

THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT



NEWSPAPER

"A periodical, like a newspaper, a book, or any other medium of didactic expression that is aimed at a certain level of the reading or listening public, cannot satisfy everyone equally; not everyone will find it useful to the same degree. The important thing is that it serve as a stimulus for everyone; after all, no publication can replace the thinking mind."
Antonio Gramsci
(Prison Notebook 8)



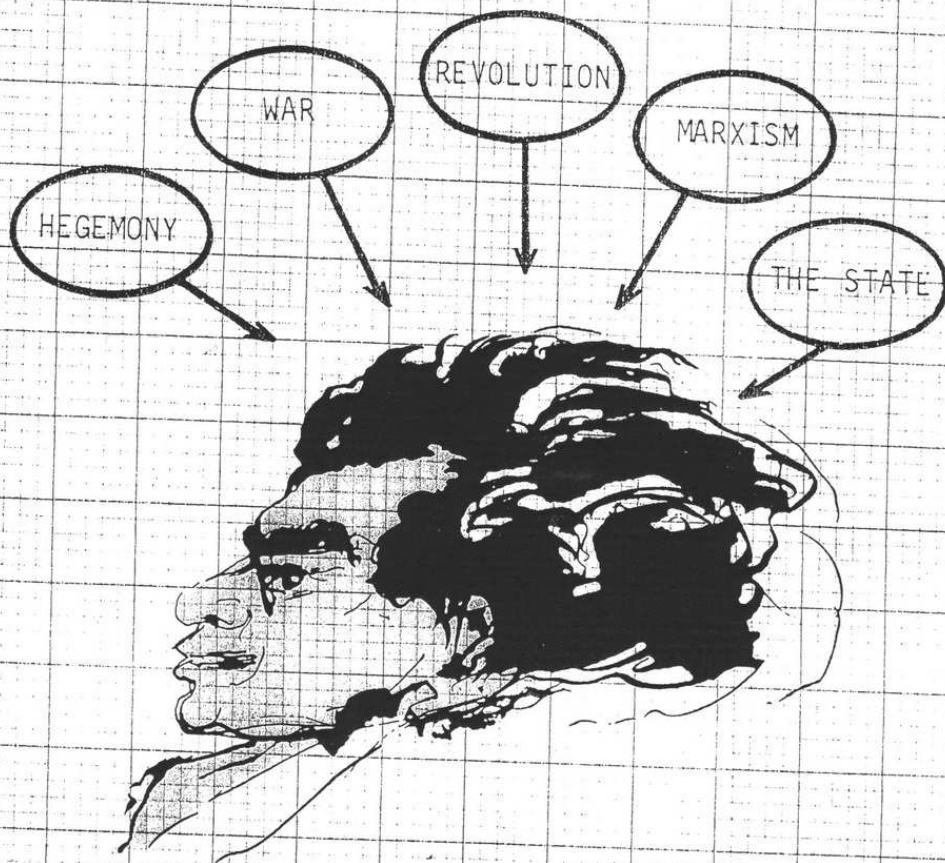
www.gramsci-monument.com

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APPROACHES TO GRAMSCI

ANNE SHOWSTACK SASSOON




Writers and Readers

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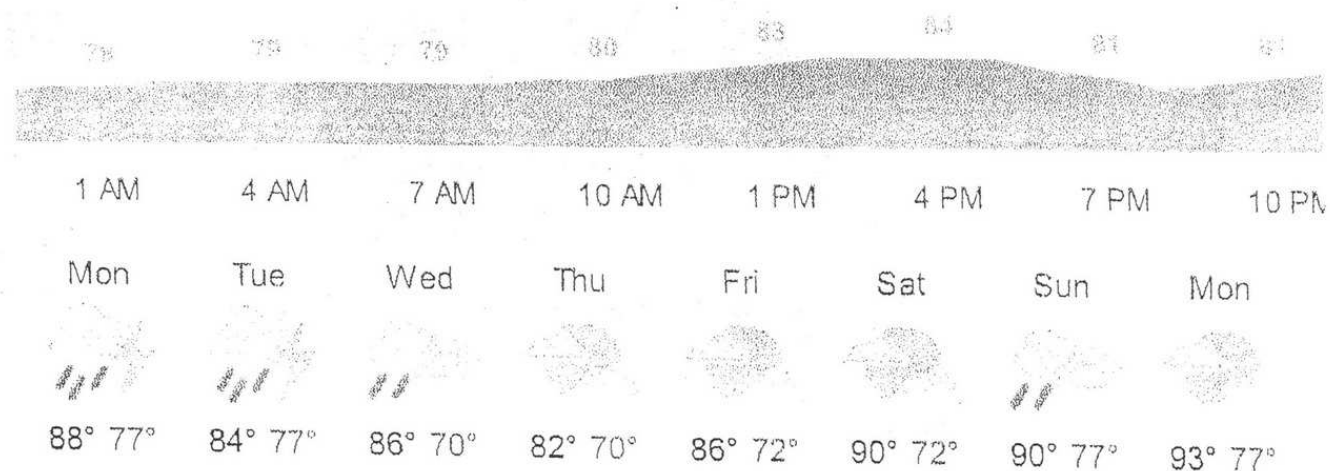
Bronx, NY 10456

Tuesday
Thunderstorm

 **84** °F | °C

Precipitation: 60%
Humidity: 69%
Wind: 8 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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GRAMSCI AND MARXIST
POLITICAL THEORY

Eric J. Hobsbawm

In this paper, read at a conference 40 years after Gramsci's death, Eric Hobsbawm discusses what he considers Gramsci's major contribution to Marxism - his political theory. While Marx considered politics primary and while there is an implied political theory in his writings, he never studied politics as an autonomous subject. Gramsci, Hobsbawm suggests, not only developed Marx's ideas but goes beyond him by redefining the very meaning of politics. His work concerns both a strategy for the transformation of capitalism and for building socialism. Gramsci poses the question of what is preserved from the past and what is changed. For him, as for Marx, there is a continuum between the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism. But Gramsci went beyond both Marx and Lenin in his analysis of the political and not just organizational nature of the party and its task in helping to construct elements of a new society; as well as in the attention he paid to the relations between leaders, party and masses. He is, moreover, original in his thinking about the relationship between the working class and the nation: 'the national question' is for him not external to the working class movement, but integral to its task. The revolution is a struggle to lead and represent the whole people and to isolate the minority of exploiters and the oppressors.

Hobsbawm points out that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is not just relevant for advanced Western countries but for every revolutionary situation since the problem of winning and maintaining the consent of the vast majority of the population always exists. Criticizing the limits of Lenin's classic State and Revolution, he argues that politics and political institutions have been neglected in socialist societies and that there can be no socialism without democracy, without the participation of the mass of the population in the political process.

Nevertheless, in Marx's praxis, politics was absolutely primary. As he pointed out when criticizing Proudhon, in class society 'social evolutions' must be 'political revolutions', and indeed during Marx's lifetime the main criterion which distinguished Marxian socialists from all other socialists, communists and anarchists (except those deriving from the Jacobin tradition) and from trade union and cooperative movements of the working class, was precisely the belief in the essential role of politics before, during and after the revolution. A theory of politics is therefore implicit in Marx, as Gramsci recognized. There are historical reasons why it was not developed by him. I will mention merely two of them.

First, for most of Marx's life - at any rate after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions - the prospect of revolution was remote. The main task was to form the growing proletariat into a political class movement, but its prospects of gaining power or even of influencing government except by pressure from below, were remote. Second, neither Marx nor Engels were able actually to lead an organized movement or party after the end of the Communist League, and therefore were unfamiliar with the kind of organized socialist mass working class movement which developed in the 1880s and 1890s. It is important to remember that Gramsci wrote not only as a theorist and an active participant in politics, but as a leader of a communist party and one with the experience of an actual mass proletarian movement, that of Turin. In this respect he had an advantage even over Lenin, for such a mass proletarian movement had not been possible in Tsarist Russia. Before 1917 Lenin wrote as the leader of a small, illegal or barely legal cadre party. He could not have experience of a permanent and rooted but at the same time revolutionary mass working class movement playing a major part on the political scene of its country. Gramsci had this advantage.

Gramsci's political theory, however, is more than a mere process of making explicit what is implicit in Marx. It is not merely the recognition that politics is an autonomous activity, within the context, limits and determinations established by historical development. Politics, as Gramsci's English editors have rightly said (PN XXIII) is for him 'the central human activity, the means by which the single consciousness is brought into contact with the social and natural world in all its

Gramsci had learnt from his experience in Turin that a revolutionary transformation had to be rooted in those elements in the mass movement which were not just corporative but tended toward a transformation of human potential. This is a theme which is developed in considerable detail in the last piece in this collection, Alberto Maria Cirese's analysis of Gramsci's notes on folklore.

Perhaps the most useful thing I can do is to try to assess the importance of what I believe to be Gramsci's major contribution to Marxism, his pioneer work on a Marxist political theory. Gramsci's theory is neither complete, nor immune to criticism. Nor has it, or ought it to have, the status of a classic text, to which we appeal in order to settle theoretical disputes. Some forty years after his death we honour a noble man, a leader of the communist movement, and an enormously original and fertile Marxist thinker. We congratulate ourselves on his growing influence. Nevertheless, I hope we shall all continue to read Gramsci as a thinker and a guide and not as a dogmatic authority. Let us follow his example and think for ourselves, even if this may lead us to disagree with him.

Marx did not develop a comprehensive theory of politics, comparable to his economic analysis, because in one sense the field of politics was analytically secondary for him. He did indeed begin his theoretical labours with a critique of political theory, namely that of Hegel's *Philosophy of Law* (1843), but he soon realized that it was political economy which was 'the anatomy of civil society' and therefore concentrated on its critique. Moreover, for polemical reasons it seemed important to him to stress above all that 'legal relations as well as forms of state could not be understood from themselves, but are rooted in the material conditions of life'. Therefore the materialist conception of history actually discouraged the study of politics and the state as autonomous subjects - except in the crucial field of the state and revolution. Perhaps, as Engels admitted in some of his late letters (to Mehring XXXIX, 96ff) Marx and he had gone too far in this direction. Though there is an enormous quantity of Marx's and Engels' writings about politics, much of which was unknown to Gramsci, there is no systematic analysis of the subject.

forms'. That is to say it is wider than the term as commonly used; wider even than what Gramsci himself, in a narrower sense, describes as 'the science and art of politics'. It goes beyond the field of 'the State' - even of the state in the broad form as conceived by Gramsci, namely, 'the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules'. (SPN 244) For 'every man, in as much as he is active, i.e. living, contributes to modifying the social environment in which he develops . . . in other words, he tends to establish "norms", rules of living and of behaviour'. (SPN 265) This contribution is 'politics'.

What is more novel, Gramsci insists that it must be analyzed as politics, not merely at the level usually recognized as such - as the level of state and party - but at all levels; in other words that sociological analysis must be reformulated as politics, i.e. in terms of action to change the world, and not merely to interpret it. Hence politics is not only instrumental. It is not simply a means for achieving ends distinct from it. It is both the winning of power and the core of the new society itself - of socialism. And indeed it is not, and cannot be, confined to the realm of the state, because socio-political relations between human beings in Gramsci's sense will survive even the disappearance of the state. This double aspect of politics, and this continuity between the movement to overcome the old society and the construction of the new, is well brought out in several recent articles. (cf Giuseppe Vacca) The point is that Gramsci realizes that Marx's own 'philosophy of praxis' requires the systematization and concretization of a science of political action. Machiavelli, or someone who thinks in terms of an autonomous politics, is a necessary complement to Marx.

This is not a matter of theory only but of practical importance, both for the strategy of transforming capitalism into socialism and for the development of socialist societies. Gramsci's writing is profoundly concerned with both, though many commentators, especially abroad, tend to stress only one aspect of it, namely the strategic. Moreover it is essential for socialists to develop such a theory today, and this is why Gramsci's thought is of particular importance. For our movement has been slow to develop adequate strategic

thinking about the transformation of society, and even slower to develop adequate thought about the form and content of socialist societies. Let me say a few words about both.

For a long period of its history the socialist movement did not require - or thought it did not require - much strategic thinking about the politics of transforming capitalism into socialism. Both classical social-democracy in the period of the Second International and its opponents on the left tended, in different ways, to share the assumption that the transformation to socialism would, and indeed could, only begin on the day that the proletariat and its party acceded to power, whether by revolution or by winning the magical minimum of 51% of votes. What happened before that moment of power-transfer was significant only insofar as it prepared the transfer. Conversely, what happened from that day on - if it was a transfer of power - had no real connection with what went before. The movement before the power-transfer operated within the institutional system and the politics of the bourgeois state, but did not belong to it, and tried - though in practice this was impossible - to isolate itself from it. The social-democratic leaders themselves were passionately and systematically opposed to any participation in 'bourgeois' governments, sometimes even to any support for them. They could indeed be criticized by revolutionaries, because they did not even possess any strategy for winning power, since they relied on history to do this task for them. The proletariat, inevitably growing in numbers as capitalist concentration polarized society between a majority of workers and a diminishing minority of bourgeois, would eventually win electoral and therefore real power, because it would be the great majority of the people. The primary task of the parties was to mobilize and organize this growing army for a victory whose very date could sometimes be forecast by extrapolating the curve of the growth of socialist votes. However, though criticism from the left was easy, and justified, we must not forget that the revolutionaries themselves, if they were Marxists, also believed in an eventual polarization of society, and that they also considered the activities of the movement before the revolution simply as the preparation for the great moment of the revolution itself.

In the western countries - i.e. in the countries of mass

completely illegal, stood as an enemy outside state and society, and its integration into it through politics or reforms seemed negligible. On the other hand it was clear from the outset that revolution would have to be made not by the small proletarian minority alone, but by a broad front or alliance of the oppressed and discontented; and that even after the revolution the relations between the proletariat and other classes (notably the peasantry) would be crucial. To this extent Marxists in countries like Russia had to - and did - confront problems of political strategy which western social-democrats could hide from themselves; including the national question. In confronting such strategic problems they returned to Marx and Engels, who had paid considerable attention to such questions, especially in the period round 1848, and again in the period of the Paris Commune. In fact, the modern Marxist discussion of political strategy, including Gramsci's own, derives from the Russian strategic debates, as is clear when we consider the history of so characteristic a Gramscian term as 'hegemony'.

However, the very brilliance and profundity of Lenin's strategy and the success of the Bolsheviks in 1917 inhibited further development of theory. Strategy now aimed at the reproduction of October revolutions elsewhere. But from the early 1920s it became clear that October was a special case and not a general model. There were no other October revolutions, and even in other revolutionary countries - notably in China - defeat made a rethinking of strategy essential. At the same time - though communists did not pay much attention to it - the hopes of classical social-democracy also broke down. For 1914 had merely been a failure of social democracy in opposition. But in 1918-20 such parties actually found themselves in power in Germany and Austria, and failed even more dramatically. Most communists at the time dismissed this failure as simple treason, but it was more than this. Otto Bauer was not a Weimar Ebert or a Noske, but a genuine non-Bolshevik socialist. Yet Austrian Social Democracy also failed. It was at this historic moment that systematic Marxist thought about the political strategy of transformation became indispensable. It grew, not out of victory but out of defeat, not out of success but out of failure.

This failure became even more tragically evident in the west during the great crisis of the early 1930s and the triumph of

socialist and labour movements - the question of the political strategy of transformation was raised, paradoxically, only on the right of the movement. The critique of Revisionists and Fabians was rejected by both left and centre, since the revisionists seemed interested in strategy but no longer in socialism. Bernstein's famous phrase 'the movement means everything to me, the final aim of socialism nothing' allowed socialists to dismiss him. They were indeed right to reject revisionism. And yet the revisionists' critique raised three questions which required an answer, though not the revisionist one.

The first was: what were the implications for socialist strategy of the fact that the other classes and strata were not disappearing or being merged into the industrial and agricultural proletariat? Second: what would the movement do if by any chance the prospect of a single dramatic seizure of power - whether by insurrection or electoral triumph - proved unrealistic? Third, and more generally, could the movement assume that it stood entirely outside the politics of capitalist society, that the reforms it forced upon it were merely 'palliatives' and had no relation to the movement's prospects of power or to the socialism it intended to build subsequently? In the western movements these questions were not answered at all, and sometimes not even recognized. The social-democratic leaders therefore found themselves practising revisionism - reformism and opportunism - today while declaring that one day they would do something quite different. They were correctly criticized by the left, but most of that left, notably the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists, had no alternative strategy except to reject politics altogether. They merely substituted a call for militant struggle, or an unrealistic leftism which demonstrated its bankruptcy in 1914 just as much as social democracy did.

In the non-industrial countries of Eastern Europe, and especially in Russia, a political strategy of transformation was indeed developed. However, for obvious reasons it was only partial, since two of the questions raised by the revisionists did not appear to require an answer. No alternative road to power except revolution was conceivable in practice, and was therefore seriously considered. (This is no longer so in all countries of the Third World today). The movement, even when not

fascism. It is significant that the bulk of Gramsci's writings in the *Notebooks* dates from these years of crisis. By this time it was not only clear that the movement could not regard itself as standing, in some sense, outside capitalist society, preparing for the single dramatic moment of its overthrow. It was also clear that the defeat of revolution (and of social-democratic hopes) did not leave the contestants in the class struggle unchanged, to prepare for a next battle like the last. Capitalism itself was changing, in part to meet the challenge of successful revolution in Russia, of unsuccessful revolutionary forces elsewhere: hence Gramsci's reflections on 'revolution/restoration' and 'passive revolution', which are attempts to give revolutionary and Marxist answers to the question of the dynamic relation between socialist movement and regime raised, in a wrong and uncritical form, during the revisionist controversy. They refer not only to fascism, which he saw as perhaps 'the form of passive revolution belonging to the twentieth century just as liberalism had been in the nineteenth', but also more generally to the changes in the structure of modern capitalism, which Gramsci noted in the USA. (*SPN* 279ff) (This initial passage of *Notebook* 22 on Americanism and Fordism as Buci-Glucksmann shows is a particularly impressive example of Gramsci's genius.) Finally, it became clear with the triumph of fascism that it was no longer possible to treat capitalist state power as an essentially homogeneous entity; to take a basically liberal democracy for granted as the framework for working class struggle, even in western countries.

It is the merit of the international communist movement that it pioneered new strategic thinking about the transformation. I cannot think of any equivalent within the socialist parties. Nevertheless, for obvious reasons, this development was limited and distorted until after 1956. That is why we are today not much further than Gramsci was 40 years ago. The situation itself is greatly changed, but our theory is not. Thus, while we are today considering the transition to socialism under conditions of a pluri-party democracy - which Gramsci did not - we have been slow to reflect, in the Gramscian way, on the historical experience of such a process (e.g. in the transition from pre-bourgeois to bourgeois society), and its implications for the future.

Let me make a few observations about Gramsci's own strategic thinking. I am not here interested in Gramsci's assessment of the Italian Communist Party's (PCI) strategy at any time in his life, or in the PCI's strategies, which have certainly been inspired by its leaders' interpretation of Gramsci. Our judgment of Gramsci does not depend on whether we think he was right in 1924 or 1930. I think that Marx's attitude towards the regime of Napoleon III was often wrong and unrealistic, but the *18th Brumaire* remains a profound and fundamental work. Similarly our judgment of the policy of the PCI should not depend on whether it has the textual authority of Gramsci or anyone else. There has been, especially in Italy, too much writing which judges Gramsci as a strategic thinker by whether the writer approves or disapproves of the policy of the PCI now or in the past. I would like to look at him in a more general perspective.

The most original characteristic of Gramsci's strategic thought is that, in spite of his fondness for military metaphors, he never became their prisoner. For the soldier, war is not peace, even if it is the continuation of politics by other means, and victory is, speaking professionally, an end in itself. Yet for Gramsci (as for Marx) the struggle to overthrow capitalism and build socialism is essentially a continuum, in which the actual transfer of power is only one moment.

This follows from the Gramscian view of bourgeois society as a system both of domination and hegemony, for it is only domination, the coercive power of the state, which can be transferred by the single victory of a successful seizure of power. It also follows from Gramsci's concept (which again recalls Marx) of the new society as the working class, *i.e.* the working class as a party, *becoming the state* and in doing so eventually absorbing the now unnecessary state into civil society. The bourgeoisie was unable to do this. (Q 937) The struggle to turn the working class and its party into a potential ruling class, the struggle for hegemony, is therefore *also* the process by which it constructs, even before the transfer of power, the elements of the new society which will develop after it. Gramsci's view of the party is therefore political rather than organizational. Like the later Marx he conceives the party as the organized class, but unlike Marx, who says little about the party, he devotes enormous attention to the nature of the

organic leadership between leaders, party and masses. In this respect he also goes beyond Marx's successors, including Lenin. They, it seems to me, tended to see these relationships as posing organizational rather than political problems. I have noted elsewhere the limitations of the famous debate on *Done?* Thirdly, Gramsci's strategy follows from his concept – quite original in Marxism – of the working class as part of the *nation*. Indeed, I believe that he is so far the only Marxist thinker who provides us with a basis of integrating the nation as a historical and social reality into Marxist theory. He breaks with the habit of seeing it as 'the national question', something external to the working class movement, towards which we have to define our attitude.

In memory of the late Eric J. Hobsbawm, who passed away on October 1, 2012 at the age of 95, and who was one of the foremost historians of the 20th century. His many books include a three-part study of the 'long 19th century' (*The Age of Revolution, The Age of Capital and The Age of Empire*), *Age of Extremes: The Short 20th Century* and a memoir, *Interesting Times*. We are proud to reproduce here his essay *Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory* published in *Approaches to Gramsci* by Anne Showstack Sassoon (London: Writers and Readers, 1982).



AMBASSADOR'S CORNER

Ambassador's Note 17 by Yasmil Raymond

In Turin, the Italian city where Gramsci studied and lived for most of his adult life there are bars and restaurants, a street and a library named after him but there is not a monument. A visitor from Sardinia pointed this fact to me the other day with an air of disappointment but then mentioned that in Ales, the town of Gramsci's birth in Sardinia, there is a piazza dedicated to him. Indeed, the artist Giò Pomodoro designed a square entitled Piano d'uso collettivo (Plan for Collective Use) in 1977. It seems that commemoration and remembrance operate in different time registers and intensity. The absence of a "physical" monument of Gramsci in major cities in Italy, or for that matter, in cities around the world, is inconsequential when contrasted with the intellectual monuments that are being cultivated on daily basis at the universities and publishing houses in cities as far New Delhi, Mexico City, and Tokyo. (continues in Note 18)



Ales, Sardinia (Italy) today

A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG

23rd Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 23rd July 2013

ON LACAN & OTHERS

Marcus Steinweg

1. Philosophical life is not a life of knowledge because it remains related to truth rather than knowledge. It is not a matter of knowing but of experiencing the limits of what can be known. This experience demands and implies knowledge but it is not exhausted in any security of knowledge.
2. An experience of truth breaks with the securities of models of certainty. As a subject of truth, the subject inhabits the zone of contact between knowledge and truth.
3. Whereas knowledge can be described as its possession, truth is by definition incapable of being possessed. To possess what cannot be possessed is what I call the touching of truth as a form of life.
4. It is the experience of a perfect lack of property. In going through this experience, the subject does not even possess itself. It comports itself like something alien and stands in for itself as if for something that is elementarily unfamiliar.
5. The subject of truth is neither a subject of certainty nor of knowledge. It is a subject of the limits and is itself a limit by touching the limits of the universe of facts.
6. Touching this limit cannot be called *epistemological* because it is the experience of the limits of theoretical knowledge.
7. Philosophy is not epistemology; philosophy is a form of life which describes the limits to the possibilities of knowledge without being secured in a kind of higher knowledge. Philosophy reaches beyond the knowable and is therefore more than merely establishing a capacity for knowing.
8. Philosophy is not *anamnesis*; it begins with the experience of the onset of memory. The subject of a philosophy may be a seeking subject, but it does not know what it is looking for. Searching is not the truth of philosophy because touching truth means ceasing to search.
9. Ceasing to search means not enclosing oneself in a certainty. It means gaining insight into the senselessness of such an attempt to enclose oneself.
10. This insight, however, cannot be described as knowledge or as a fact. It becomes the subject of an assertion that hovers above the grounds of facts. A philosophy of assertion includes this hovering. The subject of assertion hovers between the spheres of ground and abyss; it maintains contact with the naturalness of naked facts and also with the super-naturalness of mere ideas; it inhabits a third dimension. This is the dimension of the limit, of the indistinguishability of the limit from its beyond, zone of indeterminacy, of terror, of hope, of becoming, of sadness and of happiness. Heavens of ideas can be

inhabited like spaces of facts, but the world of indeterminacy is uninhabitable because it is not even a *world*.

11. At the limit of the world, at this *edge of the world*, the subject experiences itself as a limit. The limit is a possible name for its subjectivity. For this reason it can be called a subject without subjectivity, because the limit continually closes the substantial concept of subjectivity for the singular subject.
12. A subject is what opens itself to this closure. It is the ek-static subject of a primordial openness, subject of this ontological nakedness and poverty, nothing but a subject of emptiness, of indeterminacy and lack of essence.
13. This subject cropped up in the thinking of the twentieth century as the subject of *unhousedness* (Heidegger), as the subject of the *unspeakable* and the *miracle* (Wittgenstein), as a subject of the *exterior* (Blanchot), as the subject of *freedom* or *nothingness* (Sartre), as the subject of *ontological lack* or the *real* (Lacan), as the subject of *chaos* and *becoming* (Deleuze/Guattari), as the subject of *desubjectivization* and *care of the self* (Foucault), as the subject of the *other* (Levinas), as the subject of *différance* (Derrida) and as the subject of the *universal* or *truth* (Badiou).
14. It is a subject whose subjectivity seems to coincide with the dimension of non-subjectivity: a subject without subjectivity.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

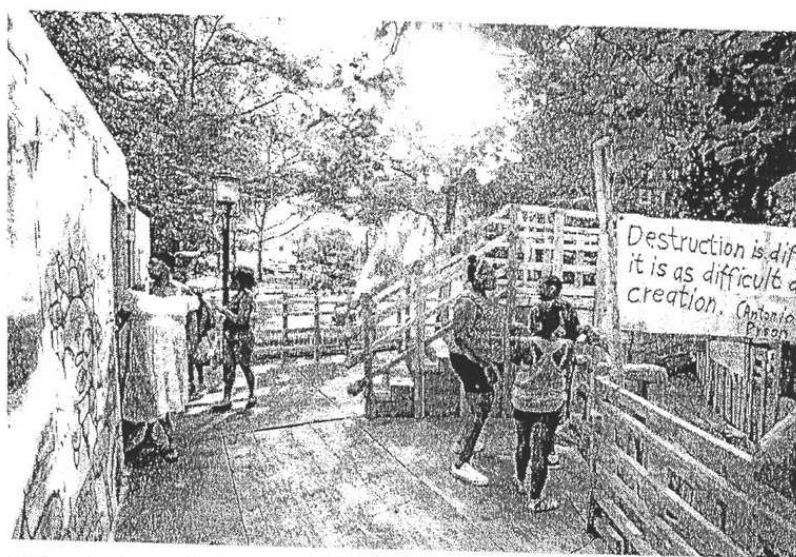
FEED BACK

THE ART WORLD

HOUSE PHILOSOPHER

Thomas Hirschhorn and the "Gramsci Monument."

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



Visitors to the installation at the Forest Houses, in the South Bronx.

This year's most captivating new art work—Thomas Hirschhorn's summerlong "Gramsci Monument," an installation at a city housing project in the South Bronx—excites so many thoughts that you may, as I did, want help thinking them. Start with the artist. Hirschhorn, fifty-six, a rangy and intense Swiss, is on hand all day, every day, at his tree-house-like village of purpose-built shacks, set on open land amid the brick towers of the Forest Houses, which are home to thirty-four hundred people. The sprawling construction bridges a walkway and is shaded by sycamores that poke up through its raised plazas. It incorporates a library and a museum of memorabilia commemorating the humanist Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), a theatre for daily lectures and performances, an office for a photocopied free daily newspaper, a micro radio station, an art classroom, an Internet center, a food kiosk, and a children's wading pool. Residents were hired to build the facilities—of cheap lumber, Plexiglas, tarpaulins, and the

signature stuff of works by Hirschhorn, shiny brown packing tape—and to staff most of them. The sponsoring Dia Art Foundation foots the costs. This is the last of four constructions in poor and working-class neighborhoods dedicated to Hirschhorn's favorite philosophers. The others celebrated Baruch Spinoza in Amsterdam, in 1999; Gilles Deleuze in Avignon, France, in 2000; and Georges Bataille in Kassel, Germany, in 2002. The materials and the equipment of the "Gramsci Monument" will be distributed to the residents via a lottery, once the installation has been dismantled, a week after the closing date of September 15th.

Sitting at a plywood table in the installation one recent steamy day, Hirschhorn drew a circle on a piece of paper and quartered it. He labelled the segments "love," "philosophy," "aesthetics," and "politics" and located his heroes at the radius points: Spinoza, love/philosophy; Deleuze, philosophy/aesthetics; Bataille, aesthetics/politics; and Gramsci, politics/love. Gramsci, who died after nearly a decade in prison

under Mussolini, and whose "Prison Notebooks" are classics of political thought, qualifies as a revolutionary with a heart. He veered from Marxist economic determinism to describe class conflict in terms of culture—the "hegemony" of dominant ideas and forms requiring a growth of contrary ideas and forms from below. "All men are intellectuals," Gramsci wrote.

Hirschhorn shrugs off the political failure of Gramsci's hopes. His allegiance to the charismatic Italian seems a personal faith, thrown open to the world. The world, as we spoke, was peopled largely by running and playing children. On a subsequent day, tracks from Jay-Z's "Magna Carta . . . Holy Grail" pulsed from the radio station, and local poets read in the theatre. The newspaper reprinted an interview with the blaxploitation diva Pam Grier. With Hirschhorn's consent, the monument's raw wooden architecture had been graced with gorgeous murals by the graffiti crew of a community organization called Xmental, one of them showing a black youth and a white youth slapping hands, with the nearby elevated No. 5 train in the background. The artist's often stated ideal, a "non-exclusive audience," was making the place its own.

Hirschhorn emphasizes that the monument is no social-work experiment, but "pure art." This rings true. On three visits, my cynical antennae scanned in vain for hints of do-good condescension. Hirschhorn had solicited cooperation from forty-six projects of the New York City Housing Authority before forming a warm if sometimes bumpy partnership with Erik Farmer, the president of the tenants' association at the Forest Houses. Farmer, who is forty-four and has used a wheelchair to get around since he was injured in a car crash, while a college student, is an impressively sage politician, committed to the interests of his community. He was the only one of the artist's housing-project contacts who asked to read texts by Gramsci, Hirschhorn said. Farmer selected the monument's construction crew of fifteen residents, and calmed local skeptics. (He told me that while the work was under construction "some old women said it looked like club-

houses, and they'd had enough of clubhouses.") He considers the monument a "boost" to family life at the complex. Hirschhorn, for his part, carefully eschews any agenda. He cradles a hope that some people's experience of the work might enhance their lives, but he makes clear that that's out of his hands. His contributions to the program of public events brook no concession to popular appetites: the sparsely attended lectures by a young philosopher from Berlin, Marcus Steinweg, included one, the other day, entitled "Ontological Narcissism."

The monument is art in the mind rather than of the eye. Hirschhorn has a slogan: "Energy = Yes! Quality = No!" His penchant for wrapping things in miles of irredeemably ugly packing tape neatly exemplifies both principles. Beauty has no evangelist in Hirschhorn. Nor does humor, as distinct from intellectual agility and a showman's flair. In the course of a career that began in the late nineteen-eighties, when he was rebuffed by a left-wing graphics co-operative in Paris, for wanting to work on his own projects, he has consented to show in galleries and museums and at biennials and art fairs—and to sell collages that relate to his installations—but always with disregard for the habits of the market and of institutions. His past exhibition works have run to labyrinthine environments on themes including war and peace and consumer culture. An unforgettable one at the Gladstone Gallery, "Superficial Engagement" (2006), intermingled images of ethereal abstract art with crudely Xeroxed photographs of human bodies blown apart in terrorist bombings. The point was elusive, but the dramatization of the peaks and abysses of human behavior profoundly moved many viewers, including me.

Hirschhorn can be heavy-handed, as in an enormous rendition, last year at Gladstone, with real and simulated furniture and fixings, of the submerged casino in the Costa Concordia, the cruise ship that capsized off the coast of Tuscany in 2012. Géricault's Romantic vision of doomed shipwreck survivors, "The Raft of the Medusa" (1819), was reproduced on one wall. The forced irony thudded. Worse, a satiri-

cal emphasis on the casino's kitschy décor had the unfortunate effect of seeming to memorialize the disaster's victims chiefly for their bad taste. But, even when his work misfires, Hirschhorn remains the most meaningfully independent of contemporary artists. At the monument, I felt safely remote from the current art world's baleful pressures of ravening money and pandering institutions. The democracy of the place, levelling the artist with the kids asplash in the wading pool, brought tones of Walt Whitman to mind.

Hirschhorn has said, "I'm interested in the 'too much,' doing too much, giving too much, putting too much of an effort into something. Wastefulness as a tool or a weapon." He cites the potlatch rituals of Northwest Native Americans, in which leading members of the tribe both affirmed and atoned for their standing by spectacularly splurging their wealth. The French renegade philosopher Georges Baraïlle made much of the potlatch, as a model for economics based on gift-giving rather than on exchange; and Hirschhorn follows suit, in the coin of gratuitous service and toil.

Artistically, his method of principled generosity recalls the career and the aura of Joseph Beuys, whose assurance that "everyone is an artist" established the zone of participatory art events that Hirschhorn advances. Hirschhorn pays declared homage to Beuys—and to Andy Warhol, for collapsing high culture into popular culture with iconic imagery that is universally understood at a glance. There's a Warholian tang to a grisaille painting on plywood of a photograph of the handsome young Gramsci, which fronts the monument. Only, unlike a Warhol Marilyn or Elvis, the image doesn't float free of its historical moorings but invites a dive into the legacy of an exemplary thinker. The divers may be few, but there's soreery in the simple gesture of folding philosophy into daily life. Politically, the work steers hard toward realms of academic leftist theory, but in ways—both peculiarly sacramental and a lot of fun—that are as likely to humble tenured theorists as to exalt their profession. Nobody counts as special at the monument, except everybody. ♦

LET AMERICA BE AMERICA AGAIN

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

Let America be America again,
Let it be the dream it used to be,
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed--
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek--
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean--
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today--O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home--
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay--
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again--
The land that never has been yet--
And yet must be--the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine--the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME--
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose--
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath--
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain--
All, all the stretch of these great green states--
And make America again!



**ERIK FARMER AT THE RADIO
STUDIO: INTERVIEW WITH DJ
GUCCI**



STILL I RISE BY MAYA ANGELOU

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise

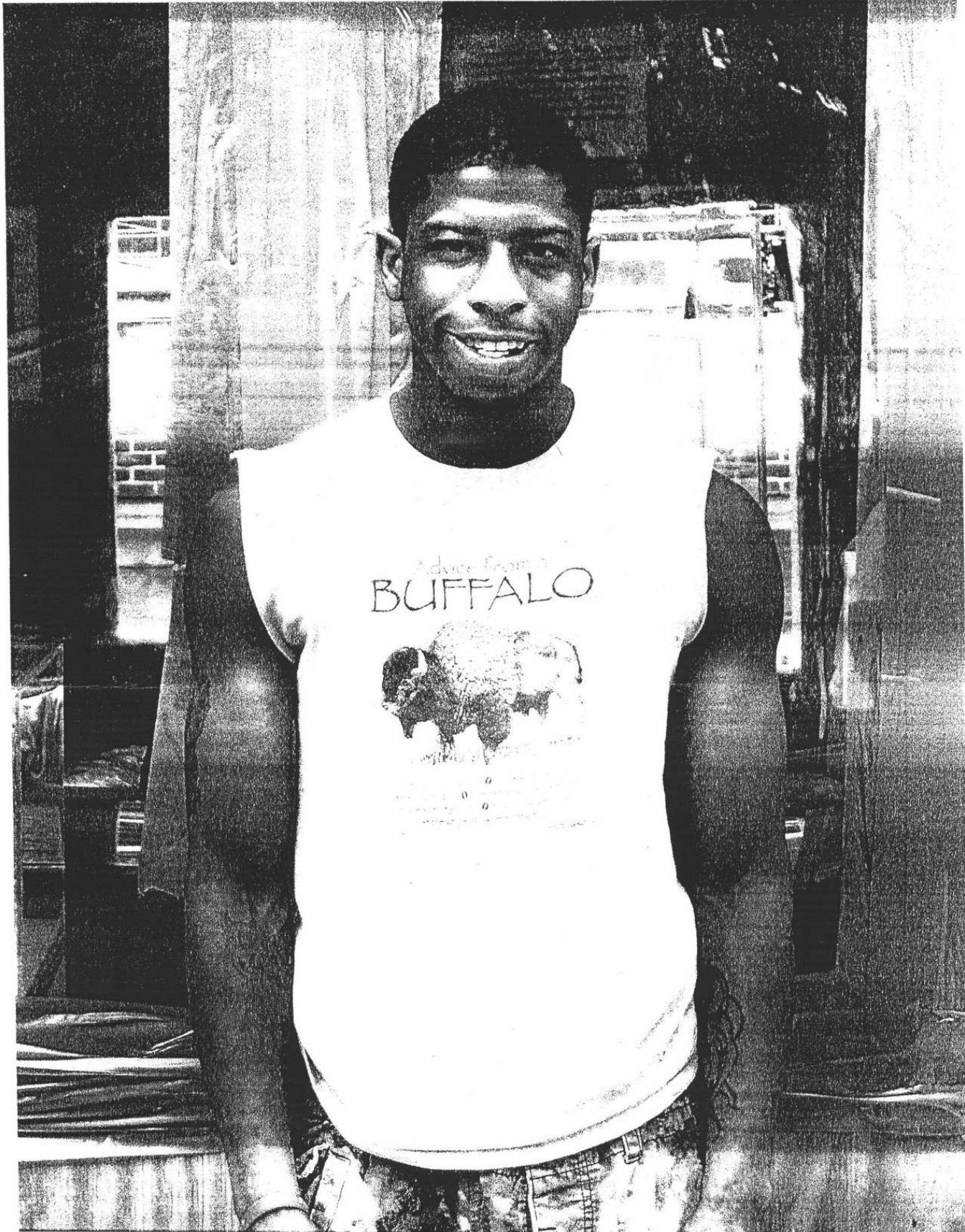
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

RESIDENT OF THE DAY



JAMAR FOSTER