken as allowing maximum epistemological and ontological distance from the 'fundamentalism' that they discern *is* Marxism. With a theoretical constituency that is underpinned by important trends in contemporary theory – post-structuralism, a philosophy of language after the later Wittgenstein, post-Heideggerian hermeneutics¹² – one of the chief contentions of these post-Marxist proponents is that 'an anti-essentialist theoretical stand is the *sine qua non* [indispensable condition] of a new vision for the left conceived in terms of a radical

⁹ Scholars working in the area of both feminist and racial politics have challenged what many consider to be the 'theoretical imperialism' of Marxism. The perceived centrality of class struggle, the preconditions of socialist revolution to end oppressive practice, and the primacy of historical materialism have all been called into question.

¹⁰ One of the signatures of some of those who consider Marxism to be a 'relativized' theory is that the word Marxism appears in the lower case to denote this theoretical shift. See especially Aronson (*op. cit.*, 1996/97: p.69). I have chosen to use the capital form here in protest against this tendency.

¹¹ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in their 1985 publication *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack, Trans., London: Verso), were perhaps the first theorists to identify their work as post-Marxist, as will be discussed in Chapter 1. Other theorists have since followed suit, endorsing the perspective to varying degrees. Sue Golding might be considered one such theorist (Ernesto Laclau wrote the foreword to her 1992 book, *Gramsci's Democratic Theory: Contributions to a Post-Liberal Democracy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press). Her preference to be thought of as a 'post-liberal' theorist certainly amounts to a vote in favour of many of the same concerns and resolutions that Laclau and Mouffe have championed. Glyn Daly is another writer who has partially endorsed Laclau and Mouffe's work in 'Post-metaphysical Culture and Politics: Richard Rorty and Laclau and Mouffe' (*Economy and Society*, 23, 2, 1994: 173-200). So too do Anna Marie Smith and Jacob Torfing in each of their respective books, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 1998) and *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

¹² Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992a: p.ii).

and plural democracy¹³. They reject especially the symbolic violence committed upon diversity and difference by traditional socialist revolutionary theory. Arguing instead a thesis for the 'multiplication of democratic practices', their central concern lies principally with the need to respect difference and for the fundamental right for individuals to determine their own social good¹⁴.

Effectively, what this equates to (among other things) is the subsequent abandonment of a theory of possibility for the forging of a socially coordinated 'collective will'¹⁵. Viewed by post-Marxists as neither an achievable nor a desirable outcome, the concept of 'collectivity' represents one further aspect of socialist theory that must emphatically be rejected. The premise of mass social unity, by this interpretation, is both unsustainable and illusory. Indeed, post-Marxists view it as antithetical to the very aspirations that should underpin democracy.

It is in this manner that individual and group identity – which may or may not include *class* identity – assumes priority. The 'problem of socialism' thus expresses the problem of the individual who is no longer conceivable as a 'universal' subject: the 'crisis' therefore being indicative of the tension expressed between class and individual (non-class) aspirations¹⁶. As Stanley Aronowitz has succinctly defined the dilemma, the argument has generally not been (though not always) to deny completely the role of production in the maintenance of capitalist hierarchy and division but, rather more correctly, 'to dispute the traditional Marxist contention that classes are *a priori* subjects defined by their determinate relation to the ownership of production and their place in the structure of production relations'¹⁷.

It is primarily from this re-conception of the individual as an 'unfixed subject' who is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations that a radical redefinition of political struggle as 'democratic/ liberal' rather than 'democratic/ socialist' has evolved. The traditional idea of revolution (entailing the inauguration of a completely new political form of society) has effectively been superseded with many sympathetic to a post-

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See, for example, Chantal Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?' (In Andrew Ross (Ed.), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988b: p.41); and Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992: p.3).

¹⁵ Golding, for example, suggests that what Gramsci's work heralds is an understanding of the 'fractured and multiplicitous' nature of the universal that the concept of 'collective will' purports to represent (Golding, *op. cit.*, 1992: pp.123-124).

¹⁶ As McCarney also notes (*op. cit.*, 1992: p.163), it is a crisis initiated by the failure of the working class to play its ordained and historical role.

¹⁷ Aronowitz (*op. cit.*, 1981: p.105).

Marxist paradigm opting for the 'radicalization' of the modern democratic tradition instead¹⁸. Such a call is principally a vote in favour of what could be termed a *rapprochement* with key liberal principles; a move that is felt essential in order to advance beyond both socialism and liberalism towards a 'Third Way'¹⁹.

Opposing this view are those who argue that the struggle for socialism must necessarily transcend particular interests. Perhaps best described as 'unapologetic socialists', this reactionary alliance vehemently rejects the assumption that the collapse of 'actually existing' communism can in any way be taken to signify a 'terminal crisis for Marxism'²⁰. Indeed, the very issue of what constitutes 'Marxism' is plainly at the heart of this dispute. Contrary to believing that Marxism is in an ever-increasing state of decay

¹⁸ Listed in chronological order: Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985); Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism Without Apologies' (*New Left Review*, 166, 1987: pp.79-106); Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy' (In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988a: pp.89-101); Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1988b: pp.31-45); Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1990); Ernesto Laclau, 'The Impossibility of Society' (*Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 15, 1-3, 1991: pp.24-27); Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1992a); Chantal Mouffe, 'Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community' (Chapter 11 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. London: Verso, 1992c: pp.225-239); Chantal Mouffe, 'Liberal Socialism and Pluralism: Which Citizenship?' (In Judith Squires (Ed.), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993: pp.69-84); Daly (*op. cit.*, 1994); Ernesto Laclau (Ed.), *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994); Chantal Mouffe, 'Politics, Democratic Action and Solidarity' (*Inquiry*, 38, 1-2, 1995a: pp.99-108); Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996); Chantal Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?' (Chapter 2 in David Trend (Ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*. New York: Routledge, 1996: pp.19-26); Chantal Mouffe, 'Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos' (*Philosophy Today* [Celina], 41, 1, Spring 1997: pp.24-29); Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?' (*Social Research*, 66, 3, Fall 1999: pp.745-59); Smith (*op. cit.*, 1998); Torfing (*op. cit.*, 1999); and Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹⁹ This desire to cut a pathway between the twin poles of reform and revolution is discussed in Chapter 1. Although descriptions of this 'Third Way' tend to differ, advocates include Bobbio (*op. cit.*, 1976/1987a); Colin Mercer in Alan Hunt (Ed.), *Marxism and Democracy* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980: pp.101-137); Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985); Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992); and Antony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

²⁰ Opponents of post-Marxism display varying degrees of opposition towards the paradigm. See for example (in chronological order): Callinicos (*op. cit.*, 1982); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986); Geras (*op. cit.*, 1987); Geras (*op. cit.*, 1988); Donna Landry & Gerald MacLean, 'Rereading Laclau and Mouffe' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 4, 4, Winter 1991, pp.41-60); Peter Osborne, 'Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity' (Chapter 8 in Peter Osborne (Ed.), *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*. London: Verso, 1991: pp.201-225); Geras (*op. cit.*, 1994); Frederic Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' (*New Left Review*, 146, 1994: pp. 53-92); Benjamin Bertram, 'New Reflections on the "Revolutionary" Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe' (*Boundary 2*, XXII, 3, 1995: pp.81-110); Robert Miklitsch, 'The Rhetoric of Post-Marxism: Discourse and Institutionality in Laclau and Mouffe' (*Social Text* 45, 14, 4, 1995: pp.167-196); Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); McLennan (*op. cit.*, 1996); McGee (*op. cit.*, 1997); David Bernas, 'Historical Materialism and Ordinary Language: Grammatical Peculiarities of the Class Struggle "Language Game"' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 11, 2, 1999: pp.18-37); Susan A. Mann, 'The Scholarship of Difference: A Scholarship of Liberation?' (*Sociological Inquiry*, 70, 4, Fall 2000: pp.471-98); and Henry Veltmeyer, 'Post-Marxist Project: An Assessment and Critique of Ernesto Laclau' (*Sociological Inquiry*, 70, 4, Fall 2000: pp.499-519).

and that history ends with capitalism²¹, there is a firm belief in this quarter that the recent individualization of politics represents nothing other than a more virulent form of passive revolution by an advanced 'modernist' version of capitalism²².

In this regard, postmodernism is articulated as the handmaiden of capitalism, its signature of discontinuity and multi-perspectival theory actually privileging capitalist continuity and rationality, correspondingly. Moreover, it is seen as representing a regression from the critical theoretical tradition that Marxist scholarship has necessarily championed. Exhibiting a decidedly 'a-critical' and 'a-political' nature, characterized, it is argued, by a predominantly descriptive and fragmented logic, the postmodern 'turn' is nothing less than an 'about turn'. Blighted additionally by its perceived inability to name oppressive practice, it is this debilitating relativity that anti-post-Marxists have especially condemned. In their view, as will be examined more fully in the course of this study, socialism is seen as theorizing a *qualitatively different form of democracy* from that which is being articulated presently. A resolute call that even more urgent theoretical work needs to be undertaken to expose the configuration of power that supports the capitalism of the twenty-first century has thus been the ensuing demand. The 'New Times' project, in particular, has been one such attempted response²³.

Between these twin poles are a wealth of other views²⁴. Significantly, with respect to both extremes, there is a shared regard for Gramscian theory. Rather surprisingly, it might seem, Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' sits centre stage amid the theoretical discourse of both these socialist defenders and radical democratic revisionists alike. Indeed, it was this apparent enigma which prompted this study. Attempting to explore the utility of this concept for the seemingly oppositionary endeavours of socialist and radical democratic theorizing provides the essential

²¹ Fukuyama (*op. cit.*, 1992).

²² David Hawkes, *Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

²³ The 'New Times' project began with a seminar in May 1988 organized by the *Marxism Today* editorial board. Concerned that Marxist theory was not addressing the issues raised by the emergence of new social movements adequately (see Chapter 1), the project was to encourage socialists 'to make better sense of the world, and, on that basis, to realign the left with that new world' (Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques, *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989: p.11).

²⁴ Stuart Hall's position, for example, has been difficult to place. In fact, this has proven to be a considerable source of frustration for Ellen Meiksins Wood, as is evident in her book, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism* (*op. cit.*, 1986). Written as a direct response to Laclau and Mouffe's work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (*op. cit.*, 1985), Wood attempts to identify the revisionists (whom she, following Marx, has branded the new 'true' socialists) taking them to task for their fashionable reinterpretation of left-wing politics. Of Hall, she writes: 'Hall's theoretical statements are sufficiently ambiguous and his movements in an NTS direction are so often accompanied by qualifications and disclaimers that it is not always easy to know exactly where he stands' (note 3, p.3).

backdrop against which I investigate my main concern: the manner in which the educational insights implicit in Gramsci’s historical materialist outlook have been reconciled to this struggle of hegemonic contestation. In this regard, I argue that there is an urgent need to redefine the dynamics of hegemony as a theory centring on *the problem of cognitive and moral [relational and valuational²⁵] submissiveness; a problem of the pathologies of capitalism with respect to democratic theory*. As I intend to demonstrate, hegemony exposed the problem of cultural learning and the attendant loss that an inorganic and anti-dialectical worldview wrought upon humanity’s perception of its own ‘creative’ potential²⁶. It is only through a consideration of this aspect of the ‘material’ harm that capital’s combined economic and extra-economic aspect imposes upon our relational and valuational sensibilities – importantly, on a sense of our own ‘nature’ – that the inadequacies of the post-Marxist exercise of ‘revisioning’ hegemony in the service of their own ‘radical’ form of democracy become much more readily apparent.

In this respect, my chief contention is precisely this: that the post-Marxist exercise of rethinking socialist aspirations in ways which are compatible with the preservation of liberal principles will ultimately gain little traction in conceiving a more ‘democratic’ order – either in a ‘radical’ liberal or ‘post’-liberal form – unless due recognition is given to the insights which are delivered from a reconsideration of the Gramscian problem of hegemony as crucially the problem of the pathological reach of a capitalist epistemology and ontology upon human possibility. To this end, I argue that the dominance of notions of ‘inclusion’ and ‘positionality’ in relation to issues of ‘identity’ and ‘politics’ within the post-Marxist literature²⁷ has led to the significant marginalization of a theory of mind with a corresponding loss of insight about the way in which

²⁵ Morality defines the way in which we treat each other based on a valuation of the ‘other’. In this respect, I argue here that the inherent capitalist depreciation of the ‘human’ through abstraction injures our sense of the relational and our positive valuation of human association correspondingly. The loss of perception of ‘the totality’ – through the way in which ‘things’ and ‘facts’ are isolated from the social world which grants them this status – is intimately connected to this process of abstraction. In Marxist thought, ‘alienation’ describes this overall process. See Bertell Ollman’s work, *Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (2nd Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

²⁶ What we must understand is that in Marxist theory, mankind is seen as the maker of its own nature through its own capacities; that is, it alone can enhance its powers of practical discrimination. This is why we see Gramsci talking about humanity as needing to create for itself a ‘higher standard of civilization’. With its own ‘nature’ under the dominion of its own activities, what is ‘human’ is subject to mankind’s own determination. Whilst humanity therefore expresses ‘potential’, it actualizes this only to the extent to which it recognizes this potential and strives to materialize it. This is the logic behind Marx’s famous opening lines of the *18th Brumaire*:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

²⁷ As I explain below, the previous exclusion of certain identities from politics has led to a struggle for inclusion – hence the reason why political struggle is referred to as ‘inclusionary politics’.

humanity's perception about itself is very much the product of a complex ecology of socio-political influences. It is precisely the problem of this impress of an inorganic epistemology and ontology upon self and social perception that lies at the heart of the problem of hegemony, as I contend further. *Hegemony is a problem that highlights the very real constraints imposed upon our cognitive and moral capabilities within a capitalist society – importantly translated as constraints upon our powers of practical reasoning*²⁸ – *drawing our attention to the constituent limitations that these effects necessarily yield upon the entire 'democratic' process itself*²⁹.

To put the problem in different terms, with regard to recent moves to 'radicalize' democracy, I want to argue that it precisely this neglect of the broad-based theory of educative-formative endeavour that is integral to Gramsci's theory of hegemony which lies at the crux of the 'lack' that I see as a typical characteristic of post-Marxist scholarship. The problem can be traced back directly to what I maintain to be the loss of the rich account of the multi-dimensional nature of the violence incurred upon perception/ action by capitalism's culture of abstraction. As I argue here, it is precisely this violence that Gramsci's historical materialist thesis duly exposes. Insofar as post-Marxism stands for the abandonment of this historicist worldview, it embraces a paradigm which effectively renders invisible pathological educative-formative theory/ practice. As I further contend, the subsequent loss of the importance of practical reasoning in relation to self and social awareness equates to a significant loss of explanatory capability of the extensive reach of the political upon concrete human lives³⁰. To my own way of thinking, the central concepts which now dominate post-Marxist discourse (concepts such as 'positionality' and 'inclusion') simply do not provide us with enough explanatory power to enable us to construct a realistic thesis of

²⁸ I use 'practical reasoning' within this study as a synonym for Marx's historical materialist method; for the type of thinking it initiates and the knowledge that it implies. As I argue here, historical materialism is also interchangeable with the more common term 'philosophy of praxis'. What both phrases describe is the sense in which reasoning represents the supercession of abstract/ technical thinking. In the same manner in which practical reasoning (praxis) is defined in Aristotelian terms as 'more than' technique – therefore conveying a sense of personal/ social enlightenment – praxis/ practical reasoning implies the same thing in Gramsci's work: the supercession of an abstract and narrowly technical way of viewing the world and its relationships. Moreover, it implies anti-fetishized thinking and greater human possibility, as I argue here.

²⁹ Democracy appears in inverted commas here to signal that historical materialism is a methodology that is 'democratic' in the broadest possible understanding of the term. If democracy equates to autonomous and liberated human endeavour, then Gramsci's objective to show how human nature was the product of human activity was the epitome of a 'democratic' theory, i.e., a theory showing how awareness of self-dispossession was simultaneously self-liberating.

³⁰ Despite the fact that it is acknowledged that identity is discursively formed, in an effort to destabilize the place of 'class' in democratic struggle, there has been no real acknowledgement regarding the manner in which class power has not only infiltrated our discourse but also our entire practice of living (praxis) as a consequence. And this is precisely the argument proposed by David Bernans (*op. cit.*, 1999).

the negative aspects of the existing socio-human dynamic.

Far from abandoning the worldview that underpins Gramsci's own distinctive theory, I argue within this study that there is an urgent need to recover the rich account of humanity and social interaction inherent within Gramsci's writings in order to begin to think more realistically about enhancing democratic practice. In this respect, I strenuously oppose Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's conviction that Marxism's only hope of remaining 'alive' is to accept that all forms of struggle are equally valid and that the unconditional support of these struggles will necessarily lead to the establishment of a form of democracy more responsive to our contemporary multi-cultural and pluralist aspirations. I oppose their claim not only on the familiar and shared ground that such a stance represents the naive under-theorization of the nature of power and its ability to disrupt the democratic dream within a capitalist society³¹ but also more specifically, because of their abandonment of the concept of hegemony and the educative-formative insights bestowed upon it by its dialectically materialist outlook³². Defending a wholly Marxist interpretation of hegemony³³, I argue that what this theory further signalled was the need to think beyond the post-Marxist's restrictive view of democracy; that the problem of democracy is no mere problem of identity exclusion, to be resolved simply by means of the exercise of our discursive

³¹ Most of the criticisms levelled against Laclau and Mouffe relate to their privileging of cultural politics at the expense of any significant analysis of the politics of the economy. That 'class' is still a fundamental power relationship that operates upon identity is generally the most common criticism raised in opposition to their theory. In short, Laclau and Mouffe have been accused of ignoring the extent to which the economic invariably exerts its influence upon the cultural. See Geras (*op. cit.*, 1987, 1988, 1994); Landry & MacLean (*op. cit.*, 1991); Bertram (*op. cit.*, 1995); Miklitsch (*op. cit.*, 1995); McLennan (*op. cit.*, 1996); McGee (*op. cit.*, 1997); Bernans (*op. cit.*, 1999); Torfing (*op. cit.*, 1999); Mann (*op. cit.*, 2000); Veltmeyer (*op. cit.*, 2000); and Bowman (*op. cit.*, 2002).

³² The foundation upon which Gramsci develops his own worldview is through Marx's historical materialist outlook or his philosophy of praxis. Praxis is a concept explained well in Karel Kosik's, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and the World* (Karel Kovandra & James Schmidt, Trans., Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company [Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume 52] 1976). It is an account of human nature that highlights the centrality of onto-formative activity to our species-being and the limits set upon our historical self-fashioning by what can be termed 'negative praxis'. Marxism seeks to enhance 'positive praxis' through the countering of historically destructive forces in relation to our socio-human activities.

³³ There is an ongoing debate within the Marxist literature as to whether an historical rendering of humankind implies a rejection of an essentialist self. Sean Sayers (1998), for instance, argues that the historical materialist self cannot be said to have an essentialist human 'nature' per se, given that our nature is historically fashioned and therefore never 'fixed' (*Marxism and Human Nature*. London: Routledge). Terry Eagleton (1999), one of Sayers' reviewers, is not so convinced ('Self-Realization, Ethics and Socialism' [Review of Sean Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, Routledge: London, 1998]. In *New Left Review*, 237, September/October, pp.150-161). He argues that Marx's use of the phrase 'species-being' was deliberate in order to acknowledge a 'human essence' to our species. For my own part, I see that the adoption of a dialectical perspective implies that there is no dichotomy, as Eagleton assumes. The species forms its own nature so that 'essence' is not something depicted as a property set apart from the practical activity (labour) of the species.

imagination³⁴. Rather, when relocated within its distinctively Marxist tradition, hegemony indicates the problem of practical reasoning and the prospects for democracy that this capacity bestows.

One of the most cogent lessons to be learnt from Gramsci was that without a theory of education and its onto-formative effects³⁵ – importantly an awareness of the very layers of sedimentation that shape our ‘being’ – our theory of identity is itself but a hollow abstraction; a uni-dimensional notion of ‘self’ that has arisen from the under-theorization of the very process by which personal and social identity is both constructed and constrained. All that we are left with is but a faint and weak spectre of what it is to be ‘human’ by the terms of this revision; a self with an identity that is entirely blind to the immense ‘social’ consequences of its own self-focused shallowness³⁶. In bold contrast therefore to the Gramscian project of unmasking what is possible through human association, I argue instead that this malnourished portrait of ‘the social’ cannot but ensure that a thesis favouring human connection is minimized accordingly³⁷.

The work presented here is a study which attempts to highlight the effects of this loss to socialist theory of what is perhaps best regarded as a concept of human possibility. I do this principally through the lens of Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, a

³⁴ Laclau and Mouffe contend that seeing the discursive possibilities of identity re-formation *should* lead to an embrace of a new ‘logic of the social’ when the contestable nature of discourse is explained and people are persuaded that they are capable of refashioning their society as they please.

³⁵ In Marxist thinking, there is no mind-action dualism. The nature of mankind is formed through practical activity. Man’s nature is formed through what he produces and how he produces it. Thus, ‘character’ and ‘personality’ are fashioned through productive activity – broadly defined. We find this point expressed in Gramsci’s work in the following way:

This contrast between thought and action, i.e., the co-existence of two conceptions of the world, one affirmed in words and the other displayed in effective action, is not simply the product of self-deception...[T]he contrast between thought and action cannot but be the expression of profounder contrasts of the social historical order’. (SPN, p.327)

³⁶ Few commentators have made this point. Peter Osborne is one exception (‘Radicalism Without Limit? Discourse, Democracy and the Politics of Identity’. Chapter 8 in Peter Osborne (Ed.), *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*. London: Verso, 1991: pp.201-225). Robert Bocock (1986) also begins his final chapter – a review of the deployment of hegemony in recent social theory – by noting that most postmodern accounts of social theory dispense with a concept of human nature. Bocock contends that the absence of any such concept invites not just incommensurability, but full-blown relativism additionally (*Hegemony*. Chichester, West Sussex: Ellis Horwood, 1986: p.104).

³⁷ Many liberal theorists attempted to protect individuals from the ‘strains of commitment’ in relation to society and the state, to borrow a phrase from John Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). Where Laclau and Mouffe and others differ from these theorists, however, is that their image of the ‘unfixed subject’ is celebrated and sustained through a concept of democracy that is different: it is not the democracy of unity based on traditional Enlightenment principles but tries to contain a lapse back into normativity and humanism by being defined through its capacity to protect pluralism, openness and difference. It is this divergence between a modernist and a postmodernist paradigm (in relation to the human and the social) that will be explored in Chapter 1.

concept that helps us to explore the problem of creating a more robust democracy by examining the ways in which our cognitive understandings are circumscribed and neutered and our ethical and social concerns diluted simultaneously. Essentially then, this study is very much both a re-examination and a re-clarification of the Gramscian concept of hegemony itself. As I argue within these pages, the problem of creating a more authentic democracy is essentially part of the broader cognitive-perspectival problem that Gramsci's concept attempted to expose. Additionally a *moral problem* – insofar as our very concept of 'humanity' is itself determined by forces operating within our political landscape to 'normalize' and assign value to certain types of relationships as opposed to others – it is likewise a problem to re-conceptualize (in order to concretize) 'progressive' relationships and valuations³⁸. This study will therefore provide the vehicle through which a fuller account of the constitutive nature of Gramsci's thinking will become more readily discernible.

The need for the qualitative enrichment of our theorizing in relation to considerations about human 'being' is thus argued vigorously – and, I hope, defended satisfactorily – within these pages. What this study is designed to show is how Gramsci's Marxism allows us much greater insights into the role that practical reasoning can positively play in the construction of worthwhile ways of living. Depicted as 'praxis' in Marxist thinking, the extent to which humankind is able to engage in practical reasoning simultaneously determines the extent to which it is no longer subject to the fetishisms that stunt its future possibilities³⁹. As this investigation demonstrates, Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is no less than a synonym for Marx's historical materialist method: a method that defines practical reasoning ('praxis') furthermore as a methodology of cognitive and moral defiance⁴⁰. It is precisely this

³⁸ By 'progressive', Gramsci meant a process in which human beings acquire the ability to regulate the forces governing their social lives.

³⁹ The notion of 'fetish' is a key concept within Marxist theory. Derek Sayer (*The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987: p.40) describes it thus:

Fetishism confuses, or indeed inverts,.. two sets of attributes, material and formal or natural and social. Properties which things acquire entirely as a consequence of their standing in a specific set of social relations are mistakenly seen as inhering in, and explained by, the material qualities of those objects themselves.

Bertell Ollman (*op. cit.*, 1976: p.251) describes the consequences of fetishism:

People do not recognize their laws, constitutions, queens, gods, moral codes, academic prizes, etc., as their own creations; instead, they offer allegiance and allow themselves to be dominated by them.

⁴⁰ For an excellent chapter outlining Marx's theory of (human) 'being' and its creative essence, see Chapter 1 of Gavin Kitching's *Karl Marx and the Philosophy of Praxis* (London: Routledge, 1988). As Kitching so skillfully demonstrates, the vitality of the phrase 'philosophy of praxis' gains its very sensibility from the dialectical mode of thought that underpins it. It is the direct antithesis of abstract thought in that it reconnects intellectual activity with practical activity. In this way, previously considered discrete elements are once again viewed in relation to the totality: it is an *organic*

insight into the place of practical reasoning in democratic struggle that I further wish to argue that the post-Marxist radical democratic project negates⁴¹.

Hegemony must be understood from a dialectical standpoint that marks both the *absence* of practical reasoning as well as its *presence*⁴². Gramsci's work, as I endeavour to explain here, provides us with important insights into the manner in which our present conceptions of 'justice' and 'democracy' are seriously constrained by the psychological/ material normativity of the mindset cultivated by capitalism. Through understanding the inorganic and anti-dialectical nature of this thought, it is possible to reformulate such concepts and to envisage a wider horizon of possibility in terms of our future human capacities for intellectual and social engagement. His work indeed suggests that radical social revisioning must be theorized beyond solutions articulated in the language of radical democracy as 'inclusionary politics' to a much deeper level of criticality: to a level that allows us to interrogate our existing attitudes and judgments in order to determine the true possibilities which our present social arrangements either invite or condemn. Enhancing society's powers of practical reasoning and educational deliberation is crucial to this goal. As I want to emphasize here, hegemony thus authors a new democratic and radicalized practice.

One final word is in order here; an 'afterword', as it were. That I have chosen to organize this study in such a way as to devote only a cursory overview of the post-Marxist position within these pages has been a deliberate preference on my part. Because I believe that the salience of their perspective has in large part arisen due to a pervasive ignorance of the exact nature of Gramsci's thought with regard to his

outlook. It is a *way of seeing*, as Aronowitz (*The Crisis in Historical Materialism*. New York: Praeger, 1981: p.46) has noted similarly. (I will examine the concept of organicity in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6.)

Another article that reinforces the influence of Gentile's influential reading of Marx on Gramsci – and thus the prominence of the concept of praxis – is Michael Smith's, 'Gramsci in the Mirror of Italian Fascism' (*Italian Quarterly*, 31, 119-120, 1990: pp.57-79).

⁴¹ Democracy becomes both the central and sole 'nodal point' around which the new logic of radical democracy is constructed. Traditional concepts – such as justice and morality – that had acted previously as points of struggle within a society are thereby subsumed under democracy's embrace within post-Marxist theory. See my discussion in Chapter 6.

⁴² Ollman (*op. cit.*, 1993) explains dialectical thinking in the following way:

Dialectics restructures our thinking about reality by replacing the common sense notion of 'thing', as something that *has* a history and *has* external connections with other things, with notions of 'process', which *contains* its history and possible futures, and "relation", which *contains* as part of what it is its ties with other relations. Nothing that didn't already exist has been added here. Rather, it is a matter of where and how one draws boundaries and establishes units (the dialectical term is 'abstracts') in which to think about the world. The assumption is that while the qualities we perceive with our five sense actually exist as parts of nature, the conceptual distinctions that tell us where one thing ends and the next one begins both in space and across time are social and mental constructs. (1993: p.11. Emphasis in original.)

advancement of a *socialist* theory of democracy, it is for this same reason that my study has been written unapologetically to capture Gramsci's own uniquely *socialist* tendencies⁴³. Whilst all too often in the literature we see frequent (and often token) references to the potency of Gramsci's ideas as an essential starting point for examining the most complex ways in which consent is shaped in late capitalist society, sadly, what we also tend to witness is an all-too-common absence of engagement with these ideas at the deeper level of philosophy⁴⁴. In this regard, I have chosen to provide only a cursory overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the post-Marxist project, focusing instead on the more urgent task to highlight the historical materialist outlook which underpins his overall thesis of neo-humanist reform⁴⁵.

2. Mapping a Critical Structure of Study

The task that now remains is to map the critical structure around which this study is organized. My intention in Chapter 1 is necessarily modest, given that I attempt to sketch the manner in which Gramsci's key concepts were being progressively enlisted towards the goal of democratizing socialism in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning by highlighting the way in which the likes of self-confessed liberal socialist Norberto Bobbio⁴⁶ was prompting a socialism that advanced the tenets of liberal democracy as its central core, the work of Colin Mercer is also profiled here in order to

⁴³ Ernesto Laclau's more recent comments on Gramsci's work – in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000) – appear to attest to his lack of direct engagement with Gramsci's own work. As Laclau notes in the first chapter of this book, 'Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics' (pp.44-89), much of his interpretation of Gramsci's ideas are based on Norberto Bobbio's 1979 chapter 'Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society' (in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979a: pp.21-47). Of additional concern is the fact that Laclau makes no mention of the very strong level of opposition that accompanied the publication of Bobbio's views. (In the same edition, for instance, there appeared an article by Jacques Textier – 'Gramsci, Theoretician of the Superstructures: On the Concept of Civil Society' (Chapter 2 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979a: pp.48-79) – which represented ideas that directly challenged Bobbio's interpretation of Gramsci's so-called 'inversion' of the base/superstructure arrangement.) I discuss the role of Bobbio's work in relation to the movement away from a Marxist analysis of society and towards a 'Third Way' type of politics in Chapter 1.

⁴⁴ I have noted some of these reasons in Chapter 1. For an excellent paper written about the problems blighting the field, see Joseph A. Buttigieg, 'Philology and Politics: Returning to the Text of Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks' (*Boundary 2*, 22, 2, 1994: pp.98-138).

⁴⁵ I first came across the work of Gramsci in 1984. At that time, Gramsci's writings had provoked the claim by one educator, Harold Entwistle, that Gramsci endorsed a programme of conservative schooling (Entwistle, *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979). My master's thesis was written primarily as a critique against Entwistle's stance (Debbie McLean, *Reading Gramsci's Writings on Education*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Auckland, New Zealand, 1985).

⁴⁶ Norberto Bobbio (1909-2004) has been a long-time Italian philosopher and advocate of a synthesis between liberalism and socialism. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the dissatisfaction felt by Bobbio and other left-wing scholars towards what they perceived to be an absent democratic base in socialist theory inspired them to utilize Gramsci's ideas to supplement Marxist theory in pursuit of a more 'liberal' brand of socialism.

illustrate his further application of Gramsci's ideas to a more politically acceptable 'Third Way'⁴⁷.

The intrusion of politics into everyday life – implied inherently within Gramsci's 'expansionist' thesis – suggested to Mercer that capitalism was deeply rooted within the realm of the superstructures to such an extent that it was even inscribed upon the identity and being of subjects themselves. In this respect, 'hegemony' acted as an index in the determination of democratic functioning Mercer maintained, intimating further that democratic struggle had to move beyond centrist depictions of the state, power and ideology to embrace a broader concept of anti-passive struggle. It particularly had to target the many and varied material practises that were perpetuated by a capitalist ethos, and in his view, were therefore complicit with both anti-democratic organization and behaviour.

Whilst acknowledging the ready application of Gramsci's ideas to democratic theorizing, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe posit an entirely new political model, as is outlined briefly in this chapter as well. It is one involving a pronounced movement away from either a straightforwardly Marxist or liberal 'aggregative' concept of society⁴⁸. In simple terms, rejecting what they perceive to be the unpalatable universalism and essentialism of a movement premised on the creation of a more harmonious social order, the thesis that they prefer to privilege is no longer anchored in a modernist view of self or society. Rather, they defend an 'agonistic' view of society in relation to democracy. As will be explained here, agonism is a concept which they argue is protective of difference but distinct from antagonism. As Laclau and Mouffe contend within their work, agonistic relations are actually the bedrock of genuine democracy insofar as this form of relationship is no longer viewed as compromising the pluralistic aspirations of democracy, but is instead receptive to the difference and heterogeneity which they perceive as definitive of the very concept itself. With the essence of democratic society thus fashioned on the need to avoid creating an artificially united society, hegemony becomes the concept that functions to 'fuse' society together. It defines the 'suturing' of groups into a loose 'democratic' confederation, changing its meaning significantly with respect to Gramsci's original

⁴⁷ Colin Mercer, 'Revolutions, Reforms or Reformulations? Marxist Discourse on Democracy' (In Alan Hunt (Ed.), *Marxism and Democracy*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980: pp. 101-137).

⁴⁸ Mouffe describes this aggregative concept of society as one premised on a democratic model which is based on a positive valuation of rational deliberation in the search for a consensus between participants. She views this model as one that ignores the 'ineradicability of antagonism' and the 'impossibility of a final resolution of conflicts' (see Mouffe, *op. cit.*, 2000).

concept.

The remainder of my thesis is therefore devoted to the task of critiquing the very 'violence of abstraction' that the post-Marxists have performed upon the Gramscian *leitmotiv* itself. Essentially then, this study is a re-examination of Gramsci's concept of hegemony as set against his original political project. Inasmuch as it is also a defence of Gramsci's concept against the extrusion of its meaning from its original Marxist base, it is at the same time a defence of a totally different form of democracy than that favoured by revisionists such as Laclau, Mouffe and others sympathetic to their stance⁴⁹. By re-conceptualising hegemony as the problem of intellectual and moral submission, and therefore primarily a problem of the pathology of capitalism upon practical reason and the educative-formative process that it inherently implies, what I also intend to demonstrate is the very inadequacy of Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical assumptions to the stated goals of their own democratic project – given their neglect of both the economic and the extra-economic aspect of capitalism's reach.

The merits of Gramsci's political writing speak for themselves. As my own study intends to demonstrate, we have in Gramsci not only a rich and robust analysis of the form and parameters of the operation of 'ideology' and 'power' within society today – as expressed particularly in language – but also gain invaluable insight into the manner in which the common sense meanings of concepts such as 'culture' and 'education' reflect the dominant intellectual and moral norms as a feature of their meaning. With respect to the objective of strategizing more effectively the elimination of what Laclau and Mouffe would call the 'worst excesses of democratic exclusion', I intend to show within these pages that we are provided with a much more effective analytical framework within Gramsci's original project itself. Insofar as a dialectical rendering of hegemony allows the previously hidden to be brought into view, it is a far more effective concept for disclosing the broadest parameters of power against democratic practise than the horizontal perspective offered by the fashionable rhetoric of post-Marxist radicalism.

With this objective in mind, the original problem that Gramsci was addressing will be expedited in the remainder of this thesis. I discuss the problems associated with this task in the closing pages of Chapter 1 before presenting my own comprehensive and systematic examination of Gramsci's pre-prison writings in the following three

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I touch briefly on the work of Sue Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992) – a theorist who has also suggested that Gramsci's work heralds a new post-liberal, post-socialist democracy.

chapters. Although my original intention had been to devote the same amount of space to surveying Gramsci's cultural and militant writings as his prison archive, what soon became apparent, upon undertaking this research, was the important foundational nature of these earlier commentaries. As the following account will demonstrate, the genealogy of Gramsci's mature concept of hegemony is highly evident throughout these scattered earlier writings⁵⁰, so much so in fact that I did not feel that a comprehensive chronology of the *Notebook* content was needed in order to illustrate the degree of continuity existing between both bodies of work. Common to each period is Gramsci's unwavering commitment to historical materialism. His commitment to inaugurate a culture of practical reasoning – in order to combat the subaltern patterns of thought and activity that he saw to be so much a feature of everyday practice – is the central thread traversing his writing.

As I intend to show within this early archive of political and cultural writings, Gramsci's 'problem' always remained that of bringing history into the service of *all* humanity: essentially, *of socializing it*. In this respect, the greatest crime of capitalism was that the progressive unfolding of history – this social(ist) advancement, as it were – had been deliberately and flagrantly curtailed. Beneath the sober face of civility, the partisan machinations of a privileged sector of society had inhibited an alternative unfolding of history in a manner that Gramsci argued ultimately 'constrained' history itself. That is, inscribed upon the face of history was a dehumanizing and anti-socialist script. It is therefore Gramsci's conscious awareness of the 'effects' of the work of these 'unchecked hands', as he so poetically put it⁵¹, that helped him to configure his associated response; to uncover the lie that capitalism stood in the service of *all* humankind in order to begin to author an alternative history which would truly have a

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There is no single comprehensive volume containing these earlier writings available to the Anglophone researcher. Five separate works were surveyed in this study, some of which contained duplicate versions of Gramsci's notes. These sources were, in chronological order: Antonio Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (Pedro Cavalcanti & Paul Piccone, Eds. & Pierluigi Molajoni, Mary Ann Aiello-Peabody, Paul Piccone, & John Thiem, Trans., Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1975); Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From The Cultural Writings* (David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds. & William Boelhower, Trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920): With additional texts by Bordiga and Tasca* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & John Mathews, Trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990a. Original work published 1977); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1921-1926): With additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & Trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990b. Original work published 1978); and Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* (Richard Bellamy, Ed. & Virginia Cox, Trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994a). See the Appendix for a detailed chronological listing of each article examined in this study.

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'Indifference', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) 26 August 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.17).

universal focus⁵². As will be revealed in Chapter 2 especially, unmasking the role of human agency in both ordaining and reinforcing authoritarian and bureaucratic relationships became Gramsci's long-standing objective. Significantly, exposing the culture-bound (philosophical-political) nature of the concepts that we hold – concepts that have been engineered historically by various social agents (political and religious leaders and intellectuals of all kinds) – constituted his unique response.

Effectively then, at the very heart of Gramsci's 'integral' manner of conceiving politics lay his exertions to make bourgeois politics 'honest'; that is, respectful of human need. What will become increasingly evident in the course of these chapters is that a *socialist* philosophy to create a *socialist* history meant none other than a *socialist* solution. Put simply, the reappropriation of culture (interpreted as the whole of humankind taking ownership of its own history) demanded both an intellectual and, rather more formidably for any truly 'authentic' change, a *moral* reform. Understood as the liberation of thought and action that likewise heralded new patterns of human association and a parallel increase in the depth of these connections, neither the application of physical force alone nor the justification of paternalistic conduct in the name of this cause would therefore suffice⁵³. Bourgeois philosophy and methodology had to be abandoned in the interests of *genuine socialist solutions*. Self-education, all the more crucially, was to be concomitantly the substance as well as the sum of this qualitative social advance.

A survey of some Gramsci's earliest articles in Chapter 2 establishes very clearly that the challenge that a pervasive anti-dialectic and inorganic perspective posed to the regeneration of a socialist outlook was the most significant problem that he saw needed to be addressed. In this respect, self-education was Gramsci's nominated response. Through his own attempts to historicize the present, he was importantly mirroring Marx's method to gain the necessary 'objective' insights about the past which would enable the proletariat to author for itself an entirely new future. This was particularly vital given the overwhelming dominance of various forms of

⁵² Gramsci was not advocating an abstract concept of universalism, as we will read. Rather, he sought a concrete advance in both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of human life. This involved the materialization of the socialist aspiration to maximize the fullest possible development of humanity's own powers to satisfy its evolving global needs.

⁵³ As I argue within these pages, bourgeois hegemony is pathological in relation to the thought and practice of humankind. As Gramsci's work so clearly demonstrates, the dominance of capitalism on custom and culture is ultimately injurious to mankind's universal potential to fulfil its own needs. Loosening this grip necessitates encouraging independence in thought and practice and not, as several commentators have assumed, applying paternalistic solutions in a naïve attempt to remedy this problem.

superstition within the culture (positivism and religious thought, especially) that ultimately resulted in humanity’s own self-estrangement. With the principles of capitalism so tightly engineered into the culture, and consolidated into everyday practice through the medium of language itself, we witness the beginnings of Gramsci’s attempts to articulate this practice and to respond to it simultaneously. This involved critiquing any outlook that proclaimed the neutrality of economic practices in relation to issues of ethical and moral concern⁵⁴.

Gramsci’s rearticulation of concepts such as ‘culture’ and ‘philosophy’ provides early evidence of his practice of the dialectical rejuvenation of culture (its absolute humanization) through the historicization and politicization of everyday language and belief⁵⁵. As I argue in Chapter 3, he begins to extend this practice still further, continuing to articulate organic concepts that epitomized what he began to refer to as the philosophy and practice of the ‘common good’. In stark contrast to the prevailing assumptions of his day, whereupon ‘freedom’ was a concept commensurate only with the pursuit of one’s own bloated self-interest, Gramsci’s rearticulated concept represented an entirely new and progressive conception of freedom. Freedom becomes ‘class gratification’ for Gramsci, but the gratification importantly of the *proletarian* class. To Gramsci’s mind, only when the interests of the most marginalized sector of society begin to be recognized and accommodated within the realm of bourgeois justice – that is, when humanity at last endorses the liberties of *all* – can we actually begin to speak of ‘civilization’ with any real degree of authenticity⁵⁶.

We see that it was Gramsci’s conviction that the basis for the new order had to be derived from a reinvigorated concept of the citizen and the duties that citizenship entailed which most dominated his writing during this period. Essentially, as we shall learn in this chapter, it was the problem of how to breathe new life into the existing portrait of citizenship that was to preoccupy him right up to, and after, the eve of the

⁵⁴ Inevitably, Gramsci was laying the foundation for his subsequent critique of Benedetto Croce’s position. In Croce’s book, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx*, he insisted on the autonomy of economic concerns in relation to moral actions (C.M. Meredith, Trans., with an introduction by A.D. Lindsay, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966. Original work published 1914). In other words, Croce was unable to conceptualize the extra-economic effects of capital upon human relationships, and therefore unable to name the oppression emanating from this rationality as unjust. I discuss this problem further in Chapter 6.

⁵⁵ As we will see in the following pages, Gramsci credits Marxism with being an ‘original’ philosophy because of the dialectical and organic mode of thought which underpinned it. As we will read in this study, it is the direct antithesis of abstract thought in that it makes intellectual activity constantly accountable to concrete reality. In this respect, it is onto-formative, shaping mankind’s very ‘being’ by the rigour that it demands through the cognitive process.

⁵⁶ For Marx, this civilizing mission is not to be understood in teleological terms. Rather, maximizing the growth of human powers to fulfill humanity’s ever-evolving needs is a measure of the ‘success’ of this ambition.

Russian Revolution (October 1917). Serving to intensify his previous beliefs regarding the value of intensive educational activity, the October Revolution also provided him with a concrete model of a new state – that of the Russian Soviets. As we will read here, the concept of the Soviet championed those same active and participatory principles inherent within Gramsci's own concept of citizenship. As such, it mirrored his own re-envisioned view of freedom and a socialized concept of the 'people-state' additionally. In Chapters 5 and 6, I explain how Gramsci's equivalent models of state – the Factory Councils and the party – were founded upon the principles of reciprocal education and reciprocal control. With each model based on his historical materialist outlook, the people themselves became the 'active and operative expression' of 'the state'; their greater capacity for practical reasoning being correlated inversely with their greater release from fetishized and inorganic modes of thought.

As will be seen in Chapter 4, the Factory Councils therefore epitomized no less than *the form and the content* of the broader, re-inaugurated 'socialist' (democratized) relationships that Gramsci hoped to instigate within society more generally. As Gramsci endeavoured to explain at the time, in order to avoid the 'purely formal correction of a democratic state'⁵⁷, socialized cultural activity and humanized production stood as the fundamental precondition for broadening the existing (minimal) bourgeois principles of justice and reason. Relationships of solidarity, reciprocity and collective association, as we see here during this period being applied to the terrain of production (both the industrial terrain of production as well as the cultural), therefore represented not only the antithesis of bourgeois industrial power but also the very antithesis of its political, cultural and ethical power as well. The Factory Councils – essentially Gramsci's model of the proletarian state⁵⁸ – should therefore be seen as symbolizing the practical form of the theoretical antithesis of (inferior) bourgeois leadership and governance.

One of the other key merits of this study is that it is arguably one of the first in which material from the selective prison notebook translations of Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith has been supplemented with material informed by the recent translations of two of the volumes of Joseph Buttigieg's proposed five-volume set⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ This sentiment was expressed in 'The Conquest of the State', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 July 1919 (*SPW* 1, pp.73-78; *PPW*, pp.108-114).

⁵⁸ The councils were to be known as Worker and Peasant Councils. They were named as such to express the unity of the productive communities destined to replace the private profiteers.

⁵⁹ In this regard, Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith's edited work, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971) is supplemented by Joseph Buttigieg's edited, double-volume translations: *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks: Volume I* (Joseph A. Buttigieg & Antonio Callari, Trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and,

The discussion within Chapters 5 and 6 is therefore based upon my research of this combined archive. And in this respect, as I have already intimated above, given that the theoretical foundations of these later notes so clearly have their origins in Gramsci's previous work, my concentration here is again to stress the intimacy of this connection; to profile a sample of the elements that serve to inform Gramsci's discussions in order to reiterate his unwavering commitment to a Marxism that focuses on inaugurating substantive cognitive and moral reform.

This problem of how to engender cognitive and moral defiance among the proletariat was a problem overcome through the historicization of thought and its dialectical scrutiny, as I discuss in Chapter 5. By juxtaposing various normative conceptions of the world against actual historical trends and tendencies, thereby gauging how such conceptions coincided or differed, Gramsci was effectively teaching the proletariat a new type of 'literacy': a dialectical and organic mode of thought, otherwise known as 'praxis' or practical reasoning. This was a methodology for the subversion of the existing pattern of thinking; a pattern that Gramsci saw was made up of a sedimentation of ideas ranging from the speculative to the dogmatic. Essentially a methodology to steer one's thought beyond the abstract, it was a strategy to activate passive minds through prompting the posing of questions and the intelligent refusal of inadequate perceptions and explanations of social order. Perhaps more importantly, it was a methodology that accentuated the *class nature of society* – one in which the social was consequently *politicized*.

I summarize Gramsci's theory of democracy in Chapter 6. Having argued in Chapter 5 that Gramsci eschewed the temptation to foreclose the human drama that he observed with thick theories of causation or other such abstract, reductionistic interpretations, I consolidate this feature of his work with reference to the measures he thought necessary to render society truly 'democratic'. By focusing on Gramsci's critique of Nikolai Bukharin's 'popular' interpretation of the philosophy of praxis⁶⁰, I highlight important detail about the nature of the 'organic' connection that Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks: Volume II (Joseph A. Buttigieg, Ed. & Trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Three further volumes are also planned for publication.

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The phrase 'philosophy of praxis' has generally been translated as a synonym for 'historical materialism' or 'Marxism'. As Haug (*op. cit.*, 2000: pp.1-19) has suggested however, there is by no means unanimous agreement on this point. Some commentators have argued that the difference in nomenclature signalled 'Gramsci's actual departure from Marxism' (*ibid.*, p.5). For my own part, whilst I certainly agree that the phrase signalled Gramsci's wholesale adherence to Marx's historical materialist outlook, I nonetheless acknowledge that this was an unusual interpretation of Marxism at the time, given that the majority of so-called 'Marxists' tended to view Marxism in a predominantly economic or scientific light.

deployed to concretize the new relations inaugurating a socialist ‘state’. Significantly, it was Bukharin’s lack of understanding of the full implications of a dialectical-historical-humanist approach to history which saw him countenance a de facto elitist posture towards party relationships, adopting the bearing of a traditional intellectual as an unavoidable outcome. By contrast, the appeal of Niccolo Machiavelli lay precisely in the way in which *The Prince*⁶¹ represented the embodiment of a truly counter-cultural movement based on a comprehensive, concrete understanding of the manipulative aspects of the existing culture. As a fuller exegesis of Gramsci’s commentaries reveal, his rejection of Bukharin’s ideas in preference to those of Machiavelli serves to clarify the organic and dialectical (neo-humanistic) worldview he was promoting.

Insofar as liberalism’s ‘ill-liberalism’ was firmly rooted in both institutional and non-institutional processes and practices, as this discussion moreover suggests, the new hegemony was the philosophical and practical negation of the epistemology and ontology of the existing order. Socialism had to exemplify a philosophy of defiance, and this defiance had to extend beyond the abstract to reach into the concrete lived relationships of real human beings. As I argue here, it had to take a form that was a negation of subaltern thought and practice. In this respect, the philosophy of praxis stood for the negation of the pathological features of a liberal democracy and the construction of a new democratic ethos – one based on overarching principles within Marxism itself: a conscious ‘remembering’ of the potential of its own nature. Put simply, a counter-subaltern position was one that was expressed *in and through* a dynamic fusion of theory and practice. An anti-positivist, anti-idealist philosophy similarly, it was one that reiterated the power of conscious thought in relation to the restoration of a vibrant and new human dynamic.

Returning to the concerns which initiated this study by way of conclusion – how Gramsci’s concept of hegemony has been redeployed in the service of post-Marxism to institute a new and radical concept of democracy – I devote the final pages of this thesis to a reassessment of Laclau and Mouffe’s claims. Challenging their contention that they have, in fact, succeeded in theorizing a post-liberal, post-Marxist democracy, discussion in these final pages centres on a critical reassessment of their rejection of the philosophy of praxis and a privileging instead of a post-humanist, discursive theory

⁶¹ Gramsci took his title for the new party from the title of Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince* which was written in 1513. I discuss what this new concept of party entailed in Chapter 5 and examine the broader influence of Machiavelli’s thought upon Gramsci’s ideas in Chapter 6.

of identity. Repeating concerns noted previously, I discuss further the effects of what is essentially a postmodernist inability to distinguish difference in relation to the continuing dictatorial practices of the economic and extra-economic which constrain both our image of self and our notion of the social simultaneously. Consolidating the need to redeploy Gramsci’s original concept of hegemony to our democratic theorizing, my contention here is that unless serious notice is taken of the educative-formative problem that hegemony implies, the domination of subjectivity in relation to these forces cannot help but circumscribe any broader democratic intent.

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-----CHAPTER 1-----

LOCATING HEGEMONY AGAINST THE TIDE OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL STRUGGLE

[Within our project] 'humanity' is no longer seen as a ground but as a perspective. As universality is no longer the privilege of an 'unlimited' social actor – like the working class in Marxism – it can only be pragmatically constructed through the 'equivalential' effects of struggles carried out by actors that are always limited. In this sense, socialist demands simply take their place alongside other democratic demands, and the possibility of a democratic socialism is based on this articulation.

(Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times*, 1990: p.229¹)

1. Introduction: How to Theorize Socialist Democracy Anew

As intimated in the introduction to this study, the growing disillusionment felt by a minority of intellectuals towards Marxist/ socialist theory as the ideal platform for a reconceived global politics has been accompanied by intense and protracted debates regarding the nature and value of a post-Marxist 'radical democracy' as a viable and effective substitute². Not unsurprisingly however, a great deal of confusion has surrounded the precise nature of this 'democracy'. Within the ensuing debate, attention has been focused not only upon the exact nature of the objections being waged against Marxism, but also upon whether post-Marxism actually represents a feasible challenge to the traditional forms of oppression to warrant its claims to radicalism and socialism correspondingly³. To many, neither ascription is in fact tenable.

¹ London: Verso, 1990.

² Some of the key writings advancing a post-Marxist revisionist perspective are (in chronological order): Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack, Trans., London: Verso, 1985); Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1990); Sue Golding, *Gramsci's Democratic Theory: Contributions to a Post-Liberal Democracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992a); Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 1998); Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000); and Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

³ Oppositionary voices include the following: Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986); Norman Geras, 'Post-Marxism?' (*New Left Review*, 163, 1987: pp.40-82); Norman Geras, 'Ex-Marxism Without Substance: Being a Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe' (*New Left Review*, 169, 1988: pp.34-61); Nicos Mouzelis, 'Marxism or Post-Marxism?' (*New Left Review*, 167, January/ February 1988: pp.107-123); Donna Landry & Gerald MacLean, 'Rereading Laclau and Mouffe' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 4, 4, Winter 1991, pp.41-60); Norman Geras, 'Democracy and the Ends of Marxism' (*New Left Review*, 203, 1994: pp.92-106); Benjamin Bertram, 'New Reflections on the "Revolutionary" Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe' (*Boundary 2*, 22, 3, 1995: pp.81-110); Robert Miklitsch, 'The Rhetoric of Post-Marxism: Discourse

Certainly, there has been no shortage of critics. With their discontent evident in the sheer number of articles and book chapters devoted to the question, as well as the emotional intensity that pervades much of the protest registered therein, there are countless points of opposition reflected within this anti-post-Marxist literature⁴. Probably the most serious charge to be levelled against the paradigm, however – and one that appears most frequently – stems from the widespread belief that there is a genuine and underlying incompatibility between capitalism per se and a bone fide democracy. Given that it is widely believed that post-Marxists concentrate their attention on the latter concern with only minimal acknowledgment of the former, the general consensus among these critics is that this so-called ‘new’ brand of radicalism represents nothing less than a reformist stance involving merely a refinement of existing forms of democratic functioning *within capitalism*. In short, a widespread feeling of condemnation exists across the board against the very feasibility of a post-socialist, post-liberal radical democratic project; in effect, a vote additionally against the theoretical and practical possibility of a liberal democratic/ Marxist reconciliation.

To many antagonistic towards this venture, post-Marxism represents a movement that has arisen out of, yet has been unable to surpass, what has become known in more recent times as the ‘new social movement’ tradition⁵. With the dominant

and Institutionalism in Laclau and Mouffe’ (*Social Text* 45, 14, 4, 1995: pp.167-196); Gregor McLennan, ‘Post-Marxism and the “Four Sins” of Modernist Theorizing’ (*New Left Review*, 218, July/August 1996: pp.53-74); Daniel T. McGee, ‘Post-Marxism: The Opiate of the Intellectuals’ (*Modern Language Quarterly*, 58, 2, 1997: pp.201-225); David Bernans, ‘Historical Materialism and Ordinary Language: Grammatical Peculiarities of the Class Struggle “Language Game”’ (*Rethinking Marxism*, 11, 2, 1999: pp.18-37); Atilio A. Boron, ‘Embattled Legacy: “Post-Marxism” and the Social and Political Theory of Karl Marx’ (*Latin American Perspectives*, 27, 4, July 2000: pp.49-79); and Henry Veltmeyer, ‘Post-Marxist Project: An Assessment and Critique of Ernesto Laclau’ (*Sociological Inquiry*, 70, 4, Fall 2000: pp.499-519).

⁴ To take the ideas of just two of these commentators – Landry & MacLean (*op. cit.*, 1991) – some of their criticisms include the following: that the global textuality of late multi-national capitalism is completely ignored in favour of a predictably easy critique of Second International politics; that Laclau and Mouffe’s attempts to deconstruct the logocentrism of Western philosophy fails insofar as they introduce a new fictional notion of ‘betterment’ in the guise of a post-1790 historiography; that their talk of a generalized antagonism and a totalizing model of ‘the social’ ends up looking remarkably like support for class antagonism and the traditional sociological model of society that they set out to displace; and lastly, that their move to considerably enlarge the field of objectivity by focusing on the materiality of ‘discourse’ – rather than on ‘ideology’ – exposes the constitution of the social ground of politics to be an assembly of horizontally shifting horizons determined by language, but leaves unexamined the presence of ‘value’ that has been imbued upon this ground.

⁵ There are many works devoted to examining these new social movements. See for example, Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stanford M. Lyman (Ed.), *Social Movements: Critiques, Concepts, Case-Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); Louis Maheu (Ed.), *Social Movements and Social Classes: The Future of Collective Action* (London: Sage, 1995); Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, & Mayer M. Zald (Eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Of the more recent works to examine this phenomenon critically in relation to Gramsci’s ideas, see especially John D. Holst, *Social Movements, Civil Society and Radical Adult Education* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey,

focus of this tradition being seen as largely devoted to ‘the amplification of civil liberties’⁶ rather than any broader-based and concerted struggle against the inequity of capitalism itself, it is a campaign which has been successively labelled as nothing but a weak attempt by a few intellectuals disaffected by the traditional political paradigms to apply a civil rights’ agenda to the economic domain. Proponents argue, for their part, that because post-Marxists effectively seek to achieve the same objectives as those supporting this movement – namely, to protect the civil rights of a heterogeneous grouping of individuals – then the same criticisms can be applied to post-Marxism that have been directed previously to these new social movement adherents. In this respect, post-Marxism has not been regarded as representing anything significantly ‘new’ at all. Even as far back as 1986, in their seminal work, *Democracy and Capitalism*, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis characterized the tenor of this type of project as typifying a vague and futile hope that the expansion of personal rights would somehow automatically ‘render the exercise of both property rights and state power democratically accountable’⁷.

Advocates of post-Marxism, however, have been quick to distance themselves from the new social movement tradition⁸, emphasizing that their own ‘radicalized’ view of democracy is far from comparable to the general ‘modernist’ interpretation which is projected within that and other such traditions. Perceiving the source of this difference to lie in the manner in which their own philosophical perspective is underwritten by a discursive, anti-representational view of both the self and the social, they see that whilst their own objective is very much concerned with a revival of the core principles behind the Enlightenment project, at the same time it is also connected with the liberation of these principles from their traditional philosophical homeland. Put simply, unlike the new social movement advocates, their project is premised on a rejection of what they regard as the ‘petrifying’ epistemological premises that accompanied these principles. Indeed, it is precisely this feature which distinguishes their own position from that of the new social movement tradition: namely, that they abandon any reference to an essentialist subject interacting consensually with other unitary beings to form a

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⁶ Barry D. Adam, ‘Post-Marxism and New Social Movements’ (*Canadian Review of Sociology & Anthropology*, 30, 3, 1993: pp.316-336).

⁷ Bowles & Gintis, *Democracy and Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1986: p.177), cited in Adam (*op. cit.*, 1993: p.317).

⁸ Laclau and Mouffe have registered their protest against their project being seen as identical to that of the ‘new social movement’ theorists for the reasons I outline here (Laclau & Mouffe, *op. cit.*, 1985: p.159).

relatively homogeneous society⁹. What replaces this vision is one which could even be termed a 'counter-social' thesis. Identifying common and more general interests to be intrinsically repressive, the image of 'the social' that they instead promote is that of a fractured and diversified space where the claims of plural subjects and heterogeneous groups are set against other such subjects and groups in what post-Marxists call 'agonistic democratic struggle'. It is because of this employment of these alternative portraits of the self and the social that they consider their own concept of democracy to be unique¹⁰, privileging particularism rather than universalism and upholding a theory of the subject as a decentred, detotalized agent¹¹.

In a similar manner, post-Marxists have also been quick to refute the more acrid contention by socialist critics that the economy will always necessarily force undue compliance demands upon democracy – no matter how it is to be conceptualized. For their own part, post-Marxists cannot help but view the economic as an unnecessary 'distraction' in the pursuit of a genuinely 'liberal' form of democracy insofar as it places an unwarranted burden on class as the central locus of all forms of social inequality¹². To their way of thinking, such a viewpoint represents both a reductionistic and a

⁹ This is an aspect of Chantal Mouffe's work, in particular, that has been highlighted by Alexandra Tanesini. In her article 'In Search of Community: Mouffe, Wittgenstein and Cavell' (*Radical Philosophy*, 110, November-December 2001: pp.12-19), Tanesini argues that the 'paradox' that Mouffe stresses as being a natural feature of democracy – that a 'we' always implies a 'them' – need not necessarily represent an unnegotiable divide between self and other. Community building can be more inclusive, and 'we' does not always have to presume exclusion.

¹⁰ Another term given to their position is 'post-liberal-democratic'. Although it is explained that the 'symbolic resources' of the democratic tradition form the basis of the post-Marxist project, as Mouffe has argued consistently, their project nonetheless abandons the conception of a unitary subject as 'citizen' in favour of a non-essentialist self. The political ground for democracy thus becomes a 'discursively constructed ensemble of social relations' as opposed to a 'common ground' upon which the variances of race, class and gender would be moderated constitutionally. See for example, Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy' (In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988a: pp.89-101); Chantal Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?' (In Andrew Ross (Ed.), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988b: pp.31-45); Chantal Mouffe, 'Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community' (Chapter 11 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. London: Verso, 1992c: pp.225-239); Chantal Mouffe, 'Liberal Socialism and Pluralism: Which Citizenship?' (In Judith Squires (Ed.), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993: pp.69-84); Chantal Mouffe, 'Politics, Democratic Action and Solidarity' (*Inquiry*, 38, 1-2, 1995a: pp.99-108); Chantal Mouffe, 'Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics' (Chapter 11 in Linda Nicholson & Steve Seidman (Eds.), *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995b: pp.315-331); Chantal Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?' (Chapter 2 in David Trend (Ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*. New York: Routledge, 1996: pp.19-26); and Chantal Mouffe, 'Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos' (*Philosophy Today* [Celina], 41, 1, Spring 1997: pp.24-29).

¹¹ Although both Laclau and Mouffe want to abandon any reference to 'human rights', they are adamant that this move will not open the floodgates to greater human rights' abuse. They argue that the theory we privilege to prevent abuse assumes a homogeneous essentialist view of human nature that discourages diversity among subject positions. See especially Mouffe's final chapter, 'Conclusion: The Ethics of Democracy' (*op. cit.*, 2000: pp.129-140).

¹² Mouffe has been consistent with this argument. See, for instance, Mouffe, *op. cit.* (1992b: pp.2-3).

teleological logic, directing democratic activity ironically towards the construction of an enforced, homogeneous collectivity. Strenuously opposing the utopian imagery that likewise accompanies this logic, they argue by contrast that a greater emphasis on a variety of forms of struggle initiated by marginalized groups within society to retain their own identities will inevitably result in simultaneous challenges to capitalism. It is because of the combined pressure that can be exerted upon the economic realm via these localized struggles for greater access to democracy – and the various forms of protection that democratic processes and practices advance – that the progressive alleviation of economic disparities will subsequently result, they contend¹³.

As I have noted already in the introduction to this study, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is made to play a vital role in support of the post-Marxist thesis. In fact, it was my intense intrigue with the manner in which the Gramscian concept was being advertised as fundamental to the theoretical dismissal of the historical aspirations of socialism that initially motivated this study¹⁴. Despite the fact that many writers have presented highly competent critiques of the major premises of post-Marxist politics, as I have suggested already, virtually none of these critical commentaries have focused specifically on the manner in which the two most influential proponents of post-Marxism, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, have revisioned Gramsci's concept of hegemony¹⁵. Within those works surveyed, the revisioning of the concept has been noted at best as a subsidiary concern in a broader defense of Marxism itself. A closer examination of the manner in which hegemony has been employed to sustain the claims of post-Marxism is therefore the focus of this present chapter. Beginning with an examination of some of the writings that might be said to have heralded a movement towards poststructuralist thought, I then consider the key arguments advanced by Laclau and Mouffe to justify their own deployment of the concept.

My intent within this chapter is necessarily modest and limited. It is to trace the evolution of the application of hegemony within poststructuralist theorizing in order to underscore what I hold to be the key omissions – and therefore the source of the main

¹³ As Paul Bowman notes ('Laclau, Mouffe and Post-Marxism'. Bath Spa University College, Cultural Studies Web Site, 2002: p.10), in post-Marxism, 'democracy promises to be the best means of assuring that any injustice, exploitation, and oppression can be countered, and that *all* power be accountable, precisely because democratic principles contain within themselves the basis for their own critique and contestation' (*ibid.*).

¹⁴ Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.3, p.192).

¹⁵ Robert Bocock is one exception. He devotes a major section of his fifth and final chapter, 'Hegemony and Recent Social Theory', to a description of how Laclau and Mouffe try to revision Gramsci's concept (Robert Bocock, *Hegemony*. Chichester, West Sussex: Ellis Horwood, 1986: especially Chapter 5, pp.103-119).

disability – that I see present within their perspective. As I argue below, it is only when one returns to the Gramscian archive itself that the palpable effects of such omissions upon possible future left-wing strategizing become glaringly obvious. Accordingly, this is precisely what I am proposing to do in this study – to return to Gramsci's writings themselves in an endeavour to re-examine the concept of hegemony so as to re-establish the centrality of a broad-based theory of education that lies behind his more general discussion about the need for neo-humanist reform through the adoption of an historicist (organic and dialectical) outlook. This ambition, of and by itself, necessarily presents its own unique challenges to researchers, as outlined in the final section of this chapter.

2. Beyond Revolution and Reform

It was principally during the 1970s and 1980s that the arguments for a reappraisal of traditional Marxist/ socialist 'solutions' began to be articulated more vocally within a range of venues taking a variety of forms¹⁶. As has been indicated already in this study, the strains of democracy that were sorely evident within existing communist states had become a major source of concern to those on the left who had been witnessing the demise of popularity in socialist theory as an associated outcome. With many perceiving the glaring lacunae within the Marxist tradition of the actual nature and constitution of the new socialist society as a significant weakness in socialist theorizing – a weakness with respect to what 'cultural unification' would actually look like – Gramsci's ideas were duly acknowledged as presenting a vital point of departure away from the fiction of the old and towards the demands of what have been termed the 'new historical realities' of our age. As this thesis itself will show, it was Gramsci's open, pragmatic insights that led many to praise his theory, if not to acknowledge his staunch and enduring Marxist commitment¹⁷.

¹⁶ Many commentators confirm that the events of May 1968 helped to spark the movement towards rethinking the principles behind structural Marxist theory. The steady embrace of post-Althusserian, Lacanian, Lyotardian, Derridean and Foucauldian ideas within cultural and political theory, which both preceded and followed these events, certainly destabilized traditional leftist thinking. Often cited as being of particular importance in the development within Marxism of a democratic strategy has been the work of Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband. See especially Nicos Poulantzas' works: *Political Power and Social Classes* (Timothy O'Hagan, Trans., London: New Left Books, 1975a); *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (David Fernbach, Trans., London: New Left Books, 1975b); and *State, Power, Socialism* (Patrick Camiller, Trans., London: Verso, 1980). Of Ralph Miliband's work, see especially, *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and *Class Power and State Power* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁷ As Joseph Buttigieg observed in his review of both Sue Golding and Renate Holub's 1992 texts (*Science & Society*, 58, 3, 1994: pp.347-351), there was 'a certain discomfort on the part of the authors with the fact that Gramsci was a Marxist; a certain anxiety (not always explicit) to show that

In this context, the work of a number of writers during this period reflected this tendency¹⁸. Norberto Bobbio, in particular, was arguably the most vocal and outspoken, lobbying in favour of a broad-based socialist review of democracy's placement within leftist theorizing. An Italian philosopher and long-time political agitator¹⁹, Bobbio had for many years been asserting the need for the development of theory that addressed 'the task of constructing a feasible form of socialism'²⁰. Professing his goal to be the realization of a synthesis between liberalism and socialism, Bobbio's disenchantment with the socialist tradition lay specifically with the weak and 'orthodox' forms of Marxism that presented a mechanical and economistic view of the process of a socialist transition. Based as they were wholly on an antithesis of the old, no attempt to conceptualize a 'living' or 'real' society or the day-to-day reality that might characterize this newly founded community had been forthcoming. To Bobbio, socialist theory had to constitute more than mere 'scholastic repetition and [an] exegesis of the classical works of the founding fathers'²¹. It had to provide a solid, empirical grounding to assist the formation of a viable form of Marxist politics.

What Bobbio therefore found attractive about Gramsci's work was his rejection of an instant 'historically ordained' process of a triumphant socialist transformation based on the revolutionary conquest and overthrow of a domineering capitalist state. And despite the fact that Bobbio considered Gramsci's work still fell short of providing

the best elements of Gramsci's thought are those that can be collocated within the ambit of currently fashionable "post-" discourses: post-structuralism, post-Marxism, postmodernism' (pp.350-351).

¹⁸ See for instance, in chronological order: Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979a); Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (David Fernbach, Trans., London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980); Thomas Nemeth, *Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980); Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Anne Showstack Sassoon (Ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci* (London: Writers & Readers, 1982); and John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge: Coercion and Consent in Marxist Political Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).

¹⁹ For perhaps the best historical overview of Bobbio's life and intellectual legacy, see Perry Anderson's 'The Affinities of Norberto Bobbio' (*New Left Review*, 170, July-August 1988: pp.3-36).

²⁰ Norberto Bobbio, *Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy* (Roger Griffin, Trans., Cambridge: Polity, 1987a: p.9. Original work published 1976). As I suggest here, and Mouffe herself has noted in her paper, 'Liberal Socialism and Pluralism: Which Citizenship?' (In Judith Squires (Ed.), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993: pp.69-84), the work of Norberto Bobbio had been crucial in keeping alive the debate within Marxist circles regarding the nature of democracy in relation to socialist theory. See Norberto Bobbio, 'The Future of Democracy' (*Telos*, 61, Fall 1984: pp.3-16); Bobbio (*op. cit.*, 1976/1987a); and Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy: A Defence of the Rules of the Game* (Roger Griffin, Trans., London: Polity Press. Original work published 1984). A further survey of the literature of this period also confirms this interest in theorizing democracy within socialism. See for instance, John Keane, *Public Life and Late Capitalism: Towards a Socialist Theory of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Christopher Pierson, *Marxist Theory and Democratic Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986); and Frank Cunningham, *Democratic Theory and Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²¹ Bobbio (*op. cit.*, 1976/1987a: p.9).

the specific detail of the type of unified society that needed to be charted, he properly acknowledged that what Gramsci's philosophy *did* provide was the supercession of an inadequate thesis of sheer and utter rejection for all that exists in society now – a rejection of what could be termed a 'substitution' thesis of revolutionary change (in light of the fact that one social order would be substituted for another). To Bobbio, Gramsci's reconfiguration of the concept of 'state' importantly proffered new and exciting perceptions of the fluid and dynamic interplay between economics, politics and culture in advanced capitalist formations. To this end, Bobbio's claim that Gramsci had actually 'inverted' Marxist theory by favouring the primacy of the ideological superstructures over the economic base and civil society over political society fuelled a long and protracted debate. It was, in actual fact, a dispute over the basic elements of Marxist theory and the variable possibilities within Gramsci's work for a liberal/ socialist synergy²².

Other works exploring the potential for an alliance between socialism and liberalism also began to stress the possible contribution that Gramsci's ideas could make in theorizing a democratic form of socialism²³. A collection of papers published in 1980 under the editorship of Alan Hunt, carrying the title *Marxism and Democracy*, contained two further contributions that might be said to have continued the sort of discussion so welcomed by Bobbio. Colin Mercer²⁴ and Anne Showstack Sassoon's²⁵ chapters reflected their independent but shared belief that there was an urgent need for democracy's radical revisioning, and that the potential for doing so was especially fecund within Gramsci's writing. Through the articulation of his twin concepts of 'integral state' and 'hegemony', in particular, they argued further that Gramsci had

²² Bobbio had first published his paper, 'Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society', in an Italian publication in 1968. It appeared subsequently as the first chapter in Mouffe's edited collection, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* in 1979 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp.21-47), along with a paper opposing Bobbio's interpretation (Jacques Textier, 'Gramsci, Theoretician of the Superstructures: On the Concept of Civil Society'. Chapter 2 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979a: pp.48-79).

²³ Mouffe published a chapter in her own 1979 work called 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci' (1979b). Here, she argued that the actual condition of intelligibility of Gramsci's conception of hegemony is against viewing ideology as either socialist or liberal/ democratic (Chapter 5 in Mouffe, *op. cit.* 1979a: pp.168-204).

²⁴ Colin Mercer, 'Revolutions, Reforms or Reformulations? Marxist Discourse on Democracy' (In Alan Hunt (Ed.), *Marxism and Democracy*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980: pp. 101-137). In the other article that Mercer also had published that year – 'After Gramsci' (*Screen Education*, 36, Autumn, 1980: pp.5-15) – he argued against the marginalization of Gramsci's work by Marxist exponents who had favoured Althusser's instead. Focusing his discussion on the way in which Gramsci avoids the twin errors of either an excessively economic interpretation of the 'ideological' or an excessively phenomenalist/ idealistic reading, Mercer suggests that Marxism could learn a great deal from Gramsci.

²⁵ Anne Showstack Sassoon, 'Gramsci: A New Concept of Politics and the Expansion of Democracy' (In Alan Hunt, *op. cit.*, 1980: pp.81-99).

clearly laid the foundations for a qualitatively new type of socialism²⁶. Mercer's work was particularly provocative insofar as it attempted to derive from Gramscian concepts not only an alternative concept of political struggle but also to suggest a new concept of subjectivity, correspondingly.

The argument that Mercer was advancing mimicked aspects of Bobbio's to the extent that both claimed that the problem of theorizing a transition from a capitalist society to a socialist one had suffered historically from the use of a dichotomous discourse that continually forced discussion towards the twin poles of either 'revolution' or 'reform'²⁷, 'dictatorship' or 'democracy'²⁸. In Mercer's mind, the concept of 'integral state' that was so fundamentally a feature of Gramsci's work provided the vital theoretical opening that he thought was so desperately needed in order to move the debate forward beyond this conservative impasse²⁹. That said, contra Bobbio's preference for interpreting democracy as a merely formal and representational concept in the same manner as that portrayed within the liberal tradition, Mercer saw the need for the concept to be extended. In his opinion, Gramsci's projection of the seemingly private and apolitical domain of everyday life as a valid, and indeed necessary, site of political contestation and struggle³⁰ suggested that democracy had to be re-theorized as *relational* in Gramscian terms³¹.

As Mercer explained in the course of his commentary, classical Marxist theory had under-theorized such crucial concepts as power, ideology and democracy in particular. With power having been traditionally depicted as a visible force, concentrated in sites that could be seized or managed, democracy was posited as the inevitable outcome of a direct attack on these power-wielding institutions³². Given the dominance of this scenario, repression and subordination within history had tended to be portrayed rather baldly as the effects of the accumulation of power by the bourgeoisie through the repressive, monolithic institution of the state. Power was

²⁶ Sassoon acknowledged similarly Gramsci's contribution to this expansionist (integral) state thesis (Sassoon, *op. cit.*, 1980: pp.81-99). She noted especially how the old divisions between economics and politics, and between the public and the private realm, were no longer valid as a consequence of thinking about the state's role in the process of social formation in general terms (p.82).

²⁷ In like manner, Cunningham (*op. cit.*, 1987) describes the tension between thinking that is cast in terms of either reform or revolution (pp.282-84).

²⁸ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: pp.101-103). Mercer notes how the opposition was often put in terms of Leninism *versus* pluralism, a move that effectively equated Leninism with totalitarianism.

²⁹ Mercer credits Gramsci's concepts with 'the disarticulation of certain necessary correspondences within Marxist theory between certain concepts and propositions' (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.103).

³⁰ Bobbio always maintained a concept of democracy that was, in essence, procedural.

³¹ Sassoon's paper in the same volume (Sassoon, *op. cit.*, 1980: pp.81-99) emphasizes the need to consider this relational dimension as well.

³² Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.104).

therefore perceived as the *possession* of a class, just as ideology was viewed as the possession of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. In keeping with this line of analysis, a direct assault on these sites of power was thought to be an appropriate and legitimate mode of struggle through which to secure a new and superior socialist order. Theorized then as the automatic outcome of the substitution of a capitalist power base by a socialist one, democracy was thus conceptualized as being the inevitable *outcome* or *gain* of struggle, rather than being characterized more broadly as an integral facet of the process itself³³.

Such a representation highlighted, in Mercer's view, an attitude of ambivalence towards the day-to-day, social form that concepts like democracy invariably took. Feeling uneasy about this absence of a fully theorized conception of 'actual' democracy within orthodox leftist thinking, Mercer's goal understandably involved the exploration of a spatial opening beyond Marx – a 'Third Way' which might represent not only a route beyond this discourse of 'dichotomies' but also a pathway towards a fully articulated and 'living' concept of democracy³⁴.

Gramsci's notion of an 'integral state' was credited by Mercer as having the capability to advance socialism beyond either a capitalist compromise or a Marxist revolutionary utopia³⁵. Insofar as Gramsci advanced a theory of the state beyond an entity that was the instrument or property of a class, Mercer suggested that this direction would serve to provide Marxism with the theoretical ability to understand democracy anew; where it might be located on a terrain that was not 'recognized by a politics which recognizes only the "terminal" forms of political power – the State, the Assembly, etc'³⁶. In this regard, Mercer proposed that the Gramscian concept of integral state provided just such a terrain. It was one that would encourage a re-conceptualization of the simplistic equation of the new socialist state as an 'anti-state' in a narrow and centrist fashion, while also acting as a potential foundation for an entirely new way of conceiving both politics and power³⁷.

³³ *Ibid.* (pp.103-104).

³⁴ *Ibid.* (p.101).

³⁵ He saw that the concept of integral state, when bolstered by the idea of hegemony and passive revolution, provided a strong analytic framework from which to measure the extent of the subordination of groups to the embrace of capitalism. Mercer suggested that these concepts provided an index to gauge the extent of a democratic transition towards socialism by theorizing a previously invisible space between the mode of production and the representative state that needed to be targeted as a further site for active struggle (Mercer, *op. cit.*, 1980b: p.109).

³⁶ *Ibid.* (p.112).

³⁷ Anne Showstack Sassoon makes exactly the same point in her chapter that appears alongside Mercer's (Sassoon, *op. cit.*, 1980: pp.81-99). She claims that Gramsci's development of the concept of integral state served to challenge older notions of the division between economics and

For Gramsci, according to Mercer, civil society as much as political society could be thought of as 'state' to the extent that the influence of the bourgeoisie permeated the mantle of civil society, effectively legitimating the visible political structures within society through ideological support. Noteworthy, too, was the fact that Mercer was quick to dispel any simplistic renderings of such support as yet another form of dominance through ideological means³⁸. He argued instead that Gramsci's insights into hegemonic rule represented '...more than the "addition" of dominant ideas and attitudes to a given economic base and its "executive committee", the state'³⁹. Firmly rejecting the suggestion that civil society functioned as an 'illusory front', Mercer went on to contend that there was a 'relatively stable equilibrium' between the economic, the political, and the ideological⁴⁰. What this basically meant was that the terrain upon which there was struggle for purely immediate and self-evident economic and political concerns was a limited ground for widespread and effective democratic struggle – owing to the narrow interpretation of 'state' and 'politics' upon which it was premised.

Born out of an analysis of real historical struggle, Gramsci's concept of hegemony represented the genesis of this reformulation of the state as an 'integral' entity. Rather than viewing the proletariat as a completely subordinate mass, dominated entirely by forces of coercion, Mercer acknowledged that what Gramsci's concept supported was the recognition of the complicity of these minorities in the maintenance of the status quo: a recognition that these subordinates actually consented to the process of government by the fidelity implied by their citizenship⁴¹. In other words, Gramsci's expanded concept of politics was founded upon the fundamental question of the extent to which consent is a natural facet of citizenship. That said, however, it would be wrong to suppose that citizens or groups could exercise total liberty by the terms of this allegiance. The dice was invariably loaded so that there was never a possibility of any real autonomy for the masses within the workings of this type of state. This, Mercer argued,

politics and between the public and the private spheres. Arguing further that Gramsci provided us with a new concept of democracy in his thoughts on the practical operation of the Factory Councils, she urged the study of these ideas to assist the theorization of a qualitatively different form of democracy.

³⁸ Mercer also makes this point in his article in *Screen Education* ('After Gramsci', 36, Autumn 1980a: pp.5-15). He argued there that Gramsci's interest lay principally in how ideology was articulated and the subsequent effects of that articulation.

³⁹ *Ibid.* (p.115).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (p.120).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* (p.121).

...is precisely what the concept of hegemony designates; that active consent is not 'imposed' but negotiated by unequal forces in a complex and uneven confrontation of downward and upward movement in which a series of relatively stable compromises establishes a contradictory equilibrium⁴².

The notion of an 'historical bloc' contained these diverse elements, forming them into a relatively unified and harmonious body for which hegemony was the cement. With an historical bloc so fashioned, the superiority which distinguished a group or class was never fixed or given. Rather, it was constructed in a fluid and dynamic process marked by encounter, contestation and temporary settlement.

With the state no longer theorized as 'exterior' to the various parties which fell within its ambit – because the state's influence was seen to resonate additionally within the civil and seemingly private domains of society – social relationships were to be conceived more appropriately as political in nature. In other words, a society forged by this 'integral politics' was synonymous with a society of constructed and semi-complicit subjects who exemplified the 'effects' of the workings of capital. And it is precisely at this point that Mercer affirmed the continuation of Gramsci's ideas in Michel Foucault's depiction of a power/ knowledge nexus⁴³. Contrary to classical Marxist theory, Gramsci's rendition of the bourgeois state suggested this idea of subjects whose images were mediated by the ideological assumptions of the state; subjects who stood at the intersection of a network of power relations⁴⁴. The emergent concept of discourse that Foucault crafted represented no less than the epistemological and material combination of the 'effect' of politics and ideology. Foucault thus affirmed the Gramscian thesis: that there was no *one* site of politics. Politics intruded into every facet of life to the extent that resistance to politics was never a simple, tidy matter of resistance to a force exterior to, or beyond, a class or a group.

Gramsci's 'expansionist' theory of the state and politics consequently underpinned the theoretical thrust of Mercer's submission. No longer could socialist theory continue to ignore complex issues of politics and state and reduce them to simple and narrow terms. Gramsci's insight invariably added much more robust insights into the nature of politics to Marxist understandings: hegemony suggested that

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.122-125). Mercer intimates that Foucault's work was a development of Gramsci's, despite the fact that Foucault stepped beyond the Marxist paradigm. See my own analysis of Foucault's ideas in the paper, 'More Free or Less Constrained? Freire and Foucault on Freedom and the Problem of Human Submissiveness' (*New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 37, 1, pp.15-27).

⁴⁴ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980a: p.12); Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.126).

even our common sense, everyday understandings were ultimately the product of a form of political expression. To the extent that reason itself was therefore subject to capitalist accommodation in Mercer's view, hegemony represented a powerful form of political and subject neutralization. It prevented the disarticulation of capitalism by rendering this accommodation invisible and ultimately disrupting any likelihood of radical change. His subsequent call for a re-theorized concept of democracy that could act in an anti-passive manner⁴⁵ was based accordingly on Gramsci's notion of how the state was effectively etched into the everyday cultural and ideological realm of living. Struggling against these 'inscriptions' upon various regional, personal, sexual, racial, educational, environmental and local sites, Mercer concluded, was an essential prerequisite for any serious challenge to the existing social order⁴⁶.

As Mercer's interpretation might also be seen to imply, a further theoretical development attributable to Gramsci was the depiction of subjects who were heterogeneous rather than homogeneous in their makeup. The Gramscian subject of capitalism was constructed at the intersection of many discourses and many sites, he emphasized in each of his 1980 articles⁴⁷. Positing a new conception of individuality, one which Mercer described as an expanded concept of citizenship⁴⁸, he insisted that subjects should be viewed as consenting subjects in a greater-than-juridical sense. Their consent extended beyond their formal role as citizens, he argued, their 'citizenship' becoming part and parcel of their actual, day-to-day identity. It was in this way that Gramsci's enlargement of the concept of state invited a re-conceptualization of the subject, in tandem. That subject identity was more the product of a political settlement than the outcome of personal, subjective choice was likewise the implication.

This was how Mercer came to reject the procedural sense in which democracy had tended to be cast traditionally in liberal terms. Insofar as democracy was not simply a concept that could be confined narrowly to the spheres of politics and government, socialist democracy had to distinguish itself from liberal democracy by encouraging a broader interrogation of the extent of politics and power in everyday lives. Importantly, notwithstanding the different emphases that both Mercer and

⁴⁵ Loath to invoke the discourse of reform, Mercer found in Gramsci a way to imply that real democratic changes were possible. This is precisely what 'anti-passive' meant.

⁴⁶ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.122).

⁴⁷ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980a; *op. cit.*, 1980b).

⁴⁸ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980a: p.13). He described this expansion as a result of the 'overflow' implied by viewing citizenship in these terms.

Sassoon offered in their respective chapters, both agreed that any strategy for the democratic transition to socialism had to start from the ‘dissymmetry of the presence of the masses’⁴⁹. In other words, a point acknowledged by both authors was that the abolition of the existing inequitable social divisions within society would be democracy’s greatest triumph. The test of democracy’s good health lay squarely in its practical effects – the amelioration of human poverty and suffering.

Such was the type of discussion that arguably laid the ground for subsequent theoretical work that has since become known as post-Marxist theory. Despite the fact that post-Marxist commentators might well be considered allies of Mercer⁵⁰ and Bobbio⁵¹ in their critique of the inadequacies of traditional Marxist theory, where their position clearly differs however is in relation to their attempted movement beyond an ‘Enlightenment’ interpretation of democracy and identity. Picking up also on the concerns raised by one prominent Gramscian scholar at the time (Joseph Femia⁵²) who alleged that Gramsci’s predilection for the formation of a ‘collective will’ signified the potential subordination of the individual to the collective, they argued further that it was therefore necessary to step beyond the Marxist/ Gramscian paradigm entirely: to abandon both liberalism and Marxism in favour of what they contended might represent a *genuine* ‘Third Way’. Their embrace of semiotic (discourse) theory⁵³, coupled with the adoption of an anti-essentialist notion of identity, was the means by which they

⁴⁹ Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980b: p.106); Sassoon (*op. cit.*, 1980: p.92).

⁵⁰ It is interesting to note that Mercer began his paper, ‘After Gramsci’ (*op. cit.*, 1980a), with a discussion of the merits of Gramsci’s ideas in relation to those of Althusser, despite the greater popularity of the latter at the time. Laclau and Mouffe agree with the importance of Gramsci’s work as their own critique of Althusser’s ideas in relation to Gramsci demonstrates (Laclau & Mouffe, *op. cit.*, 1985: see especially Chapter 3).

⁵¹ As Laclau reveals in his latest comments on the problems of universality and hegemony (in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso, 2000), his reading of Gramsci relies very heavily on the interpretation of Gramsci’s ideas as expressed in Bobbio’s 1979 essay, ‘Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society’ (in Mouffe, *op. cit.*, 1979: pp.21-47). In the early 1990s, Chantal Mouffe also incorporated a discussion of Bobbio’s work within her own in an attempt to articulate where her position differed from Bobbio’s (see especially Mouffe, *op. cit.*, 1993).

⁵² Joseph V. Femia has been arguably the most critical commentator of Gramsci’s work. In his 1981 volume, *Gramsci’s Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), Femia expressed his reservations about Gramsci’s democratic experiment – the Factory Councils. He has repeated these concerns in a more recent article, ‘Gramsci and the Question of Totalitarianism’ (*The Philosophical Forum*, 29, 3-4, 1998: pp.160-167). As I explain in the following section of this chapter, it could be argued that Femia’s conclusions are partly the result of his own peculiar methodological approach to researching Gramsci’s ideas.

⁵³ Semiotic theory challenges the simple correspondence generally seen to exist between a label (a ‘referent’) that defines an identity and the identity itself (the ‘thing’ itself). In this respect, it is an anti-reductionist theory of identity in relation to the discourse that always attempts to ‘contain’ or to ‘fix’ this identity. It can thus be said to be an anti-essentialist theory of identity. See Bowman (*op. cit.*, 2002).

chose to differentiate their work conceptually 'not just from Marxism and Communism, but from classical forms of social democracy as well'⁵⁴. Let us turn now to their claims.

3. Post-Marxism, Hegemony and Radical Democracy

Among other things, what was argued by the chief exponents of post-Marxism, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in their 1985 study, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, was that the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony' suggested an entirely new 'logic of the social' that was, in fact, *incompatible* with the 'basic categories of Marxist theory'⁵⁵. In essence, what Laclau and Mouffe thus claimed in this study was that '[B]ehind the concept of "hegemony" lay hidden something more than a type of political relation *complementary* to the basic categories of Marxist theory'⁵⁶. Consequently, in their opinion, 'hegemony' could only ever come to constitute 'a fundamental tool for political analysis on the Left' when the 'vicissitudes of the concept' were recognised and the 'new logic of the social' implicit within it became 'fully accepted'⁵⁷. Presenting their own work as one that went 'far beyond Gramsci' with its inherent 'epistemological obstacles'⁵⁸, they further contended that 'hegemony' had tremendous analytical potential but that this potential would only be realized when the concept was *extracted* from its Marxist ontological and epistemological origins.

To summarize Laclau and Mouffe's position as it was advanced in this original work, the appeal of Gramsci's contribution to Marxism emanated from its tendency to display all the hallmarks of a theory which avoided a commitment to the Marxist theory of a determinant base, whilst at the same time preserving a concept of the social that was not, to use their expression, 'overdetermined'⁵⁹. In this sense, what 'hegemony'

⁵⁴ Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1990: p.xii). One of the most concise accounts of the manner in which Laclau and Mouffe, in particular, have argued that their post-Marxist position encompasses a view of the subject that lies beyond either a liberal-individualist, liberal-communitarian or a socialist position can be found in Chantal Mouffe's chapter, 'Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community' (Chapter 11 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. London: Verso, 1992c: pp.225-239).

⁵⁵ Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.3).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (Emphasis in original).

⁵⁷ Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.192).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ As noted above, the application of semiotic ideas to social and political theory has meant that the 'excess' meaning that is invested in either an object or a subject makes them overdetermined by that meaning. In relation to Marxist theory, for example, the dominance of economic concerns is seen to be responsible for the overdetermination of all subject identities engaged in struggle by their primary association with the concept of 'class'.

affirmed, to their way of thinking, was a political model of democratic pluralism. Reinterpreting the manner in which Gramsci began to conceptualize politics as 'articulation' through his thesis of the socially constituted nature of objectivity, Laclau and Mouffe argued that connections between groups – manifest as classes – do not arise automatically or spontaneously, forged from the mode of production. They maintained instead that cultural and political identities were constituted or articulated by hegemonic 'discourses'⁶⁰. To their way of thinking, the mode of production (contra Marx) could and must not be granted continuing ontological priority in the theorization of radical social change – precisely because the social is 'self-constitutive'. Social progress is thus freed from any class-based (economic) imperative, becoming instead dependent on active and strategic political (re-)organization.

As was noted briefly in the introduction to this chapter, what this movement away from a thesis of economic determination signalled was additionally the involvement of multiple agencies and multiple sites of struggle in the drive for more democratic and equitable social gains. A separate, relatively autonomous 'agonistic' view of self is projected within this theory⁶¹; a perspective that envisages 'the social' as a cacophony of multiple selves requiring a point of 'suture' to link these identities together whilst simultaneously maintaining the integrity of each. While democracy provides a 'nodal point' for this linkage, hegemony is the name that they give to this new confederation that is now 'society'.

Indeed, Laclau and Mouffe's attempt to reposition themselves as 'post'-Marxists was premised ultimately on their disaffection with what they perceived to be the 'anthropological philosophy' inherent within both a liberal and a Marxist discourse⁶². They specifically objected to the logic of historical materialism⁶³, which in their view

⁶⁰ One can notice, in this usage, an emphasis on a *dominant* discourse.

⁶¹ In contrast to deliberative democracy, Mouffe advances an agonistic portrait of the social. This is a denial of an aggregative (co-operative) view of society and one where competition is instead understood to be the norm. To alleviate the worst excesses of this competitiveness, Mouffe argues for democracy as the preferred political model. In her view, not only does democracy express an openness and protection towards the differences that could ultimately destroy a social order but it also tempers relationships which are excessively antagonistic. The latter become 'agonistic' under the umbrella of democracy; that is, they express the diversity of human values whilst also respecting (tolerating) this diversity. See especially Mouffe's article, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?' (*op. cit.*, 1999).

⁶² An anthropological philosophy of being is interpreted by post-Marxists as a modernist depiction of the individual as constituted by humanist assumptions and Enlightenment principles. For a full discussion about the post-Marxist charges of essentialism against modernist theory, see Gregor McLennan, 'Post-Marxism and the "Four Sins" of Modernist Theorizing' (*New Left Review*, 218, July/ August 1996: pp.53-74).

⁶³ Within the theory of historical materialism, certain social tendencies are noted that arise from an understanding of man as a being in relationship with others. Laclau and Mouffe argue that an over-

imprisoned the liberated Gramscian agent by means of the alleged communal identity it subsequently imposed. According to Laclau and Mouffe's reasoning, the rejection of this antiquated and unrealistic vision of a harmonious 'collective will' would thus lead to the liberation of the Gramscian agent. It would allow the agent the authentic freedom that Gramsci's theory implicitly seemed to suggest⁶⁴. In this respect, championing 'democracy' was a strategic theoretical shift necessary for a left-wing politics of the new millennium because 'democracy', rather than 'socialism', best signalled a 'maximum (level) of (social) integration'⁶⁵ towards which any community should be attempting to aspire. It was seen as a deterrent, no less, to what they argued was the inevitable social subordination of individuality by a homogenizing collective; a safeguard moreover against the 'totalitarianism' that they further maintained was part and parcel of the discourse of socialism⁶⁶.

As explained above, hegemony's placement in the post-Marxist 'recovery' of Gramscian agency was for them to stand as a type of marker signifying that this 'maximum' level of social integration was a possibility and a preference. The preferred portrait of the social painted is one where dispersed and differential groupings co-exist requiring only a minimal level of solidarity with others to achieve their own specific objectives. According to Laclau and Mouffe then, hegemony allows us to rethink the principles that were inherent originally within traditional Enlightenment thought. It permits the restoration of a concept of democracy, although it is one that no longer understates the significance of pluralist ways of life for the sake of an adherence to 'the totality' or 'the collective'. The 'logic' of hegemony typifies the abandonment of a consensus-based politics with its focus on the desirability of rational agreement over a common set of shared, human values. Instead, a hegemonic social order is all that is needed: a 'sutured' society based on a loose confederation of groupings committed only to a non-totalitarian conception of democracy. A hegemonic social order marks this politics of 'contingency', as Laclau and Mouffe have preferred it to be called⁶⁷.

socialized view of humankind is therefore privileged in this model, causing a certain blindness within socialist theory to the ineradicability of conflict and difference. These traits must be respected, they further contend, because they represent the means by which closure is invariably forestalled within a democratic society.

⁶⁴ Opponents of Laclau and Mouffe have pointed out that even the concept of agency might be in doubt in their theory as subjectivity is rewritten as the expression of constitutive discourses disconnected from any 'origin' or 'ground' (see Osborne, *op. cit.*, 1991: p.217). In other words, theirs is a logic that has no social content but only 'pure form' (p.218).

⁶⁵ Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.189).

⁶⁶ Influenced by the writings of Claude Lefort, Laclau and Mouffe argue that socialism forces an artificial unity upon the people, thereby making its logic ultimately totalitarian in nature (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.187).

⁶⁷ Their claim is that the concept of hegemony is able to...

Sue Golding, in her 1992 study titled *Gramsci's Democratic Theory: Contributions to a Post-Liberal Democracy*⁶⁸, further reiterated this point: that Gramsci's work offered 'a profound contribution to theorizing what a better society based on and expressing the will of the people might entail; and [his reflections] did so without, at the same time, repeating the limitations found in either a liberal or an idealist – or, for that matter, a marxist-leninist framework'⁶⁹. It was precisely the *potential* logic of the philosophy of praxis expressed in his work which excited her. That said, Golding nonetheless argues that Gramsci avoided pursuing this line of inquiry himself, unable or unwilling to explore the possibilities that an animation of the 'will' within the social ultimately sanctioned⁷⁰. To the extent that the dynamism of the will was invariably what Gramsci's concept of hegemony expressed – a concept that Golding understood to be deliberately crafted around 'dynamic and non-essentialist categories'⁷¹ – she went on to conclude that it became nothing more than a theory of consensus politics at the end of the day⁷². In other words, the very radicality of the subject⁷³ implicated in Gramsci's thesis of the primacy of 'will-power' was subsequently constrained by the grounding of identity back into the totalizing category of class.

By this reading, Golding allied herself closely with Laclau and Mouffe, recommending that the left accept the logic that a radicalization of the will – and hegemony in particular – invited. She argued further that Gramsci's contribution exposed 'a genealogy rife with multiplicities, series, cuts, pauses, commas' – 'the logic of contingency as a radical hegemony'⁷⁴. That social struggle is unbounded, and that change can be initiated by multiple attempts at new and original forms of articulation are recommendations she likewise makes⁷⁵. Thus, primarily in agreement with Laclau

fill a hiatus... 'Hegemony' will allude to an absent totality, and to the diverse attempts at recomposition and rearticulation which, in overcoming this absence, made it possible for struggles to be given a meaning and for historical forces to be endowed with full positivity. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: p.7)

⁶⁸ Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992). Golding's work is important precisely because her sole focus is on Gramsci and how his revisioning of Marxism led to a new understanding of the ethico-political that could lead Marxism forward towards championing a people-based – rather than a class-based – ethicality.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* (p.xii).

⁷⁰ Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992: see especially Chapter 4, pp.68-87). See also Sue Golding, 'The Concept of the Philosophy of Praxis in the *Quaderni* of Antonio Gramsci' (In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988: pp.543-563).

⁷¹ Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992: p.130).

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ To Golding, Gramsci's rejection of a theory of the objective nature of the real world, a world that was beyond man, so to speak, also meant a rejection of any fossilized or pre-set conceptions around the so-called nature of man (Golding, *op. cit.*, 1988: pp.544-545). She argued therefore that Gramsci rejected a static subject or the notion that this subject could ever be the embodiment of a universal essence.

⁷⁴ Golding (*op. cit.*, 1992: p.136).

⁷⁵ Golding writes that what is implied is a new kind of logic...

and Mouffe, Golding contends that what Gramsci's work invites a fundamental review of traditional Marxist assumptions; assumptions such as the centrality of class to social identity and, by extension, class-led revolution as a privileged form of struggle.

As Laclau had also explained in a follow-up publication to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*⁷⁶, the logic of contingency as a radical hegemony implied the multiplication of 'public spaces' and their constituencies beyond those accepted by either classical liberalism or classical socialism. Rather than struggling on the limited ground offered by liberals (in terms of politics) or by socialists (in terms of class), new opportunities for social change could be promoted by understanding 'the socially constructed nature of any objectivity'⁷⁷. Freed consequently from the constraints of this older discourse and the psychological restrictions that this way of thinking had imposed upon struggle itself⁷⁸, what Laclau, Mouffe and Golding urged was the expansion of the frontiers of struggle; that is, a plan of active struggle across many fronts⁷⁹. In their view, a successful strategy for the left would evolve out of 'the expansion and multiplication of fragmentary, partial and limited subjects who entered the collective decision-making process'⁸⁰. This was, in fact, the only strategy that they regarded as authentically ethical: where ethicality was located neither in the logic of 'class' nor that of 'politics', but was invested instead in the practice of individual determination⁸¹.

It was in this way that Gramsci's ideas thus provided the inspiration for Laclau and Mouffe and Golding's respective 'philosophies of possibility' to take shape. Prompted to rethink the motive behind political change as that which is contingent on

...without the concomitant privileging of a foundational unity or systematizing of that logos. At the very least, it would require rethinking the limits of the political moment wholly disrupting the notion of 'limit' as being in itself a 'fixed' universalism, dialectical or otherwise. Indeed, it would require a rethinking of that 'undefinable something' (to defer to Gramsci once again), i.e., that peculiar mix of the 'not-yet-possibly', contouring and, in fact, (de)limiting the real. It would require, in other words, a series of elastic 'quasi concepts' around otherness and negation. (Golding, 1992: p.133)

⁷⁶ *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1990: p.xv).

⁷⁷ Laclau (*op. cit.*, 1990: p.4).

⁷⁸ This was precisely the point that Mercer had been trying to make (*op. cit.*, 1980b): that the discourse of either 'reform' or 'revolution' imposed real constraints on what was possible in thinking about a future course of political struggle.

⁷⁹ Mouffe talks about the need to establish a new principle of 'democratic equivalence' (*op. cit.*, 1988b: p.42), where diverse democratic struggles are seen as having the same degree of legitimacy. She names anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-capitalist struggles as examples.

⁸⁰ Laclau (*op. cit.*, 1990: p.xiv).

⁸¹ Golding's entire 1992 work focused on the problem of grounding ethics, given Gramsci's rejection of objectivity and his accompanying thesis of the historical construction of all human meaning. Inevitably, the rejection of a class-based solution implies that ethics is grounded back in the people and struggle arises from the immediate concerns of these people – as opposed to arising from any theoretical 'model' such as liberalism or Marxism. In this respect, there is a certain irony about Golding's position, given that Gramsci's notion of humanity in relation to history and culture simply reflects the Marxist historical materialist tendency to do precisely what Golding is advocating.

human struggle and practical political challenge, by the same token, they also began to consider how 'democracy' might be the most effective means to graft wills together whilst retaining the separate identity and expression of each. According to this interpretation, history becomes no less than the product of fluid and constantly shifting political alliances and struggles 'laboriously constructed from a number of dissimilar points'⁸², just as a new social ethic is anchored in the modulation and modification of 'the very identity of the forces engaging in that alliance'⁸³. Post-Marxism and post-liberal democracy each express this challenge: the challenge invited by viewing culture as no longer 'merely' superstructural but as the very ground upon which future struggles must ultimately be fought.

The above is a brief synopsis of the manner in which hegemony has been called into the service of post-Marxist scholarship. The work presented here is very much a rejection of this thesis. It is a rejection specifically of the claim by Laclau and Mouffe that Gramsci's theory in general, and his concept of hegemony in particular, provides this 'new logic of the social'; that only by adopting an alternative post-Marxist epistemology and ontology can the power that is inherent within Gramsci's concept of hegemony become truly 'liberated'. As I endeavour to highlight within my study, hegemony is a concept that is quite simply unintelligible when extruded from the epistemology and ontology of Marxism. Far from being disadvantaged or handicapped by this etymology, I intend to show that the Gramscian concept allows our understandings of democracy itself to become truly 'radicalized': it allows the subtle and complex aspects of the social to be grasped as an ecology of interacting and intersecting parts.

The problem, as I intend to demonstrate, centres on the way in which the nature of the historical materialist insights that Gramsci's theory of hegemony contained is severely constrained by Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist 'revisionism'. As other writers have argued correctly, the considerable appeal of Gramsci's ideas lay precisely in the manner in which they overcame the limitations from which the more orthodox versions of classical Marxism might be said (justifiably) to have suffered⁸⁴. As I intend to argue here, Gramsci's original concept of hegemony provides a far more viable 'democratic politics' than is possible through Laclau and Mouffe's preferred 'radical'

⁸² Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.87).

⁸³ *Ibid.* (p.184).

⁸⁴ For instance, see: James Joll, *Gramsci* (London: Fontana, 1977); Mercer (*op. cit.*, 1980a & 1980b); Sassoon (*op. cit.*, 1980); Dante Germino, *Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

solution.

Put simply, as the result of Laclau and Mouffe's abandonment of the Marxist concept of 'historicization', which they take to be fundamentally misguided because of its seeming adherence to an 'eschatological future'⁸⁵, there is a corresponding absence of dialectical linkage between such concepts as 'tradition', 'history' and the 'economy' in relation to identity formation and transformation. Identity is portrayed as the product of discursive articulation – a movement *away* from utilizing the concept of 'ideology' as an analytical device, it must be added⁸⁶ – with the result that there is an accompanying denial of the effects of the economic upon the way in which 'the social' is duly constructed. Despite the fact that the political identity of subjectivity is therefore acknowledged in Laclau and Mouffe's analysis, their omission of historically economic forms of inscription upon subjectivity means that the effects of the economic 'play' on the political remain essentially invisible. In practical terms, their position represents no less than a regression back to a liberal concept of politics, notwithstanding their persistent reassurances to the contrary.

In conjunction with this omission, moreover, Laclau and Mouffe offer only a weak and under-theorized concept of democracy to accompany their theory of the discursive nature of the social. Repeating Bobbio's error – and in spite of their belief that democracy must be viewed as a form of life – they falsely equate the visible signs of democratic operation with democracy itself, offering little recognition within their theory of the type of mentality that would need to be cultivated in order to foster a critical citizenry; that is, one predisposed towards, and competent in, sound intellectual and social judgement. In short, there is a noticeable absence of comment within their work about the need for critical education to enable a person to be able to reflect upon their personal and social circumstance – thus ensuring that democracy becomes more typically a *critical* form of life. Here, the struggle to protect 'the social' from slippage towards the 'anti-democratic' – loosely defined as the bureaucratic, monolithic or homogeneous – *is discussion that actually occludes how our educational assumptions*

⁸⁵ As one commentator has noted, in Laclau and Mouffe's concerted attempt to secure an 'unmastered future', incommensurability is privileged over commonality as a new 'emancipatory possibility' (Judith Butler, 'Postmodernism and Postmarxism'. *Diacritics*, 23, 4, Winter 1993: pp. 3-11).

⁸⁶ This move is reminiscent of Foucault's attempts to step beyond the Marxist paradigm by choosing not to focus on the concept of ideology. Foucault explains his position in an interview where the concepts of truth and power are discussed (Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power'. Interview in Paul Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984: pp.51-75). See also Landry and MacLean's criticism of Laclau and Mouffe's attempts to side-step the concept of ideology (Landry & MacLean, *op. cit.*, 1991: p.41).

themselves under capitalism contribute to the perpetuation of anti-democratic practices. The source of this problem can again be tracked back to Laclau and Mouffe's embrace of a discursive concept of subjectivity and their problematization of human sociability. Because their theory lacks the capacity to consider *questions of pathology in relation to subjectivity*, they are simply unable to envisage how some features that define 'difference' might be considered pathological – particularly those which render subjects the victims of their own intellectual passivity⁸⁷.

As I will indicate through an exegesis of Gramsci's own writings in the chapters to follow, the practical lesson we learn from his work is indeed the naivety of assuming that an expansion in the visible forms of democracy will automatically provide an assurance against more significant anti-democratic, social symptoms. For not only do I argue that this is a simplistic and reductionist way of conceiving 'democracy', but so too do I also contend that the assumptions behind this thinking betray a naïve and immature understanding of the nature of power and its various forms of inscription within a social order. As I argue within the pages that follow, one of the most significant findings of Gramsci's work lies with his explication of the intimate linkage that exists between the structural and superstructural: of how each domain operates in tandem to exert important limitations on identity constitution – and specifically upon the formation of the mind.

A respectful regard for this complex theory of *identity limitation* – the effect of power on the developing (social) subject, no less – is therefore an essential prerequisite for the evolution of a democratic, social ethos. Laclau and Mouffe and Golding's endeavours to advance the cause of socialism through the adoption of an epistemological and ontological 'revision' provide us with nothing other than an impossible 'horizon' for the theorization of a radical democratic alternative – given that the concept of the pathological is lost entirely in their theorizing. Ironically, whilst supporting a thesis of 'the contextual subject', this occlusion of categories of judgment that keep open discussion about the nature of the human condition prevents more robust consideration about the nature of 'difference' and what might constitute pathological preferences and practices.

⁸⁷ This tends to be a feature inherent in the adoption of a postmodernist worldview because the concept of 'pathological' signals the presence of normative judgment. 'Difference' has been seen to be neutral with respect to normativity, thus inviting the charge of relativity to be laid squarely at the door of those who favour a postmodern paradigm. In this particular case, post-Marxism wants to keep 'equality' and 'freedom' as moderating concepts under the further policing that a looser concept of democracy would impose. For a discussion about this attempt, see Chapter 6, 'The Uncritical Democracy of Laclau and Mouffe'.

To this effect, what I am essentially taking issue with is the extent to which the revisionists' rendition of 'hegemony' might actually deliver the more just and ethical form of society that they so stridently profess to endorse. Although I will return to a discussion of many of these points in greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis (Chapter 6), I want to stress here that I judge their project to be fatally flawed, not only because of their own imprecise understanding of Marxist theory in general but also of Gramsci's concept of hegemony in particular. What the above deficiencies suggest, to my way of thinking, is that theirs is an impoverished theory; impoverished inevitably because of their abandonment of the historical subject and of their parallel attempts to reframe 'hegemony' in post-humanistic terms. As I have further suggested in my discussion above, democracy must be viewed as a terrain that *harbours* abusive practices as much as it *relieves* them. It is especially through the diminution of the concept of education, which Gramsci's notion of hegemony particularly highlighted, that the under-theorization of such pathologies in post-Marxist analysis has occurred.

As will be noted in my own account of Gramsci's ideas, it is clear that the distorted assumptions that were 'common' to the majority of Gramsci's fellow citizens had been historically inherited and passively absorbed. Given this problem, there was an urgent need to expose these ideas, beliefs and attitudes to critical interrogation. An acquiescent polity was a polity subject to itself in ways that Gramsci inevitably foresaw precluded its own transition towards greater self-government and creative self-management. In this regard, unlike those in Gramsci's time who had prophesized the inevitable and automatic demise of capitalism, his was a politics premised on educative-formative endeavour. The development of the critical consciousness necessary for self-rule had to be cultivated and nurtured through education, in Gramsci's view. Even more significantly, as we witness below, it was an education that had to begin with one's own self-awareness. It was only by means of this type of knowledge – of one's own unwitting collaboration with the ideological supports of capitalism – that changes could then be activated. This meant opening one's mind and striving to move towards 'objectivity', as Gramsci described this process⁸⁸. Even as early as 1916, Gramsci affirmed this conviction via the German romantic, Novalis, whom he quoted as saying: 'The supreme problem of culture is that of gaining possession of one's transcendental self⁸⁹, of being at one and the same time the self of oneself⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ Gramsci always defined 'objectivity' as anti-positivistic and anti-idealistic. In other words, it reflected a Marxist historical materialist vantage point.

⁸⁹ As Esteve Morera rightly observes (*Gramsci's Historicism: A Realist Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 1990: p.5), Gramsci often used the terminology of the speculative philosophers, but his

In short, the problem of bourgeois hegemony was a cognitive and a moral [human relational and valuation] problem that required a uniquely socialist solution: the historicization of thought and its dialectical scrutiny. The new intellectually and morally reformed society would no longer pay lip service to the concept of the common good, but would instead epitomize that 'good' in all dimensions of its social and institutional makeup. It was this radical re-grounding of humanity in associations other than those dictated by profit (the exploitative forms of rivalry and competition) that provided society with its renewed concept of democracy – a non-fetishized (organic) form of democracy, as explained in Chapter 6. As I argue there, by relocating the theory of hegemony within what is essentially a Marxist problematic and revealing the uniquely educational dimension of the concept itself, it is possible to theorize a 'radical' concept of democracy *without recourse to either a radical liberal or post-liberal alternative*. The answer already lies in Gramsci's own legacy, as I intend to demonstrate. It simply needs to be revisited and rearticulated correspondingly in a clearer and more comprehensive fashion.

Departing for the moment from these concerns, it is important to understand however that 'reading' Gramsci is not an altogether easy task. This point has been made frequently within the Gramscian literature, with many writers prefacing their studies with accounts of the hazards that any Gramscian scholar might reasonably be expected to encounter. The unique way in which Gramsci considers philosophy, politics and culture in an integral and dialectic fashion; the fact that his research was not so much 'research' but theory in action; the specific Italian nuances that underpin the development of his thinking; and the distinctive manner in which his key concepts differed from mainstream theory (concepts such as civil society, hegemony, passive revolution, etc.) are all points that invite a major philological commitment on the part of any scholar who is serious in understanding Gramsci's inimitable standpoint. As the discussion in the following section is designed to highlight, ongoing disputes surrounding the degree of continuity that is expressed between Gramsci's pre-prison and prison theorizing make this task even more demanding. Additionally off-putting is

intention was to express quite different concepts. Here, Gramsci was referring to the need to recognize how one's own valuations were founded on the abstract series of relationships that capitalism authorized and legitimated.

⁹⁰ 'Socialism and Culture', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.10). Gramsci's objection to the Gentilian schooling reforms of 1923 mirrored his concerns regarding the potential loss of this cultural (self) knowledge. As Steven Mansfield, quoting Gramsci, notes ('Introduction to Gramsci's "Notes on Language". *Telos*, 59, 1984: pp.119-126), 'Students learned Latin and Greek "in order to know at first hand the civilization of Greece and of Rome – a civilization that was a necessary precondition of our modern civilization: in other words, they learned them in order to be themselves and know themselves consciously"' (p.124).

the sheer magnitude of the literature within the domain that presents its own peculiar challenges to the researcher and the research process in general. My own approach towards attempting to resolve these problems will be outlined in the course of this discussion.

4. Hegemony and the Problem of 'Reading' Gramsci

Despite the calming reassurance that the concept of hegemony 'is really a very simple one', as Thomas Bates confidently asserted in one of the earliest English-language articles to explore the Gramscian concept⁹¹, there are now such a plethora of interpretations of 'hegemony' that simplicity can certainly *not* be claimed to be a dominant feature of the concept⁹². William Hartley's review of what remains one of the (still) leading books which deals extensively with Gramsci's contribution of the concept to political and cultural theory is most instructive in this regard⁹³. Referring to Walter Adamson's *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (1980), Hartley noted an appalling inability on Adamson's part to 'have noticed that the word "hegemony" appears in ways other than the two described by him'⁹⁴. Additionally irritating to Hartley, and even more significant to our discussion here, was the way in which Adamson chose to argue throughout his book that Gramsci developed *two* concepts of hegemony, not one⁹⁵.

To briefly summarize Adamson's position, what he argued was that hegemony was generally defined in Gramsci's writing with reference to a 'partner' term that served

⁹¹ 'Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony' (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36, 1975: p.352).

⁹² A search for the word 'hegemony' in any database will reveal an enormous array of articles and books carrying the word in their title. Many of these works are not exploring the Gramscian concept specifically but equate 'hegemony' with 'dominance' in their interpretation. Others prefer to think of hegemony as 'dominance' without specifying the specific nuances of this dominance. Typical of a general keyword search of this term are titles such as the following (in chronological order): Robert Boccock, *Hegemony* (Chichester, West Sussex: Ellis Horwood, 1986); Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Andrew Walter, *World Power and World Money: The Role of Hegemony and International Monetary Order* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Epifanio San Juan, *Hegemony and Strategies of Transgression: Essays in Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); and William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁹³ 'Approaching Gramsci's Politics' [Review of Walter Adamson's *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980]. *Italian Quarterly*, 97, 8, 1984: pp.171-181. As Robert Dombroski notes in his wonderful study of Gramsci's theatre criticisms and cultural writings (*Antonio Gramsci*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989: note 6, p.134), William Hartley's own work looked at the concept of hegemony under the title of 'Politics and Culture in Antonio Gramsci's *Quaderni del Carcere*'. This was the title of his Ph.D. dissertation awarded from the University of Chicago in 1985.

⁹⁴ Hartley (*op. cit.*, 1984: pp.176-177).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

to define the specific meaning of the initial word. Furthermore, he claimed that only two 'partners' defined 'hegemony' within Gramsci's work:

Hegemony, for instance, is sometimes compared with *domination*, in which case the reference is to the process of gaining legitimate consent within the functional universe of civil society, as opposed to simply holding it together through a monopoly on the means of violence. At other times, *hegemony* is compared with *economic-corporative*. Here the reference is to two historical phases of bourgeois development, the former representing a higher stage than the latter. Thus, in an important sense, Gramsci had not one but two concepts of hegemony, a point which has eluded nearly all of his interpreters and which has led to the common misunderstanding that he was inconsistent in his definition of the term⁹⁶.

Whilst Hartley was quick to acknowledge the interplay of these partnerships within Gramsci's writings, what he nonetheless objected to in Adamson's interpretation was his overall conclusion – that there were in fact *two* concepts, not *one*. Through his own investigation of Gramsci's extensive literary legacy, Hartley detected that these two partnerships were merely the expression of a single, albeit complex, concept. In other words, he chose to argue that there was just *one* concept, despite the extraordinary array of varying nuances that could be detected within Gramsci's writing⁹⁷.

Having said this, Hartley duly proceeded to nominate a much more likely candidate to qualify as an alternative to Adamson's, if one were to be elected at all. Noting how Gramsci appeared to deploy hegemony frequently to define the dominance of the nation-state in international affairs⁹⁸, he described this 'second' concept in the following terms:

⁹⁶ Adamson (*op. cit.*, 1980: p.10. Emphasis in original).

⁹⁷ Hartley prefers to call these various nuances 'modes' in his study (Hartley, *op. cit.*, 1984: p.177). To sketch just one or two of these modes of usage here, as Hartley refers to them in his review, there is a mode in which hegemony 'is equated to leadership (*direzione*) as opposed to domination (*dominazione*)'; a mode in which 'the institutions of civil society are said to constitute an "apparatus of hegemony"'; a mode in which 'hegemony is discussed in terms of prestige, trust, intellectual and moral influence or "spiritual rule"; and, further, modes in which 'hegemony is described as involving an alliance, autonomy of the leading group or class, and an anti-economic-corporative consciousness' (p.177).

⁹⁸ It is worth quoting Hartley in full on this point (*op. cit.*, 1984: pp.177-178):

[A]ll of these 'modes' can be read as constituting a single complex concept of hegemony; none of them fundamentally contradicts the others. However, there are instances in which the word 'hegemony' is used in a sense that cannot be reconciled with its [single] conceptual usage. For example, when Gramsci speaks of the 'hegemony' of the United States in the Pacific Ocean or over the Caribbean Sea; of the waning of the traditional supremacy of the British fleet as 'a hegemonic factor'; of the assurance of Spanish 'hegemony' in Italy after the battle of Pavia; of French finance capital's 'tendency towards hegemony'; of the 'hegemonic state', 'hegemonic military force', 'hegemonic nation', of the hegemonic role of the Anglo-Saxon economy; of Austrian hegemony in Italy before the Risorgimento; he is using the word in a sense which makes it synonymous with domination rather than leadership, with connotations of force rather than consent, with reference to imperialist politics rather than to proletarian politics, and usually it is applied to the sphere of international relations rather than to analyze class relations within a given national state.

The second concept pertains to the analysis of relations between states or nations: a 'great power' (*grande potenza*) is a state whose territorial expanse, population size, economic potential and military force enable it to exert an influence over other states while pursuing its own autonomous policies; it is 'hegemonic' in so far as it is the head and guide (*cape e guida*) of a system of alliances and accords...⁹⁹

Having maintained that 'material force' seemed to be the determining factor with reference to hegemony in the international sphere, whereas 'intellectual, moral and political leadership' appeared to be the determining factor in the class analysis of the state, Hartley reiterated however that *both* involved a combination of force and consent¹⁰⁰. In fact, concluding his discussion by noting how Gramsci viewed all political relations as 'a complex interplay between domination and leadership'¹⁰¹, Hartley might even be said to have signalled the cancellation of this apparent dualism by virtue of this *précis*.

This interchange not only highlights the contentious nature of existing interpretations of the term but also serves to illustrate how the process of textual interpretation is closely associated with philological method, broadly understood¹⁰². Perhaps as Hartley was trying to suggest, while on the one hand reference to the varied nuances of the term appear to convey the impression that Gramsci was being completely inconsistent in the way in which he employed the term, on the other hand, when one overlays the *leitmotiv* of Gramsci's overall project upon his writing, a totally different picture is likely to emerge. As I argue in the work presented here, insofar as Gramsci's struggle was, without question, committed to overcoming the hegemony of the bourgeoisie – their intellectual and moral dominance based on a capitalist form of political economy – substituting this hegemony for proletarian hegemony necessarily entailed a completely different conception of politics; one that was redefined through the reversal of the subordination of social relationships to an economic rationality. It was one in which existing conceptual boundaries were revised to maximize and broaden the scope of thought so that reality was no longer distorted by the application of narrow and false abstractions.

⁹⁹ Hartley (*op. cit.*, 1984: p.178).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² What I am alluding to here is a point that Gramsci himself made: reality itself represents a 'living' philology. In keeping with the historical materialist outlook that he adopted, maximizing the breadth of abstractions (Ollman called this 'abstraction extension') allows us to get closer to the reality that we are attempting to interpret. See Bertell Ollman's *Dialectical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 1993). I am indebted to Ollman for these insights.

My own research tends to suggest that hegemony must be defined in terms of the *leitmotiv* of Gramsci's long-term commitment to the overthrow of capitalism via the application of *socialist forms of thought and practice*. To understand this concept, one must first understand Gramsci's unique way of viewing the world – that is, his philosophy of praxis. As I will be reiterating in the pages that follow, through the philosophy of praxis (a synonym no less for Marx's methodology of historical materialism, I argue here¹⁰³) Gramsci adopted a completely different way of thinking about reality such that the conceptual preferences that had previously forced 'thought' to dwell within a narrow realm of appearances were superceded within his own worldview. This was accomplished particularly by his direct examination of *actual reality itself: through bypassing the conceptual distortions that disguised its actual constitution*. As we will see in more detail in Chapter 5, Gramsci's historiography is premised on the sharpening of these powers which resulted in an entirely different purchase on life's facade. Insofar it authored a totalizing worldview as an outcome¹⁰⁴ – one in which the individual, society and nature are viewed in ecological terms, bound together in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship – I argue here that Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' was no less than Marx's own method to restore to consciousness that very reality from which 'mind' had been unwittingly distanced¹⁰⁵.

It is this degree of interconnectedness between his concept (hegemony) and Gramsci's overall project that I am insisting must be duly acknowledged in any exegesis that claims to be faithful to his writing. *Hegemony cannot be understood unless it is cast within an historical materialist outlook*. Accordingly, it is a concept which demands a dialectical and organic viewing of the reality which it seeks to master and transform. In this respect, hegemony is 'slippery' because it is a concept calculated to restore to vision *the totality within which all particulars exist internal to it*. Any attempt to isolate its specific features and to narrowly define its meaning is doomed to failure

¹⁰³ As noted in footnote 60 of my introductory chapter, a number of writers have examined this phrase in order to attempt to understand better the term's specific meaning. What I intend to show in my own study is that the philosophy of praxis *is* a synonym for historical materialism.

¹⁰⁴ According to this argument, capitalism must be seen to be a totality: not simply the dominance of an economic theory but the dominance of the rationality of the conceptual logic that maintains and enhances its dominance. To understand capitalism requires that we know *how the machine works*: that we view the *friction generated* as part of the overall way in which the machine functions (see footnote 106 in this chapter).

¹⁰⁵ Gramsci's writings were directed squarely against the two most virulent forms of philosophy that epitomized this distancing (dispossession): positivism and idealism. In this respect, Gramsci was advocating a supercession of the theory/ practice dichotomy. Buttigieg expressed this point in the following way: the most striking feature of Gramsci's writings 'remains the embodiment of a mode of thought that holds theory and practice inseparably bound together' (*Antonio Gramsci's Triad: Culture, Politics, Intellectuals*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Centre for Humanistic Studies, University of Minnesota [CHS Occasional Papers, Number 10], 1987: p.5).

precisely because it is a concept which has been purposefully cast to retain breadth: that is, to allow maximum leverage on reality so as to avoid distorting the totality (the internal ecology of relationships) which it seeks to elucidate¹⁰⁶. Subverting our present propensity to privilege concepts that differentiate, detach and isolate – rather than totalize – involves adopting a completely counter-cultural worldview: one that avoids a focus which would have us dwell solely on the particulars. To understand the essence of hegemony therefore implies the need to reverse one's usual habits of thought. It means to adopt an alternative vantage point: one that simultaneously privileges the historic and endows it with a totalitarian (expansive) logic.

Grasping this new logic is by no means easy: it defies the natural tendencies of our customary habits of thought. Symptomatic of the inability of some Gramscian commentators to adjust their own thinking to this authentically Marxist worldview, a prominent debate within the literature centring on whether Gramsci's early work betrays traces of the gestation of the concept, reveals two very different schools of thought. In the highly praised 1967 publication of his doctoral research, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*¹⁰⁷, John Cammett asserted that hegemony was 'the unifying idea of Gramsci's life from the days of *La Citta futura* to those of the *Quaderni del Carcere*'¹⁰⁸. Against his confident validation of the extent of the sweep of the concept however, Joseph Femia (the scholar alluded to previously for his condemnation of the inherent totalitarianism of Gramsci's own theory and practice of socialism¹⁰⁹) has expressed an entirely opposing view. According to Femia, the alleged absence of the actual word itself from Gramsci's theoretical vocabulary until 1926¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Derek Sayer recounts a wonderful instance where E.P. Thompson roundly condemned his sociological colleagues for trying to define too precisely the concept of class (*The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987). Thompson wrote:

Sociologists who have stopped the time machine and, with a great deal of conceptual huffing and puffing, have gone down to the engine-room to look, tell us that nowhere at all have they been able to locate and classify a class. They can only find a multitude of people with different occupations, incomes, status-hierarchies and the rest. Of course they are right, since class is not this or that part of the machine, but *the way the machine works* once it is set in motion – not this interest and that interest, but the *friction* of interests – the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise...[C]lass itself is not a thing, it is a happening. (Emphasis in the original. Cited in Sayer, p.146)

¹⁰⁷ John Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967).

¹⁰⁸ Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: pp.205-206).

¹⁰⁹ Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Joseph V. Femia, 'Gramsci and the Question of Totalitarianism' (*The Philosophical Forum*, 29, 3-4, 1998: pp.160-167).

¹¹⁰ My own research has revealed that Gramsci made use of the word itself prior to this date with the first mention of the actual word having appeared in July 1918 in relation to comments he made about the Russian Revolution ('The Russian Utopia', *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.), 25 July 1918, *HPC*, pp.149-155). The first reference in Gramsci's writings that I have accessed occurs in 1917 in a

afforded more than sufficient proof for him to claim that Cammett had overstated the concept's centrality during the earlier pre-prison years.

Femia is perhaps best noted for his 1981 study, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*. More inclined to promote Gramsci's *Prison Notebook* writings as the 'defining context' of hegemony, Femia's tendency to assign to the prison years a quality which was representative of the pinnacle of Gramsci's thought¹¹¹ has been accompanied by his contention that certain 'phases' or 'stages'¹¹² naturally arose in the evolution of Gramsci's ideas, and that these could be detected readily in any survey of the thinker's writing. He used this logic subsequently to justify the scant attention that he had paid to the writings of the younger Gramsci in his finished study, not surprisingly arguing there that the prison notes were 'in crucial respects different from Gramsci's earlier ideas'¹¹³.

As with any attempt to try to demarcate the shifts in an author's thoughts, there is a high probability that certain aspects of their views might be privileged unjustifiably over certain others. This is a caution that Richard Bellamy also offered in the introduction to his 1994 edited collection of Gramsci's pre-prison writings¹¹⁴. Such a charge has indeed been laid consistently against Femia's analysis¹¹⁵. More recently

quotation that Gramsci reprints from a letter discussing the theatre industry ('The Chiarella Brothers Again', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 8 July 1917, *SCW*, pp.61-63).

¹¹¹ Carl Boggs also argues that Gramsci's intellectual and political life can be traced through four distinctive stages (*The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism*. Boston: South End Press, 1984: Chapter 1).

¹¹² Femia (*op. cit.*, 1981: pp.4-5).

¹¹³ *Ibid.* (p.7). In Femia's 'Introduction and Preview' to his study (*Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*), he wrote:

My refusal to view Gramsci's work as a unified corpus will not find favour in all quarters. Massimo Salvadori, a respected authority on Gramsci, echoes many when he claims 'that Gramsci's work, from his youthful writings to those composed in prison, is unitary like very few others' and 'that the *Quaderni*, taken as a whole, do not represent a qualitatively new thematic compared with the elaborations completed before 1926'. Rather, the *Notebooks* 'reflect, in substance, a theoretical systematization of the problems that arose during the period of his directly political activity'. While this interpretation undeniably possesses a grain of truth, it tends to blind commentators to the revisions and developments in Gramsci's thinking, thus giving rise – as we shall see – to a number of misunderstandings about the nature of his message. (1981: pp.3-4)

Ironically, Femia later wrote: 'With some exceptions, the ideas in the *Notebooks* were either intimated or affirmed, in some shape or form, in his youthful writings' (*ibid.*, p.6).

¹¹⁴ Bellamy, in Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994a: p.x). In his introductory remarks to this volume, Bellamy stated: 'One of the advantages of approaching Gramsci through the pre-prison writings rather than the *Prison Notebooks* is that the original intent and frame of reference of his ideas are harder to avoid' (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁵ Christine Buci-Glucksmann in *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980: p.95) presents a compelling case that serves 'to destroy right away the idea of some mythical break between the earlier "activist" Gramsci and the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks*'. To her mind, as well as my own, 'The later Gramsci deepened and reconsidered the problems that the earlier Gramsci had already posed' (*ibid.*). Walter Adamson, despite Hartley's criticisms of his analysis of hegemony, was also vehemently opposed to any separation of the pre-prison from the prison

especially, Joseph Buttigieg¹¹⁶ has voiced his growing concern about this dubious type of scholarship. Not only did he condemn Femia for underestimating the degree of cohesion which permeates Gramsci's entire corpus of work¹¹⁷ but he also questioned the merit of his unapologetic reliance on older, more schematic and thematic translations¹¹⁸.

In spite of Femia's neglect however, his own explanation for relying on the original (condensed) edition is at least partially understandable – notwithstanding Buttigieg's reservations, it must be added¹¹⁹. For, while seemingly wedded to the idea that a 'meticulous chronological approach...hardly enhances our comprehension of his [Gramsci's] ideas themselves', Femia's subsequent defence of his chosen literary methodology can be seen to be based much more upon pragmatic reasons than on any other: namely, that these 'new' translations 'suffer from the disadvantage of rendering the reading of the entire work much more difficult and disorienting'¹²⁰. And in this regard, Femia is most certainly correct. The sheer volume of both the primary translations and the secondary source investigations makes 'reading Gramsci' much 'more difficult and disorienting' now than ever was the case in Femia's time¹²¹. Given as well the current tendency within institutions to equate academic 'performance' with measured research 'outcomes', it might be reasonably predicted that scholars will continue to avoid further in-depth engagement with this newer archive for the same pragmatic reasons as Femia's – despite their 'meticulous chronological' state.

This problem has certainly not escaped Buttigieg's attention. As he has noted himself, regardless of the availability of these more concise translations, there is no

writings. He wrote: 'I am convinced that one cannot understand the political and cultural theory of the Notebooks apart from a creative reconstruction of the 1914-26 period...' (Adamson, *op. cit.*, 1980: p.8).

¹¹⁶ Joseph A. Buttigieg, 'Philology and Politics: Returning to the Text of Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks' (*Boundary 2*, 21, 2, 1994: pp.98-138).

¹¹⁷ Buttigieg's points are undoubtedly sound ones, particularly as there is unquestionably a danger in assigning a more generous weighting to the prison writings as opposed to the pre-prison archive. Dante Germino endorses the unity between these pre-prison writings and the later prison notes when he writes: 'Looking over the more than eight hundred pages of Gramsci's output for the first two years of his journalistic career, one cannot help but be impressed by the conceptual unity of the pieces despite the enormous variety of their subject matter' (*op. cit.*, 1990: pp.48-49).

¹¹⁸ Buttigieg (*op. cit.*, 1994: pp.100-101). Buttigieg voiced this concern when commenting on Femia's refusal to employ an edition of the *Notebooks* that more closely reflected the chronology and method of the original manuscripts themselves. Insofar as Stanley Aronowitz once warned against finding in Marx 'a series of definitive arguments that validate any specific position' (Aronowitz, *op. cit.*, 1981: p.xiii), the same could easily be said of Gramsci.

¹¹⁹ Buttigieg later concedes that Femia had simply taken the same philological liberties as are commonly practiced by the editors of anthologies and thematic versions of the *Prison Notebooks* (Buttigieg, *op. cit.*, 1994: p.103).

¹²⁰ Femia (*op. cit.*, 1981: p.vii).

¹²¹ See the following discussion for a review of the scope of this literature.

automatic guarantee that Gramsci's works will even be read, much less understood¹²². Buttigieg's entire article, in fact, bemoans the current state of Gramscian scholarship. Were readers to closely scrutinize the many publications claiming Gramsci's authority, Buttigieg asserts, they would actually find a 'paucity of philosophically rigorous textual analyses', despite the growing availability of critical editions of Gramsci's original writings (i.e., chronologically rigorous and methodologically scrupulous reproductions)¹²³. He warns further that large tracts of the *Notebooks* themselves still remain relatively unknown, even to those scholars who have devoted most of their research energy to investigating Gramsci's ideas¹²⁴. Hence we have a paradoxical situation occurring in the field where, in spite of scholars having much better access to the Gramscian archive, detailed textual analyses of the *Quaderni* remain nonetheless a rarity.

That there is a much greater likelihood that a comprehensive reading of Gramsci's 'disordered' work will reveal (in the sense that it cannot avoid) the *leitmotiv* or spirit of Gramsci's overall project is generally agreed. Such a reading better positions scholars to overcome the 'difficulties' identified by previous commentators: the 'fragmentary and multiple writing'¹²⁵; the censored nature of his musings¹²⁶ in which he had recourse to euphemism, elliptical word play and metaphor¹²⁷; the 'apparent contradictions, cryptic utterances...aborted observations, unassimilated "rough" facts and seemingly endless digressions'¹²⁸; his 'idiosyncratic way of formulating concepts'¹²⁹; not forgetting the very real linguistic problems arising after any piece of writing has had to undergo the metamorphosis of translation. It is likely that all these difficulties would be reduced by greater (as opposed to more limited) philological exertion. I would also like suggest, moreover, that greater diligence must also be expended to grasp *the underlying historical materialist method* that gives Gramsci's

¹²² Buttigieg (*op. cit.*, 1994: p.99).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Buci-Glucksmann (*op. cit.*, 1981: p.8).

¹²⁶ It was not only Gramsci's prison writings that underwent censorship. As Carl Levy ('A New Look at the Young Gramsci', *Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], 14, 3, 1986: pp.31-48) explains, censorship was a fact of life during the duration of the First World War. Particularly prone to the censor's 'little blue pencil' was material appearing in the socialist press – especially after the two Russian Revolutions and anti-war rioting which accompanied Italy's involvement in the First World War (p.34). Not surprisingly, Gramsci's fiery polemical tracts received a considerable degree of attention from the authorities of Turin, a situation that predictably drew Gramsci's ire. See Gramsci's article, 'Class Intransigence and Italian History', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 18 May 1918 (*SPW 1*, p.41). See also the note attached to Gramsci's article, 'The Russian Utopia', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 27 July 1918 (*SPW 1*, p.55).

¹²⁷ Femia (*op. cit.*, 1981: p.9); Paul Ransome, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction* (New York: Harvester/ Wheatsheaf, 1992: p.3).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Adamson (*op. cit.*, 1980: p.9).

work its formidable Marxist character. It is with due regard for the wisdom of *both* of these insights that I offer this present study.

As intimated above however, the task of keeping up with the ever-expanding Gramscian archives has by no means been easy, by anyone's standards. In the last two decades especially, we have witnessed an intense and renewed interest in Gramsci's work. Whereas once, non-Italian speaking scholars had only the Lawner letters¹³⁰ and the Henderson archive¹³¹ to assist them, now Frank Rosengarten's edited two-volume set¹³² has superseded these valuable, but nonetheless limited, collections. On Rosengarten's own count, his volumes contain a total of 486 letters¹³³ as against Lawner's previous 94 and Henderson's 219.

Then there are Gramsci's early political writings to consider. In 1957, two of the earliest non-Italian collections to offer the reader a taste of Gramsci were published. These were Carl Marzani's *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci*¹³⁴, and Louis Marks' *The Modern Prince and other Writings*¹³⁵. Telos Press also sponsored a short volume edited by Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone (*History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*) in 1975¹³⁶. These works were then followed by two volumes of the pre-prison period, titled *Selections from Political Writings*¹³⁷ (the original editions were published in 1977 and 1978). *Volume I* spans the period 1910 to 1920 and *Volume II* provides coverage of the 1920 to 1926 years. Although both volumes provide the scholar with a rich and fertile resource of the writings of Gramsci's early activist youth until the time of his arrest and ultimate imprisonment, the size of these two volumes alone stands at 393 and 516 pages – *excluding* the introduction and contents pages!

¹³⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Letters From Prison* (Lynne Lawner, Ed. & Trans., New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

¹³¹ Rosengarten (Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volume I)*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994b: pp.x-xi) explains that the Hamish Henderson archive, although collated between 1948-50, was never published until 1974. It spanned two issues (numbers 25 and 26) of the *New Edinburgh Review*. He also adds that this archive was later published in book form in 1988 (by Zwan Publications, which is now Pluto Press).

¹³² Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volumes I & II)* (Frank Rosengarten, Ed. & Raymond Rosenthal, Trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1994b & 1994c).

¹³³ Gramsci (*op. cit.*, 1994b: p.ix).

¹³⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci* (Carl Marzani, Ed. & Trans., New York: Cameron Associates Inc., 1957a).

¹³⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other Writings* (Louis Marks, Ed. & Trans., New York: International Publishers, 1957b).

¹³⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (Pedro Cavalcanti & Paul Piccone, Eds. & Pierluigi Molajoni, Mary Ann Aiello-Peabody, Paul Piccone, & John Thiem, Trans., Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1975).

¹³⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920): With additional texts by Bordiga and Tasca* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & John Mathews, Trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990a. Original work published 1977); and Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1921-1926): With additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & Trans., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990b. Original work published 1978).

To continue the stock-take, David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith's small 1985 edited collection of Gramsci's cultural writings¹³⁸ was later supplemented by Forgacs' *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected writings, 1916-1935* (1988¹³⁹). A little later, Richard Bellamy's edited collection of more pre-prison writings followed (1994¹⁴⁰). When one adds to this the recent publication of *Volumes I and II* of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Joseph Buttigieg (1992, 1996¹⁴¹), published to supersede the 1971 Hoare and Nowell Smith volume, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*¹⁴² – not forgetting the further three volumes scheduled for future publication in order to complete this set – the sheer enormity of the available primary source archive, whilst undoubtedly constituting a tremendous academic accomplishment, is nevertheless wholly overwhelming.

In addition to this library of literature, the secondary commentaries on aspects of Gramsci's life and theory constitute an archive that is at least tenfold this quantity. An indication of the exponential rate at which these commentaries are being generated can be gauged by reviewing John Cammett's bibliographical archive. The second volume of Cammett's, *Bibliografia gramsciana*, which contains a supplement updating the collection to 1993¹⁴³, numbers over 1100 items¹⁴⁴. This is in addition to the original 11,430 items contained in the first volume, *Bibliografia gramsciana, 1922-1988*¹⁴⁵. With an ever-increasing number of articles being written every year, Cammett's database clearly reflects the exponential growth of interest in the value of Gramsci's ideas.

Given the wealth of resources available to those scholars keen to acquaint themselves more intimately with Gramsci's life and times, I make no apology for omitting detailed biographical notes within the course of these chapters¹⁴⁶. Insofar as

¹³⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From The Cultural Writings* (David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds. & William Boelhower, Trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹³⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected writings, 1916-1935* (David Forgacs, Ed. & Trans., New York: Schocken Books, 1988).

¹⁴⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* (Richard Bellamy, Ed. & Virginia Cox, Trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994a).

¹⁴¹ The first of these volumes totals 608 pages, whilst the second is 736 (this count excludes the usual introductory remarks).

¹⁴² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans., New York: International Publishers, 1971).

¹⁴³ John M. Cammett & Maria Luisa Righi (Rome: Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, 1995).

¹⁴⁴ An online searchable version of the complete *Bibliografia gramsciana* is available at the Internet web site: <http://www.soc.qc.edu/gramsci>. Further resources are being advertised continuously in the *Newsletter of the International Gramsci Society*, which is also accessible at this site.

¹⁴⁵ John M. Cammett (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1991).

¹⁴⁶ For two excellent biographies see Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (London: Merlin Press, 1977) and Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977).

the overarching aim of this study is to begin to locate Gramsci's developing concept of hegemony against the broader purview of the theory and practice of Italian socialism of the early 1900s, illustrating his practice of the historical materialist method in the process, this task is one which is essentially philosophically and politically reconstructive as opposed to straightforwardly bibliographical. I want to show especially how the three key ingredients of historical materialism are writ large within his work: namely, the historicism of reality, its dialectical totalization and its humanist (re)articulation. As I shall demonstrate throughout this investigation, the coherence between Gramsci's earlier and later work can be traced back directly to his adherence to this distinctive philosophy. In this respect, Gramsci's philosophy automatically lends his work an internal integrity and overall sensibility, a point that I feel has not been emphasized adequately within the Gramscian literature.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Socialist Theory of Democracy

Ironically, as revealed in the preceding account, it was Gramsci's remarkable ability to grasp the complexity of historical reality, analyzing more thoroughly and systematically than any other theorist the relations of force within that reality, which initially attracted the attention of Laclau and Mouffe and resulted in their 1985 publication, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Attempting to explore what they took to be the 'logic' inherent in hegemony and applying it in the service of their own (by inference) theoretically superior strategy for struggle against oppressive practice, hegemony thus became a keystone concept – a new 'discursive opportunity', no less – to enable Laclau and Mouffe to unsettle such hallowed myths as the old 'Stalinist imaginary' of a classless and harmonious society. More crucially, this 'revision' allowed them to apply a new democratic vision of 'the social' to leftist struggle. No longer a 'socialist' order to be worked towards, nor one borne out of the struggle to free humanity from its own inhumanity, it was to be an order constructed from the here and now; a textured plurality of autonomous subjects, united loosely through a common regard for a redefined democratic ethos.

Far from agreeing with one reviewer who professed his glowing admiration for the 'invigorating' work of Laclau and Mouffe and their 'relentless and almost passionate' probing of 'the implications of deconstruction and anti-foundationalism for political life'¹⁴⁷, my own research has demonstrated that their alleged 'fervour' provides scant compensation for a noticeable lack of understanding of those precepts which they have attempted so enthusiastically to condemn. Consequently, despite Laclau and Mouffe's conviction that their work heralds a revalorization of politics against all forms of misguided reductionism, this is exactly the fate that the Gramscian concept of hegemony suffers at their own hands, as I have suggested above. With their own concept lacking the depth of the original Gramscian one, which arose from his astute understanding of the latent alliance between the 'political' and the 'civil' – an understanding of the formidable impress of capitalism upon both the cognitive and moral aspects of subjectivity – Laclau and Mouffe's portrayal of hegemony as a type of social 'glue' thus represents nothing but the bastardization of a concept that *already possessed* the capacity to provide the liberty needed to effect a radically new form of democracy. It is for this very reason that I present my own re-reading of Gramsci's work in the chapters which follow.

As I argue in this study, the significance of Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' lay in its explanatory capacity: its recognition of how ideas, beliefs and attitudes – which in turn govern everyday perception and practice – were brought into political service (i.e., the service of the ruling class). Simultaneously, it also provided a rich account of how the 'blanket of culture', as it were, both shielded and distanced such forms of thought from their political origins; of how they became absorbed within everyday 'common sense', thereby infiltrating the subconscious and moving beyond the scope of critical gaze. This was an awareness that arose not only from Gramsci's study of the intellectuals who espoused these views but one that evolved correspondingly from his intricate understanding of the depth to which ideas and beliefs penetrated the cultural realm and became moulded into the language and norms of everyday, customary practice. It was this negative educative-formative effect that interested Gramsci especially, as it was this effect that reflected more broadly the extent of the cultural activity needed to reverse the social harm caused by a potent combination of alienating tendencies.

¹⁴⁷ Fred Dallmayr, 'Hegemony and Democracy: A Review of Laclau and Mouffe "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics"'. [Review of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack, Trans.). London: Verso, 1985]. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 13, 3, 1987: pp.283-96.

Accordingly, as explained clearly in the next chapter, *the* fundamental concern which resonates throughout the entire body of Gramsci's writings – both within his more animated pre-prison writings and within his more contemplative prison labours – can best be thought of as the problem of *how to create history*: to privilege 'possibility' and to lift humanity out of the malaise into which it had become submerged. In essence, as we will witness time and again in these writings, this was the primary dilemma leading to Gramsci's demands for allegiance to an historical and dialectical Marxist form of thinking and activity; a new philosophy which represented the supercession of those old forms of thought which had invariably endorsed a pattern of human predestination and social determinism coterminously. For Gramsci, the struggle was nothing other than a struggle to replace limited and detrimental bourgeois forms of reasoning and judgment with humanly progressive Marxist suppositions¹⁴⁸.

This was the practical predicament of how to substitute a *regressive* philosophy for an *expansive* one. To Gramsci, Marxism stood for the creative potential of *all* humanity freed from the sobriety and poverty of a history of humanity's way of thinking about itself that has been fashioned by human endeavour – yet, fashioned *narrowly and restrictively* by an exclusive and excluding minority. Marxism thus stood for the cultivation of the universal potential of humanity: for how the majority – the 'will' of the proletariat – would be realized (liberated) and stamped onto a history that would be progressively 'humanized' by means of this process of counter-cultural struggle. As will become all too obvious in the course of this thesis, this vital concern is reflected in the very practice of Gramsci's critical interrogation of a whole variety of key social concepts – concepts such as the state, its intellectuals and socialist theory itself. Indeed, as I will be arguing here, conceptual interrogation constituted Gramsci's integral Marxist approach to politics. It lay at the very heart of his practical philosophy – his philosophy of praxis.

What will therefore be outlined in the course of the next chapter, and, indeed, in others to follow, is that we are witnessing invariably, time and again, Gramsci's intellectual attempts to *make theory work in favour of the proletariat*. With this in mind, what is immediately obvious in his writing is his own recourse to the methodology of historical materialism: a method to subvert ideology by the application of a practical, historically anchored form of reasoning. We thus witness in his writing a constant sifting of the wheat from the chaff as Gramsci sought repeatedly to identify what factors were

¹⁴⁸ 'Collective thought' would replace 'selective thought', in effect.

present marking an event and how this interpretation of reality differed from other representations. It was from such detail that he was able to slowly piece together his own understanding of history's effects; of the forces that were most likely to work in favour of or conspire against the proletariat's efforts to exert its will upon history.

Present within Gramsci's early journalistic activity is a vast array of recorded concerns that expressed the dynamic criticality of this historical-dialectical-humanist method. Geographical details contributing to social isolation; the indifference and unawareness of individuals; false leadership (on account of the reformist element within the party); the despotic state which 'crushed individual initiative'; laws which created privilege for the few; theory which was deterministic; high levels of illiteracy within the population; problems inherent in the absence of a shared language¹⁴⁹; the preoccupation with immediate interests rather than the broader concerns which a sense of citizenship would cultivate; and the general ignorance of socialism reflected in the small number of citizens who were party members – all were manifestations of a single reality, despite the seemingly disconnected nature of this variable range of issues. Importantly a method to challenge the primacy of appearance over substance – whereby the world appeared entirely independent of those who had produced it¹⁵⁰ – Gramsci's historicism must likewise be viewed as his practice of the 'art of politics'.

Insofar as Gramsci's own historiographical method entailed mapping the multiple shades of capitalist dominance and social containment and modelling the value of criticality in relation to one's historical and social insights, his historicism underscored his 'praxis': his practice of a new democratic politics. History remained in the hands of an exclusive and privileged minority, with democracy merely an abstraction. 'Nature' as well as 'spirit' was subsumed under the capitalist demands of 'production' and 'private capital accumulation'. To elucidate all those cultural practices that were essentially 'captive' to bourgeois production and to map those same features (i.e., as the effects of proletarian inactivity, correspondingly) was the preliminary and

¹⁴⁹ Peter Ives ('The Grammar of Hegemony'. *Left History*, 5, 1, Spring 1997, pp.85-103) claims, based on Tullio DeMauro's estimate, that 'only two and a half percent of the Italian population spoke "standard" Italian in 1861' (pp.92-93). Ives also notes that Graziadio Ascoli, a linguistic historian, believed that the divide between the general population and the cultured elite contributed significantly to this lack of overall cultural unity within Italy and the fragmentation of the nation-state correspondingly (p.93). See also Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990: pp.27-30) for his comments on these same points.

¹⁵⁰ Sayer (*op.cit.*,1987) also employs the religious term 'transubstantiation' (meaning that which changes its substance) to describe this process. Such a process is also captured by the term 'fetish'.

vital step in Gramsci's engagement in *praxis*. As I want to make clear within the following chapters, 'praxis' – Gramsci's integral political method – was nothing less than his own application of Marx's historical materialist worldview.

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-----CHAPTER 2-----

BOURGEOIS POLITICS AND THE POVERTY OF THE PUBLIC 'CREATIVE SPIRIT' IN ITALY: A COGNITIVE AND MORAL PROBLEM REVEALED (1910 – 1917)

In the realm of theory, Marxism is not to be confused with or reduced to any other philosophy; it is original not only because it surpasses previous philosophies but also, and above all, because it opens up a completely new road: in other words, it renews from top to bottom the whole way of conceiving philosophy.

(PN 2: Notebook 4, entry 11, p.153)

1. Introduction: How to Create History

We saw in the previous chapter that Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe were effectively claiming in their 1985 publication, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*¹, that hegemony achieved its utility within left-wing strategizing when the open, unsutured character of the social was fully embraced. In contrast to what they described as the overly ambitious, eschatological and epistemological worldview of a more traditionally socialist perspective, Laclau and Mouffe proclaimed the theoretical and practical superiority of their own perspective instead. To their way of thinking, it offered a much greater consideration of multiple forms of inequality; forms they further insisted had been subordinated unfairly to class-based theory. It did this by rejecting the central tenets associated with the Marxist tradition in light of the radicalization (interpreted as the positive reappraisal) of the foundational principles of liberalism.

It was in this fashion that Gramsci's concept of hegemony was said to have invited this revision by virtue of the logic that the post-Marxists insisted was *already intrinsic within the concept itself*². As Laclau and Mouffe explained in several articles written in defense of their thesis, it was for this very reason that hegemony played such a prominent role in theorizing their own revision of Marxism. Importantly, in their view, Gramsci's concept signified how there was no 'fixed' essence to identity: how class was simply predicated on a series of alliances with the identifier ('class') acting as a

¹ *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Winston Moore & Paul Cammack, Trans., London: Verso, 1985).

² Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985: p.3).

type of stabilizer or signifier. It was on the basis of such logic that their protest against class as a necessary and privileged rallying point for political struggle correspondingly gained its legitimacy. Put simply, according to this interpretation, hegemony signalled both the contingent character of identity as well as the arbitrary nature of class as a given political rallying point. What all this added up to was a thesis that validated struggle on many fronts, constructed around many nodal points – a consortium of interests, so to speak – based on a shared allegiance to the principles of a radicalized democracy.

As indicated previously, my own position is diametrically opposed to this uniquely anti-Marxist interpretation of hegemony³. More specifically, I argue that the strategy of creating multiple nodal points around which (undefined) minority groups might join together successfully in democratic struggle constitutes a weaker form of struggle than the broader philosophical-conceptual-concrete struggle that historical materialism describes. To my own way of thinking, the substitution of the Gramscian dialectical materialist analysis of the social for this uniquely discursive brand⁴ invariably renders the post-Marxist struggle of antagonisms one that fails to register the pronounced effect of the economy (broadly defined) upon identity construction itself⁵.

Undoubtedly, the most worrying aspect of Laclau and Mouffe's discursive theoretical approach to social, cultural and political analysis lies with the wholesale abandonment of the more traditional socialist categories of inquiry. Rendering virtually

³ I am firmly in agreement with many of Laclau and Mouffe's critics. As I indicated in the last chapter, these critics include (in chronological order): Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986); Norman Geras, 'Post-Marxism?' (*New Left Review*, 163, 1987: pp.40-82); Norman Geras, 'Ex-Marxism Without Substance: Being a Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe' (*New Left Review*, 169, 1988: pp.34-61); Donna Landry & Gerald MacLean, 'Rereading Laclau and Mouffe' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 4, 4, Winter 1991, pp.41-60); Norman Geras, 'Democracy and the Ends of Marxism' (*New Left Review*, 203, 1994: pp.92-106); Benjamin Bertram, 'New Reflections on the "Revolutionary" Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe' (*Boundary 2*, 22, 3, 1995: pp.81-110); Robert Miklitsch, 'The Rhetoric of Post-Marxism: Discourse and Institutionality in Laclau and Mouffe' (*Social Text* 45, 14, 4, 1995: pp.167-196); Gregor McLennan, 'Post-Marxism and the "Four Sins" of Modernist Theorizing' (*New Left Review*, 218, July/August 1996: pp.53-74); Daniel T. McGee, 'Post-Marxism: The Opiate of the Intellectuals' (*Modern Language Quarterly*, 58, 2, 1997: pp.201-225); David Bernans, 'Historical Materialism and Ordinary Language: Grammatical Peculiarities of the Class Struggle "Language Game"' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 11, 2, 1999: pp.18-37); Atilio A. Boron, 'Embattled Legacy: "Post-Marxism" and the Social and Political Theory of Karl Marx' (*Latin American Perspectives*, 27, 4, July 2000: pp.49-79); Henry Veltmeyer, 'Post-Marxist Project: An Assessment and Critique of Ernesto Laclau' (*Sociological Inquiry*, 70, 4, Fall 2000: pp.499-519).

⁴ As more than one commentator has observed, Laclau and Mouffe neither follow a strictly Derridean theory of discourse nor a Foucauldian one. As a result, their work has been criticized for its lack of theoretical rigour.

⁵ Although Jacob Torfing is generous with his praise for Laclau and Mouffe's work (*New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), it is invariably their lack of attention 'to the study of state-economic relations, the institutional underpinning of relatively enduring social and political identities, and the stable reproduction of capitalist societies' (p.291) that Torfing identifies as a major weakness in their study.

invisible all those questions of mind and mind formation that were previously central to Marxist theory, I argue that this is precisely the means by which the Gramscian concept of hegemony is also irreparably defamed. Reconfigured by this move into a concept that signifies the absence or ‘negativity’ of the social, hegemony is cast to denote the impossibility of the social, *full stop* – ignoring that this impossibility can ultimately be sourced back to the penetration of the social, and our ways of thinking about the social, *by capital*. That the social itself is actually a product of existing historical-philosophical preferences that are etched into our language is a point grossly under-theorized within post-Marxist thought. To put the matter in different terms, notwithstanding the fact that they recognize the discursive basis of human action, as Gramsci did, what they refuse to recognize – in attempting to evade the so-called ‘claustrophobia’ of the Marxist paradigm⁶ – is the towering effect of the economic aspect upon our reasoning, and the valuation that this mindset imposes subsequently upon every aspect of our contemporary thought and practice.

Yet this was undeniably the central point of Gramsci’s historical inquiry, as I intend to explain here. When grasped as a dialectical concept, as I have been insisting that it must be, hegemony becomes *a tool of exposition*. It helps to make visible the hidden substratum that exists beneath the realm of appearances. Through a reversal of the habitual process of externalization – importantly, a process in which the relationships that make up this seemingly ‘objective’ realm become graspable as *human constructs*, and therefore *subject to revision* – hegemony signals what is effectively an educative-formative problem. Primarily a problem of *cognitive and moral submissiveness*, as we will see from studying Gramsci’s various commentaries, hegemony both marks and explains the passivity of a population in terms of the subsequent consent that they inevitably bestow upon their own (alienating) ideological and psychological upbringing⁷. In Gramscian/ Marxist terms, hegemony therefore highlights the pathological ‘reach’ of a capitalist epistemology and ontology upon personal and social identity simultaneously. To contextualize Gramsci’s original concept within historical materialism, and to highlight the significance of the educational activity within his broader agenda of radical cognitive and moral reform, is therefore the intention of this study.

⁶ Marxism is nominated repeatedly within post-Marxist theory as a philosophy of social ‘closure’. The intention behind this thesis is to argue precisely the opposite.

⁷ See Bertell Ollman’s *Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (2nd Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

I begin this task by means of an examination of the historical context within which Gramsci developed his outlook on culture and politics, highlighting how he saw that the two domains clearly intersected in an integral and formidable way. The primary purpose of this chapter is to begin to background Gramsci's writings within the 1910 to 1917 period to enable us to gain greater insight into his protracted struggle to initiate a new cultural order to supplant that of the so-called 'liberal' order⁸. On the basis of these writings, it further charts the nature of Gramsci's response to the crisis of bourgeois (mis)rule during this period⁹; how he began to counter the destructive combination of intersecting fetishizing tendencies via the criticality offered from a Marxist historical-dialectical-humanist vantage point.

In this respect, we can start to see the way in which he initiated his own challenge against the 'pseudo-concrete'. In these very early writings, one of the first things we observe is how more parochial concerns for his homeland, Sardinia¹⁰, are juxtaposed with his broader abhorrence of a loss of 'public spirit' in Italy more generally¹¹. It is against this backdrop that Gramsci's endorsement of the self-dignification of the proletariat becomes a key imperative, in keeping with his distinctive

⁸ When Italy achieved the unification of its territories, the form of government that was supposedly established was a liberal one. In reality, vestiges of the old, feudal order were sorely evident in the policies and practices of the government, leading Gramsci to remark that socialism would be that much harder to initiate, given that 'Italy never underwent the liberal experience' ('Freedom First', // *Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918, *HPC*, pp.50-51). He also noted how the religious question – the strong theocratic tradition within the country – was an additional impediment to the realization of a truly liberal or parliamentary state ('The Italian Catholics', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 22 December 1918, *HPC*, pp.111-115).

⁹ The crisis referred to was generated by the failure of the Italian bourgeoisie to deliver the liberal society that it had promised upon Italian national unification – commonly known as the 'Risorgimento'. In an article titled 'Philanthropy, Good Will, and Organization' (*Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1917, *HPC*, pp.43-45; *SCW*, pp.23-26), for example, Gramsci noted the 'lack of any tradition of democratic life' in Italy (*HPC*, p.45). For an excellent account of this crisis of liberal rule and how it has been interpreted more commonly as a central reason for the nation's subsequent embrace of fascism, see Adrian Lyttelton's *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919 – 1929* (2nd Edition. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

¹⁰ As one of the islands lying west of the Italian mainland, Sardinia had a chequered history. Suffering successive occupation under foreign rule, it gained its independence when it became part of the unified Italian state in 1861. As Gramsci's comments frequently reveal, the Sardinians had always been considered an inferior people, separated not only physically from the mainlanders but also by the peculiarities of their own distinctive dialect and traditions. For an excellent historical overview of the fate of the Sardinians, see Alastair Davidson's *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (London: Merlin Press, 1977: especially pp.1-12).

¹¹ The metaphor of social and moral 'bankruptcy' is often employed within these writings to describe the social and moral decay, as Gramsci defines it. Gramsci also referred to this phenomenon as a bankruptcy of the 'spiritual' aspect, or the poverty of the public 'creative spirit'. In this connection, Joseph Buttigieg wrote that the entire prison legacy can be read as Gramsci's attempt to grapple with the history and development of Italian civil society – 'including its most recondite, or less exalted, elements' ('Gramsci on Civil Society'. *Boundary 2*, 22, 3, 1995: pp.1-32). Indeed, it was the cultural poverty of civil society that Buttigieg argued had contributed to the rise of a movement 'as intellectually destitute and repugnant as fascism' (*op. cit.*, 1995: p.25).

Marxist conception of mankind's latent human potential¹². Firmly convinced that the reclamation of social power was achievable only by conscious thought and creative cultural endeavour, we thus see Gramsci frequently bemoaning the pervasiveness of a 'servant' or 'slave' mentality that he identified as undermining a more robust and critical intellectual outlook¹³. Attributing the source of this malaise not only to a self-absorbed ruling class but also to a self-indulgent working class, Gramsci's immediate reaction to this deficiency is to affirm repeatedly the need for cultural (educative-formative) activity. As I argue below, his constant insistence on the primacy of 'culture' and 'cultivation' belies his steadfast desire to make the proletariat think of itself as a *producer*: and not just a producer of the economy (of capital) but a producer of history and of culture as well¹⁴.

In keeping with this continuous theme of the condemnation of social deprivation and the call for cultural renewal correspondingly, Gramsci appeals explicitly for a reinvigorated society based on a foundation of qualitatively richer, non-exploitative relationships. As will become evident in the course of this chapter, and others that follow, dialectical thinking has, at its core, the *clarification of relationships*. Insofar as Gramsci knew that alienation and self-estrangement arose out of an inability to discriminate accurately between those forces wholly within mankind's jurisdiction and those that lay outside this boundary of control (yet were still 'connected' nonetheless because they were 'known' socially), teaching individuals to discriminate between the two became of uppermost importance in countering the exploitation that inevitably fed off this ignorance. What we see echoed throughout his numerous commentaries are therefore Gramsci's repeated remonstrations that the multiple forms of bourgeois

¹² Many of Gramsci's cultural pieces capture the type of society and personality that Gramsci abhorred during this period. See, for instance, 'Theatre and Cinema', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 26 August 1916 (SCW, pp.54-56); 'Morality and Standards', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 22 March 1917 (SCW, pp.70-73); 'The Theatre Industry [I]', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 28 June 1917 (SCW, pp.56-58).

¹³ Gramsci maintained that the major preoccupation of the proletariat lay with its own 'small personal interests' – a phrase that comes specifically from Gramsci's article on 'Illiteracy' (*La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917, HPC, p.29). Elsewhere ('The Russian Utopia', *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.), 25 July 1918, and *Il Grido del Popolo*, 27 July 1918, SPW 1, pp.48-55; HPC, pp.149-155), he discussed the inability of the mass to exert their influence upon history. The problem lay in the absence of a shared social goal, Gramsci argued here, and in the fact that the proletariat directed its activities primarily towards 'the preservation of its own physiological and moral well-being' (SPW 1, p.49). Bereft of a social conscience – a psychological state that Gramsci described as arising from an absence of seeing oneself as either a 'citizen' or a 'ruler' – they were content to be led, in the same manner as sheep or cattle.

¹⁴ This was the key objective behind the Factory Council movement, as discussed in Chapter 4. As Gramsci wrote in *L'Ordine Nuovo* ('Unions and Councils', 11 October 1919, SPW 1, pp.98-102; PPW, pp.115-120):

Once the Councils exist, they give the workers direct responsibility for production, provide them with an incentive to improve their work, instill a conscious and voluntary discipline, and create a producer's mentality – the mentality of a creator of history. (SPW 1, p.101)

division – epitomized by the ethos of capitalism – could be successfully challenged only by *the restoration of an organic form of thought and association*¹⁵. The construction of a qualitatively richer human culture, freed from the alienating logic of capitalism's narrow and contractual economic base, is very clearly Gramsci's overarching objective¹⁶; the creation of a new culture distinguished moreover by a 'higher standard of human relationship'¹⁷. Humanity had to begin to 're-think' itself into existence by rethinking the linkage between the individual, society and nature as an organic whole¹⁸. This is what Gramsci meant by revolution: namely, the outlook generated from mankind's renewed consciousness of its own self-creative capacity.

Gramsci's choice of words and phrases certainly provides us with concrete affirmation, very early on, that he fully appreciated the crucial nature of the relational and valuational problem that capitalism posed and how this problem, in its broadest aspect, was itself (intrinsically) an educative-formative one. Through his historical materialist vantage point, he readily understood that a simple, direct, physical challenge against the economic mode of production could never inaugurate the type of

¹⁵ To think organically meant thinking ecologically about social organization: to recognize the interconnectedness of human beings in relation to nature and themselves. It was a type of thought that was opposed to viewing each individual in splendid isolation, just as it was opposed to viewing any one element as either superior to, or independent of, any other. Organic thought was importantly a conception of the totality as much as it was a recognition of the different elements and their interrelationship within that totality.

¹⁶ Although some commentators have argued that Gramsci's early reading of Marx was 'occasioned by no more than intellectual curiosity', others have claimed that Gramsci more than simply dabbled in Marx. Evidence of his sophisticated knowledge and use of Marx's historical materialist method is very clear throughout these early writings, as the present study intends to illustrate. Dante Germino (*Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990: pp.30-31) also draws our attention to Alfonso Leonetti's comment regarding Gramsci's knowledge of Marx. Leonetti wrote that 'during the period 1914-1918, when he was between twenty-three and twenty-seven years old, Gramsci read and studied the following works of Marx: *The Communist Manifesto*, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* [i.e. address of the Central Committee to the Communist League], *The Holy Family*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, and the *Introduction to the Critique of the Political Economy*, almost always in the French translation edited by Citron' (*ibid*). There is also a note in Cammett (1967: p.10) that confirms that Gramsci had been receiving the Socialist Party daily since he was fourteen (John Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), and had also enjoyed reading another Milanese socialistic publication, *Il Viandante*. This meant that he would have had ample and prolonged exposure to socialist ideas (*ibid*).

¹⁷ As Gramsci would later write, people were cultured 'empirically and primordially, not organically' ('Philanthropy, Good Will, and Organization', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1917, *HPC*, p.44).

¹⁸ These thoughts – of how to connect humanity with itself – are reflected in many of Gramsci's early writings. An excellent example of this thinking is provided in Gramsci's article, published in *La Citta Futura* (11 February 1917, *HPC*, pp.28-29) where the question of the illiteracy of the majority of Italian citizens is discussed. As this quotation suggests, Gramsci equated 'literacy' to the acquisition of an historical materialist vantage point:

Socialist propaganda quickly generates the feeling that one is not merely an individual in a small circle of immediate interests (the town and the family), but a citizen of a larger world full of citizens with whom one has to exchange ideas, hopes and miseries. In this way, culture and literacy have acquired a purpose; and as long as this purpose remains a vital part of one's consciousness the love of knowledge will remain irresistible. (*HPC*, p.29)

society Gramsci desired in the way in which Marx explained it could be authored. The problem of the exclusivity of capital – engineered into culture and everyday patterns of reasoning – was consequently not only a problem of *material* production but equally, one of *social* production correspondingly. Very much, therefore, an *integral* problem, it was one which demanded an integral resolution, as will soon become evident. As my own analysis will begin to demonstrate, the aspirations behind Gramsci's conceptual critique are clearly indicative of this fundamental, all-embracing goal: to instigate a new 'world view' (*forma mentis*) which was no less equivalent to the establishment of a new, and expansive, proletarian hegemony.

In determining the content of this chapter, I have chosen to deliberately confine my discussion to just three important 'umbrella' themes that appear to me to characterize this early archive and thus provide the 'best way in', as it were. These are Gramsci's early socialism as an integral vision of life and the practice of conceptual reappropriation that was fundamental to this vision¹⁹; self-education as the practice of the art of active discrimination between the permanent and the willed; and finally, the theme of 'indifference' and religion's role in human estrangement. Because of Gramsci's uniquely Marxist orientation – one that identifies the warp of the weave and simultaneously cuts across it – it must be noted, however, that such themes must nonetheless be treated as no more than convenient reference points to allow greater access to the unity of the archive as a whole. The following account can only ever contain a *selective overview* of the richness of the ideas and arguments being expressed. Mindful of this caution, let us turn then to these themes.

¹⁹

As I suggest in this chapter, one of the greatest challenges that the socialists faced was undermining the psychological normativity of the concepts that were in ordinary, everyday use. Within these early writings, the concept of culture is one of the first concepts that Gramsci targets for reappropriation. Dante Germino even goes so far as to suggest – in agreement with the findings of Franco Lo Piparo (expressed in his *Lingu, intellettuali, egemonia in Gramsci*. Bari, 1979) – that the work that Gramsci did in linguistics with Professor Matteo Bartoli at Turin University (1912-1914) undoubtedly aided his comprehension of the inseparability of language, politics and culture (*op. cit.*, 1990: especially pp.26-31). Germino also notes (p.36) that Gramsci even toyed with the idea of submitting 'a thesis on the history of language, in which he would seek to apply the critical methods of historical materialism'.

2. Gramsci's Organic and Integral Vision of Life

Gramsci's early journalistic activity was the medium through which he began to articulate his Marxist philosophy and to identify the various sites upon which the proletarian counter-cultural struggle needed to be fostered. As page after page of his political and cultural commentaries attest, civil society had assimilated and naturalized a certain political outlook that fortified capitalism. What Gramsci's ongoing commentaries therefore represent are, significantly, his preliminary attempts to map the myriad of factors that had contributed historically to the poverty of the evolution of his society towards the formation of a social (socialist) consciousness. What this archive equally demonstrates is Gramsci's acute understanding of how the inorganic and anti-dialectical manner in which thought and structural organization within society normalized class division, rendering it natural and impenetrable as an outcome. In this respect, his diverse reflections and subtle cameos on culture and politics represent Gramsci's initial and profound grasp of the reach of capitalism's power and its impact on mankind's transformative/ onto-formative capabilities.

In the earliest example of Gramsci's writing – an essay he wrote as a student titled 'Oppressed and Oppressors'²⁰ – the theme which dominates this work is the notion of 'civilization' and how contradictory the rhetoric was from its concrete manifestation. Expressing his cynicism towards the nobler, liberal tendencies to depict war and colonization as an intention to 'civilize', he commented here that men were motivated more by their insatiable desire for personal advancement and individual gain than by any selfless commitment to a collective praxis or common good²¹. In the final analysis, he concluded, 'society' was simply an abstraction; built on nothing more than a thin and external veneer of civilization²². As explained more comprehensively in Chapter 4, the problem of colonialism which this article highlighted was the very same

²⁰ There is some confusion surrounding the exact date in which this article was written. Most commentators agree, however, that it was written either in December 1910 or at the beginning of 1911 (*SPW* 1, pp.3-5; *HPC*, pp.156-158). Interestingly, this particular article has often been set apart from Gramsci's other work, with commentators arguing that it has little historical merit beyond being a simple reflective piece on Gramsci's beloved homeland, Sardinia. Whilst certainly agreeing that this reflection clearly arose out of Gramsci's experiences as a marginalized southerner, what this essay nonetheless reflects is the multiple and enduring concerns that we also find re-articulated throughout both his pre-prison and later prison writings.

²¹ Gramsci (after Marx) conceived of mind and meaning not as properties of individual determination but instead as properties of the social order. Making people conscious of the intersubjective nature of meaning meant making them conscious that worthwhile individual forms of life are dependent upon collective effort and individual access to the collective resources of the community.

²² As Gramsci writes here, wars have always tended to have been waged for commercial gain and legitimated as an intent to 'civilize'. Ironically, statues and monuments are then erected in memory

problem that typified the dilemmas identifiable in the Italian South, and was symptomatic of the pathologies systemic throughout a society divided by class factionalism. Revisiting these issues in a paper that Gramsci wrote in 1926 immediately prior to his imprisonment titled 'Some Aspects of the Southern Question'²³, this paper can be read as a further, albeit more sophisticated, attempt to define in greater detail the concerns that he first discussed in the earlier essay. The economic marginalization of the South²⁴, the dominance and makeup of the peasantry and its allegiance to the conservative spirituality of Catholicism and the dominance of southerners throughout the national state bureaucracy (yet the parallel absence of socialist representation among this sector) were representative of an assortment of issues which contributed to Gramsci's formidable understanding of the tremendous tensions, antagonisms and conflicts that were enduring features of Italy's social landscape²⁵.

The French Revolution provided a superb example of how the abolition of class slavery would demand the application of intellectual and moral reserves of immense human proportion. In Gramsci's estimation, it was nothing but a pseudo-revolution – a reformist undertaking that simply created a superficial impression of social betterment. Despite the masses having benefited materially by certain concessions and improvements to their lifestyle, no significant change in the material or moral fabric of the society had actually transpired. In Gramsci's view, the Revolution *did* serve a limited purpose nonetheless: it brought to popular consciousness the understanding

of these atrocities, Gramsci further laments ('Oppressed and Oppressors', December 1910 or early 1911, *SPW 1*, p.5).

²³ The unique characteristics of the South became the unique problems of revolutionary struggle (see Davidson, *op. cit.*, 1977: pp.1-12 for an account of the history of Sardinia). Gramsci presented an overview of these problems in the final article he produced prior to his arrest and imprisonment in 1926. As noted in his article, his own paper was prompted by the publication of a rival article about the South and its misfortunes by the editors of a journal titled *Quarto Stato*. See 'Some Aspects of the Southern Question', September-November 1926 (*SPW 2*, pp.441-462; *PPW*, pp.313-337).

²⁴ The question of the economic exploitation of the South was a persistent theme throughout Gramsci's work. For example, in *Notebook 2* (*PN 1*: entry 55, pp.301-302) he noted how the iniquitous emphyteusis leases operated almost exclusively in the South (these were leases whereby the landowner benefits from both the profit acquired from the regular ground-rental paid by the leasee as well as the improvements to the land over time). Similarly, in a further entry in the same notebook (*PN 1: Notebook 2*, entry 65, p.309), Gramsci points out how an author of one of the articles he was reading noted the intensive and irrational deforestation of the mountains of southern Sardinia in order to sell coal to Spain.

²⁵ Chapter 2 in John Cammett's excellent study, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), provides valuable detail about the economic and political climate of Italy at the time. The year 1911, for instance, was a boon year for Turin's industries, culminating in 'The International Industrial Exhibition' between April and November. The political effect of this climate of economic optimism meant that reformist parties were supported to the detriment of the revolutionary parties. Cammett notes also how this tendency was quickly reversed once the economy began to shrink between 1911 and 1913 – partially on account of the Italian involvement in the Libyan war (pp.14-15).

that social privileges and differences were products 'of society and not of nature'²⁶. It helped to endorse basic secular ideas that human problems (poverty, war) were squarely the result of human motivation rather than the outcome of the work of some 'hidden hand'²⁷ – either of divine intervention or metaphysical causality.

Gramsci was soon provided with the perfect occasion to express the depth of his opposition towards capitalism when debate flared up concerning the appropriate response by the Socialist Party to Italy's involvement in the First World War²⁸. Notwithstanding the fact that many of his fellow socialist colleagues had voted in favour of allying with the bourgeoisie under a nationalist banner (to form a 'united front'), Gramsci did not hesitate to condemn this move in his October 1914 article, 'Active and Operative Neutrality'. Basing his opposition on his long-standing conviction that the class struggle needed to sit centre-stage within national life, we see him advising that 'a general fusion of all parties in national unanimity'²⁹ was merely a convenient way of postponing this struggle indefinitely. Convinced that a show of cross-party solidarity against the war would needlessly compromise the socialist cause, Gramsci regarded an alliance between the classes as an inherently regressive and foolhardy policy. A national, united front would help to *consolidate* – rather than to alleviate – the bourgeoisie's hold over the proletariat, he wrote. They would still be its 'pupils', and no less subject to the ideological constraints of its authority³⁰.

Further examples of Gramsci's disquiet towards various 'socialist solutions' are similarly interspersed throughout this early archive. In particular, we find him frequently juxtaposing his discernment of socialism as 'an integral vision of life' with what he takes to be the limited vision of fellow party members (Angelo Tasca and Amadeo Bordiga³¹,

²⁶ 'Oppressed and Oppressors' (*SPW* 1, p.5). Gramsci would repeat this point in 'Socialism and Culture' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916, *SPW* 1, pp.10-13; *HPC*, pp.20-23; *PPW*, pp.8-12). He wrote, 'Above all, man is mind, i.e., he is a product of history, not nature' (*SPW* 1, p.11).

²⁷ Gramsci argued in particular that the proletariat needed to view social history as a social (human) phenomenon rather than a natural phenomenon in his article 'Indifference' (*Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) 26 August 1916, *SPW* 1, pp.17-18).

²⁸ This was in an article titled 'Active and Operative Neutrality', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 October 1914 (*SPW* 1, pp.6-9; *HPC*, pp. 116-120; *PPW*, pp.3-7). To Gramsci, World War I was something of an historical watershed for Italian socialists. In this article, he questioned the role of the party (the PSI) and once again stressed the need for the party to develop its own 'internal dialectic' (*SPW* 1, p.6). As explained in the following discussion, Gramsci saw that the party had to challenge the cognitive and moral authority of existing philosophies in order to establish new, organic relations between its own leadership element and other party members.

²⁹ Gramsci was in agreement with Mussolini on this point, as he stated in this article (Mussolini was at that time a prominent left-wing supporter). *Ibid.* (p.8).

³⁰ As we will see in Chapter 5, Gramsci was later to become a tireless advocate for a worker/ peasant alliance.

³¹ Angelo Tasca was a fellow student with Gramsci at the University of Turin. Giuseppe Fiori (*Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*. New York: Schocken Books, 1970: p.76) informs us that Tasca, at

especially). As he argues emphatically throughout these writings, unless the philosophy and underlying ethos of the new socialist vision is fully comprehended by those in prominent leadership positions, little authentic change inevitably would result³². Much – if not *all* – of the friction that would be generated between Gramsci and his socialist allies during this period (and beyond) can invariably be traced back to these roots; to the inability of his comrades to conceive of socialism as a coherent philosophy with a distinctive dialectical and historical outlook.

Gramsci's anti-positivistic³³ sentiments are first highlighted in the course of his discussion of the lack of socialist commitment to an 'integral' philosophy. Although primarily a piece he wrote to mourn the passing of a brilliant young literary critic (Renato Serra³⁴), 'The Light Which Went Out' (1915³⁵) was a commentary which provided Gramsci with one of his earliest opportunities to record his objections towards the unwarranted pre-eminence of abstract and positivistic forms of thought³⁶. From the nature of Gramsci's comments, there is little doubt that he saw positivism as nothing other than a naïve type of thinking that legitimated class servitude and human

seventeen, was the co-founder of the Turin branch of the Young Socialist Federation. Amadeo Bordiga had been a Neapolitan engineering student who subsequently became the leader of the 'intransigent' faction of the party, and later assumed leadership of the Communist Party fringe after the Livorno split in 1921 (see Fiori, Chapter 4).

³² The rift between Tasca and Gramsci occurred when the newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* was launched as the voice of the factory workers. In one of the articles Gramsci penned – 'The Programme of *L'Ordine Nuovo*' (14 and 28 August 1920, *SPW* 1, pp.291-298; *PPW*, pp.178-186; *MP*, pp.22-27) – he made it quite clear that Tasca's ideas were totally at odds with the ideas of *L'Ordine Nuovo*. This dispute centred around the relationship between the leaders and the masses, with Gramsci taking the firm view that there had to be real communion and reciprocity between the two groups.

³³ Gramsci rejected positivism repeatedly in its multiple forms. A quotation from one of the earliest articles in which he discusses this problem is telling in this regard ('Margins', *La Città Futura*, 11 February 1917, *HPC*, p.41):

[A mythical model of a future society]...had been created when there was blind faith in everything accompanied by the attribute *scientific*. Reaching such a model society was a postulate of philosophic positivism, of *scientific* philosophy. But such a conception turned out to be not scientific, but only aridly mechanistic...Such a conception is a toy of positivist fatalism whose determinants are social energies abstracted from man and from will, incomprehensible and absurd: an arid mysticism with no outbursts of suffering passion. This bookish vision of life saw unity and effects, but did not see multiplicity and man whose unity is synthesis. (p.41)

³⁴ Fiori (*op. cit.*, 1970: p.99) explains that Serra was a young critic, very highly esteemed by Gramsci but killed tragically in one of the battles on the Podgora river. Gramsci went so far as to compare Serra to Francesco De Sanctis who was, in his estimation, 'the greatest European literary critic'. (For an exemplary discussion of the importance of De Sanctis to Gramsci, see Chapter 3, 'The Appeal of De Sanctis', in Robert Dombroski, *Antonio Gramsci*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989: pp.52-73).

³⁵ *Il Grido del Popolo*, 20 November 1915 (*HPC*, pp.26-28).

³⁶ In entry 78 of *Notebook 1* (*PN* 1: p.183) Gramsci quotes an excerpt from an article by Balbino Giuliano in which positivism is represented as antithetical to critical thought insofar as it had become a 'materialist theology':

Positivism had the merit of restoring to European culture the sense of reality which the old rationalistic ideologies had wiped out, but subsequently positivism was guilty of enclosing reality within the sphere of dead nature and, therefore, also of enclosing philosophical enquiry within a kind of new materialist theology.

oppression coterminously. It stood in direct opposition to dialectical knowledge to the extent that an exclusive positivist outlook led to a rejection of a comprehensive (organic, totalized) viewing of social reality, culminating in the simultaneous endorsement of the isolation and fragmentation of knowledge. Through the erection of knowledge boundaries, opposing viewpoints were duly discredited because their own methodologies failed to accord with these more rigorous 'scientific' principles. To this end, Gramsci's manifest disdain is clearly captured in his caustic jibe that the quickest way to extinguish the flame of humanity was to 'measure poetry in cubic metres and in kilograms of printed paper'³⁷. It was plainly the job of the party to expose all such forms of 'intellectualism' and 'scholastic prejudice', a tactic that he held as being integral to the promotion of an organic, socialist worldview.

Gramsci's continuing preoccupation with critiquing anti-positivism (later expressed as a form of anti-scientism³⁸) is also a central theme of one of his most celebrated early articles, 'Socialism and Culture' (1916³⁹). Here, what we see in Gramsci's carefully formulated response to the small-minded rantings of fellow Italian Enrico Leone⁴⁰ is the first overt example of Gramsci's deployment of a dialectical-historical-humanist method and the practice of conceptual reappropriation that it necessarily condoned. Objecting to the 'common sense' view of culture as an externalized entity that appeared to stand entirely independent from the intentional actions (labour) of concrete human beings, Gramsci attacks this view of culture and the concept of 'intellectual' that becomes its by-product. In Gramsci's view, the solution to

³⁷ 'The Light Which Went Out', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 20 November 1915 (HPC, p.28).

³⁸ As Buttigieg reminds us, Gramsci is not against scientific forms of thought *per se*, but is objecting to the apoliticization which occurs when phenomenon are given scientific (politically neutral) ascriptions. As explained in Buttigieg's exemplary discussion on the reasons behind Gramsci's detailed examination of various intellectuals and their cultural 'contributions' (PN 1: especially pp.42-64), the primary means to alleviate the blinding effects of scientific legitimization was for Gramsci to critique the impact of scientific thought upon the social realm. For, as Buttigieg argues, it was 'scientific legitimacy' that had

...contributed to the perpetuation of the deterministic (and fatalistic) belief that certain individuals (criminals, for instance) as well as certain groups (in particular the Southerners) [were] 'barbaric' or primitive by nature, that is, biologically. (1992: p.47)

³⁹ *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916 (SPW 1, pp.10-13; HPC, pp.20-23; PPW, pp.8-12).

⁴⁰ Both Buttigieg (*Antonio Gramsci's Triad: Culture, Politics, Intellectuals*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Centre for Humanistic Studies, University of Minnesota [CHS Occasional Papers, Number 10], 1987: p.15) and Levy ('A New Look at the Young Gramsci'. *Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], 14, 3, 1986: p.43) note how this article can be read as a direct response to the polemic of the Italian syndicalist leader (trade union leader) and university professor, Enrico Leone. Buttigieg points out that Leone published an article on syndicalism the previous fortnight, which was essentially a 'diatribe against culture and intellectualism and a eulogy to the ignorant worker' (*ibid.*). The note accompanying Leone's name in *SPW 1* (note 8, p.378) also informs us that he was expelled from the Socialist Party in 1908, and 'became a sort of precursor to fascism'. Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990: p.38), for his part, maintains that this article also continued the debate that was begun in 1912 in the Socialist Youth Congress at Bologna. Amadeo Bordiga and Angelo Tasca had disagreed over the idea that a socialist revolution coincided with the emergence of a socialist culture. Gramsci sided with Tasca against Bordiga, thereby supporting this thesis.

the manufactured division between mental prestige and manual labour that Leone proposed – no less than the glorification of the latter and the denigration of the former – typified a simplistic solution to the problem of thought and its intentional debasement.

Challenging the naturalness and inevitability of the existing hierarchies within the social order (i.e., how certain values are condoned selectively and rewarded subsequently under the seemingly 'fair' and 'neutral' rules of capitalism) Gramsci argues in his article that intellectual functioning is a 'natural' feature of human life. Consequently, he rejects the idea that 'thinking' should become the exclusive activity of a group of people who stood above and to one side of the majority⁴¹. Urging socialists to reject the parallel fetishized view of culture as 'encyclopedic knowledge'⁴², we see him juxtaposing the inorganic concept of culture (which equated to 'non'-culture, in his opinion) with a reinvigorated and dialectical notion instead⁴³. Describing this inferior view of culture, he wrote:

We need to free ourselves from the habit of seeing culture as encyclopedic knowledge, and men as mere receptacles to be stuffed full of empirical data and a mass of unconnected raw facts, which have to be filed in the brain as in the columns of a dictionary, enabling their owner to respond to the various stimuli from the outside world. This form of culture really is harmful, particularly for the proletariat. It serves only to create maladjusted people, people who believe they are superior to the rest of humanity because they have memorized a certain number of facts and dates and who rattle them off at every opportunity, so turning them also into a barrier between themselves and others⁴⁴.

What this example aptly demonstrates is an early application of historical materialist strategy; namely, of moving the conceptual boundaries of meaning by reinvigorating a traditional, inorganic term with a new organic nuance⁴⁵. Understanding

⁴¹ As explained in Chapter 4, Gramsci became highly critical of some of his communist confreres because of their assumptions about proletarian and peasant ineptitude. This was a sure recipe for sectarianism, he thought: of enslaving the masses to a set of political tendencies which were not of their own construction.

⁴² 'Socialism and Culture', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.10).

⁴³ For a useful discussion on language and culture, especially language and its connection with metaphor, see *SPN*, pp.449-452.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*. In an article written a little later in December 1917 ('Philanthropy, Good Will, and Organization', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1917, *HPC*, pp.43-45; *SCW*, pp.23-26), Gramsci repeated this view of culture in response to another writer, 'Umilissimo':

'Umilissimo' has an inaccurate concept of culture. He believes that culture is equal to knowing a little of everything, i.e., it is the same as the 'popular university'. On the other hand, I see culture as the exercise of thought, the acquisition of general ideas, the habit of connecting cause and effect. For me, everything is already cultured insofar as they think, everyone connects cause and effect. But people are cultured empirically and primordially, not organically. (*HPC*, p.44)

⁴⁵ Gramsci later wrote that what he advocated was a 'living philology' (*SPN*, p.429). The phrase appeared in Gramsci's critical discussion of Nikolai Bukharin's *Popular Manual* (see Chapters 5 and 6).

precisely how a word become associated with a certain meaning, and how that meaning in turn was affiliated to a certain political worldview⁴⁶, Gramsci's challenge therefore became one of attempting to inaugurate a completely new set of 'socialized' meanings different from the traditional cognitively constraining terms. That is, we see him reappropriating the existing (psychologically limiting) terms and imbuing them with humanized, inclusive (dialectical), organic, popular meanings. As he would later caution in his *Notebook* musings, 'identity of terms does not mean identity of concepts'⁴⁷. In this respect, his strategy here of reinscribing the common sense concept with a new expansive meaning can be seen as the chief way in which Gramsci began to enunciate his own 'art of politics': the 'integral vision' that he saw harboured within socialism.

Throughout several of Gramsci's commentaries thereafter, the need for self-awareness is continually stressed. He argues that individuals must be critically conscious of their own beliefs, but warns additionally that everyone must be called upon to account for the nature of their commitments. As will be detailed more fully in Chapter 3, Gramsci's own unwavering commitment to Marxism and the onto-formative philosophy upon which it is grounded is given form in his writing through his regular petitions for the cultivation of both 'character' and 'personality'. To position the proletariat as the instigator of the new cultural order required that the predominant alienating personality – a personality that had permeated the proletarian psyche – had to be replaced with a socialized and liberated one instead. A key aspect of this goal involved combating the notion that the various leadership and governance functions – functions that had been regarded previously as select and 'specialist' activities – should continue to be assigned to the jurisdiction of an exclusive body of professional

⁴⁶ As noted in a footnote 19 within this chapter, Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990) drew our attention to the emphasis that Gramsci placed on languages whilst studying at the University of Turin (1911-1913). Cammett, however, was perhaps the first to make this claim (*op. cit.*, 1967). Cammett noted how Gramsci's linguistics professor, Matteo Bartoli, 'expected great things of him' – particularly as an intellectual ally in fighting the 'neogrammarians' whose principal worldview was decidedly positivistic (p.17). They became noted for reducing linguistics 'to formal analysis rather than studying language in its social and historical context' (*ibid.*). See also Steven R. Mansfield ('Introduction to Gramsci's "Notes on Language". *Telos*, 59, 1984: pp.119-126) and Peter Ives ('The Grammar of Hegemony'. *Left History*, 5, 1, Spring 1997: pp.85-103, and 'A Grammatical Introduction to Gramsci's Political Theory'. *Rethinking Marxism*, 10, 1, 1998: pp.34-51) for their discussion of Gramsci's knowledge of linguistics as a fundamental aspect of his emerging political philosophy.

⁴⁷ (SPN, pp.455-56). In Gramsci's fifth notebook (PN 2: *Notebook 5*, entry 131, p.384), in relation to a discussion regarding the merits of a regular language column in a newspaper, he maintains that 'language should be treated as a conception of the world, as an expression of a conception of the world'. Following this logic, he argues here that 'the technical improvement of expression, both quantitatively (the acquisition of new modes of expression) and qualitatively (the acquisition of the nuances of meaning and of a more complex syntax and style) represent[ed] a broadening and deepening of the conception of the world and its history' (*ibid.*).

intellectuals⁴⁸. The question of how to engender the self-sufficiency of the proletariat is a constant theme within these early writings⁴⁹. As Gramsci repeatedly intimated within his commentaries, 'potentiality' would become 'actuality' only through conscious and critical, cultural endeavour.

As this task suggested, the political programme given life to in a series of successive articles embodied the idea that cultural preparation – leading to proletarian class-consciousness – had to include the subversion of existing values, understandings and practices and their replacement with culturally progressive (authentically liberating) and expansive ones. We therefore begin to get a picture, very early on, of the complexity of the process of cultural critique that Gramsci was beginning to articulate publicly. Habits of thought, historically acquired by the majority yet engineered socially into durable forms of thought by minority interests ('intellectuals' or 'leaders', variously defined), acted as a formidable barrier against social integration. What Gramsci therefore began to promote was the popularization of Marx's historical materialist worldview; importantly, a campaign to articulate concepts that captured a new spirit of human possibility.

Given that the existing mental outlook of most of his countrymen was also characterized by a tendency towards intellectual laziness and political indifference, he operated under no mistaken illusion however that this undertaking would be an altogether easy one. As his writings progressively illustrate, very few of his confreres understood the interconnectedness between the economic and the social – which meant that very few understood that changing the world entailed a systematic and sustained assault on the linguistic-conceptual foundations of the old culture. As Gramsci's writings would begin to attest⁵⁰, with most of his colleagues ill-equipped

⁴⁸ The classification that Gramsci would subsequently draw in his prison writings between the various types of intellectuals (e.g., Brescianists, Lorians) and their function in cultural formation (progressive or repressive) find their origin additionally in these early reflections. See Buttigieg's introduction to Volume 1 of the *Prison Notebooks* (especially the section titled 'Gramsci's Method') for an incisive analysis of some of the reasons why Gramsci valued these distinctions (1992: pp.42-64).

⁴⁹ Gramsci's injunction that the proletariat educate itself became a constant feature of his newspaper entries. A typical example of these thoughts appear in his article 'Freedom First' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918, *HPC*, pp.50-51) where he writes:

The responsibility to educate itself is of major importance among the organized proletariat: to generate from one's group the prestige necessary to assume social management... Education, culture, and the organized dissemination of knowledge and experience constitute the independence of the masses from the intelligensia. The most intelligent phase of the struggle against the despotism of professional intellectuals and the trust in divine law consists in the intensification of culture and the raising of consciousness. (*HPC*, p.51)

⁵⁰ See the discussion in the following chapter (Chapter 3, 'The Russian Example') concerning Gramsci's condemnation of authoritarianism and idolatry.

themselves to challenge their own theoretical-practical inheritance, the resultant lack of a grouping well-versed in the historical materialist method themselves would remain a key factor in hindering the popularization and spread of a genuinely counter-cultural worldview⁵¹.

Aware of the priority that needed to be placed on enhancing this leadership element by teaching them this new form of 'literacy', Gramsci not surprisingly repeated his calls for more educative endeavour and cultural activity. Obviously, there is little doubt that Gramsci saw education as the only viable means by which to reappropriate culture and history. In historical materialist terms, 'material production' was now to be esteemed as a general principle of labour and life.

3. Towards Self-Enlightenment: Self-Education as Onto-Formative Endeavour

Self-education was a means of re-forming socio-human reality, in Gramsci's view; a self-enlightenment intended to be self-actualizing. It was the method to penetrate existing reality so that the insufficiency of the prevailing mode of thought and the self-estranging condition that it authored could be challenged accordingly. As has been noted already in the discussion above, 'Socialism and Culture' was a critical commentary which threw into stark relief the scale of the problem that Gramsci conceded was fundamentally one of the poverty of human 'personality' and mankind's comprehension of 'self' as an outcome. Put simply, it was the problem of the self's lack of understanding that the qualitative measure of human civilization emanated from its own philosophical preferences and the practices that these simultaneously endorsed.

To know the laws 'governing the mind' meant understanding how the self had been constituted historically; how the elements of nature alongside the social and cultural elements influenced the process of 'self'-creation and granted humanity its human specificity. Therefore, knowing others, 'their history, the successive efforts they have made to be what they are', was Gramsci's injunction to 'know oneself better through others and to know others better through oneself'⁵². Clearly a process involving a differentiation between the self and 'other', and between the subjective and the

⁵¹ Gramsci's continuing frustration regarding the submissiveness of the proletariat is accompanied by a similar concern about the submissiveness of both trade union and socialist leaders to a capitalist rationale (see Chapter 4).

⁵² 'Socialism and Culture', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.13).

seemingly objective, it was a process which provided a vantage point that inevitably invited the reunification of all these relationships. Consequently, the world was no longer 'known' vicariously in an externalized and mediated fashion, but was known directly in a concrete form as the product of human productive activity (labour).

In Gramsci's mind, self-education therefore involved a struggle over the very terms and conditions of the constitution of 'knowledge' and 'philosophy'⁵³. To the extent that we witness how philosophy is no longer depicted in Gramsci's writings as a source of *externalized coercive power* but is instead portrayed as a *natural attribute of humanity*, what we are also seeing is evidence of the extent to which Marx's historical materialist method pervades these earlier commentaries. As the quotation at the commencement of this chapter specifically infers, and as we have seen illustrated above Gramsci's own reappropriation of both 'culture' and the idea of 'intellectual' functioning, Marxism was an entirely different philosophy. It was an orientation that restored to a non-fetishized state mankind's natural facilities 'to think' and 'to know'. This message figures prominently throughout this archive, despite the myriad issues that Gramsci is seen to address. Greater powers of practical discrimination equate to greater adeptness at deploying an historical-dialectical-humanist method. This is equivalent to the practice of critical and socialized thought (the universalization of philosophical labour), which, in turn, is synonymous with the successful curtailment of mankind's material and moral dispossession.

Historiography – which denotes both the ground upon which this labouring occurs as well as the criticality that this labouring process generates – is recommended repeatedly here as the way to grasp the social whole. Both in terms of the regional makeup of Italy and with regard to its international networks more particularly, careful historical analysis was imperative to an understanding of the dynamic interplay of the past upon the present. It was vital also to allow philosophy to gain sufficient critical

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Gramsci made it abundantly obvious in his critique of the ideas of Benedetto Croce and Nikolai Bukharin (see Chapters 5 and 6) that the philosophy of praxis, with its dialectical underpinnings, was above all a 'doctrine of knowledge' which was 'philosophy in action'. As discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 to 6, Gramsci's rearticulation of philosophy is essentially his endorsement of dialectical thinking. In this regard, the notion of the dialectic assumes interaction as a fundamental aspect of knowledge itself. Aronowitz put it well when he wrote that interaction is necessarily reflexive (*op. cit.*, 1981: p.42). Without the reflective aspect of thought, activity is merely mechanical or abstract, and serves an external purpose rather than stemming from the authentic activity – the will – of the agent. See Karel Kosik's excellent book, *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and the World* (Karel Kovandra & James Schmidt, Trans.). Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company [Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume 52], 1976).

purchase on the present for humanity to issue for itself an entirely different future⁵⁴. In this respect, Gramsci's preoccupation with eliminating the sufferings of Sardinia was not merely a local or parochial concern. Rather, we gain the very clear impression that his urging for an 'examination of conscience' by the Italian nation-state⁵⁵ was meant to be generalized to every level of human organization across every historical epoch. Whilst historicizing the present certainly brought to the fore specific instances of man's inhumanity to man, it was at the same time a much more versatile methodology to enable mankind to rethink the nature of 'civilization' accordingly. In other words, it was a practice that allowed for the possibility of a revaluation of human 'being' so that its 'becoming' could be qualitatively richer and inherently more satisfying as a result.

Consistent with these sentiments, Gramsci's short article on the Turkish persecution of Armenia⁵⁶ – called simply 'Armenia' (11 March 1916⁵⁷) – is yet another contribution where he focuses on the topic of 'civilization' through an examination of a further reoccurring theme; that of human indifference. Noting that the incentive for positive humanitarian intervention tended to be determined by whether people were 'close to us', were 'familiar to us' or were 'within the circle of our humanity'⁵⁸, he acknowledges that feelings of intimate connection tended to be a crucial determinant of action. And by the term 'proximity', Gramsci was talking about historical as well as geographical proximity⁵⁹. That said, in spite of a nation's close physical placement and shared cultural connection – as was the case with the relationship between Northern and Southern Italy – there was never any guarantee that these broader, more enduring cultural associations could withstand the impact of commerce. Harking back to the major theme of his schoolboy essay, Gramsci once more registers his contempt for the manner in which commercial concerns have taken, and would always take, precedence

⁵⁴ We may treat Gramsci's notebook legacy as his concrete attempt to commence this analysis. Indeed, the first thing to strike the reader when examining the unedited version of these notes was how historical analysis dominates Gramsci's notebook observations. I discuss this aspect of his work in Chapter 5 especially.

⁵⁵ See Davidson (*op. cit.*, 1977: especially pp.1-12) for an excellent overview of the trials and tribulations of the Sardinian people.

⁵⁶ Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990: pp.43-44) explains that this article was written by Gramsci in memory of the Armenian massacre of 1915 in which as many as one and a half million Armenians were estimated to have been killed during the last days of the Ottoman Empire.

⁵⁷ 'Armenia', *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.79-81).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ In 'The Beard and the Band' (*Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 5 February 1918, HPC, pp.86-87), Gramsci also discusses how temporality is an important dimension of ethics; how, on the one hand, it is quite legitimate to defend popular ideals and 'the rights of the trampled masses' when engaged in a discussion of ancient Rome but how, on the other, this type of condemnation becomes completely unacceptable with reference to a contemporary discussion of social and economic conditions in modern Italy. As Gramsci shrewdly observes, freedom seen 'far away and in the past...did not look dangerous' (HPC, p.87).

over issues of humanity⁶⁰.

In a follow-up article focusing on 'The South and The War' (1 April 1916⁶¹), Gramsci reissued his warning that protectionist policies were adversely affecting the South. Reminding readers that the South had suffered under the rule of external 'paternalistic administrations' for centuries, Gramsci also noted how the unification of Italy did nothing whatsoever to alleviate, much less than arrest, this suffering. Rather than offering opportunities for the North to assist its struggling cousin – to compensate for the 'natural conditions and historical precedents'⁶² – deliberate government policies (such as protectionism) made it quite meaningless to talk about 'national leadership' with any degree of authentic conviction, in Gramsci's opinion. Somewhat ironically, as he had observed previously, the only real merit of such policies was to confirm instead the class-based nature of many of the supposedly 'universal' activities that the government condoned⁶³.

By profiling how the Sardinians had been mistreated historically, Gramsci was clearly taking issue with those who argued that Italian unification meant that Italy had evolved into a 'modern' state and a 'liberal' nation⁶⁴. As any critical investigation into the problems of the South patently illustrated, in spite of the political accomplishments of national unification – more specifically, in Italy's case, industrialization and the alleged establishment of bourgeois 'democracy' – a discriminatory economic (politically-endorsed) agenda was ultimately the reason why a large percentage of the

⁶⁰ Gramsci's appreciation of the interconnectedness between economics and genuine moral practice was the fundamental point of difference between his position (and the position of most Marxists) and that of Benedetto Croce. As Benedetto Fontana has argued (*Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), many of Gramsci's views evolved as a direct result of his critical interrogation of Croce's ideas. The publication of Croce's work, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx* (C.M. Meredith, Trans., with an introduction by A.D. Lindsay, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1966. Original work published 1914), would have been an obvious target for Gramsci's disaffections. Here, Croce insisted that moral judgments could not be derived from a study of the economic process. But, as we see from Gramsci's comments here, matters of economics constantly intersected with ethical concerns and this interference needed to be acknowledged.

⁶¹ *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.101-104).

⁶² 'The South and the War', 1 April 1916, *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, p.103).

⁶³ Gramsci took every opportunity to critique the contradictory rhetoric of the new liberal state. In the years to come, there would be little doubt in Gramsci's mind that it was the liberal state's failure to deal with the residues of feudalism in Italy that assisted the birth of Fascism. See for instance, John Davis' chapter ('Introduction: Antonio Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution'. Chapter 1 in John A. Davis (Ed.), *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution*. London: Croom Helm, 1979: pp.11-30), where he attributes the turmoil in the agrarian sector to the growing popularity of the Fascists' policies in particular.

⁶⁴ Dante Germino ('Antonio Gramsci: From the Margins to the Center, the Journey of a Hunchback'. *Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], 14, 3, 1986: pp.19-30) offers one example of the substantial impact of these economic policies. He recounts how the Sardinian shepherds could not even afford to buy shoes because 'the price of leather was kept high thanks to a protective tariff imposed from the mainland' (p.24).

population were predominantly disenfranchised. In this context, preferred and refined historical patterns of capital accumulation divided society sharply into two major sectors – those who possessed capital (who saw capital solely as private gain) and those who were dispossessed, correspondingly. Hence, claims made by the state that it acted on behalf of the interests of *all* of its subjects were totally at odds with the concrete outcome of its policies.

What is clear from many of the commentaries that Gramsci wrote throughout this period was the value of direct, historical inquiry in capturing the dissonance between the rhetoric and the actual reality to which this rhetoric was supposed to correspond. Notwithstanding the fact that the Italian state outwardly professed a just and moral outlook towards the population, an entirely different assessment could more easily be sustained based on the actual effect of a wide assortment of its policies. And nowhere was this dissonance more blatantly self-evident than in the misery and suffering of humanity at the level of production itself, as many of Gramsci's 1916 articles began to attest⁶⁵. This was especially so during the war years⁶⁶ with thousands of workers expected to endure the military discipline and scant rewards of the factories⁶⁷. Writing on this recurring theme under his usual column heading, *Sotto la Mole*⁶⁸, Gramsci frequently derides the attitude of many contemporary industrialists who treated their workers no better – and even, much worse – than their animals. In fact, if the workers were 'horses', Gramsci remarks cuttingly in one of these articles, 'the vet would quickly become a doctor'⁶⁹. Similarly, in another commentary where he profiles the history of the cotton workers' struggle⁷⁰, Gramsci goes so far as to describe the factory conditions of the cotton workers as 'penal servitude'. Illness was frequently the short-term cost, while death – as happened more often⁷¹ – was the long-term

⁶⁵ 'A Veterinary Surgeon on Film', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 4 August 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.15-16); 'Remembering the History of the Cotton-Workers' Struggle [1906]', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 9 December 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.19-24); 'Men or Machines?' (published under the headline 'Socialists and Education'), *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.25-27; *HPC*, 33-35).

⁶⁶ Italy entered the First World War in May 1915.

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive account of how the War impacted upon one Italian province, the Province of Brescia, see Alice Kelikian's chapter in Davis ('From Liberalism to Corporatism: The Province of Brescia during the First World War'. Chapter 7 in John A. Davis (Ed.), *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution*, London: Croom Helm, 1979: pp.213-238). Of particular note is Kelikian's impressive exposition of the effects of war mobilization upon the provinces: the enormous expansion of the iron and steel industry; the opportunities for entrepreneurial activity by one or two opportune industrialists; and, on the part of the workers, their attempts to secure better pay and conditions as a result.

⁶⁸ Fiori (*op. cit.*, 1970: p.102) explains that the literal translation, 'Under the Mole', is a reference to the huge 'Mole Antonelliana' – a dome that dominated the Turin skyline.

⁶⁹ 'A Veterinary Surgeon on Film', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 4 August 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.15-16).

⁷⁰ 'Remembering the History of the Cotton-Workers' Struggle [1906]', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 9 December 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.19-24).

⁷¹ Gramsci cites the following statistics: In 1903, 'for every 1,000 women who died from pulmonary

expectation.

In what could be considered a seminal article of this era, which he simply titled 'Indifference' (26 August, 1916⁷²), Gramsci stressed that blame could not be laid entirely at the feet of the profiteering industrialists. Arguing instead that the 'shameless lack of moral rectitude'⁷³ on the part of this group could only ever have arisen from the absence of participation of the proletariat, the familiar themes of many of his previous commentaries are revisited again and confronted here directly. He chides the members of the proletariat for exempting themselves from their social responsibilities – by not making their voice heard and not doing their duty. He accuses them of viewing history as 'nothing but an immense natural phenomenon, an eruption, an earthquake'⁷⁴. He castigates them for 'their organization; their failure to give moral and material support' to those who sought to initiate change within history⁷⁵. All in all, Gramsci maintains, if individuals find themselves 'victims' it is because they have let themselves become that way. In tones of utter exasperation, Gramsci writes:

Every man must be asked to account for the manner in which he has fulfilled the task that life has set him and continues to set him day by day; he must be asked to account for what he has done, but especially for what he has not done. It is high time that the social chain should not weigh on just the few; it is time that events should be seen to be the intelligent work of men, and not the products of chance, of fatality⁷⁶.

Although the official stance of the socialists towards the war had been to 'neither support nor sabotage'⁷⁷, the effect of war mobilization in many ways worked in favour of their cause. There was a supreme opportunity available throughout the war for previously isolated individuals and groups to see themselves as part of an 'ensemble of social relations' in organic solidarity with others who found themselves in the same condition – whether that solidarity came from comradeship in the trenches or evolved from the sheer rigors of life on a factory floor. This possibility certainly did not

consumption [tuberculosis], 484, or nearly half, were textile workers' (*SPW 1*, p.21). Fiori (*op. cit.*, 1970: especially Chapter 6) has also provided a vivid account of the exploitation evident in these years, particularly in Sardinia. Accidents and death were all commonplace events (e.g., 35% of mineworkers died of tuberculosis between 1884 and 1905), he notes (p.46, footnote 1), and starvation wages made life unduly harsh.

⁷² *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), appearing under the heading *Sotto la Mole* (*SPW 1*, pp.17-18).

⁷³ 'Remembering the History of the Cotton-Workers' Struggle [1906]', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 9 December 1916 (*SPW 1*, p.24)

⁷⁴ 'Indifference', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 26 August 1916 (*SPW 1*, p.17).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* (p.18).

⁷⁷ Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: p.35).

escape Gramsci's attention, as his model of Factory Councils would duly attest⁷⁸ (see Chapter 4). That said, for all this promise of unification and humanization, it is obvious that Gramsci never laboured under any misguided pretensions that such fraternity would arise spontaneously as a result of some sort of law of 'psychological necessity'. Nor could capital ever be challenged effectively by the power of thought alone. This was a time, it must be remembered, when fellow socialists (particularly Bordiga, as we will see in Chapter 4) went about arrogantly proclaiming that the proletariat's knowledge of its class belonging was enough of an impetus on its own for it to succeed in its revolutionary activities. 'Attitude' – not education – was all that counted in their estimation. By contrast, indifference, as Gramsci would later write, was an extremely resilient and formidable foe. It would certainly need more than the cultivation of some vague 'feeling' or sentimental 'attitude' to overcome the mental lethargy induced by the imperialism of an anti-dialectical, inorganic politics, he knew. It would need constant work and ongoing self-sacrifice from every quarter.

4. Indifference and Religion's Role in Human Estrangement

The battle against indifference would indeed need formidable resources of discipline and intellectual enterprise, Gramsci asserted in his 1916 article, especially given the complicit nature of multiple and deep-seated forces whose tendencies combined to form what he considered to be a most tenacious climate of intellectual apathy. The so-called 'law of least effort', or 'the law of the lazy', as Gramsci would later chide⁷⁹, was epitomized especially in what could be termed a worldly form of illiteracy⁸⁰. Insofar as most people were content with simply 'limit[ing] their lives to the local bell tower and the family'⁸¹, it was the effect of this sort of anti-dialectical and inorganic popular 'common sense' that Gramsci opposed most steadfastly. To this end, he unleashed numerous tirades against the many habits that narrowed ordinary minds (he cited games such as *scopone* and the Italian love of drink, among these⁸²) and made its victims prisoners to their own momentary desires.

Expressing his absolute humanist and secular worldview, we see Gramsci

⁷⁸ The Factory Council, as explained in Chapter 4, was a model of a new set of social relations (organic relations) based on Marx's historical-dialectical-humanist philosophy.

⁷⁹ Gramsci, quoted in Buttigieg (*op. cit.*, 1995: p.12).

⁸⁰ The historicization of history and its dialectic scrutiny were to constitute the continuing basis for a new form of 'literacy' that was, at the same time, both critical and political. See Chapter 5.

⁸¹ 'Illiteracy', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, pp.28-29).

⁸² See especially Gramsci's article, 'Football and Scopone', *Avanti!*, 27 August 1918, (*PPW*, pp.73-74).

persistently underscoring how events were not the product of chance or unknown natural forces but, rather, 'the intelligent work of men'⁸³. To the extent that religious activity served to deflect attention away from these human causes, it thus represented another formidable source of human estrangement where the intentional relinquishment of power served as a fetter on humanity's own ability to determine its future direction⁸⁴. For that reason alone, religious fetishism became a constant theme in relation to his campaign against human indifference throughout the complete span of Gramsci's writings. As he would later recount in the *Notebooks*, religious festivals dominated the calendar events of most Italian townships⁸⁵, so much so that the social and cultural life of the villagers was integrally mixed with a residue of strong and enduring spiritual belief. Religion constituted the folklore of the majority⁸⁶. It also had its own forms of scholasticism⁸⁷; its own group of intellectuals who would need closer, more specific scrutiny, in Gramsci's admission⁸⁸. Of even greater importance than this however, was the manner in which religion operated more generally within a culture: it established invisible normative boundaries that acted in a most potent ideological manner. Because the Church's authority and influence was all-pervasive in a moral sense, its prescriptions actually functioned to emasculate alternative forms of rationality and behaviour. The spiritual therefore played a significant role in the legitimization of

⁸³ 'Indifference', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 26 August 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.18).

⁸⁴ This is not to ignore the fact that Gramsci advocated that the socialists needed to work alongside the Catholics. See Rosanna Giammanco's (1984) article titled 'Antonio Gramsci and the Catholic-Communist "Dialogue": The Church and the Party's Struggle for Hegemony' (*Italian Quarterly*, 25, 97/98, pp.133-144) for many important insights into Gramsci's position in relation to the Church. That said, the very first entry in *Notebook 1* (*PN* 1: entry 1, p.100) is titled 'On poverty, Catholicism and the papacy'. Here, Gramsci argues that the entire tradition of Catholicism takes for granted the assumption that there will always be rich and poor. With its moral and social policies based on this 'truism', it is no wonder that Catholicism stood in such an antithetical position to socialism.

⁸⁵ In the course of a discussion about periodicals and their various types (*PN* 1: *Notebook* 1, entry 43, pp.125-136), Gramsci notes the disparate makeup of Italy and of the religious culture that dominated the lives of most Italians:

...one must keep in mind that in every region, especially in Italy, given the very rich variety of local traditions, there exist groups or small groups characterized by their own ideological or psychological impulses – 'every village has, or has had, its local saint, hence its own culture and its own chapel'. (*PN* 1, p.128)

⁸⁶ Many of Gramsci's *Notebook* entries are devoted to discussing the influence of religion on the Italian psyche and the powerful alliance between the press and religion, especially. More generally, he comments that religion is the principal element of the common sense outlook of the people, to a far greater extent than even the philosophy of the traditional intellectuals (*SPN*, p.420). He also recommended in his notes that a bibliography be created that dealt with 'regional life' and suggested the need for a further bibliography on the question of folklore itself (*PN* 1: *Notebook* 2, entry 14, p.259).

⁸⁷ In his 1915 article, 'The Light Which Went Out', Gramsci observed how the Franciscan movement in the Middle Ages was the champion of the 'doctrinaire theologism of Scholasticism'. Against this scholasticism, a few religious – such as the 'modest Saint Francis of Assisi', Gramsci noted – tried to connect man to God directly without Church mediation (*HPC*, p.26).

⁸⁸ We learn in Chapter 5 that Gramsci devised his own form of classification for these conservative intellectuals. Reactionary clerics generally became labelled the 'progeny' of a certain Father Bresciani, a Jesuit priest who was vehement in his defense of the Church against the secular state (see *PN* 1: *Notebook* 1, entry 1, footnote 6, pp.374-375 for details on Bresciani).

unjust earthy practices⁸⁹.

'Cultural propaganda' was the phrase used to describe much of the Church's work in an earlier (1916) article called 'The Virtuous Press'⁹⁰. Here, Gramsci recounted how he stopped outside a religious bookstore window. Marvelling at the many religious volumes on display (the publication of each volume visible testimony to its ongoing popularity), he noted how so many of these titles had generally escaped 'the consideration of scientific and literary criticism'⁹¹. Paradoxically, despite their obvious veneration, these works were never really treated seriously as literary texts. Yet in Gramsci's view, such 'invisibility' was undoubtedly the secret to their insuperable strength. As a wide variety of his columns of literary criticism reveal – and a great many more of his *Notebooks* musings affirmed subsequently – Gramsci exhibited considerable interest in the power of all types of text⁹², especially those that tended to languish almost hidden on the margins of culture, as this example served to illustrate⁹³. The question then arose: how did one counter this influence? How could the latent effects of these works be brought into the realm of the known and the knowable?

Indeed, 'The Virtuous Press' was one of Gramsci's first articles in which he began to wage war against what he referred to as a kind of 'clerical intellectual pollution' that gripped Italian soil. Far from being politically neutral expressions of ordinary Church teaching, his writing highlighted the potency of 'the many pamphlets, magazines, leaflets and parish correspondence [that] circulated everywhere'. On one occasion, he recounted how the faithful were actively encouraged to pray for the

⁸⁹ In Gramsci's second notebook, for example, he commented on Christianity having 'adapted itself molecularly and become Jesuitism'. He qualified this last statement by adding that it had '[become] a great social hypocrisy' (*PN 1: Notebook 2*, entry 90, p.333). Gramsci leaves readers in no doubt that he considers Christianity to be 'the great heresy' (*ibid.*).

⁹⁰ *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 16 February 1916 (*HPC*, pp.93-94). Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990: pp.41-42) also recounts how Gramsci published an article on 21 June 1916 ('La Consolata e i cattolici') which was essentially a retort to the accusation that 'socialism was not a philosophical system' and that 'there was no essential disagreement between it and Catholicism' (*ibid.*, p.41).

⁹¹ *Ibid.* (p.93).

⁹² This serves as a wonderful example of the breadth of interest that Gramsci clearly showed towards all forms of literary genre as both historical and contemporary sources of historical and cultural inspiration. For an excellent overview of Gramsci's activism as a literary critic – of how he saw the role of the literary critic as vital to cultural challenge and change – see Robert Dombroski's chapter, 'On Gramsci's Theatre Criticism' (*Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], 14, 3, 1986: pp.91-117). Also in the same journal issue, see Frank Rosengarten's related chapter, 'Gramsci's "Little Discovery": Gramsci's Interpretation of Canto X of Dante's *Inferno*' (*Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], 14, 3, 1986: pp.71-90). Fiori, too, briefly discusses this important aspect of Gramsci's work (*op. cit.*, 1970: pp.104-105).

⁹³ Dombroski, for example, explains how Gramsci's analysis of Pirandello is a depiction of how literature and theatre represent definite social realities through which people are capable of being 'either manipulated or educated, fortified in their complacency or morally aroused, and that writers have the power to act upon human conscience and thus the potential to transform society' (*op. cit.*, 1986: p.115).

(corrupt) sugar producers whom they were told were 'so unjustly persecuted by enemies of religion such as the socialists and the Free Masons'⁹⁴. Elsewhere, he condemned the deliberate scare tactics that were being directed against the socialist movement from numerous Italian pulpits. To Gramsci's way of thinking, such blatant politicking merely served to confirm the extent of the parasitism that existed between greedy clergy and self-satisfying, corrupt politicians and industrialists. Testimony moreover to the sordid conspiracy between religion and earthly politics, it clearly demonstrated that a human, rather than a divine, hand firmly gripped the wheel⁹⁵.

Matching propaganda with propaganda became Gramsci's primary response from that time onwards. In several of his articles – especially those between 1916 and 1917 – readers are directly implored to *open their eyes* and *exercise their intellects*. Having little doubt that mankind's creative (self-regulative) capacity was being severely repressed by its complicity in its own dispossession⁹⁶, he consistently presents religion as the enemy of independent thought, colonizing the weak and the gullible. Bourgeois discipline and religious discipline in particular, he noted in at least two articles in February 1917⁹⁷, were both forms of social conditioning that were antithetical to the development of critical thought and practical discrimination. Mechanical and conditioned responses to authoritarian legislation were being encouraged: bureaucratic and inorganic relationships predominated over democratic and organic ones. In keeping with these views, and writing in a manner reminiscent of the style in which he

⁹⁴ 'The Virtuous Press', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 16 February 1916 (*HPC*, p.93). Gramsci devoted a great deal of discussion in his *Prison Notebooks* to the Free Masons.

⁹⁵ Germino cites an article (*op. cit.*, 1990: pp.41-42) in which Gramsci defended socialism in the face of it being (mis)interpreted as an ally of Catholicism ('La Consolata e i cattolici', 21 June 1916). It is worthwhile to include Germino's translation of Gramsci's text:

[The Catholics] await redemption through grace – that is, they invoke the good will of the saints when it would be more opportune to appeal to that of men. For them, only authority, revelation, and the word of God matter because they locate the source of human events outside of man, in a supreme will that embraces and judges everything... Instead, [we young Socialists] expect nothing from others except...[what we give] ourselves; our conscience as free men imposes a duty and our organized strength performs it. *Only what is our work, our achievement, has value and becomes part of us – not what is granted by a superior power, whether that be the bourgeois state of the Madonna of the Consolation.* (*Ibid.*, p.42. Emphasis added)

Gramsci defended the distinction in another article, 'History', *Avanti!* 29 August 1916 (*HPC*, pp.69-70; *PPW*, pp.13-14).

⁹⁶ Gramsci would later state this point forcibly in 'Republic and Proletariat in France' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 20 April 1918, *HPC*, pp.81-86). Here, he wrote:

In moral doctrine, men are considered as agents, as directly responsible for the consequences brought about by their actions in the relational life of human society. But this responsibility, this participation in history, is recognized by the laws of the past for duties but not for rights: it imposes obligations but does not allow freedom of choice and of initiative. Yet, it sanctions punishments for those who refuse this consistency, which is not a choice or a logical conclusion of a free investigation. Consequently, it does not have the character of morality. (*HPC*, p.81)

⁹⁷ 'Discipline', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.49); 'Discipline and Freedom', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.50; *PPW*, p.26).

had critiqued bourgeois culture as 'non'-culture, Gramsci began to describe bourgeois and religious discipline as forms of 'non'-discipline for the same reasons⁹⁸. His response was to again urge self-education and self-discipline, intimating that 'knowledge of the self' be acquired through historical critique.

In an article simply titled 'History', written in late 1916⁹⁹, Gramsci took the opportunity to reiterate the importance of locating oneself within culture and history to allow for a more accurate discrimination between human causes and natural ones. Using (by now) the familiar logic of Marxist thought, he reaffirmed that the best strategy to undermine the general tendencies towards the normative acceptance of vague and rampant superstition involved the historicization of thought and social value. To him, this was 'philosophy' in action; the only effective form of analysis by which a human origin was ascribed properly to human affairs. To this effect, he wrote:

[T]he explanation of our existence can only be found in history. Everything that can be historicized cannot be supernatural: it cannot be the result of divine revelation. If something is still unexplainable, this is only due to our cognitive incompleteness, to our still unattained intellectual perfection. This may make us more humble, more modest, but it cannot throw us into the arms of religion. Our religion becomes once again history: our faith becomes once again man, his will, his activity¹⁰⁰.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Democratic Awakening

The number of journal articles that Gramsci wrote in his ten years as a professional journalist is a powerful testament to his incessant and untiring efforts to critique, to challenge and thereby to extend the thinking of the growing ranks of his readership¹⁰¹. What the above account provides additionally is ample proof of Gramsci's early adherence to the historical materialist method. Even these earliest political and cultural commentaries attest to the fact that his journalism mirrored his solution to the problem of the dispossession of social power, thus providing a *model* to

⁹⁸ In a chapter in which she discusses this technique of conceptual reappropriation – of how Gramsci 'subverts' the language of politics – Anne Showstack Sassoon (*Gramsci and Contemporary Politics: Beyond Pessimism of the Intellect*. London: Routledge, 2000) notes how Gramsci 'renders [the concept of discipline] almost completely unrecognizable' in the *Quaderni*:

How should discipline be understood if what is meant by this word is a continual and permanent relationship between rulers and ruled which realizes a collective will? Certainly not as a passive and servile acceptance of orders, as a mechanical execution of a command...but as a conscious and lucid assimilation of the directive to be fulfilled. (p.48)

⁹⁹ 'History', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 26 August 1916 (*HPC*, pp.69-70; *PPW*, pp.13-14).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* (*HPC*, pp.69-70).

¹⁰¹ See Germino (*op. cit.*, 1990: p.37) for an account of Gramsci's writings for *Avanti!* during the month of January 1916 alone. Fiori (*op. cit.*, 1970: p.104) quotes Gramsci himself: 'In ten years of journalism' Gramsci stated, 'I wrote enough words to fill up fifteen to twenty volumes of four

demonstrate what he wanted individuals to do for themselves; to exercise their own cognitive capacities so that they might finally start to take control over their own lives. His own studies of culture revealed the considerable extent to which active and critical thought enhanced one's powers of practical reasoning, allowing for the repossession of history correspondingly. When viewed in this light, while it can be seen that his own writings invariably represented his uniquely personal attempt to historicize and problematize the violence of abstraction – and, in turn, his attempt to challenge the manner in which economically driven ideas and practices reflected an inferior form of intellectual, moral and political leadership – it must also be recognized that *this was what he saw that the proletariat had to do for themselves*. In this respect, he led by example¹⁰².

Admittedly, as I have also tried to emphasize in this chapter, Gramsci never laboured under any misconception that capital was not the root cause of the existing bureaucratic and inorganic relations; since the ethos of the profit motive and private property ownership was directly antithetical to the evolution of a more robust social and moral consciousness. However, as his numerous commentaries about various peasant co-operative ventures also began to show¹⁰³, the dispute between socialism and capitalism was a dispute about 'production' in the broadest possible sense. Whilst it is doubtlessly true that the control of material production was certainly a fundamental aspect of the socialists' goal, production and its relations (its cultural and social 'byproducts', as it were) formed an inseparable bond within Marxism's integral historical-dialectical-humanist orientation. Its philosophy of internal relations was premised on an acknowledgement that no attempt could be made to alter the material conditions of society without due consideration being given to the ideological domain of production¹⁰⁴.

hundred pages apiece....'

¹⁰² As Derek Sayer notes correctly in his excellent study of Marx's historical method (*The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), the pages in Marx's *Capital* are 'vivid with empirical detail':

...Marx brings 'private accumulation' to life as the story of enclosures, clearances, theft of church property, vagrancy legislation, and Combination Acts (1867: part 8). He traces the career of absolute surplus-value in struggles over the length of the working day (*ibid.*, Chapter 10) and relative surplus-value in 'the strife between workmen and machine' (*ibid.*, Chapter 15), a narrative of Luddites and Factory Acts: the history of class struggle. (p.136)

In this respect, Gramsci was clearly emulating Marx: taking theory to its ultimate explanatory level in concrete, historical reality.

¹⁰³ The best example comes from Gramsci's article 'Socialism and Cooperation' (*L'Alleanza Cooperativa*, 30 October 1916, *PPW*, pp.15-18). In this work, he is quite explicit in rejecting redistribution as the primary aim of socialism. Gramsci discusses how co-operatives such as those based on the Alleanza model are 'useful' to socialism. He describes them as 'impressive, large-scale laboratories for refining and purifying the socialist sense of social responsibility' (p.17).

¹⁰⁴ As Gramsci would write later in his *Notebooks*:

It was through Gramsci's subsequent recognition of the manner in which production and its social relations supported each other that we can appreciate how the multiple terrain of philosophy/ language/ history therefore became the crucial ground also for the construction of self-knowledge. As discussed more fully in Chapter 3, his challenge against the abstract and atomizing forms of thought that pervaded language continued to form the core of Gramsci's distinctive and relentless protest. In the same manner in which he had begun to reappropriate the concept of culture, we see him similarly targeting education in the next chapter. Culture and education were both key concepts; concepts which, in their fetishized form, signified elitism and privilege. To Gramsci's way of thinking, reclaiming such concepts and 'naturalizing' or 'popularizing' them was thereby analogous to enlisting them back into the service of humanity to benefit the common good. As I explained in my first chapter, this technique to expand thought to embrace the 'real' beyond the excesses of abstraction can be equated to his exercise of a distinctively Marxist practice. Symptomatic of his historical materialist worldview, Gramsci's continuing strategy of replacing inorganic and imperial concepts with 'inclusive', 'organic' and 'active' ones was no less than his exercise of a new form of democratic politics¹⁰⁵.

As will be seen in the next chapter, Gramsci was fiercely anti-state. Given that he firmly believed that the externalization of the function of governance constituted nothing other than a further form of social dispossession, to him, bourgeois statist solutions failed to show any substantial cognitive or moral commitment to the organization of the social along self-governing lines¹⁰⁶. As will become clearer there, the articulation of organic concepts and their contribution to reinvigorated notions of 'citizenship' and 'state' becomes a major feature of his counter-capitalist worldview in the subsequent period. Everyone needed to see themselves – and, more importantly, to *think* themselves – as capable of governing their own affairs. They would at last see themselves 'whole', as it were, and society 'whole' also. The fundamental difference

Intellectual and moral reform has to be linked with a programme of economic reform – indeed the programme of economic reform is precisely the concrete form in which every intellectual and moral reform presents itself. (*SPN*, p.133)

¹⁰⁵ I examine Gramsci's concept of democracy in relation to Laclau and Mouffe's 'radical' rendition in my final chapter, Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶ Gramsci's anti-statist stance is arguably best captured in a 1919 article, 'The Conquest of the State' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 July 1919, *SPW* 1, pp.73-78; *PPW*, pp.108-114):

The socialists have simply accepted, and frequently in a supine fashion, the historical reality produced by capitalist initiative. They have acquired the same mistaken mentality as the liberal economists: they believe in the perpetuity and fundamental perfection of the institutions of the democratic State. In their view, the form of these democratic institutions can be corrected, touched up here and there, but in fundamentals must be respected.... We, on the other hand, remain convinced...that the socialist State cannot be embodied in the institutions of the capitalist State. (*SPW* 1, p.76)

between liberalism and socialism, as we have already begun to witness, is that socialism tried to genuinely honour the cognitive and moral integrity of each and every individual. No longer content to pay lip service to a concept of universality that signalled the continuing privileging of the few at the expense of the many, it stood instead as the promise to nurture the creative spirit *of all*. To this effect, socialism epitomized the philosophy of the 'common good'. It represented the antithesis of bourgeois hegemony; the antithesis of everything that liberal capitalism was not and, most fundamentally, could never be.

* * * * *

-----CHAPTER 3-----

INTEGRAL POLITICS AS THE POLITICS OF THE 'COMMON GOOD': THE PROBLEM OF CITIZENSHIP AS THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORING THE 'ACTIVE' STATE (1917 – 1918')

Liberalism's claims are limiting ideas which, rationally acknowledged as necessary, have become idea-forces, realized in the bourgeois State which, having worn themselves out, have created an antithesis to this State in the proletariat. Though universal for the bourgeoisie, they are not universal for the proletariat. For the bourgeoisie they were limiting ideas, for the proletariat they are nominal ideas. As a matter of fact, the whole liberal programme has become the Socialist Party's minimal programme, i.e., the programme which helps us to live day by day, while waiting for the more fruitful moment to come.

(‘Three Principles, Three Orders’, *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917², *HPC*, pp.71-72)

1. Introduction: How to Create an Authentic Citizenry

As I have attempted to explain in the preceding chapter, given that the very principles and precepts of capitalism were engineered so tightly into the culture and consolidated into everyday practice through the medium of language, the practical task of capitalist critique was to not only challenge capitalism in the realm of material production but also to interrogate its *linguistic* and *conceptual* form, simultaneously³. What I tried to accentuate additionally was the manner in which Gramsci’s ensuing bid to initiate a dialectical rejuvenation of culture through the historicization and politicization of everyday language and practice was *onto-formative educational endeavour* directed against the foreclosure of fetishizing practices that conditioned and

¹ I have chosen to focus upon this particular period as it was an era marked by the Russian Revolution. The social unrest that was unleashed in the years immediately after World War I led to the Factory Council period (1919-1920). I profile this period in the next chapter.
² *HPC*, pp.70-75; *PPW*, pp.19-25.

³ As noted in the last chapter, commentators such as Franco Lo Piparo (expressed in his *Lingu, intellettuali, egemonia in Gramsci*. Bari, 1979), John Cammett (*Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), Dante Germino (*Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), Steven R. Mansfield (‘Introduction to Gramsci’s “Notes on Language”’. *Telos*, 59, 1984: pp.119-126) and Peter Ives (‘The Grammar of Hegemony’. *Left History*, 5, 1, Spring 1997: pp.85-103, and ‘A Grammatical Introduction to Gramsci’s Political Theory’. *Rethinking Marxism*, 10, 1, 1998: pp.34-51) all intimate that it was Gramsci’s knowledge of linguistics that underpinned the subsequent development of his incisive political ideas. I argue here that the influence of Marx’s dialectic and organic worldview, which proposes the non-negotiable interpenetration of the individual and the social order, was itself a conceptual-linguistic theory. A helpful text for explaining the overlap between Marx and Wittgenstein’s linguistic thought is David Rubenstein’s, *Marx and Wittgenstein: Social Praxis and Social Explanation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

restricted human 'being'. My argument here is that even Gramsci's earliest work reflected his advanced socialist understanding that Marxism was an integral philosophy: a philosophy of a conscious mind, open to the possibilities that new relational and valuational practices might bestow subsequently upon its evolving nature⁴.

In the discussion that follows, I examine how Gramsci expresses his continuing contempt for the asocial ideology of possessive individualism through his depiction of progress as the advancement of the 'common good'⁵; a concept that involves the transgression – as Gramsci worded it – of 'the appetites and needs of a single individual'⁶. Affirming the radical anthropology that lay at the heart of Marxism itself, the problem of authoring a new history is a dilemma consistently described here as the problem of authoring a new type of citizen⁷: a citizen who had a breadth of outlook and 'character'; one who displayed a robustness and roundedness of 'personality', and one whom Gramsci would come to describe repeatedly throughout his writings as a person who possessed 'general ideas' and a 'general culture'⁸. To the extent that a pervasive competitive and individualistic spirit had actively dissuaded and discouraged the cultivation of a 'collectivist' or 'communal' personality – tendering a spirit of civic indifference in its stead – Gramsci's emphasis on the problem of 'personality' construction needs to be read as his appeal for humanity to react against its own alienating preferences; its own character dispossession. We see this point emphasized frequently throughout his numerous commentaries during this period⁹, as it is

⁴ As Gramsci described this struggle in his January 1916 article, 'Socialism and Culture' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, *SPW* 1, pp.10-13; *HPC*, pp.20-23; *PPW*, pp.8-12), socialism was the growing awareness by humanity 'of its own value... [and] the right to live independently of the schemes and rights of historically previously-established minorities' (*HPC*, p.21).

⁵ 'Progress consists in nothing more than the participation of an ever increasing number of individuals in a common good', Gramsci noted in February 1917 ('Margins', *La Città Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, pp.40-43).

⁶ *Ibid.* As I endeavour to explain, Gramsci was essentially critiquing the disjunctive split between the self and the common good. He was arguing that a developmental perspective needed to be adopted with regard to education: that the good of the individual and the good of society were not mutually exclusive objectives.

⁷ Later in his writings, Gramsci came to critique the liberal abstraction of the figure which he termed the 'citizen-individual' (see especially 'The Sovereignty of Law', *Avanti!*, 1 June 1919, *PPW*, pp.87-90). In this particular article, the 'primordial element' of the liberal sovereign state is the atomized citizen-individual who thrives at the expense of society, fed, as he is, a diet of 'corrosive competition' (p.88). Here, and in a further article ('The Price of History', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 7 June 1919, *PPW*, pp.91-95), Gramsci consciously chose to replace the concept of 'citizen-individual' with the concept of 'comrade' (p.89). The reasons for this move are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

⁸ 'Men or Machines?' (published under the headline 'Socialists and Education'), *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1916 (*SPW* 1, pp.25-27; *HPC*, pp.33-35). That social conditions determine character and personality is a major feature of Marx's theory. Insofar as the whole character of a species is contained in its life activity, subjectivity is never independent of social organization. See *SPN*, p.390, for Gramsci's discussion about how 'personality' is created.

⁹ We especially see Gramsci's scorn for the manner in which society has been shaped by an 'economic contract' rather than by the needs of 'universal humanity' in his theatre criticisms. See

accentuated equally within many of his *Notebook* discussions¹⁰.

In this respect, the problem that the socialists needed to tackle was the problem of how to move the mind and conscience beyond 'the limits of the [local] bell tower'; to overcome the fatalistic traits of 'indifference', 'parasitism' and 'cowardice' which perpetually plagued and pacified the mass¹¹. This lamentation of a general 'absence of character' overall – the absence of humanity's sense of its own social power – therefore became a familiar theme within Gramsci's work, as was an accompanying concern regarding the abysmal absence of partisanship on the part of the majority¹². To live meant *to be partisan* Gramsci wrote by way of registering both his contempt and disapproval for the appalling lack of partisanship among the masses¹³. Because he felt that the whole of one's life needed to be animated by a sense of historical responsibility and conscious purpose, one's entire personality had to be partisan he took pains to stress. Throughout an extensive sample of his ongoing writings, the overriding impression one is left with when reading these notes is that narrow-mindedness and self-centredness tended to characterize the personalities of most Italians who were the worst embodiment of the degeneration of character to capital¹⁴.

This degeneration of character to capital remains a persistent theme throughout his 1917 and 1918 archive. Despite the proletarian successes that the Russian Revolution signalled, we see Gramsci repeating his affirmation that socialism was not

especially 'Theatre and Cinema', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 26 August 1916 (SCW, pp.54-56); 'Morality and Standards' (Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' at the Carignano, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 22 March 1917 (SCW, pp.70-73); 'The Theatre Industry [i]', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 28 June 1917 (SCW, pp.56-58); 'The Theatre Industry [ii]', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 4 July 1917 (SCW, pp.58-61); 'The Chiarella Brothers Again', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 8 July 1917 (SCW, pp.61-63) and 'The Theatre Industry [iii]', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 17 July 1917 (SCW, pp.63-65).

¹⁰ Careful historical investigation and contemporary study into all forms of state and clerical propaganda was a methodology that encouraged new interpretation about past events. The development of character involved the development of powers of good judgment based on nurturing skills of practical discrimination between various personalities, positions and perspectives. As his comments on culture likewise affirmed, it also meant viewing the world 'organically' rather than 'empirically and primordially' ('Philanthropy, Good Will, and Organization', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1917, *HPC*, p.44).

¹¹ These first three traits are cited as qualities oppositional to socialist traits. They appear in Gramsci's reprinted article called 'Indifferents', published on 11 February 1917 in *La Citta Futura* (*HPC*, pp.64-66).

¹² He expressed the need for partisanship in two articles where he discussed indifference and its dire repercussions for socialism. On 3 March 1917 however, he tackled the matter of character head-on, printing an article in *Il Grido del Popolo* simply titled 'Character' (*HPC*, pp.52-54). It is in this article that Gramsci again reiterates how class consciousness alone builds men of character. He argues that it is a lack of character that particularly typified socialism's adversaries, individuals for whom life was sustained only by 'the pounding heart' and a deluded and habituated 'sentimentalism'.

¹³ 'Indifferents' (a re-print of the article 'Indifference', published 26 August 1916 in *Avanti!*), *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.66).

¹⁴ 'Three Principles, Three Orders', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, pp.70-75; *PPW*, pp.19-25).

simply predicated on the successful seizure of state power but was 'an integral vision of life' with 'a philosophy, a mysticism and a morality'. This was indeed a battle of principles, he argued repeatedly¹⁵. The job of the 'internalization' and 'intensification of moral life' demanded much more than a simple change of players. It demanded a complete change of the game and of its rules; a change in the entire game-plan itself¹⁶. Against those defenders of a narrow Marxist thesis of 'might', we witness Gramsci vigorously lobbying for the restoration of the socialist dimension to politics by virtue of an appeal to authentic *socialist principles and strategies*. Successful politics could only be achieved through the application and constant exertion of human effort; but effort and action emanating from intellectual and moral resolve. Permanent, organic links of solidarity, as Gramsci was later to caution in June 1919, could only ever evolve on the basis of 'clarification, persuasion and mutual education'¹⁷.

As we will read in the following pages, in spite of Gramsci's initial optimism that events in Russia looked like representing the seizure of state power and a 'total' revolution – a revolution of 'realized morals', as he called it – a small, imperialistic vanguard would eventually hold office, making the revolution therefore anything but total in Gramsci's view. For this same reason, he continued promoting these views, arguing consistently that hierarchical political solutions posed an obvious limitation to the very precepts of socialism itself. Insofar as the dynamic, self-perpetuating vision of the 'people-nation' was essentially the apex of all revolutionary endeavour, he contended, a style of leadership that was rigid and hierarchical stood diametrically opposed to the principles of Marx's historical materialist method: to think dialectically and organically. With the masses still externally led, they were therefore deprived of developing any genuine leadership sense – a situation that was far from liberating in Gramsci's view. As we will witness from the nature of his comments about the ideas of

¹⁵ Gramsci expressed this view in a number of places. For instance, his engagement with Benedetto Croce was no less than a spirited defense of 'principles' over 'territories'. In 'Men or Machines?' (published under the headline 'Socialists and Education', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1916, *SPW 1*: pp.25-27; *HPC*: pp.33-35), he talked explicitly of the problem of 'the right' as the problem of morality, just as in his article 'Three Principles, Three Orders' he openly derided those who chose to base their 'utopian prophecies' on 'an infinity of facts but not a single moral principle' (*HPC*, p.71). In his initial comments on the revolution itself ('Notes on the Russian Revolution', 29 April 1917) he argued that proletarians could make war, but what distinguished war from a proletarian revolution were the 'principles' or 'spiritual factors' undergirding the battle. To this effect, he wrote: 'There must be more to the revolution than the question of power: there must be the question of morality, of a way of life' (*SPW 1*, p.28).

¹⁶ This was an issue about which Gramsci would remain preoccupied. His disgust with the leaders of the French General Confederation of Labour and the Italian Railway Workers' Union – who, at the very last minute, reneged on their pledge to support the general strike that had been called in July 1919 – led Gramsci to maintain that the essential problem of the proletarian revolution was more than simply the substitution of these 'treacherous and disloyal' leaders with new ones. See, 'Towards the Communist International', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 26 July 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp.79-82).

two of his colleagues (Amadeo Bordiga and Nikolai Bukharin) during a later period, what distinguished the old from the new was the adoption of a stance that was active and conscious. Significantly, it was one wherein co-participation and self-regulation (self-governance) marked the inauguration of a new set of relationships; relationships that were themselves the living embodiment of the rejection of the previous relations of alienation and subalternity.

The urgent need to fashion a dialectic and organic relationship between the leaders, the party and the masses was an ongoing feature within Gramsci's work¹⁸. He knew only too well the danger of applying simplistic, paternalistic solutions to the complex problem of the genuine formation of a 'collective will'. Inasmuch as a collective will presupposed a 'collectivity' and a 'character' upon which such a will could permanently be forged, we begin to identify a pattern within his writings accentuating the manner in which the formation of the 'citizen' was linked uncompromisingly to an authentic socialist outcome. 'Authentic' meant 'total', he makes clear, and total signified a movement away from the orthodox and traditional towards a new linguistic-conceptual-philosophical worldview¹⁹. As I emphasize in the discussion that follows, the question of the creation of the citizen can best be viewed in Gramsci's work as no less than the question of the creation of democracy, in its broadest sense. To transform the historical subject into an historical agent who would cease to act for purely personal, particularistic benefit but would act instead to advance the interests of all, was the only means of measuring 'social' democracy in its most 'total' and radical sense. Making these connections sharper and more coherent is therefore the primary purpose of this chapter.

I begin this undertaking by first sketching how the concept of education itself is targeted openly for critical scrutiny. Challenging its previous connotations and reframing its purpose to serve the interests of 'citizenship creation', we can see how Gramsci essentially reappropriates this term in the same way in which he had

¹⁷ 'Workers' Democracy', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 21 June 1919 (*SPW* 1, p.65).

¹⁸ As we saw in the last chapter, Gramsci abhorred all forms of elitism where superiority was claimed either through birth (divine origin) or through intellect. See especially his 'Socialism and Culture' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916, *SPW* 1, pp.10-13; *HPC*, pp.20-23; *PPW*, pp.8-12). His philosophy of socialism is predicated on the importance of the principle of self-governance. Benedetto Fontana's work, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), is a useful reference in this regard. Fontana makes it very plain that Gramsci's dispute with Croce centres on this relationship between the leadership (the intellectuals) and the mass. I return to these points in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

¹⁹ For example, he wrote in 'Freedom First' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918, *HPC*, pp.50-51): '[S]ocialism is organization, not only political and economic, but especially the organization of knowledge and of the will which is obtained through cultural activity' (*HPC*, p.51).

reappropriated the concept of culture previously. The destabilization and ultimate transcendence of what Gramsci terms 'limit-ideas' – importantly, the transcendence of both bourgeois and socialist limiting 'attitudes' – is also reiterated subsequently; a discussion which centres on the Russian revolution and, simultaneously, on the rejection of the politics of 'Jacobinism'²⁰ and the varying types of reformist practice that Gramsci took Jacobinism as championing²¹. An examination of how the affirmation of Marxist principles underlies his relentless commitment to socialist ideals, exemplified particularly in his rejection of the two most 'favoured' socialist strategies at the time – syndicalism and parliamentary reformism – is also included. Gramsci's reasoning behind his rejection of bourgeois 'statist' solutions is then explored, laying the way fully open for future analysis of his own Factory Council experiment as the epitome of socialist organization and association²² ('cultural activity'²³). As will be outlined more fully in Chapter 4, the Councils were synonymous with Gramsci's strategy of reappropriating the concept of 'state' and activating, in turn, its organic and socialized meaning.

²⁰ Jacobinism became associated with the aspirations of a political grouping that had originated in France and which spearheaded the French Revolution. Whilst championing the principles of liberty and radical egalitarianism, the Jacobin movement became associated simultaneously with violence and terror. It also became synonymous with reform rather than authentic revolution, as will be explained later in this chapter. To this effect, in one of Gramsci's earliest references to Jacobinism ('Notes on the Russian Revolution', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 April 1917, *SWP* 1, pp.28-30; *HPC*, pp.126-128; *PPW*, pp.31-34), he maintained that Jacobinism was 'a purely bourgeois phenomenon' and added that socialist revolutionaries could never be Jacobin. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Gramsci asserted the need for the communists to have a 'Jacobin spirit' in his *Notebook* musings. He insisted that the new party – the Modern Prince as he called it – had to have 'a part devoted to Jacobinism'. He defined this trait as 'an exemplification of the concrete formation and operation of a collective will' which was, to all intents and purposes, 'an original, *ex novo* creation' (*SPN*, p.130). See also Thomas Nemeth's discussion regarding Jacobinism (*Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study*. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980: especially pp.58-61).

²¹ Reformist politics was essentially politics that failed to challenge either the state or capitalism. Despite the fact that political action of this sort might achieve certain concessions for the working class, there was no fundamental challenge to the status quo.

²² Even the word 'association' here is precarious. As Gramsci wrote in 'The Programme of *L'Ordine Nuovo*' (14 and 28 August 1920, *SPW* 1, pp.291-298; *PPW*, pp.178-186; *MP*, pp.22-27)

In *Ordine Nuovo*'s view, the system of councils cannot be expressed by the term 'association' or words of similar meaning, but can only be represented by reproducing for a whole industrial centre the complex industrial relationships which bind one team of workers to another... [A]nd inasmuch as they are bound together industrially they constitute a necessary and absolutely indivisible historical organism. (*MP*, p.25)

²³ 'Cultural activity', as I have argued in this chapter, is a synonym for the political education of the proletariat; that is, activity which historicizes and politicizes thought, simultaneously.

2. Beyond Education as a 'Limit-idea': The First Revolutionary Substitution²⁴

Processes of learning are never completely active, but instead involve each consecutive generation being inculcated into the existing worldview of the previous one. Hence, there is a very direct and unambiguous connection between the present and the past. The worldview of the new generation is based inevitably on an admixture of the older generation's ideas, beliefs and values, which cannot help but influence its own contemporary and evolving perspective. Gramsci knew this only too well²⁵. His insistence on the importance of knowing one's history followed directly from his understanding that the seemingly 'rational' assumptions of the present had been generated historically²⁶ and were consequently, in very large measure, the product of historical conditioning²⁷. Consciousness of these multiple forces provided individuals with a much keener appreciation of their own immediate social circumstances and correspondingly endowed them with a greater sensitivity to the possibilities for future action. Stated in other terms, one's future actions depended inevitably upon one's powers of interpretation as to the actual possibilities that the past allowed²⁸.

²⁴ This phrase, 'the first revolutionary substitution', comes from Gramsci's article 'The Watchmaker' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 18 August 1917, *HPC*, pp.36-37). It has particular significance because Gramsci holds that the replacement of mental inertia and indifference with a life of active thought is the first crucial aspect of revolutionary endeavour. The substitution of an inert and passive outlook on life for an active and energetic one is seen to be the only sure direction beyond a limit-condition exemplified by bourgeois 'limit-ideas'.

²⁵ An article that Gramsci wrote in June 1918 captures this underlying sentiment ('Free Thought and Liberated Thought', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 15 June, *HPC*, pp.54-57). Here, Gramsci wrote:

Although thought is free, it is also conditioned, and it is especially conditioned by history. An individual opinion is conditioned by the specific cultural background of the individual (that is, by the particular history of that individual), and in this cultural background the individual opinion finds its explanation and meaning. (pp.54-55)

²⁶ The problem of one's historicity is now frequently commented on within the philosophical literature. Notwithstanding the fact that Joseph Dunne's 1993 book, *Back to the Rough Ground*, is primarily a text devoted to the problem of technical reasoning, particularly with regard to teacher training, themes that appear within his book have a very real sympathy with those issues with which Gramsci was also dealing (*Back to the Rough Ground: 'Phronesis' and 'Techne' in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). With reference to the problem of historicity, Dunne endorses these concerns in the following manner:

As a knowing, feeling, and acting person in the present, one always carries the weight of the past – one's own and one's community's: a weight which leans heavily on one's projecting into the future. This is the past as tradition, which means the past as present – all the more present because of its being for the most part implicit and pre-reflective, action from behind, as it were, rather than something one can place before one as object. Or, to change the plane of the image, tradition may be thought of as what is *underneath* us, continually exercising a kind of gravitational pull. (p.359)

²⁷ As Gramsci would later comment in his prison writings:

The basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis into the science of politics and of history is the demonstration that there is no abstract 'human nature', fixed and immutable (a concept that certainly derives from religious and transcendentalist thought), but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations, hence an historical fact which can, within certain limits, be ascertained with the methods of philology and criticism. (*SPN*, p.133)

²⁸ Dunne (*op. cit.*, 1993) has captured the essence of this dilemma perhaps better than most

Both social awareness and social expression were tempered invariably by language²⁹. The degree to which Gramsci displayed his concrete grasp of this phenomenon was demonstrably evident in the last chapter. There, his growing concern that cultural learning was largely a 'secondhand' and passive affair was shown to be the primary motive behind his frequent invectives championing critical inquiry based on linguistic and philosophical activity. By revealing how a common sense, encyclopedic concept of culture was replete with normative assumptions that endorsed a hierarchy of power and prestige, Gramsci confirmed that our existing capacity for knowledge and understanding was therefore subject to the parameters of possibility meted out by the normative prescriptions set by language³⁰. It was this combination of insights that Marxism so prominently affirmed that led Gramsci to attempt to reappropriate concepts that limited thought and consequently mis-described mankind's capacity for cooperative human endeavour³¹. The socialist struggle was specifically a struggle against the conceptual 'abbreviations' forced upon thought and consciousness by the common sense orthodoxy of an inorganic and anti-dialectical worldview.

In the same manner in which Gramsci had argued previously that the reappropriation of concepts was a fundamental precondition for revolutionary social transformation more generally, he began to reiterate this point with respect to the concept of education and its conventionally understood meaning. In an article titled 'Men or Machines?' (1916³²), he noted how education was regarded more generally as

commentators. He writes:

...the knowing person can never quite catch up with how he or she knows; in achieving knowledge he or she is always already beholden to assumptions, antecedent interests and tacit procedures which are not themselves known – if to be known means to be fully available for inspection and certification by consciousness. (p.357)

²⁹ Gramsci highlights the suitability of a regular column on grammar and linguistics in a note in *Notebook 5*, entry 131 (*PN 2*, p.384). Here, Gramsci wrote that 'language should be treated as a conception of the world, as the expression of a conception of the world' (*PN 2*, p.384). Regular queries about words are scattered throughout his notes, and some of these queries are eventually consolidated under the subheadings 'Encyclopedic notions' (e.g., *PN 2: Notebook 5*, entry 130, p.383; *PN 2: Notebook 5*, entry 136, p.387; *PN 2: Notebook 5*, entry 139, p.389). The whole of *Notebook 29* was subsequently titled 'Notes for the Introduction to the Study of Grammar'.

³⁰ The notion of 'common sense' became a critical concept in Gramsci's theorizing about the operation of a bourgeois hegemony and the problematic nature of this type of thinking for successful revolutionary struggle. Gramsci's critique of Nikolai Bukharin's work, *The Popular Manual* (known variously as *Theory of Historical Materialism: A Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology* (first published in Moscow in 1921) or *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*. New York: Russell & Russell. Original work published 1925), amounted to a critique of Bukharin's practice of ignoring the common sense thinking of the masses when writing his manual. See especially Gramsci's remarks under the heading 'Critical Notes on an Attempt at Popular Sociology' (*SPN*, pp.419-425).

³¹ As will be shown in later chapters, this was precisely how Gramsci portrayed the distinctiveness of Marx's philosophy of praxis: it constituted a type of knowledge that represented a freedom from all previous partial and fallacious ideologies (*SPN*, p.462, pp.464-465).

³² 'Men or Machines?' (published under the headline 'Socialists and Education'), *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 December 1916 (*SPW 1*, pp.25-27; *HPC*, pp.33-35).

a possession constituting nothing but a form of capital that inevitably legitimated class distinctions and consolidated the perpetuation of the existing inegalitarian practices correspondingly. In addition to this reduction, two distinctive types of learning were offered in education's name – one manual for the proletariat and the other academic for the bourgeoisie. Concerned at the manner in which the social division of labour was deliberately being proliferated through college type (the proletariat could only ever afford to access schools that were tailored principally to the needs of industry), he argued aggressively for the condemnation of the privileges of property ownership as an appropriate platform for future educational programmes.

Recognizing that property ownership rights were automatically reflected in the format and ethos of the existing social institutions, by arguing for a change in policy within the formal education system, Gramsci was essentially reiterating the dialectical relationship that existed between the superstructure (social relations) and the base (the economic imperative of capitalism). When seen in this light, Gramsci's advocacy for changes in educational definition can thus be read as his attempt to reappropriate education to a broader, richer, cultural manifesto³³. The new education system – as we will read in a subsequent discussion of the Factory Councils (see Chapter 4) – had to mimic the very form of the future society to which it hoped to aspire. It had to represent the solution to the problem of 'right', as Gramsci termed it in his article³⁴. In this respect, his own solution – the fulfillment of 'the right' – was etched into the very practice of 'the principle' itself: a new conception of organization which reflected a completely different social purpose.

Demonstrating his application of the historical materialist method by de-coupling 'education' from its traditional, common sense link with capital, Gramsci argues in 'Men or Machines?' that the fundamental objective that must be adhered to in the creation of an active citizenry entailed making learning – all learning – *an active and conscious process*. Commencing his column with a call for socialism to represent an entirely different pedagogical operation from that engendered by traditional forms of learning, we see Gramsci describing his new vision of 'the school' as a vision that is itself no less than a metaphor for socialist society itself. It would be a 'school of freedom and free

³³ Peter Ives's research (*op. cit.*, 1997) supports my own work here. Inasmuch as Ives discusses how Gramsci fought to replace the old normative grammar with a new, ethically superior normative grammar (p.100), the examples that I provide of Gramsci's reappropriation of the concepts of culture and education serve to endorse Ives's thesis.

³⁴ 'Men or Machines?' (*op. cit.*). It is a problem 'of right and of force', Gramsci wrote, in direct opposition to the idea that one sector of society should have their humanity sacrificed to the

initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical precision'³⁵, he declared. In this regard, the 'old school' – the bourgeois school (of social (dis)order) – suffered from a veritable litany of crimes. Perhaps the worst of these, as Gramsci noted, was that it mortgaged the child's (proletariat's) future, forcing both the will and the intelligence into a predestined and inescapable role'³⁶. By contrast, the objective of the 'new school' (the 'school of humanism', as he euphemistically named it) would have an entirely different pedagogical purpose. Its primary intent would be the optimization of every person's critical faculties; of equipping every 'pupil' with the vital character needed to become makers of their own destiny. Reiterating this objective in an article titled 'Illiteracy', published a few weeks later³⁷, Gramsci acknowledged that 'socialism is the only ideal which can make citizens in the fullest and best sense of the word'.

Before continuing, it is important to underscore how Gramsci's linguistic move forces a juxtaposition of education, in its expanded and non-institutional sense, with the formal, structural entity of the schooling system. As I have already pointed out, but which perhaps could be restated more forcefully here, while the formal processes of cultural shaping associated with the institutional function of the education (schooling) system occurred overtly within the 'private' realm of civil society, Gramsci was responding to the way in which this system operated in a symbiotic (dialectical) relationship with the economic substructure; that is, it passively mimicked the ideology of the capitalist form of production. By virtue of this association then, *a necessary qualitative difference had to exist* between the aims and potential achievements of the bourgeois education (institutional) system (limited, as it was, by the logic of capital) and those of a proletarian one. Bourgeois cultural and educational opportunities were dependent on *property ownership and wealth*. Taking into consideration this dialectical connection between base and superstructure meant that a non-reductionistic concept of education (education for citizenship) could not help *but* mimic the new form of society which socialism represented – at least if there was ever to *be* a difference in any tangible and substantive sense. As a consequence, a new organizational and spatial relationship – one combined with a fundamentally different pedagogical operation – defines Gramsci's new 'school'. Education, in both senses of the term, was

interests of another (SPW 1, p.27).

³⁵ *Ibid.* (p.26).

³⁶ Making the worker into a better 'machine' tended to be the fate of most of the proletariat who got as far as the school gates, Gramsci intimated. The article's title reflects this sentiment.

³⁷ 'Illiteracy', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (HPC, p.29). *La Citta Futura* is described as a one-off review of political culture, wholly inspired by Gramsci and containing articles written by him and by other writers such as Benedetto Croce and Gaetano Salvemini (Robert Dombroski, *Antonio Gramsci*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989: p.xv).

thus simultaneously *the vehicle* and *the form* of the new social order.

As will be argued subsequently, this struggle for culture and education (and later politics) was therefore, in a very real sense, synonymous with overcoming what Gramsci was already beginning to regard as the debilitating 'hegemony' of the bourgeoisie; a hegemony which, as I have already noted, achieved much by way of a strong, but covert, reliance on the resource provision that it found in language. The manner in which the formal educational structures within society were capitalism's 'landmarks', as it were, reinforcing as well as reflecting what was essentially a monopoly capitalist epistemology and ontology, illustrated very clearly to Gramsci how the dominance of the bourgeoisie effectively operated on two different, but interactive, planes. Whilst one was certainly institutional, the other extra-institutional dimension was by far the most effective. It operated at the level of an *epistemology and ontology* that formed, ostensibly at least, *the non-political (apolitical) psychological supports that legitimated capitalism*. In simple terms, capitalism circumscribed the way in which people thought more generally about human 'knowledge' and human 'being'. In this manner, a population's valuational and associational preferences were subconsciously manipulated by the inbuilt biases favouring limited forms of thought and practice.

As Gramsci had already begun to realize, the type of thinking that capitalism ordained was severely limited, even in its most advanced expressions (in its 'philosophies'). Its inability to *accurately locate humanity at the centre of reality*³⁸ – to capture the potentiality of human life and to cultivate a capacity for insight and judgment based on the breadth and depth of associations possible (characteristic of multidimensional human life) – equated to *an inability of bourgeois thought to act on behalf of humanity*. Indeed, this is why Gramsci would later insist so passionately that the philosophy of praxis was an entirely new philosophy markedly different from all previous philosophies. *It was original because it restored to humanity its lost potentiality*.

In sum, Gramsci's diagnosis of the contradictions of capitalism – the impoverished 'limit-ideas' of bourgeois thought – led to his renewed representation of socialism as *the philosophy of moral consciousness*; the reconciliation of humankind to

³⁸ Gramsci's rejection of both idealist and positivist forms of thought became much more explicit as he sought to defend Marxism against the dominant, oppositional philosophies. His attack on the idealism of Benedetto Croce was matched in its intensity by his repeated criticism of Nikolai Bukharin's work which Gramsci came to associate with a crude, mechanistic and positivist rendition of Marxism (see Chapters 5 and 6).

its capacity for creative expression (rather than adaptive reaction). Consistent with the onto-formative philosophy that permeates Marx's writing, Gramsci insists that the society that socialism authored characterized the restoration of the dignity – of the 'humane' and 'social' character – of humankind. His increasing emphasis on the concept of citizenship and his appeal to a reinvigorated concept of morality can therefore be viewed as an all-out attack on the alienated subject – a subject whose social isolation was conditioned primarily by the political economy³⁹.

In a cluster of articles that appeared after 'Socialists and Education', Gramsci develops this concept of the citizen as a conscious and socially aware subject. 'Socialist discipline makes subjects into citizens', he wrote, a citizen who is furthermore 'already rebellious because, having become conscious of his own personality, he finds it fettered and realizes that he cannot freely affirm himself in this world'⁴⁰. In an accompanying article, which appeared in the same issue, he recommended that 'the initial act of liberation' from the burden of 'class slavery' was to associate with other like-minded individuals who were ennobled by the idea of working for the gratification of all of the other members of their class⁴¹. Enhancing this thesis in a further article, he argued that it was only through the active association of individuals that isolation became solidarity and 'analytical facts', which lay at the heart of what he regarded as utopian plans, became concrete and universal 'moral principles'⁴². The need to ground the 'collective will' within the collectivity, as Gramsci urged was so vital here, signalled his awareness of the potential strength of the combined force of the will of the people to become an effective social energy.

To enable one's contribution to collective life to become 'revolutionary' however, it had to transcend mere 'intellectual curiosity' or 'the impulse of a good heart'. 'Potentiality' did not, of and by itself, guarantee 'actuality', Gramsci took pains to further highlight⁴³. Association alone could not prevent the production of 'very sterile, beautiful

³⁹ Gramsci reaffirms this view in a 1918 article in which he sums up the original merit of the Russian victory in allowing human values to be given the 'upper hand' at last ('A Year of History', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 16 March 1918, *HPC*, pp.146-149). He further states:

Externality no longer has any value...Everyone wants to be master of his own destiny: society is to be moulded in compliance with spirit, and not vice versa. The organization of civil society must be an expression of humanity, must respect all autonomies and all liberties. (*HPC*, p.148)

⁴⁰ 'Discipline', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.49).

⁴¹ 'Discipline and Freedom', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.50; *PPW*, p.26).

⁴² 'Three Principles, Three Orders', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, pp.70-75; *PPW*, pp.19-25).

⁴³ As indicated in the preceding chapter, Gramsci certainly did not suffer from any illusions that the requisite mental changes that would author socialism were going to arise automatically from any and every form of association. The potential for revolution would have existed within any

solutions to the most urgent problems', he cautioned⁴⁴. Once more, seizing every opportunity to attack what he considered to be an impotent, positivist approach to the problem – labelling the result 'utopian social constructs...based on an infinity of facts but not a single moral principle'⁴⁵ – time and again, his warning is repeated: *association must be moral* if it is to become the type of association to supercede the existing conservative impulses and epitomize the new world order⁴⁶.

We gradually begin to get an overall sense of the 'humanistic education' that Gramsci passionately endorses through this reoccurring juxtaposition of the subject with the citizen. Association becomes 'moral' only to the extent that subjects acquire the prerequisite 'character' and dispositions of a 'citizen'⁴⁷. Characterized as masters of their own discipline and direction, and able to forge their own goals and methods so as to pursue the successful integration of society and its productive needs, Gramsci describes the citizen as one who is thus liberated from the hypnotic logic of the old – from the 'facts' of the past – and who is now able to advocate freely for a future society that is distinguished chiefly by 'an internalization and intensification of moral life'. No longer the mere embodiment of the capital and wage-labour relationship, the unfettered individual can forge new relationships which privilege alternative and conscious relational and valuational options.

By positioning human agency at the *centre* rather than at the margins of life itself, humanity is again relocated at the centre of history and historical and cultural production when interpreted in this way. Rather than having human needs and desires succumb to the influence of a determinate set of political and economic institutions and practices – thereby becoming subservient to an imposed logic of productivity, as it

⁴⁴ community gathering, be it a gathering of monks or criminals, if this had been the case. In this same article ('Indifferents', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917, *HPC*, pp.64-66), Gramsci added:

But these solutions remain beautifully sterile: this contribution to collective life is not animated by any moral light. It is the product of intellectual curiosity and not of a piercing sense of historical responsibility which wants everyone active in life and does not admit of any kind of agnosticism or indifference. (*HPC*, p.65)

⁴⁵ 'Three Principles, Three Orders', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p. 71).

⁴⁶ In his article entitled 'Character' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 3 March 1917, *HPC*, pp.52-54), Gramsci wrote:

But this is the strength of the Italian socialists: to have kept their character, to have overcome sentimentalism, to have avoided using as a stimulus for action and as a stimulus for manifestations of collective life merely the pounding of the heart. (*HPC*, p.52)

⁴⁷ Gramsci later wrote in his notebooks:

Men create their own personality, 1. by giving a specific and concrete ('rational') direction to their own vital impulse or will; 2. by identifying the means by which... [this will is made] concrete and specific and not arbitrary; 3. by contributing to modify the *ensemble* of the concrete conditions for realizing this will to the extent of one's own limits and capacities and in the most fruitful form...To transform the external world, the general system of relations, is to potentiate oneself and to develop oneself. (*SPN*, p.360)

were – Gramsci argues instead that human needs and desires must consciously and actively direct the production process. The persona of the citizen thus stands out in Gramsci's writing as the persona of one whose own characteristics – that of an animated, intelligent and socially responsive human being – forge the new state and the new culture.

The people's uprising in Russia⁴⁸ gave Gramsci further cause for optimism as various signs of discontent generated by Italy's ongoing war involvement became manifest increasingly in spasmodic local protest. This growing climate of social combustibility – rapidly becoming a feature of 1917 – produced deepening tensions within Italian civil society, pleasingly conducive nonetheless to the positive dissemination of the socialist message. On the opposite side of the coin however, and certainly not so pleasing for achieving a united socialist front, tensions symptomatic of a growing factionalism within the socialist party began to mount. Although the Russian example had promised initially a positive outcome for humanity's liberation, it stood eventually as a stark reminder that revolution had to express an authentic human voice if democracy was not to be short-lived. As might one might well imagine, Gramsci's consistently firm position in this regard was duly vindicated. It became all too plainly obvious that without the prerequisite intellectual and moral reform, subjects would remain the victims of the vicarious whims and fancies of others. To this end, the message that Gramsci affirmed was clear. He wrote: 'There must be more to the revolution than the question of power: there must be the question of morality, of a way of life'⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ The disruptions to the economy and political order in Russia during the First World War soon led to civil disobedience and rioting by those most affected by the associated deprivations. The socialist Bolsheviks soon won the sympathy of the majority of Russian soldiers, workers, and peasants and took charge of the ailing nation with very little resistance in October 1917. Lenin and Trotsky brought war to an end in March 1918.

⁴⁹ 'Notes on the Russian Revolution', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 April 1917 (*SPW 1*, p.28)

3. The Russian Example: The Distinction Between Reformism and Authentic Revolutionary Practice

The workers' uprising in Petrograd, and the growing discontent that led to spasmodic riots and strikes being unleashed on Italian soil, gave Gramsci every reason to anticipate that the 'crisis' of liberal capitalism might eventually lead to a 'total' revolution, one that he described would be purely proletarian in character. In his first comment on the Russian event in April 1917⁵⁰, what is indeed striking is Gramsci's deployment of this subject/ citizen distinction as an even more decisive feature of his endeavours to pinpoint the exact nature of the difference between a proletarian revolution and other, non-socialist forms of uprising.

Despite the fact that revolutions might well resemble each other 'on the surface', throughout this commentary and others subsequent to it following the Bolshevik uprising, he stands firm in his resolve that the proletariat must be led by an 'organic' search for understanding and truth. Contrasting the French Revolution with the Russian, for example, he proceeds to dismiss any suggestion that the latter is in any way similar to the former. Notably wanting from the French example is a truly 'universal' programme of reform, he contends, just as there is an absence of 'other spiritual factors' – a wider moral horizon being cited here, in particular. In every possible way, the proletarian act is portrayed as one which is 'deeper', more spiritual and certainly much more ideologically pervasive⁵¹. Pictured are individuals cooperating in communion with each other, defending the interests of those least able to defend themselves, and ultimately fighting to effect the social and material conditions crucial for the realization of the self-development of all.

It is the successful liberation of the spirit and of the mind that are the two most important features regularly nominated by Gramsci as crucial elements in cultural criticism. Again, in relation to his ongoing discussions about the nature of revolution in general terms, 'reason' and 'intelligence' freed from preordained method or logic is openly celebrated. The triumph of Lenin's intellectual and practical achievements is

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (HPC, pp.126-28; SPW 1, pp.28-30; PPW, pp.31-34). Gramsci preferred to call the Russian Revolution an 'act' in preference to an 'event', in order that recognition be given to the deliberate and active nature of the intervention. Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: p.47) notes how the authorities often referred to uprisings – especially those in Turin – as 'events', no doubt to downplay the extent of their significance and to prevent their escalation. With this in mind, it is little wonder that Gramsci rejected this nomenclature.

⁵¹ In other words, there needed to be a qualitative shift representing 'a deeper excavation into the social mines' which required that the socialists needed to dig back to 'pure metal' ('The

cited as the epitome of active thought having successfully penetrated living and dynamic history: of history having been successfully re-authored. As has been discussed already in Chapter 2, Gramsci's critique of rigid, factual or mechanically dogmatic forms of representation represents his deliberate assault not only against the foreclosure of creative and open-ended thought itself but also against a static and fatalistic view of history, coterminously.

In keeping with his belief in the dynamic and fluid nature of the cultural contest, Gramsci wrote a little later ('The Watchmaker', 18 August 1917) that 'Life is always a revolution, a replacing of values, of people, of categories, of classes'. Fully cognizant moreover of how this process is invariably stymied, he acknowledges this predicament: that while the mind remained imprisoned within this realm of social and historical unconsciousness, forms of enduring and creative thought which could have successfully penetrated living history – as was the case with Lenin's conquest – were inevitably subdued. To the extent that Gramsci's writings during this period can be read as a celebration of the achievement of a group of Russians who had formed themselves into an active citizenry, vigorously fighting to re-author their country's history, they also resonate with his own personal hopes that a sizable sector of Italian society would likewise achieve this state of consciousness; in other words, that intelligence would be cured of its laziness.

While the Russian example provided Gramsci with a growing sense of optimism for an Italian revolution, it can also be seen as affording him the opportunity to continue to critique all manner of reformist thought and practice⁵². Featured within his commentaries during this period are Gramsci's continuing endeavours to discriminate between thought and behaviour that was truly revolutionary and social/ socialist, and those ideas and practices that he associated with the more limited aims of a liberal programme. The whole liberal programme, Gramsci had stated categorically in a previous article, was, in reality, nothing other than the Socialist Party's *minimal* programme⁵³.

Equally important, in his first comment on the Revolution ('Notes on the Russian

Watchmaker', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 18 August 1917, *HPC*, p.36).

⁵² Put simply, reformism refers to the interpretation of socialism as the imminent product of a series of reforms within existing institutional arrangements. Reformism often ran as a parallel philosophy alongside economic determinism, insofar as reforms were to be fought for *within* the existing system as economic forces evolved towards the realization of a socialist economy.

⁵³ 'Three Principles, Three Orders', *La Città Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, p.72).

Revolution', 29 April 1917⁵⁴), Gramsci underscores how political authoritarianism – the imposition of ideas of 'a previously dominant caste' upon other groups⁵⁵ – is purely a continuation of a class-based, sectarian politics in universalist disguise. What makes a revolution truly 'revolutionary', he insists in this reflection, is that liberty of the mind – freedom from mental/ moral domestication – constitutes political liberty also: that the basis upon which all previous inclinations and judgments were formed under bourgeois governance would now be reviewed and revised. Consistent with his belief that a *democratic, relational and moral transformation* within society constituted the very bedrock of proletarian revolution, Jacobinism becomes associated negatively with reform throughout Gramsci's provocative commentary. Socialists can never be Jacobins, he chides in one particular polemic ('Socialism and Italy', 22 September 1917⁵⁶), because Jacobinism actually reinforces the authority of the state, thereby denying subjects their citizenship by debasing them with the 'implacable weight of authority'⁵⁷.

The Russian Revolution also prompted Gramsci to repeat his earlier caution about basing one's strategies on the defense a particular nation or 'territorial idea', as he had previously described this sympathy⁵⁸. Recalling how the socialists had at first adopted a neutral attitude towards Italy's involvement in the war, he reminded his readers that the primary reason for advocating such a policy was because he believed it erroneous to try to confine collective life and struggle to the boundaries of territory alone. Such a prescription lacked 'spiritual concreteness'⁵⁹, he maintained. By this

⁵⁴ *Il Grido del Popolo* (SPW 1, pp.28-30; HPC, pp.126-128; PPW, pp.31-34).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (SPW 1, pp.28-29).

⁵⁶ *Il Grido del Popolo* (PPW, pp.27-30).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (p.30).

⁵⁸ These thoughts were published in the column *Sotto la Mole*, in the 1916 period. Although the transcripts of the two most prominent articles reflecting these ideas are not available in English, Germino (1990: pp.47-48, p.60) provides us with an account of the contents of both. An August article that Gramsci wrote ('Class Struggle and War') presents his argument that '[A] proletarian nation, which is the unification of all the proletariats of the world, will replace the nation' (in Germino, 1990: p.60). Later, this theme is again pursued in November (1916) under the heading, 'The Territorial Idea'.

⁵⁹ The 'Territorial Idea', Germino explains (*op. cit.*, 1990: p.47), was Gramsci's direct response to Croce's speech at Ravenna whereby the latter rebuked socialists for not putting the defense of the Fatherland first over disputes between parties and classes. Gramsci's reply deserves to be quoted at length:

The proletariat cannot find its home in the territorial idea of the Fatherland because it is without history, *because it has never participated in political life*, because it does not have traditions of a collective life that are confined to the circle of the [national] community. The proletariat became a political being through socialism; in its conscience the territory lacks spiritual concreteness....Its passions, its sufferings, its martyrs are for another idea [than that of the nation]: for the liberation of man from every form of slavery, for the conquest of every possibility of man as such, the man who has no territory, who recognizes no limits except the inhibitions of his conscience. Through socialism man has returned to his generic character; this is why we speak so much of humanity and esteem the International. (Cited in Germino, *op. cit.*, 1990: p.48)

assessment, he meant simply that action bounded by a 'territorial idea' represented a form of idolatry towards the modern nation-state, which could not help but undermine class solidarity as a consequence. It created the pretense of unity where in fact none existed.

Gramsci's continuing critique of 'idolatry' is yet a further significant theme which characterizes this period of writing, just as his critique of indifference had likewise been before. Idolatry represented a behaviour that, like indifference, discouraged individuals from engaging critically and directly with their world. Just as nationalism dissuaded people from thinking globally, and thus from pursuing associations based on common, moral problems, so, too, did idolatry. To hold an instinctive and sheep-like trust in other individuals was antithetical to developing a broader cognitive and moral resolve. More specifically, the reverential adherence to a particular idea or stance that it most commonly typified affirmed the foreclosure of any further interrogation of that phenomenon. In so doing, individuals actually *consented* to their own mental inertia. When reading through so many of Gramsci's early articles, there is little doubt that he perceived idolatry as a state of mind linked to the wider malaise of the human spirit; to the pathological state of the culture itself.

Idolatry signified submissiveness, just as authoritarianism did as well. To campaign for the abandonment of both in favour of the cultivation of a mental state that allowed the forging of lasting agreements and compelling principles of human action was Gramsci's overarching objective. Commenting specifically on this need in 'Towards a Cultural Association' (18 December 1917⁶⁰), Gramsci decried the tactics of his own socialist organization claiming that not enough time was allocated to allow party members to deliberate adequately over important issues with the result that 'not all of those who participated in the movement had mastered the exact terms of the questions and, therefore, they did so out of a spirit of discipline and because of a faith in their leaders, rather than out of an intimate conviction and a rational spontaneity'⁶¹. Undoubtedly, Gramsci believed that this was the chief reason for the presence in the movement 'of the puzzling phenomenon [of idolatry]' which, as he so perceptively observed, 'lets in through the window the same authoritarianism that was thrown out the door'⁶².

The importance of the proletariat in thinking internationally – as opposed to nationally – was to become a constant feature of Gramsci's writings (see Chapter 4).

⁶⁰ *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), HPC, pp.96-99.

⁶¹ 'Towards a Cultural Association', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 18 December 1917 (HPC, p.97).

⁶² *Ibid.*

Continual evidence can be offered throughout this 1917 to 1918 period of Gramsci's striving to coax thought out from behind its shelter; whether it be the shelter imposed forcefully by authoritarianism or that accepted freely through the privileging of states of either indifference or of idolatry. These were both states of social immaturity, in Gramsci's view. In many of his attacks on reformist thought issued during this period, Gramsci's technique is to link these states repeatedly back to the dominant problem as he sees it; that of the formation of 'citizens'. Here, emphasis is again placed on the need for socialists to achieve the requisite features of 'personality' and of 'character' to enable them to think and act as an organic whole. On 24 November 1917⁶³, for instance, he wrote:

We have been poisoned by a reformist training which has destroyed thinking, which has polluted our thought, both contingent and occasional judgment, as well as external thought, which continually renews itself while remaining unchanged. We are revolutionaries in action while we are reformists in thought. We operate well and reason badly. We proceed by intuition rather than by reason, and this brings a constant instability and dissatisfaction. We have more temperament than character⁶⁴.

Within a fortnight, Gramsci once more addressed this theme (in 'Intransigence-Tolerance: Intolerance-Compromise') as he again reiterated his stance of non-collaboration – or 'intransigence', as he preferred to call it. This would be a position that he would restate again and again, almost obsessively over several months. Intransigence, as he saw it, was the only authentic socialist response – 'the necessary predicate of character⁶⁵', as he put it – to the inflated claims made by liberals (claims which were subscribed to by a growing number of socialists as well) that liberalism championed 'universals'; that is, that liberalism embodied all the general principles necessary for the establishment of a more democratic, social order. As opposed to believing such a fiction – and in order to provide his own guide in an attempt to profile the indispensable, positive characteristics of socialist mental and moral practice vital to ensure organicity of thought and action – Gramsci's work can be read as an attempt to articulate and disseminate these same elements in the course of the ensuing year. In this regard, he was always most insistent that the cardinal principles of 'collectively-established deliberations' themselves encompassed the finest elements of socialist emancipatory practice⁶⁶.

⁶³ 'Literature', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 24 November 1917 (HPC, pp.23-26).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* (p.25).

⁶⁵ 'Intransigence-Tolerance: Intolerance-Compromise', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 8 December 1917 (HPC, pp.57-59).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (p.58).

Character traits duly nominated as contributing to the best possible type of collective agreement emerge scattered throughout successive articles. They include: the capacity for tolerance; an ability for disciplined, systematic reading; the requisite aptitude to generalize and be led by an organic search for truth and understanding; being disinterested in the more common and immediate goals of personal enrichment; and being trained in the intricacies of logic whilst simultaneously showing sensitivity to the aesthetic and non-rational dimension of 'knowing'. The primary distinction between a capitalist order and that of a socialist was chiefly one of *governance*: that is, socialism did not merely pay lip-service to self-governance but reflected organizationally the embodiment of a new dimensionality of rule (the inclusion of all voices) along with a genuine commitment towards enhancing the common good.

In one of the most hard-hitting articles of the period – 'The Revolution Against *Capital*' (24 December 1917⁶⁷) – the identification of positive and negative character traits again became the nominated means that Gramsci elects to discriminate between genuine and counterfeit Marxist practice. Conscious and critical human endeavour, Gramsci again reminded his readers, provided the dynamism that transformed Russian society. The contrast drawn is one between two different groups, both of whom called themselves 'Marxists'. On the one hand, he profiles an active group whom he described as demonstrating an astute mastery of 'economic facts, judging them and adapting them to their will'. It is this understanding that therefore endowed them with 'a greater consciousness of their own power – of their own capacity to assume social responsibility'. On the other, he identifies a passive and inert body who idly sought comfort in 'the critical schemas determining how the history of Russia would unfold according to the canons of historical materialism'⁶⁸. Although this latter group audaciously called themselves 'Marxists', in Gramsci's estimation, they were anything but: their own (mis)interpretation of Marx's ideas had resulted in their automatic allegiance to a doctrinaire and dogmatic reading of his principles which exerted its own 'scientific authority' upon its members⁶⁹.

Gramsci's unrelenting attack upon this peculiar rendition of Marxism is entirely consistent with his general contempt for every form of 'limit-idea'. It endorsed the view that certain ways of thinking (being) represented the very negation of thought/ being

⁶⁷ *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.), 24 December 1917 (*SPW* 1, pp.34-37; *HPC*, pp.123-126).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* (*SPW* 1, pp.34-35).

⁶⁹ Gramsci later coined the phrase 'pedantic Marxists' when discussing this grouping ('Out of the Dilemma', *Avanti!*, 29 November 1919, *PPW*, p.133).

itself. What was believed as fact or dogma remained essentially uninterrogated, so much so that the predominant faith in convention, dogma or 'fact' elicited a mental response within individuals whereby they simply became *unaccustomed to the very processes of thought and thinking itself*. By adhering to claims of scientific positivism, for instance, minds were not kept open to alternative forms of thought, but were inevitably closed owing to the higher form of superstition that positivism nurtured. In keeping with this view, the 'curative' could never entail the simple revision of a formula or a programme on the grounds of its inadequacy. This, itself, was the problem: in thinking that any formula or programme was ever adequate⁷⁰. To Gramsci, formulas and programmes *sterilized thought* – including those which claimed to be doing precisely the opposite⁷¹.

Given his vehement abhorrence towards preordained modes of thought and subaltern activity, Gramsci's ongoing reproof of the deterministic ideas of Claudio Treves echoed his earlier commitment towards the task of ridding Marxism of its 'positivist and naturalist encrustations'⁷². His first admonition of Treves had in fact occurred in February of the previous year (1917)⁷³. In that initial broadside, Gramsci vehemently rejected Treves's 'bookish vision of life' as representing social energies wholly 'abstracted from man and from will'⁷⁴. Analogous to the adoption of an intellectual outlook that Gramsci branded as nothing but a weak and 'arid mysticism', he tried to impress upon his readership how Treves's 'scientism' had ultimately served to circumscribe human 'thought-full-ness' (creative thought) and stultified human self-governance as an outcome. '*The tenacious will of man* has been substituted for the *natural law* and for the pseudo-scientists' *fatal course of events*', he wrote on that

⁷⁰ Gramsci stated this explicitly in 'Literature' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 24 November 1917, *HPC*, pp.23-26). There, he argued;

The errors that have been made, and the evils which could not have been avoided, have not been the result of faulty formulas or programmes. The error and the evil was in us: it was in our dilettantism, in the superficiality of our life, in the general garb of politics, in whose perversions we also unconsciously participated...Changing the formula is meaningless. We ourselves must change along with our method of action. (*HPC*, p.25)

⁷¹ Gramsci's critique of Claudio Treves is directed largely at this problem. Later, Gramsci launched a similar campaign against Nikolai Bukharin (see Gramsci's remarks under the heading 'Critical Notes on an Attempt at Popular Sociology', *SPN*, pp.419-425). The entire thrust of Gramsci's criticism of Nikolai Bukharin was that his *Popular Manual* rendered Marxism a science. Bukharin had replaced a dialectical and fluid mode of thought with static, empirical concepts and forms of classification. Instead of therefore encouraging the critical scrutiny of formal logic and abstract expression, Bukharin was actually promoting it. It was this acriticality that Gramsci announced had 'caused common sense to remain Ptolemaic, anthropomorphic and anthropocentric' (*SPW*, p.420). In other words, Bukharin's *Manual* merely endorsed another form of fatalism.

⁷² 'The Revolution Against Capital', *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.), 24 December 1917 (*SPW* 1, p.34).

⁷³ 'Margins', *La Citta Futura*, 11 February 1917 (*HPC*, pp.40-43).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* (p.41).

occasion⁷⁵.

Not too unexpectedly, therefore, the October events afforded Gramsci additional reason to censure Treves publicly for what he regarded as his passive, yet high-minded, 'critical criticism' ('Critical Criticism', 12 January 1918⁷⁶). Active forms of human association and conscious action, Gramsci took pains to repeat, were the only authentic means by which a collective, self-regulating citizenry could hope to be forged. As Gramsci's writings intimate, the insertion of the will of the proletariat into culture and history required the reconciliation of the theoretical goal (the rule of all) with the practical implications of achieving that same objective (the development of the capacity of all to rule). Whilst positivism certainly advertised itself as the model of a 'progressive' and 'civilized' worldview, what Gramsci nonetheless highlighted was the impoverished nature of this thesis; that is, he explained how positivistic thinking did not challenge the ontological and epistemological dimensions of capitalist domination. Not surprisingly, because of the sheer resilience of this lie, Gramsci devoted a great deal of his time and effort to labouring this point. Such a consideration, he maintained persistently, pointed to the fundamental shortcomings of weak and imperfect theorizing.

Gramsci's concern over the likely effect that a split within the socialist ranks might have had on any potential Italian revolutionary opportunity led him to suggest, at the end of 1917, that 'an organism of disinterested control' was now needed '[a]long with the newspaper, economic organizations⁷⁷, and the political party⁷⁸'. There is no doubt whatsoever that what would have motivated this proposal would have been Gramsci's acute and growing sense of unease towards the increasing 'bureaucratic centralism'⁷⁹ being displayed within both the trade union movement and the Socialist Party itself⁸⁰. Such conservatism within both organizations was unequivocally condemned as constituting the very antithesis of the egalitarian and authentically socialist spirit which he felt that both groups should have been attempting to foster. In

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* (p.42. Gramsci's emphasis).

⁷⁶ *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.37-39; PPW, pp.43-46).

⁷⁷ Gramsci names the powerful Cooperative Alliance as an exemplar of Turinese socialists' attempts to successfully integrate economic and political activity ('Toward a Cultural Association', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 18 December 1917, HPC, pp.96-99; PPW, pp.35-38; SCW, pp.20-23).

⁷⁸ 'Literature', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 24 November 1917 (HPC, pp.23-26).

⁷⁹ As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, Gramsci saw bureaucratic centralism as a form of organization that was antithetical to democracy itself. This type of rule was 'regressive' making the organization established along those lines nothing more than a policing body. See SPN, p.155.

⁸⁰ Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: pp.72-73) quotes research conducted by Emilio Soave into Gramsci's criticisms of traditional union structures in 1918, especially. The most serious complaint Gramsci made at that juncture was that there needed to be more direct representation of the workers themselves.

Gramsci's mind, given the impotence of the two foremost organizations in championing a counter-cultural and anti-subaltern worldview, there was an even greater need as time progressed for a type of association crafted along the Socratic lines of which he himself had consistently championed⁸¹.

He reflected upon these concerns on several occasions during the ensuing months⁸². To his way of thinking, such an organization would not only allow for 'the exercise of thought, the acquisition of general ideas, the habit of connecting cause and effect'⁸³ (that is, provide the best possible chance of immunizing its members against the persuasive rhetoric of men like Treves or of countering the 'dogmatic and intolerant mentality created in the Italian people by Catholic and Jesuit education'⁸⁴), but, even more especially, would exemplify the concrete process needing to be urgently undertaken: that is, of solidifying groups of individuals into a unified, but critically aware, entity. A social organism freed of all 'frivolity and recklessness'⁸⁵ and capable of exercising honest and responsible self-rule, was how Gramsci duly described this 'active and operative expression' of Marx's counter-capitalist culture⁸⁶.

4. The Problem of Citizenship as the Problem of Authoring a New State

By way of a brief recapitulation of the major themes developed above, what Gramsci's work was repeatedly accentuating was the manner in which bourgeois economic organization (capitalism) promoted a form of inorganic and bureaucratic politics that nurtured a climate of passivity and indifference through the fetishizing vantage point that it concurrently endorsed. An epistemology and ontology that legitimated social separatism and political and productive competition simultaneously was mirrored internally within its political and civil makeup. Consequently, as a result of the normativity engendered through the antagonistic and discordant rationality that

⁸¹ Gramsci had always championed the Socratic tradition with its emphasis on 'thinking well, whatever the thought'.

⁸² 'Toward a Cultural Association' (*op. cit.*); 'The Club of Moral Life', March 1918, *Letter to G. Lombardo Radice* (PPW, pp.51-53).

⁸³ 'Philanthropy, Good Will, and Organization', *Avanti!* 24 December 1918 (HPC, pp.43-45).

⁸⁴ 'Toward a Cultural Association' (*op. cit.*).

⁸⁵ This phrase appears in Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: p.74) in relation to a complaint that Gramsci had laid about the actions of some of the Italian proletariat. Cammett quotes Gramsci as saying, in an article in October 1918, that a major source of concern for him was not only the growing authoritarianism of both the unions and the party but also the submissiveness of the proletariat. When a previously passive and ill-informed proletariat at last took control of its suffrage rights within either organization, he predicted that 'frivolity and recklessness' would triumph.

⁸⁶ Gramsci applied this phrase to his new concept of party, as discussed in Chapter 5.

these relations of production legitimated, the capitalistic 'base' of society was protected and sheltered from significant assault. The civil-social realm was therefore far from 'autonomous', in Gramsci's view, aligned instead to the principles and precepts of a capitalist legality.

The task of challenging the arbitrary and destructive mode of thinking and being promoted by capitalism meant there was an ever-present need to continually draw attention to the manner in which the combined machinations of the civil, political and economic organizational bulwark of the bourgeoisie intersected to effectively stymie and blunt the proletariat's critical class sense. Counteracting this effect was obviously an enormous task that would require 'an intense labour of criticism', as Gramsci had previously come to suggest⁸⁷. It was one which was made even more pressing in the ensuing months of 1918 as a growing groundswell of collaborationist sentiment appeared to be gathering considerable momentum within the party and union network, a development that is discussed further in the succeeding chapter⁸⁸. Only through a process involving a concerted disciplinary regime and ongoing efforts to encourage collective organization (*anti-passive* methods) could Gramsci foresee the cultivation of a consciousness of the common good and of one's own responsibilities of citizenship.

As noted above, organization – or, better still, *re-organization* – was a key imperative consistently advanced within Gramsci's writings alongside his goal of achieving universal, human criticality. Actualizing the objective of a re-organization of the mental and moral fabric of society based on a collective view of property ownership and distribution, he wrote, was related intimately to individuals 'coming to [an] awareness' of being part of a universal human collective. It was related, in other words, to the evolution of a broader moral resolve needed to replace what Gramsci took to be the superficially conceived, impersonal and 'contractual' outlook that was inherent within the liberal position⁸⁹. Such a goal, above all else, involved hard work and sacrifice. Furthermore, as his own first-hand experience would come to teach him subsequently, the proletariat could not *but* succumb to the strong, liberal enticement towards separateness, division and privilege – justified territorially, scientifically,

⁸⁷ 'Socialism and Culture', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916 (*SPW* 1, p.12).

⁸⁸ As noted in this chapter, such collaborationist tendencies took varying forms. Generally, however, collaborationists were reformists who shared an across-the-board faith in the potential for existing institutions (e.g., trade unions, the Popular University) to deliver substantial ameliorative changes to the social and moral fabric of society.

⁸⁹ A key premise upon which the traditional liberal state was founded was that 'society' was simply that which was produced as the outcome of a series of contractual arrangements, negotiated between individuals. The function of the state was therefore chiefly that of an arbitrator through

economically, politically and vocationally – precisely through the *absence* of such endeavour (such 'work'). When explained in this manner, it becomes easier to understand why Gramsci therefore chose to accentuate the importance of counteracting the ever-present tendency for individuals to uncritically adopt 'the patterns of organization imposed on [them] by minorities at a previous period in history'⁹⁰ in a series of follow-up observations.

Collaboration, accordingly, was to be condemned as *passivity*. It was a response that was marked chiefly by its tendency for individuals to adopt (uncritically) alienating patterns of individualistic, ahistorical capitalistic organization; that is, to adopt the tenets that had been forged from the very epistemology and ontology which socialism sought to displace. In a number of articles that were written during the course of the 1918 period, Gramsci began to reconsider the problem. Undoubtedly, he regarded the confused separation of politics and economics as the most pronounced cause of the loss of strong, socialist direction⁹¹. Collaboration tended to satisfy 'psychological needs', he alleged assertively, but it could only offer an artificial sense of 'progress' that came at the expense of a much broader, all-encompassing concept of politics. Reaffirming this position again in another key article in which he openly discussed the 'errors' of the two principal forms of collaboration – syndicalism⁹² (trade unionism) and reformism (parliamentarianism) – Gramsci traced the problem of collaboration back to a misguided preference for viewing the political and economic spheres as independent and separate domains⁹³. He wrote:

which the competing interests of private individuals were given public protection.

⁹⁰ 'Socialism and Culture' (*SPW* 1, p.11).

⁹¹ The reader is referred to Darrow Schecter's study (*Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy*. Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Co. Ltd. [Avebury Series in Philosophy] 1991: especially pp.45-56) for an historical overview of the split between the economic and political branches within the socialist movement.

⁹² Schecter (*op. cit.*, 1991) has identified two main branches of syndicalism that dominated the Italian socialist movement: *evolutionary* syndicalism and *revolutionary* syndicalism. The chief exponent of the former, positivistic form was Filippo Turati who had won support within the *PSI* from 1892-1904. Revolutionary syndicalism developed as a reaction to this 'authorized' Party version with its advocates rejecting the 'evolutionary' assumptions inherent within the former, as well as its parallel reformist predilection. In this comment, Gramsci was obviously directing his critique towards evolutionary syndicalism.

⁹³ He elucidated these thoughts in 'Economic Organization and Socialism', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 9 February 1918 (*HPC*, pp.88-89; *PPW*, pp.47-49). As indicated in the last chapter, many of Gramsci's earliest articles decried the separation of commerce (economics) from culture, politics and morality. His vehement criticisms of Croce, in particular, were directed to the manner in which Croce's writings legitimated the tendency to treat the various domains of human contemplation and engagement as realms that were fully autonomous and independent.

[Syndicalists] have arbitrarily eliminated the term economics from the unity of social activity, while [reformists] have done the same with the term politics. The former have focused on professional organizing, and because of the initial mistake in their thought they do bad politics and worse economics. The others have focused on parliamentary externality, and for the same reasons they end up in the same way. The fortune and necessity of revolutionary socialism arises from these derivations. It takes social activity back to its unity and tries to do politics and economics without qualification⁹⁴.

Neither 'a professional state' as envisaged by the syndicalists, nor a state that 'monopolized production and distribution' as envisaged by reformists, promised a social vision, he argued, that could claim to be any different *organizationally* than capitalism⁹⁵. What both privileged was a conception of 'state' that was effectively based on an individualistic philosophy underpinned by personal property ownership rather than on a collectivist conception of community wealth and active and conscious co-participatory citizenship. 'Competitive representation' was therefore legally mandated in preference to the more 'socialized' agenda of 'co-operative *self*-representation'. A collaborator's vision was, by its nature, a much weaker, 'minimum' proposal to Gramsci's mind, and still very much indicative of a view of state to be fought for and 'possessed' by one class that would then be wielded over the other⁹⁶.

A model of maximum socialism for Gramsci was, by comparison, one that was ultimately *anti-class*. It was a model founded on collective ownership and the resolute aspirations of a 'common good' beyond class-based, sectional politics. By this very definition therefore, a maximum programme could not be *other* than *anti-statist* insofar as the existing state was the historical manifestation of the unfavourable distortions of a class-divided society: it was 'the economic-political organization of the bourgeois class', Gramsci conjectured in one fiery polemic on the topic ('Class Intransigence and Italian History', 18 May 1918⁹⁷). To this, he added:

The Socialist Party is not a sectional, but a class organization... It can only view the State, the network of bourgeois class power, as its antagonistic likeness. It cannot enter into direct or indirect competition for the conquest of the State without committing suicide, without losing its nature, without becoming a mere political

⁹⁴ 'Economic Organization and Socialism' (*HPC*, p.88).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (pp.88-89).

⁹⁶ These points are reiterated and developed in the section in Cammett (*op. cit.*, 1967: pp.83-85) entitled 'Trade Unionism and the Factory Councils'. Cammett writes, for example, that trade unionism was 'merely a form of capitalist society', which meant that 'the trade unions "competed" economically, [just as] the Party ["competed"] politically' (p.83). In this sense, class struggle was reduced to something much weaker than Gramsci envisaged – to class "competition".

⁹⁷ *Il Grido del Popolo* (*SPW* 1, pp.38-47; *PPW*, pp.59-69).

faction that is estranged from the historical activity of the proletariat...The Socialist Party does not conquer the State, it replaces it; it replaces the regime, abolishes party government and replaces free competition by the organization of production and exchange⁹⁸.

For Gramsci, an historical understanding of the genealogy of the state served to affirm the necessity for this apparently extreme and steadfast posture. The state could be likened to a phoenix that had arisen from the ashes of feudalism: the state was the appellant court of liberalism that functioned (ostensibly) to arbitrate in matters concerning the pursuit of individual rights, but which actually *circumscribed* those rights by defining the extremities of possibility for social solidarity and support, coterminously. Put simply, the liberal state guaranteed rights for *capitalist tendencies alone*. It was the state, moreover, which consolidated bourgeois relations of production and exchange; which united different groups of producers, giving the class a 'solid, united and external appearance' whilst at the same time solidifying the distinction between classes, nonetheless⁹⁹. *The state was thus a limitation and impediment to moral progress* in that the 'civil' society which the liberal state authored and protected was, in fact, antithetical to a 'human society' or 'socialized humanity', as Marx himself had remarked¹⁰⁰. As Gramsci here is saying, the old state/ civil order must be replaced by the new; one based on an entirely new, humanized system of production and exchange.

The organization of culture along socialist lines could not mean anything *other than* the substitution of an institution designated historically for the consolidation of bourgeois political and economic values and the ongoing polarization of the two major classes with that of an opposing one. Whereas under bourgeois rule, a 'lack of means' spelt the invisibility of the individual from public life, socialism's overarching goal was to remedy this very deficiency by granting full and unconditional sovereignty to *all* the citizens within the polis – and not just a privileged few. To this effect, concepts such as 'state' and 'governance', like concepts such as 'culture' and 'education' before them, invited a close and much-needed critical review. Tarnished, as the concept of state was, by a fetishized concept of governance, Gramsci was simply asserting how it

⁹⁸ Four months later ('After the Congress', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 14 September 1918, *HPC*, pp.99-101), Gramsci remained steadfast to this position:

...the socialist state, i.e., the organization of the collectivity after the abolition of private property, does not perpetuate the bourgeois state and it is not an evolution of the capitalist state constituted by three powers, executive, parliamentary and judiciary. It is rather a continuation and a systematic development of the professional organizations and of the local councils which the proletariat has already succeeded in spontaneously promoting within an individualistic regime. (*HPC*, p.101)

⁹⁹ 'Class Intransigence and Italian History', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 18 May 1918 (*SPW* 1, p.38).

¹⁰⁰ Thesis 10 of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* stated: 'The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society or socialized humanity'.

needed to be brought back into the service of all humanity. In the same way in which 'culture' and 'education' needed to be humanized and socialized, the concept of 'state' likewise needed to be reappropriated.

In contradistinction to the 'liberty' previously granted to individuals by the state that Gramsci named as the 'pompous, rhetorical and grandiloquent' edifice of the bourgeoisie, an unsupervised but 'regulated' freedom based on a voluntary discipline forged from the position of strength that only collective association could bring was the type of community that Gramsci envisaged. No longer requiring an 'adult' state to police its internal affairs, this mature society would instead fashion its own organizational principles from the intellectual mettle and moral resolve of its collective membership¹⁰¹. Hence, association and organization were critical elements that we see constantly underpinning Gramsci's enduring strategy for the successful diminution of the old external state. As Gramsci was only too well aware, the power of state would incrementally fade only in accordance with the extent to which the community forged itself into a new and different 'state'; *a state internalized within the people*. Gramsci's attack on the bourgeois state was thus driven by his tireless conviction that *the people were the state*¹⁰².

The problem of creating an authentic citizenry was one and the same as that of constructing an entirely new, democratic (ethically authentic) state. When portrayed in this light, Gramsci's constant exhortations for the development of 'personality' highlight how the process of changing personal beliefs, attitudes and activities at the level of the 'hum-drum' and the day-to-day issued simultaneously the possibility and the actuality for broader cultural (historico-political) change. Leading naturally and inevitably to the abolition of classes and all the sediment of class-related prejudice therewith, as has been discussed previously in Chapter 2, Gramsci's entire collection of writings depict unmistakably the educative-formative problem that Marxism championed: to promote new powers of practical discrimination and the notion of self-development and self-realization engendered in turn by the evolution of this 'productive' sensibility.

¹⁰¹ 'The duty to organize and come together', Gramsci later wrote, was the fundamental duty that necessarily distinguished Marxists from non-Marxists. He had reemphasized this point elsewhere: that 'logically' the principle of organization was superior to that of 'pure and simple freedom'; that it is 'maturity compared to childhood' ('Individualism and Collectivism', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 9 March 1918, *HPC*, 59-62).

¹⁰² Gramsci expresses his wholehearted contempt for a theory of state that abstracts the entity 'state' from individuals in a discussion titled 'Quality and Quantity' (*SPN*, pp.468-470).

Time and again, restating the significance of the qualitative shift implied in this ethos, we read how a purely numerical increase in the number of people participating in government bore absolutely no relationship to the realization of the broader moral objectives of socialism; that is, of cultivating a solid sense of social responsibility among the population. Indeed, it is this objective which is being constantly driven home to Gramsci's readers. Insofar as they are continually reminded that 'human life' gained its very meaning and its distinctive 'essence' when it began to transcend all inclinations towards shallow and short-sighted, particularistic ends (i.e., when it overcame 'pure animality', 'the pleasures of the senses', and the 'mechanical action of muscle and nerve'¹⁰³), Gramsci argues that the new republic of 'socialist desire' (as he once called it) constituted the replacement of every trace of 'egotistical liberty' that characterized the old order¹⁰⁴. Every vestige of the previous (bourgeois) 'culture of the individual' had to be eliminated from the new order. The latter was to champion a 'common' culture; a progressively richer culture that no longer saw humanity imprisoned and its creative energies stymied by its own alienating ideologies.

In this regard, and adhering to this primary focus, we see Gramsci campaigning vigorously against many of the illusory 'universalist' claims that he saw being espoused so frequently under the banner of liberal politics. Towards the middle of 1918, for instance, he authored several hard-hitting comments against what he described as the 'utopian' rhetoric that sheltered behind such concepts as 'free thought' and the 'free thinker' ('Free Thought and Liberated Thought', 15 June 1918¹⁰⁵). 'Free thought' was not to be confused with 'liberated thought', Gramsci argued here. The former was simply a limited and narrow way of conceiving liberty, whilst plainly testifying all the while to the enslavement of thought – to what he termed the 'chaos and conventionality' of certain forms of thinking that had been conditioned by culture, over time¹⁰⁶. By contrast, 'liberated thought' was directly antithetical to 'free thought', he here insisted. It was thought that represented the concrete expression of social insight freed from 'all conventions, all narrow-mindedness, all prejudices'¹⁰⁷. Founded moreover on historical sensitivity and on a form of pedagogy that Gramsci labelled 'cultural activity', it was this activity that he further perceived as the very means of generating historical understanding. 'Cultural activity' thus constituted the search in history for what Gramsci

¹⁰³ 'Cocaine', *Avanti!*, 21 May 1918 (PPW, pp.70-72).

¹⁰⁴ 'Free Thought and Liberated Thought', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 15 June 1918 (HPC, pp.54-57).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Underpinning the concept of 'free thought' was a capitalist, individualistic epistemology and ontology which was, at its core, both a-social and anti-social. By contrast, 'liberated thought' was both cultural and historical: it was 'socialized'.

called 'the substance of events'. It was effectively Gramsci's synonym for the political, educational pedagogy of the masses. He subsequently clarified the symbiotic nature of the relationship between these two terms in a later article ('Freedom First', 31 August 1918¹⁰⁸):

Education, culture and the organized dissemination of knowledge and experience constitute the independence of the masses... The most intelligent phase of the struggle against the despotism of professional intellectuals and the trust in divine law consists in the intensification of culture and the raising of consciousness. And this work cannot be postponed until tomorrow, to the time when we will be politically free. *It is itself freedom, it is itself the stimulus and the condition for action...* [S]ocialism is organization, not only political and economic, but especially the organization of knowledge and of the will which is obtained through cultural activity¹⁰⁹.

As if to come full circle then, 'cultural activity' was the means to not only activate 'socialist desire', and to achieve a consciousness of the common good, but it was also the means to continue to educate thereafter. Cultural activity was therefore the vehicle by which the 'good sense' of the past ('historical sense') would not only trigger this alternative relational (intellectual and moral) base of the new order but would further anchor it, leading to its consolidation over time. It follows from this account that the 'character' of the new state could never be determined purely by the forceful overthrow of the old economic order; that is, solely by the abolition of private property and the legal relationships that this ownership had condoned. Similarly, it would also be impossible to achieve simply by the overthrow of the existing state institutions themselves. As Gramsci conceived it, 'revolution' described an inner philosophical process; one that was dependent instead on *the quality of the thought processes that were continually evolving among the people and the quality of the associations arising, as an outcome*. Freedom could never be the product of legislation. Rather, it was the natural outcome of purposeful historical activity¹¹⁰.

We can therefore see how Gramsci's push for the creation of 'an organism of disinterested control' must be read correspondingly as his exhortation for the people to forge their own (qualitatively/ humanely better) state through self-conscious association and active organization. In this connection, such a state would not only exemplify the

¹⁰⁷ 'Free Thought and Liberated Thought' (HPC, p.54).

¹⁰⁸ *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.50-51).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* (p.51. Gramsci's emphasis).

¹¹⁰ See Karel Kosik's *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and the World* (Karel Kovandra & James Schmidt, Trans.). Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company [Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume 52], 1976), especially pp.140-147.

very maturity of the proletariat as a class – insofar as it demonstrated its capability to transcend its own limited, self-interest – but it would equally herald the movement towards the internalization of relationships through the adoption of this counter-capitalist perspective; a movement towards progressive (humanizing) transformation, more generally. It was in this way that *the problem of the proletarianization of history was being posed as one and the same problem as the humanization of history* simultaneously. This was Gramsci's vision of a 'maximum' socialist project; his philosophy of integral politics.

5. Conclusion: Liberated Thought as Historicized and Socialized/Humanized Thought

The question of how human upbringing might be conceived if we gave serious consideration to the need for individuals to develop perceptions, interpretations and judgments to the fullest extent of their capabilities, unfettered by the constraints put upon rationality and assessment by the alienating logic of capitalistic forms of association and value, is precisely the problem to which Gramsci's writings are consistently directed. 'Liberation' for Gramsci entailed *giving maximum expression to human needs and desires* in a world where human potential had been disabused of its elasticity and effectively abbreviated by the fetishizing tendencies of our existing mode of reasoning. To this effect, his own campaign of reflection and critique targeting the multitude of 'limit-ideas' which infected and sterilized thought – and which extended invariably from one extreme (e.g., authoritarianism) to the next (e.g., idolatry) – was symptomatic of his concerted attempts to kick-start the thought processes (and therefore to expand the mental and moral horizons) of as many people as possible. It was equally his attempt to catalogue the numerous myths whereby people had come to develop their own 'limit-attitudes' about themselves and their 'legitimate' place in society based on their class location; limit-attitudes which not only functioned to inhibit autonomous self-rule, but which also significantly impaired the construction of a broader social and moral resolve. His was a call for a reconsideration of what was 'normal' (these 'limit-ideas'); a call for the creation of new, socialized (humanized) relations of production and exchange as an outcome of collectively active, moral determination.

As I have noted above, albeit in a tentative manner, the problem of 'citizenship creation' (later expressed as 'comradeship') symbolized Gramsci's response to the overall problematic of the practical activation and sustained application by which the will of the proletariat could be exacted upon history. In contradistinction to the bourgeois 'subject' – a subject whom Gramsci described as being sustained by a slim fare of 'reverential prejudices' and 'fixed ideas', but no 'social sense' – the 'citizen' was one whose 'interior revolution' was to be effected through the very means by which socialism would be realized and individualism rejected, correspondingly; in other words, through *active association and cultural (historical) activity*¹¹¹. Such activity, Gramsci noted, constituted both the personal and the social embrace of order and organization after the chaos and indiscipline (the state of intellectual and moral disorientation) of bourgeois rule. In practical terms, it required developing a new mode of being that would break down the closed cycle of egotism cultivated by the cleavages endemic within a capitalist epistemology and ontology. For, how better to critique the most sacred tenets of capitalism – that is, the basic principles of self-interest and private property ownership – than to advocate vigorously for collective forms of association, organization, and control?

The whole complexion of Gramsci's argument is such that cultural activity was the vehicle through which the logic of a closed society could thus be inverted and a new order issued, simultaneously. Cultural activity was indeed predicated on a counter-tendency to celebrate mankind's *social interdependence* and to pursue the creative possibilities resulting from this reality. Time and again, solidarity, reciprocity and organization repeatedly make up the medley of vital ingredients that Gramsci identifies as missing from capitalism's overall social design. To this end, Gramsci outlined the vital preliminary preparation essential to a genuinely socialist revolutionary outcome to be the cultivation of an emotional (intellectual and moral) preparation targeted at overcoming passively learnt attitudes of distrust and hatred for solutions elaborated in collectivist (non class-based) terms. Such preparation was seen moreover to be symptomatic of the very 'active' and 'socialist' state that was the concrete outcome of the liberating power offered to humanity by the adoption of an historical materialist worldview.

¹¹¹ In 'Freedom First' (*Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918), the central criticism that Gramsci had levelled against the writer (Leonetti) was that he 'abstract[ed] from organization, i.e., from the social phenomenon through which socialism is realized' (*HPC*, p.50). 'Organization', Gramsci here continued, was best regarded as 'a mode of being which determines a type of consciousness'.

As alluded to above, therefore, Gramsci's stress on the need to educate the individual to become an authentic citizen should not be taken as a theoretical move that in any way understates the importance of the cultivation of individual propensities of practical judgment. In Gramsci's mind, the 'temperament' or 'character' of any social grouping was dependent to an enormous degree upon whether the individuals who formed such an alliance could exercise their minds to critique their own practice. His emphasis on organicity should therefore never be seen as evolving *at the expense of* the development of creative individuality – an accusation that we see being levelled against Gramsci's Factory Council initiative in the following chapter¹¹². In fact, quite the opposite argument can be sustained more readily. The collectivity, in his view, could only be as strong or as authentically 'socialist' as the character traits, preferences or practices of each of its individual members¹¹³.

To the extent that Gramsci recognized that the principal institutions available to initiate such cultural activity – the Italian Socialist Party (*PSI*) and the trade unions – had actually developed their structures and functions as a direct response to capitalist society, as I have also highlighted above, he perceived them quite unambiguously as *organs of that same society; that is, as reformist institutions*. In this regard, unlike the Bolsheviks in Russia whom Gramsci regarded as the 'active variable in history'¹¹⁴, he viewed neither of these groupings as suitable catalysts to launch a successful socialist offensive. The minor insurrections and spasmodic uprisings they periodically initiated always revolved around securing a moderate and narrow range of predominantly economic concessions. For this very reason, Gramsci viewed neither institution – as will be shown in greater detail in the next chapter – as being a suitable contender (that organ of 'disinterested control') to provide concrete expression to innovative cultural activity.

The problem was undoubtedly connected to inadequate leadership, as Gramsci's writings clearly intimate. Intent on exposing the inorganic and anti-dialectical tendencies of most trade union and party officials, Gramsci quipped in one volley that

¹¹² Gramsci based his own concept of the party upon the need for a new 'curriculum' and a new 'pedagogy'. See Chapter 5 for a more comprehensive description of this new party in the subsection titled 'The Party as the "Active and Operative Expression" of Marxism'.

¹¹³ Once more, writing in opposition to the 'economic individualist' position that many of his colleagues had adopted, Gramsci wrote: '...the "Union" of the will is not simply a grouping of physical bodies. It is a spiritual communion and mental collaboration. It is mutual support in the work of individual perfection. It is reciprocal education and reciprocal control'. ('Freedom First', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918, *HPC*, p.51)

¹¹⁴ Gramsci saw that the party needed to assume this role ('After the Congress', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 14

the connection between the leaders and the proletariat never exceeded the parameters of 'the account-ledger and the membership file'¹¹⁵. This was to be a major theme within this period and one which he pursued right up to his arrest and eventual imprisonment. While such an 'unbridgeable abyss' continued to exist, it is obvious that Gramsci believed that the 'immense social forces' unleashed by the war could never be transformed into a genuine socialist democracy. The problem was primarily the problem of a new type of leadership within the production process; of combating intellectual and moral submissiveness through leadership practices that bridged the divide between labour and production, and which both modelled and actively encouraged critical, participatory citizenship. In this respect, in order for the working class to be seen as the leading class, it had *to become* the leading and productive class. Democracy was no distant end point. It arose from the very art and practice *of living*.

* * * * *

September 1919, *HPC*, p.100).

¹¹⁵ 'Officialdom', 4 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* (*SPW* 2, p.17).

-----CHAPTER 4-----

LABOUR, LEADERSHIP AND PRODUCTION: COMBATting MINIMAL IDEAS (1919 – 1926)

But the battle has just begun: it is necessary to destroy the collaborationist and reformist spirit. It is necessary to indicate precisely what we mean by the State...to clarify and impress on a wide scale the idea that the socialist state, i.e., the organization of the collectivity after the abolition of private property, does not perpetuate the bourgeois state and it is not an evolution of the capitalist state constituted by three powers, executive, parliamentary and judiciary. It is rather a continuation and a systematic development of the professional organizations and of the local councils which the proletariat has already succeeded in spontaneously promoting within an individualistic regime.

(‘After the Congress’, *Il Grido del Popolo*, 14 September 1918, *HPC*, p.101)

1. Introduction: How to Create an Authentic Socialist State

The severe social and economic hemorrhaging that marked the end of the First World War (August 1918) unleashed waves of violent unrest that saw the proletariat react both swiftly and militantly to the imperialistic exertions of a renewed alliance of bourgeois interests¹. Whilst it is true that these interests had certainly been historically formed, they were substantially shaken and reinvigorated by the conclusion of hostilities. Aptly named the period of ‘imperial capitalism’, it was a time when tariffs, subsidies, contracts and agreements proliferated as both a visible and concrete testimony to the continuing disadvantage of certain sectors of Italian society²; a period in which all manner of ‘legal’ means were employed adeptly by Italy’s united industrial and banking might to exert a firm and effective stranglehold over the economic recovery of the country. As one might typically have expected, the growing cleavage that even more sharply endured between labour and leadership during this difficult time could not help but fuel Gramsci’s continuing intolerance towards the (legally mandated) class nature of Italian society³.

¹ For one of the most concise overviews of the problems of the period, as Gramsci saw them, see his ‘Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 8 May 1920 (*SPW 1*, pp.190-196; *PPW*, pp.155-162).

² During the war years, Gramsci charged that capitalist colonies had particularly been exploited to an unprecedented degree (‘The War in the Colonies’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 7 June 1919, *SPW 1*, pp.59-60). In this regard, Sardinia and the South continued to bear the brunt of the capitalist assault, as many of his commentaries pointed out subsequently.

³ Bemoaning the farcical and anti-social nature of liberal law and justice, Gramsci wrote: ‘Every citizen becomes a gladiator, who sees, in other people, enemies to vanquish or to subjugate to

In this chapter, the final in which I examine Gramsci's pre-prison ideas, his thoughts for the period 1919 to 1926 are specifically canvassed. Significantly, the purpose of this overview is *not* to provide a comprehensive chronological account of the history of the period, which, as is commonly known, is dominated (at least in the early part) by Gramsci's involvement in the 1920 factory occupations⁴. Many other works have been written which generously satisfy this need⁵. Instead, my main intention is to highlight here how Gramsci's continuing reference to activating a new morality can be read as indicative of his unwavering commitment to an historical materialist vantage point where human sensuous activity is progressively liberated from the fetishizing practices of monopoly capitalism. As we will see below, his articulation of a Marxist counter-philosophy expressed through his organic concept of the Council form of governance and party⁶ becomes the primary means by which he continues to combat the Jacobin (reformist) preferences of his communist allies⁷. Notwithstanding the growing groundswell of counter-violence exhibited by right-wing reactionary forces (fascism)⁸, his cognizance of the potency of the economic beyond the conventional boundaries of production and exchange leads him to reiterate continuously the non-negotiable nature of the extra-economic dimension of the struggle.

one's own interests. All the higher bonds of love and solidarity are dissolved...The Constitution is a codification of disorder and anti-human chaos' ('The Sovereignty of Law', *Avanti!*, 1 June 1919, *PPW*, p.88).

⁴ The occupations of the factories in September and October 1920 culminated in a Factory Council form of governance being established. Two excellent accounts that detail the occupations are given in John Cammett (*Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967: Chapter 5, pp.96-122) and Gwyn A. Williams, *Proletarian Order: Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins of Italian Communism, 1911-21* (London: Pluto Press, 1975: pp.241-276).

⁵ See especially Martin Clark's, *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution That Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Darrow Schecter's, *Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy* (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Company Ltd., Avebury Series in Philosophy, 1991); and Williams (*op. cit.*, 1975). See also the chapters by Franco De Felice, 'Revolution and Production', and Mario Telo, 'The Factory Councils', in Anne Showstack Sassoon (Ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci* (London: Writers & Readers, 1972: pp.188-199 and pp.200-210).

⁶ Gramsci's concept of organicity becomes pivotal in distinguishing between a conventional philosophy and that of a Marxist viewpoint, as I argue in this chapter. Gramsci's dispute with Amadeo Bordiga revolved around the relationship between the party and the mass. For Gramsci, the party was not an organ of the proletariat: it *was* the proletariat. In this respect, Gramsci repudiated the idea of the party as a representative party, thus rejecting Bordiga's model of the party as a small, disciplined nucleus of professional revolutionaries. As discussed in Chapter 6, Gramsci's dispute with Nikolai Bukharin in the 1930s also revolved around the relationship that needed to exist between the leadership and the mass.

⁷ Jacobinism was defined principally by an inorganic, hierarchical and bureaucratic form of leadership, usually the rule of a vanguard on behalf of a mass. Chapters 5 and 6 reveal that Gramsci would later appeal to his party to adopt a Jacobin spirit – an appeal for the party not to adopt the *organizational form* of Jacobinism but, rather, to adopt the *spirit* and *passion* of the movement.

⁸ For an excellent overview of this period, see Adrian Lyttelton's 'The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919 – 1929' (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).

While wishing to expose how Gramsci's historical materialist vantage point undergirds his writing during this period as much as it did previously, I also want to examine certain claims that have been levelled against Gramsci by several commentators that the central premise underlying his theory of the Factory Councils was 'totalitarian' and 'elitist'⁹. Insofar as the idea of the Council movement could be seen to imply the formation of a 'one-party', proletarian state – modelled, as they were, on the Russian principle of the Soviets – it is alleged that every other form of institution necessarily became secondary and subordinated to the Councils as a consequence. Rather than Gramsci therefore succeeding in establishing the flourishing, participatory democracy that he intended to establish, it is claimed that his privileging of the 'proletarian collective' came at the *expense* of other individual and particular interests ('non class-based' interests), and that this demand for industrial democracy therefore came at the expense of the broader principles of democracy *per se*¹⁰. It is argued, additionally, that this implicit unity of the collective gave Gramsci's strategy 'a more authoritarian slant than either he or his later followers cared to acknowledge'¹¹.

As will become evident throughout this chapter, the best means of rebutting these charges is to continue to clarify and reassert Gramsci's method of conceptual expansion; of outlining how he was trying to actively re-author a new socialistic/communitistic worldview through the humanistic reappropriation of such traditional concepts as 'labour', 'leadership' and 'production'. In Gramsci's assessment, 'production' stood historically as a primary concept that both specified and justified relations of division and privilege within capitalist discourse – in the same manner in which he had identified previously how 'culture' and 'education' were wholly human activities, yet had been popularly constrained through the fetishizing tendencies inherent within the capitalistic worldview. Just as we saw in the previous chapter how naturalizing and popularizing (universalizing) these concepts was an integral aspect of

⁹ Darrow Schecter is one such commentator. See his *Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy* (*op. cit.*). Others have also intimated that there is a theory/ practice rift: see Luciano Pellicani, *Gramsci: An Alternative Communism?* (Foreword by Giovanni Sartori. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981); Howard K. Moss, 'Gramsci and the Idea of Human Nature' (*Italian Quarterly*, 31, 119-120, 1990: pp.7-19); James Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998); and more recently, Joseph V. Femia, 'Gramsci and the Question of Totalitarianism' (*The Philosophical Forum*, 29, 3-4, 1998: pp.160-167).

¹⁰ Martin's comments (*op. cit.*, 1998) typify the tenor of most of these criticisms:
The implicit moral unity that Gramsci ascribed to the industrial proletariat once the councils were in place testified to the belief in the potential harmonization of individual differences within an 'organic' community.... Yet – like criticisms of participatory democracy today – an emphasis on common, as opposed to individual, goals suggests a severe restriction in the scope for political disagreement and individual initiative. (p.28)

¹¹ *Ibid.* (p.168).

Gramsci's counter-cultural struggle, here we again witness his simultaneous attempts to eliminate the dichotomies perpetuated within the 'production' process (broadly defined) and to enlist this concept back into the service of humanity. His call for relationships of solidarity, reciprocity and collective association to be established upon the terrain of production (both the industrial terrain as well as the cultural terrain of production), can therefore be seen as representing not only his challenge against the deleterious effects of bourgeois industrial power but also his resistance to its broader political, cultural and ethical manifesto.

For Gramsci, the crucial task on which the success of the revolutionary prospects of socialism ultimately depended was for the proletariat to begin to consider itself as a grouping of 'leaders' and 'intellectuals' in its own right. It had to regard itself a 'producer' in every sense of the word, just as the leaders had to view themselves as the organic expression of the proletariat – rather than continuing to laud over them from above as its superior masters. As will be highlighted in the course of this chapter, founded as the Factory Councils were upon the idea of the occupation and popular repossession of the ownership and means of production by the proletariat, this new mode of governance was a concrete attempt to move both party and trade union thinking forward beyond the limitations of opportunist and reformist practice¹². To this end, the occupations not only enabled the proletariat to gain immediate access and control over a range of material productive processes but they also provided it with a potentially broad-based network of associations from which to launch the intransigent working-class struggle that Gramsci felt was so desperately needed.

It would be a mistake however to interpret Gramsci's later advocacy of a 'vanguard' of organic intellectuals as signalling his departure from championing autodidactic activity as the necessary mainstay of authentic and critical communism. Gramsci's unequivocal promotion of strong leadership and a resilient party within his 1919 to 1920 commentary must be read within the context of the times, always mindful of the complete lack of leadership and direction displayed by those in prominent frontline positions within the Socialist Party during this period. Protesting vigorously against the predominant tendency for the then-existing leadership element to act as dictators of an alternative, authoritarian system, he argued explicitly that the only justification for endorsing a vanguard was if it acted responsibly as a catalyst for anti-

¹² Just as Gramsci had established his Club of Moral Life previously as a forum for this type of educative process, here the factories become replacement sites for ongoing critical deliberations over all manner of social issues.

bureaucratic change; that is, if it existed to give concrete expression to the collective will of the workers¹³. Put simply, insofar as Gramsci condemned the 'exploitative oligarchy'¹⁴ that began to emerge within socialist circles as a result of 'customary' leadership practices, he was – by fervently opposing such practices – condemning what he considered to be a limited, reformist practice¹⁵. To this end, a radical renovation of society entailed that the new, progressive hegemony *had to be lived*.

We have seen how the evolution of Gramsci's thinking occurred in the commentary offered within the last two chapters. We saw the extent to which he had begun the slow and painstaking work of mapping the intricacies of the divisive capitalist epistemology and ontology: how he had identified the power that was infused within its mode of production as the source of the corruption of broader social concerns; how a 'liberal' conception of justice domesticated these same concerns, thereby limiting more substantive ethical matters to those which sympathized with capitalist 'extortionary' tactics¹⁶; how scientific logic and abstract thought were being brought increasingly into the service of capitalism to enhance its status and ensure its ongoing durability against 'rational' scrutiny¹⁷. Furthermore, we saw how Gramsci kept drawing our attention consistently to the arguments and oratory of key individuals (leaders/ intellectuals) to show how such expressions tended to reflect the sentiments of a certain 'social type'¹⁸ with the effect of solidifying the existing boundaries of governance; and of his appreciation of the manner in which culture, and the everyday language used to

¹³ One of the clearest statements that we have on this point appeared in Gramsci's article, 'Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 May 1920, *SPW* 1, pp.190-6; *PPW*, pp.155-162). Here, he stated:

The political party of the working class justifies its existence only to the extent that, by powerfully centralizing and co-coordinating proletarian action, it counterposes a *de facto* revolutionary power to the legal power of the bourgeois State and limits its freedom of initiative and manoeuvre. (*SPW* 1, p.193)

¹⁴ In Gramsci's view, the leadership element did nothing to seriously undermine the primary source of capitalism's power – the freedom of capitalism to extract surplus value. Accordingly, an exploitative oligarchy was concealed beneath the seemingly healthy 'democratic' makeup of society.

¹⁵ As I explain in Chapter 6, 'limitation' was inherent in the fetishization of such concepts to a liberal legality – a legality that paid lip service only to the concept of self-representation/ human agency – thereby paying lip service also to the construction of an authentic, democratic ethos. This is essentially a critique of an aristocratic and alienating conception of politics and its domination by the philosopher-kings (the tutelage of politics over the masses).

¹⁶ In his article, 'The War in the Colonies' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 7 June 1919, *SPW* 1, pp.59-60), Gramsci argued that 'the extortions of capitalism' were far more deadly than all the 'modern weapons' of war for 'they killed women, children and old people through starvation and despair, by degrees...' (p.60). In a later article, 'Legality' (28 August 1921), he went on to lament how the concept of justice was circumscribed by the capitalist principle of private property protection.

¹⁷ On 19 October 1918 ('Mysteries of Poetry and Culture', *Il Grido del Popolo*) Gramsci had complained that positivism had become perverted, becoming no less than 'a doctrine of being and knowledge' (*HPC*, p.16). He stated forthrightly that 'there can be nothing in common between critical communism and positivism' (p.17).

¹⁸ We see the beginnings of Gramsci's discussion of the intellectual here: how the intellectual is defined here by his/ her organizing function rather than by any inherent mental quality of intellectual superiority. This is a major theme which Gramsci would continue to develop in the *Notebooks*.

express that culture, could be seen to be personified in the attitudes and practices of a submissive proletariat. It was in this way that his readers were provided with a plethora of 'concrete cases' which not only allowed for a richer analysis of the 'unhealthy residue' of anti-socialist (later, anti-communist) sentiment that abounded but which helped them equally to clarify for themselves what a communal practice and economic way of life would inevitably entail. As I have suggested already, it is important to remember that what Gramsci was illustrating, through his own commentaries and studies, was that rigorous and critical inquiry into the nature of civil society and its complicity with capitalism was itself a partial antidote to its continuing resilience.

It can be seen as no great surprise then, in light of Gramsci's growing frustration with the reformist element that dominated the socialist movement – representing essentially what he took as being the capture of the party by capitalism¹⁹ – that he responded positively to the founding of the non-reformist Communist Party at Livorno in January 1921²⁰. Convinced that the Factory Council movement had failed because of the deliberate tactics of sabotage committed against it by its so-called socialist allies rather than because of any enterprising counter-offensive launched by the bourgeoisie, Gramsci's decision was undoubtedly predicated on an accompanying perception that no party could ever pretend to represent the masses except the party that had a completely unambiguous understanding of the principles of historical materialism and the neo-humanistic struggle that it simultaneously endorsed. In other words, the party of the proletariat needed to be a completely *partisan party*. It had to be an *organic party* that truly sponsored the cause of the masses, instead of one which choreographed its activities to appear outwardly revolutionary, whilst all the while working inwardly towards promoting its own detached ends. In short, the revolutionary conquest of social power demanded that the 'revolutionary' component of the struggle be forever kept to the fore; that the anti-subaltern principles that defined the very essence of socialism were acknowledged and vigorously upheld in the drawing up and implementation of any tactical schema.

The incompatibility between a critical communist outlook and a social-democratic one continued as a central theme of Gramsci's work, as did the theme of

¹⁹ Gramsci's utter frustration with the party was certainly evident as early as September 1918 when he wrote: 'The party has been the gangway for Italian political fortunes: it has been the most efficient sieve for Jacobin individualism' ('After the Congress', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 14 September 1918, *HPC*, pp.99-100).

²⁰ Gramsci's later struggle to 'Bolshevize' the party (1924 – 1926) resulted from his growing disquiet about the character of this new party. In short, he quickly became highly critical of Bordiga's own interpretation of Marxism.

the necessity for a worker and peasant alliance. In light of the charges levelled against Gramsci (above), it is important to note that his subsequent disputes with Amadeo Bordiga²¹, leader of the communist splinter group, hinged on their respective differences with regard to the Communist Party's outlook, organization, and tactics and the criticality of a worker and peasant alliance in achieving a successful revolutionary outcome. As will be discussed towards the end of the present chapter, this was a dispute that centred on Bordiga's inability to adopt an historical materialist worldview and his failure to recognize the struggle as one against categories of expression (concepts) that perpetuated rather than alleviated capitalist relations of production and exchange. In other words, the dispute for Gramsci was a dispute over the naturalness, inevitability and 'rightness' of the existing hierarchies within the social order; in effect, a dispute about the cognitive and moral dimension of the struggle necessary to initiate a new socialist order.

2. Beyond Trade Unionism and Reformist Party Compromise

As I have taken pains to stress in the foregoing chapter, Gramsci believed that the quality of the relationships which the Socialist Party could nurture would inevitably determine the quality of the socialism (i.e., of the social relationships) that could optimally be engendered – that if the psychology (value schema or worldview) of the population remained unchanged, the divisions of class and caste would remain an enduring feature of the social landscape²². Until the individualistic mentality of the population was ultimately transformed, the continuity of capitalism was effectively guaranteed. In practical terms, as Gramsci reasoned, whilst the economic and social turmoil that the war had initiated had certainly galvanized discontented groups together in a spontaneous, antagonistic contempt for privilege and profiteering, no amount of

²¹ Amadeo Bordiga was the first leader of the Italian Communist Party until his arrest by the fascists in February 1923. Although he was acquitted in October that year, his subsequent conflicts with the Executive Committee and disagreements with Gramsci over programmatic and tactical decisions meant that he was displaced from the leadership role.

²² Gramsci refers periodically to the notion of caste in the same derogatory manner as class. In 'The Italian Liberals' (*Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 12 September 1918) for instance, he derides the economist, Professor Prato, as being (among other things) an individual from a caste. He adds a bracketed comment specifying just what he means:

(We insist on the word "caste" because it is the only one which expresses with precision those social groupings which can be distinguished among themselves by means of prejudices, culture and family tradition – having, for example, a bishop, a priest, a president of the court of appeals or some such other luminary in the social hierarchy as an ancestor or as a relative.) (*HPC*, p.107)

A little over a year later, the trade union bureaucracy and journalists are also accused of comprising a caste, having a 'group psychology of their own absolutely at odds with that of the workers' ('Trade Unions and Dictatorship', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 25 October 1919, *SPW* 1, p.105).

hostility or raw energy generated by virtue of this opposition could ever guarantee an order that was in any way appreciably different from that of the old: not unless such oppositionary expression could transcend the level of the individual to become a class phenomenon (i.e., become an *anti-class and anti-caste phenomena*)²³.

During 1919, we saw how Gramsci kept accentuating this problem in various ways. With reference to the Russian situation, for instance, he warned that ‘instinctive rebellion’ by a ‘naïve, enthusiastic giant’ was not enough; that this spontaneous, militant insurgency needed to be managed more directly into a tightly-knit and consciously disciplined, socialist democracy. Moreover, although he recognized that the industrial workers were the ones who would most likely play a leading role in generating a significant revolutionary movement – for the simple reason that they were used to seeing themselves as a member of a collectivity (this psychology having been forged by their allegiance to unions, craft guilds or the various co-operatives of the day) – by the same token, he never underestimated the power of capital and the negative pull that it exerted upon the formation of more robust forms of human association. When considering the rise of the anarchist faction during this period²⁴, for instance, Gramsci made no secret of his hostility towards what he took to be a callous, mercenary and destructive force. Describing this phenomenon as nothing but a show of ‘turbulent indiscipline’, ‘lacking direction’ and never ‘international’ (meaning that it did not express a fully Marxist focus), he made it abundantly clear that anarchist tendencies were merely disorganized displays of oppositional reaction, exercised spontaneously in pursuit of individual and contingent interests and goals.

The disparateness of the Italian peasantry was another marked feature of the difference Gramsci noted during this time that differentiating the Russian situation from that of the Italian. There was not the same allegiance to the socialist cause in Italy as there had been in Russia simply because the former state had guaranteed many of the peasants the right to own their own land and to profit from the produce harvested from it. In first mulling over this problem in ‘The Peasants and the State’ in June 1918²⁵, he judged the negative impact of such property concessions in terms of the likely prospect

²³ Gramsci expressed this sentiment in ‘Our Obligation to be Strong’ (25 November 1918, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), *SPW* 1, p.57).

²⁴ Gramsci addressed the anarchists directly in an April (1920) issue of *L’Ordine Nuovo*. Previously, he had periodically derided their tactics as a ‘form of elementary terrorism’ without long-term or effective consequences. Communism, by contrast, represented ‘civilization’. In ‘The State and Socialism’ (28 June – 5 July 1919, *PPW*, pp.101-107) for instance, he wrote: ‘...anarchy is a continuation of liberalism, rather than socialism; in the dialectic of history, anarchy will be expelled from the sphere of social reality along with liberalism’ (p.103).

²⁵ *Avanti!*, 6 June 1918 (*HPC*, pp.75-79).

of peasant support for the socialist cause²⁶. With this concern frequently appearing as a recurring theme within a number of successive articles, the success or otherwise of a Marxist insurrection was seen to rest predominantly on the potential for the creation of a united front²⁷. To this effect, Gramsci declared in August 1921²⁸: 'The problem of the Italian revolution...is one of worker and peasant unity'²⁹.

In stressing this need for unity, however, he was not condoning just any type of unity. Whilst Gramsci begrudgingly admitted that many of the traditional organizations affiliated to the proletariat had played no small role in securing the solidarity of the masses, we also see him conceding that although a measure of worker solidarity existed at all, this was largely *despite* the existing institutions of representation of the proletariat rather than *because* of them. Given this assessment, it would be fair to argue that a major theme that dominates these commentaries is his criticism of the internal organization of the existing proletarian institutions.

The unions were a case in point³⁰. Founded essentially as organizations to protect the interests of workers in many and varied industrial contexts, it was a model of organization which militated against any potential input by the workers themselves to initiate change in the production process – and scarcely represented a body that encouraged them to initiate more general, social change³¹. A contractual entity with a narrow and functionally limited structure³², trade unionism was not a class-oriented

²⁶ Interestingly, in later articles, he also notes how peasant sympathies towards a belief in folklore and the occult exacerbated the problem of educating the peasantry. Because they did not believe in the power of their own agency, they did not view economic and political institutions as historical categories subject to modification and change ('Workers and Peasants', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 2 August 1919, *SPW 1*, pp.83-87).

²⁷ By September 1923, Gramsci began posing the problem of the relations between the workers and the peasants 'not simply as a problem of class relations', but also as a territorial problem; that is, as part of the Southern Question ('Gramsci to the Executive Committee of the PCI', Vienna, 12 September 1923, *SPW 2*, pp.161-63). Gramsci's dispute with Bordiga confirmed also that behind the territorial problem lay the economic problem – the problem of corporative thinking.

²⁸ 'The Agrarian Struggle in Italy', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 31 August 1921 (*SPW 2*, p.67).

²⁹ Gramsci's later drive to Bolshevize the Communist Party was integral to his commitment to forge an alliance between the workers and peasants. See especially 'The Internal Situation in Our Party and the Tasks of the Forthcoming Congress', *L'Unita*, 3 July 1925 (*SPW 2*, pp.293-305).

³⁰ The unions did not see it as their role, for example, to establish dialogue or supportive alliances with other groups beyond their own particular industry or trade.

³¹ In relation to the historical function of the unions, Gramsci wrote:

Syndicalism has never once expressed such a conception of the (worker as) producer, nor of the process of historical development of the producer society.... It has theorized a particular form of organization – the craft and industrial union – and has built, to be sure, on a reality, but a reality that was given its form by the capitalist regime of free competition and private ownership of labour-power. Therefore it has simply constructed a Utopia, a great castle of abstractions. ('Syndicalism and the Councils', *SPW 1*, p.112)

³² 'Syndicalism and Councils', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919, Vol. 1, No. 25 (*SPW 1*, pp.109-113; *PPW*, pp.127-131). As Gramsci was led to remark, confined as the union protest was to merely economic and corporatist concerns, they operated within the parameters of a bourgeois legality. To this end Gramsci wrote:

institution of the type that Gramsci argued was so urgently required³³. The party fared no better³⁴. It had not even attempted to try to generate solidarity among the many sectors of Italian society, or to endeavour to 'order the disparate and chaotic energies' and to give them 'a permanent form and discipline', as Gramsci had urged was necessary in June 1919³⁵. As he was to maintain a little later, they 'forgot that their role had to be essentially one of criticism, of antithesis. Instead of mastering reality, they allowed themselves to be absorbed by it'³⁶.

Fully alert to the severe limitations that both these classical organs of working class representation expressed – the trade union and the party – establishing a new, authentically revolutionary institution, capable of coordinating and educating immediate worker discontent into an active and critical anti-capitalist force, became his future and overarching objective. Charged with forging enduring links of solidarity between the two groups for whom the most could be said to be at stake – the peasants and the industrial workers – this new institution would further epitomize, in practical form, the theoretical antithesis of the existing concepts of state and governance.

The State of the Peasants' and Workers' Councils – the bodies that Gramsci and his colleagues established during the turmoil of the factory occupations – thus represented 'a class' and a 'social organization' in ways in which neither the union body nor the party ever could³⁷. Fashioned quite deliberately on the model of the Russian Soviets³⁸, the primary objective of the Councils was to repossess the

Trade unionism stands revealed as nothing other than a form of capitalist society, not a potential successor to that society. It organizes workers not as producers, but as wage-earners, i.e., as creatures of the capitalist, private property régime, selling the commodity labour... (SPW 1, p.110)

³³ The difference between the party, the unions and the Factory Councils, Gramsci claimed, was that the former were 'voluntary' and 'contractualist' in character whilst the latter was an institution with a 'public' character ('On the *L'Ordine Nuovo* Programme', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 14 & 28 August 1920, SPW 1, pp. 291-298; PPW, pp.178-186).

³⁴ The problem of party definition and the role of the party were constant themes within Gramsci's writing as the following extract from 1924 clearly shows ('Gramsci to Togliatti, Terracini and Others', Vienna, 9 February 1924: SPW 2, pp.191-203):

The party has not been seen as the result of a dialectical process, in which the spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses and the organizing and directive will of the centre converge. It has been seen merely as something suspended in the air; something with its own autonomous and self-generated development; something which the masses will join when the situation is right and the crest of the revolutionary wave is at its highest point. (SPW 2, p.198)

³⁵ 'Workers' Democracy', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 21 June 1919 (SPW 1, pp.65-68; PPW, pp.96-100).

³⁶ SPW 1, p.75. 'The Conquest of the State', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 July 1919 (SPW 1, pp.73-78; PPW, pp.108-114).

³⁷ In 'The Problem of the School' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 27 June 1919, SCW, pp.39-40), Gramsci clearly sees the Councils as institutions embracing both the proletarian and the peasant element.

³⁸ Gramsci had written positively about the Soviets as early as July 1918 ('The Russian Utopia'), but it was not until December 1918 that he argued that the Soviets were the next step beyond the parliamentary system. Behind 'the hub' of the revolutionary energy of the 'agricultural and urban

machinery of production for the good of the social whole, and simultaneously to combat the cognitive and moral submissiveness of the proletariat which had been incapacitated by the divisive rationality of an alienating individualism³⁹. The Councils were thus the concrete embodiment of Gramsci's integral solution to the problem of capitalism. To this effect, Gramsci wrote in October 1919 ('Unions and Councils'⁴⁰):

The Factory Council is the model of the proletarian State. All the problems inherent in the organization of the proletarian State are inherent in the organization of the Council. In the one, as in the other, the concept of citizen gives way to the concept of comrade. Collaboration in effective and useful production develops solidarity and multiplies bonds of affection and fraternity. Everyone is indispensable, everyone is at his post, and everyone has a function and a post... It is a joyous awareness of being an organic whole, a homogeneous and compact system which, through useful work and the disinterested production of social wealth, asserts its sovereignty, and realizes its power and the freedom to create history⁴¹.

Aligning their objectives with the theses of the Third International⁴² – unlike either the party or union bodies which, despite their rhetoric, adhered to Second International rigidities – the Councils became the chosen vehicle through which a well-defined 'action programme' was to be executed. Given that the factories were structures that already provided workers of varied political and religious stripes with a route of collective association, Gramsci also saw the Councils as a vehicle to meld the unions and the party into closer collaboration. Rather than their relationship being based inorganically on 'an accidental pact of alliance', he envisaged instead that 'an inner fusion between their programmes' would invariably occur. As noted above, and will be explained more fully in the section that follows, exemplified in the principles of the Council form of governance was an organizational philosophy no longer sympathetic to the estrangement of 'labour' to the activity of 'production', broadly defined. It was Marx's vision of a more democratic and egalitarian set of relations that the Councils at last concretized: an attempt to eradicate subaltern thought in the interests of genuine, democratic practice.

proletariat' lay in the idea of the Soviets ('The Italian Catholics', *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.), 22 December 1918, *HPC*, p.115).

³⁹ The problem of individualism was especially prominent among the peasants, Gramsci noted ('Workers and Peasants', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 2 August 1919, *SPW* 1, pp.83-87). By contrast, the Councils were based 'on the concrete, organic unity of the craft as it is realized in the discipline of the industrial process' ('Unions and Councils', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 11 October 1919, *SPW* 1, p. 101).

⁴⁰ *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 11 October 1919 (*SPW* 1, pp.98-102; *PPW*, pp.115-120).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* (*SPW* 1, pp.100-101).

⁴² The Third International was founded in April 1919 and was committed to establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. To this end, it adopted a pro-active stance by urging the expulsion of reformist elements from the Italian Socialist Party. In short, it paved the way for the creation of a communist party devoted to this objective.

3. The Factory Council as a New Kind of State and a New Kind of Legality⁴³

The socialist success in the November 1919 elections⁴⁴ did nothing to change Gramsci's opinion about the need for a new institution to unify the demands of a seething and disgruntled working-class mass. Paradoxically, there was an even greater need to give organization and direction to the proletariat owing to increasing signs of revolutionary impotence on the part of union and party officials as the social and economic turmoil continued throughout that year and the next. Without a doubt, it was because of the sustained inability – and reticence – of both the party and union hierarchy to provide the 'positive class and communist direction' that was so vital to the organic unification of the working class that inspired Gramsci and his colleagues to found the journal, *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in April of 1919. As Gramsci would later recall⁴⁵, driven by a firm will 'to do something' which was consolidated by 'a vague passion for a vague proletarian culture', the group could not help but be optimistic about a possible transformation of the existing trade unions towards 'higher forms' of productive collaboration. To this end, they elected that the most common channel of mediation, the Internal Commissions⁴⁶, were worthy bodies for undergoing just this form of restructuring.

As noted in the immediate section above, conscious that factories were already structures that provided for collective association, the choice of extending the Commissions' sphere of activity beyond isolated industrial concerns to broader social and political ones seemed a natural initiative for Gramsci and his newspaper colleagues to adopt. That said, the task of unburdening the Commissions of the makeup of the 'old legality' – a major feature of which would undoubtedly involve

⁴³ Gramsci talked frankly about the issue of industrial legality in his 1920 article, 'Unions and Councils' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 June 1920, *SPW* 1, pp.265-268). As explained, trade union power emanated entirely from that organization's relationship with the propertied class. It was a 'stable organization' precisely because it was the legally recognized bargaining agent of the workers. In this sense, Factory Council activities were much more autonomous than those of the unions as their concerns were not circumscribed in this legal sense. In an article titled 'Legality' that appeared in the following year, Gramsci tackled head-on the problem of the psychological constraints of capitalist definitions of legality and their consequences for proletarian revolutionary impetus (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 28 August 1921, *PPW*, pp.230-33).

⁴⁴ As numerous sources reiterate (e.g., Hoare in his introduction to *SPW* 1, p.x; Cammett, *op. cit.*, 1960: p.68; Clark, *op. cit.*, 1977: p.78) the *PSI* had become the largest single party at the November 1919 elections, with 156 seats out of a total of 508.

⁴⁵ 'On the *L'Ordine Nuovo* Programme', 14 August & 28 August 1920 (*SPW* 1, pp.291-298; *PPW*, pp.178-86).

⁴⁶ The Internal Commissions were trade union committees that represented only those workers who were trade union members. Bargaining on behalf of their workers for wages and better working conditions was their primary function.

combating the dominant limit-idea of the factory worker as nothing but an instrument of labour – would certainly not be an easy undertaking, as many of Gramsci's commentaries confirm. The cognitive and emotional dependence of the workers, manifest in a total distrust towards their own productive capabilities (variously defined), made the new Factory Council policies appear to be an extremely daunting proposition to the majority of workers. Because they had only ever been engaged in moderate forms of economic protest, Gramsci knew that the task of easing the workers into their newly constituted roles and gradually increasing their political capacity would first require the skills of a competent proletarian vanguard⁴⁷.

As Gramsci himself described this element, it needed to be accomplished not only in identifying 'the deepest hidden feelings that move the popular mind' but also in detecting 'the negative feelings, the inhibiting forces that fatigue and immobilize'⁴⁸. Insofar as a bourgeois upbringing had quite plainly resulted in the absence of 'personality' or 'character' among most members of the subordinated mass – an absence of human creative capacity, as was discussed in the last chapter⁴⁹ – the function of this vanguard was aimed deliberately at encouraging greater and greater worker self-confidence and participation, which would lead eventually to a state of complete and total self-management by the workers themselves. In effect, as Gramsci urged most steadfastly, the proletarian class could only ever assume a measure of *internal* governmentality to the extent that its workers were actively encouraged to exercise their minds and intellects accordingly.

Expressing the principles of an historical materialist vantage point consolidated now in the Factory Councils, the primary commitment of these bodies was to encourage the workers to recapture their 'human' capacity at the very point at which it had been taken from them⁵⁰. The call to develop personality and character within the

⁴⁷ By April 1920 it was clear that the working class could not hope to unify itself, making the need for this vanguard all the more urgent ('Address to the Anarchists', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 3-10 April 1920, *SPW 1*, pp.185-189). As Gramsci wrote:

To expect masses who are reduced to such conditions of bodily and spiritual slavery to express their own autonomous historical will; to expect them spontaneously to initiate and sustain a revolutionary action – this is purely an illusion on the part of the ideologues. To rely solely on the creative capacity of such masses and not work systematically to organize a great army of disciplined and conscious elements...this is complete and utter betrayal of the working class. (*SPW 1*, p.189)

I discuss the nature of this vanguard in Chapter 5 ('The Party as the "Active and Operative Expression" of Marxism').

⁴⁸ 'Political Capacity', *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.), 24 September 1920 (*SPW 1*, pp.347-349).

⁴⁹ Recall, in the last chapter, how Gramsci resolved to author a new citizen; one who had a 'generic character'.

⁵⁰ Echoing this sentiment, he wrote in his article, 'The Factory Council' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 5 June 1920, *SPW 1*, pp.260-264; *PPW*, pp.163-167):

workers as a central feature of Council practice was commensurate with Gramsci's ongoing and strategic response to the cognitive and psychological impotence of the mass in relation to their own capacity for autonomous self-governance. To the extent that the quality of the decision-making capacity of the people could only ever accord with the procedures that a society established to encourage such quality, Gramsci was unmistakably critiquing the inadequacy of these same provisions. Nothing but lip service had been paid to the concept of the active, participatory citizen, he maintained. The replacement of the concept of citizen with that of comrade within his writing aptly signalled the extent of the mental, physical and moral departure from all previous orthodoxies of representation (liberal, union and party) that Gramsci subsequently charged the new Councils with instigating. This new terminology was very clearly reflective of a commitment to a new kind of state and a new kind of intellectual – the critical and active citizen who was not only *represented* in the new order but was also *actively involved in authoring that same order* in a concrete and substantive way.

Rather than Gramsci therefore advocating a form of leadership and control over the masses that was totalitarian, rigid or bureaucratic, his writings reveal quite the converse: a categorical commitment to a wholly democratic outlook. Indeed, Gramsci's polemic throughout this period is characterized by his wholesale rejection of the notion that philosophy and politics constituted an elitist activity dispensed to and shaping an acquiescent polity. It reflects a position that affirms unambiguously that the nature of the communist challenge had to be defined in terms of the degree to which it succeeded in eliminating the divisions between the leaders and the led⁵¹. His ongoing disagreement with both the trade unionist and socialist hierarchy – and later, with Bordiga – was founded on an unshakeable conviction that it was only with the help of 'the entire mass of members' that socialism could ever take root and actively flourish; that what *should* have distinguished the communist movement from all others was its genuine commitment to a *total* capitalist antithesis.

His early condemnation of particularistic and individualistic responses to worker and peasant exploitation, plus his later advocacy of a cellular structure to the Communist Party, were symptomatic of his response to a leadership style which

In so far as it constructs this representative apparatus [the Council], the working class in effect completes the expropriation of the *primum mobile*, of the most important instrument of production of all – the working class itself. (*SPW 1*, p.263)

⁵¹ This stance is consistent with Gramsci's position throughout the period. He had always been adamant that the masses had to achieve their independence from the intelligentsia (see, 'Freedom First', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 31 August 1918, *HPC*, pp.50-51).

Gramsci considered nothing but 'pseudo-communist' in makeup; a leadership style which endorsed a fetishized concept of both leadership and revolution, marginalizing the activity of the workers themselves in the process. It was for this very reason that he had condemned all manner of syndicalist and reformist forms of leadership that infected the Socialist Party prior to the Livorno split in 1921, and had criticized Bordiga's 'communism' after the split in the party subsequently. What he saw as common to all such forms of leadership was a pessimism of the intellect; a psychological disposition that invariably justified both the paternalism and the alienation of those very groups whose liberty these leaders professed to champion⁵².

It is therefore no coincidence that what we find exhibited in the makeup of the Factory Councils are organizational features deliberately designed to loosen the ties of the previous legalistic and psychological regime of worker dispossession. In contrast to the unions, which had failed to cultivate anything other than 'the stingy, narrow mentality of the lower and middle ranks of the bourgeoisie'⁵³, Gramsci saw in the Councils a refreshing opportunity to negate 'all forms of individualism and the cult of personality'⁵⁴. Put simply, the Conciliar movement allowed for a shift in focus away from the obedience of the workers to some external authority (e.g., trade union authority⁵⁵) and towards their own internally moderated form of governance. In line with this objective, the role of the elected delegates would now be decidedly different. As we see stated in 'The Programme of the Workshop Delegates'⁵⁶, a new ethos of internal democracy was to be encouraged with this intention expressed in this manifesto in the following terms: 'The principle of the democratic mandate must prevail in every form of power: the elected must be nothing other than the executors of the will of the masses'⁵⁷.

⁵² On more than one occasion, Gramsci accused Bordiga particularly of harbouring a mentality where the workers were regarded as inferior beings, unable to participate, for that same reason, in the revolutionary strategizing. Later, we see Gramsci arguing that Bordiga was one of a 'dwindling group of revolutionary intellectuals, still steeped in a petit bourgeois mistrust of the worker, whom they regard as an inferior being, incapable of emancipating himself by his own efforts' ('The Party Grows in Strength by Combating Anti-Leninist Deviations', *L'Unità*, 5 July 1925, *PPW*, p.275).

⁵³ *PPW*, pp.127-28. 'Syndicalism and the Councils' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919, Vol. 1, No. 25, *SPW* 1, pp.109-113; *PPW*, 127-131).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Gramsci's later expressed this aversion to the 'cult of personality' as a battle against a sectarian or caste mentality that was pseudo-aristocratic and antithetical to the principles of Marxism. A 'heroic' leadership style was inimical with that of 'Guicciardinian man' – a man whose individualism dominated his practice (*PN* 2: note 2, p.700).

⁵⁵ Gramsci launched many attacks on the trade unions. See especially, 'Unions and Councils' (*op. cit.*), 'Trade Unions and the Dictatorship' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 25 October 1919, *SPW* 1, pp.103-108; *PPW*, pp.121-25); 'Syndicalism and the Councils' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919, Vol. 1, No. 25, *SPW* 1, pp.109-113; *PPW*, pp.127-131).

⁵⁶ *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919 (*SPW* 1, pp.114-124).

⁵⁷ *SPW* 1, p.115.

Charged with the duty of being ‘the faithful interpreter of the feelings of his comrades’⁵⁸, the control that delegates legitimately held could not be anything other than fluid and flexible and totally responsive to the mandate of the workers, according to that programme. One month later, in a piece written very soon after the November elections (‘The Party and the Revolution’, 27 December 1919⁵⁹), Gramsci again reiterated this collectivist sentiment – just as he would stress the non-negotiability of this principle in June 1923, accusing the Communist Party Executive and its members of ignoring this commitment⁶⁰. On this future occasion, his 1919 concerns were again revisited and his obvious annoyance registered as he once more accused the party of adopting a leadership mentality that was completely anti-Marxist. ‘One of the most serious obstacles which would hinder the application of a truly communist tactic’, he argued, was undoubtedly the internal organization of the party based upon [a] type of ‘sect mentality’⁶¹. Concerned more with their own self-preservation than with advancing a qualitatively different conception of human possibility, these unionist and party elements exhibited nothing but a ‘pseudo-bourgeois’ style of leadership completely at odds with Marx’s communist democratic focus⁶².

In the same way in which Gramsci would insist later that the party was not ‘an organ’ of the masses⁶³ – a conceptualization of the party that he felt legitimated the superimposition of the will (power) of a small group of cadres onto the docile mass – neither were the Councils to be considered ‘an organ’ of the proletariat. Here, the masses *were* the Councils just as it was explained in the previous chapter that the people were to be viewed as the state. The supercession of the ‘old’ legality by that of the ‘new’ hinged on the transgression of ‘all forms of individualism’ and the ‘closed and mean egotism’ that operated to undermine the spirit of human agency and broader

⁵⁸ ‘The Programme of the Workshop Delegates’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp.114-124).

⁵⁹ ‘The Party and the Revolution’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 27 December 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp. 142-46)

⁶⁰ In that article (‘Report by the Minority of the Italian Delegation’, June 1923, *SPW 2*, pp.143-53), Gramsci argued that ‘one of the most serious obstacles which would hinder the application of a truly communist tactics’ was undoubtedly the internal organization of the party based upon this type of ‘sect mentality’ (*SPW 2*, p.153).

⁶¹ *SPW 2*, p.153. It is interesting that in entry 51 of *Notebook 1* (*PN 1*, pp.162-63), he talks about the ‘religion’ of the Rotary Club. Like a ‘sect’, it is not a ‘universal’ religion however, as it ‘befits an elect aristocracy (chosen people, chosen class)’ (p.163).

⁶² ‘Trade Unions and the Dictatorship’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 25 October 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp.103-108; *PPW*, pp.121-25); ‘Syndicalism and the Councils’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 8 November 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp.109-113; *PPW*, pp.127-131); ‘The Party and the Revolution’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 27 December 1919 (*SPW 1*, pp. 142-46); ‘Unions and Councils’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 12 June 1920 (*SPW 1*, pp.265-268); and ‘Referendum’, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, 29 June 1921 (*SPW 2*, pp.48-51).

⁶³ This was a key point of difference between Gramsci and Bordiga, as Bordiga’s concept of the party ultimately allowed the problem of the creation of mass consciousness to be ignored. See ‘The Italian Situation and the Tasks of the PCI’ (‘Lyons Theses’), Lyons, January 1926 (*SPW 2*, pp.340-75).

forms of collectivist thinking.

The destruction of the old order did not mean, however, the anarchistic dismantling of the productive apparatus of society. It meant, instead, a shift in the material and moral organization of society so as to ensure that a more intense productive effort would be accompanied by a fairer, more equal, distribution of social obligations and rewards⁶⁴. In this regard, the Factory Councils were assigned a role that far exceeded their usual technical and industrial function: not only did they have to effect the technical transformation of the productive sphere to create the conditions for the material regeneration of society but so, too, were they given overall responsibility for the psychological transformation of the peasants and proletariat in order that they might begin to view themselves as the future productive community. Accordingly, this overall duty of the Councils – and the party equally – was thus a duty of care and education. For Gramsci, it had to constitute *the* primary activity of the party, as I have been arguing throughout this thesis. Insofar as education was synonymous with the negation of the leader and led divide, in practice, it alone was synonymous with revolution. The masses *were* the revolutionary force. To bypass them meant to bypass the revolution; that is, to bypass the entire philosophy of Marxism itself⁶⁵.

4. The Struggle to Educate: Two Conceptions of Communism

As discussed in Chapter 2, to know the laws ‘governing the mind’ meant, similarly, knowing how one’s mind had been crafted by a myriad of influences, the net result being a psychological predisposition embodying the imperialism of anti-dialectical thought and the adoption of an inorganic and anti-humanist worldview. During this period, Gramsci again reiterates the critical importance of this pedagogical imperative, repeating what he had inferred on a previous occasion⁶⁶: that the most

⁶⁴ ‘Out of the Dilemma’, 29 November 1919 (*PPW*, pp.132-135).

⁶⁵ Gramsci affirms his commitment to educating the masses in *Notebook 2* (*PN 1*: entry 75, especially pp.323-24) when he discusses Roberto Michels’ ideas on parties and their origins. Having noted the potential problem of the leadership directing the mass at the expense of their active participation in discussions and the organizational life of the party, Gramsci argues that it is important to build up a ‘middle stratum’ to provide the appropriate balance to the activities of these leaders. Elsewhere, he wrote that if the workers gave themselves leaders, they gave themselves new masters.

⁶⁶ In ‘Freedom First’ (*op. cit.*), for instance, Gramsci had written:

The responsibility to educate itself is of major importance among the educated proletariat: to generate from one’s group the prestige necessary to assume management...Education, culture, and the organized dissemination of knowledge and experience constitute the independence of the masses from the intelligentsia. The most intelligent phase of the struggle against the despotism of professional intellectuals and the trust in divine law consists in the intensification of culture and the raising of consciousness. (*HPC*: p.51)

appropriate starting point from which one might uncover the ethical impotence of capitalism was from a position of educational awareness. A deliberately heightened consciousness of the history of one's own self-constitution had to be accompanied by a parallel appreciation of the historical constitution of one's nation-state, in tandem. As he reminded his readers in September 1919: 'The revolution is not a thaumaturgical act, but a dialectical process of historical development'⁶⁷. In other words, the revolution had to be willed: the population had to become politically mobilized. 'Historical development' was the outcome of *the strategic and coordinated exercise of will and intelligence*; that is, of a systematic campaign to inaugurate an historical materialist outlook.

Neither the Socialist Party – nor the Communist Party after it – posed a genuinely revolutionary conception of either 'party' or 'politics' to displace the predominant pseudo-Marxist (pseudo-bourgeois) one. Time and again, we witness a battery of scathing criticisms being authored by Gramsci as a reaction against what he takes to be the obvious 'abstentionist' strategy of the party⁶⁸; of how it harboured a defeatist and reformist outlook by effectively sitting on its hands and abstaining from trying to popularize a critical and communist outlook. Given the myriad of structural and psychological factors that Gramsci had begun to expose that had conditioned the proletariat to see itself in such a disparate and inorganic manner, as I have detailed already, a sustained campaign of education and arousal was deemed to be the only strategy able to counteract these destructive tendencies. As Gramsci saw it, authentic self-determination by the working class could only ever arise if already class-conscious members actively campaigned – through study, research and sustained cultural criticism – on behalf of their class to illuminate the class nature of society and, moreover, to dedicate its energies towards eliminating the concept of 'class' entirely⁶⁹.

The serious reservations that Gramsci had been voicing concerning the ability of both the trade union bodies and the Socialist Party alike to centralize and coordinate the activities of the proletarian struggle continued throughout and beyond the period of the factory occupations. In his mind, if the party failed to unify and co-ordinate its

⁶⁷ 'The Development of the Revolution', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 13 September 1919 (*SPW 1*: pp.89-93)

⁶⁸ Here, abstentionism refers not just to the parties abstaining from involvement in parliamentary elections but also to the way in which their inactivity led them to refrain from all revolutionary activity altogether.

⁶⁹ At the Como Conference of 1924, for example, the second of the resolutions tabled elevated 'the need to resolve before all else the problem of how to root in the consciousness of the masses the necessity for the Communist Party's existence' ('The Como Conference: Resolutions', *Lo Stato Operaio*, 16 May 1924, *SPW 2*: pp.243-49).

efforts, there could be no guarantee that the working class would not form another party or shift its allegiance to supporting the anarchists instead⁷⁰. On several occasions⁷¹, for example, he brusquely reminded his comrades that, in preference to indulging in games of *scopone* or parliamentary intrigue, a systematic and profound study of the Italian situation what was really needed for achieving the maximum measure of theoretical and tactical advantage; that neither these so-called 'leaders' nor the workers themselves had acquired the necessary historical sensibilities to enable them to look beyond the 'false and hypocritical liberty and equality' of the bourgeois state⁷². 'Illusion is the most tenacious weed in the collective consciousness', he stated in exasperated tones in 1921: 'History teaches, but it has no pupils'⁷³. Plainly, it was because of the absence of this type of basic knowledge among the proletariat and its leadership body that made Gramsci even more convinced of its necessity. A study of the Italian situation was a vital requirement, he concluded, if the proletariat hoped eventually to triumph in their attempts to inaugurate an alternative counter-capitalist mindset.

As Gramsci argued consistently throughout this period, exposure by the masses to even a brief examination of the history of worker alliances with various bourgeois parties over the years would have provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the fundamental deceit of a combination of mischievous claims being touted by the liberal demagogues⁷⁴. To this end, his own work within *L'Ordine Nuovo* was clearly aimed at heightening the awareness of his readership as to the rhetorical and bogus assurances of the Italian State. On one occasion, for example, he put it to his readership that the interests of the working class had received scant protection alongside those of the property owning class, given that the magistrature had traditionally recruited its members from the ranks of the anti-proletarian, petty-bourgeoisie⁷⁵. On numerous other occasions, his inventory of the inability of the state and its parliament to provide legal guarantees for the liberty or personal safety of its

⁷⁰ *SPW 1*, p.193.

⁷¹ As early as 6 June 1918, Gramsci wrote that what was necessary was a well-documented investigation to provide the crucial criteria from which one might subsequently judge what level of development had been reached by the bourgeois state ('The Peasants and the State', *Avanti!*, *HPC*, pp.75-79). By May 1920, he was once again urging that '[e]very event in national and international proletarian life should be analyzed immediately in manifestos and circulars from the leadership, drawing lessons from them that could be used in communist propaganda and to form a revolutionary consciousness' ('Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 May 1920, *SPW 1*, pp.190-6; *PPW*, pp.155-162).

⁷² 'The Elections and Freedom', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 21 April 1921 (*SPW 2*, p.36).

⁷³ 'Italy and Spain', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 11 March 1921 (*SPW 2*, p.24).

⁷⁴ 'The Communists and the Elections', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 April 1921 (*SPW 2*, p.32).

⁷⁵ 'The Italian Parliament', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 24 March 1921 (*SPW 2*, p.30).

citizens was intended to deliberately expose the true nature of the power distortion⁷⁶. It was on the basis of Gramsci's appreciation of the importance of re-reading history in a dialectical and critical way that we see him accusing the Socialist Party and the trade union bodies of their fundamental error: they had failed to engage in any serious historical research which would have oriented their members towards a better understanding of the issues and problems that Italy was facing at that time.

This was particularly so given the steady rise of nationalist support in response to these deep-seated structural weaknesses of the liberal state⁷⁷. It is undoubtedly a truism that the 'vacancy' created by the leftist forces when the factory occupation collapsed aided the escalation of what Gramsci frequently termed this unchecked rightist 'barbarism'⁷⁸. Popular support for fascism had been fermenting gradually after the cessation of the war. When faced with the waves of socialist and anarchist insurgency that followed the fighting⁷⁹, property owners quickly turned to illiberal brutality in lieu of the guarantee of conventional legal protection. It is little wonder then that by early 1921 – in light of Gramsci's view that conventional institutions of the left endorsed nothing but a 'bureaucratic and bestial centralism', led by a collection of dogmatists and vulgar Machiavellians – he voted in favour of the Communist element withdrawing its support and forming a separate party at Livorno that January⁸⁰. Suffice to say that in voting for this separation, Gramsci hoped invariably that this smaller, more concentrated, Communist core would be able to offer the vital leadership that he felt was so prominently absent. The *raison d'être* of the new party, we see him arguing, was to champion working-class alliance through an extended network of the original Factory Councils. To this effect, he declared: 'We believe that the struggle for the creation and development of factory and enterprise Councils to be the specific struggle of the Communist Party'⁸¹.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* (SPW 2, pp.29-31).

⁷⁷ Although Lyttelton's study (1987) does not focus directly on the rise of fascism, he observes that the structural weaknesses of the liberal state meant there was a fundamental lack of connection between the great mass of the population and the governing authority of the time.

⁷⁸ In April 1919, the offices of *Avanti!* were burned down by fascist and nationalist supporters. Gramsci's first article, which comments directly on the rise of fascism is 'The Monkey-People' (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 2 January 1921, SPW 1: pp.372-374).

⁷⁹ Gramsci wrote in 'The Sovereignty of Law' (1 June 1919, PPW: pp.87-90):

A policeman today 'ranks' more than a member of Parliament, because the policeman has a stake in power, while the member of Parliament is just a juridical fiction.

Our society has become one enormous barracks, governed by irresponsibility and floundering in disorder and chaos... The anti-socialist myth of the 'barracks State' has become a terrible, asphyxiating bourgeois reality, which is forcing society into an abyss of unruliness, frenzy and homicidal chaos. (PPW: pp.87-88)

⁸⁰ Gramsci made a special feature in his prison notes of the distinction between what he termed 'bureaucratic centralism' and 'democratic centralism' (see especially SPN, pp.188-190).

⁸¹ 'The General Confederation of Labour', 25 February 1921 (SPW 2, p.13).

Amadeo Bordiga, the new head of the Communist splinter party formed at Livorno, held a distinctively different conception of the makeup and role of the party from that of Gramsci, however. While it is true that his staunch anti-reformist posture and historical advocacy for maximum revolutionary endeavour had indeed fuelled the eventual divorce of the communist element within the Socialist Party, it soon became exceedingly obvious that the communism that Bordiga sanctioned was itself infected by a fetishized form of thought whereby the party was conceived as an entity that was completely external to, and separate from, the mass. In many ways, however, Bordiga's interpretation of the sort of party that was needed was nonetheless partially understandable. A pact signed in August 1921 between the socialists and the fascists led him to believe that only a party with a strong centralist core and nationalist focus could ever hope to undermine the popularity of the firm and assertive leadership direction offered by the fascist right. As he would lament in 1922⁸², the problem of how to reconstitute an organization wherein the masses could reassume their role as a dominant force in the political setting was fundamentally a problem of leadership. It was against this backdrop that Bordiga therefore conceived of the Communist Party as an organ of the working class; as an 'association' or 'synthesis' of the brightest and most intelligent communists who would lead the masses forward, as a vanguard, according to a specific programme and plan⁸³.

In Gramsci's assessment however, Bordiga's attitude simply demonstrated that he did not fully understand the principles of historical materialism. It betrayed what Gramsci described as 'a tinge of powerful pessimism' about the capacities of the mass which needed, in Bordiga's eyes, to enlist the services of a vanguard who would struggle to gain their liberty⁸⁴. The entire programmatic nature of the type of party Bordiga defended implied a party policy that was rigid and inflexible; that 'the party' constituted a small group of leaders who 'reflected' and 'synthesized' the generic aspirations of the masses. Rather than the party therefore being depicted as 'the result of a dialectical process, in which the spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses and the organizing and directing will of the centre converge'⁸⁵, its internal

⁸² 'Congress Interventions', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 28 March 1922 (*SPW 2*, p.22).

⁸³ This assessment of Bordiga's position was detailed by Scoccimarro which appears in the 'Minutes of the Political Commission Nominated by the Central Committee to Finalize the Lyons Congress Documents', 21-26 January 1926 (*SPW 2*, pp.313-339).

⁸⁴ As Gramsci's critique of Nikolai Bukharin's work shows in Chapter 6, the type of vanguard that Gramsci advocated was one which was organic to the mass by virtue of the fact that its ability to lead rested on its members advanced understanding of anti-subaltern struggle. As I argue in that chapter, their organicity related to their knowledge of and commitment to anti-subaltern theory and practice.

⁸⁵ 'Gramsci to Togliatti, Terracini and Others', Vienna, 9 February 1924 (*SPW 2*, p.198).

structure implied precisely the opposite: that only an elite vanguard were the 'true' communist revolutionaries.

To understand Gramsci's frustration with Bordiga is to understand the difference between Bordiga's version of Marxism and that of Gramsci's. In the latter's opinion, having a communist 'core' simply 'proclaiming' itself to be the revolutionary organ of the proletariat and peasantry was nothing other than a 'formal overestimation of the party' and a 'dangerous deviation of Marxist thought'⁸⁶. Summing up his frustrations later in a letter to his colleagues in 1924⁸⁷, Gramsci wrote:

The error of the party has been to have accorded priority in an abstract fashion to the problem of party organization, which in practice has simply meant creating an apparatus of functionaries who could be depended on for their orthodoxy towards the official view. It was believed, and it is still believed, that the revolution depends only on the existence of such an apparatus; and it is sometimes even believed that its existence can bring about the revolution⁸⁸.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, Gramsci and Bordiga's disagreement regarding the nature and role of the party was further intensified because of their ongoing differences concerning the need for a worker and peasant alliance⁸⁹. Bordiga argued vehemently against the possibility of the peasantry presenting itself as a potential ally which could bolster the strength of working-class action. He did so on the grounds that the peasantry were much more bourgeois in outlook than proletarian – even to the point of claiming that they constituted an entirely 'different class'⁹⁰. For this very reason, excluding the rural element seemed a strategically sound move, particularly if the

⁸⁶ *SPW 2*, p.368. These sentiments were expressed very clearly by Gramsci and Togliatti in the 'Lyons Theses' which they drafted jointly for the Party Congress in January 1926 ('The Italian Situation and the Tasks of the PCI', *SPW 2*, pp.340-375). Here, they wrote:

The error of a mechanical interpretation of this principle must be combated in the Italian party, as a possible consequence of the ideological deviations of the far left. For these deviations lead to an arbitrary, formal over-estimation of the party, so far as its function as leader of the class is concerned. We assert that the capacity to lead the class is related, not to the fact that the party 'proclaims' itself as a revolutionary organ, but to the fact that it 'really' succeeds, as a part of the working class, in linking itself to all sections of that class and impressing upon the masses a movement in the direction desired and favoured by objective conditions. (*SPW 2*, p.368)

⁸⁷ 'Gramsci to Togliatti, Terracini and Others', Vienna, 9 February 1924 (*SPW 2*, pp.191-203).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* (pp.197-198).

⁸⁹ Gramsci was keen to propagate the notion of a Federal Republic of Workers and Peasants and had even contemplated resurrecting an old socialist periodical, *The Seed*, for this purpose (see *PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 55, note 2, p.456).

⁹⁰ 'Congress Interventions', 25-28 March 1922 (*SPW 2*, pp.118-122). The peasantry did not appear a particularly homogeneous grouping, with some tenant farmers owning their own land whilst other agricultural day labourers remained landless.

historical animosity between the urban and rural sectors was also acknowledged⁹¹ – plus the fact that the peasantry had traditionally pledged its allegiance to parties other than socialist in nature. When we remember additionally that Bordiga's primary motive for creating a separate Communist Party was that the previous leadership element was felt to be too 'bourgeois' in their tendencies, then he could even be excused for rejecting a working class/ peasant alliance – given that Bordiga was conscious of not wanting to construct a party that was a replica of those he had just admonished⁹².

As Gramsci saw the situation, however, to exclude such a sizable sector of the population from having any substantial involvement in the activities of the party was a potentially suicidal move, especially considering the growing menace of fascism. Insofar as Gramsci had previously accused Bordiga of strategically erring by his relentless pursuit of a policy of parliamentary intransigency⁹³, here, he once more voiced his dissent for none other than these same reasons: that inactivity would undoubtedly lead to the consolidation of the status quo, if not its eventual deterioration in the face of the fascist onslaught⁹⁴. Even more significantly than this though, Bordiga's 'Marxism' belied the presence of a form of mechanical and deterministic thinking that Gramsci had devoted his entire political career to combating. For the proletariat to become capable of governing, it had to free itself from the prejudices of the old legality, which meant that it needed to have conquered its own forms of sectarian and egoist thinking⁹⁵. Bordiga's complete and utter disregard for this problem was testimony to Gramsci of his failure to understand the key tenets of historical materialism. It was this inescapable divergence of thought that led Gramsci to categorize Bordiga's concept of Marxism as being no more 'communist' in principle than the reformist thinking that it had endeavoured to displace.

⁹¹ Gramsci was especially concerned to identify the source of this animosity in some of his *Prison Notebooks* musings. See for instance, 'Types of Periodicals' (*PN 1*: entry 43, pp.125-136).

⁹² Bordiga and Terricini were the authors of 'Congress Interventions' (*ibid.*), and their views rejecting a worker and peasant alliance are recorded here:

We too often confuse the workers with the peasants. They are two different classes. The Socialist Party based itself on both these classes and that was why two spirits coexisted within it. The working class and the peasantry can reach agreements in an organic form, such as is proposed by the Communist Party in its theses on the agrarian question, but it must not be believed that the peasants can become communists. The Communist Party must maintain its physiognomy as a workers' party, with centres of action in the countryside. (*SPW 2*, pp.120-121)

⁹³ Gramsci was only too well aware of the effects of universal suffrage, and thought it extremely foolhardy *not* to try to win a proportion of the peasants over to the communist cause.

⁹⁴ It is interesting that in a future *Notebook* entry, he described the intransigence of another – Adelchi Baratono. It was Baratono's inability to take a stance that led Gramsci to refer to his position as 'agnosticism' – as 'nothing more than moral or civil cowardice' (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 96, p.190).

⁹⁵ This included overcoming the distinctions that existed between the agrarian worker and the industrial one, and between the trades themselves.

To conclude this discussion, it is reasonable to suggest that the major source of disagreement between Gramsci and Bordiga hinged on the latter's inability to abandon a subaltern psychology as evidenced in his preference for a form of party organization that Gramsci later described as 'organic centralist' in nature⁹⁶. As Gramsci defined it: 'So-called "organic centralism" is based on the principle that a political group is selected by "cooptation" around an "infallible bearer of truth", one who is "enlightened by reason"...'⁹⁷. As I explain in more detail in the following chapters, what distinguished Marxism from all previous philosophies was that it represented the concrete rejection of the lived relationships of old. As a result, 'the people are the state' took on a tangible form only when the people *became* statesmen and women, as Gramsci would later write...

...[o]nly if the relations between intellectuals and people-masses, between the leaders and led, between the rulers and ruled is based on an organic attachment in which impassioned sentiment becomes understanding and hence knowledge (not mechanically but in a living manner)...[o]nly then is the relationship one of representation, and only then does one get an exchange of individual elements between rulers and ruled, the leaders and the led: in other words, only then does a life of connectedness, which alone is a social force, become a reality, and the 'historical bloc' come into being⁹⁸.

5. Conclusion: The Character of Gramsci's Communism

As outlined throughout this chapter, the period 1919 to 1926 was a time of pronounced political activity for Gramsci as he strove constantly to elucidate the differences between varying forms of (nominal) proletarian representation and (authentic) communist endeavour. Becoming exceedingly disillusioned with the Socialist Party and unionist dalliance, first with the liberal democratic government and later with the fascists, this is a period in which we see him reiterating all his previous assertions; especially his contention that the creation of a genuine communist movement required the proletariat *to think differently* – to think outside the boundaries of a capitalist 'legality'. The *L'Ordine Nuovo* period was thus a time that was marked by Gramsci's tireless efforts to teach the proletariat a new type of literacy. As I have

⁹⁶ SPN, pp.186-187. As explained in the next chapter, Gramsci supported a form of party organization that he called 'democratic centralist'. As we will see there, a democratic centralist ethos expressed the new relations of solidarity, reciprocity and collectivity that defined Gramsci's new concept of party – importantly, the embodiment of Marx's practical philosophy. Ironically, in light of Gramsci's dismissal of the organic centralist leadership of Bordiga, the fulfillment of a democratic centralist form of organization described the authentically organic relationship between members of the party. Consequently, democratic centralism described how the Gramscian party differed from every other traditional party.

⁹⁷ SPN, footnote 83, p.187.

⁹⁸ PN 2: Notebook 4, entry 33, pp.173-174: SPN, p.418.

emphasized again in this chapter, education was a non-negotiable aspect in the concretization of a new ethical and political legality. It was the means of legitimating alternative patterns of cultural contemplation and counter-capitalist (anti-class) valuation.

Given the longstanding inability of his unionist and socialist confreres to abandon the values inherent in capitalism, Gramsci's writing became increasingly focused on exposing the shortcomings of their activities, as we have seen. Indeed, the whole thrust of Gramsci's attack on his colleagues and opponents alike was that they did not understand the relational dimension of the struggle which was implied fully by Marxist principles and which urgently needed to be converted into practice: specifically, *into their own practice*. In this regard, Gramsci's message is consistent throughout: socialism succeeded only to the extent that the conventionality of the social relations inscribed by the capitalist mode of production was opposed – the focus being on the elimination of fetishized forms of thought which robbed humanity of its own powers of agency. As Gramsci's antagonism towards Bordiga's philosophy and party pedagogy revealed, the whole idea of a revolutionary organization that stood separate from its members *consolidated* rather than *eliminated* the continuation of an ethos of conventionality; that is, of pathological dependency. As we will witness in the next two chapters, communism was not some distant endpoint. It represented the living embodiment of the negation of the violence of traditional forms of relational and social organization.

To Gramsci, the Councils more than just *theorized* the possibility of every worker being able to exercise some degree of control over the material and cultural productive process: they *actualized* it as well. Consistent with this thinking, the factories were logically the natural setting for the reappropriation of the concept of 'class' itself; they were the counter-conventional institutions that Gramsci and his *Ordinovista* colleagues chose as the sites for the gestation of this new form of cultural thought and association. Premised, as they were, on the conviction that labour and production needed to be reunited and viewed as a totality – with the working class no longer merely 'workers' to be exploited for the disinterested production of material wealth but themselves now both 'labourers' and 'producers' who assumed an active and integral role within the production process – the Factory Councils therefore stood as the means by which the working class could reappropriate its own history and culture.

As noted in Chapter 2, to the extent that achieving economic justice was synonymous with attaining social justice, and vice versa, the Conciliar movement (later, articulated as Worker and Peasant Committees) stood squarely for the elimination of the relations of the exploiter/ exploited at the very site upon which this dichotomy had historically taken root. The factories thus became important sites of working class association and cultural activity (political education) – designated sites of *working class alliance and counter-capitalist struggle*. In keeping with Gramsci's dialectical and organic view of communism, alliance was therefore both *a strategy for* and *an outcome of* Gramsci's drive to create a new hegemony. It was the strategy to effect organic associations as well as the outcome of this radical re-grounding of humanity in associations other than those dictated by profit and other than those established by the rhythm of exploitative forms of competition and rivalry.

Notwithstanding the fact that some commentators have tried to argue that the failure of the Factory Council experiment epitomized a shift in Gramsci's thinking away from the pursuit of democratic principles in the struggle for socialism⁹⁹, I have argued exactly the opposite: that the participatory democratic model that the Councils exemplified was the organizational manifestation of the neohumanist form that Gramsci's deeper democratic ethos assumed. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, what any participatory model of democracy relied upon, above all else, was a self-consciously reflective mass – a mass which was capable of renovating and making critical its own customs and traditions. A distinction needs to be made therefore between the structural form through which the democratic process is articulated, and the capacity and capability of individuals to 'think well, whatever the thought'. The democracy that the Councils exemplified was premised on the philosophy that a community could only ever be as 'democratic' as the mindset allowed by each of its members. In other words, the struggle for democracy had to be fought first of all at the level of the cognitive and philosophical in order not to lose sight of the actual boundaries of the terrain of the struggle itself¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ This line of argument is intimated by both Schecter (*op. cit.*, 1991) and Martin (*op. cit.*, 1998). Teodros Kiros is a little more cautious in condemning Gramsci, but does find it somewhat paradoxical that the type of democracy that Gramsci later espoused was branded 'democratic centralism' (*Towards the Construction of a Theory of Political Action: Antonio Gramsci* (New York: University Press of America, 1985).

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 6 is devoted entirely to a discussion of Gramsci's concept of democracy as the antithesis of the pathologies of bourgeois hegemony. Through profiling Gramsci's criticisms of Nicolai Bukharin's writings and his admiration for Machiavelli, additional evidence is provided that the greatest threat to a universal form of democracy lay in the manner in which bourgeois hegemony consolidated subaltern thought and practice. Relational changes were the concrete and living manifestation of Gramsci's new and radical democracy.

Although the Factory Council defeat *did* mark a failure of the workers to take full control of the material processes of production, it did not signify an abandonment by Gramsci of the democratic principles which his Marxist beliefs epitomized. As I have suggested throughout this study, Gramsci's struggle across both phases of his life was essentially one that challenged the submission of the human spirit to an epistemology and ontology that supported a politics of 'the economy' at the expense of a politics of the 'human spirit'. As demonstrated in the next chapter, which examines a broad cross-section of Gramsci's *Notebook* entries, the Council defeat merely made the task of enlivening the proletariat and liberating it from its pathologically adaptive thought and behaviour an even more urgent imperative. To this end, as will be made clearer in the pages to follow, Gramsci's calls for sound historical research that revealed the living and interactive nature of the 'drama' contained within history represented a continuation of his efforts to make the social 'political'. Intelligent reflection and moral defiance was the theoretical centrepiece of Gramsci's praxis – the core of his revolutionary Marxist, democratic practice.

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EDUCATING COGNITIVE AND MORAL DEFIANCE: HISTORICISM AND THE DIALECTIC AS A NEW FORM OF LITERACY (1926 – 1937)

To be history and not simply graphic marks or source material or aids to memory, past events must be thought over again and in this rethinking they are made contemporary, since the evaluation and ordering of these facts necessarily depends on the 'contemporary' consciousness of those who make (or made) history and of the person who rethinks the historical event.

(Gramsci (1918) quoted in Hartley, 1984: note 2, p.180¹)

Every state has 'two' philosophies: the one that is enunciated through formulas and is merely the art of government, and the one that is affirmed through action and is the real philosophy, namely history. The problem is to find out the extent to which these two philosophies coincide or differ.

(PN 1: Notebook 1, entry 87, p.185)

1. Introduction: How to Engender Cognitive and Moral Defiance

As will be recalled from my introductory comments within the opening pages of this study, because Gramsci's concept of hegemony has often been called upon to support such a range of incompatible political and theoretical positions, a rigorous examination of his writings was considered to be the most appropriate means by which to extricate the *leitmotiv* or spirit of Gramsci's Marxism. With this intention in mind, highlighting the application of his historical materialist method against as rich a possible selection of Gramsci's translated writings has been my primary objective. In this respect, as I reiterate in the following pages, the point we need to understand – arguably, above all others – is that his sustained advocacy of 'intense cultural activity (education)' was likewise a call to think about society and social 'order' in a manner that was itself antithetical to the mode of rationality that capitalism had inscribed upon the social (expressed in its peculiar ontological and epistemological forms). To engage

¹ 'Approaching Gramsci's Politics' [Review of Walter Adamson's *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980]. *Italian Quarterly*, 97, 8, 1984: pp.171-181. Hartley notes that Gramsci wrote this in response to Croce's attempt to argue the contemporaneity of all history. He reports that this reply appeared in Gramsci's article, 'La Barba e la Fascia' (*Sotto la Mole*, 1918: p.365).

in 'cultural activity' therefore meant to combat those forms of cognitive and moral submissiveness that capitalism had spawned: to challenge what was 'normal' and 'just' about the myriad divisions that dissected the social and suffocated authentic, humanized relationships and richer associational practices.

Making the proletariat a significant and successful force within history meant making it fully cognizant of the power of its will as a necessary energetic force. And this required *actively engendering that will* – liberating it from the straightjacket of the multitude of limiting attitudes and ideas (imbued, no less, in language) that disrupted a collective striving towards principled thought and meaningful action. Critical, in-depth, historical study of the manner in which matters 'cultural' and 'conceptual' (philosophical) had circumscribed the class struggle² constitutes the foundation upon which Gramsci continues to consolidate a counter-bourgeois, Marxist ontological and epistemological stance³. As I will demonstrate in these two remaining chapters (chapters which focus specifically upon his prison writings⁴), Gramsci's injunction that cultural thought and practice be historicized was similarly his advocacy of the importance of locating ideas against the movement and flux of history in order to expose the contradictions inherent within a broad range of contemporary principles and

² After Georges Sorel, Gramsci talked about the need for 'cleavage' to occur between the classes; that a precondition to revolution was that the masses recognized the historical reality of 'class' and were not deceived by bourgeois demagoguery which understated the division. To engender a 'spirit of cleavage' among the masses was a primary goal of any educational manifesto of the left (see especially PN 2: note 1 for *Notebook 3*, entry 49, pp.450-51).

A similar logic applied to Gramsci's thinking about the difference between the philosophy of praxis and other 'speculative' philosophies. Unless the leadership element (the intellectuals) within the party worked to create 'a spirit of distinction and division' between the philosophy of praxis and the 'other pale pretenders', there was a very real danger that the concrete divisions between the classes would remain perpetually invisible (SPN, p.439).

³ Derek Sayer presents an excellent account of Marx's historical method in his work, *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987). Chapter 6, 'The Historicity of Concepts', is particularly insightful as Sayer elucidates Marx's own critique of the many abstractions that constitute our reality. Sayer argues that one of the most important insights Marx offered us was his understanding that the obfuscation of the difference between the historical and transhistorical nature of many familiar concepts we use supports a mystification of our reality. Only in recognizing this 'smudging', and by reemphasizing the differences between the historical and transhistorical nature of these concepts, can the underlying nature of reality be duly exposed (pp.126-149).

For another useful introduction to Gramsci's conception of Marxism, see especially Chapter 3 in Thomas Nemeth's *Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).

⁴ The three previous chapters were based on a broad selection of Gramsci's pre-carcer writings, without prejudice as to the 'classification' of the pieces themselves (e.g., cultural, political, general). The same can also be said of the next two chapters: insights gleaned from older prison notebook translations will be supplemented with material from newly translated works. Having said this, however, it must be noted that the Anglophone researcher should still refer to the Hoare and Nowell Smith (1971) edition of Gramsci's writings, given that only two of the five-volume set of Joseph Buttigieg's recent translations are available publicly at the time of writing. Mindful of the dangers of putting greater stress inadvertently on this selection than Gramsci himself might otherwise have intended, I have nonetheless chosen to refer to all available sources to provide as comprehensive an account of Gramsci's notebook conversations as possible.

practices⁵. Historicizing the present was therefore his way of exposing the underlying *class nature* of existing relations; *of rendering the present 'critical' and 'political' through the past*. It was the type of inquiry that represented the struggles of the past as the interaction of human agency (the subjective element) with and against the flow of 'real historical movement' (the objective situation)⁶. As such, it was a methodology that essentially repositioned class struggle onto centre-stage, revealing the underlying *political* nature of the existing social and cultural settlement in so doing. As Gramsci's *Notebooks* themselves attest, careful, detailed historical inquiry thus offered the potential for the *dialectical radicalization* of the social accordingly⁷.

To think dialectically, in simple terms, entailed thinking historically and critically about the present in order to *politicize* it⁸. It meant to adopt a fundamentally new approach to viewing the world whereby seemingly disparate and discreet elements were consciously brought together and synthesized as a totality. Even more importantly than this however, it was a way of thinking that accentuated the role of human agency in cultural creation: a mode of thinking that optimized the *organic*⁹ interconnectedness and relatedness – the pluricellular nature – of the social. As I will be explaining here, Gramsci's advice that history be thought of as an 'unfolding drama' was a relatively simple, yet strikingly effective, way of achieving this epistemological and ontological shift¹⁰. Conceiving of history as drama enabled the past to be viewed more readily as a

⁵ The *Notebooks* are littered with references supporting the necessity for detailed historical research if one is to become an 'integral historian'. For example, in the commentary that appears under the heading 'The history of the subaltern classes: Methodological criteria' (*SPN*, pp.52-55), Gramsci discusses the appropriate criteria for assessing the 'autonomy' of a subaltern group. Rather than their autonomy being measured solely by their 'separation from the formerly dominant forces' (p.53), Gramsci advocates that attention must be paid to the level of historical and political consciousness which these groups display.

⁶ We see how Gramsci highlighted the importance of a study of both these dimensions in the discussion of Nikolai Bukharin and Niccolo Machiavelli in the following chapter (Chapter 6).

⁷ As noted in Chapter 2, Sayer (*op. cit.*, 1986) stressed how much Marx's historical method was predicated on the presentation and critical analysis of concrete, empirical events in mankind's history and culture. What these events revealed were the subjects of history – real, living individuals (p.136). As Marx had intimated, the starting point of every philosophy was mankind's being in the world.

⁸ Some writers have used the term 'historian-critic' as a means to signal the importance of both facets being present to support dialectical thought (see Maurice A. Finocchiaro, *Gramsci and the History of Dialectical Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). For a valuable introduction to the concept of dialectical thought, see Bertell Ollman's *Dialectical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁹ It will be remembered that Gramsci had urged that society needed to be envisioned as a pluricellular organism rather than a fragmented and unicellular one (see Chapter 3: Introduction).

¹⁰ Gramsci made this appeal when discussing 'Marx and Machiavelli' in *Notebook 4*. Here, he stressed that every party or class or state must always be located within a 'precise historical environment, in a particular tradition, in a specific combination of social forces'. Recording these details would entail recording the 'dramatic' – activity that would involve documenting 'an unfolding historical drama' (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 10, p.152). In another instance, he argued that the collective will of the people would become the protagonist of 'a real and effective historical drama' (*SPN*, p.130). Similarly, he discussed the need for a collective will to pursue the concrete and

past that was impregnated with the living presence of humankind, a presence that was further contextualized and anchored to a specific geography and culture. The past was essentially ‘humanized’ in this manner – purged of the abstract vagaries that other theorists had so liberally imposed upon it by their petty, ahistorical fancies. As I argue below, the integral nature of Gramsci’s own reading of Marx’s historical materialist method is grasped more easily through applying this analogy.

To conceive of history as an unfolding drama was to think and act organically and dialectically. As such, thinking in this manner was already ‘revolutionary’ insofar as a posture of cognitive and moral defiance was being expressed through the very rejection of an inorganic mode of thought¹¹. Put simply, *it was itself onto-formative endeavour*. Because organic thinking had been actively dissuaded¹² however, this was therefore a cognitive disposition that had to be ‘acquired’. Hence, we witness the centrality and criticality of education or ‘cultural activity’ (education) in Gramsci’s deliberations. It was upon this basis that the historicization and dramatization of thought, blended with a critical outlook, ensured the politicization and socialization of thought, correspondingly. Gramsci believed that only through this method would the bogus liberties offered by sanctimonious liberals and socialists alike become clearly discernible from the organic liberties that an authentic socialist and communal focus offered¹³. To this end, as demonstrated towards the close of this chapter, the ‘modern Prince’ (Gramsci’s reappropriated concept of party) represented the ‘active and operative expression’ of Marxism, just as the Factory Councils had likewise functioned previously.

What we therefore witness in Gramsci’s prison entries is his concerted attempt to analyze the most effective means by which the ‘abstract’ as well as the

programmatic after ‘dramatic’ discussion had occurred – as opposed to being determined by ‘a cold and pedantic exposition of arguments’ (SPN, p.133).

¹¹ As we will read, Gramsci saw this self-review of history as the means by which the worst excesses of intellectual detachment, on the one hand, and uncritical faith, on the other, could be tempered. Historicism therefore inaugurated the rejection of the intellectual divide *in practice*.

¹² *Notebook 4* contains frequent reference, both directly and indirectly, to what Gramsci refers to as the importance of ‘the technique of thinking’ (PN 2: Entry 18, pp.159-160; PN 2: Entry 21, p.162). It is clear from these pages that his criticisms of both Bukharin and Croce centred on the ahistorical character of their ‘ideologies’. Ahistorical thought was antithetical to thought itself, as Gramsci maintained consistently.

¹³ In various entries within the *Notebooks*, Gramsci discusses how certain theorists and writers had portrayed themselves as ‘socialists’ at some stage during their lifetime. Achille Loria was a primary case. Others he identifies include Giovanni Pascoli and Enrico Corradini. Common to all was their complete lack of understanding of Marxism’s overall theoretical and practical premises (see PN 1: *Notebook 2*, entry 51, p.295-297 and PN 1: *Notebook 2*, entry 52, pp.297-300).

'spontaneous' could be converted into the 'conscious'¹⁴; of how the dialectical scrutiny of history – past and present – was itself an intrinsically revolutionary phenomenon. To position the proletariat as the instigator of the new cultural order required the cultivation of a collective in which those within this grouping saw the inseparable connection between their own aspirations and that of a common good. Above all else, this required a leadership element that understood that its own role was not one of *representing* the mass but rather of *merging with it*; bringing it to life through a liberating pedagogy of mentoring and apprenticeship, as we see reiterated below¹⁵.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Gramsci insisted that the old Bordigan party needed to adopt an affirmative policy of constructive social action based on the application of dialectic principles and practices. As he noted then, and continued to do so consistently here, the theoretical weakness of the leadership element was a major cause of the resulting 'vagueness of the concept of the subversive'¹⁶. The problem, as Gramsci had detailed previously and was now merely repeating¹⁷, was that Bordiga's style of leadership actually *consolidated* rather than *alleviated* subaltern practice. Unless the party began to embody the principles of Marxism through its own material practice, Gramsci envisaged that this limitation would remain a formidable barrier to the expansionist hopes of the left¹⁸. As will be touched upon in this chapter, but will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6, Nikolai Bukharin's *Popular Manual*, which attempted to explain the fundamental principles of historical materialism, continued to perpetuate this error¹⁹. To Gramsci's mind, Bukharin's work contained all the hallmarks

¹⁴ Gramsci cautioned in many of his notes that spontaneity and passion were, by their very nature, short-term and inorganic solutions to the founding of new states or new national structures. See, for instance, *SPN*, p.129.

¹⁵ This was the appeal of Machiavelli's work, as Gramsci explained in a number of entries (see especially *SPN*, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics', pp.125-133).

¹⁶ *PN 2: Notebook 3*, entry 45, p.44. The concept of the subversive or the subaltern played a tremendously significant role in Gramsci's thought, as I argue in the next chapter. Few commentators have stressed this important point, although it is pleasing to see this argument finally being developed in Marcus Green's paper, 'Gramsci Cannot Speak: Presentations and Interpretations of Gramsci's Concept of the Subaltern' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 14, 3, 2000: pp.1-24).

¹⁷ Gramsci talks about the distance of the Italian intellectuals from the mass in a number of places throughout the *Notebooks*, referring to their aloofness as 'cultural chauvinism' (see *PN 2: Notebook 3*, entry 46, pp.45-47; *PN 2: Notebook 3*, entry 63, p.62)

¹⁸ Gramsci also described this problem as resulting from a lack of balance between 'knowing' and 'understanding' and 'feeling' (see 'Passage from Knowing to Understanding and to Feeling and vice versa from Feeling to Understanding to Knowing', *SPN*, pp.418-419).

¹⁹ I will refer to Bukharin's work in greater detail in the next chapter. Nikolai Bukharin came to prominence as one of the leading figures of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. As one of the party's more prominent intellectuals, he produced what Gramsci frequently refers to as simply *The Popular Manual*. 'The Manual' is known variously as *Theory of Historical Materialism: A Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology* (first published in Moscow in 1921) or *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (New York: Russell & Russell. Original work published 1925). See the introduction to the section 'Problems of Marxism' in Hoare and Nowell Smith (1971: pp.378-380) for valuable notes on this treatise. Further background material exposing many of Bukharin's ideas is

of a naive and rudimentary understanding of Marx – a veritable blindness to the cognitive and moral premises inherent in its philosophy²⁰.

Since it is impossible to explore every facet of Gramsci's work, my primary emphasis in this chapter is simply to convey to the reader the overarching importance of the historicization and dramatization of thought and its dialectical scrutiny in the overall schema of Gramsci's thinking: to emphasize how his own research was an exemplar of Marx's unique historiographical method. Given this objective, I have adopted headings that are fairly generic themselves, opting to leave the exploration of those themes relating to hegemony and democracy specifically to the following chapter (Chapter 6). As I argue there, the coalescence of many aspects of Gramsci's developing theory of critical communism with respect to his concept of organicity, the role of the party and the composition of the future proletarian state is evident in his opposition to Bukharin and his defense of Machiavelli. In particular, it is within that chapter where I want to focus on Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and democracy and the revisions to these concepts that recent post-Marxist scholarship has advanced. My intention now is primarily to showcase the *Prison Notebooks* themselves: to depict them first and foremost as representing Gramsci's historical and dialectical understanding of the Italian situation in relation to the practical task of changing it.

2. Historicism as a 'New Taste' and a 'New Language'²¹

In order to expose the proletariat to the human lineage of the ideas and structures to which they now found themselves subjected, the educational thrust of Gramsci's work was rightly directed towards teaching them the essential value of the historicization of thought; thus teaching them to locate ideas historically and to chart their evolution against the backdrop of the times and the culture from whence they were issued. And to be sure, not only did this process set in train the problematization

also provided in Christine Buci-Glucksmann's Chapters 10 and 11 of *Gramsci and the State* (David Fernbach, Trans., London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980).

²⁰ Gramsci accused Bukharin of producing an ahistorical and 'scientific' rendition of Marxism, distinguished in particular by Bukharin's reduction of the philosophy of praxis to a 'sociology'. In Gramsci's mind, naming Marxism a sociology presupposed an *a priori* foundation in philosophy – and an old philosophy at that. Gramsci's critique of Bukharin was therefore based on his opposition to historical materialism being interpreted through a liberal lens – as a philosophy that was not completely autonomous and original (see especially *SPN*, p.462, pp.464-465).

²¹ This phrase comes from entry 29 of *Notebook 1*, titled 'Sarcasm as an expression of transition among historicists' (*PN 1*: pp.117-119). In this entry, Gramsci defends Marx's aspirations to give a new 'form' and 'meaning' to old aspirations, emphasizing especially how Marx's 'passion' is to add vital substance to the 'false façade'. 'Historicism', he writes, 'creates a new "taste" and a new language' (p.118).

of thought, inasmuch as it invited the interrogation of the previously familiar and the conventionally certain, but it also served to provoke the potential humanization of thought itself by viewing history as a ‘human drama’. To the extent that the questioning of everyday and mundane assumptions equated to a deliberate and ‘willed’ intervention of the mind and the objectification of thought, involving a movement away from a passive type of knowing towards an active type of understanding, it served to enable ‘active thought’ to enrich and even displace ‘given thought’ subsequently. In other words, *it forced to consciousness consideration of the normal*. ‘Common’ understandings were thus released from their privileged location within an un-inspected realm of the subconscious, their taken-for-granted logic exposed openly to the vicissitudes of reflection and revision as an outcome.

The prominence that Gramsci sought to ascribe to an investigation of a ‘theory of history and of historiography’, under the ‘Main Topic’ headings listed at the very start of his first notebook²², is therefore both a reasonable and understandable focus when set alongside this central objective. By examining a selection of comment and ideas gleaned from a range of books and articles written by a cross-section of influential figures, prominent professionals who exercised a significant cultural influence within Italy during this period, what Gramsci was no less beginning to generate was a complex profile of the potential fertility of Italy’s intellectual soil for a revolutionary renewal of Italian cultural life under a socialist banner. What appears at first sight to be a miscellaneous and unordered compilation of comment and muse soon betrays the precise and pragmatic nature of Gramsci’s unique classificatory schema. By providing an account of numerous and varied classical instances of a wide selection of intellectual and literary genre, the cognitive and moral ambiguities inherent within them are likewise laid bare. It is by means of this technique that he not only shows his readers how these examples arose in every corner of culture to exert a widespread and corrupting influence, but he prompts them also to identify and challenge their own peculiar instances of such forms.

The discussions centring on the figures of Achille Loria²³ and Father Bresciani²⁴

²² PN 1: *Notebook 1*, notes and jottings, p.99.

²³ Achille Loria (1857-1943) was a professor of economics at the University of Turin for nearly 30 years. Buttigieg’s note about Loria (PN 1: *Notebook 1*, note 1 for entry 25, p.390) highlights how Loria’s theories were intended as a contribution to social and political reform. Gramsci clearly saw them as a ‘strain of uncritical positivism’. He wrote:

Loria is not a teratological individual case; he is the most complete and perfect exemplar of a series of representatives of a certain stratum of intellectuals from a certain period; in general, of those positivist intellectuals who deal with the question of workers, and who

are perhaps the most noteworthy amongst a set of generic cases that Gramsci begins to explore. Declaring his interest from the start in ‘the cosmopolitan role’ played by the Italian intellectuals²⁵, we nonetheless find that Gramsci is not merely intent on describing their role, but soon engages in his own exercise in categorization whereby the activities of these secular and religious personalities are further classified as either conservative or reactionary. Put simply, their activities are seen as either contributing to a regressive (bourgeois) philosophy or a communally progressive one instead. Identified as leading exponents of conservatism and reaction, ‘Brescianism’ and ‘Lorianism’ are additionally depicted as representing twin poles in the ongoing contest between the Church and the State. With both being blamed equally by Gramsci for the pitiful degeneration of Italian culture, his analysis of their literary production and cultural influence becomes instrumental in confirming their role in this decay.

A professor of economics whose theories were assigned an importance far beyond their intrinsic merit, Loria came to be regarded by Gramsci as ‘the most complete and perfect exemplar of a series of representations of a certain stratum of intellectuals’, namely, ‘positivist intellectuals’²⁶. It is scarcely surprisingly, therefore, that ‘Lorianism’ subsequently became a pejorative term within the *Notebooks* directed towards ‘a certain type of literary and scientific production’ that was noted as much for its ‘poor organization of culture and, hence, to the absence of restraint and criticism’ as for its complete lack of any measure of sense or self-criticism²⁷. In a similar fashion, Brescianism, too, became a type of literary shorthand to describe non-secular

believe, more or less, that they are deepening, correcting or surpassing Marxism. (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 25, p.116)

²⁴ Note 6 (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, pp.374-75) describes Antonio Bresciani (1798-1862) as an ultra-conservative Jesuit priest and a prolific writer who often attacked liberalism for its unwelcome incursions into religious matters.

²⁵ He describes his intention to study the intellectuals in a letter to his sister-in-law, Tatiana, dated 17 November 1930 (*LFP 1*: p.360). We also see Gramsci explaining how he has always perceived Italian intellectuals as ‘cosmopolitan’ in their outlook, owing to the fact that most of the history of Italian culture was made up of ‘a mosaic of imported influences’ (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 150, p.230). Later, in entry 49 of the fourth notebook, Gramsci nominates the central reason for the fragmented state of Italy as resting with the intellectuals and in their inability to unify the nation (*PN 2*: pp.199-210).

²⁶ *PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 25, p.116. Gramsci had always viewed the question of the intellectuals as a ‘problem’ because this grouping both epitomized and dignified the existence of a dual culture. It was the self-serving and egoistic nature of this grouping that furthermore led Gramsci to doubt the likelihood that they could ever help Italy adopt a more democratic ethos.

²⁷ *Ibid.* The notes that appear at the end of the Buttigieg translations for Loria remind the reader that Gramsci had been critical of his work over an extended period. Gramsci’s comments in *Il Grido del Popolo* of 19 January 1918 are quoted:

When reading Loria’s writings, those who have retained a critical sense will ask themselves whether they are dealing with a sad lunatic or an intelligent man. Because in Loria one finds both. Flashes of light and idiotic darkness; conscientious work and incredibly extreme nonsense. His thought is totally inconsistent: his unhinged reasoning is devoid of self-criticism. (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 25, footnote 7, pp.393-94)

journalists, essayists and novelists who were ‘reactionaries’ and ‘conservatives’²⁸. Indeed, Gramsci’s later allocation of the entire *Notebook 28* to the topic of ‘Lorianism’ provides ample evidence of the importance that he placed on challenging these elitist and perverse forms of thought that contributed to filling the minds of the Italian people with a litany of bizarre and uncritical views²⁹.

Various themes relating to the nature and role of the intellectuals as a recognizable social category are continually interspersed throughout many other entries as Gramsci attempts to interpret numerous developments that had led to the formation of the Italian intellectual classes. Despite the litany of diverse headings – ranging from comment on ‘Emigration and Intellectual Movements’³⁰ to ‘Proudhon and the Italian Literati’³¹ – there is an implicit focus nonetheless on the *class affiliation* of either an individual or a grouping of these intellectuals. In this regard, entry 90 of *Notebook 3*³² is particularly important, because it is here that Gramsci begins to outline the need for a systematic method to study the emergence of the two classes. Determined to avoid a ‘one-sided history’ of the Italian situation, as he puts it, Gramsci urges that the history of the Italian intellectuals must be juxtaposed alongside the history of the subaltern classes. Only in this manner could one begin to gauge how the supremacy of the bourgeois class arose, and the degree to which the subaltern classes had actively or passively collaborated in this process.

In recognition of the dialectical connection that operated between these intellectuals and the social and political institutions within which they conducted the bulk of their activities, it is hardly surprising that many of the *Notebook* entries also contain a corresponding institutional analysis. Extensive investigations of how relationships and alliances had been formed historically between organizations (with the intention of strengthening their sphere of economic or political influence) are explored. In so doing, Gramsci provides intricate detail of the internal and shifting makeup of these organizations including extensive analysis of a range of strategies for

²⁸ PN 1: *Notebook 1*, introduction, pp.44-45. Robert Dombroski (*Antonio Gramsci*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989) also argues that Brescianism implies the opposite of ‘national-popular’ to the extent that ‘it is the expression of antidemocratic individualism and a caste spirit’ (p.76).

²⁹ Gramsci offers the reader numerous examples of the peculiarities of Loria’s thinking: his theory of the emancipation of workers from hunger because of the potential of aircraft to provide them with dead fowl as a by-product of bird strike; his theory of ‘altimetry’ by which he concluded that because mountain people were thought to be more moral than plains’ people, criminals should be incarcerated at altitude to ensure that their delinquency might be tempered accordingly (PN 1: *Notebook 1*, entry 25, pp.114-116).

³⁰ PN 1: *Notebook 1*, entry 58, pp.165-66.

³¹ PN 2: *Notebook 3*, entry 10, pp.16-17.

³² PN 2: pp.91-92.

effective political and military alliance.

The histories of such parties as the Italian Moderates³³, the French Action Party³⁴ and the French Jacobins are all exposed to intense scrutiny as Gramsci meticulously analyses the psychology of both the leaders and the mass within these groupings: their ‘temperament’ and the wisdom and will behind their political convictions. Supplementing such detail with a wealth of empirical data (population information such as emigration figures, economic statistics, etc.), he carefully outlines the national and international contexts against which various initiatives by diverse groups had flourished and taken root, or else declined from loss of traction. There is little doubt that it was by means of such rigorous and critical analyses of a miscellany of trends and tendencies relating to issues of organization and leadership that Gramsci was hoping that the conditions for a worker and peasant coalition might eventually be optimized on Italian soil³⁵.

Besides stressing the need to maintain vigilance towards significant ideological trends and themes within the local environment, a study of the international climate is furthermore recommended as an important accompaniment to this research. Prompted to examine various types of periodicals, for instance, readers are impelled to explore the specific indigenous flavour of a region, just as they are encouraged to engage in historical research based upon these texts. Gramsci identifies a wide range of themes in a series of subsequent notes generically titled, ‘Types of Periodicals’. As he advises there, a juxtaposition of local events with national ones is always vital in order to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the theoretical treatment of concrete issues of the day. Indeed, the success, or otherwise, of concrete practice is ultimately reliant upon the accuracy or otherwise of these same forms of assessment.

To this end, daily papers, periodicals and pamphlets are all portrayed as popular forms of literature that had become invaluable tools of propaganda for disseminating all manner of messages by all manner of social groups³⁶. By the

³³ The Moderate Party was formed in 1848 and stood initially for a confederation of the Italian States. Led by d’Azeglio and Cavour, it exerted strong and continuous influence until 1876, during which time it advocated federalism and, later, national unification.

³⁴ Gramsci took a particular interest in *L’Action Française* because it constituted a strong reactionary movement in France, just as the fascist movement did in Italy.

³⁵ In entry 46 (*PN 2: Notebook 3*, pp.44-47), Gramsci once more analyzes the makeup of the peasantry. He notes not only its heterogeneous composition but also how each faction displayed an undeveloped sense of both ‘class’ and ‘state’.

³⁶ In Gramsci’s journalistic writings, he frequently discussed how various newspapers had either reported or misreported events. How an event was reported was a type of cultural barometer that

numerous and varied examples that he offers, Gramsci demonstrates how each publication was committed to persuading its readership about the legitimacy of its stance, just as it was also committed to denouncing the credibility of rival opinion as well. The negative national-popular character of Italian literature is a concurrent theme that is also developed in relation to this broader examination of literary production. In this connection, Gramsci reiterates how the intellectuals' historical tendency to function as a caste had contributed significantly to the failure of the evolution of a nationally coherent and homogeneous nation³⁷. That 'nationalism' operated as the antithesis of national-popular sentiment is likewise a theme he persistently highlights³⁸.

Discussion under this title – 'Types of periodicals'³⁹ – is also replete with insightful comment and careful pragmatic advice regarding the type of reading, research and scholarship that might engender more critical reflection; reflection that might lead, more significantly, to the correction of a whole series of erroneous beliefs hindering the evolution of a collective consciousness. Important variables with the potential to neutralize a 'homogeneous way of thinking and acting' are reassessed under this heading as Gramsci also continues his discussion about the problems facing the South. Convinced, as he was, that the social and economic stagnation of the South needed to be posed in concrete, human terms, Gramsci's notebook entries clearly reflect this thesis. Recounting in ever-greater depth the most salient features of the regional landscape – the composition of the peasantry and the landowners, the influence of the Church, the makeup of the intellectuals of the South, and so forth – what his analysis tends to confirm is that the numerous pathologies which plagued the South were generally the product of planned and orchestrated, human intervention. The 'Southern Problem' was essentially a microcosm of the entire problem of the subaltern in general, as Gramsci's future commentaries suggest⁴⁰.

As was touched upon in Chapter 3, a combined contemporary and historical

allowed the socialists to assess their own revolutionary readiness, just as it also enabled them to anticipate the reaction of the bourgeois to their challenge.

³⁷ In a major entry titled 'The Intellectuals' in *Notebook 4* (PN 2: entry 49), Gramsci states quite categorically that it was the 'elitist' and 'cosmopolitan' function of the intellectuals in Italy that was 'both the cause and the effect of the fragmented state of the peninsula...' (p.204).

³⁸ Gramsci compares the Italian, French and Russian intellectuals in entry 49 (PN 2: *Notebook 4*, pp.199-210), concluding that the Russians were the only group able to maintain their ties to their homeland and to develop a spirit of the national-popular in their activities, additionally.

³⁹ This subheading does not only appear as a single heading but reoccurs in a number of entries in *Notebook 1*: entry 35; entry 38; entry 43; entry 55; entry 65.

⁴⁰ See especially *SPN*, pp.70-74. As I argue in Chapter 6, to understand Gramsci's Marxism means to understand the implications of the anti- or counter-subaltern perspective for his overall theory of revolution. A counter-subaltern stance was the very essence of Gramsci's counter-hegemonic worldview, as I argue there.

study of the South threw up the broadest possible range of issues that epitomized the uniqueness of the Italian situation in relation to the revolutionary aspirations of socialism, more generally. The implicit lessons contained within these notes are many: how the South was treated as a semi-colonial market by the North; how this ‘treatment’ was enshrined in legislation and enforced informally in a vendetta of hatred for southerners⁴¹; how various intellectuals throughout the period had assisted in supporting these inequalities through their so-called ‘scientific’ theories⁴²; and how, above all else, these seemingly isolated ‘problems’ needed to be analyzed organically if there was ever to be any real chance for the unification and socialization of the country. In short, the numerous and varied problems relating to the future success of the Italian left are addressed under a range of subheadings. Grasping the complex makeup of the Italian South meant having to account for the source of the power differential that had come to constitute its historical dowry. This understanding was needed to win the rural proletariat over to the inherent wisdom of supporting a socialist/communist campaign; to dispel the numerous and divisive ‘myths’ that might have impeded the formation of permanent links of alliance between the rural proletariat and its urban counterpart.

The American ‘situation’, likewise, could not be ignored. Gramsci’s preliminary writings on this topic appear under the entry ‘Americanism’⁴³, and are devoted to comparing and contrasting the social composition of Italy and America respectively. Of special interest to Gramsci was the likely impact of a ‘Fordist fanfare’ and ‘American mentality’ upon traditional Italian business and cultural practices more generally. Observing that the ‘forced development of a new human type’ was a typical feature of a new set of industrial requirements (the Tayloristic form of industrial efficiency, especially), a corresponding absence of resistance accompanying this phenomenon is similarly registered. The reasons for this passivity are explained in relation to the absence in America of a feudal past, with the comment that new, large-scale industrial initiatives were bound to be attractive to the majority of workers when set against the prospect of partial or wholesale unemployment. It was doubtless from such attempts to gauge the psychological predisposition of nations towards industry and business that

⁴¹ In entry 50 of *Notebook 1*, for instance, Gramsci notes the existence of various documents condoning practices within certain Italian industries that discriminated against the employment of Central and Southern workers (*PN 1*: pp.161-62).

⁴² In entry 44 in the first notebook, for instance, Gramsci identifies Alfredo Niceforo, Enrico Ferri and Alfredo Oriano as three positivistic sociologists whose ‘research’ contributed adversely to resolving the problem of Southern disadvantage. For details on Alfredo Niceforo, see *PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 44, note 22, p.429.

⁴³ *PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 61, pp.167-170.

Gramsci was encouraged to think that the ‘structure’ dominates the ‘superstructures’ more directly in the American context: that in the latter context, the superstructures had become ‘rationalized’⁴⁴. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of this situation, moreover, was that none of the usual ‘political and ideological intermediaries’ appeared to be needed in such a modern industrial nation. Here, hegemony was ‘born in the factory’, he concluded⁴⁵.

This last remark is especially pertinent, because it reaffirms that Gramsci’s socio-historical research was directed towards assessing the extent to which the superstructures within a given society operated to sustain the structures of capitalism within it. The absence of superstructural supports within American society, for example, contrasted sharply with the ‘viscous sedimentations of past historical phases’ that had accumulated in Italy, and had resulted in an increasing number of passive and unproductive groups whom Gramsci referred to uncharitably as ‘parasitic [capitalists]’. That these groups produced nothing themselves, effectively living off the efforts of the productive sector instead, made them no better than ‘pensioners of economic history’⁴⁶, in Gramsci’s view. What was the natural ‘entitlement’ of one group was clearly perceived as the inherent ‘greed’ of another. A regular pattern of the dignification of one group and the vilification of the other can be seen to emerge, consolidating common prejudices and solidifying ongoing antagonisms and historical fractures⁴⁷.

Other groupings doubtless drew Gramsci’s interest for similar reasons: they functioned as superstructural agents, as it were, fulfilling a type of mediation role in the complicated struggle between the two classes⁴⁸. In this connection, we see detailed observations regarding the ‘spontaneous’ attraction of many of these groupings, evidence that is no less supportive of Gramsci’s intense interest in the means by which a particular group that aspired to assume a leadership function could enrich its chances through securing the collaboration of other dispersed groupings. It was this type of knowledge that Gramsci was intent on gathering to provide practical guidance about the course of action that the communists needed to take in order to disrupt the old equilibrium and to instigate a new. To this effect, his cogent observations regarding

⁴⁴ Gramsci reworked this entry later with very few modifications to the text (see *SPN*, pp.285-86).

⁴⁵ *PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 61, p.169.

⁴⁶ This phrase appears in the Hoare and Nowell Smith translation (*SPN*, p.281). Gramsci identifies civil service personnel and intellectuals of the clerical and secular type, in particular, as examples of these ‘pensioners’.

⁴⁷ Gramsci identified how certain racial prejudices coexisted alongside the existing class divisions. The case of Southern prejudice was the most obvious, as was the example of the Jews.

literary styles and their ‘effects’ should certainly *not* be read as simply ‘analysis’. Rather, they should be taken as the practical manifestation of his positive commitment to an open-ended and critical praxis.

From the above, what is immediately clear from even a cursory inspection of these early notebook entries is that culture is best viewed as an historical artifact with the stresses and fractures of the present originating from an admixture of settlements negotiated in the past. Additionally interesting – as noted above, but discussed in greater detail next – is how Gramsci began to articulate what he saw to be Marx’s original contribution to philosophy through a latent analogy of history as drama. As I contend in the next section, Gramsci’s appeal to history as a ‘dramatic unfolding’ becomes a means for him to distinguish between what he termed ‘vulgar’ versions of Marxism and those more authentic dialectical-historical variants. Insofar as history is seen as actors in interaction with other actors within a specific cultural and historical milieu, the analogy therefore forces us to humanize and contextualize the drama. As I argue below, history can no longer be depicted in either a unidimensional or schematic form, by virtue of this reasoning.

3. History as ‘Drama’: The Role of Self-Consciousness in the Cultivation of Cognitive and Moral Defiance

As explained previously, Gramsci’s overarching disagreements with his colleagues, first within the Socialist Party faction and later with Bordiga, lay chiefly with their inability to understand the dialectical premises of historical materialism and its overarching ‘practical implications’. That is, they failed to appreciate the cognitive and moral shifts in everyday social relations that historical materialism had the potential to ordain⁴⁸. It is hardly surprising therefore, given this problem, that the first section of *Notebook 4* is devoted to the systematic elaboration of the unique and original

⁴⁸ The Rotary Club, along with the Freemasons, the YMCA movement and the Jesuits were all important groupings in this regard.

⁴⁹ Gramsci professes his dismay about many theorists’ lack of understanding of Marx’s theory of historical materialism. In entry 6 of *Notebook 4* (PN 2, pp.147-149), for example, Gramsci noted Roberto Ardigo’s critique of ‘The Materialist Conception of History’. He wrote that Ardigo ‘badly misunderstood’ historical materialism (p.149). In entry 60 (PN 2: *Notebook 4*, p.233), Gramsci also chided Barbagallo for declaring himself an ‘historical materialist’, just as he rejected as naive Henri De Man’s attempts to ‘supercede’ Marx’s concept of the dialectic with a more psychological tendency – courtesy of Freud (PN 2: *Notebook 4*, entry 30, pp.167-68).

complexion of historical materialism, as Marx himself had characterized it⁵⁰. It is here where we find Gramsci reaffirming his conviction that the supreme test of the originality and potency of historical materialism lay exclusively in its *result*: the successful conquest of the concrete, historical world. Ideas elaborated in the abstract that bore only a 'theoretical relationship' to the concrete and the real were weak and illusory. As he saw it, most of the ideas generated by the majority of his confreres fell into that category, their work either constituting a definitive, closed programme or else a 'utopia' of pseudo-revolutionary verbalism as a result⁵¹.

To Gramsci, it was precisely this problem of intellectual detachment that was the crux of the problem of the history of the Italian intellectuals and their relationship with the people. There were too many 'pretenders' – those who professed allegiance to an 'historical materialist' standpoint yet who actually misinterpreted this commitment through their own vague and confused pedagogical endeavours. The work of Benedetto Croce and Nikolai Bukharin (whose contributions will be examined in Chapter 6) most noticeably exemplified this corruption. Whilst each professed adopting an historical materialist orientation, the significant shortcomings associated with each of their claims could be seen as jeopardizing the entire spirit of Marxism as a completely integral philosophy. Not only was Gramsci therefore intent upon exposing the illegitimacy of the *content* of their claims but, even more importantly, he was also intent on critiquing their social and professional standing as 'intellectuals'⁵².

This latter distinction is a vital one insofar as the category of 'intellectual' mimicked the duality that was forced upon 'activity' by the artificial distinction between muscular-nervous and intellectual-cognitive effort⁵³. As Gramsci had earlier intimated,

⁵⁰ Buci-Glucksmann (*op. cit.*, 1980) has also acknowledged that *Notebook 4* is the first of those in which Gramsci exhibits a 'certain qualitative leap'. It is the first in which he begins to elaborate systematically his 'philosophy of Marxism', she argues (pp.21-22).

⁵¹ Gramsci accused Bordiga, in particular, of the former failing and the syndicalists of the latter.

⁵² In a discussion about the rise of German philosophy and its crowning point in the philosophy of praxis, Gramsci wrote:

[A] new way of conceiving the world and man is born and that this conception is no longer reserved to the great intellectuals, to professional philosophers, but rather tends to become popular, mass phenomenon, with a concretely world-wide character, capable of modifying (even if the result includes hybrid combinations) popular thought and mummified popular culture. (*SPN*, p.417)

⁵³ There are many references in the *Notebooks* to this objection. Arguably the best relates to a perceived need to elaborate a new stratum of intellectuals. To this end, Gramsci wrote:

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world. (*SPN*, p.9)

the proletariat was itself a product of this same distinction. Consequently, a genuine rendering of the historical materialist method posed the very existence of the categories ‘intellectual’ and ‘proletariat’ *a problem*. Only when the subordination of the latter grouping was recognized as arbitrary and unjust would the prospect of a new social equilibrium materialize accordingly. Anti-subaltern thought and practice constituted the prototypical expression of this negation, as Gramsci had always argued.

The embrace of an altogether new form of humanism, which Gramsci came to identify as ‘neohumanism’⁵⁴ within his prison writings, represented an advancement beyond the corporate limits of the old society towards the superstructural integrity of the new⁵⁵. Indeed, the whole flavour of Gramsci’s writings in the *Notebooks* is one that affirms the conviction that the philosophy of praxis is an ‘integral’ philosophy: that all existing philosophies were ‘one-sided’ insofar as each negated the fundamental problem of the class divisions within society – albeit all the while professing their own unique capacity to ‘solve the universal problems of humankind’. In contrast, the philosophy of praxis attempted to expose the animation (the ‘drama’) that was generated by the conflicts in the very ‘ensemble of systems’ themselves⁵⁶. In this regard, the superiority of Marxism, courtesy of the foundations laid by Hegel⁵⁷, could be seen to derive from its unique ability to detect the contradictions of the social while presenting itself simultaneously as an element of these same ruptures. It alone was the only philosophy that was thus truly ‘self-conscious’.

To Gramsci, neither the philosophy of Croce nor the ‘sociology’ of Bukharin⁵⁸ was sufficiently ‘self-conscious’ enough. Bukharin’s work – which was intended to be

⁵⁴ In *Notebook 5*, entry 127 (PN 2: pp.377-382), Gramsci credits Machiavelli with articulating ‘a conception of the world that could be called “philosophy of praxis” or “neohumanism”’ (p.378). Gramsci goes on to explain that this conception ‘does not recognize transcendental or immanent elements (in the metaphysical sense) but is based entirely on the concrete action of man who, out of historical necessity, works and transforms reality’ (*ibid.*). It might also be added that neohumanism captures the inadequacy of the humanist position to truly dignify humanity by its underestimation of the impingements upon human freedom that are imposed by this structural/superstructural liaison.

⁵⁵ See PN 2: *Notebook 5*, entry 123, pp.362-374.

⁵⁶ Gramsci wrote:

All hitherto existing philosophies (philosophical systems) have been manifestations of the intimate contradictions by which society is lacerated. But each philosophical system taken by itself has not been the conscious expression of these contradictions since this expression could be provided only by the *ensemble* of systems in conflict with each other. (SPN, p.404)

⁵⁷ Gramsci credited Hegel with developing ‘in a single system and in a single philosopher’ this consciousness of contradictions (SPN, p.404). It was Marx who then reformed and developed Hegelianism (SPN, p.404; SPN, p.465), a philosophy which Gramsci had earlier cautioned contained none of the ingredients essential to historical materialism ‘except in embryonic form’ (PN 2: *Notebook 4*, entry 11, pp.152-53).

no less than a 'definitive' treatise on the precepts of communism – confirmed his prejudice. In it, the dialectic unity implied by Marx's theory of historical materialism had been pared back so severely that all that remained was a raw and crude materialism⁵⁹. More specifically, Bukharin's misinterpretation of several of Marx's key concepts led him to assign an unwarranted emphasis on the element of causality⁶⁰, so much so that relationships of similitude were unfortunately translated into a series of rigid laws⁶¹. The opposite errors applied to Croce's interpretation. While Gramsci indeed acknowledged that the latter's interpretation of historical materialism had provided a 'valuable corrective' to economist and materialist tendencies (because it gave 'new weight' to the front of cultural struggle⁶²), he nevertheless saw that it tipped the balance too far the other way. Whereas Bukharin's work was therefore overly materialist, Croce's work was instead overly metaphysical⁶³.

Neither was able to theorize the role of existing philosophy in masking the source of the problems it professed to study and resolve, a dilemma which meant that neither theorist was really capable of comprehending the essential elements of Marxism itself. The negation of the very positions from which both of them were arguing was what was indeed so distinctive and innovative in Marx's philosophy⁶⁴. It was precisely Marx's ability to mediate between idealism and materialism – its 'humanistic-historical' as opposed to 'speculative-abstract' or 'mechanical-formal' character – that defined the essence and dynamism of his theory. It was a mediation

⁵⁸ Gramsci called sociology 'the philosophy of non-philosophers'. He wrote: '[E]very sociology presupposes a philosophy, a conception of the world of which it is itself a subordinate part' (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 13, pp.154-55).

⁵⁹ See Gramsci's criticisms of Bukharin's misunderstanding of the dialectic in the section titled 'The Dialectic' in the Hoare and Nowell Smith volume (*SPN*, pp.434-36). Elsewhere, Gramsci reveals the depth of his distain for Bukharin's work when he writes that 'the mode of thinking expounded in the *Manual* is no different from that of Loria' (*SPN*, p.460).

⁶⁰ In two entries in *Notebook 4* – entries 25 and 26 – Gramsci accuses Bukharin of employing the element of causality taken from the natural sciences in order to explain history. For Gramsci, this constituted nothing short of a return to 'the old ideological historiography' (*PN 2*: pp. 164-66). The Hoare and Nowell Smith edition contains further reference to Gramsci's contempt for Bukharin's search for causality and regularity:

It is not a question of 'discovering' a metaphysical law of 'determinism', or even of establishing a 'general' law of causality. It is a question of bringing out how in historical evolution relatively permanent forces are constituted which operate with a certain regularity and automatism. (*SPN*, p.412)

⁶¹ See *PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 23, p.163.

⁶² See note 5 (*SPN*: p.56) where Gramsci acknowledges that Croce's thought has 'instrumental value'.

⁶³ Interestingly, Gramsci criticizes Bukharin's work for being 'metaphysical' (*SPN*, p.449). Inasmuch as Bukharin relied on scientific laws rather than historical inquiry to describe the present, this criticism signalled a broader movement away from Marx's concrete theory of history.

⁶⁴ As Gramsci cautioned in *Notebook 4* (*PN 2*: entry 14, pp.155-56):

The old world, while rendering homage to historical materialism, seeks to reduce it to a body of subordinate, secondary criteria that can be incorporated into its idealist or materialist

that took human sensuous activity as its starting point, and acquired a full and thorough knowledge of the deficiencies (the contradictions) of existing worldviews based on this concrete understanding of human interaction. In other words, what an authentically dialectic theory offered was a portrayal of the human condition at the level of the living and the real. It offered a critique of the theoretical – the formal and the abstract – based on the refutation that examples from the living and the real provided⁶⁵.

Arguably, one of the best examples of how Gramsci's authentically Marxist 'dramatic' and 'critical' reading of the social differed from that of his contemporaries occurs in Gramsci's reading of Canto 10 of Dante's *Inferno*⁶⁶. In the same way in which Gramsci had consistently argued that Machiavelli's work revealed something real that had remained previously hidden⁶⁷, he felt equally that Dante's masterpiece could be interpreted in an entirely different way from the 'expert' analyses that had been offered by the likes of commentators such as Croce and Vincenzo Morello (another literary critic⁶⁸). In Gramsci's mind, Canto 10 was a piece of writing that contained all the hallmarks of an integral (living-historical) drama. In addition, he believed that the historical-humanist element that it contained could only be fully appreciated when a purely formal and structural analysis of the piece had been abandoned in favour of an integral, poetic-dramatic reading instead. Contra Croce's rendition – and even that of his friend, Professor Cosmo, whose reading of the Canto Gramsci later claimed suffered from the 'professional disease of Dante specialists'⁶⁹ – he argued that there was a poetic unity between the structure of the Canto and its dramatic form. Only an integral (dialectical) rendering of the drama could reveal this, however.

While Gramsci's reading of Dante therefore illustrated his literary differences with Croce, it exemplified his cognitive and moral distance from him as well. Given

general theory. Whoever reduces historical materialism to a similar role within this theoretical terrain is implicitly capitulating before the enemy. (p.156)

⁶⁵ Gramsci was intent upon exposing how a technically correct interpretation of an aspect of life might nonetheless betray the reasoner to be operating from an initially misguided set of premises. See especially his discussion, 'The technique of thinking' (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 18, pp.159-160).

⁶⁶ Gramsci's notes on 'Canto 10 of the Inferno' comprise eleven entries under this separate subheading in *Notebook 4*. His correction of previous interpretations offered by both Croce and Vincenzo Morello, for instance, illustrates the points of difference between the views of these commentators and Gramsci's uniquely dialectical worldview.

⁶⁷ On numerous occasions, Gramsci defended Machiavelli as the theorist who wanted to educate those who were 'not in the know' (see *PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 150, pp.150-51). See my discussion about Machiavelli in the next chapter.

⁶⁸ Robert Dombroski (*op. cit.*, 1989: pp.62-73) recounts how Gramsci also reacted negatively to Vincenzo Morello's interpretation (p.65). Both Croce and Morello had contributed to a Dante who had effectively been 'transhumanized', as Gramsci had noted previously in 'The Light Which Went Out', 20 November 1915, *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.26-28).

⁶⁹ See Note 4, pp.610-11 (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 86).

these differences, it is hardly surprising that Gramsci's subsequent work began to take on a complexion that was very much 'anti-Croce'. What also needs be noted was that Gramsci's affinity with the ideas of Francesco De Sanctis, a highly acclaimed literary figure whom Gramsci had named previously as one of the greatest social critics of all times⁷⁰, was a powerful parallel influence in his writing during this time. Like the poet Renato Serra, whom Gramsci had praised for offering Italians an important literary and social counter-position to that of the positivists (see Chapter 2), De Sanctis provided a similar counterfoil to the 'expertise' of Croce⁷¹. Gramsci credits De Sanctis especially with 'the type of literary criticism suitable to historical materialism'⁷², describing this as 'the criticism of the "structure" of works' and the championing of 'the logical and living-historical coherence of the mass of represented sentiments'⁷³. As intimated by these comments, the national-popular character of De Sanctis's work stood in stark contrast to the non national-popular nature of much of the contemporary literature of the times. So although Gramsci's reading of Dante was unquestionably pitted against Croce's as a piece of 'literary criticism', it was indicative no less of Gramsci's broader socio-cultural challenge.

Whilst De Sanctis could thus be said to have 'intuited' Marx's dialectical perspective and provided a valuable corrective to the non national-popular flavour of contemporary literary production, Gramsci sought to articulate precisely how to enact a broader national-popular consensus at the level of 'state'. Rather unsurprisingly, as his *Notebook* entries attest, the persona of these new intellectuals is portrayed in unapologetic terms as completely antithetical to the intellectualism personified by either Croce or Bukharin. Moreover, in keeping with his rigid anti-sectarian and anti-caste stance, Gramsci began to characterize his 'anti-Croce' and 'anti-Bukharin' (intellectual) as a figure endowed with what he regarded as an original 'Jacobin spirit'. Personifying and implementing an organic relationship to the mass – as opposed to situating themselves apart from the mass, and thereby distinguishing themselves in a sectarian fashion – these new intellectuals were motivated and energized by the same passion and commitment towards cultural unification as the group whom Gramsci had chosen to critique earlier – the French Jacobins⁷⁴. As Gramsci's ensuing discussion

⁷⁰ 'The Light Which Went Out', 20 November 1915, *Il Grido del Popolo* (HPC, pp.26-28).

⁷¹ So too, did the work of Luigi Russo. Russo brought out a Florence edition of Machiavelli's *The Prince* in 1931, so Hoare and Nowell Smith state in a footnote to Gramsci's discussion of Machiavelli (SPN, footnote 58, p.413).

⁷² Entry 5, p.145.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Although Gramsci had regarded Jacobinism previously as an inorganic, hierarchical and bureaucratic form of leadership (see his 'Notes on the Russian Revolution', 29 April 1917), he also

subsequently reveals, it was an aberration of the actual practice of democracy that the Jacobin spirit duly challenged.

Somewhat surprisingly, out of all the figures who might have been chosen to embody all that was 'positive' and 'progressive' about Jacobinism, it was Machiavelli whom Gramsci selected⁷⁵. Fondly describing him as the first real 'man of action' ahead of Lenin, Gramsci found in Machiavelli the necessary and vital ingredients for the fashioning of a nationally-popular and conscious form of leadership. To Gramsci, Machiavelli's writings reiterated exactly what he himself already knew: that the successful art of politics lay neither in the application of learned theories nor in the construction of cold and clinical utopias⁷⁶. Instead, it lay in the ability of those who claimed they acted on behalf of the people to assess the subjective and objective moment within history in order to intervene in that moment to affect a cognitive and morally defiant reform. Accordingly, a successful party strategy would involve many aspects of vital work at the level of the superstructures, in particular. To the extent that Machiavelli recognized that the political function of a party therefore had to involve direct and indirect, cultural as well as economic and political activity, his work inevitably provided Gramsci with a valuable source of inspiration for theorizing a 'national' and 'popular' peasant/ proletarian alliance⁷⁷. Additionally, as we will see below, what he also articulated was a concept of party that symbolized the ideal relationship between the leaders and the mass. Culminating in the negation of the divide that had originally defined this polarity, it was one that would author the formation of a genuine 'collective will'⁷⁸.

appreciated it as a movement that expressed the historical goal of 'the union of city and countryside' and 'the concrete formation and operation of a collective will'. Historically, it played an important role in holding the advances achieved by the French Revolution, so that in this regard, the movement most certainly had a positive appeal. In his notebooks, Gramsci praises the Jacobins for their ability to read the concrete situation accurately. He wrote that to be Jacobin meant that their 'language, their ideology, their methods of action reflected perfectly the exigencies of the epoch' (*SPN*, p.78). The juridico-political language of the Jacobins, along with the concepts of classical German philosophy, revealed what Gramsci called 'the maximum of concreteness' which he saw as 'the source of modern historicism' (*ibid.*).

⁷⁵ In Hoare and Nowell Smith's introduction to Gramsci's writings on Machiavelli (*SPN*, Part 2, Chapter 1, pp.123-124), they argue that the concept of Jacobinism is a unifying thread within all of Gramsci's later writings. Machiavelli's objective of creating a new social order embraced a critique of the concrete that could be interpreted as initiating an intellectual and moral reform of the same order that Gramsci himself was advocating. This is how Gramsci interprets his contribution to politics (see the notes titled 'The Modern Prince', *SPN*, pp.123-205).

⁷⁶ Gramsci saw in Machiavelli the supersession of a form of political science that was represented either as a 'cold utopia' or a 'scholarly treatise' (*SPN*, pp.125-126). To Gramsci, his politics represented the personification of a political ideology to unite individuals into a collective will that would no longer require the intervention of an external state to regulate its affairs.

⁷⁷ There is little doubt that Machiavelli's advocacy of the need to bind the peasants to the proletariat in order to be able to instigate a new and modern state enamored Gramsci to his work.

⁷⁸ Gramsci defined Jacobinism as 'an exemplification of the concrete formation and operation of a collective will' (*SPN*, p.130). He offers this definition of collective will, and of political will in a

Politics became an ‘autonomous’ and ‘integral’ philosophy under Machiavelli’s stewardship. With historical analysis and concrete military techniques essential components of his political maneuvering, Machiavelli was able to achieve sufficient critical distance from the norms of religion and morality to criticize the old state, thereby allowing him to forge the construction of the new. This had always been a neglected aspect of the party’s activities, in Gramsci’s view, as we saw reflected in his comments in relation to Bordiga’s leadership in the last chapter. Naming Bordiga’s leadership style that of a ‘gypsy or nomadic kind’ – in contradistinction to leadership of an ‘organic or coherent kind’⁷⁹ – his party is accused of posing yet another inorganic and anti-Marxist solution to the problem of leadership. Why Machiavelli’s work was doubtless so instructive was because it provided the party with an exemplar of how it might go about the concrete task of arousing and inspiring a ‘dispersed and shattered people’ to unite based on a concrete assessment of a concrete reality. Machiavelli thus advanced a valuable view of politics at the level of the theoretical, one that moreover *located the party in a practical role relative to the genuine democratic renewal of Italian society*. I will return to examine Machiavelli’s influence further in Chapter 6.

We therefore see in the evolution of Gramsci’s prison writings a continuation of familiar pre-prison themes; his lamentation of the perpetuation of the division between leaders and led⁸⁰; Gramsci’s continuing disquiet at the apoliticism of the masses⁸¹ and of the solutions proposed by Communist Party leaders and theorists (notably Bordiga and Bukharin); an accelerated critique against vulgar idealist interpretations of historical materialism as well as excessively economic interpretations; and a lobbying for the development of a genuine party spirit as the basis for a strong state spirit⁸². These are all aspects of a familiar and common theme – Gramsci’s ongoing critique of the epistemological and ontological supports of capitalism and his articulation of an integral and antithetical philosophy of organic communism. For Gramsci, the latter undertaking was one and the same as the liberation of Marx’s philosophy of praxis from the reductionistic narratives assigned to it by both a bourgeois liberal and a socialist reformist faction. Considered in these terms, Gramsci’s notebook comments reflect his

modern sense: ‘[W]ill as operative awareness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama’ (*ibid.*).

⁷⁹ *SPN*, p.204. Following this comment about Bordiga, Gramsci wrote:

His interest in the trade unions was extremely superficial, and polemical in origin — not systematic, not organic and coherent, not directed towards social homogeneity but paternalistic and formalistic.

⁸⁰ Gramsci holds this to be the most ‘elementary truth’ that is often overlooked (*SPN*, p.144). Elsewhere he wrote: ‘Only by this contact does a philosophy become “historical”, purify itself of intellectualistic elements of an individual character and become “life”’ (*SPN*, p.330).

⁸¹ *SPN*, p.147; *SPN*, p.203.

struggle to preserve no less than the *dramatic, dialectical essence of Marx's own work*.

As Gramsci had always maintained, a perspective that was respectful of Marx's philosophy of praxis had to be one which presupposed the rejection of the 'cohesive' ideology of private property ownership and the divisions inherent in the bourgeois productive model. As a consequence of this rejection, it had to be grounded in the *concrete and real productive needs of humanity* as determined by a combined empirical and qualitative assessment of both poverty and need. In this respect, Marxism appealed to Gramsci because it inaugurated a new categorical imperative⁸³. It was one which respected both the qualitative as well as the quantitative dimension of human need, demanding their reconciliation with respect to the overall determination of 'well being'. Stated in different terms, Marxism insisted that concepts such as 'justice' and 'fairness' be benchmarked according to whether the needs of humanity were *actually being fulfilled*; whether the productive processes within society (economic and cultural) served to advance the common good or acted regressively to impede it.

To this effect, the 'modern Prince' – the euphemism that Gramsci gave to his new conception of the party – became the 'organizer and the active, operative expression'⁸⁴ of this new 'mean'. As Gramsci remarked:

The modern Prince, as it develops, revolutionizes the whole system of intellectual and moral relations, in that its development means precisely that any given act is seen as useful or harmful, as virtuous or wicked, only in so far as it has as its point of reference the modern Prince itself, and helps to strengthen or oppose it. In men's consciences, the Prince takes the place of the divinity or the categorical imperative, and becomes the basis for a modern laicism and for a complete laicization of all aspects of life and of all customary relations⁸⁵.

Inasmuch as Gramsci saw the Prince as an entity that was not external to the people but one that represented the living embodiment of a collective, popular will, what this alternative conception of party allowed him to do was to re-articulate concepts

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Gramsci viewed Marxism as the 'crowning point' of all the great cultural movements of intellectual and moral reformation: 'Renaissance and Reformation, German philosophy and the French Revolution, Calvinism and English classical economics [and] secular liberalism' (SPN, p.395). Further, he named historicism as the movement that '[most] lay at the root of the whole modern conception of life' (*ibid.*).

⁸⁴ SPN, p.133.

⁸⁵ This quotation appears in the section in Hoare and Nowell Smith's work, 'Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics' (SPN, p.133). The first version of this note was written between 1931-32 and the last between 1933-34.

such as justice and morality in terms that were neither abstract nor idealistic⁸⁶. It enabled such principles to be assessed in a concrete manner, an exercise that similarly permitted the recalibration of all such ideals in relation to the concrete lives of concrete human beings⁸⁷. In simple terms, their ‘truthfulness’ was now to be judged in relation to the universal practices of humankind. Condemning the ‘nominal’ and ‘mythical’, the modern Prince was thus the propagator and the defender of ‘a sounder and truer rationalism’. This was precisely the rationalism of the common good; the apex of authentic, communal commitment.

4. The Party as the ‘Active and Operative Expression’ of Marxism

The modern Prince was thus the concrete manifestation of a myriad of concepts that characterized a genuinely integral Marxist (anti-reformist) posture. Liberated from the vestiges of Bordigan and Bukharinian ‘error’, Gramsci’s idea of the party exemplified his tenacious solution to the problems that he had identified prior to his unexpected arrest and imprisonment. How the party might function in a practical sense in relation to the masses was an issue that had been of particular concern, as we saw highlighted previously in Chapter 4. No less related was also the problem of party structure – notably the dilemma of how to bridge the divide between the most conscious elements within the party and those who were the most indifferent and uncommitted. This was the practical problem of how to instigate new communal relationships – the problem of educating ‘spontaneity’, as Gramsci once worded it⁸⁸, so that it might become both conscious and critical.

Undoubtedly, the most significant lesson to be learned from the Factory Council period was that there existed a lack of conscious leadership within the party. For Gramsci, Bordiga’s ‘heroic’ leadership style had served to confirm this: he had acted in a manner that was both paternalistic and formalistic towards the people⁸⁹. His was the

⁸⁶ Gramsci’s meaning here has been subject to a variety of perverse interpretations, which is entirely understandable if the party is defined incorrectly – that is, in a traditional sense – as an entity which is external to the mass. James Martin’s comments illustrate this confusion (see *Gramsci’s Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998: especially pp.103-106).

⁸⁷ As readers will appreciate, this was a move that was explicitly in opposition to Croce’s separation of politics from both philosophy and ethics.

⁸⁸ *SPN*, p.198.

⁸⁹ As far back as 3 July 1920 (‘Two Revolutions’, *SPW* 1, pp.305-309; *PPW*, p.168), Gramsci had condemned this type of leadership.

posture of an individual ‘superman’⁹⁰, one that Gramsci belittled throughout the pages of the *Notebooks* as pseudo-aristocratic and inimical to the patterns of organization and type of relations that were indicative of a concretized and unified humanity⁹¹. As Gramsci had consistently argued throughout his writings, even within his earliest commentaries, a ‘permanent’ and ‘closed’ leadership style could not but serve to fortify the divide between the intellectuals and the people. It did so to the extent that it invariably failed to promote a broad-based advancement of national-popular (proletarian) interests, reinforcing the position of the proletariat as ‘subaltern’ as an unavoidable outcome⁹². As will become evident in the succeeding chapter, the root of the problem lay precisely in the inability of these leaders to view themselves as actors in the existing ‘relations of force’. In simple terms, as my forthcoming discussion about Bukharin will reveal, they could not see their own worldview as contributing to the contravention of those very same Marxist principles that their practices allegedly espoused.

Gramsci’s endeavours to outline the nature of the ‘modern Prince’ therefore constituted yet a further attempt to define the non-negotiable organizational and relational dimension of the struggle that distinguished an authentic socialist posture. As he put it, the party was not only the ‘*organizer*’ of the new order: it was also its ‘*active, operative expression*’. This means that the ‘collective organism’ that Marxism favoured was not simply the *result* of the educational process: rather, the educational process was the philosophy of Marxism in its concrete guise. Ensuring the end of the theory and practice rift that Gramsci saw inherent within liberalism meant negating the

⁹⁰ The concept of ‘superman’ was undoubtedly popularized by Friedrich Nietzsche who adopted the term as part of his philosophical struggle against Christianity. The dominance of Darwinism during Nietzsche’s lifetime led him to argue that if man has ascended from the apes, it seemed logical to assume that he would ascend into an even more superior being – a superman. Nietzsche theorized the nature of this superior man, inevitably producing an image of the future society based on the rule of this superman. For a useful introduction to the ideas of Nietzsche, see Janko Lavrin’s *Nietzsche: A Bibliographical Introduction* (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

⁹¹ Typical of Gramsci’s comments appears the following (*SPN*, pp.204-205):

In reality, one has to struggle against the above-mentioned degenerations, the false heroisms and pseudo-aristocracies, and stimulate the formation of homogeneous, compact social blocs, which will give birth to their own intellectuals, their own commandos, their own vanguard – who in turn will react upon those blocs in order to develop them, and not merely so as to perpetuate their gypsy domination.

⁹² I develop this idea in the following chapter. We might well interpret the phrase ‘national-popular collective will’ as a pseudonym for socialism. Insofar as Gramsci described the creation of this will as the supercession of an ‘economic-corporate’ form of rule (*SPN*, p.131) – rule by a body corporate comprised of a number of different groups committed to their own economic gratification – the overcoming of this type of sectarian rule implied that the new form of rule would no longer be motivated by economic protectionism. Instead, it would herald an ethical (universal) form of rule.

intellectual/ simple divide *in practice*⁹³. The party was not simply a *vehicle* for the instigation of a Marxist philosophy. As Gramsci remarks, it was its *operative expression*. That is, it was the concrete negation of the cognitive and moral contradictions that he identified as pathological features of all existing political parties.

The party, as Gramsci conceived it to be, was thus ‘philosophy in action’. Recognizing that the internal differences inherent in the traditional concept of a party were indicative of the structural and cultural inequalities that precluded ‘active and conscious co-participation’⁹⁴, what must be noted here is that the party, by being expressive of Marx’s principles ‘in action’, represented the negation of the fundamental contradiction between the leaders and the led. Repeating arguments that he had previously articulated against the Bordigan view of party, as indicated briefly above, Gramsci portrayed the modern Prince as an organization no longer considered *external to the mass*. Instead, as ‘philosophy in action’, it was conceptualized as a pluricellular or monolithic entity – a collective organism – that embodied the new state in both *form* and *function*. He declared:

A collective organism is made up of single individuals, who form the organism in as much as they have given themselves, and actively accept, a particular hierarchy and leadership. If each of the individual members sees the collective organism as an entity external to himself, it is evident that this organism no longer in fact exists, it becomes a phantasm of the mind, a fetish...The tendency is to see the organism as a dualism; it is towards an external, critical attitude of the individual towards the organism...a fetishistic relationship. The individual expects the organism to act, even if he does not do anything himself, and does not reflect that precisely because his attitude is widespread, the organism is necessarily inoperative⁹⁵.

⁹³ As Gramsci wrote, what must never be forgotten was that a primary reason why Marxism had to remain in contact with the ‘simple’ was because it was through such contact that it found the source of the very problems it had set out to study (SPN, p.330).

⁹⁴ (SPN, p.429). The full passage reads:

With the extension of mass parties and their organic coalescence with the intimate (economic-productive) life of the masses themselves, the process whereby popular feeling is standardized ceases to be mechanical and casual (that is, produced by the conditioning of environmental factors and the like) and becomes conscious and critical. Knowledge and a judgement of the importance of this feeling on the part of the leaders is no longer the product of hunches backed up by the identification of statistical laws, which leaders then translate into ideas and words-as-force. (This is the rational and intellectual way and is all too often fallacious.) Rather it is acquired by the collective organism through ‘active and conscious co-participation’, through ‘compassionality’, through experience of immediate particulars, through a system which is called a ‘living philology’. In this way a close links formed between great mass, party and leading group; and the whole complex, thus articulated, can move together as ‘collective-man’.

This passage appeared in a section devoted to ‘Problems of Marxism’ (SPN, p.429) under the ‘General Questions’ heading. These remarks referred specifically to Bukharin’s ‘leadership’.

⁹⁵ SPN, p.187, footnote 83. Hoare and Nowell Smith draw the reader’s attention to this passage which originally appeared in the Einaudi edition of the *Quaderni. Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo Stato moderno* (1949).

Elsewhere, Gramsci reiterated this description by likening this emerging collectivity to an orchestral-like entity which functioned to co-ordinate different specializations into a central, moral-political direction⁹⁶. Whilst each of the individual elements within an orchestra had the capability to create its own distinctive sound, without an awareness of the need to harmonize with the other elements – an awareness of one's location in relation to the whole, and of an understanding of the function and importance of the whole relative to one's own potential – a cacophony of discordant sounds was unavoidable, with each instrument intent only on pursuing its own private agenda. Consistent with Gramsci's earliest reflections then, these later notes bear ample testimony to his ongoing and unfailing conviction that a renovated notion of self (a consciousness of self in relation to others) was critical to the birth of a new, harmonious whole.

Not unexpectedly therefore, the dominant theme which resonates throughout the length and breadth of Gramsci's combined entries is that of his tireless commitment to educational-formative work (cultural activity) involving the enhancement of the critical capabilities of each and every individual⁹⁷. To achieve this outcome, the cultivation of an anti-subaltern outlook is moreover prioritized as the only possible 'curriculum' (for both leaders and led alike) capable of reinvigorating communal human initiative. Evident also are a myriad of none-too-frequent reminders that Gramsci's grievance with his communist confreres centred precisely upon this very point: that if the party was truly 'communist', then its central manifesto had to be *the practice of a politics of cognitive and moral respect*. The adoption of any alternative conception of the party – one especially that off-handedly dismissed the centrality of the formative work needed to resist the dehumanizing effects of capital upon character (both individual and communal) – was a conception of party that was quite simply antithetical to Marxism itself. The reassertion of human agency, via a consciousness of one's self-capability, had to constitute *the* central feature of party practice. A struggle moreover for the

⁹⁶ In entry 75 (*PN 2: Notebook 2*, pp.318-326), Gramsci discusses Robert Michels work on political parties. He notes especially how questions of democracy and oligarchy are relative to the class differences between the leadership and the members. He writes:

If there is no class difference, the question becomes a purely technical one – the orchestra does not believe that the conductor is an oligarchic boss – concerning the division of labour and education; that is, centralization must take into account that in popular parties education and political "apprenticeship" take place mostly through the active participation of members in the intellectual – discussions – and organizational life of the party. (p.323)

⁹⁷ Gramsci noted that the starting point of the philosophy of praxis must be the critical elaboration 'of what one really is' (*SPN*, p.324). In other words, he argues that one must have a consciousness of one's lack of consciousness and work towards overcoming this remote way of viewing the world.

materialization of Marx's own principles manifest in practice⁹⁸, it was likewise a struggle for a new citizen democracy, as I intend to argue in the following chapter.

In this connection, reciprocal education and reciprocal control was the guiding maxim of this new school. That is, to abolish the distinction between the rulers and the ruled, the fulfilment of this objective required the implementation of *an educational and political apprenticeship*: a form of organization where everyone learnt to participate actively in the intellectual discussions and organizational life of the collective. Effectively a mentoring model, it was precisely this form of organization that distinguished the Gramscian 'democratic centralist' party⁹⁹ from its 'bureaucratic centralist' cousin¹⁰⁰: those more adept tutored those who were least adept, minimizing the intellectual distance between both parties in this didactic engagement between the two. Accordingly, a new relationship was duly forged out of the concrete and material reversal of the previous politics of privilege and separatist. Auto-reflection on the part of both the leaders and the mass was consequently the key to releasing human agency from the hallucinogenic effects of the all-pervasive pathological tendencies inspired by liberalism. Reinforcing this point, Gramsci wrote:

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists... in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself...becomes the foundation of a new, integral conception of the world¹⁰¹.

In sum, a new curriculum and a new pedagogy was what distinguished the Gramscian Prince from all previous parties – a curriculum and a pedagogy, moreover,

⁹⁸ Karel Kosik has described this release as the essence of the concept of praxis. Praxis implies that socio-human reality is discovered as the opposite of givenness (*Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on Problems of Man and the World* (Karel Kovandra & James Schmidt, Trans.). Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company [Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Volume 52] 1976: p.136).

⁹⁹ Gramsci named this type of organization 'democratic centralist' in makeup. To the extent that he saw the party as a type of homogeneous cultural centre – a collective will which embodied a citizen democracy – it should come as no surprise that he gave it this name. (See the discussion by Teodros Kiros, for example, who maintained that the concept of centralism appears at first antithetical to the democratic process that Gramsci was invoking. Kiros's book is titled *Towards the Construction of a Theory of Political Action: Antonio Gramsci*. New York: University Press of America, 1985: especially pp.238-242.)

¹⁰⁰ Gramsci wrote that when a party functions 'democratically' it is progressive, and when it functions 'bureaucratically' (bureaucratic centralism) it is regressive (*SPN*, p.155). The party in this second case is a simple, unthinking executor. It is then technically a policing organism and its name, 'political party', is simply a metaphor to describe some mythological character.

¹⁰¹ *SPN*, p.9. Elsewhere Gramsci wrote:

That all members of a political party should be regarded as intellectuals is an affirmation that can easily lend itself to mockery and caricature. But if one thinks about it nothing could be more exact...A party might have a greater or lesser proportion of members in the higher grades or in the lower, but this is not the point. What matters is the function, which is directive and organizational, i.e. educative, intellectual. (*SPN*, p.16)

underwritten by Marx's own 'programmatic'¹⁰² (practical) philosophy. To this end, Gramsci's personal journalistic and political writings offer us an especially vivid portrait of the type of work in which this 'historical laboratory'¹⁰³ needed to specialize: investigation, on the one hand, to find the real identity underneath the apparent differentiation and contradiction and on the other, to find the substantial diversity underneath the apparent identity¹⁰⁴. This involved reviewing the most widely circulated and most popular literature, and combining this with study and criticism of previous ideological currents. It is work that Gramsci describes furthermore as entailing a combination of 'deduction and induction', 'identification and distinction', 'positive demonstration' and the 'destruction of the old'. Above all, it required the application of a patient and systematic methodology to discriminate accurately between the 'logically perfect'¹⁰⁵ and the untidy complexities of a reality fashioned by an array of unpredictable and complex elements.

As Gramsci saw it, this 'self-review' of history offered the twin antidote needed to allow the intellectuals, who were effectively imprisoned by their own intellectualism, to merge with the ordinary people who, by contrast, were imprisoned by their faith¹⁰⁶. The continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the order of the existing leadership element of the party therefore ensured a homogeneous, 'centralist' movement¹⁰⁷. Representing, as it did, the negation of authoritarianism and bureaucracy, this movement also expressed a direct, concrete relationship forged organically between initially diverse and fractured groupings. With this move also reclassifying the entire membership of the party as both 'organic' and 'intellectual' coterminously, it was a tactic moreover which successfully disrupted the psychological normativity of the old mental/ manual divide. The ensuing collective entity

¹⁰² Despite the fact that Gramsci was highly critical of Bordiga's 'programmatic' solutions, Gramsci invokes the term positively here with respect to Marx's writing.

¹⁰³ *SPN*, p.335. In this respect, the primary purpose of the party, as Gramsci here notes, was 'to work out the ethics and the politics corresponding to [the elaboration and diffusion of conceptions of the world]...and act as it were as their historical "laboratory"' (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁴ *SPN*, p.189.

¹⁰⁵ Gramsci made these comments when discussing 'organic centralism' in relation to Maurras (*PN 1: Notebook 1*, entry 44, p.161). He argues that organic centralism was 'co-optation' around a 'professor of truth'. In this respect, Maurras's military defeats were due to their 'excessively logical perfection' and 'rigidified and rationalistic policies' (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁶ Gramsci was essentially defining this new form of 'organic intellectualism' as cognitive and moral practice that arose out of a mutual critique of both the naïve worldview of the masses as well as the abstract and detached philosophy of the philosopher kings. For an interesting study regarding this concept of organic intellectualism in relation to adult educational theory, see Leif Hommen's *On the 'Organic Intellectualism' of Antonio Gramsci: A Study of the Concept as a Contribution to the Politics of Adult Education* (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1986).

¹⁰⁷ Gramsci uses words such as centralist, unitary, monolithic and homogeneous to convey the idea that what marks out authentic Marxist organization is the organic unity achieved through the

was precisely what Jacobinism had inaugurated historically: the exemplification and operation of an anti-subaltern, political practice.

From what I have tabled here, it can be seen that Gramsci's own anti-subaltern Jacobinism shared those very same properties of resourcefulness that he had seen embodied in Machiavellian political inquiry. In particular, the laicisation of all those aspects of life and customary relationships – the magnification of the concrete, historical impress of mankind – endowed Machiavelli's work with a quality surpassed only by Marx's own historical endeavours. No less than the elucidation, in precise and concrete terms, of a twin methodology for both the destruction as well as the reconstruction of a truly 'modern principality' (a new historical 'bloc', in Gramscian parlance¹⁰⁸), Machiavelli's precocious educational programme thus mimicked the populist flavour of Gramsci's own. Each accentuated especially the indispensability of human resolve ('will' as opposed to 'chance') with respect to the practical expansion of mankind's future, collective liberties¹⁰⁹.

When seen in this light, notwithstanding the popular and unflattering reputation that had been given to Machiavelli by his none-too-numerous critics¹¹⁰, the idea of the destabilization of the old order by means of increasing the proficiency of the new, made *The Prince* a superb cipher for Gramsci's new conception of party. As I have noted in this chapter, but will be revisiting again in the pages of the next, the entire thrust of Gramsci's Marxism was to reform democracy by humanizing it – that is, to expose and combat its fetishized form. Primarily an assault on the external, formalized concept of

negation of the previous capitalist-inspired divisions, for example, between theory and practice, between the intellectual strata and popular masses and between the rulers and ruled.

¹⁰⁸ The concept of 'bloc' was used by Gramsci in various ways to indicate the presence of an 'interplay' or interconnectedness between two or more elements: here, between the base or economic structure of society and its superstructural or infrastructural components. In one instance (*SPN*, p.360), Gramsci referred to the way in which a human personality might be viewed as a bloc: 'Man is to be conceived as an historical bloc of purely individual and subjective elements and of mass and objective or material elements with which the individual is in an active relationship'. Elsewhere (*SPN*, p.345), he similarly argued that history and philosophy are, in fact, indivisible. They form a bloc, in the sense that the philosophy of an historical epoch forms the history of that epoch.

¹⁰⁹ The complete laicisation of history, as Gramsci described it, would allow the proletariat to learn 'from the facts that nothing which exists is natural...but rather exists because of the existence of certain conditions' (*SPN*, p.158). In Gramsci's view, this was the route of 'independence', in the sense that the proletariat learnt from these facts that 'in order to produce certain results, certain preconditions must necessarily be created in order to achieve this outcome' (*ibid.*).

¹¹⁰ Practically any commentary on Machiavelli will make reference to the climate of anti-Machiavellian sentiment that came to be associated with his name. R.M. Crawford, for example, begins his third chapter about Machiavelli with reference to the reputation that he had gained as an archetypal villain in Elizabethan drama (*The Renaissance and Other Essays* [Second edition]. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1947). His apparent validation of atheism and murder earned Machiavelli the reputation of an anti-Christ, with the result that the adjective 'Machiavellian' became a wholly pejorative term.

rule and the abstract concept of liberty simultaneously, it represented, at last, the concrete practice of Marxist theory: the most radical form of democracy possible, as I argue there.

5. Conclusion: Towards a New and Integral Politics

Given that the primary purpose of this chapter was to canvas very broadly the content of Gramsci's prison writings, my emphasis here has been to describe specifically how the integral and critical nature of his Marxism was expressed by a historicist/ dialectic rendering of events. Furthermore, as I have also attempted to accent here, in Gramsci's mind, it was precisely the absence of this methodology that signalled a concomitant absence of an authentic revolutionary posture. Insofar as neither Gramsci's confreres nor his rivals had ever comprehended the full significance of the historicization and problematization of the past for the maintenance of an authentically socialist epistemology and ontology, their own worldview could never support a transcendence of that past, tethered as it was to the present by a psychological predisposition that was essentially reformist in nature. No amount of good will or enthusiasm could alter the fact that only an historicist/ dialectical perspective could expose the deep-seated contradictions that blighted society, especially those manifest in one's traditional mode of thought and practice.

To put this yet another way, the historicization and problematization of the past was Marx's method of transcending mechanical, supernatural or metaphysical conceptions of the world so that the human dimension (praxis) of historical development could thus be uncovered. Only in this manner would the integral (political-economic) nature of the human drama also become apparent, providing, as an outcome, the firmness of ground upon which the majority of needs and aspirations for social renewal might flourish accordingly. A widespread educational campaign to engage the masses in dialectical thinking was moreover critical to their solidarity as a homogeneous class. Marxism was no minority good. Its essence lay in its 'universality' – that is, in its concrete capacity to assist humankind to overcome its industrial and political servitude and to fashion for itself a new and more equitable productive settlement. To ignore this universal, participatory aspect was to ignore a fundamental tenet of Marxism itself.

And this was precisely the error that Gramsci sought to address in his elaboration of the new party – the modern Prince. Just as we witnessed in previous chapters how Gramsci had adopted a strategy of counter-posing a new conception of education, culture and state to the existing bourgeois meaning, what we encounter in the *Notebooks* is no less than a continuation of this type of activity – although now it is being applied principally to the notion of politics and the party. Repeating his earlier rejection of the nonsensical divide between muscular-nervous activity and intellectual activity, we see Gramsci urging in these notebook entries that the new party must abandon its propensity for replicating bourgeois hierarchical and authoritarian divisions; that the only justification for the existence of the Communist Party lay in its ability to centralize and coordinate proletariat action to enable the workers *through their own efforts* ‘to liberate themselves autonomously from industrial and political servitude’¹¹¹. In other terms, the party could no longer simply mimic other parties. Instead, it had to model itself upon a fully living (concrete) Marxist epistemology and ontology.

In this respect, the radicality of Gramsci’s theory lay precisely in its ‘socialist’ intent: that is, in his commitment to overthrowing what he regarded as being a pathological culture in order to liberate the cognitive and moral capacity inherent in what it means *to live a human life*. As we have witnessed in the last three chapters, Gramsci’s conception of education was intimately linked to this vision of human release and becoming. By adopting a dialectical perspective – to avoid a purely liberal rendition of freedom – the problem of human freedom and humanization was instead seen to revolve around overcoming the self-imposed limitations on associative and expressive possibility that the ideology of capitalism established. This was precisely the problem Gramsci raised on many occasions – the problem of cultivating a life of ‘connectedness’.

As I have endeavoured to argue throughout this thesis, hegemony was a concept that evolved out of Gramsci’s steadfast refusal to accept the neutrality of culture and cultural learning. In simple terms, *hegemony was Gramsci’s theory of the erosion of the human condition under capital*. Hierarchies were legitimated and elitism rewarded through the attendant liaison between capital and cultural production. To this end, Gramsci’s work has consistently shown that such patterns of thought mimicked the inorganic ideology of the capitalist mode of production, thus effectively mis-

¹¹¹ Gramsci had issued this statement in his article, ‘Two Revolutions’ (*L’Ordine Nuovo*, 3 July 1920, *SPW* 1: pp.305-309; *PPW*: pp.168-172)

describing mankind's capacity for cooperative human endeavour, in tandem. Recognition of the 'bloc' that existed between the superstructural and the structural meant being alert to the fact that inferior forms of associative life and moral practice were legitimated in culture¹¹². Importantly, whilst this recognition signified the distance that existed between the pathological and the possible, it also signified the route of the negation of this distance correspondingly. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Gramsci's Marxism is predicated on the negation of subaltern politics through one's own immediate practice. Indeed, the very originality of Gramsci's philosophy of praxis lay in the fact that it was first and foremost the expression of a new set of principles manifested in practice.

* * * * *

¹¹² Importantly, as we have seen, intellectuals (variously defined) acted as the elaborators of many of the concepts of reality that people had acquired. These views were not neutral with respect to the social structuring of society. In language, a sediment of past meanings that legitimate and endorse certain forms of association as both natural and just is evident – thereby denigrating certain others.

-----CHAPTER 6-----

BEYOND DEMOCRACY AS A LIMITING IDEA: PROLETARIAN HEGEMONY AS NEOHUMANISTIC REFORM

Structures and superstructures form an 'historical bloc'. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures is the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations of production. From this one can conclude: that only a totalitarian [unified, all-absorbing] system of ideologies gives a rational reflection of the contradiction of the structure and represents the existence of the objective conditions for the revolutionizing of praxis... This reasoning is based on the necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure, a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process.

(Gramsci, *SPN*, p.366)

1. Introduction: How to Combat Subaltern Thought and Practice

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the concept of hegemony signified a state of normative compliance to the cognitive and moral strictures of capitalism. In this, the final chapter of my study, I want to consolidate this argument by reasserting how hegemony vitally informed Gramsci's concept of democracy. Despite the fact that Gramsci's application of the word democracy numbers only a half a dozen instances within his writings, his entire life's work can nonetheless be regarded as his concerted attempt to establish an ethos of humanity built around those traits of character and intellect that made the unconscious both conscious and problematic¹. We have already seen that this is how Gramsci defines the success of a democracy: not in the manifestation of procedures and contracts to recognize rights and needs but in terms of subjectivity and the capability of the subject to achieve a state of self-conscious criticality. In the remaining pages, I want to continue exploring this conception of democracy and how it is supported by Gramsci's mature understanding of the workings of hegemony; of how superceding this hegemony required that democracy itself be educated.

As Gramsci had been emphasizing consistently, socialism initiated authentic

¹ Central to Gramsci's interpretation of the historical materialist method was the application of criticality as a methodology of challenge and change. As I argue in this chapter, one needed to be able to recognize a subaltern mentality and logic in order to both understand its operation and to reject its effects subsequently.

democracy *not* by increasing representation to certain sectors of the population – as Gramsci's dispute with Bordiga suggested (see Chapter 4) – but by critiquing the very concept of representation itself. This is what was revolutionary about Gramsci's concept of revolution, as I have been arguing additionally: that revolution and education were synonymous insofar as engendering the capacity for cognitive and moral independence by the mass relied simultaneously on overcoming the sectarian and economistic modes of thought that unmistakably undermined the quality of their decision-making capabilities. In other words, they were their own representatives only to the extent that they were fully conscious of these inherited class-oriented patterns of thought, and were able to envision – and to feel impassioned to achieve² – alternative, non class-oriented forms of social and cultural association³.

In relation to a theory of democratic functioning, hegemony thus signifies how a subject is adversely equipped to engage in public forums of participation and deliberation precisely because of the stultifying corrosion of its character to capital. Consequently, hegemony names and describes a passive consensus – one where the bonds of sociality are pre-cast as an ideology that imposes a class-based (class-bound) way of viewing the world while at the same time rendering this tendency wholly invisible. It describes the corresponding loss of human agency effected through an individual's inability to interpret reality independently of this pre-conditioning upon thought and emotion. Moreover, it recognizes that so much human action is conditioned by conformity that no real sense of 'agency' inevitably underwrites the moral and ethical behaviour of humankind. In this most important respect, hegemony can essentially be seen to stand on the same continuum as domination for Gramsci. Hegemony describes not merely an individual failure of thought and responsible human action but additionally traces the locus of this failure back to the *coalitional dominance effected between capitalism and the superstructures*. In the varying shades of heteronomy that henceforth make up a continuum, consent is simply an aspect of domination.

Insofar as the Gramscian concept of hegemony has been interpreted variously as dominance, or leadership – or the consensual aspect of rule, or intellectual and

² The whole tenor of Gramsci's work had been to critique pure intellectualism as a way of knowing. A quotation he chose to highlight from the work of Henri Bergson captures well his own thinking in this respect: 'Intelligence is characterized by a natural incomprehensibility of life, since it represents clearly only the discontinuous and the immobile' (SPN, p.252).

³ As explained in this chapter, historical and dialectical thinking was the route of self(social)-consciousness and the mode of inauguration of the new citizen democracy.

moral reform – it seems to me that the common characteristic of all these inflexions can be attributed to the problem that historical materialism poses for the subject in relation to capital⁴. Best conceived as an ‘effect’ of the combined pathological tendencies of the prevailing ahistorical, inorganic and dehumanizing worldview, the problem that hegemony therefore portrays is the exponential inability of subjectivity to counter the relational and valuational effects of capital. As this study has clearly shown, what Gramsci’s criticisms of various personalities and politics and positions had in common was his general scorn for their insensitivity to the historical-dialectical-humanist vantage point that characterized Marxism’s originality as both a theory and a practice. As my own account of Gramsci’s political skirmishes has endeavoured to reveal, regardless of the political rhetoric used by groups or parties purporting solutions to the multiple problems of capital, Gramsci despised (with equal venom) any that showed a lack of appreciation for the types of cultural activity needed to counter the cognitive-perspectival problem which fettered subjectivity and hindered relational and valuational reform simultaneously⁵. In fact, it was this very ignorance that aligned both liberals, socialists and reformists alike. Neither saw that the key to Marxism lay in a dynamic rejection of the terms and conditions imposed on ‘being’ by what might well be regarded as ‘humanly suicidal’ thought and practice.

That the solution to reversing this deficiency lay with sound, historical research – the type of investigation that allowed the greatest reflection about human affairs – has equally been emphasized throughout my study. Because it signified open-ended, first-hand, critical engagement with the concrete – necessitating the abandonment of tendencies towards ‘lazy’ thought and one-sided reasoning – such inquiry embodied a technique of thinking that served to offset the continued subordination of concrete thought to audacious, second-hand theory. In this regard, it constituted a striving towards the reflective appropriation of the effect of tradition upon one’s cognitive and

⁴ This emphasis on the individual must by no means be seen as a rejection of the concept of class in preference to an individual analysis. My approach merely reflects a dialectical approach to the study of class and the problems associated with the subject’s recognition of the power of capital, as Bertell Ollman discusses in his book, *Dialectical Investigations* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵ As we will see in this chapter, Gramsci’s opposition to those who professed to be socialist revolved around the problem of ‘knowing’ Marxism: in other words, his criticism against these various renditions of Marxism related to the way in which their knowledge was purely the knowledge of intellectual acquaintance (see his rebuke of Bukharin for instance: *SPN*, p.472). To Gramsci, this was one of the greatest ironies to have plagued Marx’s work: that Marx’s sentiments were simply not understood. In Gramsci’s view, those who truly ‘knew’ Marx bore testimony to their understanding by the way in which they no longer posed abstract and metaphysical ‘solutions’ to the concrete problems about which Marx wrote. Knowledge became totalized and humanized by becoming the product of an active relationship between a subject and his or her reality. Truly ‘knowing’ Marx meant working to inaugurate this new relationship between individuals and their reality.

emotional prejudices. It was both 'original' and 'unique' by virtue of the fact that it advanced a permanent state of wariness towards the authors of these fictions and what were essentially their 'untrustworthy' versions of history and philosophy⁶.

The reacquaintance of the self to one's thought, combined with one's emotion, was also a significant feature of Gramsci's theory of criticality, as we have witnessed above⁷. Notwithstanding the fact that there has been a long tradition of theorists who have identified the importance of the acquisition of independent rationality to the exercise of authentic human agency⁸, Gramsci did not pose the problem of human agency as one that could be rectified in purely rationalist terms. As we have seen in Chapter 3, rationality was itself a prisoner of culture. In this respect, unless intellectualism was tempered with character traits that could direct knowledge towards the pursuit of worthwhile ideals, the desiring of the immediate values endorsed by one's culture would inevitably circumscribe one's choices within the limits imposed by that same rationality – a rationality which was essentially the arbiter of the politics and ethics of that culture. And it was precisely this dimension of the problem of revolutionary change that was so impervious to critique. Its resilience, as the word 'hegemony' implies, arose as an outcome of its invisibility. Thus, in spite of numerous attempts by Gramsci's colleagues to initiate change, it was this neglect that indeed explained the pervasiveness of the misguided adoption of an economistic rationality in the pursuit of Marxist principles. Similarly, it was this neglect that led to the perpetuation of a faith in the power of traditional forms of reasoning to inaugurate the new social order⁹.

⁶ Gramsci put the point thus:

[The philosophy of praxis] is consciousness full of contradictions, in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradictions and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action. (*SPN*, p.405)

⁷ As evident in Gramsci's account of the significance of Machiavelli's work, the way in which Machiavelli's arguments – his cognitive and moral critique of the existing order – became internalized within the people themselves, and thus became synonymous with their own powers of auto-reflection, represented the outcome of a successful organic connection between the leaders and the led. And this was by no means a success won through reason alone. As Gramsci reflected in his notes on Machiavelli (*SPN*, p.126), what made Machiavelli's work great was that he recognised in each of the extreme forms of action – pure spontaneity and pure scholasticism – the danger of passivity. What created the emotion needed to incite men to action was an *educated* passion – a dictum that Gramsci had himself advanced throughout his long political career.

⁸ Jose Nun signals that there has always been a tendency for Marxism to have suffered from an excessively zealous rationalist reductionism at the hands of its purported followers. He examines this problem of reductionism in relation to Gramsci's following as well ('Elements for a Theory of Democracy: Gramsci and Common Sense'. *Boundary 2* [Special Issue: The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci], XIV, 3, 1986: pp.197-229).

⁹ This included faith in the traditional forms of philosophy and a belief in the superiority of the ideas of philosophers to deliver greater justice to the masses. As I try to make clear, the philosophy of praxis was a philosophy of action. Through a re-examination of history – the application of a greater

We have seen throughout this thesis that Gramsci's passionate embrace of cultural criticism is based on his acute understanding that the principal task of socialist activity was to release one's mind and one's emotions from the compulsion of custom. In more precise terms, to restore the balance between the head and the heart – to re-establish the dialectical connection between those elements that had been interpreted previously as discrete or distinct¹⁰ – comprised the essence of this undertaking. Just as 'praxis' in Aristotelian terms crucially signified the connectedness between self and other, praxis (as we have begun to witness in Gramscian terms) constituted a qualitative depth to understanding achieved by realigning these distincts: emotion to reason and reason to emotion; the universal to the particular and the particular to the universal; self to other and other to self, and so forth. *Dialectical thinking was therefore a technique of thinking that made knowledge balanced.* It questioned the very 'reasonableness' of reason itself. But even more than this: *it was onto-formative insofar as it humanized knowledge*¹¹. It was a 'practical' philosophy to the extent that it was 'more fully rounded' than either naïve consciousness or learned philosophy. Educated by an admixture of rationality plus emotion, it was no longer indifferent to human need and was thus capable of much greater resourcefulness in the pursuit of human ideals.

In this, the final chapter of my investigation, I also want to return to my original set of arguments against Laclau and Mouffe's deployment of hegemony for their own attempted 'post-socialist' renewal. As stated in the initial pages of this study, I argued that their own peculiar rendition of Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the centrepiece of their 'radical' form of democracy ignores altogether any prospect of damage or pathology in relation to subjectivity. It does this by virtue of their adoption of a discursive interpretation of both the self and the social, a move that basically entails the embrace of a counter-humanist epistemology and ontology in the conceptualization of a new conception of the democratic, correspondingly. Having also abandoned any Marxist conception of history and class struggle and arguing instead the need for the creation of 'new political frontiers' by means of the construction of a 'chain of

cognitive force upon history – the corresponding process of critique and enlightenment was a necessary stimulant for action.

¹⁰ This was Gramsci's key criticism against his other major adversary, Benedetto Croce.

¹¹ Gramsci's critique of positivism and idealism was a direct assault on the one-sidedness of both forms of thought – the 'knowledge' gained through either an excessively empirical or an excessively speculative worldview. To restore the balance between the rational and the affective was at the same time the means to re-form humanity: to restore what was 'human' about the human condition itself. Historical materialism for Gramsci was the absolute humanization of history, a process which was not simply a static, descriptive view of the history of humankind. Rather, it was but the activation of a lost dimension of humanity upon history.

equivalences between particularities'¹², as I explain here, it is the *practices* of capitalism – not the *ideology* – that become the de facto target of Laclau and Mouffe's disaffection. Rather than post-Marxism confronting the entire pathology of capitalism, as Gramsci argued was necessary so as to overthrow its dehumanizing tendencies, this lesser form of struggle to right the immediate and tangible *effects* of capitalism (problems such as disproportionality in relation to material resourcing and the marginalization of various voices, etc.) constitutes their entire policy of opposition and reactionary politics. As my own analysis shows, the culmination of all of these theoretical contortions is a vote paradoxically in favour of *the continuation of logic of capitalism itself*.

Believing, as Laclau and Mouffe do, that the application of greater pressure on the (undefined) political process to 'even up' the processes of capital distribution will foster greater social equity, hegemony is reconceived as the glue to bind a consortium of interests which favour these redistributive and anti-marginalizing policies and practices. It therefore becomes the name for what is effectively an alliance of interests that lobby for an extension of the democratic process through the greater proliferation of treaties and contracts. And despite the fact that Laclau and Mouffe argue such behaviour requires democracy to be grounded in a mindset that is antithetical to possessive individualism¹³, we nonetheless find scant consideration of how their own 'common good' recommendation might subsequently be fulfilled. Far from being a theory that therefore *aids* our understanding of fruitful strategies to create a more 'just' democracy, I conclude this discussion by highlighting exactly how the absence of this educational dimension furnishes post-Marxist theory with only a pale and weak concept of democracy in its wake. It is precisely an arid and abstract, one-sided view of democracy, given its veritable blindness to the dominance of capital: a rejection, no less, of the concept of the historical bloc¹⁴.

Given the impossibility of canvassing the entire *Notebook* archive in order to legitimate my argument above, I have chosen instead to pursue just two lines of inquiry through which I intend to consolidate my thesis. The first is an examination of

¹² Laclau (p.304-306) in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹³ Mouffe best explains her stance in her chapter, 'Liberal Socialism and Pluralism: Which Citizenship?' (In Judith Squires (Ed.), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993: pp.69-84).

¹⁴ I received a copy of Jonathon Joseph's excellent study on the concept of hegemony as I was writing this chapter (*Hegemony: A Realist Analysis*. London: Routledge, 2002). His views endorse wholeheartedly my own analysis of the way in which the post-Marxists abandon the notion of the historical bloc. See especially his Chapter 5, 'Posts and Structures' (pp.99-121).

Gramsci's critique of Nikolai Bukharin's attempts to educate the mass – a discussion in which most of Gramsci's previous concerns are again reiterated¹⁵. In particular, Gramsci condemned Bukharin's subaltern stance which was evident in the latter's traditional views regarding the superiority of his knowledge in relation to the mass, and also in the relationship that this outlook implied, as an outcome. Gramsci's critique of Bukharin's inorganic mode of thinking (Bukharin's sociological approach with respect to Marxist¹⁶) and his associated criticisms of the bureaucratic relations which he felt such thinking consolidated, provide a convenient 'window' on Gramsci's thoughts during this time allowing for a much greater appreciation also of the nature of the collectivity he was trying to establish.

This examination will be followed by a further in-depth analysis of Gramsci's anti-Crocean interpretation of Machiavelli's contribution to politics¹⁷. In contrast to Bukharin, Gramsci found in Machiavelli a political thinker whose historical-humanist clarification of events revealed the intricacies of the collusion of politics and culture. His work reinforced Gramsci's own understandings of the workings of rule, and especially reinforced his perception that the modern Italian state was nothing but a democratic-bureaucratic regime, steeped, as it was, in a semi-feudal consciousness. Machiavelli's analysis of society stood as additional testimony to the tyranny of the historical bloc in relation to the creation of a new national-popular (proletarianized) state; an account of the pathology of democratic aspirations when ensnared by hegemony.

¹⁵ I touched briefly on Gramsci's opposition to Bukharin in the last chapter. As one of the party's most prominent intellectuals, Bukharin produced what Gramsci frequently refers to as simply *The Popular Manual*. Although it appears that Gramsci at first recommended Bukharin's interpretation, reproducing whole passages of the translated text for his correspondence school students around 1925, by 1931 he was totally opposed to his work. 'The Manual' was known variously as *Theory of Historical Materialism: A Popular Manual of Marxist Sociology* (first published in Moscow in 1921) and *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (New York: Russell & Russell. Original work published 1925). As Christine Buci-Glucksmann has noted (*Gramsci and the State* (David Fernbach, Trans.), London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980: see especially Chapters 10 and 11), most of Gramsci's notes on Bukharin were written around the same time Gramsci wrote many of his comments on Machiavelli. *Notebook 4* contained many of these original notes, reworked later in *Notebook 11* dating from 1932-33 (p.203). See *Notebook 4* in the Buttigieg translations (*PN 2*: pp.135-264) and especially Chapter 10 of Buci-Glucksmann's account concerning the supposed 'about turn' that Gramsci had displayed towards Bukharin's work.

¹⁶ In Gramsci's mind, treating the philosophy of praxis as a 'sociology' meant treating Marxism as a discipline of scientific explanation rather than as a guideline for concrete cognitive and moral practice. As he noted elsewhere in his notebooks (*SPN*, p.367), the philosophy of praxis should be seen taking its starting point from the passage from the purely economic to the ethico-political moment. It describes the cathartic moment when the structure ceased to be 'an external force' and became instead a force 'to create a new ethico-political form' (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ Machiavelli's importance to Gramsci's work has been outlined in Benedetto Fontana's excellent book, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Here, Fontana argues that Gramsci's reading of Machiavelli was a counter-reading to Croce's; that through Machiavelli, Gramsci promoted his own democratic philosophy.

Insofar as bourgeois hegemony consolidated subalternity to the extent that it corroded the free-play of those elements critical to a successful universal democracy, importantly, what each of these studies provide is additional evidence of Gramsci's unfailing commitment to the eradication of subaltern thought – in whatever its manifestation¹⁸. Specifically, the points I raise in relation to the discussion that follows are threefold: (1) that combating the cognitive and moral submissiveness of both the proletariat as well as many of its so-called leaders required a relationship of reciprocity to be established between the great bulk of the population and its 'most conscious' element; (2) that the new cultural order to which Gramsci aspired was one in which individuals stood in a direct relationship to knowledge, having been equipped with traits of feeling and judgment ('good sense') that might allow them to reflect critically upon their own personal and social reality and to teach others to regain their agency by their own cognitive endeavours; and (3) that the establishment of relations of cognitive and moral respect implicit in Gramsci's advocacy of an organic relationship between individuals and groups be taken as evidence of his practical commitment to an authentic democratic ethos. As was touched upon in Chapter 5, and will be explored more fully in the discussion to follow, the key to inaugurating socialism in practice lay in a refusal to comply with the 'common sense' master/ slave relations endorsed by capitalism. Hegemony signified the need to *reappropriate the concept of democracy*: to make it a progressive concept by being released from the limitations that capitalism imposed.

2. The Sociological Aberration of Bukharin's Marxism

While there is a specific subsection of the Hoare and Nowell Smith's volume dedicated to Gramsci's more direct criticisms of Bukharin's *Popular Manual*¹⁹, many of the more general criticisms that we find Gramsci levelling against those purporting to have provided an accurate and accessible representation of Marx's historical materialist method may be applied equally to Bukharin's work²⁰. A common feature of all these representations was their contamination by what Gramsci deemed to be a

¹⁸ It should be seen as no small coincidence that the concept of subalternity is a term that is used in logic to signify the relationship between the universal and the particular – specifically in relationship to quality.

¹⁹ The section in question is subtitled 'Critical Notes at an Attempt at Popular Sociology' (SPN, pp.419-472). Many of these notes first appear in *Notebook 4* in the Buttigieg translations (PN 2, pp.135-264), which were to be reworked later in a specific notebook devoted to the study of philosophy – *Notebook 11*.

²⁰ This is especially the case in notes taken from Gramsci's writings gathered together in Part 2, Chapter 1 of *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, under the chapter heading 'The Modern Prince' (SPN, pp.125-205). In particular, many of the errors that Gramsci names occur in relation to his discussion about the way to develop the 'science and art of politics'.

'liberal' mode of thought and practice²¹. This was one in which the possibility of applying alternative forms of thought to existing problems was circumscribed by an inevitable tendency to fall back upon customary modes of reasoning and acting. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the liberation of the proletariat necessitated a new type of literacy: one that was personified especially in those who could be both 'critics' and 'men of action' at the same time. Gramsci's criticisms of Bukharin reveal a total contempt towards Bukharin's adherence to the 'old legality' – a condemnation, no less, of his lack of ability to be either.

What a closer analysis of Gramsci's critique of Bukharin provides is both confirmation and clarification that the struggle had to be a two-edged struggle: it required a reciprocal measure of anti-subaltern thought and practice on the part of those intellectuals professing their connection to the mass just as it required an equivalent movement on the part of the mass. As Gramsci had always portrayed the problem, the struggle was one for 'objectivity' – 'to free oneself from partial and fallacious ideologies'²². Given that all existing modes of rationality – from the advanced (philosophy) to the everyday (common sense) to the simple (folklore) – served to mask the potential for counter-subaltern thought and association, what was required was *an education of the self*. This was a prior activity wherein one posed one's self and one's thinking as an element of the very problem needing to be resolved²³. In this regard, Bukharin's error – along with others who called themselves Marxist – was his inability to view himself as a candidate in the existing 'relations of force'. He was entirely oblivious to the fact that their own 'methodology' was premised on a mode of viewing the world that by definition perpetuated existing subaltern thought and practice²⁴.

To pose oneself as part of the problem was to pose one's own relationship with

²¹ The pervasive tone of many of Gramsci's notes in *Notebook 4* was that, although Marxism had become popularized through its 'association' with the likes of Croce, Gentile, Bergson and Sorel, this 'Marxism in combination' was totally inadequate 'for creating a broad cultural movement that embraces the whole of man...and that brings about the moral unification of society' (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 3, p.141).

²² *SPN*, p.445.

²³ Education implied a belief in the self-modifying power of thought.

²⁴ As Gramsci wrote:

Sociology is the attempt to create a historical-political methodology dependent on an already elaborated philosophical system... Sociology has therefore become... the philosophy of non-philosophers, an attempt to classify and describe historical and political facts schematically, according to criteria constructed on the model of the sciences.

(*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 13, p.155)

Readers might be aware that this criticism of sociology became commonplace between the 1940s and the 1960s. This ongoing critique led to the ascension of the 'new sociologists' in the 1970s and 1980s.

others as a fundamental aspect of the problem of class²⁵. In Gramsci's critique of Bukharin, we again see clarification of the importance of a leadership element that neither underestimated nor undermined the capacity of the working class and peasantry to co-author a new history. This meant that their 'leadership' and 'intellectualism' was premised on their capacity to think and act in an anti-subaltern manner. In this respect, they formed a vanguard not because they professed their superiority to others, or because they possessed a greater general knowledge and intelligence (as some commentators have tried to argue²⁶) but rather, because they 'lived' their counter-subaltern relationships. *Their organicity related to their knowledge of and commitment to anti-subaltern theory and practice.* They represented a group who were the expression of these more advanced forms of social and humanized consciousness – a group, moreover, who were especially committed to supporting autonomous agency as a central principle of democracy, as was discussed in my previous chapter with reference to Gramsci's new conception of 'party'.

Describing Bukharin's work as a 'sociology' that was only capable of capturing an abstract, scholastic Marxism, Gramsci painted Bukharin's attempts to introduce the masses to a 'scientific policy of the working class'²⁷ as merely another example of all that was misunderstood about historical materialism, both as a philosophy and a praxis. As Gramsci's comments reveal, all that the *Manual* succeeded in achieving was to render down a complex, fluid reality into a simplistic, external description of phenomena according to criteria constructed on 'the model of the sciences'²⁸. Capturing the spirit of this sentiment in a series of parallel notes that he was writing about Machiavelli at the time, Gramsci wrote:

²⁵ This was essentially the same criticism that Gramsci had levelled against Bordiga (see Chapter 4). It was a criticism that was indistinguishable from Gramsci's view of the party, a view he expressed about 'the capacity of comrades to work among the masses, to be continuously present among them, to be in the first line of every struggle, to be able on all occasions to take and keep the position which is appropriate for the vanguard of the proletariat' (*SPW 2*, pp.366-367).

²⁶ As noted in Chapter 4, various commentators have intimated that there is a noticeable theory/practice rift in Gramsci's work. See, for instance Luciano Pellicani, *Gramsci: An Alternative Communism?* (Foreword by Giovanni Sartori. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981); Howard K. Moss, 'Gramsci and the Idea of Human Nature' (*Italian Quarterly*, 31, 119-120, 1990: pp.7-19); James Martin, *Gramsci's Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998); and more recently, Joseph V. Femia, 'Gramsci and the Question of Totalitarianism' (*The Philosophical Forum*, 29, 3-4, 1998: pp.160-167).

²⁷ Bukharin (*op. cit.* 1965) wrote:

The practical task of a reconstruction of society may be correctly solved by the application of a scientific policy of the working class, i.e., a policy based on scientific theory; this scientific theory, in the case of the proletarian, is the theory founded by Karl Marx. (p.x)

²⁸ *PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 13, p.155.

The reduction of the philosophy of praxis to a form of sociology has represented the crystallization of the degenerate tendency, already criticized by Engels...and which consists in reducing a conception of the world to a mechanical formula which gives the impression of holding the whole of history in the palm of its hand²⁹.

What Bukharin's rendition of Marxism belied was a scholastic and intellectual understanding of the principles of Marxism; a knowledge of Marxism that was paradoxically the antithesis of those very principles which Marxism exemplified. Rather than opposing the dispossession and impoverishment of the human spirit or championing the cathartic moment whereby structure ceased to be 'an external force' crushing the human spirit³⁰, Bukharin's so-called solution did neither in Gramsci's view. His scathing attack on the *Manual* leaves us in little doubt that Gramsci found this work totally ineffective in assisting its readership either to envision the historical drama of which they were so centrally a part, or to motivate their own Jacobin passions to re-script this history anew³¹. By emphasizing these same principles as principles of sociology rather than principles of a *concrete cognitive and moral practice*, Bukharin's *Manual* typified views that were wholly representative of a traditional and sectarian outlook³².

We find that Gramsci's diatribe against Bukharin's position is therefore as much a critique of a personality and psychology as it is of a method. In Gramsci's eyes, Bukharin was nothing but a 'crystallized intellectual'³³ – meaning that he was part of a group who were the specialized representatives and standard-bearers of the 'culture' of the age. Furthermore, as Gramsci astutely observed, it was this function and shared nomenclature that connected these groupings both internationally and inter-generationally, therefore forming them effectively into an 'autonomous' or separate grouping in relation to the mass. Just as Gramsci had condemned this type of thinking

²⁹ *SPN*, pp.427-428.

³⁰ *SPN*, p.367.

³¹ Gramsci's frustration is evident in the following passage:

In short, the point is not to compile an organic repertory of political maxims but rather to write a book that is, in a certain sense, 'dramatic', an unfolding historical drama in which political maxims are presented as a specific necessity and not as scientific principles.

(*PN 2, Notebook 4*, entry 10, p.152)

³² I noted Gramsci's objection to sectarian thinking in relation to his disagreements with Bordiga in Chapter 4. Here, in the prison journals, Gramsci seems to add further clarity to his definition, as Buci-Glucksmann (*op. cit.*, 1980: p.232) has recounted:

Expression of sectarianism: one of the typical expressions of sectarian thinking (i.e., thinking that does not understand that a political party is not reducible simply to its technical organization, but involves the entire active social bloc that the party leads, being its necessary expression) is the belief that it is still possible to achieve the same thing (certain things), when the political and military situation has changed.

³³ Gramsci discusses the characteristics of intellectuals whom he describes as a 'crystallized social group' in a passage in the Hoare and Nowell Smith volume titled 'Questions of Nomenclature and Content' (*SPN*, pp.452-457).

in his other adversary, Croce, so too did he argue that Bukharin's outlook was just as aristocratic and 'traditional'³⁴. As Gramsci worded it:

Every new social organism (type of society) creates a new superstructure whose specialized representatives and standard-bearers (the intellectuals) can only be conceived as themselves being 'new' intellectuals who have come out of the new situation and are not a continuation of the preceding intellectual milieu. If the 'new' intellectuals put themselves forward as the direct continuation of the previous 'intelligentsia', they are not new at all (that is, not tied to the new social group which organically represents the new historical situation) but are a conservative and fossilized left-over of the social group which has been historically superseded³⁵.

Consistent with his previous efforts to dislodge what Gramsci saw as being the arbitrary pairing of capital to culture (a phenomenon manifest here through the privilege bestowed on a minority for their organizational and directive function), what we therefore witness in Gramsci's response is a forceful reassertion of all his previous anti-individualist and anti-caste sentiments. As he clearly indicates in the passage above, what distinguished the old from the new was an *anti-subaltern psychology*: that is, *the psychology of a cognitively and morally defiant stance achieved by a subject's refusal to acknowledge the legality of the existing inorganic, anti-social settlement*. And this was precisely a trait that Bukharin lacked: the self-awareness that his own specific social relations were a product of the existing relations of force. Understood in this way, Bukharin's (mis)interpretation of historical materialism merely reflected an ignorance of his own deficient worldview³⁶.

To Gramsci, historical materialism needed none of the extraneous supports of science and sociology that Bukharin had clearly thought were so necessary³⁷. Indeed, what Bukharin's so-called scientific analysis of class struggle belied was, paradoxically, a complete absence of any real concept of struggle. His preference for a naturalistic and scientific view of human nature not only tended to portray human nature as more

³⁴ As explained in Chapter 5, Gramsci considered the study of the intellectuals as a group to be a vital aspect of the study of the enduring power of capitalism. Although his comments about various intellectuals are interspersed throughout the length and breadth of his journal commentary, possibly the most helpful collection of notes on this topic are gathered under the subheading 'The Intellectuals' in the Hoare and Nowell Smith volume (*SPN* [Part 1, Chapter 1], pp.3-23).

³⁵ *SPN*, pp.452-453.

³⁶ What Gramsci found most irksome were Bukharin's accompanying assertions that he was merely adhering to the historical method (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 5, p.144).

³⁷ Gramsci wrote the following in this regard:

To maintain that the philosophy of praxis is not a completely autonomous and independent structure of thought in antagonism to all traditional philosophies and religions, means in reality that one has not severed one's links with the old world, if indeed one has not actually capitulated. The philosophy of praxis has no need of support from alien sources. (*SPN*, p.462)

determined than determining³⁸ but similarly functioned to negate the role of one's humanity (expressed as 'will' and 'intuition' and 'passion') in relation to questions of class. This was particularly the case for the proletariat and peasants whose limited understanding of the workings of state suggested the need for leadership by other 'lesser determined' beings. The practical and immediate result of this thinking merely consolidated the exaggerated self-importance of Bukharin's own work. As Bukharin saw it, it affirmed the contribution that an advanced thinker of his own calibre might apply to a problem in order to ensure a successful revolutionary outcome.

In this connection, Gramsci's growing penchant for military metaphors throughout these commentaries is entirely understandable, given that such images tended to capture the dynamic nature of the contest that he believed had to be fought. Class struggle was nothing short of war. Endorsing the view that a more precise knowledge of how a combination of both objective and subjective factors would more likely tip the balance towards success – especially when reinforced by greater intellectual effort – Gramsci was essentially objecting to what he considered to be 'traces of old-fashioned metaphysics' in Bukharin's account of Marxism and in its misplaced optimism in predicting and influencing future reality³⁹. Contra Bukharin's confidence that one could 'know the future' through 'a scientific act of knowledge'⁴⁰, to Gramsci's mind, the future could reveal itself only through the concerted application of a voluntary effort upon the physical world⁴¹. History was made through conscious effort, *not* interpretation.

³⁸ In an attempt to clarify the contribution that Marx had made to the 'science of politics and of history', Gramsci endorsed Marx's view of human nature, writing that the latter did not see human nature as fixed and immutable (*PN 2: Notebook 4*, entry 8, p.150). What this implied was that man should be viewed as a *determining* being rather than a *determined* being, thus opening the way for greater prominence to be given to man's own faculties in the construction of his 'nature'. Gramsci had reaffirmed this elsewhere, saying '...man is a process, and more exactly, the process of his actions' (*SPN*, p.351).

³⁹ *SPN*, p.437.

⁴⁰ *SPN*, p.438. In Gramsci's efforts to clarify the principles of historical materialism, he makes it abundantly clear that Bukharin's approach to topics such as 'matter' is a legacy of his 'borrowing' from the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, mechanics) and the language and concepts of materialist metaphysics (*PN 2, Notebook 4*, entry 25, pp.164-166; *SPN*, pp.465-468). He writes:

Historical materialism takes the physical...properties of matter into account,...but only insofar as they become an 'economic factor' of production. The issue...is not matter as such but how it is socially and historically organized for production, as a *human relation*. Historical materialism does not study a machine in order to establish the physical-chemical-mechanical structure of its natural components; it studies it as an object of production and property, as the crystallization of the social relation that itself coincides with a particular historical period. (*PN 2*, p.164)

⁴¹ Seen in these terms, it is indeed easy to understand Machiavelli's immediate appeal, as discussed in the following pages. It might be recalled also that Gramsci preferred to refer to the Russian Revolution as an 'act' as opposed to an 'event' to highlight the importance of the human element of intention in the creation of an alternative social settlement.

The fact that the people felt themselves more closely related to foreign intellectuals than domestic ones⁴² was a damning indictment of the lack of connectedness between the intellectuals and the people. Such a situation highlighted the urgent need for an elaboration of a new type of national intellectual who would assume an organic connection with the people. No longer simply the 'representative' of the people, the 'organic intellectual', as Gramsci named this figure, was one who laboured to make traditional liberal abstractions both concrete and real. Abandoning their aristocratic and theocratic status and relegating themselves to a role of 'co-participant' in the formation of historical and institutional values, what Gramsci envisaged was this new leadership element working alongside the people to co-author a new, 'popular' state⁴³:

What matters is that a new way of conceiving the world and man is born and that this conception is no longer reserved to the great intellectuals, to professional philosophers, but rather tends to become popular, mass phenomenon, with a concrete world-wide character, capable of modifying...popular thought and mummified popular culture⁴⁴.

The conviction that every person is a philosopher thus no longer represented a mere 'abstraction' but became 'concrete' through the proletarianization (humanization) of history. Through the active acknowledgment of the mental capabilities that resided in every human being, Marxism became a concrete cognitive and moral practice. A qualitative advance of the culture was therefore not the product of the advancement of a narrow grouping of intellectuals. Instead, as Gramsci intimated here, it could be achieved only through the conscious activity of an ever-greater number of people who had begun to 'philosophize' for themselves⁴⁵. This was what should have been meant by the evolution of society towards a modern democracy. The people became their own representatives when their lives began to be animated by concerns other than those dictated by practical economic survival. Undoubtedly, this is precisely what Gramsci meant by his statement that 'the most fertile contribution of the philosophy of

⁴² SCW, p.209. This assertion appears in a note titled 'Concept of "National-Popular"' reproduced from Q21, entry 5 (SCW, pp.206-212).

⁴³ SPN, p.198. As Gramsci described it, such unity between 'spontaneity and 'conscious leadership' (which he also referred to as 'discipline') was 'precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes'.

⁴⁴ SPN, p.417.

⁴⁵ Gramsci named this new type of intellectual an 'organic' intellectual or a 'democratic philosopher'. Referring to the latter, he wrote: '...he is a philosopher convinced that his personality is not limited to himself as a physical individual but is an active social relationship of modification of the cultural environment' (SPN, p.350).

praxis' was 'that quality is also connected to quantity'⁴⁶.

As if to come full circle then, the same criticisms that Gramsci had applied previously to Bordiga were now in the *Notebooks* being applied to Bukharin; the key objection, in particular, being that Bukharin was ignorant of the new set of relationships that Marxism heralded. As I suggested previously in Chapter 5, the very concepts of 'proletariat' and 'intellectual' acted to consolidate existing social divisions. Given this recognition, it was therefore logical to reason that the fashioning of a democratic collectivity entailed the negation of these traditional forms of categorization: a categorization which importantly belied a differential (class-based) treatment between the various groupings. As Gramsci so eloquently put it – and to repeat a previous quotation:

...it is acquired by the collective organism through 'active and conscious co-participation', through 'compassionality', through experience of immediate particulars, through a system which is called a 'living philology'. In this way a close link is formed between great mass, party and leading group; and the whole complex, thus articulated, can move together as 'collective-man'.⁴⁷

As we will witness in the next section, in contrast to Bukharin's reasoning, Gramsci detected in Machiavelli's work the type of rationality that anticipated Marx; that is, he understood how the power of authority and tradition, replicated in everyday folkloristic and common sense conservatism, impacted adversely on humanity's powers of self and social adjustment. Seeing the Reformation in his own time as a phenomenon that was nothing other than a 'myth' – mythical insofar as it was never capable of delivering on its promise to be a truly counter-cultural movement – Machiavelli succeeded in both uncovering the myth and, at the same time, establishing the culture that it had originally proposed. And although this ambition was never realized historically, in Gramsci's eyes, the objectives that it sought to concretize were those very same objectives towards which all of his own energies were most fully committed: that is, to the formation of a new political and legal order synonymous with the creation of a genuinely successful 'Reformation'.

⁴⁶ SPN, p.469.

⁴⁷ This is a passage that appears in Gramsci's comments about Bukharin under the 'General Questions' heading in material collated under 'Problems of Marxism' (SPN, p.429).

3. Lessons From Machiavelli: Towards a Citizen Democracy

In [Machiavelli's] treatment, in his critique of the present, he expressed general concepts – presented, however, in aphoristic rather than in systematic form – and an original conception of the world. This conception of the world too could be called 'philosophy of praxis', or 'neo-humanism', in as much as it does not recognize transcendental or immanent (in the metaphysical sense) elements, but bases itself entirely on the concrete action of man, who, impelled by historical necessity, works and transforms reality⁴⁸.

Arguably, one would be hard pressed to find a more glowing tribute to the work of Machiavelli than Gramsci's elevation of his worldview to the status of 'philosophy of praxis'. Yet, as indicated in the discussion of Machiavelli's significance in relation to Gramsci's own views in my last chapter, Gramsci saw in what he called Machiavelli's 'treatment' or 'critique' of the present a depiction of politics and of human nature that represented the supercession of all previous and inadequate philosophies. The absolute humanism of Machiavelli's own historical method affirmed that the emperor indeed had no clothes: that politics revealed itself as the domain of struggle upon which the dominant perceptions of the world had flourished – ironically by distancing themselves from that very ground which gave them their birth. Religious morality, scientific rationality and philosophical virtue were all simply parochial or partisan types of understanding that cultivated what were, in effect, limited forms of cognitive and moral provincialism⁴⁹. Each needed to be viewed as a deliberate and manufactured perspective of the world enhancing particularistic rather than universalistic interests. As Gramsci saw it, the fusion of political ideology with political science evident in *The Prince* was precisely the type of analytical enterprise that gave Machiavelli's insights a uniquely practical form⁵⁰.

The human contextualization of all existing forms of philosophy and practical activity was the pivotal factor that enabled Machiavelli's work to play an instrumental role in Gramsci's reconceptualization of the nature of a truly representative and popular

⁴⁸ SPN, pp.248-249. This discussion of Machiavelli appears under the heading 'Politics and Constitutional Law', located in turn under the broader subject heading of 'State and Civil Society' in the Hoare and Nowell Smith volume. This discussion can also be found in the fifth notebook in the Buttigieg collection (PN 2: Notebook 5, entry 127, p.378).

⁴⁹ Although the major revelation of Machiavelli's work was said to be the portrayal of politics as an autonomous and independent domain, what this meant was not that the likes of religion and science were untainted by politics but rather the reverse: they were sub-domains of politics. In this respect, politics is taken to mean the domain of 'human struggle'. It is in relation to Gramsci's discussion of Machiavelli that he reiterates how political society and civil society are a single entity.

⁵⁰ SPN, p.125. Gramsci presents Machiavelli's work in this way as a new and more robust type of political science, as will be explained here.

culture. Religion, science and philosophy were all realms in which the world was promoted as 'being' of a certain kind and conforming to a certain set of dogma. Because each realm had generated its own intellectual functionaries designed to protect and uphold the so-called 'truths' upon which these domains had originally been founded, Machiavelli's insights offered both a method of interpretation and critique; of an understanding of life and living that exposed the way things *really were* beneath the superficial and fragile mantle of appearances. He upheld a unique and laicised form of rationalism that allowed the political advantages of these functionaries to be exposed whilst at the same time undermining the neutrality and absolutism of their accompanying assertions. His work affirmed theoretically what Gramsci himself had always been arguing: 'that every "truth" believed to be eternal and absolute' had instead a very 'human' and 'practical origin'⁵¹.

In contrast to the 'long-winded arguments' and 'pedantic classifications of principles and criteria' which Gramsci condemned in Bukharin's *Popular Manual*, Machiavelli's concrete form of historiography serves as an exemplar of the critically self-conscious attitude that was increasingly absent from the historical materialist accounts of so many of Gramsci's contemporaries⁵². In a variety of notes, contained under a variety of headings, lavish praise is heaped on Machiavelli for having 'intuited' the problem of political rule and for having endeavoured to explore the problem in a thoroughly 'systematic' fashion⁵³. No less a barbed criticism of Bukharin's own attempt to offer a systematic exploration of the problems of political rule⁵⁴ – which, as we have seen, required the application of a dispassionate political 'science'⁵⁵ – it is one which likewise begins to demonstrate the extent to which Gramsci believed that Machiavelli's work exhibited the same organic approach to the study of history as Marx's own

⁵¹ SPN, p.406. Elsewhere, discussing the nature of the philosophy of praxis, Gramsci wrote that it was 'absolute historicism [and] absolute humanism' (SPN, p.417). In a discussion about the concept of 'orthodoxy', he reiterated this point: 'The philosophy of praxis is absolute "historicism", the absolute secularisation and earthiness of thought, an absolute humanism of history. It is along this line that one must trace the thread of a new conception of the world' (SPN, p.465).

⁵² Gramsci enlisted Machiavelli's support to bolster his own attempts to 'bring Labriola back into circulation', in order to counter the many hybrid variants of the philosophy of praxis which he saw were misrepresentations of the real problems of philosophy (SPN, p.388).

⁵³ Gramsci made these remarks in a letter to Tatiana (14 November 1927). With reference to Machiavelli, Gramsci repeated previous cautions that the word 'systematic' should *not* be interpreted in a purely pedantic and academic sense (SPN, p.327).

⁵⁴ In a series of comments in which Gramsci implores his fellow communists to research why it is that there 'co-exist many systems and currents of philosophical thought' and why they 'fracture along certain lines and in certain directions' (SPN, p.327), he writes:

The fact of this process goes to show how necessary it is to order in a systematic, coherent and critical fashion one's own intuitions of life and the world, and to determine exactly what is to be understood by the word 'systematic', so that it is not taken in the pedantic and academic sense. (*Ibid.*)

⁵⁵ SPN, p.125.

historical methodology. Throughout this commentary, and many like it, we are left in little doubt that Gramsci saw the starting point for all future cultural action had to begin with an analysis of the many metaphysical disguises worn by thought and practice: a reflection, no less, of the *inorganic deficiencies of all existing forms of philosophy*⁵⁶.

In the same way in which Gramsci began to apply Machiavelli's work as a corrective to the excessive intellectualism of Bukharin's *Manual*, we also witness how it served as an important corrective to the pseudo-revolutionary verbalism of syndicalist leaders such as Georges Sorel⁵⁷. To Gramsci, Sorel's naïve perception of the problem of the relations of force was far from 'systematic' itself. Condemning Sorel's simplistic theorization of the 'general strike' as the 'highest achievement' of practical trade union activity⁵⁸, Gramsci's application of Machiavelli's genuinely proactive attempts to create a new ethical and political order is juxtaposed alongside Sorel's limited and 'passive' economistic assumptions⁵⁹. In this connection, Machiavelli's careful, sustained analysis of the combined objective and subjective exigencies that made up the vicissitudes of a particular historical landscape is offered as representing a vision and a plan of cultural action that far surpassed Sorel's⁶⁰. Condemning the latter's strategies as nothing other than 'defensive' and 'mythical' – mythical because his activities actually left untouched the very reality that Sorel had hoped to transform – Machiavelli's work is duly nominated as the most successful theoretical attempt of any to create a 'superior, total form of modern civilization'⁶¹.

It was both 'superior' and 'total' on a number of counts. As noted above, the merit of Machiavelli's historiographical method lay unquestionably in its deliberate abandonment of all pre-constituted theories and philosophical methods of analysis. Favouring, as it did, a first-hand (re)examination of the living and the concrete,

⁵⁶ As we have been reading in relation to Bukharin's folly, Gramsci argued that philosophy is organic only when the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity are made coherent. What Gramsci's critique of Bukharin similarly suggested was that a philosophy only became 'historical' – and, as Gramsci wrote, 'purified' itself of intellectualistic elements of an individual character [to] become "life" – when the intellectuals began their 'philosophizing' from concrete and actual reality (SPN, p.330).

⁵⁷ SPN, pp.125-129. See also Robert Dombroski's comments on the relationship between Machiavelli, Sorel and Gramsci in his book *Antonio Gramsci* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989: pp.87-90).

⁵⁸ SPN, p.127.

⁵⁹ For this discussion about Sorel, see SPN, pp.127-129). Regarding a more general discussion of the dangers of economism, see 'Some Theoretical and Practical Aspects of "Economism"' (SPN, pp.158-168).

⁶⁰ The full text appears as follows:

Machiavelli's *Prince* could be studied as an historical exemplification of the Sorelian myth – i.e., of a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorizing, but rather by a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will. (SPN, p.126)

⁶¹ SPN, p.132-133.

Machiavelli's approach therefore avoided the replication of the partisan and limited (class-based) assumptions that were part and parcel of the more traditional forms of historical interpretation. Perhaps even more importantly, it sanctioned the same, first-hand relationship to reality that would allow the 'organic philosopher'⁶², as Gramsci renamed the Machiavellian figure of the *condottiere*⁶³, to articulate the 'good sense' of the present out of the 'errors' that were both implicit and explicit in that present. Blessed with this capacity for deconstruction and reconstruction, it was the only 'total' method of historical analysis permitting a genuine theory-practice dialectic. For this very reason, it was this approach alone which Gramsci began to portray as the authentic essence of the concept 'revolutionary'⁶⁴ – and the only approach, moreover, becoming of the title 'philosophy of praxis', as inferred by his unconditional endorsement of Machiavelli's worldview. Capturing the significance of this advantage in a declaration wherein he again attempted to define the spirit of the difference between an authentic philosophy for cultural reform and that of an imposter⁶⁵, Gramsci remarked: 'A philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superceding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world)'⁶⁶.

Numerous comments are found scattered throughout the notebook entries to endorse these sentiments, each affirming that the starting point of the development of a new conception of the world had to begin with the rejection of all previous and inadequate philosophies. Correspondingly, they also reaffirmed the importance of establishing a new relationship between the thinker and external reality; that it was through this relationship that an interior transformation, or cognitive and moral reform, is generated⁶⁷. In keeping also with these ideas, we see Gramsci repeatedly asserting

⁶² Elsewhere, Gramsci termed this new type of intellectual the 'democratic philosopher' (*SPN*, pp.350-351) or the 'organic intellectual' (*SPN*, p.10).

⁶³ In a note in Hoare & Nowell Smith (*SPN*, note 21, p.64), they explain that a *condottiere* was the leader of a mercenary army. These armies were common in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

⁶⁴ In a discussion of the concept of 'orthodoxy' (*SPN*, pp.462-465), Gramsci defined what he meant by revolutionary. He wrote:

A theory is 'revolutionary' precisely to the extent that it is an element of conscious separation and distinction into two camps and is a peak inaccessible to the enemy camp. To maintain that the philosophy of praxis is not a completely autonomous and independent structure of thought in antagonism to all traditional philosophies and religions, means in reality that one has not severed one's links with the old world, if indeed one has not actually capitulated. (*SPN*, p.462)

⁶⁵ Gramsci referred to the 'double revision' that the philosophy of praxis had undergone – by which he meant that many of its key tenets had been appropriated by various materialist and idealist currents (*SPN*, pp.388-389).

⁶⁶ *SPN*, p.330.

⁶⁷ To choose but two examples, in relation to a discussion about how the philosophy of praxis differs from various other materialist philosophies, Gramsci wrote:

the importance of critical investigation on a number of fronts, not only to overcome the limitations of thought that had been imposed previously on the thinking processes of the investigator himself, but also to become more fully acquainted with the negative tendencies of thought. The latter were represented in the population at large on a variety of different levels, from the most refined and ‘higher order’ philosophies (which, as we have seen, coexisted in both materialist and idealist forms) to the ‘folklore of philosophy’ (common sense⁶⁸), as manifested in the predominantly acritical and fragmented worldview of the masses⁶⁹. In what is perhaps the best synthesis of the revolutionary nature of this type of investigation, Gramsci wrote,

The true fundamental function and significance of the dialectic can only be grasped if the philosophy of praxis is conceived as an integral and original philosophy which opens up a new phase of history and a new phase in the development of world thought. It does this to the extent that it goes beyond both traditional idealism and traditional materialism, philosophies which are expressions of past societies, whilst retaining their vital elements. If the philosophy of praxis is not considered except in subordination to another philosophy, then it is not possible to grasp the new dialectic, through which the transcending of old philosophies is effected and expressed⁷⁰.

Representing the new dialectic as involving essentially the search for the ‘good sense’ that is harboured in any ‘philosophy’ of whatever stripe, as this quotation clearly indicates, it was in fact this middle ground that had been opened up that was constitutive of the ‘theory’ of the philosophy of praxis⁷¹. Moreover, the dialectic was itself a pedagogy – a pedagogy of possibility – and the only one which promoted a more accurate distinction between those ideologies that were historically necessary

...the first problem which has to be formulated and understood is this: that the new philosophy cannot coincide with any past system, under whatever name. Identity of terms does not mean identity of concepts. (*SPN*, pp.455-456)

Then, in a further discussion regarding the concept of ‘orthodoxy’, he stated:

At the level of theory the philosophy of praxis cannot be confounded with or reduced to any other philosophy. Its originality lies not only in its transcending of previous philosophies but also and above all in that it opens up a completely new road, renewing from head to toe the whole way of conceiving philosophy itself. (*SPN*, p.464)

⁶⁸ Gramsci saw ‘common sense’ to be the ‘folklore’ of philosophy proper: ‘Common sense is the folklore of “philosophy” and stands midway between real “folklore” (that is, as it is understood) and the philosophy, the science, the economics of the scholars’ (*SPN*, p.323).

⁶⁹ Gramsci articulates this sentiment in a number of instances. He argues that there is a difference between the teaching of philosophy aimed to give the student ‘historical information about the development of past philosophy’ and teaching which is aimed ‘at giving him a cultural formation and helping him to elaborate his own thought critically so as to be able to participate in an ideological and cultural community’ (*SPN*, note 2, p.424).

⁷⁰ *SPN*, p.435.

⁷¹ The reader is referred to a recent article by Diana Coben who examines the distinction between ‘common sense’ and ‘good sense’. See Chapter 13, ‘Metaphors for an Educative Politics: “Common Sense”, “Good Sense”, and Educating Adults’ (In Carmel Borg, Joseph Buttigieg, & Peter Mayo (Eds.) (2002), *Gramsci and Education*. Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp.263-290).

(organic) and those which were merely arbitrary (conjunctural)⁷². Again, we see Gramsci cautioning how it was this universal inability of minds to distinguish between the historically permanent and the willed and arbitrary that led to a fundamental miscalculation of the extent to which reality could actually be challenged or changed⁷³. To this end, he posed a number of questions throughout his polemic, each designed specifically to sharpen these powers of assessment in order to illuminate ‘the points of least resistance’ against the existing conservative social forces. Literally, philosophy was *made active* by this strategy. It was converted from a regressive to a progressive social force, which provided the means to animate the ‘the force of will’ and to allow it to be ‘most fruitfully applied’ to the counter-cultural struggle⁷⁴. It is this process of practical discrimination which we see Gramsci referring to in the *Notebooks* as the ‘science and art of politics’⁷⁵.

Such analyses were certainly not to be seen as ends in themselves; instead, they gained their worth only to the extent that they exorcised certain ‘primitive’ modes of reasoning and were thus instrumental in fanning a passion and igniting a will. With this new form of historiography thereby representing the ‘active’ and ‘operative expression’ of a new form of ‘popular’ knowledge – a rejection simultaneously of the coupling of capital to knowledge, as has already been noted in Chapter 5 – what Gramsci saw embodied in the pages of Machiavelli’s manifesto⁷⁶ was nothing other than the depiction of a political strategy designed for the creation of a genuinely national-popular and counter-cultural movement. Activated by the ‘good sense’ generated through historical criticism, this new ‘collective will’ (defined similarly as ‘party’ in Gramsci’s eyes) was the expression, no less, of a subaltern victory⁷⁷. It typified the rejection of the continuation of external rule through the parallel growth of

⁷² SPN, p.177-178.

⁷³ SPN, p.178. This problem is often mentioned in several of his notes. In a discussion about democratic centralism, for instance, he put this concern in the following terms:

[The] continuous effort to separate out the ‘international’ and ‘unitary’ element in national and local reality is true concrete political action, the sole activity productive of historical progress. It requires an organic unity between theory and practice, between intellectual strata and popular masses, between rulers and ruled. (SPN, pp.189-190)

⁷⁴ SPN, p.185.

⁷⁵ Gramsci offered the following definition for this phrase:

The study of how ‘situations’ should be analysed, in other words how to establish the various levels of the relations of force, offers an opportunity for an elementary exposition of the science and art of politics — understood as a body of practical rules for research and of detailed observations useful for awakening an interest in effective reality and for stimulating more rigorous and more vigorous political insights. (SPN, pp.175-176)

⁷⁶ *The Prince* deserved to be regarded as more than simply a literary work. In Gramsci’s assessment, it was a political manifesto, capable of inaugurating a collective will (SPN, p.127, p.134).

⁷⁷ He wrote that good sense was both ‘an intellectual unity and an ethic in conformity with a conception of reality that has gone beyond common sense and become, if only within narrow limits, a critical conception’ (SPN, p.333).

one's own cognitive and organic sensibilities.

Given Gramsci's assessment of the significance of Machiavelli's work to the task of incubating a new form of popular and democratic culture, it is therefore hardly surprising that Croce's counter-reading of Machiavelli's contribution becomes more explicit as Gramsci reviews the finer points of innovation in thought and practice inherent within this new type of historiography⁷⁸. In particular, it is within his exegesis of the transformations issued by the popularization of knowledge and the new relationship that it establishes between the traditional intellectuals and the mass where Gramsci draws more directly on Croce's ideas. Not only does he do this to illustrate the error of the latter's interpretation of Machiavelli but also to expose Croce's own reduction of the philosophy of praxis to what Gramsci terms 'an empirical canon of historical research'⁷⁹. His repeated references to the importance of the philosophy of praxis as a 'new way of conceiving the world and man'⁸⁰ betrays his open hostility towards Croce's attempts to deliberately downplay the features contributing to its uniqueness⁸¹. Whilst thus acknowledging the very important contribution that Croce's work had unquestioningly played in directing his own attention towards the 'front of cultural struggle' and the construction of the 'doctrine of hegemony as a complement to the theory of the State-as-force'⁸², Gramsci nonetheless condemned the deficiencies within Croce's philosophical suppositions for their inherently individualistic and anti-historical tendencies⁸³.

⁷⁸ For a much more thorough treatment of the manner in which Gramsci's reading of Machiavelli should also be read as a critique of Croce, see Fontana's *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (op. cit., 1993).

⁷⁹ SPN, p.39). In a comment in his fourth notebook, Gramsci made the following remark about the dialectic and Croce's failure to understand it:

The dialectic is also a technique—and it is precisely as a technique that many philosophers have difficulty accepting it—but it is also a new thought, a new philosophy...Croce's *La Critica* has published many reviews that demonstrate this failing to understand dialectical technique and the new mode of thought. (PN 2; Notebook 4, entry 18, p.160)

⁸⁰ SPN, p.417.

⁸¹ In Gramsci's view, Croce had wrongly interpreted Marx's concept of the superstructure as an appearance or an illusion. Gramsci defended this error in the following manner:

Croce's theory...reproduces only one part, the critical-destructive part, of Marxist theory. For Marx, 'ideologies' are anything but appearances and illusions: they are an objective and operative reality; they just are not the mainspring of history, that's all. It is not ideologies that create social reality but social reality, in its productive structure, that creates ideologies. ...the aim of his theory is also, precisely, to make a specific social group 'become conscious' of its own tasks, its own power, its own coming-into-being. (PN 2; Notebook 4, entry 15, p.157)

⁸² SPN, note 5, p.56.

⁸³ Gramsci expressed his dislike of Croce's activities on a number of occasions. He wrote the following in one of his letters for example (from *Lettere dal Carcere*, pp.631-633 as cited in SPN, note 6, p.128):

[Croce's] teaching produces perhaps the greatest quantity of 'gastric juices' to assist the process of digestion. Set in its historical context, the context of Italian history, Croce's work appears to be the most powerful mechanism for 'conforming' the new forces to its vital

To Gramsci, Croce's position as one of the leading exponents of Italian politics meant that his role in relation to the concrete organization of culture was profoundly significant. In this connection, supported by what Croce took to be Machiavelli's legitimation of politics as an autonomous and separate enterprise, distinct from philosophical endeavour, the former was completely unwilling to admit that either philosophy in general, or his own philosophizing in particular, functioned as a political tool. Unwilling to contemplate the political/ practical purposes to which his own thoughts were inevitably being employed, Croce's strenuous denial of his role in the consolidation of the existing social order simply gave his work additional potency. In Gramsci's determination, insofar as Croce's positive support of a traditional concept of intellectualism translated conversely into his effective endorsement of the 'non-intellectualism' of the mass, his ideas thus consolidated the permanent divide between the latter in terms of the former. With Gramsci having himself fallen victim to such prejudicial treatment in his own upbringing, he was therefore only too well aware of the efficacy of Croce's destructive philosophy⁸⁴.

It is important at this juncture to understand that implicit within Gramsci's critique of Croce's philosophical activities is also a broader critique of Enlightenment theory, more generally. Despite the fact that the liberalism that Croce pretended to espouse was touted as the apex of civilized human culture and the epitome of a democratic ethos, as Gramsci had been repeatedly trying to suggest, a theory of intellectualism that legitimated the exclusive privileges of a small group of (state) functionaries likewise signalled the alienation of the majority from politics and of the detachment of 'self' from the society in which it interacted. In simple terms, liberalism maintained its 'order' via the subordination of personal judgments to the external and impersonal authority of abstractions ('the rule' or 'the right'). Rather than individuals therefore exercising constant vigilance towards reality – developing their own 'good sense', no less – they were being encouraged instead to abandon their own creative endeavours and to submit their judgments to pre-existing rules and codified schemas. In Gramsci's estimation, this type of order was *an imposed order*; one sanctioned by a perverse logic that undermined the cognitive and moral faculties that could have provided the necessary ground for the construction of genuinely higher order forms of

interests (not simply its immediate interests, but its future ones as well) that the dominant group possesses, and I think that the latter has a proper appreciation of his utility, superficial appearances notwithstanding.

⁸⁴ Croce's philosophy was destructive insofar as his philosophical ideas supported the perpetuation of an elite group of people advantaged primarily through the status and opportunities that capital brought them. Gramsci's own financial disadvantage, it will be recalled, had made his own access to these same educational and cultural opportunities decidedly more difficult.

justice and democracy.

Behind Gramsci's advocacy of a philosophy of praxis and his steadfast opposition to the theories of Croce, we witness an unshakeable conviction in the practical nature of philosophy and its indispensable role in sanctioning the development of an authentic, democratic culture. Of all the models of politics to privilege intellectual and moral conformity to an external authority and abstract social order, Croce's was by far the most blatant. Motivated by his opposition to Croce, Gramsci's attempt to *reappropriate* and *popularize* the concept of philosophy was the means by which he *opposed to the old 'Crocean' legality a living model of his own organic and democratic culture*. As we read in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), the modern Prince was the philosophy of praxis *in concrete guise*. Importantly, it represented the success of previously marginalized 'wills' in achieving 'objectivity' based on the application of dialectic and organic thought. The party thus both *expressed* and *modelled in practice* the negation of a myriad of liberal notions: culture, education, intellectualism, philosophy, politics, state, democracy and justice. In this respect, the 'modern Prince' epitomized a re-valuation of the basic premises of human association in favour of the fundamental recognition of the centrality of the social to the qualitative advancement of all humankind.

At this point, I would like to close this discussion by summarizing what I see as being the main elements of the counter-hegemonic characteristics of Gramsci's Marxism. From what I have explained above, Gramsci felt that none of these so-called intellectuals had really understood the challenges that Marxism posed as a completely different mode of thought. It was for this very reason that he made such a central feature of Machiavelli's originality of outlook. As Gramsci boasted, the historiographical approach that underpinned Machiavelli's worldview constituted a complete supercession of all previous variants of political thought. Describing this outlook as one that substantially altered the existing worldview⁸⁵, Machiavelli was merely attesting in his own politics to the revolutionary nature of Marx's ideas. Strangely for Gramsci however, it was perhaps the greatest irony of both Machiavelli and Marx's 'innovation' that each was simply reclaiming an 'old' science⁸⁶. For this was what 'good sense' entailed: using theory to understand the world better and examining the world

⁸⁵ SPN, p.151.

⁸⁶ Just as education and culture and state had been converted into abstract concepts by capitalist ideology (they had been commodified), so too had science. Gramsci was merely reappropriating and popularizing (proletarianizing) the concept.

concretely to sharpen and correct the ‘error’ of theory⁸⁷. To the degree that Marxism expressed this co-dependency through its dialectic and organic theory, it was a ‘creative’ worldview⁸⁸. For what could be more humanly creative (productive) than *active participation in practical life*?⁸⁹

It was in this way that the Machiavellian/ Gramscian philosophy of praxis epitomized a truly cognitively and morally defiant epistemology and practice. Having identified the multiple ways in which capitalism was etched upon history as a ‘negative praxis’⁹⁰ through language’s normalizing effects – a process which entailed the decoupling of theory from practice and the dictatorship of abstractions, as we have seen – what Gramsci had been urging was that *the* most fundamental aspect of Marxism was the negation of this same culture⁹¹. An anti-subaltern, social ethos began with this simple but elementary understanding. In a nutshell, Marxism stood for the repossession of humanity’s *creative capacity* by refocusing on an unmasked present: it stood for the repossession of a mode of thought liberated from the impoverished portrait of human possibility that issued from capitalism’s anti-historicist, anti-dialectical and anti-human agenda. The struggle to achieve a proletarian hegemony was a struggle to achieve *neohuman reform*.

⁸⁷ This entire outlook was captured in Gramsci’s thoughts regarding the movement from ‘technique-as-work’ to ‘technique-as-science’ which captured the shift from a passive state of labouring responsive to external authority and command to ‘technique-as-science’. This latter term implied a state where active participation encompassing a humanist conception of history was valued (*SPN*, p.10).

⁸⁸ ‘Creativity’ and a Marxist worldview are essentially synonymous within Gramsci’s writings. He specifically uses this term to describe a number of changes facilitated by Marxism (see *SPN*, p.346). For example, he describes ‘creativity’ as ‘thought which modifies the feelings of many’ and therefore of ‘reality itself’. He contends further that ‘reality does not exist on its own, in and for itself, but only in an historic relationship with the men who modify it’.

⁸⁹ As argued in Chapter 4, the Marxist concept of production must be understood in a more than simply ‘technique-as-work’ sense (which denotes passivity for Gramsci and the self-assimilation of the values of capital, as I have explained in a previous footnote). Instead, he utilizes a ‘technique-as-science’ concept to try to show that the active component of production ought to be emphasized. Liberated from the passivity which capitalist valuation ascribed to it (which the word ‘labour’ itself suggests), production becomes an active concept because its onto-formative capacity is again recognized.

⁹⁰ I noted previously how some commentators chose to describe the stultification of the creative potential of humanity by a capitalist rationality as ‘negative praxis’. This seems a useful way to describe the functioning of these ideas and values in relation to the progressive potential of the Marxist mode of thought.

⁹¹ It is difficult to think of a domain of human practice that has not fallen victim to the culture of abstraction. ‘The market’ is perhaps one of the most vivid examples of the creation of an extra-human institution that commands an incredibly powerful allegiance. For a more comprehensive account of this process, see Derek Sayer’s *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

4. Reconsidering Hegemony: The Uncritical Democracy of Laclau and Mouffe

In light of this explanation, we can see how ‘hegemony’ itself is an integral concept within Gramsci’s (Marxist) philosophy of praxis. It is a concept that has two faces. On the one hand, while it exposes the problem of the inorganic and anti-dialectical worldview epitomizing the ethos of a capitalist rationality – effectively signalling the broader and very ‘material’ problem of cognitive and moral submissiveness inherent in capital’s extra-economic aspect⁹² – on the other hand, it offers enormous opportunity for counter-relational and counter-valuational intervention correspondingly. And this is precisely hegemony’s strength as a concept: while describing the means by which the logic of the capitalist economy corrodes historical/ political/ philosophical sensibilities – and transforms these sensibilities into more sympathetic receptors for continued dictatorial practices – *it similarly exhibits its own dialectical and organic capacity for transformative praxis.*

Given that this account provides us with an invaluable resource against which we might re-examine the claims for a post-Marxist abandonment of this usage, I want to conclude this investigation with just such a review. It is against my own reading of the dynamic nature of Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis that we are now provided with a much clearer vantage point from which to assess the merits of a neo-Gramscian, post-Marxist revisioning. As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, I do not see that it is *Marxism* that is the regressive theory. Indeed, as I have indicated from the outset, I attribute much of the sympathy that the post-Marxists have generated in favour of their position to a nebulous and confused knowledge – by themselves and by many of their supporters⁹³ – of the philosophical and practical underpinnings of Marxism itself. Paradoxically, while Laclau and Mouffe therefore happily abandon a perceived ‘structural’ and ‘totalitarian’ Marxism in favour of what they call a Gramscian alternative (albeit sanitized against the last remnants of that alleged ‘theology’), this very judgment exhibits a disturbing lack of awareness of the fact that Gramsci’s whole lifework typified

⁹² Hegemony moves us beyond a simple economic explanation of class dominance – one that is purely confined to the level of the political economy.

⁹³ We find writers like Simon Tormey, for instance (‘Post-Marxism, Democracy and the Future of Radical Politics’. *Democracy & Nature*, 7, 1, 2001: pp.119-134) are reasonably sympathetic to the work of Laclau and Mouffe because of the latter’s dogmatic and deterministic description of Marxism. I see this as a huge irony however, in that their own understanding of Gramsci expresses the pseudo-Marxist misunderstandings of which Gramsci was so condemnatory.

the very principles and practices epitomized by Marx⁹⁴.

Evidence for this conclusion is borne out readily by an examination of the many extraordinary statements contained in a host of works published by Laclau and Mouffe⁹⁵, seemingly representative of their collective knowledge of the Marxist tradition and presented in support of what these writers take to be legitimate reasons for the 'anti-totalizing' and 'anti-totalitarian' assumptions that have purportedly acted as the drivers behind their project⁹⁶. Suffice to say that having gone to some considerable effort to examine their ideas fairly, I am in complete agreement with critics of post-Marxism who claim that the post-Marxist's understanding of Marxism is alarmingly facile and shallow. Given the extraordinarily simplistic and pernicious picture of Marxism that Laclau and Mouffe have painted, even the most ardent Marxist sympathizers would be compelled to rethink the very reasons for their allegiance to socialism⁹⁷. Indeed, the over-glamorization of their own capacities to 'surpass' Marxism by means of this campaign of 'misrepresentation' certainly leaves one to wonder, right

⁹⁴ This is not to deny that Laclau and Mouffe think of Gramsci's work as Marxist. Instead, what I am saying here is that in misunderstanding the nature of Marxism, they similarly misunderstand the integrity of Gramsci's work in relation to this philosophical/ practical tradition.

⁹⁵ The works which I have surveyed here are listed in chronological order: Laclau & Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1985); Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe, 'Post-Marxism Without Apologies' (*New Left Review*, 166, 1987: pp.79-106); Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy' (In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988a: pp.89-101); Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 1988b: pp.31-45); Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1990); Ernesto Laclau, 'The Impossibility of Society' (*Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 15, 1-3, 1991: pp.24-27); Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London: Verso, 1992a); Chantal Mouffe, 'Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community' (Chapter 11 in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*. London: Verso, 1992c: pp.225-239); Chantal Mouffe, 'Liberal Socialism and Pluralism: Which Citizenship?' (In Judith Squires (Ed.), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993: pp.69-84); Daly (*op. cit.*, 1994); Ernesto Laclau (Ed.), *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994); Chantal Mouffe, 'Politics, Democratic Action and Solidarity' (*Inquiry*, 38, 1-2, 1995a: pp.99-108); Chantal Mouffe, 'Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics' (Chapter 11 in Linda Nicholson & Steve Seidman (Eds.), *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995b: pp.315-331); Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996); Chantal Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?' (Chapter 2 in David Trend (Ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*. New York: Routledge, 1996: pp.19-26); Chantal Mouffe, 'Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos' (*Philosophy Today* [Celina], 41, 1, Spring 1997: pp.24-29); Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?' (*Social Research*, 66, 3, Fall 1999: pp.745-59); Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, & Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000); and Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).

⁹⁶ As mentioned previously in this study, even one of Laclau's most recent discussions of Gramsci (Butler, Laclau & Zizek, *op. cit.*, 2000) reveals that much of his interpretation of Gramsci's ideas is based on Norberto Bobbio's 1979 chapter 'Gramsci and the Conception of Civil Society' (in Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979a: pp.21-47).

⁹⁷ Best and Kellner's statement is a typical assessment of Laclau and Mouffe's position in relation to Marxism (*Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1991):

Much of their analysis replicates earlier critiques of the Second International Marxism...It is ironic, therefore, that arch-deconstructors Laclau and Mouffe produce an essentialist and monistic reading of a complex and heterogeneous Marxist tradition. (p.201)

from the beginning, about the accuracy of the judgments contained in post-Marxism, based upon this blatant initial failure to represent accurately and fairly the way of life (the philosophy and praxis) that Marxism promotes.

To my mind, the linear and unidimensional theory of 'discursive practice'⁹⁸ through which they have chosen to pursue what is claimed to be a parallel concern with Marxists for 'relations of subordination'⁹⁹ – and for expanding the 'seeds of universality' so as to increase our ability to compete with the 'neoliberal consensus' which has dominated world politics 'for the last thirty years'¹⁰⁰ – neither provides them with the equivalent philosophical means to recognize the specific nature and extent of this assault, nor furnishes them with a set of alternative tools through which they might adequately create the concrete sea-changes they so desperately seek to invoke¹⁰¹. As I explain here, perhaps the most ironic aspect of this new 'logic' is that their victim-centred politics of 'freedom and equality for all' loses its very capacity to gauge the fullest extent of that victim-hood through the accompanying loss of subjectivity that their discursive paradigm promotes.

What must be said from the outset though, is that I do not challenge the legitimacy of the post-Marxist preference for viewing our subjectivity as *embedded in a particular time and culture (language)*. This is exactly the other paradox within their work – that in fleeing Marx and embracing Wittgenstein's 'contextualist' approach¹⁰², they needed only to have turned to Gramsci to explain how Marxism offers the equivalent 'fluid' and 'dynamic' picture of history and culture upon which they might have based their own arguments more profitably. Unfortunately, owing to the paucity of these understandings of the explanatory capabilities of an historical materialist worldview, we find a rather hybrid theory being woven together from a vicarious set of

⁹⁸ Most writers acknowledge that the theory of 'discursive practise' underwrites post-Marxism, although Jacob Torfing has argued that the best description for Laclau and Mouffe's approach is 'discourse-theoretical analytics' (*New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999: p.12).

⁹⁹ Mouffe (*op., cit.*, 1996: p.20).

¹⁰⁰ Butler, Laclau & Zizek (*op., cit.*, 2000: p.306).

¹⁰¹ Part of the problem is their sympathies with Richard Rorty's ideas where there is a similar advocacy for the demotion of theory to politics. As I argue here, their shared concern with being 'undistracted with theory' promotes precisely what Jonathon Ree has called an anti-theoreticism that is itself a kind of 'involved puritanism'. What remains is a Rortean type of optimism in the sheer force of political willpower alone to create social change (see Jonathon Ree, 'Strenuous Unbelief'. *London Review of Books*, 20, 20, 1998: pp.7-11).

¹⁰² See especially Chapter 3, 'Wittgenstein, Political Theory and Democracy' in Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000: pp.60-79). This book is essentially a collection of some of Mouffe's earlier published work. For a critique of the use of Wittgenstein in Laclau and Mouffe's work, see David Bernans, 'Historical Materialism and Ordinary Language: Grammatical Peculiarities of the Class Struggle "Language Game"' (*Rethinking Marxism*, 11, 2, 1999: pp.18-37).

sources¹⁰³. Preoccupied largely with pursuing the logic of Wittgensteinian thought in relation to political theorizing, an overall lack of engagement with Marxist insights leads inevitably to a ‘flattening’ of argumentation with an under-theorization of power and its operation as a consequence¹⁰⁴. Accordingly, whilst they *do* begin to adopt a radical skepticism towards ‘context-independent’ judgments, their pursuit of a theory of embeddedness through what some have maintained is their dubious interpretation of Wittgenstein’s language insights – rather than Gramsci’s – inclines their gaze completely away from a focus on the economic in relation to human agency. In this sense, they ignore the very real cognitive and moral problems that Gramsci espoused in relation to the constraints on reasoning and valuation entailed by the dominance of capitalism¹⁰⁵.

In this respect, whilst Wittgenstein helps them to understand the way in which we find ourselves constructed through our language and embedded within a culture *which is already expressive of a shared tradition*, they do not begin to grasp the full educational significance of these insights with reference to their own valuation of plurality and conflict as a ‘naturally’ occurring feature of the social landscape. Dismissing ontology as hindering the movement towards the construction of a pluralist democratic ethos, the *de facto* ontological portrait that they instead adopt is ironically that which has been engineered surreptitiously into our culture by a pervasive capitalist logic. Indeed, notwithstanding their desire to introduce a new mode of thought about the social that leads us beyond the excessive individualism that is part and parcel of our present thinking¹⁰⁶, their failure to recognize the role that a capitalist rationality plays in the construction of the very type of society that they so vehemently decry, leads them to the naïve conclusion that the manifestation of this type of identity is simply the product of *persuasion*. ‘Persuading’ people ‘to broaden their range of

¹⁰³ Mouffe’s work, in particular, is influenced by the appropriation of various insights from all manner of sources.

¹⁰⁴ Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 2000: pp.60-70) employs Wittgenstein in order to argue that democracy must be more than merely *procedural*: that creating a democratic ethos requires the generation of many different practices rather than simply prompting people to ‘obey a rule’. It must become a form of life instead.

¹⁰⁵ I find their assessment of political theorists such as Rawls to be misguided. To label his activities as misconceived completely ignores the fact that Rawls did not ignore the problem of our socio-cultural embeddedness within his theorizing but instead *acknowledged* it. He had no intention of creating a ‘universal rational theory’, as Mouffe alleges, but rather tried to show how the problem of our temporal and cultural embeddedness, and the subsequent consent that we assign to our existing conceptions of justice, forces us to re-examine those arrangements to check that they are indeed as ‘just’ as we are claiming them to be.

¹⁰⁶ This is one of their key criticisms of a neoliberal worldview and one which Mouffe, in particular, has expressed in relation to existing liberalism.

commitments to others to build a more inclusive community¹⁰⁷ is the task, one which is to be pursued via a multiplicity of ‘practices, discourses and language-games’¹⁰⁸ instrumental to this goal.

To explain the problem in different terms, and to be slightly more generous to the spirit of post-Marxism, Laclau and Mouffe’s appeal to social embeddedness compels them to sidestep traditional appeals to ontology (more specifically, to sidestep the associated claims to morality and truth that they have judged to have traditionally accompanied this focus), in order to restore to humankind what was simultaneously taken from it – its ability to make itself into whatever it chooses¹⁰⁹. Without doubt, it is also this perception that accounts for the widespread wariness that they display towards all existing modernist concepts and ideologies¹¹⁰. Following Rorty – whose ideas we can see writ large within their work – Laclau and Mouffe’s stance is one which echoes his belief that little is to be gained by trying to work out intrinsically *what we are*. Our need, they concur, is therefore not for ‘knowledge’ but for ‘hope’. Politics, not philosophy, offers such hope but politics understood in an entirely pragmatic sense; that is, rid of its idealistic and utopian elements and reflective of the constitutive character of social division and antagonism. Unfettered by the layers of optimistic deceit upon which our present social institutions and arrangements have been historically based, it is through this revisionism that democracy is no longer to be considered an abstract ideal – either in an individualized or universalized form and entirely constructed from a theoretical set of normative imperatives.

But insofar as post-Marxism signals its abandonment of a type of Rawlsian and Habermasian striving for an impartial and rational consensus¹¹¹, so too does it ultimately signal a corresponding rejection of Rorty’s alternative: a politics of ‘sentimentalism’ upon which we might begin to construct a new social climate

¹⁰⁷ Mouffe (*op. cit.*, 2000: pp.65-66).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* (p.70).

¹⁰⁹ In this respect, their work echoes many sentiments endorsed by Richard Rorty. See *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998a) and *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers [Volume 3]* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998b).

¹¹⁰ As in Rorty’s work, there is a firm conviction that by demoting theory and elevating politics, the world can be transformed by a type of collective self-reliance.

¹¹¹ Mouffe sees the work of Jurgen Habermas as similar to Rawls in that the same striving for transparency in communication to reach a more homogeneous political community is present in the assumptions of both theorists. Mouffe refers especially to Habermas’s earlier work – *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Thomas McCarthy, Trans. Cambridge: Polity, 1989) – as well as his later work – *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (William Rehg, Trans. Cambridge: Polity, 1996).

underscored by a type of ‘human rights ethos’¹¹². Opting to consider the conjunction between ethics and politics in an altogether ‘different way’¹¹³, they suggest the need ‘to problematize the nature of human sociability’¹¹⁴ in light of what they perceive to be the ‘ineradicably antagonistic’ dimension of politics. Rather than believing then in the possibility of a type of democratic and judicial telos – in which the reconciliation between politics and ethics is envisaged as the alleviation of disharmony, and hence the end of all antagonism (politics) – they opt instead for a Lacanian/ Zizekian¹¹⁵ alternative: a type of ‘ethics of dis-harmony’¹¹⁶. Premised on the assumption that reciprocity and hostility are mutually dynamic aspects of the human condition¹¹⁷, a new concept of democracy and associational attachment is duly proposed¹¹⁸. It is at this point that the Gramscian concept of hegemony is deployed. Given the loss of a ‘centre’ which bound interests together previously via power or knowledge or morality, hegemony becomes a new nodal point which acts as a ‘suture’ to bind uncommon interests (articulations) into a confederation of ‘radically democratic’ entities¹¹⁹.

It is from this position of the untenability of attempts to judge conduct universally according to pronouncements regarding the nature of human life itself, that post-Marxism thus proposes ‘democracy’ as an alternative ‘anchorage’ for this new type of particularistic ethics. With democracy now conceived as an ‘open space’ within which a variety of ‘democratic identities’ co-exist, agreeing to disagree about varying conceptions of ‘the good’, it is simultaneously a space which loosely unifies interests in a common regard for the Enlightenment principles of equality and freedom for all. Consequently, we come full circle back to the proposed means to avoid full-blown relativism: diverse democratic struggles must be united around a new notion of ‘citizenship’ that admits agonism (difference) whilst also condemning the fundamental

¹¹² See Rorty (*op. cit.*, 1998a & 1998b).

¹¹³ Perhaps the best account of ethics in Laclau and Mouffe’s work comes in the form of Mouffe’s ‘Conclusion: The Ethics of Democracy’ (*op. cit.*, 2000: pp.129-140).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ In Mouffe’s *The Paradox of Democracy* (2000), she reiterates the importance of Jacques Lacan’s theory in undermining the Habermasian theory of a perfect intersubjective communication free from tension. Likewise, the work of Slavoj Zizek has featured prominently in their work. Although Zizek has been said to have been extremely supportive of Laclau and Mouffe’s efforts, the distance between their work is nonetheless highlighted in Butler, Laclau & Zizek (*op. cit.*, 2000).

¹¹⁶ Jacques Laclau is credited with articulating this position.

¹¹⁷ Derrida’s ideas have been highly influential in Laclau and Mouffe’s assessment of the underlying nature of humankind.

¹¹⁸ Alexandra Tanesini has examined Mouffe’s work in a recent article, ‘In Search of Community: Mouffe, Wittgenstein and Cavell’ (*Radical Philosophy*, 110, November-December 2001: pp.12-19). She points out how the scepticism that underpins Mouffe’s preference for relinquishing the possibility of constructing more homogeneous political communities revolves around how we think about a ‘we’. Tanesini argues here that there is no necessity to treat others always as adversaries in the way in which Mouffe’s deconstructive view of community building proposes.

¹¹⁹ Hegemony is defined in various ways: as a ‘field of hegemonic practices’

inequities that are an inherent feature of antagonistic racist, sexist and capitalist practices. A pluralism that is compatible with a struggle against inequality and threats to the freedom of assorted interest groups is therefore the type of pluralism defined by the post-Marxist thesis: a thesis of 'radical' democracy.

Although it is easy to agree with post-Marxists that democracy must be more than merely procedural and has to be marked by a strong sense of participation and responsibility among its citizenry, it is far harder to agree that their new model of agonistic pluralism is the *harbinger* of democracy rather than simply its *nemesis*. A number of points can be made in defense of the latter judgment, least of which issue from the extreme corruption of the Gramscian concept of hegemony and its utilization to legitimate permanent human division. The benefits accrued from the Gramscian theory, which utilized embeddedness not only in understanding the constructed nature of identity but also in providing insights into the constraints upon the human mind and human learning, are unhappily lost in their theory of discursive subjectivity. This is due to the absence of the 'leaven' that was intrinsic within Gramsci's own theory of hegemony; namely, his theory of education or cultural learning. Despite the fact that Laclau and Mouffe therefore celebrate a Freudian/ Lacanian view of subjectivity, making it a prominent feature within their work, it is a view of subjectivity that nonetheless takes for granted the *source* of humanity's antagonisms. In this respect, the seemingly 'natural' state of self and social diversity is only natural if one chooses to ignore the full implications of embeddedness with regard to the construction of the social.

What I am arguing here is that the absence of any theory of cultural learning – either positive or negative with respect to identity formation and transformation – means that the post-Marxists' theory of democracy is bereft of any deeper acknowledgement of the *social character of mind and a concept of pathology in relation to selfhood*. In discussing how identity is inscribed by discursive practices, a more precise analysis not only of the extent to which our identity is *submerged* – and thus *effectively imprisoned* – by economic and extra-economic influences is effectively avoided, just as consideration of the possible 'harm' done to autonomy by the particular interest groupings into which we happen to find ourselves affiliated is, additionally. Their obsessive need to occlude modernist categories of thought leads ironically to the presumption of self-determination and autonomy as an automatic given: the assumption being that refashioning oneself into whatever identity one chooses is a

relatively straight-forward affair. Likewise, *what* one chooses to embrace is treated unproblematically. With all interests being regarded as 'equivalent' in terms of their desert with respect to 'agonistic' protection, there is a summary dismissal of the entire category of the pathological in terms of prejudice. In fact, there is *an inability to consider a qualitative dimension of human living* by virtue of the terms of reference prescribed by this distinctive anti-ontological stance.

Moreover, given that capitalistic protest is but one of several types of protest promoted by Laclau and Mouffe, it is impossible *not* to read this thesis as anything other than *a glorified thesis of social mobility*. With the source of antagonism and marginalization generally going hand-in-hand with the lack of access that a particular interest might suffer in relation to material disadvantage, they advocate for democratic pressure to be directed towards ensuring equality of resourcing and freedom of access to pathways that secure such benefits. In this respect, the *practices* of capitalism – its *effects* – and not its *ideology* are being challenged within post-Marxist theory. This is certainly in keeping with their non-recognition of class as a key explanatory category. If we reject the notion of 'class' then we are left with a portrait of isolated power groupings exerting undue pressures upon more marginalized groups. Indeed, hegemony's revisioning as a 'suture' to bind dissimilar (yet 'equivalent') interest groupings into a common struggle to achieve recognition and equality against more powerful rivals appears to confirm this judgment. Their repeated references to the need to establish a democratic obligation to each other so that a shared (but non-substantive) sense of community can be developed, reads as a further vote in favour of the neutralization of overall economic challenge in relation to democratic progress. The general impression we are subsequently left with is that what is needed to expedite this objective is a healthy dose of radical thought and citizenly goodwill.

For my own part, the exclusions and closures to thinking that are initiated by post-Marxism's denial of a concept of pathology in relation to the human condition, points to its inability to even begin to *think about the problem of subaltern thought and practice* in the manner that the Gramscian concept of hegemony signalled. The image of self that the post-Marxists choose to project is that of a confident, independent and autonomous chooser who is wholly unencumbered (psychologically and cognitively) by the history of their learning. A further assumption – that this figure has no doubts about the particular contingencies that govern his or her life – is premised likewise on the parallel supposition than any doubts that might arise are simply the product of 'taste'

which can be amended accordingly. Nowhere is serious concern ever registered that taste is a by-product of the preferential prejudices that we subsequently acquire as part of our unwitting socialization. In other words, if we *were* to recognize fully the implications of always being on ‘the inside’ of history and culture, one would have thought that a permanent wariness should be shown towards all inherited tastes and preferences, so that they are not simply embraced wholeheartedly as if these traits were always merely products of our ‘choice’.

To conclude this discussion, this loss of the educative-formative dimension that is inherent in Gramsci’s conception of hegemony results in the loss of definition of human life with respect to the nature of the idiosyncrasies that cultural learning generates. To base equality on the simplistic grounds of equal respect for each and every (seemingly ‘private’¹²⁰) idiosyncrasy is to concede submissiveness to the prevailing authorities and the forms of prejudice that are already harboured within the existing social order¹²¹. As noted earlier in the present chapter, one of the most significant problems that Gramsci highlighted as being an effective ‘guarantor’ of the perpetuation of submissiveness was a pronounced inability by his confreres to distinguish appropriately between ‘natural’ contingencies and those aberrations which were the result of human invention. He wanted them to realize how the pre-conditioning upon thought and emotion that individuals received through their own socialization was, in fact, the origin of their passivity; a process whereby their minds were taught to condone, as normal, a plethora of abstractions that capitalist rationality propagated in both its economic and extra-economic dimensions. This recognition of the problem of cognitive and moral submissiveness was the problem that Gramsci’s theory of hegemony signalled: namely, the sense in which our own best powers of judgment are in reality undermined by the socio-political manipulation of our seemingly self-authored idiosyncrasies; of our unwitting favouring of fetishized forms of thought and social practice.

¹²⁰ A thesis of social embeddedness points to the manner in which even our ‘private’ preferences are in fact a product of social reasoning. In this respect, there is no such thing as ‘civil’ society divorced from ‘political’ society. The intimate ways in which our personal preferences are shaped by and impact upon others connect these preferences always back to the society in which we live.

¹²¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have aptly named post-Marxist politics the ‘politics of avoidance’. See their *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form* [Theory Out of Bounds, Vol. 1] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

5. Conclusion: From Pathologies to Possibilities

As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, and indeed throughout this study as a whole, Gramsci's concept of democracy was predicated on the understanding of the operation of hegemony and its stifling effect upon the critical dimensions of character and connection. Insofar as hegemony signified pathological, adaptive (inorganic and anti-dialectical) thought and behaviour, its significance for a theory of democracy was self-evident. Unless democratic theory took serious notice of the problem of hegemony, the domination of subjectivity implied by its presence could not help but circumscribe any broader democratic intent. Indeed, Gramsci's entire notebook archive can be thought of as his ongoing analysis of the pathology of the existing capitalist order; of the character of this pathology as well as the character of its conquest. To the extent that hegemony signals a deprivation of practical discrimination and independent reasoning (subaltern thinking), at the same time, its characteristically dialectical nature presents it as the antithesis of this condition. When understood in this dialectical manner, hegemony equates to an orientation that critiques abstract democracy, defining instead a humanized concept where democracy equates to the very art and practice of living.

And this is perhaps the foremost lesson that can be gleaned from this close examination of Gramsci's work. It is fully Marxist through and through, endorsing particularly *the* fundamental lesson that Marx himself taught: that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but *their social being that determines their consciousness*. In any reading of Gramsci's work, it is my firm belief that one must always keep to the fore the basic philosophical premise that *life is a form of action*. What names alienation *as alienation* and fetishization *as fetishization* and hegemony *as hegemony* is this vital recognition that beings are onto-formative. They make themselves through their own perceptual orientation which is fashioned in the process of their own practice of 'labouring' – that is, it is formed through their own 'appropriational' activity which Marx broadly calls 'labour' and 'production'¹²². Abstractions and speculative constructions only 'take flesh', so to speak, when the

¹²² The normal meaning of both labour and production is thus given a significantly wider compass in Marx's thoughts than is generally commonplace. David Rubenstein (*op. cit.*, 1981) cites Marx's own writing, observing that in Marx's view, human essence lies nowhere but in productive activities: 'As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production both with what they produce and how they produce it'. Ollman (*op. cit.*, 1976 & 1993) and Sayers (*op. cit.*, 1987) equally endorse this view. Labouring equates to appropriation, and it is through appropriation that the ontology of human beings is fashioned. If this appropriation is one-sided, then mankind's nature is stunted correspondingly.

authoring capacity of humankind is lost sight of and the products of human creation are accorded an independent and fictitious life of their own (objectified). It was precisely these sorts of conjuring tricks that Gramsci sought to identify and confront through his own deployment of Marx's historical materialist method: the only method, in his view, which could illuminate mankind's dehumanizing labouring/ appropriational preferences¹²³.

Importantly, Gramsci's writings therefore convey this Marxist story of human 'forgetfulness' and 'self-enlightenment' simultaneously. 'Forgetting' that history and knowledge and religion and suchlike are products emanating from mankind's own 'labouring' practices, the fetishization of these capacities – and their subsequent transition into objective (reified) entities, external from the control of will – converted them (falsely) into 'durable historical forces'. As we witnessed in Gramsci's very early writing, 'culture' and 'education' were prime examples of this 'forgetting'. Externalized in such a way as to be no longer recognizable as natural elements of human sensual activity, thus distorting the social nature (i.e., social act) of production through their objectification, each becomes activity that is set apart from natural practice and known subsequently only in this fetishized state (i.e., within a narrow economy of exchange). With this alienation duly legitimated and rendered normative in all forms of institutional and non-institutional organization, Gramsci's campaign of conceptual reappropriation was a struggle to challenge these common sense 'limit-ideas': ideas that relied for their purchase on a cleavage between mind and action and on rendering this cleavage invisible, simultaneously.

'Cognitive and moral submissiveness' is the phrase that I have highlighted here in my own best efforts to describe how Gramsci chose to portray this complex scenario of ideological self-estrangement and ontological debasement. Using methods that affirmed his allegiance to Marx's dialectical and organic theory of internal relations, Gramsci's overt attempts to challenge the meaning of these fetishized terms were essentially his means of repositioning humankind once more at the centre of history – of restoring humanity's 'character' and 'personality' as I have emphasized throughout this study. A rejection furthermore of the philosophy of possessive individualism, as I

¹²³ Ollman (*op cit.*, 1976: pp.89-93) discusses the concept of appropriation in Marx. He describes how 'the individual appropriates the nature he perceives and has become oriented to by making it in some way part of himself with whatever effect this has on his senses and future orientation' (p.89). As Ollman explains, it is the nature of these appropriations and our sensitivity towards variation that constructs what we are and what we can become. Appropriation is thereby connected to our 'labouring' just as it is to our existing orientation and the openness we show towards new ways of viewing the world.

have also stressed, Gramsci's unwavering campaign against this cult of dispossession took cultural/ educational activity to be both the *form* and the *means* for achieving the victory of the politics of the common good; the struggle to reinvigorate a humanity that was no longer a victim of its own asocial and apolitical tendencies. Hence the need for a new type of leadership element, consolidated moreover in a new concept of party. Acknowledged in both was the simultaneous recognition that the incremental gains in autonomy of those who were subaltern were wholly dependent on the negation of the leadership element's own historical advantage.

As I have endeavoured to argue throughout this study, Gramsci's original concept thus affords a tremendously powerful insight for allowing us to understand, at the deepest possible level, anti-democratic ideology and practice. Unless democracy is defined in relation to this struggle against the cognitive and moral submissiveness of society to its own reificatory historical preferences, as Gramsci's work has shown, a community's capacity for its own self-advancement will remain forever circumscribed to a narrow, more restricted philosophy of democratic possibility. And this is precisely the problem that is lost sight of within post-Marxist theorizing, as I have argued here. Despite the fact that the intersubjective nature of life is affirmed by their deployment of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language – which locates individuals always 'on the inside' of their culture, just as it does their history – the entire 'political economy' that this insight suggests (contrary to Wittgenstein's own theory) is nonetheless conveniently ignored. Ironically then a perspective that endorses a fetishized and abstract view of subjectivity, all that post-Marxism accomplishes is to reinstate through the back door that which was thrown out the front; namely, it succeeds in reinscribing the fissure between individual 'subjectivities' and the cultural, linguistic, religious and economic traditions in which these have been invariably forged.

The flaws in this argument are obvious. Their portrayal of subjectivity as a de facto 'given' and 'good' ignores entirely the nature of the onto-formative problem to which the whole thrust of Gramsci's writings is expressly dedicated. In my own mind, it is hugely ironic that the very individualistic associational preferences promoted by post-Marxist advocates merely serve to exemplify and intensify the very real and deep-seated prejudices of capitalist logic in relation to the broader problem of social change. So, in spite of Laclau's recent parting wish (expressed in one of his latest publications¹²⁴) that fair-minded individuals must 'expand [the] seeds of universality so

¹²⁴ Laclau (*op. cit.*, 2000).

that we can have a full social imaginary, capable of competing with the neoliberal consensus'¹²⁵, he does not even suspect that the 'lack of imagination' afflicting 'vast sectors of the population' might possibly be the result of a *political outcome* engineered into the social by the combined economic and extra-economic forces of capitalism. In this respect, Laclau's own ignorance of the way in which his ideas are themselves embedded in an existing set of relations of force serves to illustrate how the absence of consideration of the educative-formative problem illuminated by Gramsci's historical materialist outlook is likely to handicap any theory which seeks to implement concrete, democratic change.

As Gramsci's work so aptly reveals, the educative-formative problem that underpins the concept of hegemony requires that any contemporary discussion of democracy include an added account of the very desires, values and understandings which oppose or constrain its advance. In this regard, the resignation that the post-Marxists show to 'antagonism' as a natural and defining characteristic of democracy blinds them entirely to the pathology of capitalism, such that their exceedingly pragmatic stance ultimately begs the question which democratic theory should itself aim to open up: namely, the extent to which our existing social preferences are or are not the product of our own conscious, educated choices. What my present study has been designed to demonstrate is that to ignore this dimension of the problem is to ignore precisely a dimension of the question of self-determination generally absent from debates about the nature of democracy. The problem is as much an *educational* as a political one, as Gramsci's legacy so clearly demonstrates.

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¹²⁵*Ibid.* (p.300).

-----APPENDIX-----

INDEX OF PRE-PRISON ARTICLES EXAMINED
AND THEIR SOURCES

ABBREVIATIONS:

English translations of Gramsci's writings that have been referred to in this thesis have been abbreviated as follows:

- MP** (1957b) *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (Louis Marks, Ed. & Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- SPN** (1971). *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- HPC** (1975). *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (Pedro Cavalcanti & Paul Piccone, Eds. & Pierluigi Molajoni, Mary Ann Aiello-Peabody, Paul Piccone, & John Thiem, Trans.). Saint Louis: Telos Press.
- SCW** (1985). *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From The Cultural Writings* (David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Eds. & William Boelhower, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- SPW 1** (1977/ 1990a). *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920): With additional texts by Bordiga and Tasca* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & John Mathews, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1977)
- SPW 2** (1978/ 1990b). *Selections from Political Writings (1921-1926): With additional texts by other Italian Communist leaders* (Quintin Hoare, Ed. & Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1978)
- PN 1** (1992). *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks (Volume I)* (Joseph A. Buttigieg & Antonio Callari, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- PPW** (1994a). *Antonio Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* (Richard Bellamy, Ed. & Virginia Cox, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LFP 1** (1994b) *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volume I)* (Frank Rosengarten, Ed. & Raymond Rosenthal, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- LFP 2** (1994c). *Letters from Prison: Antonio Gramsci (Volume II)* (Frank Rosengarten, Ed. & Raymond Rosenthal, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- PN 2** (1996). *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks (Volume II)* (Joseph A. Buttigieg, Ed. & Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

INDEX OF PRE-PRISON ARTICLES EXAMINED AND THEIR SOURCES
(CROSS-REFERENCED AND IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER):

Oppressed and Oppressors

November 1910 or early 1911

SPW 1, pp.3-5; *HPC*, pp.156-158

The Futurists

Corriere Universitario, 20 May 1913

SCW, pp.46-49

Active and Operative [Functional¹] Neutrality

31 October 1914, *Il Grido del Popolo*

SPW 1, pp.6-9; *HPC*, pp. 116-120; *PPW*, pp.3-7

The Light Which Went Out

20 November 1915, *Il Grido del Popolo*

HPC, pp.26-28

Intellectualism

11 January 1916, *Avanti!*

Cited in Buttigieg (1987: p.12)

Review of Mario Missiroli's 'Il Papa in Guerra'

Circa 1916 - date not specified

Cited in Buttigieg (1987: pp.13-14)

Socialism and Culture

29 January 1916, *Il Grido del Popolo*

SPW 1, pp.10-13; *HPC*, pp.20-23; *PPW*, pp.8-12

The Virtuous Press

16 February 1916, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.)

HPC, pp.93-94

Armenia

11 March 1916, *Il Grido del Popolo*

HPC, pp.79-81

The South and the War

1 April 1916, *Il Grido del Popolo*

HPC, pp.101-104

'La Consolata e i cattolici'

21 June 1916

Cited in Germino (1990: pp.41-42)

July 14th

15 July 1916, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.)

SPW 1, pp.10-13

A Veterinary Surgeon on Film

4 August 1916, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.)

SPW 1, pp.15-16

Indifference

26 August 1916, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.)

SPW 1, pp.17-18

Theatre and Cinema

26 August 1916, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)

SCW, pp.54-56

History

29 August 1916 *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.)

HPC, pp.69-70; *PPW*, pp.13-14

Socialism and Co-operation

30 October 1916, *L'Alleanza Cooperativa*

PPW, pp.15-18

The Territorial Idea

'Sotto la Mole', November 1916

Cited in Germino (1990: p.47)

Remembering the History of the Cotton Workers' Struggle

9 December 1916, *Il Grido del Popolo*

SPW 1, pp.19-24

Men or Machines?²

24 December 1916³, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)

SPW 1, pp.25-27; *HPC*, pp.33-35

¹ The *PPW* version titles this article, 'An Active and Functional Neutrality'.

² This article appeared under the broader headline banner of 'Socialists and education'.

³ The date given in the *HPC* version for this article is 24 December 1917. It also notes that this is the Turin edition rather than the Piedmont one.

Illiteracy

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, pp.28-29

Margins

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, pp.40-43

Discipline

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, p.49

Discipline and Freedom

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, p.50; PPW, p.26

Indifferents

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, pp.64-66

Three Principles, Three Orders

11 February 1917, *La Citta Futura* HPC, pp.70-75; PPW, pp.19-25

Character

3 March 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.52-54

Morality and Standards (Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' at the Carignano)

22 March 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.70-73

'Pensaci, Giacomino!' by Pirandello at the Alfieri

24 March 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.77-79

'L'loia' by Pirandello at the Alfieri

4 April 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.79-80

'Non Amarmi cosil' by Fraccaroli at the Carignano

18 April 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.73-74

Notes on the Russian Revolution

29 April 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* SPW 1, pp.28-30; HPC, pp.126-128; PPW, pp.31-34

The Theatre Industry [I]

28 June 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.56-58

The Theatre Industry [II]

4 July 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.58-61

The Chiarella Brothers Again

8 July 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.61-63

The Theatre Industry [III]

17 July 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.63-65

The Russian Maximalist[s]⁴

28 July 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* SPW 1, pp.31-33; HPC, pp.132-134

The Watchmaker

18 August 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.36-37

Continuation of Life

11 September 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.66-67

Socialism and Italy

22 September 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* PPW, pp.27-30

Contrasts

3 October 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.67-68

'Cosi e (se vi pare)' by Pirandello at the Carignano

5 October 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.81-82

La scimmia giacobina (The Jacobin Monkey)

22 October 1917, *Avanti!* Cited in Buttigieg (1995)

Literature

24 November 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.23-26

⁴ The title in the HPC edition is 'The Russian Maximalist' (singular).

'Il piacere dell' onesta' by Pirandello at the Carignano

29 November 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SCW*, pp.83-84

Intransigence-Tolerance: Intolerance-Compromise

8 December 1917, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.57-59

Clarifying Ideas About Bourgeois Reformism

11 December 1917, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) *HPC*, pp.94-96

Towards a Cultural Association⁵

18 December 1917, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) *HPC*, pp.96-99; *PPW*, pp.35-38; *SCW*, pp.20-23

The Revolution Against Capital

24 December 1917⁶, *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.34-37; *HPC*, pp.123-126; *PPW*, pp.39-42
 Republished 5 January 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo*

Philanthropy, Good Will and Organization

24 December 1917, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *HPC*, pp.43-45; *SCW*, pp.23-26

Critical Criticism

12 January 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.37-39; *PPW*, pp.43-46

The Social Function of the Nationalist Party

26 January 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.104-106

The Constitutional Assembly and the Soviets

26 January 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, p.146

The Beard and the Band

5 February 1918, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) *HPC*, 86-87

Economic Organization and Socialism⁷

9 February 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.88-89; *PPW*, pp.47-49

Socialism and Actualist Philosophy

9 February 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *PPW*, p.50

Universal Language and Esperanto⁸

16 February 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.29-33; *SCW*, pp.26-30

Wilson and the Russian Maximalists

2 March 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.129-131

The Club of Moral Life

Turin, March 1918, *Letter to G. Lombardo Radice* *PPW*, pp.51-53

Individualism and Collectivism

9 March 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.59-62

A Year of History

16 March 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.146-149

Republic and Proletariat in France

20 April 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.81-86

Your Heritage

1 May 1918, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) *HPC*, pp.12-15

Our Marx

4 May 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *HPC*, pp.9-12; *PPW*, pp.54-58

Class Intransigence and Italian History

18 May 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* *SPW* 1, pp.38-47; *PPW*, pp.59-69

Cocaine

21 May 1918, *Avanti!* *PPW*, pp.70-72

⁵ In *PPW*, this article is titled, 'Why We Need a Cultural Association'.

⁶ The *HPC* edition states that this article was published on 24 November, not 24 December, as the two other sources quote.

⁷ In *PPW*, this article is titled, 'Socialism and Economic Organization'.

⁸ 'A Single Language and Esperanto' is the title given in the *SCW* edition.

Culture and Class Struggle

25 May 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.109-111; SCW, pp.31-34

Serial Novels

25 May 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* SCW, pp.34-37

The Peasants and the State

6 June 1918, *Avanti!* HPC, pp.75-79

Illusions Flourish

15 June 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, 62-64

Free Thought and Liberated Thought

15 June 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, 54-57

Toward an Understanding of the Russian Revolution

22 June 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.139-145

The Russian Utopia

25 July 1918, *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.) SPW 1, pp.48-55; HPC, pp.149-155
Republished in *Il Grido del Popolo*, 27 July 1918

Football and Scopone

27 August 1918, *Avanti!* PPW, pp.73-74

Freedom First

31 August 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.50-51

***Il Passivo* (The Shortfall)**

6 September 1918, *Avanti!* Cited in Buttigieg (1995)

Italian Democracy

7 September 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.115-116

The Italian Liberals

12 September 1918, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) HPC, pp.106-109

After the Congress

14 September 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.99-101

Lenin's Work

14 September 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.134-139

Mysteries of Poetry and Culture⁹

19 October 1918, *Il Grido del Popolo* HPC, pp.16-19; PPW, pp.75-79

Men, Ideas, Newspapers and Money

23 October 1918, *Avanti!* PPW, pp.80-84

Our Obligation to be Strong

25 November 1918, *Avanti!* (Turin Ed.) SPW 1, pp.56-58

The Italian Catholics

22 December 1918, *Avanti* (Turin Ed.) HPC, pp.111-115

'Il giuoco delle parti' by Pirandello at the Carignano

6 February 1919, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.84-85

The Sovereignty of Law

1 June 1919, *Avanti!* PPW, pp.87-90

The War in the Colonies

7 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.59-60

The Price of History

7 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.91-95

The Revolutionary Tide

14 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, p.61

Communism and Art

14 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SCW, pp.37-38

⁹ In PPW, this article is titled, 'Cultural and Poetic Mysteries'.

Workers' Democracy21 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.65-68; *PPW*, pp.96-100**The Return to Freedom**26 June 1919, *Avanti!**SPW* 1, pp.69-72**The Problem of the School**27 June 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SCW*, pp.39-40**The State and Socialism**28 June - 5 July 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**PPW*, pp.101-107**Emma Gramatica**1 July 1919, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)*SCW*, pp.68-70**The Conquest of State**12 July 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.73-78; *PPW*, pp.108-114**Editorial from *Ordine Nuovo***

12 July 1919

MP, pp.20-21**Towards the Communist International**26 July 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.79-82**Workers and Peasants**2 August 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.83-87**Electoralism**23 August 1919, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)*SPW* 1, p.88**Editorial from *L'Ordine Nuovo***

23 August 1919

MP, pp.19-20**The Development of the Revolution**13 September 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.89-93**To the Workshop Delegates of the Fiat Centro and Brevetti Plants**13 September 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.94-97**Unions and Councils**11 October 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.98-102; *PPW*, pp.115-120**Trade Unions and the Dictatorship**25 October 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.103-108; *PPW*, pp.121-25**Syndicalism and the Councils**8 November 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.109-113; *PPW*, 127-131**The Program of the Workshop Delegates**8 November 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.114-124**Revolutionaries and the Elections**15 November 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.127-129**The Problem of Power**29 November 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.130-134**Out of the Dilemma**29 November 1919, *Avanti!**PPW*, pp.132-135**The Events of 2-3 Dec [1919]**6-13 December 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.135-141**The Party and The Revolution**27 December 1919, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.142-146**Workers and Peasants**3 January 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.147-49**'La ragione degli altri' by Pirandello at the Carignano**13 January 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)*SCW*, pp.85-86**The Historical Role of the Cities**17 January 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo**SPW* 1, pp.150-153; *PPW*, pp.136-140

First: Renew the Party

24-31 January 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.154-157

Action Programme of the Turin Socialist Section

24-31 January 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.158-161

The Italian State

7 February 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.141-145

The Instruments of Labour

14 February 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.162-166

The Drunken Soldier

18 February 1920, *Avanti!* PPW, pp.146-150

The Factory Worker

21 February 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.151-154

Governing Party & Governing Class¹⁰

28 February-6 March, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.167-172

Proletarian Unity

28 February-6 March, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.173-178

The Problem of Force

26 March 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SPW 1, pp.179-181

Turin and Italy

3 April 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SPW 1, pp.182-184

Address to the Anarchists

3-10 April 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.185-189

Towards a Renewal of the Socialist Party¹¹

8 May 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.190-196; PPW, pp.155-162

The Tasca Report and the Congress of the Turin Chamber of Labour

5 June 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.255-259

The Factory Council

5 June 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.260-264; PPW, pp.163-167

Unions and Councils

5 June 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.260-264; PPW, pp.163-167

Questions of Culture

14 June 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) SCW, pp.41-43

The Colonial Populations

26 June 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.301-304

Two Revolutions

3 July 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.305-309; PPW, p.169

The Communist Groups

17 July 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.173-177

The Turin Factory Councils Movement

July 1920, Report to the Executive Committee¹² SPW 1, pp.310-320

On The *L'Ordine Nuovo* Programme¹³

14 and 28 August 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.291-298; PPW, pp.178-186

Editorial: 21 August 1920

21 August 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 1, pp.321-322

¹⁰ The article consisted of two short pieces 'Governing Party' and 'Class Party' published under the same heading: 'The Week in Politics'.

¹¹ There is a note appended to the PPW version reminding readers that this was written as a party document and that Gramsci was obliged to take other views into account.

¹² This was a report dispatched to the Executive Committee of the Communist International and published for the first time in Russian, German and French in *Communist International* in 1920. It was republished in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 14 March 1921.

¹³ In PPW, this article is titled, 'The Programme of *L'Ordine Nuovo*'.

What Do We Mean by Demagogy?

29 August 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.323-325

The Occupation

2 September 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.)
5 September 1920, *Avanti!* (Milan Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.326-329

The Communist Party

4 and 9 September 1920¹⁴, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.330-339; *PPW*, pp.187-197

Red Sunday¹⁵

5 September 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.340-343; *PPW*, pp.198-204

Five Months Later

14 September 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.344-346

Political Capacity

24 September 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.347-349

Editorial: 9 October 1920

9 October 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.350-351

Reaction

17 October 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.352-355

Predictions

19 October 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.356-359

What is Reaction?

24 November 1920, *Avanti!* (Piedmont Ed.) *SPW* 1, pp.360-362

Split or Ruin?

11-18 December 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.363-365

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24 December 1920, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.366-367

The Workers' State

1 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.368-371

The Monkey People

2 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.372-374

Marinetti the Revolutionary

5 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SCW*, pp.49-51

Russia and the International

9 January 1921 *PPW*, pp.205

The Livorno Congress

13 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 1, pp.375-77; *PPW*, pp.209-212

Caporetto and Vittorio Veneto

28 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.3-4

War is War

31 January 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.5-9

Workers' Control

10 February 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.10-11

The General Confederation of Labour

25 February 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.12-14

Real Dialectics

3 March 1921 *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.15-16

Officialdom

4 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.17-19

¹⁴ The dates in *PPW* differ and appear in this source as 4 September and 9 October 1920.

¹⁵ A note in *PPW* states that this article was written on the first Sunday of the factory occupations.

Unions and Councils

5 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.20-22

Italy and Spain

11 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.23-24

Socialists and Communists

12 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.25-26

England and Russia

18 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.27-28

The Italian Parliament

24 March 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.29-31

The Communists and the Elections

12 April 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.32-34

The Elections and Freedom

21 April 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.35-37

Elemental Forces

26 April 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.38-40

Party Art

8 May 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SCW, pp.44-46

The Old Order in Turin

18 May 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.41-43

Socialists and Fascists

11 June 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.44-45; PPW, pp.213-15

Reactionary Subversiveness

22 June 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.46-47

Referendum

29 June 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.48-51

Why the Bourgeois Can No Longer Govern the Country

2 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.216-18

Leaders and Masses

3 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.216-18

Bonhomi

5 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.54-55

The 'Arditi Del Popolo'

15 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.56-58

The Development of Fascism

21 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.59-60

La Stampa and the Fascists

24 July 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.219-22

Moral Problems and the Class Struggle

7 August 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.223-226

Against Terror

19 August 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.61-62

The Two Fascisms

25 August 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.63-65

Legality

28 August 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.230-33

The Agrarian Struggle in Italy

31 August 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* SPW 2, pp.66-67

April and September 1920

7 September 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* PPW, pp.234-36

The Mainstay of the State

13 November 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *PPW*, pp.237-39

Those Mainly Responsible

20 September 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.68-70

Parties and Masses

25 September 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.71-74

Masses and Leaders

30 October 1921, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.75-78

One Year

15 January 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.79-82

The Essence of the Crisis

5 February 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *PPW*, pp.240-243

The 'Alleanza del Lavoro'

21 February 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.83-84

A Crisis within a Crisis

24 February 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.85-86

The Rome Congress

20-25 March 1922 *SPW* 2, pp.93-117

Congress Interventions

25-28 March 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.118-122

Report on the National Congress

6 April 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.123-25

Lessons

5 May 1922, *L'Ordine Nuovo* *SPW* 2, pp.87-89

[A letter to Trotsky on Italian Futurism]

8 September 1922, Moscow *SCW*, pp.52-54; *PPW*, pp.244

Origins of the Mussolini Cabinet

20 November 1922 *SPW* 2, pp.129-131
La Correspondance Internationale

Gramsci to Togliatti

18 May 1923, Moscow *SPW* 2, pp.138-142

Report by the Minority of the Italian Delegation to the Enlarged Executive Meeting of June 1923

June 1923 *SPW* 2, pp.143-153

What the Relations Should be Between The PCI and the Comintern Faction

Probably written June 1923 *SPW* 2, pp.154-156

Faction Meeting: Fragment of the Minutes (12 July 1923)

12 July 1923 *SPW* 2, pp.157-158

Three Fragments by Gramsci

July 1923 *SPW* 2, pp.159-160

Gramsci to the Executive Committee of the PCI

12 September 1923 *SPW* 2, pp.161-163

Our Trade-Union Strategy¹⁶

18 October 1923, *Lo Stato Operaio* *SPW* 2, pp.164-168; *PPW*, p.249

What Is to Be Done?

1 November 1923, *Voce della Gioventù* *SPW* 2, pp.169-172

Gramsci to Scoccimarro

5 January 1924, Vienna *SPW* 2, pp.173-176

¹⁶ In *PPW*, this article is titled, 'Our Union Policy'.

Gramsci to Terracini	
12 January 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.177-181
Gramsci to Togliatti	
27 January 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.182-187
Gramsci to Leonetti	
28 January 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.188-190
Gramsci to Togliatti, Terracini and Others	
9 February 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.191-203
Editorial: March 1924	
March 1924	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.207-208
'Leader'	
March 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.209-212
Against Pessimism	
15 March 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.213-217; <i>PPW</i> , p.255
The Mezzogiorno and Fascism	
15 March 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>PPW</i> , p.260
Gramsci to Togliatti, Scoccimarro, Leonetti, etc.	
Vienna, 21 March 1924	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.218-223
The Programme of <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	
1 and 15 April, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.224-228
Problems of Today and Tomorrow	
1 and 15 April, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.229-236
Gramsci to Zino Zini	
2 April 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.237-239
Gramsci to Togliatti, Scoccimarro, etc.	
5 April 1924, Vienna	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.240-242
The Como Conference: Resolutions	
16 May 1924, <i>Lo Stato Operaio</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.243-249
Gramsci's Intervention at the Como Conference	
29 May 1924, <i>Lo Stato Operaio</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.250-254
The Italian Crisis	
26 August 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.255-266
Democracy and Fascism	
1 November 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.267-272
The Fall of Fascism	
15 November 1924, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.273-275
Report to the Central Committee	
6 February 1925	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.276-284
The Party School of Education	
1 April 1925, <i>L'Ordine Nuovo</i>	<i>PPW</i> , p.265-267
Introduction to the First Course of the Party School	
3 July 1925	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.285-292
The Internal Situation in our Party and the Tasks of the Forthcoming Congress	
3 July 1925, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW 2</i> , pp.293-305
The Party Grows in Strength by Combating Anti-Leninist Deviations	
5 July 1925, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>PPW</i> , p.268-275
Cell Organization and the World Congress	
28 July 1925, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>PPW</i> , p.276
The Organizational Basis of the Party	
15 August 1925, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>PPW</i> , p.281

Elements of the Situation	
24 November 1925, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.306-309
Minutes of the Political Commission nominated by the Central Committee to Finalize the Lyons Congress Documents	
21-26 January 1926	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.313-339
The Italian Situation and the Tasks of the PCI ('Lyons Theses')	
January 1926, Lyons	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.340-375
The Party's First Five Years	
24 February 1926, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.379-399
A Study of the Italian Situation	
2-3 August 1926	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.400-411; <i>PPW</i> , p.288
The Soviet Union on the Path to Communism	
7 September 1926, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>PPW</i> , pp.301-305
The Peasants and the Dictatorship of The Proletariat (Notes for <i>Il Mondo</i>)	
17 September 1926, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.412-416
Once Again on the Organic Capacities of the Working Class	
1 October 1926, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.417-421
We are the Republican Concentration	
13 October 1926, <i>L'Unita</i>	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.422-425
On the Situation in the Bolshevik Party	
October 1926	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.426-440
Letter to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party	
14 October 1926, Rome	<i>PPW</i> , pp.306
Some Aspects of the Southern Question	
September-November 1926	<i>SPW</i> 2, pp.441-462; <i>PPW</i> , pp.313

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