

ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND HIS LEGACY

What is the relation between Marxism and Sociology? Alvin Gouldner referred to them as Siamese twins, the one dependent upon the other, yet each representing its own tradition of social thought. Thus, one of sociology's *raison d'être*s has been the refutation of Marxism, specifically the claim of an emancipatory life beyond capitalism. Think of the writings of Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and Parsons all of which sought to dismiss or refute the possibility of a world freer or fairer than capitalism. From the other side, Perry Anderson has argued that following the defeat of socialism, whether by fascism or Stalinism, there emerged a distinctive "Western Marxism," which defined itself by its critique of bourgeois thought, especially in the realm of philosophy but also of sociology. Gramsci, perhaps the greatest of Western Marxists, engaged the vision of the great Italian Hegelian philosopher Croce but he also tangled with sociology. As we will see, we may think of Gramsci as Marxism's sociologist.

Writing in the euphoric times of the early 1970s, Anderson was critical of Western Marxism for having lost its bearings. Its critical energies had become so focused on bourgeois thought that it had lost touch with the working class. Anderson proposed the renewal of an independent, Trotsky-inspired, Marxist tradition. This came to very little. Today, Marxism has once more entered a period of defeat. It cannot draw inspiration from burgeoning socialist (let alone revolutionary!) movements, but instead must rely on a hostile reengagement with bourgeois thought, not least sociology. Of course, the engagement of Marxism and sociology can occur from either side. On the one hand, there is what we might call a *Marxist Sociology*, the appropriation of Marxist ideas, concepts, method to enrich sociology. Perhaps trying to keep up with the radicalization of sociology in the 1960s and 1970s, in 1981 Seymour Martin Lipset referred to his classic *Political Man* as a work of "apolitical Marxism" – from a Marxist point of view an oxymoronic travesty. This is bringing Marxism into the orbit of sociology. There has been quite a bit of that in recent years – the enrichment of sociology and the domestication of Marxism. In this course we are more interested in a borrowing that proceeds in the other direction, injecting and thereby enriching Marxism with sociology, producing what we might call a *Sociological Marxism*.

Gramsci is the "Sociological Marxist" par excellence, although, as we will see, others have often turned his writings into a form of Marxist sociology. The thesis of this course is that Gramsci's work originates in a recognition of the historic significance of sociology as the social science of advanced capitalism. By advanced capitalism – interestingly he never actually gave it a name -- Gramsci meant (a) the expansion of civil society, a social world between economy and state, (b) the expansion of the state itself and (c) the intensification of ties between the two. Sociology was the study, first and foremost of this burgeoning civil society – sociology of family, sociology of education,

political sociology, organizational sociology, economic sociology, organizational sociology. Unlike other Marxists, but like sociology, Gramsci appreciated the liberative potential of civil society. But he was critical of sociology for misrecognizing its object in two ways. First, sociology saw civil society (family, associations, parties, education, etc.) as an actually rather than potentially autonomous realm. Sociology colluded in obscuring civil society's close ties to the state, and thus to the reproduction of capitalism. Second, and relatedly, sociology regarded civil society as a source of spontaneous *consensus*. Gramsci, by contrast, argued that what he called *consent* was neither primordial nor given, but organized and protected by the "armor of coercion". In other words, just as state and civil society were inseparable so were force and consent, even when (or particularly when) force was invisible.

In misrecognizing its "object," sociology also misconstrues the *sociologist* who is represented as an intellectual outside the world he or she studies. For Gramsci there are no free-floating sociologists, but only sociologists connected to classes. Just as there are no autonomous intellectuals so there are no self-sustaining universal laws. If political parties tend toward oligarchy – the iron law of oligarchy -- that is because of prevailing conditions, conditions that are neither natural nor immutable. Gramsci, therefore, resituates (historicizes) sociology within (1) a theory of advanced capitalism; (2) a novel politics of capitalism but also of socialism; (3) an elaborate comparative history to discover possibilities within limits as well as the limits of the possible; and (4) a theory of intellectuals and the production of knowledge, leading finally to (5) the development of what we may call a Sociological Marxism. The lynchpin of his Marxism is the multivocal concept of "hegemony".

That is, indeed, how we will organize the reading of Gramsci's prison writings. We begin with his periodization of capitalism based on the rise of civil society and the expansion of the state. We will consider this demarcation between early and advanced capitalism (and the parallel demarcation between "East" and "West") for its implications for revolutionary struggle, namely the distinction between war of position and war of movement. We will examine Gramsci's distinction between economic and organic crises, and their connection to his concept of "socialism" and the regulated society. Here we will see hegemony is a particular form of domination that combines force and consent.

We turn next to hegemony as a relation between classes, in which a dominant class presents its interests as the interests of all. We are here concerned with the three levels of class formation, as well as the way class formation is limited by the economic structure on the one side and the balance of military forces on the other. We will examine the potentiality of different classes – peasantry, landed classes, bourgeoisie, working class, petty bourgeoisie – to achieve hegemony. We will ask time and again what is so special about the working class that it can become a universal class and why the peasantry and bourgeoisie are so flawed.

The possibilities of transformation are determined by national terrains which opens up Gramsci's comparative history. He is primarily concerned to understand the peculiarities of Italy through a series of comparisons: the Italian Risorgimento versus the

French Revolution; Fascism versus Communism; and Fascism versus Americanism and Fordism. In this comparative approach, hegemony refers to a form of a revolution, an active revolution as opposed to the “passive revolution” to be found in Italy or the Soviet Union. This active revolution is in part dependent upon “hegemony” over fractions within classes as well as of one class over another.

We, then, turn to Gramsci’s methodology. What is this Marxism that gives him insight into the possibilities of transformation? What privileges Marxism? Gramsci grounds his Marxism in the “lived experience” of subaltern classes, a spontaneous “common sense” out of which emerges a “good sense” that grasps the totality and its transformative potentialities. Organic intellectuals, through their close connection to a revolutionary class, elaborate the “good sense” out of the “common sense.” Traditional intellectuals, who think of themselves as autonomous and above classes, serve to stultify the good sense of the revolutionary class. Whatever their self-understanding, intellectuals are never outside the struggle for hegemony or above classes. This is the fourth meaning of hegemony, a contestation among or reconfiguration of ideologies. Finally, we assess Gramsci’s Marxism by reference to his interpretations of two texts: *The Theses on Feuerbach* and *The Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

Until we get to the *Prison Notebooks*, the course actually unfolds in reverse order from the one just described. The steps leading to his mature theory involve Gramsci’s life as a communist leader and intellectual -- how he became a Marxist and why he remained one. The Russian Revolution is catalytic, leading Gramsci to examine the specificity of Italy with regard to Russia, his participation in the Factory Council movement (1919-1920) and the elaboration of a new working class culture. He ponders the defeat of this workers’ movement trying to comprehend why a worker-peasant alliance proved less viable than the Northern historic bloc that bound workers to the capitalist class. He seeks an entity that will serve the working class as the state serves the dominant classes and finds it in the Modern Prince, the Communist Party. But the Italian Communist Party fails to establish hegemony even within the working class, socialism is defeated, and instead fascism rises to exploit the catastrophic balance of classes. Gramsci is sentenced to prison where he dies but not before he scribbles those 33 notebooks to create his elaborate and distinctive Marxism.

To appreciate the distinctiveness of Gramsci’s Marxism, we begin the course by placing him in relation to the alternative Marxisms of the early part of the 20th. century – social democracy, evolutionary socialism, revolutionary socialism, and most importantly Bolshevism, expressed in the writings of Lenin. Indeed, the most important backdrop to Gramsci’s prison writings, at least for the purposes of this introduction to Gramsci, is Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, which is where we begin. We will then read Fiori’s biography of Gramsci and from there move into his early writings on the Russian Revolution, Factory Councils, and *The Southern Question*. Then and only then can we turn to the *Prison Notebooks* themselves. We will use Quintin and Hoare’s *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. This translation, with its extraordinary annotations, was the first to make Gramsci accessible to an English speaking public.

There is, or rather was, a Gramsci industry which generated a multiplicity of interesting and important secondary sources. I would recommend the following: Perry Anderson, "Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 100 (1976-77); Chantal Mouffe (editor), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (1979), Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (1975); Walter Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution* (1980). Joseph Buttigieg is undertaking a five volume translation of the Italian edition of *Quaderni del carcere*, originally prepared by Valentino Gerratana. Two volumes (1992 and 1996) have so far appeared from Columbia University Press.

We end the course with a series of monographs that appropriate Gramsci's ideas in different ways. They are James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*; Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor*; Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, David Latin, *Hegemony and Culture*, Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*. Each of you will be expected to write a short 3,000 word critical essay of one of these books as it relates to the writings of Gramsci. These will be presented and discussed in the seminar.

We meet twice a week. Gramsci's writings, especially the prison writings, are very ambiguous and complex, so it is important to lay out one reading of Gramsci so that you can react against it, reveal its shortcomings, develop alternative readings. We will go over the same terrain, the same passages time and again. The idea is to never leave Gramsci throughout the semester but to return to him again and again but with different lenses. I will lead the discussions each session until we come to your essays. However, as part of the course requirement I want each of you to send out reaction notes -- queries, puzzles, contradictions, in short anything striking, no less than 12 hours before *each session*. These must be no more than 300 words in length. I intend to keep the class size down so as to make reading them manageable for everyone. There will be no auditors.

1/16 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Why study Gramsci? The relation of Gramsci to Sociology. An integrated portrait of Gramsci's Marxism. Organization of Course.

I: MARXISM BEFORE GRAMSCI

1/18 FROM MARX TO MARXISM

Marx, *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*

Although some would try to excise Gramsci from the Marxist tradition I will locate him firmly in that tradition. I will show how the work of Marx and Engels gave rise to the specifically German Marxism of the Second International (notably the orthodoxy of Karl Kautsky, the evolutionary socialism of Eduard Bernstein and the revolutionary socialism of Rosa Luxemburg), how Bolshevism was a specifically Russian response to German Marxism as well as to the exigencies of the time and finally, how Gramsci's writings in turn can be seen as an Italian but also more broadly, advanced capitalist response, to both these (Russian and German) traditions. The debate among these various Marxisms can be seen as divergent interpretations of Marx's famous "Preface" where he summarised his theory of history. This is also a text to which Gramsci's prison writings return time and again.

1/23 LENIN: STATE AND REVOLUTION

Lenin, *State and Revolution*.

We don't have a lot of time to read Lenin but I want to show that Gramsci's ideas are firmly rooted in his work. It was Lenin who first used the concept of hegemony systematically (in relation to the leading role of the working class vis-à-vis the peasantry), who thematized the role of the vanguard party, who theorized two stages of capitalism (competitive and monopoly capitalism), and who recognized the interests in imperialism of Western labor aristocracies. But most important Lenin was the first to thematize the problems of the state and the transition to communism. The locus classicus of Lenin's theory is *State and Revolution*. One can regard Gramsci's writings as an attempt to problematize the universalistic character of *State and Revolution* (and thereby specify its Russian character), and to highlight the key ambiguities in Lenin's treatment of bourgeois democracy, his two stage transition to communism, and indeed Lenin's very model of communism. We need to ask what is the state, what is the capitalist state, why it has to be destroyed and a new one created, what is the nature of its successor, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and why this will wither away. We also need to ask how a revolutionary force will be created on the terrain of capitalism and what role that might

play in the formation of socialism and its transformation into communism. We will undertake a critique of Lenin that will lay the basis for Gramsci's writings.

1/25 Two Perspectives on Gramsci

Eric Hobsbawm, *Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory*

Tom Nairn, *Antoniu Su Gobbu*

II: FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY

Gramsci's writings in prison cannot be separated from the political experiences both in Sardinia and in Turin. In a sense we may say that his writings before prison moved from the practical to the theoretical, while those in prison started from the theoretical in order to derive the practical, the political consequences.

1/30 GRAMSCI'S ROAD TO MARXISM

Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*

This heart rending biography of Gramsci traces his life from his childhood in Sardinia where he remained until he was 20 years old (1911), to his revolutionary and cultural activities in Turin, his participation in the factory council movement (1919-20), his ascendancy to the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party in 1924, his arrest by Fascist government in 1926 and finally to his life in prison, where his deep suffering was matched only by his intellectual creativity. He died in 1937. We should pay attention to the question of first, why Gramsci *became* a Marxist, and what Marxism and Bolshevism meant to him in the Italian context, and second, why he chose to *remain* a Marxist, despite all its problems and failures, and how he sought to *rebuild* its theoretical apparatus.

2/1 THE REVOLUTION AGAINST CAPITAL

“Notes on the Russian Revolution” (April, 1917)

“The Russian Maximalists” (July, 1917)

“The Revolution Against Capital” (December, 1917)

Here, particularly in “The Revolution Against Capital,” we have the first embryo of Gramsci's Marxism, an unqualified celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution, the attack on “laws” of history, ideas as historical forces, a eulogy to the collective will, already prefiguring the distinction between East and West, normal times and crisis times,

reducing Marxism to the expression of “men” in relation to one another. It is striking that Gramsci could discern already in April, 1917, long before the final denouement in October, the proletarian and socialist character of the Russian Revolution. He was of no doubt that Lenin and the Bolsheviks (“Maximalists”) would, in the final analysis, achieve the upper hand when this was by no means obvious to other observers! Note here the negative assessment of Jacobinism, an assessment Gramsci will later reconsider when comparing the French Revolution with the failed Italian Revolution. This early voluntarism will give way to a greater determinism, subjective elements will be located within the context of objective forces.

2/6 THE FACTORY COUNCILS

“Workers’ Democracy” (1919);
 “The Conquest of the State” (1919);
 “Unions and Councils” (1919);
 “Trade Unions and the Dictatorship” (1919);
 “Syndicalism and the Councils” (1919);
 “The Party and Revolution” (1919);
 “The Factory Council” (1920);
 “Two Revolutions” (1920);

The early Gramsci is usually associated with his editorship of the cultural newspaper, *L’Ordine Nuovo*, and his leadership role in and his theorizing of the Factory Council Movement in Turin. The Factory Councils were Gramsci’s counterpart to the Soviets in the Russian Revolution but how does Gramsci’s conception of the socialist transition differ from Lenin’s? What is the role of trade unions and party in the council movement? Based on the reading of these pieces what does Gramsci understand by socialism?

2/8 THE SOUTHERN QUESTION

Aspects of the Southern Question (1926).

His experiences in Turin during and after World War I, the failure of the council movement as well as the prestige of the Bolshevik success are the backdrop to his later reflections on the importance of the political party, capitalist hegemony, ideology, intellectuals, and the possibilities and meaning of socialism. The first, and perhaps most brilliant formulation of these questions, prefiguring the *Prison Notebooks*, is to be found in “Aspects of the Southern Question.” Here Gramsci studies the phases of development of two historic blocs (vertical coordination of classes, horizontal coordination of base and superstructure) – the Northern Industrial bloc and the Southern Agrarian Bloc. Gramsci asks how these blocs may breakdown and give rise to a revolutionary working class supported by the peasantry. Here lies his “Southern Question” and his “Vatican

Question.” He develops his first (and most Leninist) conception of “hegemony” from below, or what some might call (although Gramsci never does) “counter-hegemony” (pp.448-9). Here too we find his theory of intellectuals in embryo. In talking about the solidity of these two blocs, however, Gramsci is offering in embryo an alternative approach to hegemony -- “hegemony from above.” In asking about the relation between these two blocs Gramsci poses the question of colonialism, the question of the relation between town and country but goes beyond these to a class analysis. Here we have the most complete example of what Gramsci will later call the “analysis of situations” – the study of the revolutionary possibilities on a specific national terrain. Frantz Fanon would do something similar in his *The Wretched of the Earth*.

III:A THEORY OF ADVANCED CAPITALISM

Gramsci’s theory of hegemony has a totalistic quality in which everything is connected to everything else. It can’t be approached linearly. Instead we make incisions into the theory and examine it from different points of view. Our first incision are the notes collected under “State and Civil Society.” Here we are interested in his theory of advanced capitalism and its political implications.

Selections from Prison Notebooks, pp.206-276.

2/13: STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Gramsci’s periodizes capitalism using political rather than conventional economic criteria (anarchic vs. organized, competitive vs. monopoly, etc.) The novel feature of advanced capitalism is based on the emergence of civil society which incorporates and domesticates challenges to capitalism (p.243). However, it is not simply that the state is aided and abetted by an expanding civil society in reproducing capitalism but the state itself assumes expanded functions (pp.244-47). From the standpoint of this incision hegemony refers to a form of rule that combines force and consent, dictatorship and hegemony (pp.244, 261, 263, footnote 49, p.80).

2/15 WAR OF POSITION vs. WAR OF MOVEMENT

The rise of civil society and the expansion of the state to include repressive as well as ideological apparatuses poses a new terrain for revolution in which the “war of movement” no longer suffices. The revolution is first and foremost a “war of position” -- the long process of conquering or replacing civil society, turning it away from its connection to the state and toward prefigurative politics of socialism (pp.229-239; p.265). This is revolution in the “West,” which is different from revolution in the “East,” where

civil society is “primordial and gelatinous” (p.238). There the war of movement comes first and war of position, the constitution of civil society comes after the conquest of power (p.268).

2/20 CRISES OF CAPITALISM AND THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM

Gramsci’s theory of hegemony leads not only to a novel theory of revolution but a specific notion of socialism, as the tendential withering away of the “state” as repressive apparatus and its replacement by the flowering of civil society (pp.253, 258-9, 261-4). Gramsci also suggests that certain types of crises – organic or political crises – are more likely to provide the grounds to challenge hegemony than purely economic crises (pp.210-211; 219-223).

IV:THE POLITICS OF POSSIBILITY

If *State and Civil Society* delineates a theory of advanced capitalism and thus the type of revolution necessary for the realization of socialism, *The Modern Prince* analyses the terrain of possibility -- how classes are formed and how class struggle develops within limits defined by objective structural constraints.

2/22 ANALYSIS OF SITUATIONS

The Modern Prince, pp.175-85.

The center piece of Gramsci’s account of politics is to be found in his “analysis of situations” and the determination of the “relations forces” (pp.175-185). Here hegemony is not so much a form of rule but a relation between classes. Gramsci lays out the economic, political and military relations of forces. It is within the political moment that class potentially moves from corporate, to economic to hegemonic phase (pp.180-2). The hegemonic phase is one in which a dominant or potentially dominant class presents its interests as the interests of all. What is the hegemonic ideology with which it manages to accomplish this task (158-68; p.195)? What are the material conditions of hegemony (p.161)? Indeed, what is ideology for Gramsci (pp.125-6)? What is a political party (pp.147-157) and what is the role of the party or state in forging hegemony? What has Gramsci to say about the relation of parties to classes in general and specifically to the working class, the class of great industrialists, petty bourgeoisie, and the peasantry? One might say his characterization of party systems defines the mechanics of hegemony.

2/27 ORGANIC AND CONJUNCTURAL SITUATIONS

The Modern Prince, pp.124-205.

The central theme of *The Modern Prince* is the conditions of the organization of a collective will: ideology, party, economy. It is the idea that men and women make history but not under conditions of their own choosing. Gramsci distinguishes between conditions (situations) that are or “organic” (relatively permanent) and those that are conjunctural (immediate and ephemeral). It is important not to reduce one to the other as economism and voluntarism do (pp. 180, 177 and footnote). For Gramsci meaningful political strategy calls for “prediction” that assesses what is organic and what is conjuncture (pp.127, 175). Gramsci sites the examples of the Paris Commune (p.179) and Factory Councils (p.202). How does Gramsci know what is organic and conjunctural?

V: COMPARATIVE HISTORY

One key way Gramsci discovers what’s possible in any given conjuncture is through comparative analysis of national terrains. Gramsci develops a sophisticated and too often unrecognized comparative political sociology that prefigures the great political sociology of Barrington Moore and Samuel Huntington. The purposes of his comparisons are manifold. His first comparison is between Italy and Russia, when, in his youthful enthusiasm for revolution, he searches for the Italian equivalent of the Soviets. The defeat of the Council Movement and rise of Fascism, however, leads him to think of Italy as part of the West and not the East and to seek the source of fascism in Italy’s failed bourgeois revolution. To understand this he compares Italy’s Risorgimento (national unification movement) with the French Revolution. In a third comparison he confronts the fascist claims that their movement will bring about a socialist Mecca. He has to demonstrate why this is not the case by comparison with the Soviet Union! Finally, he compares the ambitions and origins of fascism with the high modernity of Americanism. Fascism, he argues, will not be able to compete with Fordism, driving Europe toward socialism.

3/1 PASSIVE AND HEGEMONIC REVOLUTIONS

Notes on Italian History, pp.52-120

Notes on Italian History places Italy firmly in the camp of the “West,” comparing its failed 19th. century revolution with the successful French bourgeois Revolution. Gramsci asks why France was able to develop a Jacobin Party that represented a bourgeois national hegemony (pp.76-8) but Italy was never able to achieve that national unity. It experienced a *passive revolution* or a “revolution without a revolution” (p.59) instead of a *hegemonic bourgeois revolution*. In Italy the bourgeoisie was weak (p.82) and the state was to constitute hegemony on its behalf (pp.105-6). The potentially hegemonic party –

the Action Party – failed in its attempts at agrarian reform and thereby to represent the peasantry. Instead its initiatives were absorbed by the more conservative Moderate Party. The weakness of the bourgeoisie and civil society led to hegemonic crisis (pp.275-6, 219-223), which led to fascism rather than socialist revolution. Fascism was the continuation of the passive revolution, the regulation of civil society from above rather than its reconstruction from below. Gramsci seems to be arguing that a bourgeois revolution is a prerequisite for a socialist revolution in Italy – why? Are we not back to some laws of history! Why was a bourgeois revolution not necessary in Russia?

Gramsci not only compares national social formations to determine the crucial elements of revolutionary politics but has a rudimentary theory of inter-state influences and reactions. Indeed, he extends his comparative field by arguing that the French Revolution stimulated a reactive “passive revolution” not just in Italy but in the rest of Europe, e.g. in Germany and England (pp.115; 116-7; 119), where the landed classes stood in as a ruling class for the bourgeoisie. He argues by analogy that, a century and a half later, the Russian Revolution led to similar reactive, passive revolutions in the form of fascism (pp.119-20). In this view fascism is shaped by an international rather than a national configuration of forces.

3/6 FASCISM, FORDISM AND SOCIALISM

Americanism and Fordism, pp.279-318

A different axis of comparison is provided by economic developments in the United States (Fordism) and their cultural reflex (Americanism). Gramsci argues that Fascism was not only a response to the Russian Revolution but to Americanism/Fordism. Not having feudal legacies -- pensioners of economic history (pp.281, 285-6, 293) -- to inherit and contend with, America could develop a stream-lined, hyper-rational hegemony rooted in production and projected from there into family life and civil society (pp.294-316). America may lay the economic foundation of a higher civilization but there is no hope of its realization there since the workers' movement is stuck at the “economic corporate level,” defending craft unionism (p.286), opposing the development of Fordism (p.292). In Europe on the other hand the regulated economy of fascism (pp.120, 291) was the attempt to deal simultaneously with the contradictions of capitalism and competition from America. But fascism cannot compete economically because it preserves rather than destroys the old parasitic classes (pp.293-4; 316-8). Europe, therefore, can only continue to develop its economy, Gramsci intimates, if it is transformed by socialist revolution. Whether such a revolution will take place is another matter.

This does raise the question, also central to Gramsci, of the difference between fascism and socialism – socialism considered in its ideal typical form or in its Soviet incarnation. This is especially important because fascism often presented itself in the guise of socialism while Soviet communism, especially after the Stalinist turn, was a totalitarianism that made the analogy persuasive. What was Gramsci's answer!

VI: INTELLECTUALS AND COMMON SENSE

So far we have looked upon Gramsci as a scientist diagnosing the terrain of politics but who is this scientist, qua intellectual? Gramsci insists there is no place for an intellectual other than in relation to a fundamental class. Thus, he divides the intellectuals into two types: organic and traditional. An organic intellectual this holds a close relation to the world or lived experience of the class which he or she represents. The organic intellectual elaborates a vision of emancipation, embedded in a class experience, which entails first to discovering and then elaborating the “good sense” concealed in the “common sense.” Marxism is, therefore, elaborated as critique of bourgeois thought, at the same time that its essence is grounded in and engaged with the common sense of the working class. From whence cometh Marxism’s truth if not from the objectivity of the outsider? Is it from the privileged insight into society given by the standpoint of “the” progressive class, that is, the working class? Does Marxism’s truth lie in its greater predictive power, which derives from taking the standpoint of a class which is the subject as well as the object of history? Is it in “mass adhesion” that Marxism claims its validity? Why cannot Marxism be in contradiction to the common sense of the working class?

3/8 ORGANIC AND TRADITIONAL INTELLECTUALS

The Intellectuals, pp.5-23

We have already seen that Gramsci emphasizes the power of ideology to grip, galvanize and mobilize the collective will, rather than its capacity to mystify reality. He seems to believe that an ideology that is effective as a social force will also turn out to be true. He argues, for example, that Marxism cannot be opposed to the common sense of the popular classes, although it might need intellectuals to interpret Marxism and turn it into a living force (pp.198-9). Intellectuals are of two types: organic and traditional intellectuals, distinguished by their relations to the class they represent. Organic intellectuals are those that share class experience with those they represent, articulate that experience in political terms. Traditional intellectuals stand apart from their class in order to represent its universal interests. Organic intellectuals mobilize subordinate classes while traditional intellectuals reproduce the hegemony of dominant classes. Is there a place for intellectuals to form a class of their own, or to find a place autonomous from the fundamental classes?

3/13 COMMON SENSE AND GOOD SENSE

The Study of Philosophy, pp.321-343

The existence of two types of intellectuals correspond to the struggle between *common sense* into which has percolated ideas of the traditional intellectuals, especially religious ideas -- we might call it tradition -- and *good sense* which is rational and corresponds to real needs (pp.326, 328, 346) and which organic intellectuals try to release, articulate and make coherent. What are the stages of development of the good sense? Good sense often reveals itself in moment of crisis or transformation. We have here a view of hegemony from below, the struggle between hegemonies. Can any other class apart from workers (e.g. peasants, bourgeoisie) develop a good sense?

VII: GRAMSCI'S MARXISM

Gramsci has effectively reconstructed Marxism, what he calls "Philosophy of Praxis" in *The Prison Notebooks*. We finish this part of the course, studying Gramsci's interpretation of two synoptic texts of Marx: *The Theses on Feuerbach* and *The Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

3/15 PHILOSOPHY OF PRACTICE

Problems of Marxism, pp.419-472

In *The Theses on Feuerbach* Marx tries to tread a careful line between an idealism in which the world is constituted through thought and a materialism in which the world is objective and external. For Gramsci knowledge is neither "ordering" nor "receptive," but practical (p.345). We know the world only through our interaction with it (pp.440-8, especially 445-6). What then is the status of "scientific laws" that operate independently of human will. Gramsci has only contempt for the sociological laws based on statistical correlations or universal transhistorical (evolutionary) claims (pp.426, 430, 461-2). The existence of laws points to the passivity of human beings unwilling to transform the world around them (pp.428-9). In non-revolutionary times, however, "inevitable laws" can be a crutch enabling those who seek change to hold on to their beliefs (pp.336, 337, 342).

Still Gramsci believes that there are limits to change at any point in history, otherwise we would be left only with political opportunism. Scientific analysis is essential to work out those limits (pp.438, 410-413; 127, fn.) How do we discover and confirm those tendencies? We prove the truth of theories through our action. Here Gramsci has a model of experimental science in which theory is proven through practice (pp.158, 171, 446). Predictions, furthermore, come true because there is "mass adhesion" to a particular theory, leading to collective mobilization. Here the notion of truth shifts from what works to what we all believe, a consensus view of truth (pp. 341, 345-6, 348). Truth is not what intellectuals concoct in their cocoon and foist on the "masses" but something that emerges from subaltern groups, from a critique of their "common sense" (pp.330-1; 420-1). Gramsci criticizes Bukharin for starting with systematic philosophies

rather than common sense (pp.419-25). The educators too have to be educated. Running through Gramsci, therefore, are different notions of truth: consensus view of truth, a correspondence view of truth and also a pragmatic view of truth as that which works. In normal times these might diverge and be the preserve of different groups but in revolutionary times they converge.

3/20: HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The Study of Philosophy, pp.343-377

If *The Theses on Feuerbach* is the point of reference for Gramsci's theory of knowledge, *The Preface to the Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* is the reference point for his theory of history. As before Gramsci leans more toward consciousness, ideology, and superstructure than toward economic base and the material. Still there remains the underlying premise that capitalism has an "incurable contradiction" (pp.178, 222) that emerges historically as the relations of production first promote and then fetter the forces of production (p.202). Thus, men and women enter economic relations independent of their will (p.180) but, if they understand those objective constraints they can still make history. To do so they have to be organized collectively (pp.352-3), which in turn requires ideological cement that will reshape those relations. But, Gramsci insists, they can't create ideology de novo -- organization and struggles take place on the terrain of politics and ideology (pp.365, 371-2, 162, 164). Gramsci expresses this material determinism within limits through the concept of "historic bloc" which expresses this binding together of "base" and "superstructure" (pp.366, 377). Gramsci holds onto the materialist premise that the advance of the forces of production creates the possibility of progressive development of human society and toward communism where we collectively make history (pp.353-4, 367, 368). Thus, men and women only set themselves tasks for which there already exist material conditions and the new order only emerges when the old one has exhausted its potential (pp.106, 177, 194). In adopting Marx's twin formula that "men make history" but "under conditions not of their own choosing," Gramsci focuses on the first but never abandons the second.

With this reconstruction of Marx we end our journey through Gramsci. We now deepen our understanding of Gramsci by comparing his ideas with Marxists who claim to be following in his footsteps.

VIII: GRAMSCI AND HIS LEGACY

In the remainder of the course we will examine attempts to carry forward the Gramscian tradition in contemporary social science. Each week we will study one monograph through essays, no more than 3,000 words long, that you will write and distribute ahead of time.

Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor*;
James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*
David Latin, *Hegemony and Culture*
Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*
Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World.*