

Creating the cultures of the future: cultural strategy, policy and institutions in Gramsci

Part Two: Cultural strategy and institutions in Gramsci's early writings and political practice

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Introduction¹

Scholars who have studied Gramsci's pre-prison writings have all tended to place emphasis on his interest in culture and education.² His interest in cultural institutions, however, so far has not received systematic attention.

In 1974, Gramsci's early writings on cultural institutions were seen by Alastair Davidson as expressions of a merely ideological-practical, rather than theoretical, interest based on 'the completely traditional, and idealist, method of indoctrination through the press, lectures and seminars'.³ Davidson's emphasis was on Gramsci's Crocean starting point, which resulted in a 'cultural messianism' that was, substantially, a 'continuous failure' and which Gramsci eventually renounced.⁴

Walter Adamson, in his analysis of Gramsci's conception of the relationship between political organisation and political education in the period between 1918 and 1926, confirmed Davidson's diagnosis of 'cultural messianism' in matters of political education.⁵ Adamson, however, underlined the prefigurative dimension that, from 1919, Gramsci attributed to the factory councils as the institutions of the future proletarian state. Adamson also argued that such prefigurative dimension, far from declining after the failure of the workers' councils experience and the consolidation of Fascism, became for Gramsci '*the* crucial element for a strategy of revolution in the West where the power of the state is deeply and inextricably connected with the complex superstructures of civil society'.⁶ Revolution was now conceived by Gramsci 'as a long drawn-out assault on the cultural interstices of the bourgeois civil society (...) to be waged first through antifascist defensive alliances but ultimately through the construction of autonomous, alternative institutions as the basis for a new "historic bloc"'.⁷ However, by assuming a notion of 'political education', in Gramsci, separated from general cultural and intellectual activity – a separation that, as we will see, is not supported by Gramsci's own writings --, Adamson failed to relate Gramsci's ideas on cultural institutions to questions of political organisation. He in fact argued that, in the prison notebooks, the reason why Gramsci's theory of political education relied on cultural institutions was simply that Gramsci needed a solution to his allegedly incomplete account of the psychological level in the transition to a critical consciousness, and to his assumed inability to explain, on the social level, the

development of an alternative hegemony that would not be incorporated by the existing bourgeois one.⁸

Adamson later noted that by 1918 Gramsci's view of 'political education' included, amongst other ideas, 'a cultural organization which acts as the "first nucleus" of the coming socialist society',⁹ and argued that, in the prison notebooks, Gramsci had continued to conceive 'political education' as taking place within concrete institutional settings such as 'schools, churches, the press, political parties, trade unions, the courts, medical centres, and the army',¹⁰ in addition to the factory councils. However, Adamson did not provide an analysis of cultural institutions in the young Gramsci's writings, and therefore interpreted Gramsci's prescriptive notes on primary education as anticipations of how education might be organised in a socialist society and as policy indications for the improvement of education in bourgeois society.¹¹

After the publication, by the mid-1980s, of a number of newly discovered articles from Gramsci's early years, Carl Levy challenged the earlier assumption that Gramsci was 'hostile or indifferent to the traditional institutions of the working class movement'.¹² He argued that the young Gramsci's engagement with the daily concerns of labour and cooperative movements functioned as a laboratory in which he developed his theoretical conceptions on cooperation and, more generally, on proletarian institutions. Levy also stressed Gramsci's notion of socialism as a grass-root project to be created through a critique of capitalist society carried out from within autonomous proletarian prefigurative institutions, which would constitute a link between the present and the future.¹³ However, Levy's insights do not seem to have raised any further interest. Yet, without analysing the characteristics, role and significance of cultural institutions in the pre-prison writings, Gramsci's later interest in their activities is difficult to understand. In fact, why should a revolutionary thinker be keen on developing cultural institutions?¹⁴ An analysis of Gramsci's early ideas and political practice in relation to cultural institutions would answer this question, which is of relevance and consequence to anyone interested in the role of cultural strategy and institutions in political struggle.

My argument is that cultural institutions in Gramsci's pre-prison writings and political practice occupied a special, strategic place amongst prefigurative proletarian institutions. They were at the centre of his theory and strategy of the revolutionary process of the socialist transformation of society. Without an understanding of the role of cultural institutions, Gramsci's later theory of the creation of organic intellectuals and a new hegemony seem to remain without concrete applicability. I therefore analyse Gramsci's political practice and writings on cultural organisations and institutions to identify their characteristics, the problems that they were expected to address, and their role in the revolutionary process. I discuss these issues in relation to the main influences on Gramsci's ideas on the relationship between culture and revolution in the pre-prison period (particularly the Italian socialist tradition and the Proletkultist), and try to relate them to his own later broader theorisation in the prison writings. Nonetheless, this article only aims to lay the foundations by which we might make sense of Gramsci's activity and reflections on this issue.

1. The cultural associations of the proletariat and the debate on ‘socialism and culture’ in the Italian socialist tradition, 1916-17

Gramsci's first involvement in the question of the relationship between socialism and culture dated back to 1912, when it emerged as a topical issue within the Italian Socialist Party. At the National Congress of Socialist Youth in Bologna in September 1912, Angelo Tasca's call for a cultural-intellectual renewal of Italian socialism was disparaged as ‘*culturista*’ (‘culturist’) by Amadeo Bordiga, who contended that there should not be too much emphasis on education because ‘no one becomes a socialist through education but through real-life necessities imposed by the class they belong to’.¹⁵

Although at the time Gramsci was still not a member of the Socialist Party, Tasca was one of his closest friends at the University in Turin. In 1916, Gramsci still remembered the emphasis that the debate had been given in the socialist press, and realised its importance for the development of socialist political strategy. Responding to the revolutionary syndicalist Enrico Leone, who had claimed that the only hope of ‘salvation’ would be in an ‘ignorant and primitive’ proletariat ‘uncontaminated by culture’,¹⁶ Gramsci rejected anti-intellectualism and provided a justification to Tasca's ‘culturist’ line.¹⁷ To theorise the relationship between culture and socialist politics, Gramsci combined the conception of the role of culture as critique held by the German Romantic poet Novalis with a political interpretation of Socratic philosophy advanced by the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher Vico. For Novalis, culture was a tool of transcendental self-understanding: know thyself *as different from others* – it was thus, in Gramsci, the basis for the development of a socialist proletarian identity grounded in the critique of bourgeois society.¹⁸ For Vico, instead, culture meant: know yourself *as equal in civil rights to all other human beings* – it was thus, in Gramsci, the basis for the construction of a socialist proletarian identity based on equality.¹⁹ By linking the two perspectives, culture was no longer ‘encyclopaedic knowledge’, ‘pedantry’,²⁰ as understood by paternalistic educational institutions for the working classes, such as the traditional popular universities that were widespread in Italy at the time. It was, instead ‘organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations’.²¹ It was a tool of self-transformation ‘through a critique of capitalist civilization’ which could not occur by ‘spontaneous evolution’, as argued by the revolutionary syndicalists, because, ‘above all, man is (...) a product of history, not nature.’²²

To illustrate the importance of culture to workers enthralled by the syndicalists, Gramsci relied on historical analogy. He explained that the once emerging bourgeoisie had prepared its political revolution with a cultural one. The Enlightenment, with the Encyclopedia of D'Alembert and Diderot, was ‘a magnificent revolution in itself’, a cultural revolution, which ‘helped to create a state of mental preparedness for those explosions in the name of what was seen as a common cause’.²³ Culture was the factor that enabled the spread of revolutionary ideas, principles, and institutions across

Europe.²⁴ The proletariat could therefore draw a lesson from the French Revolution and adopt its methods, using culture as a revolutionary weapon.

The theme of socialism and culture was to be a crucial one in Gramsci's intellectual trajectory. His early reflections could in fact be seen to constitute the first kernel of a long elaboration that would eventually lead, in the prison notebooks, to an original re-formulation of the concept of 'intellectual and moral reform' as a necessary step of the revolutionary process.²⁵

We find an initial theorisation of the role of cultural institutions in an article that Gramsci wrote in the Autumn of 1917, when, as the news of the Bolshevik Revolution reached Italy, the debate on socialism and culture re-emerged in the socialist press. The possibility of a revolutionary seizure of power in Italy may have highlighted the challenge represented by the proletariat's responsibility for running the post-revolutionary state. Gramsci intervened in the debate, ardently supporting a comrade's controversial proposal of creating a workers' cultural association. He explained that an association was a necessary alternative to the Popular University, the only institute of adult education allegedly for proletarians in Turin. For Gramsci, this institution had bourgeois origins and was 'based on a vague and confused criterion of spiritual humanistarianism'.²⁶ The proletariat should instead develop its own autonomous cultural institutions.

The cultural association which the Socialists should promote must have class aims and limits. It must be a proletarian institution seeking definite goals. The proletariat, at a certain moment of its development and history, recognizes that the complexity of its life lacks a necessary organ and creates it, with its strength, with its good will, for its own ends.²⁷

The idea of autonomy in use here was inspired by Sorel's writings.²⁸ Gramsci would develop the idea theoretically, in the prison notebooks, as 'spirit of cleavage', or the proletariat's emancipation from subaltern to hegemonic status through a 'progressive acquisition of the consciousness of its own historical personality' -- which was fundamental for attracting 'potential allied classes'.²⁹

On the basis of the principle of autonomy, the cultural organisations of the proletariat were not aimed at traditional education as understood by the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, education was aimed at the vital political function of creating political cohesion and democratic participation, and avoiding dogmatism within the workers' movement. Instead of the philanthropy of the popular universities, the cultural association of the proletariat should offer 'solidarity, organization'.³⁰ Instead of lectures, there would be 'the detailed work of discussing and investigating problems, work in which everybody is both master and disciple'.³¹ Instead of 'knowing a little of everything', culture would be treated as 'exercise of thought, acquisition of general ideas, habit of connecting cause and effect'.³²

Culture should not be conceived as something separate from everyday life: 'everybody is already cultured because everybody thinks, everybody connects causes and effects. But they are empirically, primordially cultured, not organically', because they are not used to the Socratic discipline of 'thinking well, whatever one thinks'.³³

The role of the cultural organisation of the proletariat would be to provide such discipline and method of thought.

A cultural association would therefore address, for Gramsci, what he saw as the four main problems of the socialist movement. The first was a lack of compactness amongst members, which resulted in the breaking of ranks but also in the opposite phenomenon of authoritarianism.³⁴ Compactness was difficult to achieve because solutions to problems tended to be provided as they emerged from urgent current political developments, without broad discussion and preparation. As a consequence, Gramsci noted, the implementation of strategies tended to rely on obedience to the leadership, rather than on participation in discussions, because most members did not have the necessary knowledge and awareness of issues. This led to dogmatism and, ultimately, to the phenomena of ‘idolatry’ and ‘authoritarianism’ that the socialists were supposed to be fighting.³⁵ Cultural activities would help support freedom of thought within the proletarian movement. ‘Culture (...) is a basic concept of socialism, because it integrates and makes concrete the vague concept of freedom of thought’,³⁶ and therefore should be organised as a practical activity.

A cultural association would provide the opportunity of discussing problems ‘in a disinterested way – that is, without waiting to be stimulated by current events – whatever interests or might one day interest the proletarian movement’.³⁷ The word ‘disinterested’ is important here, as in Gramsci’s writings of this period there was a quasi-identification of politics and disinterestedness. Through political association, the proletariat would be able to ‘shed (...) personal selfishness’ and would ‘learn to work disinterestedly for the future of all’.³⁸

For Gramsci, a second problem that the cultural association would help address was the inability of the political and economic organisations of the proletariat (which included the party, the cooperatives, and the Labour Confederation) to discuss and disseminate the moral, religious and philosophical foundations and implications of political and economic decisions. The consequences of this situation were recurrent ‘spiritual crises’ within the movement. To address this problem, socialism should be considered ‘an integral vision of life’, with ‘a philosophy, a mystique, a morality’,³⁹ capable of confronting its moral and philosophical problems without resorting to external, bourgeois philosophies, mystiques and moralities. A cultural association would have a vital role as the place in which such problems would be discussed, clarified, and propagated.⁴⁰ It is possible to argue that if, for Gramsci, the principles of socialism had to be discussed, it was because they were not given definitively. Therefore, they could not be simply propagated, but had to be created through discussion, and proletarian cultural institutions were key sites of this elaboration. In the prison notebooks, Gramsci would insist, in the same way, that the principles of historical materialism only represented a temporary value, not an eternal truth,⁴¹ which meant that they were subject to constant discussion. This was possible because historical materialism was, for Gramsci, is ‘a philosophy whose theory of knowledge is dialectic’, rather than ‘a “sociology” whose philosophy is (...) materialism’.⁴²

The third problem that the cultural association would address was the lack of a specific role for intellectuals within the socialist movement. Presumably here Gramsci

was thinking of the kind of intellectuals who, in the prison notebooks, he would call ‘traditional’: those whom the proletariat, in the phase of its emergence and organisation, found were already present.⁴³ The cultural association was a place in which traditional intellectuals could find a function that would ‘fit their capabilities’, so that ‘their intellectualism, their intelligence, would be put to the test’.⁴⁴ The work of intellectuals, however, should be of a methodological kind: to stimulate the proletariat to develop critical tools that would enable it to elaborate ‘a higher critical perception of history and the world in which they live and struggle’.⁴⁵ In the prison notebooks, this would become the function of the organic intellectuals of the working classes: ‘to determine and to organise the reform of moral and intellectual life’.⁴⁶

But the young Gramsci also stressed the need to attract (traditional) intellectuals towards the proletarian movement. We can see this idea in embryo when he wrote positively of the success of the Fabian Society (a member of the British section of the Second International) in attracting and ‘involving intellectuals and the university world’ in its activities.⁴⁷ The prison notebooks confirm that the proletariat needed to attract traditional intellectuals in addition to generating its own organic variety: ‘[o]ne of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer “ideologically” the traditional intellectuals’,⁴⁸ but this task had to be facilitated by the activities of the organic intellectuals: ‘assimilation is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals’.⁴⁹

Fourth and last, the cultural association of the proletariat would help fight the consequences of Catholic and Jesuit education, which stifled ‘the spirit of disinterested solidarity, love of free discussion, the desire to discover the truth with uniquely human means, which reason and intelligence provide’.⁵⁰

Gramsci’s idea of cultural association resulted in the creation, in collaboration with other comrades of the Socialist Youth Federation of Piedmont, of a *Club di vita morale* (‘Club of moral life’) for the education of the youth interested in socialism. Apparently the club had only a few members and held only three meetings, interrupting its activities when the members were recruited for active military service.⁵¹ However, the initiative could be seen as linked to *La Città futura* (subtitled ‘single issue of the youth’), a four-page, newspaper-format journal for young socialists, which Gramsci published on 11 February 1917 on behalf of the Piedmont committee of the Youth Federation of the Socialist Party. The journal was written mostly by Gramsci (with essays critically discussing issues such as common sense, indifference, illiteracy, and authoritarian notions of discipline),⁵² but also included an essay by Gaetano Salvemini and excerpts from essays by Benedetto Croce and Armando Carlini as stimuli to a reflection and discussion about questions of culture, religion and philosophy.⁵³ The publication of the single-issue was announced by the Socialist newspapers *Il Grido del Popolo* and *Avanti!*, also providing a list of contents. The announcement (most likely written by Gramsci himself) explained that the single issue was meant to be an invitation to the Socialist youth, whose life and future had been undermined by the war, to participate actively and responsibly in political life and create for themselves an environment in which their energies and intelligence would find full realisation and achievement.

Arguably, for Gramsci, journals and various kinds of publications were vital in providing texts for the discussions to be held at socialist cultural organisations.

It is possible to say that with the conceptualisation of a proletarian cultural association as the basis for a broad, bottom-up development of a new culture and civilisation, the young Gramsci parted company from the traditional socialist idea of changing the consciousness of the proletariat through political propaganda. It was therefore quite natural that the Bolshevik debates on ‘proletarian culture’, as we will see, should attract his interest.

2. The debate on ‘proletarian culture’, the *Ordine Nuovo*, and the ‘proletarian cultural soviets’, 1918-1922

In June 1918, as editor of the socialist newspaper *Il Grido del Popolo*, Gramsci published a translation of an article by the first Peoples’ Commissar of Education of the first Soviet Republic, Anatoly Lunacharsky.⁵⁴ In the article, Lunacharsky explained the position of the Proletkult, the organisation of which he was a theorist, in relation to the debate on proletarian culture that had developed amongst Bolshevik intellectuals. Lunacharsky lamented that in Russia, although no one challenged the notion that some kind of measure was needed to spread culture and instruction amongst the working class, and especially the illiterate, the concept of proletarian culture was viewed with suspicion by both the comrades to the Left (like Lenin) and those to the Right (like Potresov).⁵⁵ Comrades to the Left understood educational measures as a mere integration of the activities of popular education already carried out by bourgeois institutions. Amongst the leftists, however, some were completely against the concept of proletarian culture because they saw it as a deviation from the actual revolutionary tasks of the proletariat. Comrades to the right, instead, accused the Proletkultists of desperate utopianism.⁵⁶ The Proletkultists, explained Lunacharsky, argued that socialist propaganda had to have such broad foundations that the notion of ‘propaganda’ would no longer be adequate to render the concept. One could only speak of self-education and self-instruction of the proletariat.⁵⁷ To support this activity, cultural institutions were fundamental. Therefore, besides the three main organisations of the proletariat (political, economic, and cooperative), there should be organisations devoted to cultural activities, comprising clubs, schools, libraries, newspapers, journals and theatres.

This was clearly a programme that Gramsci fully shared. In fact, he wrote a short introduction to Lunacharsky’s article to draw the readers’ attention to the ‘coincidence of thought and practical proposal’ between Lunacharsky’s approach to the question of ‘proletarian culture’ and the one already articulated by the Turin editorial office of *Avanti!* between December 1917 and January 1918.⁵⁸ Gramsci attributed this coincidence to the striking similarity between the Italian and the Russia proletariat in terms of ‘intellectual and moral conditions’.⁵⁹ As the proletariats of two equally marginal nations in their relation to international capitalism, they had a similar revolutionary potential.⁶⁰ But the question of proletarian culture, he argued, was now

‘more urgent and fundamental’ for the Italian proletariat than for the Russian,⁶¹ possibly because it still had to carry out the revolution.

With Gramsci’s co-founding, in April 1919, of the weekly *Ordine Nuovo*, in which he systematically published translations of the writings of Lenin and other Bolsheviks,⁶² and his involvement in the movement of factory councils from June of the same year, the idea of a cultural association of the proletariat undertook a transformation into that of the ‘proletarian cultural soviets’. These would provide workers and peasants with ‘a permanent discipline of education’ that would enable them to ‘create a conception of their own of the world and of the complex and intricate system of human relations, both economic and spiritual, which shapes social life on the globe’.⁶³ Gramsci saw the factory councils as the Italian parallels of the soviets, the basic elements for a dictatorship of the proletariat leading to a new proletarian state, and through the ‘cultural soviets’ factory workers should be educated to become able to take over the management of factories and to carry out new forms of self-government. In Gramsci’s writings of this period, the setting up ‘a network of proletarian institutions, without delay’ (*fin d’ora*)⁶⁴ was ‘necessary to ensure the actual creation of this [proletarian] State’;⁶⁵

In December 1919, Gramsci started to commit most of his energies to the revolutionary education of the proletariat, through the Group for Communist Education (*Gruppo di educazione comunista*) and its School of socialist culture and propaganda, with courses delivered by editors and collaborators of *Ordine Nuovo*.⁶⁶ The school was designed to satisfy factory workers’ desire to acquire the knowledge that would make them masters of their own thought and action, and therefore protagonists of the history of their own class.⁶⁷

The influence of Proletkultist ideas only became noticeable in Gramsci’s writings from around June 1920.

The revolution (...) presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living that must be specific of the working class, that must be created by it, that will become ‘dominant’ when the working class becomes the dominant class.⁶⁸

While the idea of a new culture was already present in Gramsci’s writings, the qualification that this culture ‘must be specific of the working class’ was possibly a new element derived from the Proletkultist thought. But what radically changed form his earlier approach was the introduction into the debate of the rhetorical question: ‘is it possible to start identifying the latent elements that will lead to the creation of a proletarian civilization or culture? Do elements of an art, philosophy and morality (...) specific to the working class already exist?’⁶⁹ The new theme was in fact presented by Gramsci as a question already articulated by the Russian working class.

According to our Russian comrades, who have already set up an entire network of organizations for ‘Proletarian Culture’ (Proletkult), the mere fact that the workers raise these questions and attempt to answer them means that the elements of an original proletarian civilization already exist, that there are already proletarian forces of production of cultural values.⁷⁰

Therefore, although it was ‘not possible to obtain positive creative results before the system of bourgeois domination has been broken up’, on the basis of the Russian experience ‘we can begin to think that in the fullness of its autonomous historical life the working class will also have its own original conception of the world, some of whose fundamental features can already be delineated’.⁷¹ These would fully emerge when the working class became free from bourgeois domination. They consisted, for example, in the combination of manual and intellectual labour (which would generate a completely new educational tradition), and in the emergence of ‘new complexes of linguistic expressions’.⁷²

The role of the cultural organisation also changed for Gramsci. It was no longer simply the cultural organisation of the proletariat, but the organisation for proletarian culture. The focus was no longer simply on the development of a method of discussion, but also on the expression of the creativity of the proletariat. The Russian Proletkult was a useful model, and Gramsci welcomed the Bolsheviks’ offer to help the working classes that were still not free from bourgeois domination by linking the Proletkult to other similar organisations worldwide.⁷³

The failure and end of the period of occupation of factories in Northern Italy at the beginning of October 1920 and the increased violence by the Fascist squads opened up a period of crisis within the Socialist Party that led to the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy, for which Gramsci was partly responsible. From the point of view of cultural activities this development resulted in the intensification of Gramsci’s relationship with the Proletkult. With the launch of the Manifesto of the International Office of Proletarian Culture after the II Congress of the Comintern, an Italian delegation attended an International Proletkult meeting in Moscow. This visit led, in the following month, to the creation, under Gramsci’s direction, of an Institute for Proletarian Culture (*‘Istituto di cultura proletaria’*) in Turin, which rapidly recruited a few hundred adherents amongst factory workers.⁷⁴ The initiatives organised by the Institute included conferences, concerts, visits to museums and exhibitions of arts and crafts, proletarian literary prizes, and very well attended first-aid courses to help comrades regularly assaulted by the Fascist squads. The first conference took place in February 1921 under title ‘Intellectuals and workers’. The newspaper *Ordine Nuovo* explained that the event would be the first example of the method that the Institute for Proletarian Culture would use in carrying out its educational task. One of the invited speakers was the renowned journalist and writer, Giuseppe Prezzolini, and the topic was presented, in the announcement in the newspaper, with a number of questions:

Does a class of intellectuals exist? What are its historical and social characteristics? What are the functions exercised by intellectuals in modern societies? What do they think they are and represent? What is precisely their situation, instead, in a class society? What is the point of view of factory workers on intellectuals? Does a proletarian culture exist?⁷⁵

It is interesting that Gramsci’s prison Notebook 12, on intellectuals, started with a question that could be seen as the ideal continuation of that earlier debate: ‘Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?’

The titles of other conferences organised by the Institute for Proletarian Culture in the spring of 1921 were: 'Tomorrow's civilisation' and 'Proletarian culture'. According to oral sources interviewed by Cesare Bermani in the 1960s, Gramsci tended not to attend the debates because he wanted the workers to take control of their own cultural activities.⁷⁶ In March 1921, the Institute was renamed Section of the Moscow International Proletkult (*Sezione del Prolet-Cult Internazionale di Mosca*),⁷⁷ reflecting a more direct link with the Russian Proletkult. The editors of *Ordine Nuovo*, now a daily, created new subject sections of the paper entirely devoted to writings by proletarians. These included, for example, 'Proletarian comments', 'Proletarian life', and 'Factory life'.⁷⁸ It is possible to say that through the influence of the Proletkult, Gramsci came close to essentialising the concept of culture in relation to class. However, the emphasis on the creation of a 'proletarian' culture would not become a theme in his later writings, and there would be no uncritical celebration of proletarian culture in Gramsci's prison notebooks.⁷⁹ His interest would rather develop towards the idea of the creation of a new unitary culture overcoming any class connotation.⁸⁰

However, as we have seen, the period of the *Ordine Nuovo* and the factory councils brought another important new development that was not related to the Proletkult. The theme of the cultural institution of the proletariat was complemented by that of the intellectual, which Gramsci was to follow up in the prison notebooks. In prison, Gramsci would remark on the importance of the *Ordine Nuovo* experience for his development of the theory of a new type of intellectual whose starting point was that of the practical constructor and organiser.⁸¹

(...) the weekly *Ordine Nuovo* worked to develop certain forms of new intellectualism and to determine its new concepts, and this was not the least of the reasons for its success, since such a conception corresponded to latent aspirations and conformed to the development of the real forms of life. The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator (...); from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains 'specialised' and does not become 'directive' (specialised and political).⁸²

3. Moscow, Vienna, and Rome, 1922-26

In the summer of 1922, when Gramsci was in the Soviet Union as representative of the Italian Communist Party on the Executive of the Communist International, the Politbureau of the Russian Communist Party decided to launch a public debate, in the newspaper *Pravda*, on the question of 'proletarian culture'. The debate raised the issue of whether a consolidation of the revolution into a full socialist transformation of society should be achieved through cultural means. It involved all the leading theoreticians, including Lenin, Bukharin, Pletnev, Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Krupskaya, and Bogdanov.⁸³ It eventually developed into a philosophical dispute between, on one side, Bogdanov, the main theorist of proletarian culture, and Bukharin supporting the Proletkultist conception, and on the other side Lenin and most other prominent

Bolshevik figures, condemning the idea.⁸⁴ In October of the previous year, Gramsci had published in *Ordine Nuovo* Bogdanov's article 'Proletarian poetry', giving it particular emphasis, and in Moscow he and Angelo Tasca attended a number of meetings of the International Proletkult.⁸⁵ However, according to Tasca's account, Gramsci's interest in the Proletkult was limited. In particular, he did not apparently share the enthusiasm of the Proletkultists for cubism and constructivism, trying instead to direct the Proletkultists' interest towards the study of the success of the popular novel as a potential interesting starting point for the development of a proletarian culture.⁸⁶

While in Russia, Gramsci may have become aware that Lenin was particularly skeptical about the notion of proletarian culture. Lenin considered institutions and organisations for the creation of a popular culture unnecessary before the revolution and frivolous after it.⁸⁷ For him, the transition to a socialist society could not wait for the preliminary creation of a proletarian culture; it should rather be built, more pragmatically, on the existing materials of bourgeois culture: 'we have to build socialism from that culture (...) we have no other materials'.⁸⁸ And after the seizure of power what was needed, for Lenin, was rather a broad programme of education in support of industrial expansion and rationalisation, which required the raising of the cultural level of the masses.⁸⁹

Trotsky also criticised the idea of proletarian culture on the ground that if the objective of the revolution was a classless society, it did not make sense to develop a class culture. For him the main cultural task of the proletariat was the assimilation of bourgeois culture, and therefore the role of the Proletkult should be to raise the literary level of the working classes.⁹⁰ In *Literature and Revolution* (1923) he argued that bourgeois culture had taken five centuries to develop:

history shows that the formation of a new culture (...) around a ruling class demands considerable time and reaches completion only at the period preceding the political decadence of that class. Will the proletariat have enough time to create a "proletarian" culture?

Most importantly, Trotsky asked, why take the trouble, given that, in contrast to the bourgeoisie, 'the proletariat regards its dictatorship as a brief period of transition'?⁹¹ This led him to the rather stark conclusion 'that there is no proletarian culture and that there will never be any and in fact there is no reason to regret this'.⁹² In Gramsci's later writings, there seems to be no comment on Trotsky's position on proletarian culture, despite the fact that Gramsci's well known letter replying to Trotsky's questions about the Italian Futurist art movement, dated September 1922 (and therefore written in Moscow), was published as an appendix to Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* in 1923 together with Trotsky's own essay on the highly controversial question of proletarian culture.

At the end of November 1923, Gramsci was sent by the Comintern to Vienna, to work in the International office for the fight against fascism. His task was to oversee the Italian Communist Party's links with other European communist parties, as well as the propaganda activity for Italian refugees abroad after Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922 and the arrest, in 1923, of more than two thousand Communist militants.⁹³ From Moscow and Vienna Gramsci supported the recruitment of young

Italian Communist militants for the international schools of politics in Russia.⁹⁴ In Vienna, he also planned a number of publications, including a new, theoretical series of *Ordine Nuovo*, which would return to the cultural programme of the first series, and a substantial quarterly journal of Marxist scholarship aimed at factory workers, which should be titled *Critica Proletaria* and should deal with questions of political culture (the latter journal, however, did not materialise. He also planned a bi-weekly for peasants titled *Il Seme* ('The Seed'), which would start publication in 1924, a theoretical periodical for the education of party militants and aimed at attracting intellectuals, a yearly publication of the Italian working class, and a series of booklets of basic propaganda.⁹⁵

The range of different publications planned by Gramsci in Vienna arguably reflected the idea of a party with a broad mass support and capable of attracting intellectuals. Gramsci's view of journalism would be articulated in the prison notebooks in a number of notes and in a special notebook titled 'Journalism', entirely devoted to the topic of what he called 'integral journalism'.⁹⁶ His notes on journalism would reflect his conception of social change as, ultimately, a question of the emergence of a new culture and civilisation, to which journalism could make a significant contribution by aiming at gradually moving readers 'from simple common sense to coherent and systematic thought'⁹⁷ -- hence, arguably, his concept of 'integral journalism'.

Returning to Italy in May 1924, having gained parliamentary immunity as an elected MP, Gramsci started a party school as an itinerant organisation in the mountains around Como,⁹⁸ near to the Swiss border. He was living in semi-hiding after the murder, by the Fascists, of the Socialist MP, Giacomo Matteotti, only two months after the general elections. Gramsci returned to Moscow in February 1925 to work on the Executive of the International and was back in Rome in April 1925, where he lived again in semi-hiding, travelling to attend secret meetings in Italy and France, until his arrest in November 1926.⁹⁹ By 1925, the revolutionary workers' movement in Italy had been in a situation of illegality or semi-illegality for almost five years.¹⁰⁰ As a consequence, new members could not be 'educated to our methods of broad activity, of broad discussions, of reciprocal control that are characteristic of periods of democracy and legality'.¹⁰¹ For Gramsci, intellectual work involving all members had become more necessary than ever before to avoid the transformation of the workers' movement into an extremely radicalised organisation in which the struggle for survival undermined its internal democracy.¹⁰² To further complicate this situation, the Communist Party of Italy was part of the Communist International. While Gramsci subscribed to the need for this level of coordination, he was also worried about the lack of debate and 'intellectual stagnation' that this form of organisation might generate, particularly in the situation of illegality, which made discussions even more difficult, and direct involvement and participation on a mass scale impossible.¹⁰³

In introducing the activity of an internal Party School by correspondence, he was realistic in clarifying that the school was about the survival of the party:

[w]e are a militant organisation and, in our ranks, the aim of studying is to enhance and refine the capacities for struggle of both individuals and the organization as a whole; to

understand more fully our enemy's positions and our own, so that we can ensure that our day-to-day action is in accordance with these positions.¹⁰⁴

The school was fundamental for educating a proletarian vanguard able 'to confront its enemies and the battles that await it'. Yet, even in such extreme circumstances the object was not mere party propaganda, but 'theoretical consciousness and revolutionary doctrine',¹⁰⁵ and the institutional form of the school remained, for Gramsci, fundamental to political struggle. As Fascism advanced, Gramsci's cultural project contracted. But this was to prove only a temporary pragmatic development due to the constraints imposed by circumstances.

Gramsci never stopped believing in the possibility of constructing a new society through cultural organisations. Even in confinement in Ustica, one of the first activity that he undertook was to set up a school with courses of general culture amongst political internees. Gramsci taught history and geography and took lessons of German language, while Bordiga, also an internee, was responsible for courses on scientific topics.¹⁰⁶ In prison in Turi, Gramsci continued to use the exercise periods for his Socratic discussions, which were perceived by his comrades as attempts to develop their critical approach and enrich their cultural and political preparation.¹⁰⁷

In 1927, when planning, in prison, to write a history of Italian intellectuals, Gramsci wrote to Bordiga, who was then still in confinement in Ustica, asking him to act as a 'devil's advocate' in commenting on his ideas on the question of intellectuals.¹⁰⁸ Given that Bordiga had continued to lead the 'anti-culturist' or anti-intellectualist camp in the Italian Communist Party, it is possible to deduce that Gramsci was back to the old 'culturist' thesis and may have thought of developing the topic theoretically, for which task he would have benefited from the contribution of Bordiga's opposite point of view.¹⁰⁹ In 1932, Gramsci actually went back, in his prison notes, to the discussions of 1912-14 on socialism and culture, showing that there was still something important about them. However, from a political point of view, by 1932 he considered the early 'culturist' and 'economistic' approaches to socialism as 'two aspects of the same immaturity and of the same primitivism'.¹¹⁰ He nonetheless explained the culturist position as a response to an endemic and persistent anti-intellectualism that resulted from the economistic and syndicalist roots of socialism.¹¹¹ This could be taken to mean that he still saw the 'culturist' approach as a necessary response to Bordiga's excessive economism.

It is perhaps not by chance that the problem of the traditional anti-intellectualism within the socialist movement came back to trouble Gramsci in 1932. In the Soviet Union, Stalin had appropriated Lenin's concept of 'cultural revolution' as an upgrading of the level of the population to the needs of production, and had merged it with the populist elements of the Proletkultist movement, transforming it into a tool of class war for the persecution of intellectuals not aligned with the Bolshevik Party.¹¹² Did Gramsci's notes imply that Stalin's economistic, top-down approach to cultural revolution was immature and primitive? As a 'culturist', Gramsci needed to disentangle this Stalinist appropriation, identify its roots, and provide a response by arguing that the extreme economistic position was (also) immature. Presumably, against Stalin's engineered social change imposed from above after the revolution, Gramsci insisted on

the alternative view that the new intellectuals should emerge organically through broad cultural work to be undertaken through the setting up of cultural organisations and institutions well before the revolution. The objective was the creation of a new civilisation that would continue to educate all its members and not keep anyone in a position of subordination because of lack of education or as a consequence of a culture that kept them in a state of passivity.

Although in the prison notebooks there is no trace of the proletarian culture debate, and although Gramsci never fully embraced the Proletkultist ideal of proletarian culture, he seemed to agree with the Proletkultists in not waiting after the revolution to deal with the problem of culture. Cultural activity and the institutions that supported it constituted the first step of the revolutionary process. By insisting that the whole of the proletariat needed to be involved in the construction of a new civilisation, Gramsci advanced the idea that a socialist revolution should involve the masses actively, not as passive spectators.

Conclusion

In summary, Gramsci theorised the role of prefigurative cultural institutions in four points. These were: i) to create free and disinterested discussion, thus avoiding dogmatism, idolatry, authoritarianism; ii) to discuss and disseminate the foundations and implications of the decisions of the economic and political prefigurative institutions of the proletariat; iii) to give a role to intellectuals in supporting the development of a critical intellectual method in the working classes while attracting other intellectuals towards the proletarian movement; and iv) to replace the legacy of religious indoctrination with the elaboration of a new culture and civilisation.

With this theorization, Gramsci went clearly beyond the traditional socialist idea of changing the consciousness of the proletariat through propaganda, and moved towards the idea of the development of a new critical culture and, ultimately, a new civilisation. In the prison notebooks, this theme would lead to the formulation of the concept of 'intellectual and moral reform' as a fundamental step of the revolutionary process.

Gramsci's theory of cultural institutions worked on three levels. One was that of the critique of existing cultural institutions aimed at social reproduction. The second was the organization of alternative prefigurative institutions of the socialist society on the basis of the critique of existing institutions. The third was the elaboration of ideas for the cultural institutions of the socialist society of the future. It is possible to say that in Gramsci's writings and political practice there was no indication of any reformist interest in existing 'bourgeois' cultural institutions.

For the second and third levels of elaboration, Gramsci gave a different emphasis to different traditions in different periods and in relation to contextual circumstances and constraints, but instead of shifting from one tradition to the other he explored them while retaining earlier legacies. This led to a cumulative evolution of

new themes, but within a constant problematic and theorization of cultural institutions and of their role in political strategy.

The themes of the early period before the factory council experience were those of a cultural-intellectual renewal: culture was seen as a tool of self-transformation through a discipline of one's inner self which would lead to the attainment of a higher awareness and understanding of one's role, rights and obligations. Through the creation of cultural institutions, the proletariat would support the achievement of these objectives offering organization and autonomy from bourgeois cultural provision and therefore emancipation from its subaltern state. In the prison notebooks, Gramsci would fully develop the concept of autonomy theoretically as the transformation of the proletariat into a hegemonic social group. The idea that the principles of socialism had to be created through free discussion in proletarian cultural institutions would generate, in the prison notebooks, the insistence that the principles of historical materialism had only temporary value.

In the period of the factory councils, culture also took up an additional meaning as a permanent education that would enable the workers to take over the management of factories and develop new forms of self-government. The influence of the Proletkultist theme of the creation of a proletarian culture and creativity enriched Gramsci's approach, but would not become a theme in his later writings; his interest would rather be towards the creation of a new unitary culture without class divisions. From the institutional point of view, however, in this period the theme of the cultural institution of the proletariat was complemented by the new theme of the emergence of a new type of intellectual whose starting point was that of the practical constructor and organiser.

In the period following the defeat of the factory council movement, besides constantly devising new cultural institutions, Gramsci gave a significant impetus to the creation of a whole range of periodical publications aimed at theoretical development for a wide range of existing and potential militants, including intellectuals. This reflected a view of journalism as a key element of the intellectual and cultural emancipation of the masses, and of the political party as a protagonist of such emancipation. His view of journalism would be articulated in the prison notebooks as 'integral journalism' contributing to the emergence of a new culture and civilisation. However, despite this constant evolution and growth in complexity of elaboration, a key element remained as a constant in Gramsci's conception of cultural strategy and institutions. This was the centrality of prefigurative cultural institutions: they were indeed an important element of his theory and strategy of the revolutionary process of socialist transformation of society.

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Abbreviations

- MP Gramsci, A., *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, translated by Louis Marks, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1957.
- HPC *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, translated and edited by P. Cavalcanti and P. Piccone, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1975.
- SPW1 Gramsci, A., *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*, edited by Q. Hoare and translated by J. Mathews, London and Minneapolis, Lawrence & Wishart and University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- SCW Gramsci, A., *Selections from Cultural Writings*, translated by William Boelhower and edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1985.
- PPW Gramsci, A., *Pre-Prison Writings*, edited by R. Bellamy and translated by V. Cox, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- AGR Forgacs, D. (ed.) *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, New York, New York University Press, 2000.
- CT Gramsci, A., *Cronache torinesi, 1913-1917*, edited by Sergio Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1980.
- CF Gramsci, A., *La città futura, 1917-18*, edited by Sergio Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1982.
- NM Gramsci, A., *Il nostro Marx, 1918-1919*, edited by Sergio Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1984.
- ON Gramsci, A., *L'Ordine Nuovo, 1919-20*, Torino, Einaudi, 1954.
- S Gramsci, A., *Scritti 1915-1921*, edited by S. Caprioglio, Milano, Moizzi, 1976.
- SP Gramsci, A., *Scritti politici*, a cura di Paolo Spriano, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1967.

Notes

¹ Throughout this article, when discussing Gramsci's writings, I provide references to the page numbers of the available English translations. When more than one translation is available, I reference the older most widespread anthology. References to Italian editions are added in parenthesis. Where no published translations are available, translations are my own. A list of abbreviations of editions and anthologies of Gramsci's writings cited in this article is provided with the list of references. Concordance tables of the anthologies of the existing English translations of the pre-prison writings are available at: <http://www.internationalgramscisociety.org/resources/pre-prison-index/index.html>. Concordance tables of the Italian editions of the pre-prison writings are not available, but it is possible to identify individual articles or essays by date and translated title. For newspaper articles signed only with Gramsci's initials or a pseudonym, or unsigned but attributed to Gramsci by scholars, details are provided in the list of references; original Italian titles of articles are provided in parenthesis, and titles added by scholars are indicated in square brackets. For Gramsci's prison writings, references to the Italian critical edition of the prison notebooks (Q) also allow a rapid location of the notes (although not of the page numbers) in the first three volumes so far published of the English critical edition of the prison notebooks (PN). Concordance tables of the anthologies of English translations with the Italian critical edition of the prison notebooks are available at http://www.internationalgramscisociety.org/resources/concordance_table/index.html. For the dates of Gramsci's prison notes, I refer to G. Francioni, *L'officina gramsciana. Ipotesi sulla struttura dei "Quaderni del carcere"*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1984.

² In English, see, for example, A. Davidson, 'Gramsci and Lenin 1917-1922', *The Socialist Register*, 1974; C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1980 [1975]; A. Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci. Towards an Intellectual Biography*, London, Merlin Press, 1977; A. Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, 2nd ed., Minneapolis, Unwin Hyman and University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980] (Parts I and II, pp. 21-108); W.L. Adamson, 'Towards the Prison Notebooks: The evolution of Gramsci's thinking on political organization 1918-1926', *Polity*, 12 (1), Autumn, 1979; W.L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution. A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1980 (Part I, pp. 15-101); C. Levy, 'A new look at the young Gramsci', *boundary 2*, 14 (3), 1986.

³ Davidson, 'Gramsci and Lenin', p. 127.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

⁵ Adamson, 'Towards the Prison Notebooks'.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸ W.L. Adamson, 'Beyond "Reform or Revolution": Notes on Political Education in Gramsci, Habermas and Arendt', *Theory and Society*, 6 (3), November, 1978. However, this did not explain why Gramsci had relied on cultural institutions from as early as 1918, well before elaborating theoretically the question of an alternative hegemony. In fact, the theoretical elaboration of the concept of hegemony only seems to have started, in Gramsci's writings, after 1923 (Adamson, 'Towards the Prison Notebooks'), and to have come to maturation at the time in which Gramsci wrote his prison note titled 'Direzione politica di classe prima e dopo l'andata al governo' (Q 1, 44, 40-54), which has been dated at 1930. See also Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*.

⁹ Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution*, p. 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Levy, 'A new look at the young Gramsci', p. 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Levy referred in particular to [A. Gramsci], 'Socialism and cooperation', *L'Alleanza cooperativa*, 30 October 1916, PPW 15-18 (CT 600-3).

¹⁴ The question of the political implications of Gramsci's writings is an extremely contentious issue, a discussion of which falls beyond the scope of this article. However, Gramsci's revolutionary position was distinct from the 'intransigent' one – the key dividing line being a conception of 'the revolution as a process made by the masses' (Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, p. 57) rather than by professional revolutionaries. From this stemmed the fundamental importance of broad cultural-educational work and of the cultural institutions necessary for its realisation.

¹⁵ Quoted in Paolo Spriano's editorial footnote (translated in AGR 403, n. 2) to the article 'Socialism and Culture' (signed Alfa Gamma), *Il Grido del Popolo*, 29 January 1916, AGR 56-59 (SP 17-20). Long excerpts of Tasca's and Bordiga's articles on the question of socialism and culture in the socialist press in the occasion of the congress have been published in Bermiani 'Antonio Gramsci e il dibattito su "culturismo e anticulturismo"' in C. Bermiani, ed., *Gramsci, gli intellettuali e la cultura proletaria*, Milano, Colibri, 2007, pp. 39-56. See also A. Bordiga, *Scritti scelti*, edited by F. Livorsi, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1975, pp. 43-45.

¹⁶ E. Leone, 'Democracy in smithereens', *Guerra di classe*, 15 January 1916, quoted in David Forgacs's editorial note to Gramsci's article 'Socialism and Culture', AGR, n. 1, p. 403.

¹⁷ [A. Gramsci], 'Socialism and Culture', SPW1 10-13 (SP 17-20). The term 'culturism' in this context referred to the importance attributed to culture in political struggle. The concept should be carefully distinguished from the apparently similar notion of 'culturalism' used in British cultural studies, where Gramsci's concept of hegemony was in fact used to address the two extremes of 'structuralism' and 'culturalism'. See S. Hall, 'Cultural studies: two paradigms', *Media, Culture & Society*, 2 (1), 1980. See also Part One, section 2.

¹⁸ SPW1 10-13 (SP 17-20).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* 11 (SP 18).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

- ²³ Ibid. 12 (SP 20).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ FS 25-28 (Q 14, 26, 1682-5).
- ²⁶ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', *Avanti!*, Piedmont edition, 18 December 1917, SCW 21 (CF 497).
- ²⁷ Ibid., in SCW 21 (CF 498).
- ²⁸ See also [A. Gramsci], 'Cronache dell'Ordine Nuovo', XV, 11 October 1919, 1, n. 21, ON 461.
- ²⁹ FS 156 (Q 3, 49, 333).
- ³⁰ [A. Gramsci], 'Philanthropy, good will and organization', *Avanti!*, Piedmont edition, 24 December 1917, SCW 25 (CF 157).
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 22 (CF 498).
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ [A. Gramsci], 'Philanthropy, good will and organization', SCW 25 (CF 156).
- ³⁷ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 22 (CF 499).
- ³⁸ A. Gramsci, 'Your heritage', *Avanti!*, Piedmont edition, 1 May 1918, HPC 12-15 (CF 869).
- ³⁹ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 22 (CF 499). Arguably, here Gramsci used the term 'mistica' in the Italian meaning of 'spiritual experience' (G. Devoto and G. Oli, *Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, Le Monnier, 2011), to mean that socialism would replace religion with its own secular understanding of the spiritual experience. This interpretation is supported by Gramsci's criticism of political 'idolatry' in the same article. In the prison notebooks, Gramsci commented on the School of Fascist Mysticism which the Fascist Party had set up in Milan in 1930, suggesting that the term 'mistica' was being manipulated by fascist political rhetoric. The Fascists were adopting the French critical and pejorative meaning as applied to politics, and transforming it into a positive concept, to mean that fascism was a political religion in the French sense as 'a state of nonrational and nonlogical political elation, a durable fanaticism that is impervious to any evidence that may contradict it' (PN3 213; Q 7, 84, 915).
- ⁴⁰ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 22 (CF 499).
- ⁴¹ PN2 188 (Q 4, 40, 465).
- ⁴² PN3 178-9 (Q 7, 29, 877).
- ⁴³ PN2 199 (Q 4, 49, 475); SPN 56-7 (Q 12, 1, 1514).
- ⁴⁴ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 22-23 (CF 499).
- ⁴⁵ [A. Gramsci], 'Cultura e lotta di classe', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 25 May 1918, SCW 31-34 (NM 49).
- ⁴⁶ SPN 453 (Q 11, 16, 1407).
- ⁴⁷ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 23 (CF, 499).
- ⁴⁸ SPN 10 (Q 12, 1, 1517).
- ⁴⁹ SPN 10 (Q 12, 1, 1517).
- ⁵⁰ [A. Gramsci], 'For a cultural association', SCW 23 (CF, 499).
- ⁵¹ Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci*.
- ⁵² Gramsci's main essays for *La Città futura* are collected in SG 73-89 and S 45-47. They have been translated in HPC as 'Illiteracy' (28-9; SG 81-2), 'Margins' (40-3; SG 82-7), 'Discipline' (49; SG 80-1), 'Discipline and Freedom' (50; SG 82), 'Indifferents' (64-6; SG 78-80), 'Three Principles, Three Orders' (70-5; SG 73-8).
- ⁵³ G. Salvemini, 'Cosa è la cultura', S 289-294 (Appendix); 'Due inviti alla meditazione', S 294-278 (Appendix).
- ⁵⁴ A. Lunacharsky, 'La cultura nel movimento socialista', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 1 June 1918, S (Appendix) 360-64.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., S 360.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., S 361.

- ⁵⁷ Ibid., S 363.
- ⁵⁸ A. Gramsci, 'La cultura nel movimento socialista', *Il Grido del Popolo*, 1 June 1918, NM 77.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Adamson, 'Towards the Prison Notebooks', p. 55.
- ⁶¹ A. Gramsci, 'La cultura nel movimento socialista', NM 77.
- ⁶² Davidson, 'Gramsci and Lenin'.
- ⁶³ [A. Gramsci], 'Two editorials from Ordine Nuovo, II', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 July 1919, MP, 21 (SP 217).
- ⁶⁴ [A. Gramsci], 'The conquest of the state', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 12 July 1919, PPW 113 (ON 18).
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ [A. Gramsci], 'Cronache dell'Ordine Nuovo', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 20 December 1919, SP 289.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ [A. Gramsci], 'Questions of culture', *Avanti!* Piedmont edition, 14 June 1920, SCW 41 ('Cronache di cultura', S 217).
- ⁶⁹ [A. Gramsci], 'Questions of culture', SCW 41 (S, 217).
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., SCW 41 (S, 217).
- ⁷¹ Ibid., SCW 42 (S, 218).
- ⁷² Ibid., SCW 43 (S, 219).
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ C. Bermani, 'Breve storia del Proletkul't italiano', *Primo Maggio, saggi e documenti per una storia di classe*, 16, autunno-inverno, 1981-2, reprinted in C. Bermani, *Gramsci, gli intellettuali e la cultura proletaria*, Milano, Cooperativa Colibri, 2007, pp. 121-55.
- ⁷⁵ 'Un contraddittorio sul compito e la funzione sociale degli intellettuali', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 26 February 1921, quoted in Bermani, 'Breve storia del Proletkul't italiano', p. 133.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 136.
- ⁷⁷ Bermani, 'Breve storia del Proletkul't italiano'.
- ⁷⁸ C. Bermani, 'L'Ordine nuovo e il canto sociale', in C. Bermani (ed.) *Gramsci, gli intellettuali e la cultura proletaria*, Milano, Colibri, 2007.
- ⁷⁹ See G. Baratta, *Le rose e i quaderni. Saggio sul pensiero di Antonio Gramsci*, Roma, Gamberetti, 2000, especially Chapter 3, 'Il fantasma del populismo', and Anne Showstack-Sassoon, 'Introduction to the Second Edition', in Gramsci's *Politics*, 2nd ed., London, Hutchinson, 1987. Showstack-Sassoon has concluded, more specifically, that Gramsci was 'not a populist but an "intellectual democrat"' (A. Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics. Beyond Pessimism of the Intellect*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 5).
- ⁸⁰ See my discussion of Gramsci's prison notes on folklore in Part One.
- ⁸¹ SPN 9-10 (Q 12, 3, 1551).
- ⁸² SPN 10 (Q 12, 3, 1551).
- ⁸³ J. Biggardt, 'Bukharin and the origins of the "proletarian culture" debate', *Soviet Studies*, 39 (2), April, 1987.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Bermani, 'Breve storia del Proletkul't italiano'.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid. Tasca's account seems plausible given that Gramsci had been interested in the phenomenon of the popularity of serial novels at least since 1918, when he published the translation of an essay, probably by J.H. Rosny, titled 'Serial novels', in *Il Grido del Popolo*, 25 May 1918 (SCW 34-37).
- ⁸⁷ Z.A. Sochor, 'Was Bogdanov Russia's answer to Gramsci?', *Studies in East European Thought*, 22 (1), February, 1981; J.E. Marot, 'Alexander Bogdanov, Vpered, and the Role of the Intellectual in the Workers' Movement', *Russian Review*, 49 (3), July, 1990.
- ⁸⁸ Quoted in L. Mally, *Culture of the Future: the Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 199.
- ⁸⁹ Sochor, 'Was Bogdanov Russia's answer to Gramsci?'; Marot, 'Alexander Bogdanov, Vpered, and the Role of the Intellectual in the Workers' Movement'.

- ⁹⁰ J.C. McClelland, 'Utopianism versus revolutionary heroism in Bolshevik policy: the proletarian culture debate', *Slavic Review*, 39 (3), 1980, 1980.
- ⁹¹ L. Trotsky, 'What is proletarian culture, and is it possible?', in P.N. Siegel (ed.) *Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art*, New York, Pathfinder Press, 1923, p. 41.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁹³ F. Lussana, 'A scuola di leninismo. Come si diventa "rivoluzionari di professione"', in F. Giasi (ed.) *Gramsci nel suo tempo*, Roma, Carocci, 2008
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ SCW 408-25 (Q 24 1-9 2259-75).
- ⁹⁷ Q 24, 3, 2263.
- ⁹⁸ Lussana, 'A scuola di leninismo. Come si diventa "rivoluzionari di professione"'
- ⁹⁹ G. Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1995 [1966].
- ¹⁰⁰ A. Gramsci, 'Necessità di una preparazione ideologica di massa', [May 1925], *Lo stato operaio*, March-April 1931, SP 598.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.* SP 598-99.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, SP 603.
- ¹⁰⁴ [A. Gramsci], 'La scuola di partito', *L'Ordine Nuovo*, 1 April 1925, PPW 266 (SP 596).
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, PPW 267 (SP 597).
- ¹⁰⁶ Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci*.
- ¹⁰⁷ Oral account by Giovanni Lai, transcribed in C. Bermani, 'Gramsci operaista e la letteratura proletaria', *Primo Maggio, saggi e documenti per una storia di classe*, 14, inverno, 1980-81, pp. 95-6.
- ¹⁰⁸ We know this through Bordiga's reply to Gramsci from Ustica, dated 13 April 1927 (Archivio Leonetti), in A. Bordiga, *Scritti scelti*, edited by F. Livorsi, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1975, pp. 200-3, partially reprinted in Bermani, 'Antonio Gramsci e il dibattito su "culturismo e anticulturismo"', p. 54.
- ¹⁰⁹ Excerpts of Bordiga's newspaper articles on the question of socialism and culture have been published in Bermani, 'Antonio Gramsci e il dibattito su "culturismo e anticulturismo"'.
- ¹¹⁰ Q 9, 26, 1112.
- ¹¹¹ Q 9, 26, 1112.
- ¹¹² S. Fitzpatrick, 'Cultural revolution in Russia 1928-32', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9 (1), January, 1974.