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GRAMSCI, ANTONIO

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), the leading Italian Marxist of the first half of the century, became one of the most influential thinkers on cultural studies from the 1980s. Earlier grouped together with Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch as Western Marxists because of a shared sense that it was culture, not political economy that was central to social reproduction of bourgeois societies, he is principally known for the *Prison Notebooks* and associated with the idea of hegemony. The *Prison Notebooks*, composed while Gramsci was a guest in Mussolini's jails, are highly suggestive but frequently and radically incomplete. They reveal a sophisticated and historically sensitive mind engaging with the details of Italian society and culture, but they do not contain a developed theory of hegemony. Hegemony is defined in one place in the *Prison Notebooks* as coercion plus consent; the state is understood as dictatorship plus hegemony. The point is that while in Eastern experiences, such as Russia prior to the October Revolution, culture is secondary to force in securing social reproduction, in Western cases the balance works the other way around. We are not forced to consume; we like to consume. Television rules, not tanks, at least in the centres of the world system. Gramsci does not, however, subscribe to the idea of the cultural dope, or to Marcuse's thesis in *One-Dimensional Man* that we cannot break free of this system of near-total incorporation. Hegemony, or domination, is based on a shared common sense that naturalises this world, that tells us there will always be bosses (and they will always be men). Hegemony is much more than brainwashing; it appeals because it taps into a system of needs and justifies the necessity of this world on the grounds that it is impossible to imagine any other, let alone realise it.

Hegemony, for Gramsci, is not natural, but constructed. It depends upon daily reinforcement, in education, work, in advertisements, and soap opera. Gramsci takes belief to be central to social reproduction and is therefore one of the first Marxists properly to acknowledge the significance of popular culture and folklore. If you want to understand gender and domesticity, read the women's weeklies. Dominant groups and classes have to build hegemony to project their own form of dominance and the subordination of the subaltern

classes. Hegemony is therefore mediated by the *historic bloc* or class coalition that constructs it. If hegemony rules, for Gramsci, then counter-hegemony must also be possible. This raises the question of agency—who will change the world?—which Gramsci answers ambiguously. Sometimes it is the Italian Communist Party, or New Prince; sometimes the agent looks more like the people, the popular alliance, or rainbow movement. Intellectuals have a key role in this process, for they are organizers who work with ideas. Gramsci thinks of the new, innovative intellectuals as organic, as opposed to the old clerical or civic category of traditional intellectuals. In terms of social theory, Gramsci is evidently a Marxist, with the difference that he sets his project against the economistic legacy of orthodox Marxism. This is what explains the double message of his 1917 essay on the Russian Revolution, "The Revolution Against Capital." Gramsci supported the Bolsheviks, because they had the nerve to act, to seize power, and because they acted against the Second International's orthodoxy, for which Marx's *Capital* was correct: You only had to wait for revolution. The Russian revolution was also a revolt against this determinist reading of *Capital*. Gramsci's early Marxism rested on this voluntaristic, grassroots sympathy with the council movement, closer to syndicalism. The Party, or Modern Prince (after his fellow Italian, Machiavelli), became necessary to follow the Bolshevik example and to countermand Mussolini's fascist party.

The interest in culture and solidarity or social reproduction aligns Gramsci's thinking with Émile Durkheim. Hegemony might be viewed as a parallel for *conscience collectif*, and like Durkheim, Gramsci views socialism as a better way to organize modernity, with the difference that Gramsci insists on viewing the new order as a proletarian order. The image of the subaltern classes becomes increasingly significant in the *Prison Notebooks*, 15 years after his conciliar period after World War I. The subaltern classes indicate to Gramsci the ongoing pertinence of the peasants, or of precapitalist modes of production in modernity. Gramsci rejects the Eurocentrism of other period socialists, for whom the peasants were part of the problem, and only the revolutionary proletariat could be its solution. In *The Southern Question* ([1926]1995), Gramsci makes clear his insistence that the world-system plays itself out locally in the exploitation of Southern Italy by the North. Underdevelopment is built into capitalism, or modernity; Marxists henceforth must frontally address this problem, rather than seeing the future of a modernizing proletariat as an alternative bourgeoisie, or even as joining in a new historic bloc with the bourgeoisie and against the peasants. Yet Gramsci remains a modernizer, as well as a populist. Though Lenin and Trotsky enthused for Taylorism, Gramsci is the first Marxist to develop a stronger argument for Fordism as a social model, an image of new society, a new culture as well as a new political economy. Italy had its

continue to grapple with explanations of human society in the new millennium.

— James J. Chriss

See also Functionalism; Marxism; Merton, Robert K.; Parsons, Talcott

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GOVERNMENTALITY

Governmentality, a term appearing in the later works of Michael Foucault, refers to the ethical practices whereby individuals form and care for the self as it is affected by the wider array of social powers and knowledges. Governmentality came to replace Foucault's more famous concept power/knowledge (*pouvoir/savoir*) in the empirical volumes of his history of sexuality (Foucault 1985, 1986).

The deep background of the theory of governmentality is the long history of social theory's attempt to find a mediating position between the objective structures of social power and the subjective elements of selfhood. In his theory of power/knowledge, Foucault was one of the first in the late modern era to show that social theories of knowledge must perforce be theories of social power. In this he was able to advance the idea by drawing upon the distinction made in the French language between formal or scientific knowledges (*connaissances*) and practical knowledges of daily life (*saviors*). This made it possible to avoid an oversimplifying notion of ideology that invites the suggestion that knowledges are all of one kind, thus uniformly susceptible to the distortions of political and economic interests.

Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, though often stated in highly abstract terms, was a direct outcome of his empirical studies in the history of modern social forms, including its forms of culture and knowledge. Thus,

even before the expression came into explicit use in *Archaeologie du savoir* (1969), his early studies of madness, the hospital, and the human sciences were, in effect, a history of the forms of power at play in the modern era. He saw, quite clearly, that the traditional top-down idea of power (commonly associated with Karl Marx) is unable to account for the fact that, in the modern system especially, individuals subject *themselves* to power. At the beginning, for example, the urban migrations for work in the factory system were, in principle, voluntary (if only in the sense that agrarian labor was disappearing). Hence Foucault's idea that in modernity power works often in a gentle way by applying itself to the practical knowledges taught (or absorbed and otherwise learned) by ordinary men and women in the course of daily life. To work in a factory is both to learn a different method of ordering daily life and to subject oneself to a new regime of power.

Power/knowledge eventually gave way to governmentality in the second and third volumes of Foucault's history of sexuality (1985, 1986). Though he used the earlier expression in the first volume (1978), once he immersed himself in the research on sexual practices and self-care, he came to see what was at work, from the earliest, even with the Greeks. Selfhood had always been less a form of knowledge as such than a practical ethic. The effect of this insight was that in the third of his sexuality studies (1986), he seems to have lost interest in sexuality and turned to a general theory of the self and self-formation.

Governmentality is a concept of rich potential (largely unrealized in Anglophone social theory) for theories of the social self. It invites a vastly more complex and broad-ranging social psychology than is permitted, for example, by the concept *socialization*. Governmentality allows social theory to avoid the dead end of supposing that the social self is formed by the introjection of structured cultures and their social values. Instead of the wider social forces intruding upon the self, or offering the self an array of social opportunities, governmentality allows social theory to locate the formation of subjecthood at an earlier, if preconscious, point in the social development of the individual. When, in the earliest months of life, individuals learn to govern themselves, they are learning as well the play of social power mediated by even the gentlest of parental gestures. When, later in development, the individual is said to become a self, or to "have" a self, he or she can be seen as having achieved a degree of ethical competence in governing oneself in relation to the power plays to which one is subjected and into which one inserts oneself. The affinities to power/knowledge are apparent, as are the ways a theory of governmentality seeks to rethink the social self in political terms.

— Charles Lemert

See also Foucault, Michel; Power; Surveillance and Society