GRAMSCI AND THE POLITICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Walter L. Adamson

Marxist theory is regularly accused of being insufficiently attentive to politics. In believing that the constitutional guarantees of the liberal state are mere window-dressing for bourgeois rule and that, under socialism, the "governing of men" would give way to the "administration of things," and so to the "withering away of the state," classical Marxism not only failed to emancipate itself from the most naive psychological and sociological assumptions of its century, but tightened the screws of Weber's "iron cage" and opened the door to the ruthless totalitarianisms that in our century have governed in Marxism's name. Furthermore, even in its most successful political analyses, those purporting to explain the self-constitution and social reproduction of the capitalist state, classical Marxism, it is commonly argued, was far too given to crude forms of economic reductionism. I do not wish to contest these charges; indeed my own versions of them may be found elsewhere.[1]

Yet the superiority of liberal political theory which such a concession may seem to imply is far from absolute. For while liberalism has been more consistently realistic and keen-sighted about the nature of bureaucracy, political power, and the possibilities for democracy within the institutions of government, it has tended to operate with a simplistic public/private or state/society dichotomy which causes it to neglect what I call the "politics of civil society."[2] When everything outside government is treated as private/society, it cannot be recognized that parts of that vast space constitute a different sort of political field, one that mediates between government and the private sphere in a stricter sense. While liberals may well examine society politically, in the hopes of identifying the "social prerequisites" of democratic rule (in public education, religious and civic traditions, the workplace, and so forth), they are far less likely to ask about how the institutions of education, religion, community, and workplace might themselves be made more democratic, or how the relationships between such public institutions and government might be more complex than the simple servicing of the latter by the former.[3] In particular, they too often fail to explore the ways in which the non-governmental public might constitute an aspect of the state itself, especially in the formation of public opinion, legitimacy, and consent.

By civil society, then, I mean the public space between large-scale bureaucratic structures of state and economy on the one hand, and the private sphere of family, friendship, personality, and intimacy on the other.[4] While it would be premature to try to specify what precisely lies within this space in modern societies, we can say that it centers around organizations which generate opinions and goals with which they seek not only to influence wider

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public opinions and policies within existing structures and rules, but sometimes also to alter the structures and rules themselves. Classical Marxism was always attentive to the politics of civil society because of its need to understand how subaltern classes constitute themselves politically and mount challenges to incumbent authority. Of course such political understanding is hard won, and there were always Marxists who preferred to assume that such challenges grew automatically out of "laws" of historical development. It is Gramsci's particular distinction among his comrades not only to have resisted this temptation, but to have developed their most coherent and complete discussion of the modern politics of civil society, even if he was no less prone than they to illusions about the politics of proletarian dictatorships.

My purpose in this paper is to examine Gramsci's concept of civil society, and then to consider how it might be further developed to suit the needs of contemporary political theory. I begin with some comments on the concept itself, including a defense of it against a recent attack from the direction of orthodox Marxism. I then consider why Gramsci gave his concept the unorthodox form he did, and what its several (partially conflicting) dimensions were. In this analysis I pay particular attention to Gramsci's concept of religion, a distinctive aspect o his whole conception of Marxism that is only now gaining some recognition yet plays a critical role in his view of civil society.[5] Finally, I take up certain problems in this view, and then attempt to think beyond it in relation to contemporary politics.

I

As he freely acknowledged, Gramsci used civil society in a fundamentally Hegelian sense.[6] For both theorists it involves that new public conflict zone which has been differentiated out, and thus freed from the control of, both the private sphere of family and the governmental institutions of kingship, law-making, and bureaucracy. Likewise for both it is an aspect of the state as a whole, specifically that part of it which, in Hegel's terms, fulfills the human needs of citizens for "livelihood, happiness, and a legal status" (i.e., economic, cultural, and political needs) as distinguished from that part of the state which rules and regulates citizens from centralized institutions of authority. Gramsci did not use Hegel's quaint vocabulary for describing civil society as the social location of the courts, the police, and the corporations, and it is unstated but of course obvious that he would have regarded this particular content of civil society as bourgeois and as corresponding to Prussia's stage of development in Hegel's epoch. Yet initially it appears that all Gramsci has done is to relativize the content of Hegel's civil society. Its particular content in any concrete case is always the outcome and the object of political struggle, and depends ultimately on which "social group" has been and is becoming hegemonic. Hence, Gramsci can recognize a possibility which Hegel could not: that of a proletarian civil society in which worker councils substitute for corporations and the political party for the police.

That Gramsci's differences with Hegel in this respect had to be much more significant than this will become fully clear after we consider his relation to

Croce and Marx. Suffice it to say here that Hegel, following the Scottish economists, imaged the central conflict of civil society in terms of entrepreneurs and laborers in a marketplace. For him it was therefore not only perennially the same but also centrally economic. Civil society is above all the sphere in which the economic struggles of public life are played out. For Gramsci, on the other hand, the conflicts of civil society are centrally political in three separate senses. Their point is not merely the making of economic contracts and the dividing of the existing labor product (for him, political as well as economic acts), but also and more importantly, the expression of political points of view (by parties, religious groups, organs of information, and so forth) in order to influence the political identifications of the masses *and* the institutional nature and boundaries of civil society itself. Hegel did of course recognize the moral-cultural basis and import of the struggles of civil society, and Gramsci followed him in this respect. Yet in doing so Gramsci significantly altered the relation of culture to the state. For Hegel, proper civic *Bildung* begins in civil society. Civil society is something like its grammar school, an educational end-point for many, perhaps the majority of citizens; and that higher school, in which they gain their most important education, is of course the state *senso stricto*. In Gramsci, however, the state *senso stricto*—what he calls political society—has little or no ethical content. It simply dominates; its weapons are coercive not consensual.

Gramsci, then, has shifted from Hegel's correlation of civil society with *Moralität* and state with *Sittlichkeit* to the simpler correlation of civil society with consent and state with domination. Civil society becomes the location of all culture or "ethical life" publicly expressed; only the private sphere (and not of course the Hegelian realm of absolute spirit, which Gramsci did not grant) might be seen to express culture outside civil society. It may be that he made this move, as he suggested in a 1924 letter to Palmiro Togliatti, because he saw that the crucial political struggles in modern Western societies occur in civil society, and that these struggles have a fundamentally cultural character.[7] We will return to this point shortly. But it should also be recognised that the move is a straightforward transposition from Croce, who also correlated the ethical with civil society and violent force with the state.

Unlike Croce, however, Gramsci treated the dichotomies of force/consent, domination/hegemony, and state/civil society as aspects of public life (or the state in the broad sense) rather than as a division of public/private, and thus when he proclaimed his faith that ethics and politics *will* be reconciled in the "regulated (socialist) society" of the future, he was predicting the successful coordination of three different social spheres. Moreover, because he accepted the Hegelian equation of civil society + political society = state, he insisted against Croce on the simultaneously cultural and political character of civil society. In short, like Hegel (indeed, even more than Hegel) he conceived civil society as a field of cultural-political struggle, and as a mediation of public and private; but like Croce he denied the ethical-cultural character of political society.

On the latter point, of course, he is also like Marx, yet it is when we introduce Marx—by any reasonable account Gramsci's most important

mentor—that the major difficulty in understanding his concept of civil society arises. Because he was a Marxist, and because he based his understanding of Marxism heavily on the 1859 preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, Gramsci accepted the dichotomy of base and superstructure as an essential sociological organizing principle. But how, his interpreters have wondered, can he hope to reconcile his idea of the essentially cultural and political character of civil society, and thus its apparent superstructural stature, with the fact that, from a Marxist perspective, civil society is also obviously economic and thus part of, if not identical with, the base? The Turinese worker councils, which he conceived and helped to organize in 1919, are the central institution in what he saw as an emerging proletarian component of civil society; and they are simultaneously economic, political, and cultural. Indeed, it is in the way they integrate each of these aspects that Gramsci found their chief attraction.

Is civil society, then, part of the base or part of the superstructure? Clearly it must be the latter or Gramsci's references to civil society as the consensual aspect of the state would make no sense. This interpretation is further reinforced by his references to civil society as standing "between the economic structure and the state," to the economy as "making incursions" into civil society, and to the logic of political action as being distinct from economic action such that politics may be considered an "autonomous science."[8] Yet it does not follow, as some interpreters have concluded, that Gramsci has reversed the Marxian image and assigned primacy to the superstructure.[9] Any such idea flies in the face of Gramsci's self-proclaimed Marxism and turns him into an idealist. A more plausible interpretation is that he held the idea of the primacy of the economic in the traditional Marxist way, but altered its role within the theory of revolution. Rather than arguing, as had Marx in the 1859 Preface, that revolution would be directly precipitated by the conflict between the forces and relations of production, Gramsci seems to have believed that this conflict was only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for revolution.[10] Thus, in an era of extreme social, political, and economic dislocation, such as the post-World-War-I era in which Gramsci was writing, the conflict in the economic base became for him a kind of background factor which could simply be assumed. The key to grasping revolutionary possibilities became the essentially cultural-political analysis of hegemony and counter-hegemony in the superstructures of civil society.

It is on this point that Gramsci's appropriation of Marx is commonly misunderstood, especially by the guardians of Marxist orthodoxy. In a recent issue of this journal, Geoffrey Hunt charges that Gramsci's concept of civil society is "an ideological concept of competitive capitalism of no *critical* value in understanding the capitalist society of the late 20th century."[11] To substantiate this, he puts forward a number of claims, among them that: (1) Gramsci "lapses into the absolutely fundamental error of taking *phenomenal* features of that society [capitalism] as its essential basis, resulting in an awkward syncretism of liberalism and Marxism"; (2) that he errs in supposing that the historical path to power for the proletariat might parallel that of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, a "fallacy of class transposition"; (3) that the

"cultural emphasis" of his concept of civil society "is not wedded to any adequate consideration of the essential inner structure and dynamics of capitalism"; (4) that he is guilty of a "total neglect of the base"; (5) that he believes civil society to be "an aggregate of free, equal, self-interested, property-owning individuals bearing rights"; (6) that he falls victim to the illusion built into capitalism that politics is merely a superstructure; (7) that he takes the state as given, as not itself constituted, and thus as the origin of hegemony rather than the effect of "essential production relations"; (8) that "'hegemony' substitutes for ideology" in his analysis; and (9) that the worker "consents" to the rule of the capitalist class.[12]

These are wild charges which cannot be substantiated with textual evidence from Gramsci (which may explain why Hunt fails to present any). The only charges that contain some truth are the second and the eighth. Regarding the latter, it is true that Gramsci tended to neglect the study of the formation of ideology directly within the processes of production and exchange, but nowhere did he deny its origins there.[13] Regarding the former, it may be that Gramsci deluded himself in believing that the proletariat could build an alternative hegemony as had the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie. As will be argued later, he did not perceive how the postwar transition away from entrepreneurial capitalism put this strategy in peril.[14] Yet this in no way invalidates his concept of civil society. On the contrary, the much increased fragility of civil society in advanced capitalism ought to make us more aware than ever of the urgency of its defense.

The main problem in Hunt's analysis seems to lie in his failure to distinguish the theory of capitalism from that of revolution. Nowhere did Gramsci say that the state is a given, that politics is produced entirely outside the production process, or that the liberal conception of civil society as an aggregate of free and equal individuals is correct. Gramsci was a Marxist for whom such claims would be absurd. But what, he would have asked, has the fact that the political may be traced back to the capital-labor relation within production got to do with the theory of revolution? What practical difference in terms of revolutionary strategy does this connection make? For Gramsci the practical effect of emphasizing this connection had too often been forms of automatic Marxism or trade-union economism. What he wanted was an activist strategy aimed at the building of an alternative cultural-political bloc, centered, it should be recalled, in factory-based institutions (until they were hopelessly defeated). His analysis of civil society must be understood in relation to this end.

II

Turning now directly to the question of why Gramsci chose to think of civil society in this unusual manner, two factors may be cited. First, as already suggested, he seems to have rejected any notion that economic crises by themselves lead to intense class struggle.[15] Certainly his own experience after the war, when Italian economic conditions were in complete chaos, must have convinced him that the key factors in producing revolutions were political and

cultural rather than economic. Thus, to grasp the Marxist imperative in a concrete situation, Croce became a helpful theoretical mediation. Gramsci was drawn to Croce's *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, for example, in part because he saw it as Croce's effort to win support for his "religion of liberty" as the consensual basis for modern Italian civil society. The "philosophy of praxis" would have to learn how to present itself in this way and not, as in Nikolai Bukharin's *Popular Manual*, as a positivistic science.[16]

Secondly, Gramsci seems to have believed that Italy's full realization as a modern nation-state required that it develop a hegemonic (integrated and unified) culture which it lacked under fascism, indeed had never had since achieving political unification in 1870. In distinguishing force from consent, or domination from hegemony as the currencies through which power is exerted in political society and civil society respectively, Gramsci never claimed that an entrenched regime necessarily possesses both. On the contrary, rule by domination alone is probably more common, and a number of Gramsci's most inventive political categories—Caesarism, passive revolution, revolution-restoration, and war of position—were developed precisely to analyze non-hegemonic political situations. Italian national politics has always been of this sort because the Jacobin force necessary to galvanize hegemony has always been lacking.[17] Thus the Risorgimento was a passive revolution—a moderately progressive but non-hegemonic political movement that succeeds at the expense of a far more progressive rival—and so was fascism. The politics of civil society or struggle for hegemony remained radically open in Italy, and this is the avenue which Marxism can best utilize, especially now in the wake of its defeat in the struggle for domination. Indeed, should it be victorious in the politics of civil society, Gramsci seems to have believed, it would ultimately be sure to gain control of the state as a whole.[18]

We are now in a position to appreciate fully why Gramsci's revision of Hegel's concept of civil society had to be more radical than merely relativizing its content to allow for non-bourgeois hegemonic formations as well as continuous hegemonic struggle. Gramsci wanted to preserve both the Marxian insight that the forces of production (not the state) are the primary determinant of modern social evolution, and the Crocean insight that civil society is primarily a sphere of "ethical-political" contestation among rival social groups. The first point implies that the widening contradiction between the forces and relations of production remains the most basic precondition for the historical realization of a new socialist mode of production. But the second point implies that the fundamental political contest is unlikely to be a direct confrontation between capital and labor for control of the state and, thus, the means of production, at least not in the near term. Rather the contest is likely to be a "positional" one for civil society conceived essentially as a cultural-political domain, indeed the sole public domain where mass consent is at issue.

Gramsci, however, went well beyond Croce when we consider that this struggle for civil society or "war of position" is not presented as an undifferentiated whole. Indeed, nearly everything in the *Prison Notebooks* can be seen as a contribution to one or another "front" in this war. His analyses of

the Risorgimento and of earlier Italian history as well as his discussion of the historical function of intellectuals in relation to "national-popular" and "Jacobin" movements can be understood as a battle on the *historiographic front*, that is, as a way of clarifying Italy's historical failures in gaining hegemony and thereby the route that might possibly lead to success. Similarly, his theater criticism, reflections on journalism, studies of language change, folklore, and popular novels as well as his critique of fascist culture as "Jesuitical" and "Brescianist" can be seen as battles on the *literary-critical and popular-culture front*.[19] His study of the common school and of educational philosophy as well as the implicit pedagogical principles of Bukharin's *Popular Manual* can be seen as his battle on the *educational front*. His analysis of modern political parties as educators or consensus-builders, his reflections on politics as an "autonomous science," and his inquiry into the worker psychology produced by "Americanism and Fordism" are all aspects of his battle on the *political-theoretical front*. Finally, his appropriation of Croce's philosophy for the "philosophy of praxis," his conception of orthodox Marxism, and his defense of "vulgar Marxism" as the theoretical form most accessible to the masses at any early stage in their development can all be seen as a war of position on the *religious front*. Some more detailed remarks about this last front will help uncover a central tension in Gramsci's politics of civil society as well as a distinguishing characteristic of his Marxism as a whole.

A reader of the *Prison Letters* will likely notice that Gramsci often seems to regard himself not only as an avid student of Croce but as his arch-rival in the politics of civil society.[20] Croce is the Italian "lay Pope," a position he has attained in part because of his shrewd recognition that the role was there to be taken. As a student of Italian history and political tradition, Croce had recognized that no social group had achieved hegemony in Italy, either during the Risorgimento or thereafter, but that the struggle to establish one had been continual. In broad terms the contenders had been traditional Catholicism and laical liberalism, and Croce understood himself to be the personal embodiment of the latter on the contemporary scene. Yet, as a student of modern societies generally, Croce had also understood that there was a problem of secularization which transcended national boundaries. As he had written to Georges Sorel in 1914 (a letter which Gramsci noted with interest after it was published in *La Critica* in 1929), the great social problem of the modern age was to learn to "live without religion," that is, without traditional confessional religion.[21] Later, in his *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (1932), Croce tried to show that traditional religion, as well as the nineteenth-century ideologies which had sought to replace it, had been killed by the crassly materialistic environment of post -1870 "Bismarckian" Europe. Nonetheless, Croce believed he could revive the liberal tradition and refashion it to serve as a secular "religion of liberty," an aim which his *History* was calculated to advance.[22]

Gramsci had no quarrel with the way Croce had defined the problem. Already in his early writings he had made a sympathetic note of Croce's contention that secular philosophy could in principle supply the same consolations as had confessional religion.[23] Moreover, he had displayed keen

interest in the question of what made for a good teacher for the masses, and he had answered it in religious terms. Thus the writer and critic Renato Serra, tragically killed in the war, had taught the people in the same way as had Saint Francis of Assisi: both knew that to make "God disappear behind syllogisms" would "kill feelings . . . , strangle the ardor of faith," and that the true teacher was a "humble soul, a simple spirit" who could "reanimate in each soul a divine inebriation."[24] His early attraction to Croce was similarly based. As he remarked in one of his prison letters, Croce's "greatest quality has always been the ability to disseminate his ideas about the world in a series of brief writings which make philosophy accessible to the people and so are readily absorbed as good sense and common sense."[25] Marx too was not the compiler of "indisputable, scholastic statements" but a "master of spiritual and moral life," in effect, the creator of a new religious faith.[26]

Croce was right both in seeking to be the inspiration for a hegemonic culture in Italy and for attacking the problem of secularization with a lay "religion of liberty." Italy needed a "coherent, unitary, nationally diffused 'conception of life and man,' a 'lay religion,' a philosophy that has become precisely a 'culture,' that is, generated an ethic, a way of life, a civil and individual form of conduct."[27] And this need was connected with the problem of secularism in just the way Croce had stated it:

> That aspect of the modern crisis which is bemoaned as a 'wave of materialism' is related to what is called the 'crisis of authority.' If the ruling class has lost its consensus, that is, is no longer 'hegemonic' (*dirigente*) but only 'dominant,' living by pure coercive force, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a wide variety of morbid symtoms appear.[28]

Where Gramsci differed from Croce, of course, is in the remedy prescribed. Rather than a "religion of liberty," what Italy needs is the "philosophy of praxis" (Marxism), which can be understood as a kind of "heresy" of the religion of liberty "since it was born on the same terrain of modern civilization."[29] This philosophy of praxis is the "absolute *secularization* and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history." It

> presupposes all this cultural past: Renaissance and Reformation, German philosophy and the French Revolution, Calvinism and English classical economics, laical liberalism and this historicism which is at the root of the whole modern conception of life. The philosophy of praxis is the crowning point of this entire movement of intellectual and moral reformation, made dialectical in the contrast between popular culture and high culture. It corresponds to the nexus Protestant Reformation plus French Revolution: it is a philosophy which is also a politics, and a politics which is also philosophy.[30]

The Protestant Reformation, according to Gramsci, went through two phases: a populist one which was anti-intellectual and materialistic in its emphasis on production and the increase of wealth, and then, several centuries later, an intellectual one in which a higher culture was created. Marxism is a "modern

popular reformation" still in its "populist phase." Thus its immediate task is to "constitute its own group of intellectuals" in order to "combat modern ideologies in their most refined form." It must also "educate the popular masses." But this is a slow task for which great patience is required. A viable, non-materialistic intellectual culture, diffused, throughout the population, is a long-term goal and is not immediately realizable.[31]

With this point of view, Gramsci not only has a strategy and a religious content to rival Croce's liberalism; he also has an explanation of the phenomenon which the latter was seeking to combat but could not explain: the materialistic culture of post-1870 Europe. Croce saw this culture negatively as the disease which had killed "faith" both in terms of traditional religion and its various secular surrogates. His hope that his own liberalism could somehow defeat nihilistic materialism was simply that: a hope.[32] Gramsci, on the other hand, also approached materialistic culture negatively, but in a dialectical way. The materialistic ethos epitomized by Bismarck's Germany was the cultural concomitant of the rise of the working class into economic and political prominence within modern European life. Given the historical experience of the Protestant Reformation, it should have been expected. It is a lamentable but necessary phase. Even the "vulgar" forms in which Marxism had been presented to and imbibed by the working class had to be tolerated to some extent, for they made good pedagogical sense at an early historical stage. If the true character of Marxist historicism were to be affirmed immediately, that is, if it were conceded that Marxism has "practical origins" and therefore only "provisional value," the "convictions necessary for action" might well be shaken. Only in the long run can vulgar Marxism get its "decent burial."[33]

We have seen that Gramsci sometimes conceded that Croce's writings have real pedagogical virtues. Yet despite them he believed that Croce's liberalism is unlikely to succeed as a modern lay religion since it is little more than an "atheism for aristocrats."[34] The Catholic Church is actually a far greater threat to the philosophy of praxis than Croce, for "the Pope as leader and guide of the majority of Italian peasants and women is a great, indeed the greatest political force in the country after the government, given that his authority and influence operate through a centralized and well-articulated organization."[35] Yet Gramsci believed that the passage to a non-transcendental or "immanentist conception of life" is in the historical cards, and Marxism is therefore in the final analysis the "only religious faith that is adequate" to the modern world. Moreover, it is the only religious faith that can produce a "real" hegemony since all the other faiths are seeking to reconcile class interests and thus are not "organic" outgrowths of the people. Marxism will succeed, Gramsci implied, because it is the only faith that will raise the "simple" to a philosophical level that satisfies their inner spiritual needs. Catholicism has a simplistic version of itself for the masses, but it never seeks to raise them above it. Croce's lay religion makes no contact with the masses at all.[36]

For Gramsci, then, Marxism is less a philosophy, political strategy or understanding of history than a new religion which integrates its world-view

and practical ethic into a distinctive culture. From this point of view, whose inspiration derives from both Sorel and Croce, Gramsci is able to offer fresh and concrete answers to two of the central problems Marxist theory had faced in his age.[37] First, the problem of the acquisition of class consciousness, which had frustrated nearly every Marxist thinker from Lenin to Lukács, can be detached from the narrow intellectualistic terms in which it was ordinarily approached and reconceived through a religious paradigm. Like Lenin, Gramsci thought that the proletariat begins with an "economic-corporative" frame of mind (Lenin's "trade-union consciousness"). Though intellectually narrow and oversimple, this frame of mind has deep feelings of outrage, doubt, and fear attached to it. In a way that Lenin and other Marxists failed to appreciate fully, Gramsci saw that "the popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel."[38] Yet these feelings cannot become the basis for significant political action. The economic-corporative is limited because it is only an egoistic-passional stance somewhat akin to Kierkegaard's "aesthetic stage" of life. What is needed is a "catharsis" (a term more suggestive of a religious-conversion experience than of a dispassionate acquisition of knowledge) through which the egoistic-passional stance is transformed into a sense of the collective power of a mutually shared vision of what the future can be, and a mutually shared faith in the group's ability to arrive at that destination. This reorientation amounts to a collective "religious stage," for no knowledge can guarantee its success. Its power derives not from science but from culture, from a collectively shared faith.

Secondly, Gramsci used the religious paradigm to rethink the problem of "orthodoxy." After the revisionist critique of Marxism in the 1890s (by Bernstein, Croce, Pareto and others), the politically faithful were faced with the problem of how to deal with convincing disproofs of specific Marxist theses. Lukács tried to handle this problem in *History and Class Consciousness* with the idea that "orthodoxy refers exclusively to method."[39] But this is to describe orthodoxy exclusively in terms of a particular philosophical commitment and nowhere brings into play considerations of political commitment and passional investment in a particular vision or goal. Gramsci's concept of orthodoxy has the virtue of addressing these latter considerations as well as the purely philosophical point. Orthodoxy for Gramsci is not only a belief that Marxism "contains in itself all the fundamental elements needed to construct a total and integral conception of the world" but also, and more importantly, it is "everything which is needed to give life to an integral practical organization of society, that is, to become a total integral civilization." It is revolutionary in the same way that Christianity was revolutionary against paganism. It offers a new and higher principle of civilization.[40]

Yet Gramsci's understanding of Marxism as a lay religion is not confined in its implications to problems internal to Marxism. It also opens up a particular vista on the set of problems associated with what Weber called rationalization, a vista quite different from the well-known Marxist appropriation of Weber by Lukács. As Habermas has suggested in his interpretation of Weber, the various interrelated rationalization processes associated with modernity

produce two connected but quite different problems: one of freedom (the "iron cage" of bureaucratization), the other of meaning (the cultural hegemony of a science that cannot prescribe what to do or how to live).[41] In developing his concept of reification, Lukács confronted the former problem far more fully than he did the latter. What he objected to in the modern proliferation of semi-autonomous sub-systems of purposive-rational action is that it produces no organic whole, that is, that it does not measure up to a genuine concept of reason. The result is a loss of freedom because the sub-systems advance autonomously without popular, democratic control, and a loss of meaning because they produce a fragmentation of social and personal experience. But Lukács did not consider, as Weber did, that the problem of meaning also arises in terms of the rationalization of religious experience which undermines and ultimately destroys religion's capacity to provide meaning.

Gramsci's approach to rationalization differs from that of Lukács in two principal ways. First, he did not understand rationalization as a comprehensive set of phenomena involving law, art, culture, and religion as well as state administration and industrial work. His discussions of rationalization are therefore topically isolated (bureaucratization of political parties, rationalization of work), and when he took up the phenomenon comprehensively, as in his discussion, following Croce, of the "wave of materialism and crisis of authority" in post-1870 Europe, he thought of it as the cultural concomitant of the rise of the working class rather than as an autonomously developing rationalization process.[42] Secondly, in contrast to Lukács, Gramsci's approach to processes of rationalization pays less attention to the problem of freedom than to that of meaning. Thus in the "Americanism and Fordism" sections of *The Prison Notebooks* where he discussed the rationalization of work, he did not even acknowledge a problem of freedom. On the contrary, the rationalization or mechanization of work (as in Taylorism) is presented as a problem of worker "adaptation":

> Once the process of adaptation has been completed, what really happens is that the brain of the worker, far from being mummified, reaches a state of complete freedom. The only thing that is completely mechanized is the physical gesture; the memory of the trade, reduced to simple gestures repeated at an intense rhythm, 'nestles' in the muscular and nervous centers and leaves the brain free and unencumbered for other occupations. One can walk without having to think about all the movements needed in order to move, in perfect synchronization, all the parts of the body, in the specific way that is necessary for walking. The same thing happens and will go on happening in industry with the basic gestures of the trade. One walks automatically, and at the same time one thinks about whatever one chooses.[43]

While there are other places in which Gramsci was more critical of American industrial civilization, he does seem to have believed that the modern problem of freedom lies not in the rationalization of work but in the democratic control of industrial decisionmaking.[44] Unlike Lukács, however, Gramsci did not believe that the full democratization of social life, and thus its full conformity

to the principle of autonomous reason, resolves the modern problem of meaning. Democratization, as in the Turinese worker councils of 1919–1920, certainly helps; but a secular religious replacement for Christianity is also necessary. In this respect Gramsci may seem closer to Durkheim than to Marx.

The religious dimension within Gramsci's prescription for the modern "crisis of authority" reveals a central tension underlying his conception of the politics of civil society. On the one hand, civil society for Gramsci demarcates the public space outside the state proper and so opens to view the range of organizations (other than the state) that might be democratized, as well as the various modes in which cultural combat for the political allegiance of the population can be undertaken. In this sense the politics of civil society is open-ended, its full expression being predicated on the possibility of free communication and free play among all social parties. On the other hand, Gramscian civil society is the public space in which alienation and the fragmentation of experience—the modern problem of meaning—is to be overcome, not only by democratic participation but also by yoking that participation to a "coherent, unitary, nationally diffused 'conception of life and man,' a 'lay religion,' a philosophy that has become precisely a culture." In this sense the politics of civil society is ultimately closed: free communication and free play must always remain subordinate to the higher goal of cultural unity.

III

In today's world of course the possibility that Marxism represents history's anointed successor to Calvinist Christianity appears extremely unlikely. That such a world-historical vision was still plausible in the 1930s dramatizes the very great political and cultural distance we have traveled in the last half century. In part, this distance can be measured in terms of the decline in the persuasive power and thus the legitimating force of all the nineteenth-century ideologies: not only Marxism, but conservatism, liberalism, and anarchism as well. One might of course argue that such ideologies were always surrogate religions and that their demise has been accompanied by the resurgence of traditional religious forces, especially since 1970. Yet it remains unlikely that traditional religion will ever again play the hegemonic role it did in some medieval societies, especially in the West where the forces of the capitalist labor market and new waves of immigration have combined to produce unprecedented cultural and ethnic diversity within national boundaries. Moreover, it seems increasingly likely, as certain liberal writers of the 1950s then suggested, that what holds contemporary societies together is the very opposite of consensus on political vision and cultural values.[45] What holds them together is the *absence* of a shared political culture, and thus the impossibility of forging oppositional attitudes into a unitary counter-culture that might mobilize political action. Thus the implication of postwar social development is that the modern problem of meaning, to the extent that it can

be resolved at all, cannot be resolved within civil society but must retreat to the private sphere.

It may well be, then, that the latent contradiction of Gramsci's conception of civil society—between the organizing principle of open-ended democratic competition and that of a closed unitary culture—has been historically superseded. If a collective identity is to be forged in contemporary civil societies, it can only be via the procedural consensus on democratic competition, with the cultural principles of the competitors secured only at the level of the private sphere. Yet Gramsci's ambivalence remains valuable in challenging us to think through the implications of this state of affairs even if it may be inevitable. In recent years it has become fashionable to celebrate this apparent inevitability as the virtues of multiplicity, heterogeneity, *heteroglossia*, a love of the incommensurable, and the like.[46] Yet to be able to assess such anti-unitarian (or, as their proponents would say, anti-totalitarian) values requires that we be able to deal intelligently with certain presuppositions that Gramsci made, but about which we continue to know very little. Does the stable and positively self-regarding personality require at least roughly unitary and coherent cultural norms? Does their absence therefore imply severe costs in terms of crime, terrorism, suicide, and other manifestations of alientation and social unrest? Does their absence therefore imply promoting the already manifest tendency of the political-administrative system to become uncoupled from any accountability to the citizenry? Such questions should make clear that to have gone beyond Gramsci's answers is hardly to have escaped his problems, and that they continue to represent an important research agenda.

In its democratic aspect as well, Gramsci's concept of civil society continues to deserve our consideration. For it appears today as a pioneering concept, which anticipated the post-World-War-II turn towards social theories that demand a reinvigorated public sphere. Arendt's theory of action, Habermas's early call for a new public sphere, Touraine's recent emphasis on the importance of social movements, these and many other examples testify to a deeply felt desire to reinvigorate and repoliticize civil society.[47] The first such call, however, was Gramsci's. Because of his advance—against both Hegel and Marx—of freeing civil society from any simple identification with the bourgeoisie and capitalism, he was able to transform it from an economic or political-economic to an essentially cultural-political conception and thus to grasp it as a zone of contestation by social movements. As such it resembles an Arendtian space of appearance, except that he would never limit its activity to "action" in her sense. But it has the same fluidity, the same emphasis on the *vita activa*, the same stress on the ethical-educational nature of its struggles. That he concentrated all his attention on the workers' movement, on a single movement which he saw, erroneously it now appears, as having world-transforming implications of the first order, does not change the fact that he had the basic structural insight about the importance of civil society as a mediator between the private sphere and both government and the economic productive forces, or in Habermas's terms, between life-world and system.[48]

Moreover, Gramsci's concept has advantages that some more recent visions of public space do not. First, he recognized that civil society is not literally a

topographical space, that it can be clearly distinguished from the state and the private sphere only analytically.[49] But at the same time he did not fall into the opposite trap of proposing a merely formal definition as, for example, a space in which "two or more individuals, who previously acted singularly assemble to interrogate both their own interactions and the wider relations of social and political power within which they are always and already embedded."[50] Rather he recognized that civil society must be defined in terms of attempts at collective goal-setting by specific social groups in interaction with one another. Second, Gramsci also understood that the revitalization and repoliticization of civil society cannot be conceived on the model of an "ideal speech situation," as in Habermas, but must appreciate the human needs for affective, spiritual relations and rhetorical and social play, as well as the need for bargaining and compromise given the existence of conflicts of interest and ideology which no modern society yet has ever eradicated.[51]

Still, from our current perspective, it is also obvious that Gramsci's conception of civil society is deficient in a number of respects. I would like to discuss four of them here. First, there is something clearly obsolete in the fact that Gramsci granted only a provisional status to civil society. By this I mean that, wedded as he was to a Marxian philosophy of history, he argued unquestioningly (at least as a matter of faith) that the oppositional character of civil society, as well as the opposition of political and civil society, will ultimately be overcome by the proletarian revolution, leaving us with a "regulated society" which, though not perhaps conflict-free (Gramsci was unclear on this point), certainly is at least realtively trouble-free given its egalitarian order. In other words, Gramsci's conception of civil society is dynamic only insofar as the proletariat remains in opposition, and his conception thus remains dependent upon a theory of proletarian revolution which very few in the West today (including many of its communist parties) would accept.

Related to this difficulty is the palpable fact that in states where socialist revolutions have occurred, civil society does not disappear by virtue of a genuine and egalitarian cultural union of state, civil society, and private sphere, as Gramsci imagined it would, but has to be actively suppressed. Current emancipatory possibilities in these societies often hinge on the reopening of civil society, as in the Polish Solidarity movement. Indeed, I would suggest that East-West differences in this respect are primarily of degree: in the former the organizations of civil society tend to be actively suppressed by bureaucratic economic and political structures, while in the latter such structures attempt only to circumvent or avoid contact with the organizations of civil society. In both kinds of society, the achievement of a rough balance of power among the three spheres of state, civil society, and the private would go a long way towards humanizing life within them.

Secondly, Gramsci's belief in a proletarian "regulated society" as an historical end-point calls attention to the absence in his work of any significant discussion of the necessity of its bourgeois political foundation. There is little mention of individual rights and freedoms in Gramsci, and very little sensitivity to the fact that any fully contestatory civil society necessarily

presupposes them. Of course, Gramsci thought of such rights and freedoms as being tied to the reign of private property rather than to the bourgeois political institutions of parliament, independent judiciary, and so forth, which he regarded as merely superstructural. One may endlessly debate the question of the degree to which Gramsci's regulated society would have been liberal, had it come about. But since it has not come about, and shows little political prospect for doing so, it seems obvious that a re-emphasis on the liberal underpinnings of civil society is in order. In terms of the Marxist tradition, this means that we have to return to Marx's essay on *The Jewish Question* and re-emphasize that the "civil society" there *aufgehoben* by "human society" is itself a crucial moment of freedom, though not of course a sufficient one. It should also mean that we fully recognize the existence of non-class forms of social domination, and so expand our conception of the associations, movements, and publics for whom guaranteed free expression is critical to human emancipation.

Thirdly, there are serious problems in Gramsci's concept of a politics of civil society that derive from his self-described Jacobin allegiances. Despite the fact that in his early work Gramsci had only contempt for the French Jacobins, and refused to see anything Jacobin at all in the events of 1917, he gradually learned to appreciate the political-military virtues of centralized authority and its cultural concomitant: society as a culturally integrated totality. In his *Ordine-nuovo* period, Gramsci went so far as to image the society of the future as "organized on the model of a large engineering works, a communist international in which every people, every part of humanity acquires a characteristic personality by its performance of a particular form of production and no longer by its organization as a state with particular frontiers."[52] Later he corrected this image, but only in that he came to deny the withering away of the state it implies and not the underlying idea of cultural integration around proletarian production. The result is that Gramsci remained committed to a model of socialist revolution based on *dirigisme* and centralized bureaucratic control and left himself open to a nightmare interpretation of socialism as the full realization of a "rationalization" process which reaches internal limits under conditions of private accumulation of capital.[53]

Finally, Gramsci's account of civil society is deficient because he failed to give an historical account of civil society which would explain how a public zone between the state and the private sphere arose, how and why it changes in character over time, and what the conditions of its possibility are. We have seen that Gramsci took steps in this direction: he relativized the content of civil society and reconceived it as a zone of cultural-political contestation, and hence potential self-transformation. But there is an internal contradiction within his politics which reveals that he did not fully think through civil society as an historical entity. For at precisely the time (1924) that he began to recognize theoretically the crucial political importance of civil society as the site of alternative hegemonies, his political practice was revealing the unprecedented power of those in control of the economy and government to circumvent, manipulate, and control it.

Why had the Italian proletariat been blocked in its efforts at utilizing civil society for its own advancement when such had manifestly been the bourgeois path in eighteenth-century England and France? Gramsci seems never to have arrived at an answer to this question. While to explore it fully here obviously lies outside present bounds, I would like to conclude this discussion with some brief observations about contemporary civil societies that take this question as a starting-point. If civil society represents a third force or sphere between state and private realm, then it seems likely that the functions of the organizations operating within it have in some manner been differentiated out of the other two spheres. Thus civil society appears to Hegel essentially as a "system of needs," an independent marketplace, no longer merely an extension of the private household nor under the control of the state. Other forces in the incipient civil society of his era—representative assemblies, independent professions, the press, political clubs, and so forth—seem to share this characteristic of having won their independence from either or both of these spheres.

Thus it appears that two of the essential preconditions of civil society are a level of social complexity and differentiation of functions that strain and ultimately burst the boundaries of the private household, and a state organization which either cannot or does not seek to incorporate or control what has become independent of the private. When firmly entrenched as an economy, civil society may even appear (as it did to Marx) to be fundamentally in control of the state and the private realm, rather than the reverse. Conversely, if either of the latter realms (for whatever reason) should seek to and succeed in reappropriating or otherwise controlling some or all of the organizations of civil society, the sphere itself will weaken such that new organizations (like alternative social movements) which seek to root themselves there will have difficulty in doing so. This appears to have been the fate of the proletarian movement in Gramsci's Turin. To use Habermas's term, civil society became "refeudalized" as part of the general historical transition from liberal, entrepreneurial to advanced, monopoly capitalism.[54]

From this point of view, Gramsci's mistake was to remain committed to a model of base and superstructure which prevented him from appreciating the new interconnectedness of economic-corporate and political-bureaucratic organizations whose increasing power contributed so heavily to the demise of civil society in his era. His tripartite model of state/civil society/private sphere, and the theorizing of civil society as part of the superstructure upon which it was predicated, opened the historical situation to potential analysis, but his continued treatment of the forces of production as prior to (more primary than) the state prevented its realization. If he felt obligated to retain a model of base and superstructure, he would have done better to have reconceived the former as the amalgam of corporate-bureaucratic structures operating via a system logic of purposive-rational action and infinite expansion, and the latter as a "life-world" of public and private organizations and persons operating via norms of participation, justice, and community on the one hand, mutual affection, intimacy, and concern on the other.[55]

Today we face a social world in which the power of corporate-bureaucratic

structures is so great as to threaten the very existence of civil society and even the private sphere as we know them.[56] My contention is that Gramsci's tripartite model of society, amended so that state-bureaucratic and economic-corporate structures are treated analytically as a single sphere, continues to offer an excellent theoretical approach to this situation, especially if each sphere is understood to operate via separate and distinct organizing principles or logics. As the engine of the Weberian forces of rationalization, the corporate-bureaucratic sphere operates via a logic of purposive-rational action (or means-ends rationality) and the corresponding norms of efficiency, internal control, and external expansion of power. Organizations operating primarily within this domain (apart from government and big business itself) are the scientific establishment, the mass media, and most political parties and lobby organizations. Civil society, in contrast, operates via a logic of open discussion, democratic participation, and the corresponding norms of publicity, justice, and community. Organizations operating primarily in this domain include social movements, non-profit community and public service organizations, religious groups, community arts groups, and "public interest" corporations and lobbies. Finally, the private sphere operates via a logic of affective communication and corresponding norms of mutuality, care, concern, and intimacy. It includes family, friendships, and personal relationships; sexuality, eroticism, and intimacy; the human body and the human personality.

The problem of the interrelation of these spheres must not be resolved, as Gramsci imagined, via their integration in a cultural totality. In our world this could only mean the complete triumph of the corporate bureaucratic sphere and the end of democracy and individuality. The problem is to defend the existence and integrity of each sphere against the "colonization" of the weaker ones by the dominant one.[57] In the long run, the achievement of a rough balance of power among the three seems an eminently reasonable goal. Yet, in my judgment, the best hope for such a balance of power lies in a resurgence of civil society. Without a much stronger civil society than presently exists, the private sphere is likely to be too weak to defend itself, and the corporate-bureaucratic sphere too strong to be in any way constrained.

NOTES

1. See my *Hegemony and Revolution: Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 229–246 and *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 1–9.
2. For a recent example of this tendency among liberals, see S.I. Benn and G.F. Gaus, ed., *Public and Private in Social Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983). For the purposes of present discussion, so-called "neo-conservatism" may be considered a variant of liberalism. While the neo-conservatives have made a special point of the need for a reimposition of "superego controls" (patriotism, ascetic traditionalism, etc.) within the cultural domain, they tend to remain liberals within the domains of politics and economics. Moreover, they show the same tendency to sharp public/private dichotomies as in liberalism. See, for example, Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. xii–xv, 10–15. One exception is Peter Berger with his concept of mediating

structures. See Berger and Richard Neuhaus, *To Empower People* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977), pp. 1–3.

3. Generalizations as sweeping as this one are bound to suggest exceptions. One thinks, for example, of the recent work by Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), which attempts to think through the nature of justice across the institutions of civil society and government, or that by Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Economic Democracy* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1985), which, as its title suggests, attempts to extend democratic theory to the workplace. Yet most such exceptions are recent and may be seen as liberal responses to challenges by feminists, socialists, and others over the past two decades that its grasp of "personal politics" is highly inadequate.
4. Because they treated the marketplace as the central expression of bourgeois civil society, neither Hegel nor Marx understood civil society in quite this way. The definition is, however, consistent with Gramsci's usage and, as will be argued below, is the most useful way to conceive civil society for contemporary politics, though for reasons Gramsci probably did not fully grasp.
5. The theme was pioneered by Hugues Portelli, *Gramsci et la question religieuse* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1974). However, Portelli confined himself to an *explication de texte*, and offered no evaluation and little context for comprehending the import of Gramsci's analysis of religion. Some recent Italian works which have gone further in these respects are: Augusto Del Noce, *Il suicidio della rivoluzione* (Milan: Rusconi, 1978); Claudio Vasale, *Politica e religione in A. Gramsci* (Rome: Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1979); Tommaso La Rocca, *Gramsci e la religione* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1981); and R. Vinco, *Una fede senza futuro?* (Verona: Mazziana, 1983).
6. See Antonio Gramsci, *Lettere dal Carcere*, ed. S. Caprioglio and E. Fubini (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 481 (henceforth cited as L.C.), and the *Quaderni del Carcere*, 4 vols., ed. V. Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), p. 703 (henceforth cited as Q.).
7. See Palmiro Togliatti, ed., *La formazione del gruppo dirigente del PCI nel 1923–1924* (Rome: Riuniti, 1962), pp. 196–7.
8. Q., pp. 1253, 1615, 1022, 1599. For further discussion of Gramsci's view of politics as an "autonomous science," see my *Hegemony and Revolution*, pp. 202–228. For the opposing view that Gramsci remains an orthodox Marxist, see Jacques Texier, "Gramsci, Théoricien des Superstructures," *La Pensée*, 139 (1969), pp. 35–60.
9. See Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci e la concezione della societa civile," in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea*, 2 vols. Rome: Riuniti, 1969, Vol. I., pp. 75–101.
10. Gramsci may have believed that his view of revolution remained consistent with Marx's since he commonly focused on another sentence from the 1859 Preface in which Marx declared that "a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production . . . and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." See, for example, Q., pp. 1249, 1492, 1570, and 1592.
11. Geoffrey Hunt, "Gramsci, Civil Society, and Bureaucracy," *Praxis International* 6:2 (July 1986), p. 206.
12. *Ibid*, pp. 207, 210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 216.
13. I have explored this topic in *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism*, chapter 6.
14. See also the discussion of the "paradox of civil society" in *Hegemony and Revolution*, pp. 221–2, 239–40.
15. Antonio Gramsci, *La costruzione del partito comunista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), p. 121. (This volume will henceforth be cited as C.P.C.).
16. For Gramsci's interest in the *Storia d'Europa*, see L.C., pp. 609, 614–21 and 632; also Q., pp. 1208, 1224, 1226–7, 1292–4, 1297. For his pedagogical critique of Bukharin, see Q., p. 1396.
17. Q., pp. 1559–60.
18. Q., p. 802.
19. By "Jesuitical," Gramsci meant to refer to the tendency to assume that revolution is always the work of fanatical minority, as the historical Jesuits had assumed about the liberal revolutions of 1848. "Jesuits" then underhandedly appropriate the rhetoric of the revolutionaries they oppose in order to legitimize reaction. "Brescianism," which refers to the same phenomena, recalls DeSanctis's critique of Jesuit Father Antonio Bresciani who, in a novel about Italy in 1848, *L'Ebreo di Verona*, had presented traditional Catholicism as "true liberty" while condemning the liberals as mere "libertines."

Gramsci used both terms as categories with which to condemn a number of writers who enjoyed popularity under fascism. See Q, pp. 1384, 2185–9, 2197–8, and 2209.

20. See especially Gramsci's letters to Tania of May 2 and May 9, 1932 (L.C., pp. 614–621) and Q., p. 1224.
21. *La Critica* 27 (1929), p. 114. For Gramsci's comment, see Q., p. 1294.
22. See Benedetto Croce, *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimono* (Bari: Laterza, 1932), especially pp. 27–28 and 358.
23. Croce's contention was voiced in a short article, "Religione e serenità," published in *La Critica* 23 (March 20, 1915), pp. 153–5, and republished by Gramsci in the first and only issue of his journal *La Città Futura* (February 11, 1917). The piece is now available in Croce's *Etica e Politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1931), pp. 23–25.
24. Serra died on July 20, 1915, days after Italy's entry into the war; Gramsci's eulogy appeared in *Il Grido del Popolo* on November 20, 1915 and is now included in S.G. pp. 10–12.
25. Gramsci, letter to Tania (April 25, 1932); L.C. pp. 613. In his early educational efforts such as the *Club di Vita Morale*, which he established in Turin in December 1917, Gramsci made use of Croce's writings precisely because of their pedagogical virtues.
26. S.G., pp. 150, 220.
27. Q., pp. 2185–6.
28. Q., 311. This assessment is remarkably similar to Emile Durkheim's in 1912: "In a word, the old gods are growing old or already dead, and the others are not yet born." The passage from which this is drawn is also very like Gramsci's. See his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J.W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 475–6. There is, however, no evidence that Gramsci knew of Durkheim or his work.
29. Q., p. 1238.
30. Q., pp. 1437, 1860.
31. Q., pp. 1854–64.
32. For a fuller treatment of this theme in Croce see my "Benedetto Croce and the Death of Ideology," *Journal of Modern History* 55 (1983), pp. 208–36.
33. Q., pp. 1389, 1394. See also Q., pp. 463, 1034, 1233, and 1291–92. Gramsci nonetheless recognized that vulgar Marxism had costs particularly in encouraging political passivity.
34. Q., pp. 1303–4.
35. Q., p. 1306.
36. Q., pp. 1295, 1319–20, 1380–81.
37. Gramsci admired Sorel's inquiry into ancient Christianity and his incorporation of Renan's idea of "intellectual and moral reform" into Marxism. See Q., pp. 1682–3, 1860.
38. Q., p. 1505.
39. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. R. Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), pp. 1, 27.
40. Q., pp. 1434–5.
41. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), pp. 243 ff.
42. Gramsci did not deal directly with Weber's discussion of rationalization. He knew *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated into Italian in 1931, but his discussion of it focused entirely on the Protestant idea of grace (Q., p. 1086). The only other writings of Weber with which he seems to have been familiar are his discussions of Wilhelminian Germany, especially of parliament and political parties. See Q., pp. 388, 1527. Instead the major impetus for his ideas about a "wave of materialism and crisis of authority" comes from Croce (whose *Storia d'Europa* might be seen as Italy's Weberian meditation on the rationalization of life).
43. Q., pp. 2170–1.
44. For a passage critical of "American-style civilization," which makes people "dessicated, mechanical, and bureaucratic, and creates an abstract mentality," see L.C. 250. For his suggestion that socialism would involve a democratized but still rationalized workplace, and that this corresponds to the real desires and needs of the workers, see Q., pp. 2160–64.
45. See, for example, Seymour M. Lipset's classic discussion of the political virtue of "cross-cutting cleavages" in social structure in *Political Man* (Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1960).
46. See, for example, Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G.

Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

47. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit* (Neuwied a Rhein: Luchterhand, 1962); and Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye*, trans. A. Duff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
48. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, p. xxiii.
49. For a fuller discussion of this point, see my *Hegemony and Revolution*, pp. 215–222.
50. John Keane, *Public Life and Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 2.
51. For Habermas's conception, see *Theory of Communicative Action*, pp. 272–337.
52. Antonio Gramsci, *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954), p. 126.
53. Such of course was Max Weber's expectation about socialism. See his "Socialism," now in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W.G. Runciman (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 251–262.
54. See Habermas, "The Public Sphere," *New German Critique* 5 (1974), pp. 49–55.
55. See Habermas's distinction between system and life-world in *Theory of Communicative Action* (especially the as-yet-untranslated volume two), which, I am suggesting, provides a new basis for understanding the classical Marxist model of society. The danger in his distinction is that it will be interpreted as yet another form of the dichotomy of public and private.
56. For an intriguing argument about the threat to the private, see John O'Neill, *Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). My quarrel with this analysis, however, is that it leaves us with a vision of the contemporary political imperative centered upon a defense of the private (e.g. the family) rather than upon reassertion of civil society.
57. With the word "colonization," I call attention again to the heavy debt this analysis owes to Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*, especially the second volume.