

# THE GRAMSCI MONUMENT- NEWSPAPER



Editors:

LAKESHA BRYANT  
and  
SAQUAN SCOTT

"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)



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## GRAMSCI IN THE BRONX



BRONX  
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ANTONIO GRAMXI

Bookmark Antonio GramXi

Handwriting unknown, but the use of "x" instead "sc" probably refers to Sardinian or Albanian language, year unknown.

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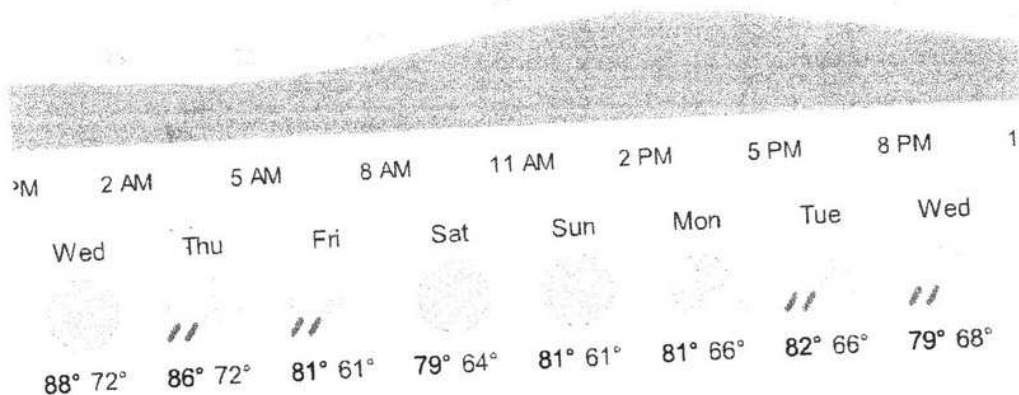
Bronx, NY 10456

Thursday  
Chance of Storm

86 °F | °C

Precipitation: 50%  
Humidity: 69%  
Wind: 11 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind
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## Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci\*

Henry A. Giroux

### Introduction

Sixty years after his death, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci still looms large as one of the great political theorists of the twentieth century. Refusing to separate culture from systemic relations of power, or politics from the production of knowledge and identities, Gramsci redefined how politics bore down on everyday life through the force of its pedagogical practices, relations, and discourses. This position is in stark contrast to a growing and insistent number of progressive theorists who abstract politics from culture and political struggle from pedagogical practices. In opposition to Gramsci, such theorists privilege a materialist politics that ignores the ways in which cultural formations have become one of the chief means through which individuals engage and comprehend the material circumstances and forces that shape their lives. In a strange twist of politics, many progressives and Left intellectuals now view culture as ornamental, a burden on class-based politics, or identical with a much

maligned identity politics (for example, see Gitlin, 1995; and Rorty, 1998).

Gramsci's work both challenges this position and provides a theoretical framework for understanding how class is always lived through the modalities of race and gender.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it provides an important political corrective to those social theories that fail to acknowledge how pedagogical politics work in shaping and articulating the divide between diverse institutional and cultural formations. For Gramsci, social theory at its best expands the meaning of the political by being self-conscious about the way pedagogy works through its own cultural practices in order to legitimate its own motivating questions, secure particular modes of authority, and privilege particular "institutional frameworks and disciplinary rules by which its research imperatives are formed" (Frow & Morris, in Grossberg, 1977, p. 268). Gramsci's work presents a much-needed challenge to this position. For Gramsci, culture needed to be addressed as part of a new political configuration and set of historical conditions that had emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century in the advanced industrial societies of the West. Critical intellectuals could not address the material machineries of power, the institutional arrangements of capitalism, and the changing politics of class formation without being attentive to how common sense and consent were being constructed within new public spheres marked by an expanding application of the dynamics and politics of specific, yet shifting, pedagogical practices. Such an understanding required not only a new attentiveness to "culture in its political role and consequences" (Cochran, 1994, p. 157), but foregrounded the issue of how alternative cultural spheres might be transformed into sites of struggle and resistance animated by a new group of subaltern intellectuals.

While the context for taking up Gramsci's work is radically different from the historical context in which his politics and theories developed, Gramsci's views on the relationship between culture, pedagogy, and power provide an important theoretical resource for addressing the challenge currently facing public and higher education in the United States. I want to analyze the importance of Gramsci's work, especially his work on education, by first outlining the nature of the current right-wing attempt to subordinate public and higher education to the needs of capital—substituting the purpose and meaning of education from a public to a private good—and the central role that cultural politics plays in spearheading such an assault. In addition, I want to analyze the attempt on the part of right-wing theorists such as E. D. Hirsch to appropriate Gramsci's views on education for a conservative educational

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project. Finally, I will conclude by analyzing the implications Gramsci's work might have for defending education as a public good and cultural pedagogy as central to any discourse of radical politics.

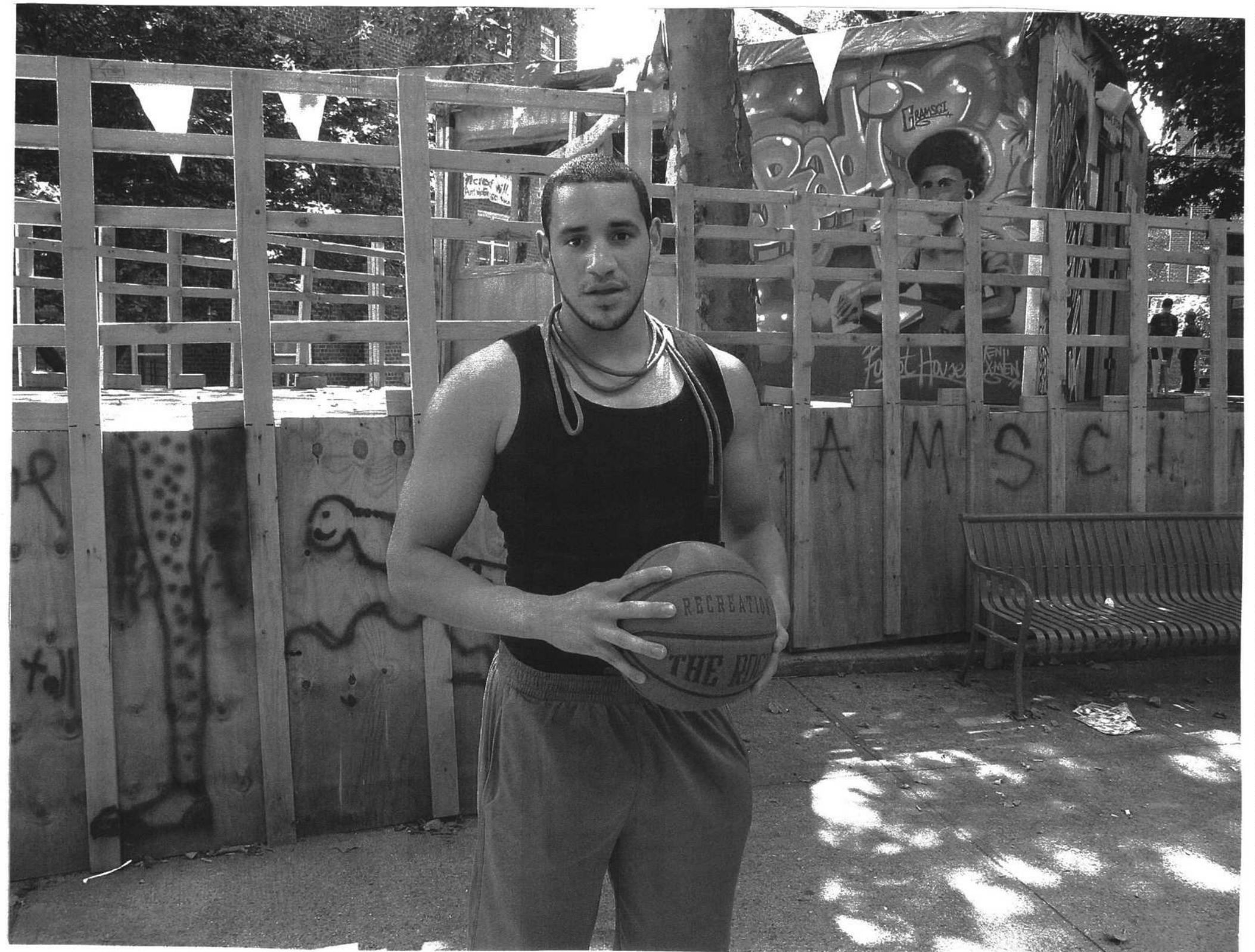
### Democracy and Education under Siege

As the United States moves into the new millennium, questions of culture have become central to understanding how politics and power reorganize practices that have a profound effect on the social and economic forces that regulate everyday life. The politics of culture can be seen not only in the ways that symbolic resources and knowledge have replaced traditional skills as the main productive force, but also in the role that culture now plays as the main pedagogical force to secure the authority and interests of dominant groups. Media technologies have redefined the power of particular groups to construct a representational politics that plays a crucial role shaping self and group identities, as well as determining and marking off different conceptions of community and belonging. The notion that culture has become "a crucial site and weapon of power" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 142) has not been lost on conservatives and the growing forces of the new right.

Beginning with Reagan and Bush in the 1980s and culminating with the Gingrich-Republican revolution in the 1990s, conservatives have taken control over an evergrowing electronic media industry and new global communication systems—acknowledging that politics has taken on an important pedagogical function in the information age (see Schiller, 1989; and Barnouw, 1997). Recognizing the political value of defining culture as both a site of struggle and a sphere of education becomes central to social and political change, and conservatives have easily outmaneuvered progressives in the ongoing battle over control of the conditions for the production of knowledge, values, identities, desires, and those social practices central to winning the consent of diverse segments of the American public. Utilizing the power of the established press, electronic media, and talk radio as a site of cultural politics, conservatives have used their massive financial resources and foundations to gain control of various segments of the culture industry (Giroux, 1995). Conservative foundations and groups have also played a pivotal role in educating a new generation of public intellectuals in order to wage a relentless battle against all facets of democratic life; bearing the brunt of this vicious attack are groups disadvantaged by virtue of

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# RESIDENT OF THE DAY



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# JUAN

their race, age, gender, class, and lack of citizenship. With profound irony, conservative forces have appropriated Antonio Gramsci's insight that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 350). In doing so, they have reasserted the role of culture as educational force for social and economic reproduction and have waged an intense ideological battle both within various cultural sites such as the media and over important cultural sites such as public schools, the arts, and higher education.

The effects of the current assault on democracy by the right can be seen in the dismantling of state supports for immigrants, people of color, and working people. More specifically, it is evident in the passage of retrograde social policies that promote deindustrialization, downsizing, and free market reforms, which in the case of recent welfare reform legislation will prohibit over 3.5 million children from receiving any type of government assistance, adding more children to the ranks of over 14.7 million children already living in poverty in the United States.<sup>2</sup> As conservative policies move away from a politics of social investment to one of social containment, state services are hollowed out and reduced to their more repressive functions—discipline, control, and surveillance.<sup>3</sup> This is evident not only in states such as California and Florida, which spend more to incarcerate people than to educate their college-age populations, but also in the disproportionate number of African-American males throughout the country who are being incarcerated or placed under the control of the criminal justice system (on this issue, see Tonry, 1995; Miller, 1996; and Butterfield, 1997). The aftermath of this battle against democracy and social and economic justice can also be seen in a resurgent racism, marked by antiimmigrant legislation such as Proposition 209 in California, the dismantling of affirmative action, and the re-emergence of racist ideologies attempting to prove that differences in intelligence are both racially distinctive and genetically determined.<sup>4</sup> In this instance, racially coded attacks on criminals, the underclass, and welfare mothers are legitimated, in part, through a politically invigorated rhetoric of Social Darwinism that both scapegoats people of color while simultaneously blaming them for the social problems that result in their exploitation, suffering, and oppression (see, for example, Hadjor, 1995; Hacker, 1995; and Marable, 1995).

As part of this broader assault on democracy, public education has become one of the most contested public spheres in political life at the turn of the century. More than any other institution, public schools serve as a dangerous reminder of both the promise and shortcomings of the social, political, and economic forces that shape society. Embodying the

contradictions of the larger society, public schools provide a critical referent for measuring the degree to which American society fulfills its obligation to provide all students with the knowledge and skills necessary for critical citizenship and the possibilities of democratic public life. As sites that reflect the nation's alleged commitment to the legacy of democracy, schools offer both a challenge and threat to attempts by conservatives and liberals alike to remove the language of choice from the discourse of democracy and to diminish citizenship to a largely privatized affair in which civic responsibilities are reduced to the act of consuming. A euphemism for privatization, "choice" relieves schools of the pretense of serving the public good. No longer institutions designed to benefit all members of the community, they are refashioned in market terms designed to serve the narrow interests of individual consumers and national economic policies.

Dismissing the role that schools might play as democratic public spheres, conservatives have redefined the meaning and purpose of schooling in accordance with the interest of global capitalism. As financial support for public schools dries up, conservatives increasingly attempt to harness all educational institutions to corporate control through calls for privatization, vouchers, and so-called choice programs. Rewriting the tradition of schooling as a public good, conservatives abstract questions of equity from excellence and subsume the political mission of schooling within the ideology and logic of the market. Similarly, conservatives have waged a relentless attack on teacher unions, called for the return of authoritarian teaching approaches, and endorsed learning by drill and rote memorization. In this scenario, public education is replaced by the call for privately funded educational institutions that can safely ignore civil rights, exclude students who are class and racially disenfranchised, and conveniently blur the lines between religion and the state.

Given the prevailing attack on education, we are witnessing both the elimination of public school as a potential site for expanding the public good and the realignment of the mission of higher education within the discourse and ideology of the corporate world.<sup>5</sup> Within this perspective, higher education is aggressively shorn of its utopian impulses. Undermined as a repository of critical thinking, writing, teaching, and learning, universities are refashioned to meet the interests of commerce and regulation. Within the current onslaught against non-commodified public spheres, the mission of the university becomes instrumental; it is redesigned largely to serve corporate interests whose aim is to restructure higher education along the lines of global capitalism. In specific terms,

this means privileging instrumental over substantive knowledge, shifting power away from faculty to administrations, and corporatizing the culture of the university. As the college curriculum is stripped of those subjects (typically in the humanities) that do not translate immediately into market considerations, programs are downsized and reduced to service programs for business. In this case, not only does instrumental knowledge replace substantive knowledge as the basis for research, writing, and teaching, but the university intellectual is reduced to low level technocrat whose role is to manage and legitimate the downsizing, knowledge production, and labor practices that characterize the institutional power and culture of the corporatized and vocationalized university.

The defining principle of the current right-wing attack against higher education and public schooling is the dismantling of all public spheres that refuse to be defined strictly by the instrumental logic of the market. As such, the battle waged over education must be understood as part of a much broader struggle for democratic public life, the political function of culture, the role of intellectuals, and the importance of pedagogy as a hegemonic technology in various aspects of daily life. At stake here is the issue of how we "think" politics in Gramscian terms, that is, how do we create a new culture through a reformulation of the meaning of cultural politics, intellectual engagement, and pedagogical change.<sup>6</sup> In short, how do we reassert the primacy of a nondogmatic, progressive politics by analyzing how culture as a force for resistance is related to power, education, and agency? This project suggests the need to understand how culture shapes the everyday lives of people: how culture constitutes a defining principle for understanding how struggles over meaning, identity, social practices, and institutional machineries of power can be waged while inserting the pedagogical back into the political, and expanding the pedagogical by recognizing the "educational force of our whole social and cultural experience [as one] that actively and profoundly teaches" (Williams, 1967, p. 15).

Gramsci's legacy is important for progressives because he provides a wide-ranging and insightful analysis of how education functions as part of a wider political set of discourses and social relations aimed at promoting ideological and structural change. But in spite of Gramsci's politics and intentions, his work has also been used by conservatives to legitimate a profoundly reactionary view of education and the processes of learning and persuasion. In opposition to such an appropriation, I want to analyze in detail how Gramsci's work has been used by Harold Entwistle, in *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical*

*Politics* (1979), and, more recently, by E. D. Hirsch, in *The Schools We Need* (1996), to push a deeply conservative educational agenda. While recognizing that Gramsci's writings on education represent a problematic legacy for progressives, I want to argue in opposition to Entwistle and Hirsch that Gramsci's work, when read within the appropriate historical context and in relation to Gramsci's revolutionary project, provides an invaluable theoretical service for helping radical educators rethink the political nature of educational work and the role it might play in the struggle for expanding and developing the relationship between learning and democratic social change, and committed intellectual practice and political struggle.<sup>7</sup>

### Appropriating Gramsci

Although the works of Harold Entwistle and E. D. Hirsch are separated by a decade, the writers share similar views about the value of a conservative approach to schooling. Not only do both authors legitimate schools as agents of social and economic reproduction, they advocate classroom practices based on learning a common culture, rigid disciplinary rules, an authoritarian pedagogy, and a standardized curriculum. At the same time, it is important to note that Entwistle provides a far more serious engagement with Gramsci's work and makes some valuable contributions, both in his critiques of some progressive forms of political education and in his suggestions for rethinking the politics of adult education. While Hirsch's work on Gramsci was inspired by Entwistle, he attempts to reappropriate Entwistle in the service of a right-wing conservatism that blames educational progressives in the United States for the decline of teaching and learning in the public schools. Hirsch's "discovery" that Gramsci is in actuality a poster boy for conservative thought combines the bad faith of misrepresentation with the reductionism of an ideological fervor that seems to make a mockery of political sense and historical accuracy.<sup>8</sup> While the nature of the political appropriation of Gramsci's work by a diverse body of radical educators may be open to interpretation, it certainly stretches the bounds of plausibility when Hirsch aligns Gramsci with contemporary, right-wing educational theorists such as Dianne Ravitch and Charles Sykes. Not only does such an appropriation represent a form of theoretical disingenuousness and political opportunism, but it is also an affront to everything that Gramsci stood for as a Marxist revolutionary.

Entwistle and Hirsch share a view of schooling that stands in sharp

contrast to the radical educational theories of their time; yet, they appropriate from Gramsci's work a rationale for conservative pedagogical practices as part of their attempt to redefine the relationship between schooling and society, and intellectuals and their social responsibilities. Although Entwistle's book, *Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics*, provides a more extensive reading of Gramsci, E. D. Hirsch applies the implications of such a conservative interpretation directly to matters affecting teaching and learning in the United States. Moreover, Hirsch draws upon Gramsci's work, in addition to that of his conservative contemporaries, in a spurious effort to produce what he calls a "pragmatic" and bipartisan, rather than "ideological" and conservative agenda for educational reform. In what follows, I will critically engage how Entwistle and Hirsch appropriate Gramsci, and analyze the implications of their work for a theory of schooling and pedagogy.

Harold Entwistle's book represents one of the first comprehensive analyses of the relevance of Gramsci's writings for educational theory and practice. Providing his own detailed interpretation of Gramsci's writings on schooling, Entwistle rejects as misguided the way Gramsci's work has been previously interpreted, and excoriates "new sociologists of education" as well as other radical educational theorists who rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s in England. After resurrecting the "real" Gramsci, Entwistle proceeds to dismiss those "radical" critics who have allegedly misinterpreted Gramsci's work. The remainder of Entwistle's book focuses on the relevance of Gramsci's writings for adult education, ending with the "remarkable" conclusion that the lesson to be learned from Gramsci's work is that schools do not provide the setting for "a radical, counterhegemonic education" (1989, p. 177).

Entwistle's reading of Gramsci's work portrays him as a "stern" taskmaster whose views on discipline, knowledge, and hegemony render him more compatible with Karl Popper and Jacques Barzun (both of whom are referred to positively), than the likes of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, or, for that matter, even John Dewey. If we are to take Entwistle's version of Gramsci seriously as a model for socialist education, then we will have to accept the claim that Gramsci supported unproblematically a deference to authority, the rote memorizing of facts, and a subservience to imposed standards as core pedagogical principles for a theory and practice of schooling. Needless to say, such a claim is hardly consistent with Gramsci's call for an educational practice and project aimed at generating "more and more organic intellectuals from the children of the peasantry and the proletariat" (Holly, 1980, p. 319).

The conservative literary theorist, E. D. Hirsch, echoes a similar argument. Hirsch describes Gramsci's work as a critical response to Giovanni Gentile's educational reforms (enacted under Il Duce in the 1920s)—reforms which emphasized "emotion," "feeling," and the "most immediate needs of the child" (Hirsch, 1996, p. 7). The failure of these reforms, according to Hirsch, served as proof of the inadequacy of what he incorrectly terms the central tenets of critical educational theory. In opposition to the alleged failure of this form of "progressive" pedagogy, Hirsch argues that Gramsci offers a rationale for conservative methods, such as "phonics and memorization of the multiplication table," claiming that they are necessary for "the oppressed classes to learn how to read, write, and communicate—and to gain enough traditional knowledge to understand the worlds of nature and culture surrounding them."

What Hirsch and Entwistle fail to acknowledge in their selective readings of Gramsci is that his concern with "facts" and intellectual rigor makes sense only as a rightly argued critique of inane methodologies that separate facts from values, learning from understanding, and emotion from the intellect. As David Forgacs points out, in the introduction to *An Antonio Gramsci Reader*, Gramsci

begins not from the point of view of the teacher but from that of the learner, and he emphasizes that the learning process is a movement toward self-knowledge, self-mastery and thus liberation. Education is not a matter of handing out "encyclopedic knowledge" but of developing and disciplining the awareness which the learner already possesses. (1988, p. 54)

Gramsci's emphasis on intellectual rigor and discipline can only be understood as part of a broader concern that students develop a critical understanding of how the past informs the present in order that they liberate themselves from the ideologies and common sense assumptions of the dominant order. Gramsci was quite clear on the distinction between learning facts that enlarged one's perception of the larger social order and simply gathering information. Even in his earlier writings, Gramsci understood the relationship between pedagogy of rote memorization and the conservative nature of the culture it served to legitimate. For instance, Gramsci wrote in 1916:

We must break the habit of thinking that culture is encyclopedic knowledge whereby man [sic] is viewed as a mere container in which to pour and conserve empirical data or brute disconnected facts which he will have to subsequently pigeonhole in his brain as in the columns of a dictionary so as to be able to eventually respond to the varied stimuli of the external world. This form of culture is truly harmful, especially to the proletariat. It only serves to create misfits, people who believe themselves superior to the rest of humanity because they

have accumulated in their memory a certain quantity of facts and dates which they cough up at every opportunity to almost raise a barrier between themselves and others. (1975, pp. 20-21)

Hirsch ignores Gramsci's critique of encyclopedic knowledge and, in doing so, argues that

Romantic anti-intellectualism and developmentalism [critical thinking and critical social theory], as Gramsci understood, are luxuries of the merchant class that the poor cannot afford [...]. Today, the Enlightenment view of the value of knowledge is the only view we can afford. When the eighteenth-century Encyclopedists attempted to systematize human knowledge in a set of books, they were placing their hope for progress in the ever-growing experience of human kind. (1997, p. 113)

For Hirsch, the production of knowledge by the middle class is only paved with good intentions. It seems unimaginable for Hirsch to engage critically the relationship between knowledge and power, or ideology and politics. To address how culture and power combined to produce knowledge that often legitimates not the general interests but particular racial, class, and gendered interests would work against his general educational program: to teach children a core knowledge base of "facts." For Hirsch, the most distinguishing mark of encyclopedic knowledge is its use for inculcating mental discipline; moreover, the primary purpose of education is not only to transmit such knowledge but to prevent it from being undermined by forms of "anti-intellectualism" in the American educational community—whose legacy, Hirsch argues, extends from "home economics" and 'shop' in the 1920s to all forms of 'critical thinking and problem solving skills' in the 1990s" (1997, p. 113).

For Gramsci, the production of knowledge and its reception and transformation was historical, dialectical, and critical. Gramsci rejected mere factuality and demanded that schooling be "formative, while being 'instructive.'" The pedagogical task entailed, in part, "mitigating and rendering more fertile the dogmatic approach which must inevitably characterize these first few years" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 30). Such a task was not easy and demanded, the production of "limits on libertarian ideologies," while, the recognition that "the elements of struggle against the mechanical and Jesuitical school have become unhealthily exaggerated" (pp. 32-33). Underlying Gramsci's pedagogy is an educational principle in which a comfortable humanism is replaced by a hardheaded radicalism—not a radicalism that falsely separates necessity and spontaneity, discipline and the acquisition of basic skills from imagina-

tion, but, instead, one that integrates them.

In contrast, Entwistle and Hirsch interpret Gramsci's view of schooling as one that surrenders pedagogy to dull routine, and, in doing so, implies that such a pedagogy can, and should, be maintained at the expense of the spirit. The interconnections between discipline and critical thinking in Gramsci's view of schooling only lend support to a conservative notion of pedagogy if the concept of physical discipline and self-control is abstracted from his emphasis on the importance of developing a counterhegemonic project, one "which demands the formation of a militant, self-conscious proletariat that will fight unyieldingly for its right to govern itself [...]" (Karabel, 1976, p. 172). In other words, Gramsci's claim that "it will always be an effort to learn physical self-discipline and self-control, the pupil, has, in effect, to undergo psycho-physical training" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 42) gets seriously distorted unless understood within the context of Gramsci's other remarks on learning and intellectual development. Gramsci stressed this view not only in his early writing in 1916, but just as forcefully, in the *Notebooks*. In the latter, he writes: "Many people have to be persuaded that studying too is a job, and a very tiring one with its own particular apprenticeship involving muscles and nerves as well as intellect" (1971, p. 42; my emphasis).

For Gramsci, there was a dynamic tension between self-discipline and critical understanding. Consequently, what in fact often appears like a paradox in Gramsci's work on education is in reality a nuanced and dialectical endorsement of a critical and disciplined educational practice informed by a notion of radical pedagogical authority. Distinguishing between classroom authority that works in the service of critical agency and authority that is used to promote conformity and allegiance to the state, Gramsci provides a political referent for criticizing schools that he claims are merely a bourgeois affair. According to Gramsci, any pedagogical practice has to be examined and implemented within a broader understanding of what the purpose of schooling might become and how such a view of political education articulates a wider democratic project. Schools, in this instance, are seen as central and formative sites for the production of political identities, the struggle over culture, and for educating organic intellectuals. In "Questions of Culture," Gramsci argues that acquiring political power must be matched with the "problem of winning intellectual power" (1988, p. 62). If the school is to offer students of the working-class and other subaltern groups the knowledge and skills necessary for political leadership, they cannot be simply, as Hirsch in particular would have it, boot camps for the intellectually

malleable. Gramsci is quite clear on this issue:

A school which does not mortgage the child's future, a school that does not force the child's will, his intelligence and growing awareness to run along the tracks to a predetermined station. A school of freedom and free initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical precision. The children of proletarians too should have all possibilities open to them; they should be able to develop their own individuality in the optimal way, and hence in the most productive way for both themselves and society. (p. 64)

For Gramsci, any analysis of education can only be understood in relation to existing social and cultural formations and the power relations these imply. Gramsci emphasized that schooling constitutes only one form of political education within a broader network of experience, history, and collective struggle. Given Gramsci's view of political education, it is difficult to reduce his view of teaching and learning to a form of positivist reductionism in which a particular methodology, such as rote learning, is endorsed without questioning, whether such pedagogical practices are either implicated in or offer resistance to the mechanisms of consent, common sense, and dominant social relations.

Hirsch not only enlists Gramsci to justify authoritarian classroom relations in which students are deprived of the basic right to address disturbing, urgent questions, but also to foster a sense that the point of view of the learner is irrelevant. For both Hirsch and Entwistle, schools are dysfunctional not because they oppress students from subaltern groups but because the legacy of progressive education emphasizes "'project oriented,' 'hands-on,' 'critical-thinking' and so-called 'democratic education'" rather than a core curriculum of facts and information (Hirsch, 1997, p. 7). Hirsch, in particular, endorses a reductive view of information accumulation in which the critical relationship between culture and power remains largely unexamined, except as a pretext to urge working-class and subaltern groups to master the dominant culture as a way of reproducing the social order. Hirsch makes this point quite clearly:

The oppressed class should be taught to master the tools of power and authority—the ability to read, write, and communicate—and to gain enough traditional knowledge to understand the worlds of nature and culture surrounding them. Children, particularly the children of the poor, should not be encouraged to flourish "naturally," which would keep them ignorant and make them slaves of emotion. They should learn the value of hard work, gain the knowledge that leads to understanding, and master the traditional culture in order to command its rhetoric, as Gramsci himself had learned to do. (1997, p. 7)

The implication here is that any recourse to teaching working-class

children about the specificities of their histories, experiences, and cultural memories would simply result in a form of pedagogical infantilism. More importantly, Hirsch misses a central concern that runs throughout Gramsci's work: skills are not universal, and must be addressed within the context that educators, not to mention students, both intervene and attempt to change. Similarly, Hirsch assumes that the poor performance of working-class students results from intellectual sloth and has nothing to do with underfunded schools, a diminished tax base, and urban politics. On the contrary, for Hirsch, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate classroom resources, and broken-down school buildings play no role in whether working-class kids and other subaltern groups do well in schools. The real enemy of student learning, according to Hirsch, is the critical legacy of progressivism (and its failure to endorse rote learning, a core curriculum, and uniform teaching) rather than the force of racial and class bias, poor working conditions for teachers, or poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, while Gramsci was deeply concerned with students learning "facts" and specific forms of knowledge, he did not advocate that the context of such learning was irrelevant. For Gramsci, learning had to be rigorous but meaningful, subject based but related to practical activities. Appropriating Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" (the educator must be educated), Gramsci believed that "the relationship between teacher and pupil is active and reciprocal so that every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher" (1971, p. 350). By arguing that the teacher-student relationship leaves no room for elitism or sterile pedantry, Gramsci introduces an important principle into the structuring of classroom social relations. The concept of the teacher as a learner suggests that teachers must help students to appropriate their own histories, and also examine their own roles as public intellectuals, located within specific cultural formations and relations of power. In this instance, Gramsci not only argues implicitly against forms of authoritarian teaching, but he sharply criticizes the assumption that knowledge should be treated unproblematically—beyond the dynamics of interrogation, criticism, and political engagement. Gramsci had no interest in allowing schools to produce a culture that served repressive authority and state power, nor did he have any interest in supporting teachers and intellectuals who were reduced to what he called "experts in legitimation" (in Said, 1983, p. 172).

By ignoring how the imposition of meanings and values distributed in schools are dialectically related to the mechanisms of economic and political control in the dominant society, both Entwistle and Hirsch

depoliticize the relationship between power and culture; Hirsch is especially vehement in normalizing the hegemonic role that schools play in defining what is legitimate knowledge and social practice. For Hirsch, this position translates into a call for a common national curriculum that emphasizes the acquisition of core knowledge and standardized testing.<sup>10</sup> Hirsch has no conception that such a position is at odds with the counter-hegemonic project posed by Gramsci—cultural pedagogy as a means to create organic intellectuals whose task is to identify the social interests behind power, challenge traditional understandings of culture, power, and politics; and share such knowledge as the basis for organizing diverse forms of class struggle in order to create a socialist society. Class struggle or the goals of socialism could not be more removed from Hirsch's politics.

Rather than acknowledge the need to revalue the "disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups" (Fraser, 1995, p. 71), Hirsch wants to "save" underprivileged kids by stripping them of their identities and histories while assimilating them into the dominant culture. Curriculum in these terms provides the legitimation for forms of middle-class cultural capital that serves as an institutionally sanctioned bunker against learning and living with differences (Hall, in Lubiano, 1997, p. 297). Hirsch argues that, while teaching multiculturalism may have some value, it is ultimately disruptive to subaltern students because of its approach through "amateur psychological efforts [that] fail because [they result] in lies to children about their achievements [...] and lead to further erosion of their self esteem" (1997, pp. 103-04). It appears not to occur to Hirsch that schools may actually systematize failing students through racially motivated models of teaching, tracking, and evaluation. Should we assume that curricular knowledge that represents middle-class cultural capital as the referent against which the narratives of history, identity, and social experience should be judged is unproblematically uplifting for working-class kids? Or that warehousing and tracking, often built into school curricula to the disadvantage of racial, class, and gender minorities, works to their advantage? This position is not merely naive, it is a construct of reactionary politics parading as common sense, and is completely at odds with Gramsci's view of the role that education should play in liberating subaltern groups.

In opposition to Gramsci, neither Entwistle nor Hirsch provides a critical language to deconstruct the basis of privileges that are accorded the dominant culture. There is no attempt to interrogate culture as the shared and lived principles of life, characteristic of different groups and classes, as these emerge within unequal relations of power and struggle.

Nor do Entwistle and Hirsch critically engage how questions of power, history, race, gender, and class privilege work to codify specific ideological educational practices as merely the accumulation of disinterested knowledge "that can be exchanged on the world market for upward mobility" (Mohanty, 1989-90, p. 184). In effect, they de-emphasize unequally valued cultural styles and the ways in which dominant pedagogical practices work to disparage the multiple languages, histories, and experiences at work in a multicultural society.

Hirsch, in particular, ends up legitimating a homogenizing cultural discourse that institutionalizes various policing techniques to safeguard the interests and power of dominant groups. In the end, both Entwistle and Hirsch support a view of culture and knowledge as monolithic: the product of a single, durable history and vision, at odds with the notion and politics of difference. The cultural politics at work in this view of education maintains an ominous ideological silence regarding the validity and importance of the experiences of women, Blacks, and other groups excluded from the narrative of mainstream history and culture. Thus there emerges no critical understanding of Gramsci's focus on culture as a field of struggle, or of competing interests in which dominant and subordinate groups live out and make sense of their given circumstances and conditions of life within incommensurate hierarchies of power and possibility.

Entwistle and Hirsch do more than offer an unenlightened and reductive reading of culture; they appropriate the Gramscian position that schools are agencies of social and cultural reproduction and in doing so defend this position rather than criticize it. Rather than understood as a storehouse of immutable facts, behaviors, and practices, culture is inextricably related to the outcomes of struggle over the complex and often contradictory processes of learning, persuasion, agency, and leadership. Culture is about the production and legitimation of particular ways of life transmitted in schools through overt and hidden curricula so as to legitimate the cultural capital of dominant groups, while marginalizing the voices of the subaltern. If power is related to culture in the discourses of Entwistle and Hirsch, the outcome is a notion of culture cleansed of its own complicity in furthering social relations, and pedagogical practices that reproduce the worst dimensions of schooling. For example, missing from their analysis is any understanding of increasing corporatism and its effects on schools: poverty, racism, and gender bias and the ways in which these forces structure the school curricula, the distribution of financial resources between schools, or the organization of the teaching labor force. While Hirsch's reading of

Gramsci is much more reductive than Entwistle's extensive analysis, both theorists share a conservative ideological project in their reading of the role of intellectuals and the purpose of schooling. Entwistle and Hirsch represent different versions of the same ideology—an ideology that is deeply committed to expunging democracy of its critical and emancipatory possibilities. In what follows, I want to conclude by pointing to aspects of Gramsci's work that might be useful for developing some important theoretical principles for a critical theory of schooling and pedagogy.

### Thinking Like Gramsci: Reclaiming the Struggle over Schooling

Given the current assault on schooling, and public life more generally, it is imperative that progressive educators develop a language of critique and possibility along with new strategies for understanding and intervention in order to reclaim and reinvigorate the struggle to sustain public schooling as a central feature of democratic life. Gramsci's work is enormously helpful in this regard because it forcefully reminds us that any attempt to articulate the nature and purpose of schooling must be addressed as part of a broader comprehensive politics of social change. Schooling, in Gramsci's terms, was always part of some larger ensemble "of relationships headed and moved by authority and power" (Said, 1983, p. 169). Hence, the struggle over schooling must be inextricably linked to the struggle against abusive state power, and the battle for "creating more equitable and just public spheres within and outside of educational institutions" (Mohanty, 1989-90, p. 192). Gramsci also makes clear that pedagogy is the outcome of struggles over both the relations of meaning and institutional relations of power, and that such struggles cannot be abstracted from the construction of national identity and what it means to be an active citizen. In this context, the pedagogical is inextricably grounded in a notion of hegemony, struggle, and political education articulated through a normative position and project aimed at overcoming the stark inequalities and forms of oppression suffered by subaltern groups. The theoretical and ideological contours of Gramsci's project offer no immediate solutions to the context and content of the problems faced by American educators. Nor can Gramsci's work simply be appropriated outside of his own history and the challenges it posed. What his vast writings do provide are opportunities for raising questions about what it means to learn from Gramsci at a time that demands

theoretical rigor, moral courage, and political boldness.

Gramsci's analysis of the political and social role of culture in establishing and reproducing the power of the modern state represents a crucial theoretical sphere for progressive educators. Central to Gramsci's analysis is not only the important recognition of culture as a terrain of consent and struggle, but also the political imperative to analyze how diverse groups make meaning of their lives within a variety of cultural sites and social practices in relation to, and not outside of, the material contexts of everyday life. For Gramsci, the politics of culture was inseparable from a politics that provided the pedagogical conditions for educators to think critically about how knowledge is produced, taken up, and transformed as a force for social change and collective struggle. The practical relevance of Gramsci's work on culture and pedagogy can be made more clear by commenting further on two issues: the role of basic education and the relevance of Gramsci's call for pedagogical practices that instill young children with an appreciation for self-discipline and an array of intellectual skills. While it is crucial to recognize Gramsci's call for treating various levels of schooling as sites of struggle, it is equally imperative to recognize that education for Gramsci was fundamental to preparing young people and adults with the knowledge and skills that would enable them to govern and not simply be governed, and, equally important, to use civil society as a public enclave from which to organize their moral and political energies as acts of resistance and struggle. While Gramsci did not believe that state sponsored schools alone would provide the conditions for radical change, he did suggest that they had a role to play in nourishing the tension between the democratic principles of civil society and the dominating principles of capitalism and corporate power. The project of liberal education for Gramsci was wedded to the fundamental socialist principle of educating the complete person, rather than the traditional concern with educating specialists, technocrats, and other professional experts. Gramsci was insistent that critical intellectuals had to use their education in order to both know more than their enemies and to make such knowledge consequential by bringing it to bear in all those sites of everyday life where the struggle for and against the powerful was being waged. While Gramsci's work is neither transparent nor merely transportable to different historical and political contexts, it seems reasonable, within the current historical conjuncture, to argue that education for Gramsci was deeply implicated in the project of furthering economic and political democracy, and that such a project is especially important today for articulating a progressive, if not radical, defense of the purpose of public and higher education. In the broadest

sense, this would offer progressives a theoretical rationale for challenging the existing movement on the part of corporate culture, in its various manifestations, to define public and higher education as a private, rather than public, good. The purpose of such an education would also serve to challenge the dominant society's increasing pressure to use the liberal arts to assert the primacy of citizen rights over consumer rights, democratic values over commercial values.

Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of culture and pedagogy in shaping a social subject, rather than an adaptive, depoliticized consuming subject, provided the context for his insistence on the importance of skills, rigor, discipline, and hard work. For instance, his often-cited call for teaching young children skills cannot be read, as I previously argued, as simply legitimating a conservative pedagogy. Gramsci recognized that children within the "new" Italian reforms, which argued that children should simply discover truths for themselves, were being deprived of basic skills that would enable them to read, write, and struggle over complex problems, and, therefore, expand their capacities as critical intellectuals and citizens. For Gramsci, pedagogical approaches that refused to deal with such issues often reneged on using their authority self-consciously in the interests of providing the skills and discipline necessary for young children to assume the role of critical or organic intellectuals. Gramsci rightly understood that those pedagogies that focused on the alleged natural development of the child, and devalued firm classroom authority as antithetical to good teaching, simply offered a rationale for Mussolini's educational clerks to conceal their own authority, while simultaneously employing it to limit the intellectual and political capacities, especially of working-class students, to learn those skills necessary for resistance, opposition, and, more importantly, civic struggle. What Hirsch misses in Gramsci's analysis is that rather than being a call for a depoliticized justification of rote learning, it is an attempt to both analyze the context for teaching young children the skills they will need to be active citizens and call into question any pedagogy that refuses to name the political interests that shapes its own project.

For Gramsci, the learning of skills, discipline, and rigor were not in and of themselves valuable, they were meaningful when seen as part of a broader project and performative politics, one that embraced authority in the service of social change and culture, as the terrain in which such authority became both the object of autocritique and the basis for social analysis and struggle. Hence, Gramsci's emphasis on culture as a medium of politics and power is important for progressive educators because it challenges theories of social and cultural reproduction that

overemphasize power as a force of domination. Gramsci is extremely sensitive to the productive nature of power as a complex and often contradictory site of domination, struggle, and resistance. Long before Foucault, Gramsci interrogates how culture is deployed, represented, addressed, and taken up in order to understand how power works to produce not merely forms of domination but also complicity and dissent. Gramsci's dialectical analysis of culture and power provides an important theoretical model for linking cultural politics and the discourse of critique to a language of hope, struggle, and possibility. Of course, Gramsci does not provide, nor should we expect him to offer, a blueprint for such a struggle, but his view of leadership and his theory of intellectuals offer a powerful challenge to those conservative ideologues and theoreticians (who currently reduce the function of intellectuals either to their technical expertise, or privilege them unproblematically as the cultural guardians and servants of oppressive state power).

Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a form of cultural pedagogy is also invaluable as an element of critical educational thought. By emphasizing the pedagogical force of culture, Gramsci expands the sphere of the political by pointing to those diverse spaces and spheres in which cultural practices are deployed, lived, and mobilized in the service of knowledge, power, and authority. For Gramsci, learning and politics were inextricably related and took place not merely in schools but in a vast array of public sites. While Gramsci could not anticipate the full extent of the ways in which knowledge and power would be configured within the postmodern technologies that emerged in the age of the high-speed computer and other electronic media, he did recognize the political and pedagogical significance of popular culture and the need to take it seriously in reconstructing and mapping the relations between everyday life and the formations of power. Clearly, Gramsci's recognition that the study of everyday life and popular culture needed to be incorporated strategically and performatively as part of a struggle for power and leadership is as relevant today as it was in his own time. This is especially true for challenging and transforming the modernist curriculum steeped in its celebration of the traditional Western canon, and its refusal to address subordinated forms of knowledge. If critical educators are to make a case for the context specific nature of pedagogy—a pedagogy that not only negotiates difference, but takes seriously the imperative to make knowledge meaningful in order that it might become critical and transformative—it is crucial that educators expand curricula to include those elements of popular culture that play a powerful role in shaping the desires, needs, and identities of students.



This is not to suggest that students ignore the Western-oriented curriculum, or dispense with print culture as much as redefine the relationship between knowledge and power, and how the latter is used to mobilize desire, shape identities, and secure particular forms of authority. It is not enough for students to simply be literate in the print culture of the humanities, or in the subordinated histories of oppressed groups. Critical education demands that teachers and students must also learn to read critically the new technological and visual cultures that exercise a powerful pedagogical influence over their lives as well as their conception of what it means to be a social subject engaged in acts of responsible citizenship. In addition, they must master the tools of these technologies, whether they be computer programming, video production, or magazine production, in order to create alternative public spheres actively engaged in shaping what Gramsci referred to as a new and oppositional culture.

The questions that Gramsci raises about education, culture, and political struggle also have important ramifications for theorizing about educators as public intellectuals and how such intellectuals might challenge the institutional and cultural terrains through which dominant authority is secured and state power legitimated. Marcia Landy is on target in arguing that one of Gramsci's most important contributions to political change is the recognition that "study of intellectuals and their production is synonymous with the study of political power" (Landy, 1994, p. 26). Gramsci's concern with the formation and responsibility of intellectuals stems from the recognition that they are not only central to fostering critical consciousness, demystifying dominant social relations, and disrupting common sense, but also for situating political education in the context of a more comprehensive project aimed at the liberation of the oppressed as historical agents within the framework of a revolutionary culture.

According to Gramsci, political education demanded that such intellectuals could not be neutral, nor could they ignore the most pressing social and political problems of their times. For Gramsci, the new intellectuals have little to do with the traditional humanist project of speaking for a universal culture or abstracting culture from the workings of power, history, and struggle in the name of an arid professionalism. As cultural critics, the Gramscian intellectuals refuse to define culture merely as a refined aesthetic of taste and civility. On the contrary, the task of Gramscian intellectuals was to provide modes of leadership that bridged the gap between criticism and politics, theory and action, and traditional educational institutions and everyday life. For Gramsci, the

role of the engaged intellectual was a matter of moral compassion and practical politics aimed at addressing the gap between theory and practice. This suggests that such intellectuals become what Gramsci calls "permanent persuaders and not just orators," (Gramsci, in Cochran, 1994, p. 153), and that such persuasion takes place not merely in the isolated and safe confines of the universities but in those spheres and public cultures of daily life in which subordinated groups bear the weight of the mechanisms of coercion and domination. Clearly, Gramsci's discourse on the education and political function of "organic" intellectuals provides an important theoretical discourse for questioning the meaning and function of public and higher education at a time when the latter is not only selling its curricula, space, and buildings to corporations but undermining even the humanist understanding of the intellectual as a purveyor of art and culture, now seen as merely ornamental next to the role of the intellectual as servant of corporate interests.

Gramsci's work does more than challenge the reduction of intellectuals to corporate clerks; it also broadens the meaning and role of intellectuals in terms of their social functions and individual capabilities. Changes in the mass media, modes of production, and socioeconomic needs of the state, enlarged the role that intellectuals played in exercising authority, producing knowledge, and securing consent. For Gramsci, intellectuals played a crucial political and pedagogical role in integrating thought and action for subaltern groups as part of a broader project to assert the primacy of political education far beyond the limited circle of party hacks or university academics. Moreover, Gramsci is not just suggesting that marginal groups generate their own intellectuals; he is also broadening the conditions for the production of knowledge and the range of sites through which learning for self-determination can occur. This is an important issue because it legitimates the call for progressives to create their own intellectuals and counterpublic spheres both within and outside of traditional sites of learning, as part of a broader effort to expand the sources of resistance and the dynamics of democratic struggle.

Finally, Gramsci's radical theory of political education provides an ethical language for grounding intellectual work in a project that not only demands commitment and risk, but also recognizes the ethical imperative to bear witness to collective suffering and to provide a referent for translating such a recognition into social engagement. This suggests that intellectuals must be self-critical in order to address the nature of their own locations, self interests, and privileges. Moreover, they must be in constant dialogue with those with whom they deploy their authority as

teachers, researchers, theorists, and planners in order to expose and transform those cruelties and oppressive conditions through which individuals and groups are constructed and differentiated. For Gramsci, critical intellectuals must begin by acknowledging their engagement with the "density, complexity, and historical-semantic value of culture," an engagement that grounds them in the power-making possibilities of politics (Said, 1983, p. 171). At the current historical conjuncture, Gramsci's work serves as a reminder that

democracy requires a certain kind of citizen [...] citizens who feel responsible for something more than their own well-feathered little corner; citizens who want to participate in society's affairs, who insist on it; citizens with backbones; citizens who hold their ideas about democracy at the deepest level. (Berman, 1997, p. 37)

Education in this context becomes central to principled leadership, agency, and the ongoing task of keeping the idea of justice alive, while struggling collectively on many fronts to restructure society in the interest of expanding the possibilities of democracy. Gramsci's readings of culture, political education, the role and responsibility of intellectuals, and the necessity to struggle in the interests of equality and justice, are crucial starting points for progressives to rethink and address the current assault on public schooling and the basic foundations of democracy itself.

### Notes

\*This piece was originally published as "Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci." *Educational Theory*, 49 (1), 1-19.

1. For a critique of the tendency of theorists such as Todd Gitlin to pit class politics against identity and cultural politics, see Kelley (1998). See especially Chapter 4, "Looking Extremely Backward: Why the Enlightenment Will Only Lead Us into the Dark" (pp. 102-24).

2. More specifically, "In 1995, 14.7 million children (21 percent of America's children) were living in poverty, 2.1 million more than in 1989" (Children's Defense Fund, 1997, p. 17).

3. This issue is taken up brilliantly in Aronowitz (1996).

4. In this case, I am referring specifically to the widely popularized work of Murray and Herrnstein (1994). For three important critical responses to Murray and Herrnstein, see Jacoby and Glauber (1995),

Kincheloe, Steinberg, and Gresson III (1996), and Fisher, Hout, Jankowski, Lucas, Swidler, and Voss (1996).

5. For some excellent recent sources on the corporatization of the university, see Watkins (1989) and Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994); see especially Chapter 8 of Aronowitz and DiFazio, "A Taxonomy of Teacher Work" (pp. 226-63). See also Nelson (1997).

6. The notion of thinking in Gramscian terms comes from Bové (in Landy, 1994, p. xvi).

7. Joseph Buttigieg is on target in arguing that while Gramsci's writings are fragmentary, there is nothing unclear about his views regarding "the relation between the theoretical work of intellectuals and political praxis" (1991, p. 93).

8. There are a number of instances in his book where Hirsch misrepresents the work of critical theorists in education. For example, he completely misreads the work of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, claiming that Bourdieu's analysis of "cultural capital" is important because it provides the basis for working-class kids to succeed in schools. Of course, cultural capital for Bourdieu was a class-specific category based on the Marxist notion of exchange value and illuminated how middle-class cultural capital is used in schools to legitimate forms of class inequality. See Feinberg's analysis of Hirsch's distortion of Bourdieu's work (1997, pp. 27-35).

9. For an analysis of schools within a broader political, cultural, and economic context, see Giroux (1997).

10. For in-depth analyses of the work of E. D. Hirsch, see Aronowitz and Giroux (1988), Smith (1990), and Feinberg (1997).

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# A DAILY LECTURE WRITTEN BY MARCUS STEINWEG

53rd Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 22st August 2013

FACTS ARE NOTHING BUT FACTS

Marcus Steinweg

1. Adorno considers the work of art to be the scene of a conflictual mediation between society and art, or between immanence and transcendence.
2. Art can only surpass its own limits by entering into itself. In its interior, it encounters "its latent social contents." To "go within itself in order to transcend itself" is, or should be, the achievement of art.<sup>1</sup>
3. This can mean, first of all, to encounter within immanence a transcendence which is implicit in it; and secondly, to sense the originary impact of social externality in the pure, supposedly untouched internality which indicates an intrinsic transcendence, an interiority which is detached from the world.
4. The difference between immanence and transcendence may also be observed in the contrast between nature and culture and in the tension between natural beauty and artistic beauty.
5. Whoever begins to dissolve this tension in favor of one of its poles betrays them both, for they are only what they are through and in this tension.
6. Enlightened thought begins with a refusal to flee before the irreducible conflict between nature and culture, between primary and secondary.
7. Primary nature and secondary nature are in themselves illusory. To replace the phantasm of unmediated nature with the ideology of consistent culture can only be an expression of a refusal to think.
8. In a text from 1968, Adorno addressed this refusal under the name of a secondary naiveté: "Today there exists among artists a sort of secondary naiveté, not only the primary and unjustifiably renowned instinctiveness, but also one suggesting to the artist that the reified, commodifying operation to which he is bound is divinely mandated, is absolute in its nature. This is the naiveté of the individual who, without giving the matter much thought, behaves in accordance with the dictates of the culture industry."<sup>2</sup>
9. Transcendence can be a synonym for resistance!
10. Instead of submitting to the structured immanence which constitutes established reality, of succumbing to the universe of factuality, to the industry of factuality, art implies resistance to the given, the issuance of an appeal to the unconceived.
11. At least two ideologies must be disarmed: on the one hand, the naturalistic ideology, the phantasm of authenticity and purity which is attached to the cult of immediacy and the belief in the unmediated; on the other hand, the submissive masochism of factuality.
12. The masochist of factuality is a subject corresponding to Nietzsche's ultimate human being; his disappointment is absolute, it serves him as religion after the demise of religion, as a libidinally suffused substitute for faith.
13. Adorno's conceptual gesture is always this double one which rejects simple realism and simple idealism in favor of a respectively expanded concept of realism and idealism in the name of that which he considers to be implicit incommensurability, in favor of an existing entity "which is not absorbed by existence, by empiricism."
14. For here is "what is essential about art, what is not the case with it, what is incommensurable with the empirical measure of all things," because it indicates the introjection of the new into the familiar, as invention amid the already extant, in a creative mode: "Art is actually the world once again, both identical and non-identical with it."<sup>3</sup>
15. The work of art belongs to the empirical-social sphere, inasmuch as it marks out a separation from it.
16. Evidently belonging to it is a critical distance from the world of options, evidences, and valences.
17. Art maintains a critical perspective toward the social-symbolical reality of facts without contesting its facticity.
18. The work of art participates in this reality by withdrawing from it to the extent of an infinitesimal quantum.
19. It must maintain an opposition in order to remain art, but it is not allowed to deny its fusion with social-empirical realities in order to indulge in an idealistic abandonment of the world.<sup>4</sup>

1 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, Gesammelte Schriften 7, Frankfurt am Main, 1970, p. 386.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, "Musik im Fernsehen ist Brimborium" [1968], in *ibid.*, *Musikalische Schriften VI*, Gesammelte Schriften 19, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, p. 567.

3 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, loc. cit., p. 499.

4 Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie. Zwölf theoretische Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992, p. 146 ff. "The deficient relationship of an art to what is outside it, to that which lies within it but is not itself art, threatens it in its inner constitution, whereas the social will which claims to heal it thereof inevitably damages what is

# WHAT'S GOING ON?

## FEED BACK

### Public Art Done Awesome: Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument

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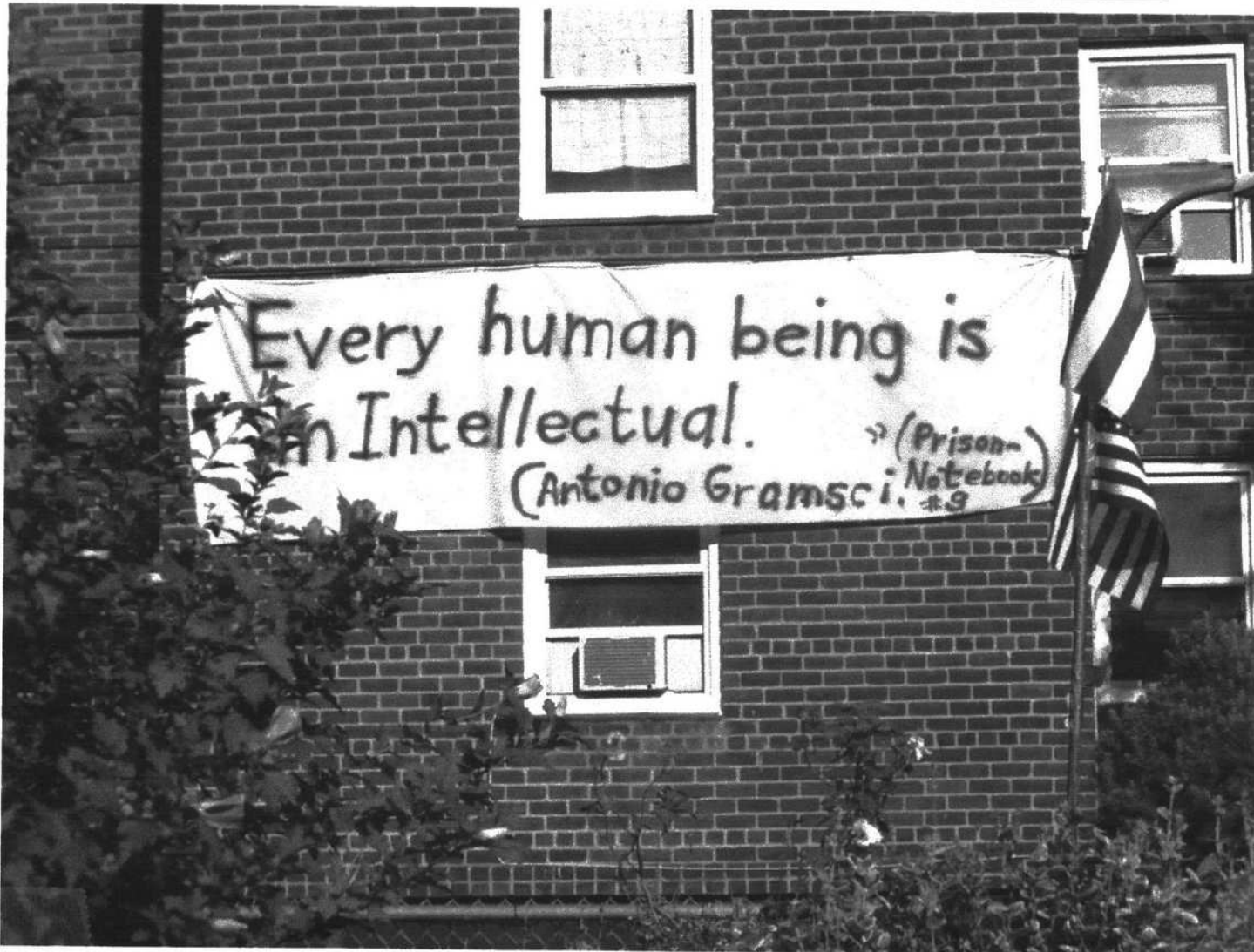
When I stopped in New York on my way home, I headed uptown to see Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument, a public art work Forest Houses, a housing complex in the Bronx. The structure started to be built July 1, and the project, now housed, will continue until September 15. This is the fourth of a series of "monuments" Hirschhorn has done that relate to philosophers he loves, but it is not the traditional monument, i.e. some grandiose sculpture.

Rather, the Gramsci Monument is a series of plywood pavilions he built with the help of local residents he hired to create to community spaces. Hirschhorn created different areas for a stage, an arts and crafts room, a bar serving \$2 cheeseburgers, a computer room, a radio station, a newspaper, and a Gramsci library and museum.

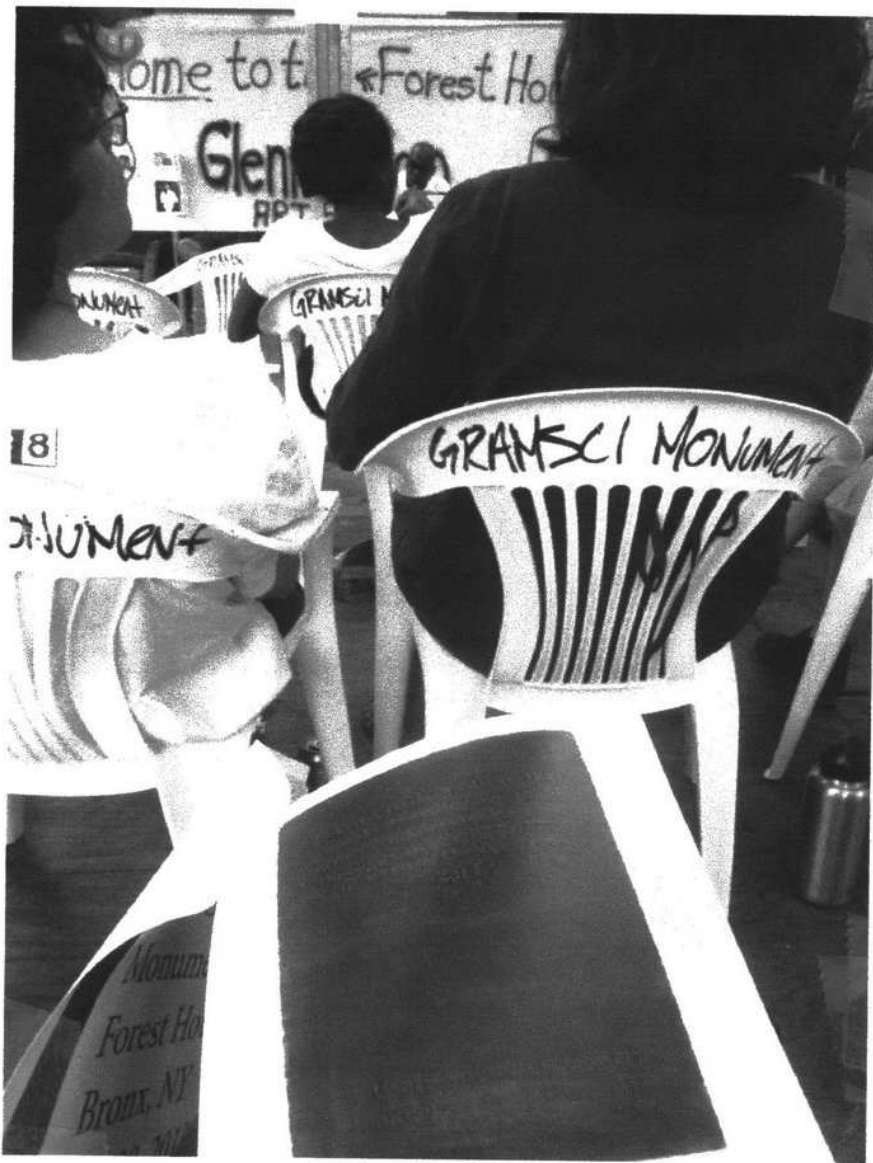
### Linnea West



Antonio Gramsci was an Italian leftist philosopher imprisoned by the Fascist government. During his incarceration, he wrote the Prison Notebooks. Quotes from it can be seen scattered across the pavilion and also on signs from facing nearby buildings. In all this, Hirschhorn wants to redefine "monument." What makes the project come to life is Hirschhorn's continued presence at the Gramsci Monument for the duration of the project, working with staff, talking to visitors, and supporting the daily programming. A typical day could include art classes for kids and a philosophy lecture followed by happy hour. Meanwhile, residents can use the space for its intended purpose or just hang out.



So for example, I showed up one sunny afternoon and wandered around, reading the daily newspaper and staring at Gramsci's prison hairbrush in the museum. As I wandered out toward the stage, I joined a group gathering for the beginning of the day's talk. It turned out to be Glen Ligon presenting his work, aided by a think color print out of images and some handfans he had made in case the day was hot. I sat with some people from DIA (sponsors of the work), Hirschhorn and the Forest Hills community president, who made the introductions, and local residents. Children and dogs also joined or ran past, creating an informal, fun atmosphere.



I especially like that Hirschhorn will continue to be present at the Monument until the end, when the plywood structure will be dismantled, the computers raffled off locally, and the ephemeral project will be gone. As a platform for Hirschhorn, it is certainly an opportunity for him to educate about Gramsci and the nature of art and to participate in a community. But interestingly he writes about the responsibility of interacting with the Other on a one-to-one level through presence and production, without any focus on outcome.



Unlike many participatory projects, I think his attitude takes control and responsibility more into his own hands even as it turns the goals away from anything practical or concrete. It resides in a belief in the transformative power of art, and the importance to himself of making a gesture of love like this regardless of its reception.