

# THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT- NEWSPAPER



[www.gramsci-monument.com](http://www.gramsci-monument.com)

"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)



**August 20th, 2013 - Forest Houses, Bronx, NY**

The Gramsci Monument-Newspaper is part of the "Gramsci Monument", an artwork by Thomas Hirschhorn, produced by Dia Art Foundation in co-operation with Erik Farmer and the Residents of Forest Houses



**OPEN MICROPHONE 7**

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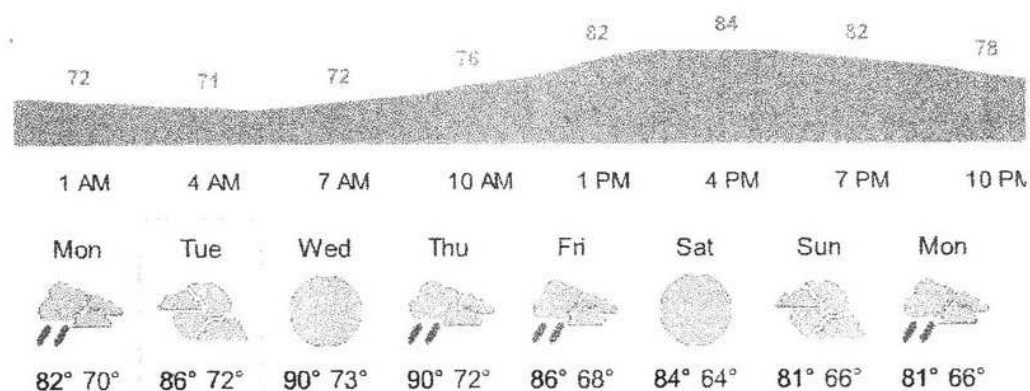
Bronx, NY 10456

Tuesday  
Partly Cloudy

 **86** °F | °C

Precipitation: 10%  
Humidity: 52%  
Wind: 8 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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OPEN MICROPHONE 7

AUGUST 18, 2013



OPEN MICROPHONE 7

AUGUST 18, 2013



# AN E-MAIL INTERVIEW

## BETWEEN OSCAR BENASSINI

## AND THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

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**Thinkers like Franco Berardi ("Bifo") or Peter Sloterdijk consider, from different positions, that there is nothing exterior to capital: all has been integrated in its interior. Creation is not alien to this dynamic, as the art market shows. Do you consider, being an artist with political positions, that there are alternatives? Can art offer a glimpse, a signal of a life not regulated by capital?**

I do not think our lives are regulated only by capital. I just think it's a little more complicated than that. To me, Art is definitely a tool to confront reality, so the capitalist system we are living in. I am not obsessed by capital because there are a lot of other things I am more interested in, such as: Hope, Form, Assertion, Courage, Universality, Headlessness, War, Love, Autonomy, and Resistance. These are my tools or my weapons as an artist. Art can provoke a confrontation or a dialogue from face to face - from one human being to another human being. Art is a tool to encounter the world and Art is a tool to stand up in the time we are living in. To me, it is - again - not the question of building an alternative - but it is question to maintain and even to develop - throughout Art, throughout doing Art but also throughout loving Art - a resistance to economical, aesthetical or cultural habits. There is no alternative to existing reality but what is needed is the Belief in Art. I believe in the Power of Art - because it's Art! Art has the power of transformation. The power to transform each human being. This is the light, this is the core and this is what is worth to live or to die for!

**Your work echoes, assembling cheap materials in spaces not accustomed to the presence of artworks, one of the central aspects of contemporary capitalism: the precarization (in labor, for instance). However, this formal decision can also be interpreted as a metaphor of a liberation from the material conditioning of consumerism. What is the objective of precarity in your work?**

"Precariousness" is definitely a term I am interested in. I want to see and to give Form to this notion because what is essential is what the status of Precarity creates: Awareness of the preciousness of the moment, of each moment, the fragility of connections, of links, of encounters, the dynamic out from the center, out from what is 'important to others', away from what should be 'central', the necessity to keep the eyes open, each instant, in all situations and the simple fact to be and to stay awake. Precarity in my work is not an objective it is its condition, and it is its Form. To be aware of our own Precariousness is a try to resist facts, journalism, opinions and comments. I believe Art is resistance as such and also resistance to political, aesthetical, cultural habits. Because art - in its precariousness - is positiveness, movement, belief, intensity.

**We'd like to know your position regarding artistic institutions, where the presence of corporations is more evident everyday. Even though a great deal of your work occurs in public spaces, can an artist subtract himself of the logic of capital, present in an explicit way in the spaces of exhibition financed by the State or private corporations? Do you mean to produce an alternative to institutionalism with your *monuments* and *altars*?**

There is no way to subtract me from reality. And that's good and that's what I want. Because I want - throughout my work of art - to be in contact with reality. And the logic of capital is one of the elements of reality. But what I do want - and that's what's important and what really counts - is to address my work clearly, strongly and fearlessly in the infight with reality. I understand Art as a tool to confront reality. Not as something against reality but as something that exists - as a form - in reality and even with reality. I believe that Art - because it's Art - can resist and can build a resistance to reality, to consumption and to the sole logic of capital. There is no alternative to reality - and there is no alternative to construct institutions, but it is - more the ever - necessary to fight for not to become

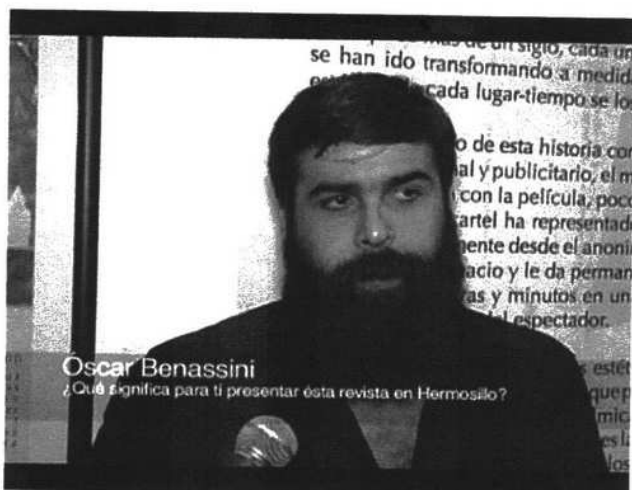
dependent. Not to become dependent from consumption and the logic of capital. Not to become dependent does mean to always to believe in the autonomy of Art. Autonomy is what gives the artwork its Beauty and its Absoluteness.

**Since the 90's your work has set out to "de-idealize" democracy, a political simulation that covers capital's interests. A few critics, however, find in your work certain "democratizing" aspects, in the sense that your work locates collective conflicts in an exhibition space. Do you think that, like Jacques Rancière does, we must recover the concept of "democracy"? Or is it evermore linked to its economic and even warlike sense?**

I am a democrat - but I do not want to become a democratized subject! This is - I believe - the tendency today; to neutralize us in the name of democracy. I refuse the sacred cow "Democracy" - the representative democracy-model is in a crisis, because it has degenerated to a system of defense of particular interests, instead of being a universal idea and a universal treasure to share and to open up towards the entire world. As an artist I want to give form to this, I hope to do this - for example - with my art-school at the "Gramsci Monument" based on "Energy = Yes! Quality = No!". One of the guidelines of this 'art-school' is the belief that Art is Universal; to me Universality means Justice, means Equality, and means The Other, means Truth, means The One World. And democracy must be Universal. To me democracy which is not reconstructed everyday, refounded everyday and reinvented everyday is going to lose its vital nerve. I see Democracy as a task to realize - as a never accomplished task. Therefore you have to work and therefore you have to fight and to stay always mobilized, indeed.

**Your work appeals to an *implication* of the audience, over a *collaboration* or an *interaction*. In that sense, it confronts it as a political subject instead of a consumer. What is the objective of reactivating certain figures of theory (Spinoza, Gramsci, Bataille, Deleuze) through your idea of *monument*? What do these authors have to say today to those who get involved with your sculptures?**

Yes, I think the notion of "Implication" is one of the most beautiful ones, I am very happy when somebody gets implicated into or with my work and I am very happy myself when I get implicated in a work of art. I cannot imagine a more ambitious goal than to create the conditions of "Implication towards the Other". I believe that Art - because it's Art - can create the conditions for Implication - beyond everything else. And I do want to implicate the so called "Non-Exclusive Audience". Gramsci, Bataille, Deleuze and Spinoza are my heroes. I wanted to dedicate a monument to my heroes and I wanted to do this - during the last decade - through the experiences of four monuments called the Spinoza Monument, the Deleuze Monument, the Bataille Monument and the Gramsci Monument. With these four works I want to establish a new kind of monument. New concerning its dedicati, new concerning its duration, new concerning its location and new concerning its output. Because I love the work and the life of the philosophers the monuments are dedicated to and I'm the only one who has to love them, because the location of the monument must be a location which cuts a window or a hole into the reality where people are living, because the monument is a time-limited, precarious monument and because the monument wants to produce something: I want to give form to the production of thinking.



Oscar Benassini  
¿Qué significa para ti presentar esta revista en Hermosillo?



Thomas Hirschhorn, portrait par  
Anna Kowalska (2011)

# AMBASSADOR'S NOTE #30 BY YASMIL RAYMOND



I have started to recognize returning visitors and was happy to see the young Japanese historian from last week again. She came alone this time without her friend and sat down at the library with me for a while. She told me that as a historian she often struggles with “the opaqueness and mystery of contemporary art” but that the monument had made her “change her mind.” And then she asked me to sum up what I liked the most about the project. Admittedly, it is precisely this type of encounters with visitors, the conversations and exchanges that occur, what I consider to be one of the most important assertions of this work. But actually, there are a multiplicity of questions that are stake for me beginning with the internal logic of the monument, the constitution of this collective action, and the different levels of commitment. Among other affirmations that I consider to be most important is the confrontation, at the most fundamental level, with the notion of artistic production, how the monument build itself, transforms into an “event” (in the Deleuzian sense) while remaining a work of art. In this sense, and perhaps more specifically, I’m interested in how the monument set out to confront or reformulate, in new and different directions, the definitions of sculpture, architecture, and monumentality. And simultaneously, how such an artistic project generates a clash, how it engages in a debate concerning the relation between art and institutions (galleries, museums, kunsthalle, academia, publishing houses, etc.), how it break out with the structures of display and circulation by addressing the bureaucracy of cultural administration as a body that is worn-down by habits, bound by its own weight, and lost in its own apparatus. In other words, what I think is enormously important is the affirmation of the human power, human interaction, the fact that there is a steady and continuous sound coming out from the monument—voices, laughter, nasty arguments—responding to the invitation to be present.

# A DAILY LECTURE BY MARCUS STEINWEG

**51st Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 19th August 2013**

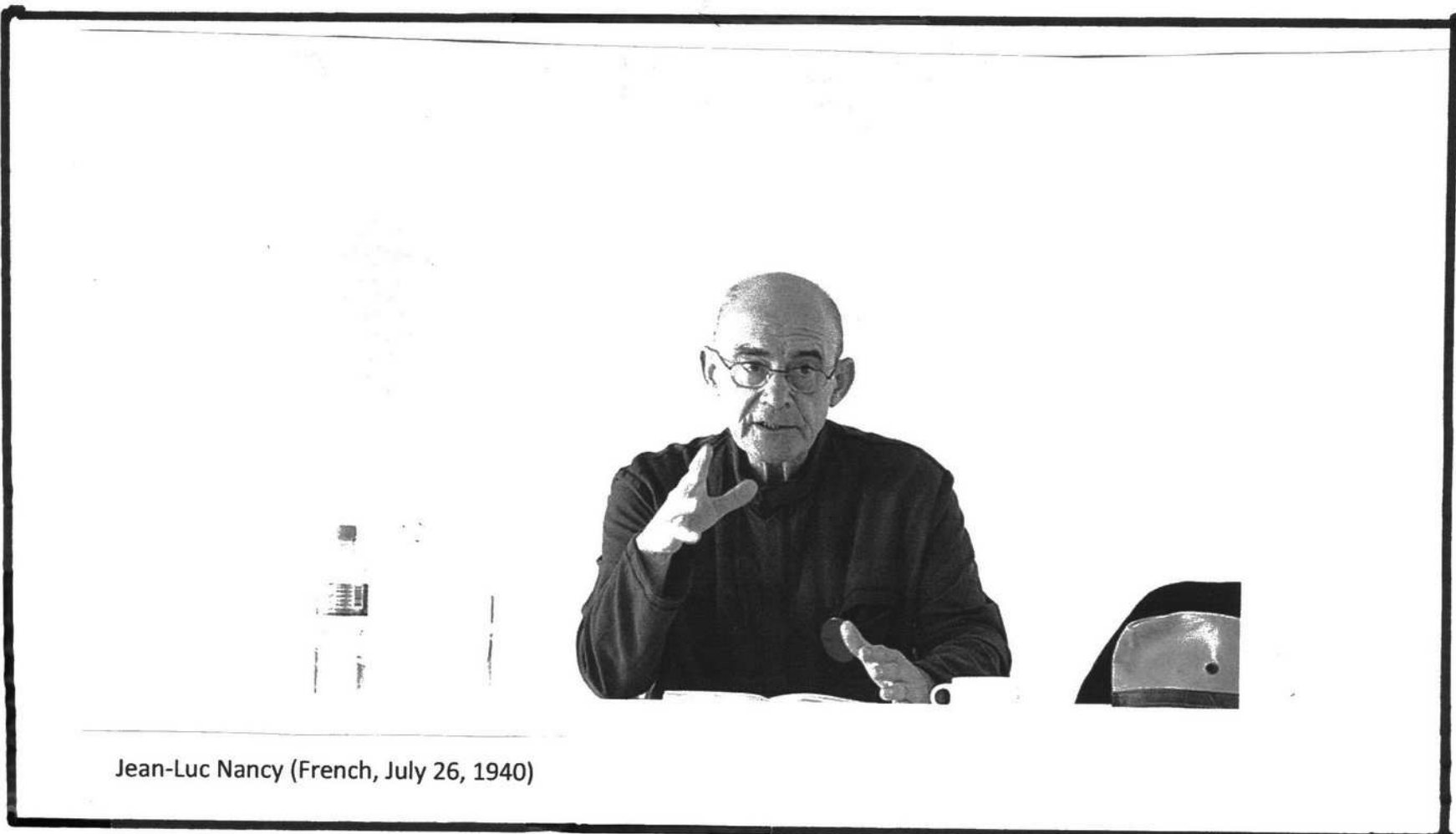
**ACOSMIC DISASTER**

**Marcus Steinweg**

1. The world—if we do not consider it to be a world of facts, a homogeneous sphere of objective consistencies—resembles a “sketch without design,” in the apt formulation of Jean-Luc Nancy: “plummeted out of the black emanation of a sudden surge of energy, elementary wave, flare of photons within the density of a sunken, self-enfolded void, obscure and sounding cistern: pure ecstasy, sonorous and vast expansion, rupture of the quark, pulsing metrical scansion, sketch without design, omnidirectional projection, formation of shimmering eruptions, centrifugal motion.”<sup>1</sup>
2. Sketch without design and pure ecstasy; lacerated, endless texture composed out of a myriad of blind and mute ciphers.
3. This is the site where we are located.
4. It is here that every subject breathes, lives and dies—in this ocean of inhuman material.
5. The fact that God is dead means that nothing other is left to the subject than to make itself at home in this acosmic disaster, to confront therein the truth of its consistencies and of itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, “EX NIHILO,” in *ibid.*, *Der Eindringling. Das fremde Herz*, Berlin 2000, p. 53.



Jean-Luc Nancy (French, July 26, 1940)



# A LETTER FROM GRAMSCI



Dearest Tania,

June 3, 1929

I have here before me your two letters and five postcards (the most recent is of May 23) that I should answer in order, diligently. But I will not do so. Did you receive the letter mailed from home and the other for Giulia? The first must have arrived after a great delay, according to what my mother writes me.

The change of season, with a considerable heat that one can feel already, has depressed and is stupefying me. I'm oppressed by an enormous fatigue and a certain general weakness, despite the fact that I continue to take the tonics; but I believe that it will not last long. This isn't anything new and therefore it doesn't worry me. It irritates me because it robs me of the pleasure of reading and it blunts my memory and overall sensitivity.

Saturday I received your package, which as an exception was given to me. Thank you. But I thought that in it there would be wool for the socks etc.; instead I was disappointed and worried. Truly. And I must urge you not to get carried away by fantasy and by the abstract conception of what is "useful" and "necessary," but stick to the concreteness of what is allowed in prison, that is, the things I've requested from you. In this regard your two postcards sound like the plot of a novel with resolutions, regrets, lacerating dilemmas, unreasonable ambitions, desires, etc. Would it not be better to be more down-to-earth and resolute? Don't you agree? It is true that your ways amuse me, but this is not a justification (at least not for you). It amuses me because it convinces me that you are the least practical person ever, despite all the boasts that you've often regaled me with. I instead have always been the most practical man in this entire world: I didn't do many things only because I didn't cheerfully give a damn, that is, I did not appear practical because I was too much so, to the point of exaggeration. And no one understood me! A real tragedy.

Now I believe that it is possible to draw up a final, fairly exact floral balance sheet. All the seeds have failed except one; I don't know what it is, but probably it is a flower and not a weed.<sup>1</sup> The chicory is all in bloom and will yield many seeds for future seasons. The cane has already put out a leaf as broad as my hand and is preparing another: it seems to be taking root well. The dahlias are still in incubation and there is no word from them; therefore we may presume that some day or other they may decide to be born, because I do not know when they are in season. The rose is beginning to bud, after it had seemed reduced to desolate twigs. But will it manage to survive the approaching summer heat? It looks too puny and run

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down to be up to the task. It is true of course that, at bottom, the rose is nothing but a wild thorn bush, and therefore very vital . . . We shall see. I would have liked to send you a chicory flower, but then I thought that at the very best it can only serve as the start of a folk ditty.<sup>2</sup>

From your postcard of May 14 I see that you want to have a new list of the books I'd requested of you when you were here. I think I have received everything. If anything is missing, it doesn't matter: if it is important I'll remember what it is. Don't send me any translations that aren't published by Slavia, even if they are presented as being authoritative—I've received everything published by "Slavia,"<sup>3</sup> save for the first out-of-print volume and the most recent [except] *Anna Karenina* that I have yet to receive. I see that they have reprinted Dostoyevsky's *Il villaggio di Stepancikovo*, [The Manor of Stepancikovo] that you can ask them to send me. I would also like to have these other books: Henri de Man, *Il superamento del Marxismo* [The surpassing of Marxism], Bari, Laterza (just published); Ferdinando d'Amato, *Gentile*, and Francesco Flora, *Croce*—two small books published in Milan by "Edizioni Athena" in the "Thinkers of Today" series, and Adolfo Omodeo's *Storia delle religioni* (History of religions), a small book published by Principato in Messina in a scholastic series. For the books in Rome we'll have to wait a bit longer, because I do not have room: tomorrow however I'm submitting a *domandina* (a little application, this is a prison term) so as to be authorized to send a box of books home.

Dear Tania, let me know something about yourself. How do you feel now? Have you recovered well? I embrace you.

Antonio

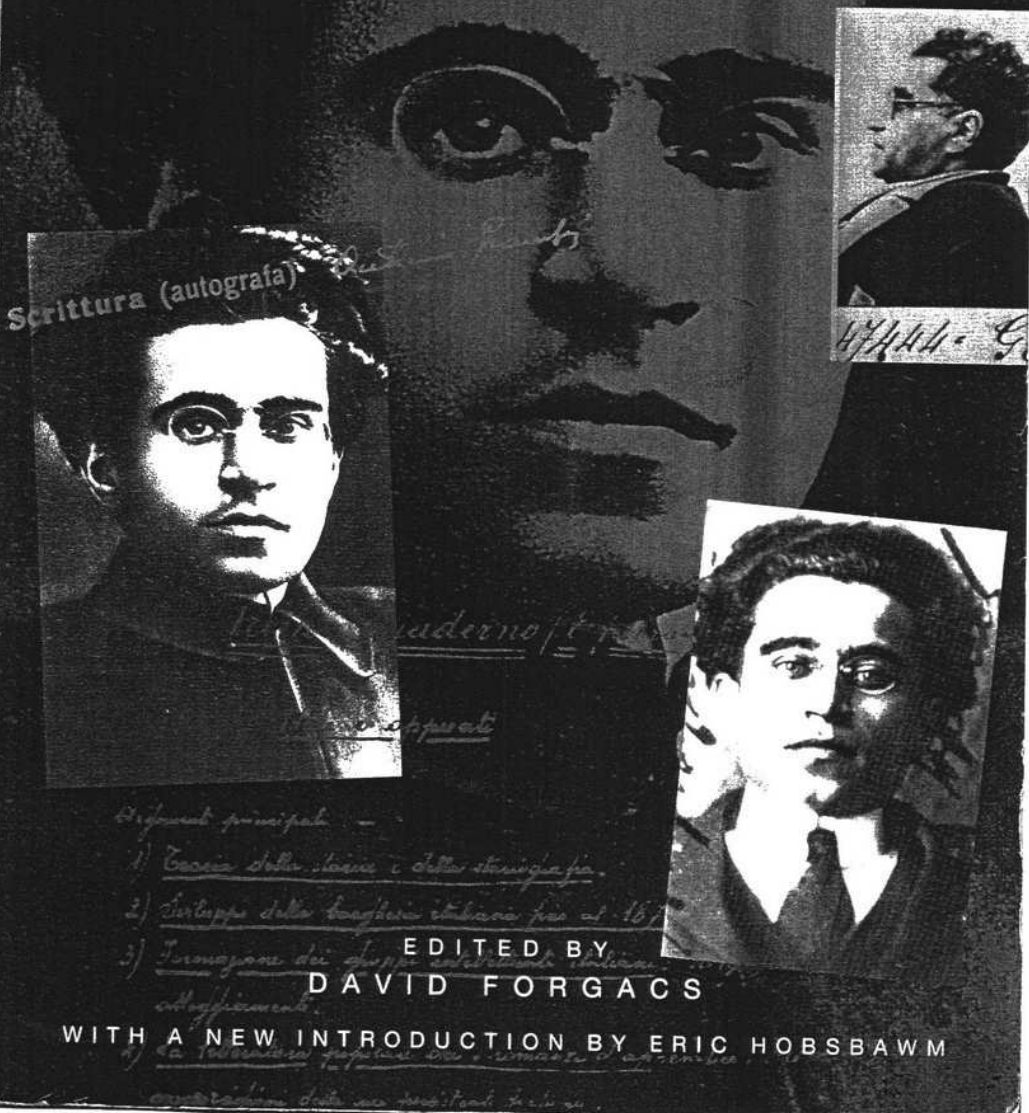
1. The sentence "All the seeds . . . weed" was used by Elsa Morante at the end of *History*, as a final expression of hope after the devastating tale of horror she recounts in that novel about a Jewish woman in Rome during World War II. See Elsa Morante, *History*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Avon Books, 1979), p. 687.

2. Gramsci uses the word *stornello*, an Italian folk-lyric poem that typically consists of a short opening line, usually an invocation to a flower, followed by two eleven-syllable lines. (Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *A History of Italian Literature* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954], p. 322).

3. Slavia was a Turinese publisher that, from 1926 to 1938, published many Italian translations of Russian literature.

The  
**ANTONIO GRAMSCI**  
 Reader

SELECTED WRITINGS 1916-1935



XIV ART AND THE  
 STRUGGLE FOR A NEW CIVILIZATION

Introduction

The discussions of culture and literature in the prison notebooks (1929-35) coincide in time with the great debates on the European left over realism and modernism, proletarian literature, popular frontism and socialist realism. At first sight they appear tangential to those debates, but on closer inspection they overlap with several of their key themes – most notably the relation between artistic freedom and political direction – as well as developing a quite distinct perspective.

This can be seen clearly in one of the most interesting notes, an indirect 'dialogue' with the French Communist Paul Nizan. In this note ('Literary Criticism'), which was written in 1933, Gramsci discusses Nizan's article 'Littérature révolutionnaire en France' (1932), which he knew not at first hand but only as it was reported and paraphrased by a hostile reviewer in *Critica Fascista*, one of the journals he was permitted to read in prison. Nizan was writing as a member of the Association des Ecrivains et des Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR), an international organization which then included among its members John Dos Passos, Anna Seghers, Louis Aragon and Luis Buñuel. The line pursued by the AEAR, Nizan argues, is so closely tied to the aims of the proletariat that, as the class struggle and the world crisis intensifies, as war draws nearer, the most honest of the 'pre-revolutionary' writers from the other literary currents will be drawn to it, whereas the unreconstructed petty-bourgeois members of those groups will show their true colours and go over to the fascist camp.

Gramsci's main objection to Nizan's position is that it is too 'cosmopolitan'. By 'backing' just one cultural line, that of the AEAR, at the expense of all the others, Nizan ignores the necessity for cultural change to start from below, from where people really are in cultural terms, and to move through a 'national' stage before it can become genuinely internationalist. In

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particular Nizan, for Gramsci, is too dismissive of popular literature, which he treats as a form of opiate foisted upon the working class by their bourgeois masters. In contrast to these positions, Gramsci insists that the strategies for a new culture must be multiple, that one must back several currents simultaneously, and that the new literature must 'sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional' (p.397).

These arguments are related both to Gramsci's opposition elsewhere in the notebooks to cosmopolitan or pseudo-internationalist outlooks (for instance his criticisms of Trotsky) and to his opposition to a narrowly artistic approach to culture and criticism. He argues that literary criticism should overlap and fuse with social criticism, with the ideological struggle to form a new culture. He takes respectively as his positive and negative models of literary criticism the nineteenth-century intellectual Francesco De Sanctis (a left democrat who sought to connect artistic criticism to political and social criticism) and Benedetto Croce (a liberal-conservative concerned to separate aesthetics from history and practical activity).

Gramsci's discussion of artistic freedom and political direction is equally distinctive. Another of his arguments against Nizan's position of supporting only the most 'correct' political line in art is that artists and writers must 'necessarily have a less precise and definite outlook' than politicians. He also writes ('Criteria of Literary Criticism'): 'When the politician put pressure on the art of his time to express a particular cultural world, his activity is one of politics, not of artistic criticism.' These arguments, despite first appearances, do not add up to a defence of the autonomy of the individual artist vis-à-vis all forms of political direction. Indeed Gramsci is concerned precisely with 'the formation of specific cultural currents', which he sees as entailing 'rational' forms of conformism, in other words the voluntary acceptance and participation by artists in a progressive cultural tendency. What he does reject are merely 'factitious', 'external' and coercive attempts to create a new artistic style by political fiat. Against this he argues that when artists feel the historical necessity of a new culture, they will accept its rationality voluntarily and produce works which follow the curve of the historical tendency. The precise forms of

their works cannot be predicted in advance. All one can say is that with the development of the economic and social forces, with the rise of the working class (a 'new social group that enters history with a hegemonic attitude', p.395) a new culture will be born which will generate its own artists and its own works of art.

1 Art and the Struggle for a New Civilization

The artistic relationship brings out, especially in relation to the philosophy of praxis, the fatuous naïvety of the parrots who think that with a few brief and stereotyped formulas they possess the key to open all doors (those keys are actually called 'picklocks').

Two writers can represent (express) the same socio-historical moment, but one can be an artist and the other a mere scribbler. To try to deal with the question just by describing what the two represent or express socially, that is, by summarizing more or less thoroughly the characteristics of a specific socio-historical moment, hardly touches at all upon the artistic problem. All this can be useful and necessary, indeed it certainly is, but in another field: that of political criticism, the criticism of social life, involving the struggle to destroy and to overcome certain feelings and beliefs, certain attitudes towards life and the world. This is not the criticism or the history of art, nor can it be presented as such – except at the expense of creating confusion and a retarding or stagnation of scientific concepts: in other words a failure precisely to pursue the intrinsic aims of cultural struggle.

A given socio-historical moment is never homogeneous; on the contrary, it is rich in contradictions. It acquires a 'personality' and is a 'moment' of development in that a certain fundamental activity of life prevails over others and represents a historical 'peak': but this presupposes a hierarchy, a contrast, a struggle. The person who represents this prevailing activity, this historical 'peak', should represent the given moment; but how should one who represents the other activities and elements be judged? Are not these also 'representative'? And is not the person who expresses 'reactionary' and anachronistic elements also representative of the 'moment'? Or should he be considered representative

who expresses all those contrasting forces and elements in conflict among themselves, that is, the one who represents the contradiction of the socio-historical whole?

It could also be said that a critique of literary civilization, a struggle to create a new culture, is artistic in the sense that a new art will be born from the new culture, but this appears to be a sophism. At any rate, it is perhaps on the basis of such presuppositions that one can best understand the relationship between De Sanctis and Croce and the controversy over form and content. De Sanctis's criticism is militant, not 'frigidly' aesthetic; it belongs to a period of cultural struggles and contrasts between antagonistic conceptions of life. Analyses of content, criticism of the 'structure' of works, that is, the logical, historical and topical coherence of the mass of artistically represented feelings, are connected to this cultural struggle. The profound humanity and humanism of De Sanctis, which even today make this critic so congenial, would seem to consist precisely in this. It is good to feel in him the impassioned fervour of one who is committed, one who has strong moral and political convictions and does not hide them nor even attempt to. Croce succeeds in distinguishing these various aspects of the critic which in De Sanctis were organically united and fused. Croce has the same cultural motives as De Sanctis, but at a time when these are in a period of expansion and triumph. The struggle continues; but it is a struggle for a refinement of culture (a certain type of culture) and not for its right to live: romantic fervour and passion have subsided into a superior serenity and an indulgence full of *bonhomie*. Even in Croce, though, this position is not permanent. A new phase follows in which cracks appear in the serenity and indulgence, and acrimony and a barely repressed anger emerge: a defensive, not an aggressive and impassioned phase, hence not to be compared with that of De Sanctis.

In short, the type of literary criticism suitable to the philosophy of praxis is offered by De Sanctis, not by Croce or by anyone else (least of all by Carducci).<sup>1</sup> It must fuse the struggle for a new culture (that is, for a new humanism) and criticism of social life, feelings and conceptions of the world with aesthetic or purely artistic criticism, and it must do so with heat and passion, even if it takes the form of sarcasm.

SCW, 93-5 (Q23§3)

## 2 Art and Culture

It seems evident that, to be precise, one should speak of a struggle for a 'new culture' and not for a 'new art' (in the immediate sense). To be precise, perhaps it cannot even be said that the struggle is for a new artistic content apart from form because content cannot be considered abstractly, in separation from form. To fight for a new art would mean to fight to create new individual artists, which is absurd since artists cannot be created artificially. One must speak of a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality and, therefore, a world intimately ingrained in 'possible artists' and 'possible works of art'.

Although one cannot artificially create individual artists, this does not therefore mean that the new cultural world for which one is fighting, by stirring up passions and human warmth, does not necessarily stir up 'new artists'. In other words, one cannot say that Tom, Dick and Harry will become artists, but one can say that new artists will be born from the movement. A new social group that enters history with a hegemonic attitude, with a self-confidence which it initially did not have, cannot but stir up from deep within itself personalities who would not previously have found sufficient strength to express themselves fully in a particular direction.

Therefore, one cannot talk about a new 'poetic aura' being formed – to use a phrase that was popular a few years ago. 'Poetic aura' is only a metaphor to express the ensemble of those artists who have already formed and emerged, or at least the process of formation and emergence which has begun and is already consolidated.

SCW, 98 (Q23§6)

## 3 Literary Criticism

See Argo's polemical article against Paul Nizan ('Idee d'oltre confine' [Ideas from across the border]) in the March 1933 issue of *Educazione Fascista*, concerning the conception of a new literature that should arise from an integral moral and intellectual renewal.

Nizan seems to pose the problem well by beginning with a definition of an integral renewal of cultural premisses, thus limiting the very field to be investigated. Argo's only valid objection is this: the impossibility of going beyond a national and autochthonous stage of the new literature and the 'cosmopolitan' dangers of Nizan's conceptions. From this point of view, many of Nizan's criticisms of groups of French intellectuals should be reconsidered: the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 'populism' and so on, including the *Monde* group; not because his criticism is politically off-target, but because the new literature must necessarily manifest itself 'nationally', in relatively hybrid and different combinations and alloys. One must examine and study the entire current objectively.

Besides, one must keep the following criterion in mind when dealing with the relationship between literature and politics: the literary man must necessarily have a less precise and definite outlook than the politician. He must be less 'sectarian', if one can put it this way, but in a 'contradictory' way. For the politician, every 'fixed' image is *a priori* reactionary: he considers the entire movement in its development. The artist, however, must have 'fixed' images that are cast into their definite form. The politician imagines man as he is and, at the same time, how he should be in order to reach a specific goal. His task is precisely to stir men up, to get them to leave their present life behind in order to become collectively able to reach the proposed goal, that is, to get them to 'conform' to the goal. The artist necessarily and realistically depicts 'that which is', at a given moment (the personal, the non-conformist, etc.). From the political point of view, therefore, the politician will never be satisfied with the artist and will never be able to be: he will find him always behind the times, always anachronistic and overtaken by the real flow of events. If history is a continuous process of liberation and self-awareness, it is evident that every stage (historical and in this case cultural) will be immediately surmounted and will no longer hold any interest. It is this, it seems to me, that must be kept in mind when evaluating Nizan's opinions about various groups.

From the objective point of view, though, just as Voltaire is still 'current' for certain strata of the population, so can these literary groups and the combinations which they represent be, and indeed are. In this case, 'objective' means that moral and intellectual

renewal does not develop simultaneously in all of the social strata. On the contrary, it is worth repeating that even today many people are Ptolemaic and not Copernican. There are many 'conformisms', many struggles for new 'conformisms' and various combinations of that which already exists (variously expressed) and that which one is working to bring about (and there are many people who are working in this direction). It is a serious error to adopt a 'single' progressive strategy according to which each new gain accumulates and becomes the premiss of further gains. Not only are the strategies multiple, but even in the 'most progressive' ones there are retrogressive moments. Furthermore, Nizan does not know how to deal with so-called 'popular literature', that is, with the success of serial literature (adventure stories, detective stories, thrillers) among the masses, a success that is assisted by the cinema and the newspapers. And yet, it is this question that represents the major part of the problem of a new literature as the expression of moral and intellectual renewal, for only from the readers of serial literature can one select a sufficient and necessary public for creating the cultural base of the new literature. It appears to me that the problem is this: how to create a body of writers who are, artistically, to serial literature what Dostoyevsky was to Sue and Soulié or, with respect to the detective story, what Chesterton was to Conan Doyle and Wallace. With this aim in mind, one must abandon many prejudices, but above all it should be remembered not only that one cannot have a monopoly but also that one is faced with a formidable organization of publishing interests.

The most common prejudice is this: that the new literature has to identify itself with an artistic school of intellectual origins, as was the case with Futurism. The premiss of the new literature cannot but be historical, political and popular. It must aim at elaborating that which already is, whether polemically or in some other way does not matter. What does matter, though, is that it sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional.

SCW, 99-102 (Q15§58)

#### 4 Criteria of Literary Criticism

Is the concept that art is art and not 'willed' and directed political propaganda in itself an obstacle to the formation of specific cultural currents that reflect their time and contribute to the strengthening of specific political currents? It seems not; indeed it seems that such a concept poses the problem in more radical terms, those of a more efficient and conclusive criticism. Given the principle that one should look only to the artistic character of the work of art, this does not in the least prevent one from investigating the mass of feelings and the attitude towards life present in the work of art itself. Indeed, one need only consult De Sanctis and Croce himself to see that this is accepted by modern currents in aesthetics. What is excluded is the idea that a work is beautiful because of its moral and political content and not for its form, with which the abstract content is fused and becomes one. Furthermore, one should examine whether a work of art might not have failed because the author was diverted by external practical (that is, artificial and insincere) preoccupations. The crucial point of the polemic seems to be this: X 'wants' to express a definite content in an artful way and fails to create a work of art. The artistic failure of this work shows that in X's hands that particular content was unpliant and refractory (since he has proven to be an artist in other works that he has really felt and experienced). It also shows that his enthusiasm was fictitious and externally willed, that in that specific case he was not really an artist, but a servant who wanted to please his masters. There are, then, two sets of facts: one aesthetic (to do with pure art), the other politico-cultural (that is, frankly political). The possibility of coming to deny the artistic character of a work can help the political critic proper to demonstrate that, as an artist, X does not belong to that particular political world. And since his personality is prevalently artistic, that world does not have any influence on him at a deep and intimate level, and does not exist for him. As far as politics is concerned, therefore, X is play-acting, he wants to be taken for what he is not, etc., etc. The political critic, then, denounces him as a 'political opportunist', not as an artist.

When the politician puts pressure on the art of his time to express a particular cultural world, his activity is one of politics, not of artistic criticism. If the cultural world for which one is

fighting is a living and necessary fact, its expansiveness will be irresistible and it will find its artists. Yet if, despite pressure, this irresistibility does not appear and is not effective, it means that the world in question was artificial and fictitious, a cardboard lubrication of mediocre men who complain that those of major stature do not agree with them. The very way of posing the question can be an indication of the firmness of such a moral and cultural world. In fact, so-called 'calligraphism'<sup>2</sup> is nothing but the defence thrown up by petty artists who opportunistically assert certain principles but who feel incapable of expressing them artistically (i.e., in their own proper sphere of activity) and drivel on about pure form which is its own content, etc., etc. The formal principle of the distinction and the unity in circulation of the spiritual categories, abstract through it is, allows one to grasp the actual truth and to criticize the arbitrariness and pseudo-life of those who are not prepared to put their cards on the table or who are simply second-rate individuals whom chance has placed in positions of authority.

SCW, 108-10 (Q15§38)

#### 5 Sincerity (or Spontaneity) and Discipline

Is sincerity (or spontaneity) always a merit and a value? Only if disciplined. Sincerity (and spontaneity) means the maximum degree of individualism, even in the sense of idiosyncrasy (in this case originality is equal to idiom). An individual is historically original when he gives maximum prominence to social being, without which he would be an 'idiot' (in the etymological sense, which is however not far from the common and vulgar sense).<sup>3</sup> There is a romantic meaning attached to such words as originality, personality and sincerity, and this meaning is historically justified in that it springs from an attempt to counteract a certain essentially 'Jesuitical' conformism, an artificial and fictitious conformism created superficially for the interests of a small group or clique, and not for those of a vanguard.

There is also a 'rational' form of conformism that corresponds to necessity, to the minimum amount of force needed to obtain a useful result. The discipline involved must be exalted and promoted and made 'spontaneous' or 'sincere'. Conformism, then,

means nothing other than 'sociality', but it is nice to use the word 'conformism' precisely because it annoys imbeciles. This does not mean that one cannot form a personality or be original, but it makes matters more difficult. It is too easy to be original by doing the opposite of what everyone else is doing; this is just mechanical. It is too easy to speak differently from others, to play with neologisms, whereas it is difficult to distinguish oneself from others without doing acrobatics. Today people try to be original and to have a personality on the cheap. Prisons and mental asylums are full of original men with strong personalities. What is really difficult is to put the stress on discipline and sociality and still profess sincerity, spontaneity, originality and personality. Nor can one say that conformism is too easy and reduces the world to a monastery. What is 'real conformism', what is the most useful and freest form of behaviour that is 'rational' in that it obeys 'necessity'? In other words, what is 'necessity'? Everyone is led to make of himself the archetype of 'fashion' and 'sociality', to offer himself as the 'model'. Therefore, sociality or conformism is the result of a cultural (but not only cultural) struggle; it is an 'objective' or universal fact, just as the 'necessity' on which the edifice of liberty is built cannot but be objective and universal. Liberty and free will, etc.

In literature (art), sincerity and spontaneity are opposed to calculation or mechanical procedures. This, too, can be a false conformism or sociality, that is, a tendency to settle down into customary and received ideas. There is the classical example of Nino Berrini who 'catalogues' the past and seeks to be original by doing what is absent from the files. Berrini's principles for the theatre are as follows: 1) the length of the work: determine the average length, basing it on those works which have been successful; 2) the study of endings: which ones have been successful and have won applause; 3) the study of combinations: for example, in the bourgeois sexual drama involving husband, wife and lover, see what combinations are exploited the most and, through elimination, 'invent' new combinations discovered in this mechanical way. In this way Berrini found that a drama must not have over 50,000 words, that is it must not last beyond a specific time. Every act or principal scene must culminate in a given way and this way is studied experimentally, according to an average of those feelings and stimuli that have been traditionally successful.

Undoubtedly, with these criteria a box-office catastrophe is impossible.<sup>4</sup> But is this 'conformism' or 'sociality' in the sense explained above? Of course not. It is an accommodation to what already exists.

Discipline also means a study of the past, since the past is an element both of the present and the future. It is not, though, an 'idle' element, but a necessary one in that it is a language, an element of a necessary 'uniformity' and not of an 'idle' and slothful uniformity.

SCW, 124-5 (Q14§61)

#### 6 ['Functional' Literature]

What in literature corresponds to 'rationalism' in architecture? Clearly, literature based on a plan or on a pre-established social course, in other words, 'functional' literature. It is strange that rationalism is acclaimed and justified in architecture and not in the other arts. There must be a misunderstanding. Is it perhaps that architecture alone has practical aims? This certainly looks like being the case because architecture is used to build houses; but this is not the point: it is a question of 'necessity'. One might say that houses are more necessary than the products of the other arts, meaning by this that everybody needs a house, while the products of the other arts are necessary only for intellectuals, for the cultured. One should then conclude that it is precisely the 'practical' people who propose to make all the arts necessary for everybody, to make everybody 'artists'.

Social coercion again! How people do blather against this coercion! Nobody sees that it is merely a word! Coercion, direction and planning are nothing more than a terrain for selecting artists. They are to be chosen for practical purposes, in a field in which will and coercion are perfectly justified. As if there has not always been some form of coercion! Just because it is exerted unconsciously by the environment and by single individuals, and not by a central power or a centralized force, does it cease to be coercion? Ultimately, it is always a question of 'rationalism' versus the individual will. Therefore, coercion is not the issue, but whether we are dealing with an authentic rationalism, a real functionalism, or with an act of the will. This is

all. Coercion is such only for those who reject it, not for those who accept it. If it goes hand in hand with the development of the social forces, it is not coercion but the 'revelation' of cultural truth obtained by an accelerated method. One can say of coercion what the religious say of predestination: for the 'willing' it is not predestination, but free will. In fact there is opposition to the concept of coercion because it involves a struggle against intellectuals, especially traditional and traditionalist intellectuals who are prepared at most to concede that innovations can be brought in little by little, gradually.

It is curious that in architecture rationalism is contrasted with 'decorativism', which is called 'industrial art'. Curious but correct. In fact, any artistic manifestation that is meant to satisfy the taste of individual wealthy buyers, to 'embellish' their lives as they say, should always be called industrial. When art, especially in its collective forms, aims to create a mass taste, to elevate this taste, it is not 'industrial', but disinterested: i.e. it is art.

The concept of rationalism or 'functionalism' in architecture seems to me to be rich in consequences and principles for cultural politics. It is no accident that the concept arose in the present period of 'socialization' (in the broad sense) and of attempts by central forces to organize the great masses against the remnants of individualism and the aesthetics of individualism in cultural politics.

SCW, 129-31 (Q14\$65)

## NOTES

### I Socialism and Marxism 1917-1918

1. 'Servants of the Queen', in *The Jungle Book*, London 1894.
2. Giuseppe Prezzolini, 'Il processo della democrazia', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 24 April 1918. The remainder of this paragraph reproduces almost exactly the text of Prezzolini's article.
3. This article in its full version starts by replying to a series of articles in *La Stampa*, the Turin newspaper linked to Giolitti, on the divisions in the PSI. The PSI reformists had argued that Socialist collaboration was necessary if the nation was 'to move, act and break with inertia' (SPW I, p. 43).

### II Working-Class Education and Culture

1. Enrico Leone, revolutionary syndicalist. The article referred to is 'Democrazia in frantumi' ('Democracy in Smithereens') in *Guerra di Classe* (journal of the syndicalist union USI), 15 January 1916: 'The modern worker learns far more from his class organizations than from the official book of knowledge ... There is thus no salvation except in workerism, in the class with calloused hands and with brains uncontaminated by culture and the infection of the classroom ... away with politics! The road is open. Ignorance has discovered the method of the general strike and feeds upon it, making the idea grow great. Wars are just what is needed to root this idea in the minds of the ignorant and primitive class.'
2. *Avanguardia* was the journal of the Socialist youth federation FGSI. At its national congress at Bologna in September 1912 the discussion on youth education and culture had been opened by Amadeo Bordiga. Angelo Tasca, one of the delegates from Turin, had intervened arguing that the party needed a full-scale theoretical and cultural renewal and that *Avanguardia* should give priority to education and culture. Bordiga opposed this: 'No one becomes a socialist through education but through real-life necessities imposed by the class they belong to.' Tasca replied that Bordiga 'wants to "ignite", we want to "evangelize" ... We want to preach socialism in the hope or certainty that we shall "ignite", not to "ignite" in the hope or certainty that socialists will be produced.'
3. The reference is to a meeting of the Turin council in December 1916 to discuss a council-funded vocational training institute for young workers. Zino Zini was a Socialist councillor and teacher of philosophy who favoured a humanities element in the institute's curriculum. Francesco Sincero, one of the Liberal majority, argued that such an approach was

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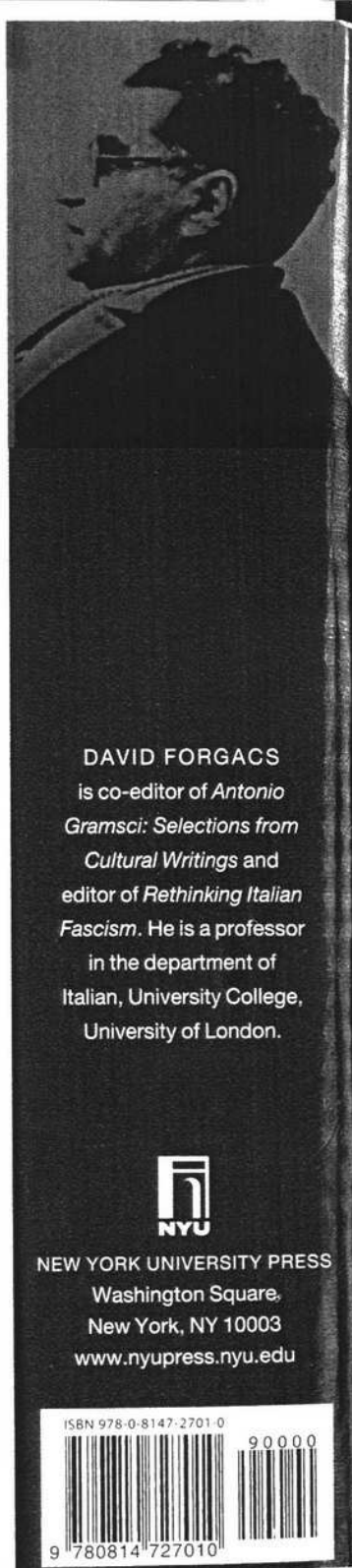
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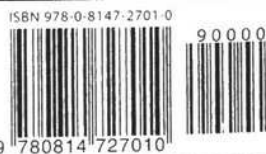
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