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NADIA URBINATI

FROM THE PERIPHERY OF MODERNITY

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Bronx, NY 10456
Sunday
Partly Cloudy

81 °F | °C

Precipitation: 0%
Humidity: 66%
Wind: 6 mph

Temperature	Precipitation	Wind

The Weather Channel - Weather Underground - AccuWeather

Nadia Urbinati

Biography

Nadia Urbinati (Ph.D., European University Institute, Florence, 1989) is a political theorist who specializes in modem and contemporary political thought and the democratic and anti-democratic traditions. She co-chaired the Columbia University Faculty Seminar on Political and Social Thought and founded and chaired the Workshop on Politics, Religion and Human Rights. She is co-editor with Andrew Arato of the journal *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory.* She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Foundation Reset Dialogues on Civilization-Istanbul Seminars.

She is the winner of the 2008-9 Lenfest/Columbia Distinguished Faculty Award. In 2008 the President of the Italian Republic awarded Professor Urbinati the *Commendatore della Repubblica* (Commander of the Italian Republic) "for her contribution to the study of democracy and the diffusion of Italian liberal and democratic thought abroad." In 2004 her book *Mill on Democracy* (cited below) received the David and Elaine Spitz Prize as the best book in liberal and democratic theory published in 2002.

Professor Urbinati is the author of *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy,* and of *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government.* She has edited *Carlo Rosselli, Liberal Socialism* and *Piero Gobetti, On Liberal Revolution.* She co-edited with Monique Canto-Sperber *Le socialism libéral: Une anthologie; Europe-États-Unis;* with Alex Zakaras, *John Stuart Mill's Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment,* and, with Stefano Recchia, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations.* She is co-editing with Steven Lukes *Condorcet's Political Writing.*

Among her books in Italian are: *Le civili libertá: Positivismo e liberalismo nell'Italia unita,* prefaced by Norberto Bobbio; *Individualismo democratico;* and *Ai confini della democrazia: opportunità e rischi dell'universalismo democratico.*

In addition to book chapters, she has published articles and book reviews in several international scholarly journals: *Political Theory, Ethics, Constellations, Philosophical Forum, Dissent, Review of Metaphysics, The European Journal of Political Theory, Perspectives on Politics, Redescriptions, Rivista di filosofia, Lua Nova, Revista Política & Sociedade, Il Mulino, European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de sociologie/Europäisches Archiv für soziologie; Review of Metaphysics;* Bryn Mawr Classical Review Website; *Dissent*; and *Critique.*

Professor Urbinati is also an editorial contributor of the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* and publishes articles in the culture section of the Italian newspaper *Il Sole24ore.*

She is currently completing a monograph on the ideology of the anti-political and the critics of democracy.

Before coming to Columbia, Professor Urbinati served as visiting professor at New York University and the University of Pennsylvania, and as a lecturer at Princeton University. She also taught at the University UNICAMP in Brazil and was a visiting professor at the Scuola Superiore de Studi Universitari e Perfezionamento Sant'Anna of Pisa (Italy). She has been a member of the School of Social Sciences of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University, and of the Department of Political Studies of the University of Turin (Italy). She was appointed as a Laurance S. Rockefeller Visiting Fellow for the academic year 2006-07 in the University Center for Human Values, Princeton University.

From the Periphery of Modernity: Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Subordination and Hegemony by Nadia Urbinati

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FROM THE PERIPHERY OF MODERNITY

Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Subordination and Hegemony

NADIA URBINATI
Columbia University

ANTONIO GRAMSCI'S THEORY OF HEGEMONY was meant to be a strategy of power pursued through a cultural work. It mainly refers to situations of subordination of both individuals and groups. Subordination entails a relation of domination by which the subjects are deprived of their self-reliance as persons as well as citizens. It denotes both a factual condition of powerlessness and a representation of oneself as an impotent hostage in the hands of an ineffable destiny.

The politics of hegemony was not a deductive inference from class theory, but the outcome of Gramsci's pitiless inspection of his own biography, beginning with his conflicting relation to his deformed body and to the stubborn deformities of the social niches within which he lived: initially, as an indigent and genial child in one of the hardest peripheries of Southern Europe, and then as an alien within his own country (and party), both as an immigrant in Turin and as a prisoner in fascist jails.

Of those many kinds of subordination, however, one played a crucial role in Gramsci's life and theory. The South was the link between his existential experience and his public and intellectual life. Southern Italy epitomized Gramsci's condition and theory of subordination and was the Baconian laboratory of his hegemonic project. Hegemony denotes a transformation from within, both of the subject and of its environment. Moreover, it implies a change in the critical perspective of the theorist, who is solicited to look at political emancipation from the point of view of the most subordinated. It was not the Turinese working class that settled the tone of the hegemonic

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project, but the "disintegrated masses" of the South—the lowest condition, not the more progressive one.

A central aim of this essay is thus that of stimulating in the reader a skeptical outlook toward both those critics who depict hegemony as a strategy of cultural homogeneity and communitarian harmony and who argue that Gramsci remained, after all, a Leninist ready to force people's cultural backwardness into the Grand Theory of the philosophy of praxis. Gramsci was not a democrat, because he neither elaborated a theory of democracy nor had a democratic theory of the state. However, he deeply understood that the democratic project expresses also a radical demand of emancipation and is not a mere constitutional devise regulating the selection of a majority.[1] In relation to *that* understanding, Gramsci's hegemony may recall the notion of an "active" democracy that John Dewey was elaborating in the same years in the United States.

Why did Gramsci pursue such an indirect path, and why did he not feel satisfied with classic techniques of power such as revolution, coup d'état, or elections? After all, within the radical tradition of his country, those strategies have always been regarded as the most suitable for an overcoming of the Italian chronic impotence to fulfill the project of modernity, that is, the construction of the state. This was, for instance, the case with the great Neapolitan revolution of 1799 and the many nationalist upheavals of the first half of the nineteenth century. In Gramsci's times, Italy was still very far from being reconciled with modernity. In spite of its liberal constitution, the Italian state was unable to match the liberal model. As with old *signoria*, its governing class was as rudely arrogant with the powerless as it was servile with the powerful. Fascism embodied the main characters of modern Italian history: theatrical in its politics of personality and paternalistic in its state's management. Gramsci's novelty and merit consisted in changing the perspective of the politics of emancipation, and instead of focusing on the traditional and direct strategies of political inclusion, he opened up a broad inquiry over the social and cultural conditions of subordination and exclusion. He looked at modernity from the bottom of its peripheries.

1. WHAT IS THE "SOUTHERN QUESTION"?

The notion of a Southern Question was born along with the unity of Italy, out of an awareness of the limits of unity itself and a disillusionment with the ineptitude of the leading class that had made it possible. The Southern problem was unquestionably related to the way in which the political unification of the country was implemented, as an "occupation" of both the local

and the central government by the moderate liberals of the North. These sentiments were shared by all scholars of the Southern society (*meridionalisti*), conservative, liberal, and democratic alike.[2]

The first generation of *meridionalisti*, however, was mainly Bismarckian and did not perceive that centralization and a protectionist policy were the primary factors of the South's misery. Only at the turn of the century, some liberal economists began identifying the tariffs policy as the tool the North had used to industrialize at the expense of the South.[3] The first to draw a democratic conclusion from this libertarian critique was Gaetano Salvemini, who suggested that the "subordinated classes" (*classi subalterne*) of the South would win emancipation only in alliance with the working class of the North. By adopting a new perspective, which was no longer moralistic but primarily political, Salvemini defined the Southern Question as a national question: the South needed not simply politicians of good will and a new policy, but a new national political subject. The emancipation of the South required the democratic emancipation of the whole nation.[4]

Salvemini proposed federalism, universal suffrage, and an end to protectionism. These suggestions provoked one of the most important schisms within the Socialist Party (to which Salvemini belonged), whose leaders were devoted to statism and indifferent (even "hostile") to the extension of political rights to Southern "barbarians." Salvemini left the party because of the "oligarchic deviation" and "corporate selfishness" of its Northern-oriented ideology. The difference between the Italian Socialists and Salvemini was essentially cultural. The Socialist Party was devoted to an "economistic" interpretation of Marxism and a fatalistic reading of the socialist transformation. It regarded the working class as the only legitimate subject and socialism as a natural and fatal process, requiring neither a political strategy nor a cultural shift.

The battle over the interpretation of the Southern question mirrored the *querelle* between idealism and positivism that animated Italian and Continental culture during the first decades of the century. Idealism and positivism grew out of opposite visions of life and inspired divergent political attitudes. As Antonio Gramsci wrote in 1918, for Herbert Spencer's followers society was "a natural organism" ruled by fixed laws, so that human will played no role in political transformation. For an Idealist Marxism, on the contrary, *being* and *knowledge* were "unified," so that social emancipation was an entirely human project to be undertaken by a tenacious rational will aiming at conscious control of sordid necessity (PPW, 77-8),[5]

It is within this cultural atmosphere that Gramsci developed his political thought and his understanding of the Southern question. His elected allegiances were complex. He sided with the idealists against the positivists, with

liberals like Salvemini against the socialists. The strategic changes his *meridionalismo* underwent over the years occurred within this theoretical framework. The Southern question was for him a national question insofar as it was a question of political and cultural hegemony. Its solution required the construction of a new relationship between the intellectuals and the "people-nation," between consciousness and being.[6]

A full analysis of Gramsci's controversial notion of hegemony, and of the even more controversial interpretations attempted by scholars since the publication of Gramsci's *Notebooks*, is beyond the scope of this essay. It is difficult, however, to avoid the temptation to trace the "troubles" in Gramsci's political thought to his idealism and the resulting idea of a positive liberty. For Richard Bellamy and Darrow Schecter, for instance, it is undeniable that the utopia of a "coincidence of the rational and the real" was at the origin of Gramsci's paradoxical concept of hegemony, torn by the two opposite tendencies of a radical democracy and a closed society. Because Gramsci wanted to square the circle—instead of making those two extremes negotiating and confronting each other—he tended to be both antiliberal and antidemocratic, envisaging one of the "most repressive State systems of recent times."[7]

Nonetheless, the idealist notion of the unity of consciousness and being has different implications if it is employed as a normative argument for social criticism or instead as a normative imperative for social construction. On one hand, this notion has strong emancipatory significance because it allows us to criticize human subordination to external authority, and to denounce a social and political order based on physical coercion instead of free consensus. Gramsci's call for individual autonomy and recognition of the equal moral dignity of all human beings rests on this premise. As he wrote in 1917, "The Italian people lack the spirit of disinterested solidarity, the love of free discussion, the desire to attain truth by purely human means offered by intelligence and reason" (PPW, 37). On the other hand, the notion of the unity of consciousness and being entails a society that, in order to solve the conflict between coercion and consent, encourages a harmonious order in which the individual mind adheres transparently to the collective mind. As Gramsci wrote in the *Notebooks*, in the society of the future, "The single individual is self-governing, without his self-governing coming into conflict with political society—but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement" (SPN, 268).

For the idealist philosopher, however, the critical and the constructive moments are logically related, and the work of emancipation does not end with social criticism. Because the contradiction between the individual and the social world is seen as the source of both existential unhappiness and political evil, the ultimate goal has to be that of attaining a conclusive

recomposition of every contradiction. This project can be unquestionably totalitarian, because to overcome the tension between liberty and necessity, it has to form individuals able to internalize coercion and seek self-discipline. For this reason, some scholars have wondered whether the failure of Gramsci's political project did not in fact save it from its own likely bad consequences[8]—although Gramsci's vision of the society of the future was anything but systematic. Indeed, it is hard to describe as totalitarian a model in which political society and civil society remain separate and in which, moreover, civil society is "complex and well-articulated" (SPN, 268).[9]

It is my opinion that by taking seriously Gramsci's reflections on the South, one can do away with some standard criticisms and interpretations. Indeed, those reflections seem to confirm the many-sidedness of his political thought, widening the distance between his social criticism and his constructivist ambitions. The South is a stubborn necessity, exposing the problems in the idealist notion of cultural and moral emancipation. Finally, Gramsci's own Southernness works as a corrective to the comprehensive and unitary character of his hegemonic ideal. In this essay, I wish to stress that Gramsci elaborated his notion of hegemony out of his concern with the condition of subordination of South Italy. For him, the Southern question was a national question, insofar as it was a question of lack of communication both among the social classes of the South and between the North and the South. Thus, it was a cultural problem, whose solution would be the conquest of individual moral autonomy by Southerners and Northerners alike, and it was a political question, whose solution would be a democratic transformation of both society and the state.

2. THE SOUTHS OF GRAMSCI

Gramsci's images of the South were many, as were the strategies he adopted in the tumultuous decades preceding and following World War I. His first South was a sort of Sardinian autonomism and arose during the years that preceded the war, when Gramsci "discovered" Croce's idealism and Salvemini's radical liberalism claiming an antiprotectionistic policy and universal suffrage.[10] He thought that libertarianism was the most radical policy to oppose the *bloc of agrarians and industrialists*, the first example of a sincere nonlocalist policy.[11]

Then came the South of the war period, when Gramsci began to see the relevance of the "organization" for political action. Like many of his generation, he thought that the war would create what the rural economy, as wrote Marx in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, could not: a collective

psychology and a sense of national and class belonging. Two cultural phenomena were produced by the war. First, middle-class intellectuals discovered the existence of a nation very different from their rhetorical construction, a poor and illiterate nation with no sense of belonging politically to the Italian state. Second, the suffering and fear in the trenches equalized soldiers of different classes by imposing great sacrifices and discipline, but also a new sense of solidarity (SG, 280-7). In 1918, Gramsci wrote that thanks to the war, a mass of "disorganized individuals" totally "removed from collective activity of any kind" had the chance to become a people (SG, 181).

The Bolshevik revolution seemed to confirm his analysis: the war created a potentially revolutionary class by making soldiers out of peasants. According to Gramsci, the conditions in Italy and Russia "were not and are not very different" (ON, 25). But the rise of fascism, the penetration of the Catholic party in the South, and the Soviet revolution's problems in rural areas dampened Gramsci's optimism.[12] Now the countryside seemed to stand like a terrible menace against the city, its culture of modernity, its industrialism, and the very destiny of the socialist revolution. The peasant, wrote Gramsci in 1920, feels "his powerlessness, his solitude, his desperate condition, and becomes a *brigante*, not a revolutionary, he becomes an assassin of the *signori*, not a fighter for communism" (ON, 317). Party ideology, political alliances, and a few years of war were not enough to impel the peasants to develop a class consciousness. These crucial events made Gramsci realize that the Communists had to replace the strategy of force with that of consent, turning their attention to the role to be played by popular culture and the intellectuals.

The rise of fascism confirmed once more the impotence of a Leninist strategy, and the need to concentrate on the cultural side of social phenomena. The article on the Southern Question (see appendix, SQ [1926]) ends with a fresco of the "great social disintegration" (*disgregazione*) of the South and with a splendid portrait of his Turinese friend Piero Gobetti, an example of the new kind of intellectual envisioned by Gramsci, and of Croce, whose secular humanism would work as a mediation between rural and urban culture. Gobetti was not a Marxist, but a liberal radical who saw the proletariat as a legitimate political subject of the liberal struggle, and who encouraged the encounter between liberals and Marxists, between the South (Croce) and the North (*L'Ordine Nuovo*), to accomplish the modernization of the Italian state.

The task, concluded Gramsci, was to foster the growth of an entirely new class of intellectuals able to take advantage of that "critical" situation and promote a new balance among social forces.[14] That would be a long project made up of little "molecular" transformations rather than sudden, wholesale

changes. "Intellectuals develop slowly, far more slowly than any other social group" (SQ, 50).

The contrasting strategies of force and consent grew from two different political goals: the construction of a new state, and the transformation of an existing state. The comparison between Machiavelli and Bodin in the *Notebooks* expressed very well the rationale for Gramsci's hegemonic project. Unlike Machiavelli, Bodin aimed not to construct a territorial state but to "balance the conflicting social forces" within the existing state. Whereas Machiavelli's emphasis was on the "moment of force," Bodin was interested in the "moment of consent" (SPN, 142). Their difference was analogous to the difference between the leaders of the Risorgimento and Gramsci himself.

3. THE LIBERAL FAILURE

Gramsci read the hegemonic failure of the making of the Italian state as a failure of its intellectuals, who had been unable to transform the dominion of force into a political and cultural consent. Both the losers and the winners had failed. The democrats had failed because of their Jacobinism and humanitarianism. Like Machiavelli, Carlo Cattaneo (the most prominent democratic federalist of the Risorgimento) thought social unity could be achieved simply by mobilizing a national army. Giuseppe Mazzini, who understood what a great mistake it was to confuse "cultural unity with political and territorial unity," reduced the ideological task to nothing more than some "aphorisms" and "empty talk" (PN, 139, 152). Gramsci understood that the promotion of the "moral and intellectual unity" of the country required a weltanschauung—in both its theoretical and its popular form—not vague moral preaching.

In Gramsci's understanding, the nineteenth century democrats totally misunderstood the intellectual task: they failed to perceive the need to implement agrarian reform in the South because they did not see the strategic importance of winning the consent of the masses. On the other side, the liberal moderates, who did have a liberal cultural strategy and had been the winners of the Risorgimento, failed in their hegemonic project because they mistrusted the masses. They were accustomed to hierarchical relations and treated Italians the way the generals of a pre-Napoleonic army treated their soldiers. "The army is also an 'instrument' for a particular end, but it is made up of thinking men and not of robots who can be utilized to the limits of their mechanical and physical cohesion" (SPN, 88). The *piemontesi* shared primary responsibility for the failure of the liberal hegemony because they had set themselves up as both intellectuals and politicians. "They said they were

aiming at the creation of a modern State in Italy, and they in fact produced a bastard. They aimed at stimulating the formation of an extensive and energetic ruling class, and they did not succeed; at integrating the people into the framework of the new State, and they did not succeed" (SPN, 90).

As the leaders of an earlier generation of *meridionalisti* had understood, building a liberal government necessitated the shaping of public opinion. Once this project failed, the dominant class was left with no instruments other than force and bureaucracy to impose a political order in the South. The vacuum left by the failure of a liberal hegemony was filled by a demagogic nationalism that worsened "social disintegration" and made it easier for fascism to take root.

Gramsci's project began where liberal hegemony left off: with the goal of incorporating the South into the national state. But precisely because he did not consider the South to be a local problem, his *meridione* should be read as a category representing the entire nation. He argued that "Italian people did not exist as a concrete ideal, as active organization," that it was a nation that existed simply as a figure of speech used by the rulers to manipulate popular sentiment and justify their oppressive policies. Like the South, the whole of Italian society was made up of an "enormous mass of individuals who were disorganized in all senses, innocent of the much evil and the little good that happened around them, indifferent to every ideal, estranged from every collective activity, and who refused every responsibility because they were out of every enterprise" (SG, 181).

Gramsci's interpretation of the Southern question as a question of national unity brings together Marx's analysis of the Jewish question and of French Caesarism: as long as the nation state remained the state of the bloc of agrarians and industrialists (that is a Northern state), and as long as the South remained a "great social disintegration," "they are equally incapable, the one of conferring emancipation, the other of receiving it."[15] Indeed, in relation to the South, the Italian state could only adopt the attitude of a Northern state, permitting the South to isolate itself from the whole and foster its corporate sentiments and interests. The emancipation of the South could only be its emancipation from itself, which would mean the emancipation of the entire nation.[16]

This goal was the ideal that shaped Gramsci's research project in prison. As he wrote to his sister-in-law in 1927, he wanted to study the "formation of the public spirit in Italy" through three topics: the Southern question, the philosophy of Croce, and the evolution of popular literary tastes (LC, 27-8). I suggest to interpret those three topics as the elements composing Gramsci's vision of hegemony, making it a truly political-cultural project. Indeed, they

corresponded, respectively, to the "disintegrated masses," the great intellectuals and the middle-class intellectuals. The tripartition acquires its mature formulation in the *Notebooks*, where Gramsci transformed his inquiry over domination and subordination into a critical investigation of their cultural expressions in folklore, philosophy, and common sense.

From a strategic point of view, common sense played the most important role, because, as the war had shown Gramsci, an army's effectiveness rests upon the ability of the *ufficiali* (lieutenants) to facilitate communication between the generals (the mind) and the soldiers (the body). The new intellectuals had to elaborate a modern humanism "able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes" (SCW, 211). Gramsci had no difficulty finding historical precedents. The Protestant Reformation triumphed when the aspirations of the few became the common sense of the many, transforming a religious event into a political one and thus fulfilling the hegemonic project of modernity. Thanks to the popularization of its tenets, the Reformation had the strength to resist Catholic armies and to form the "German nation." By the same token, liberal democracy won when the principles of the Enlightenment ceased to be the cultural property of a restricted intellectual aristocracy and became common beliefs (SPN, 394). The new reformers envisaged by Gramsci would have to follow the same path, doing precisely what Italian intellectuals had never done: "going to the people" to understand the formation and consolidation of popular beliefs and to give the new principles, as *Capital* tells, "the solidity of a popular prejudice."

4. CULTURE AND THE GUILT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The growing complexity of Gramsci's *meridione* paralleled the growing complexity of his conception of culture. In the *Notebooks*, one no longer sees a homogeneous "immense countryside" (South) opposing a homogeneous "immense city" (North). The North did not mean simply modernity and urbanization; it was not free from all provincialism and superstition. The city was not necessarily more progressive than the countryside, above all in Italy where urbanization and industrialization did not go always and everywhere together, because the former grew up before the latter. His idea of culture became equally complicated; it cannot be reduced simply to a tension between modernity and backwardness, nor even to an adaptation of popular culture to the ideology of intellectuals (SPN, 337).

Cultures were, for him, living bodies always subject to inner transformations, not entities to be worshipped or homogeneous sets of meanings shared

by all in the same way (SPN, 418-9). Gramsci's interest in popular culture and folklore was political—neither the mere curiosity of the erudite, nor the nostalgic longing for a supposedly virgin world besieged by modernity (SPN, 90-1). Understanding popular culture meant grasping its inner diversity and the restless transformations born of its various relations with the culture of the intellectuals, past and present. Beside this idea of gradual transformation, the vision of sudden, epochal change appeared to him an "illusion," a sign of "the absence of a critical sense" (PN, 129). Old and new, intellectual and popular, blended to produce those complex combinations that constitute what we call a national culture.

Like Freud's contemporaneous vision of the identity of the self, Gramsci's idea of a national culture could be metaphorically compared to the city of Rome.[17] A sufficiently learned observer would be able to recognize the various strata that tell the story of the eternal city since the Etruscan age; she would see relics where a witless viewer would see only stones. Conservation, transformation, sedimentation and evolution are gradual and blended; they are the result of an endless process of mutual adaptation, as the present comes to terms with the past (SCW, 417-8). The old does not disappear suddenly but persists in new forms. Folklore and popular culture are like living anachronisms, relics of the past stranded in the present and fused into a totality, like the multilayered city of Rome. Like spoken language in contrast to written, folklore is "unstable and fluctuating." Far from being a "prehistory," it is a living version of existing high culture and a present-day recapitulation of past combinations of high and popular culture (SCW, 194-5). Far from being passively absorbed, it is actively created and remodeled, even if it is formed of elements from other cultural strata and times (SPN, 324). As Gramsci himself suggested, the "public spirit" he planned to study in jail was nothing but "the popular creative spirit, through its diverse phases and grades of development" (LFP, 80).

This interpretation of culture and folklore affected both his notion of hegemony and his reading of the relation between city and countryside (North/South), because the interpretation allowed for a historicization of abstract categories, such as intellectuals and people, national and local, urbanism and ruralism. In the Italian case, wrote Gramsci in the *Notebooks*, the typical loses its typicality and complicates itself. Because the formation of cities preceded the industrial revolution, urbanization was not necessarily an industrial phenomenon, nor could it be identified with modernity. In Italy, therefore, one faced the paradox that "the rural type may be more progressive than the urban type." Naples, the "city of silence," was a mosaic of urban islands "submerged, pressured, crushed" by rural areas. This long-lasting

conflict nurtured feelings of hatred and resentment, the very sentiments that divided intellectuals from the peasants, the middle class from the poor. For Gramsci no less than for Vincenzo Cuoco (the Neapolitan intellectual who coined the expression "passive revolution" at the beginning of the nineteenth century), the Enlightenment and its intellectuals shared primary responsibility for the fall of the Neapolitian Republic of 1799, which marked the failure of the democratic process in the South: "The countryside crushed the city with the hordes of Cardinal Ruffo because the city had completely neglected the countryside" (PN, 129-30).

The main responsibility for the Southern problem rested with the city and the intellectuals, because of their divorce from popular culture and their misunderstanding of cultural phenomena. They failed because they elaborated their perspective of emancipation from the point of view of the highest cultural expressions. Thus if the culture of democracy did not prevail in Italy, this failure was due not so much to the strength of the antimodern forces (Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation) as to the deficiencies of the culture of modernity, still trapped within the elitarian model of the Renaissance.

The two evils Gramsci identified—separateness and incomprehension—connected his analysis of Southern intellectuals to his critique of the Enlightenment. The " 'enlightenment' error" consisted in attributing the same method of mental assimilation and cultural elaboration to all social classes (PN, 128). This "error" grew out of the imperialistic vice of the intellectuals, encapsulated in the Cartesian view that because truth always takes the form of clear and distinct ideas, intellectuals must foster truth by eradicating wrong in all its forms (popular beliefs, religions, prejudices). But because intellectual processes are more complex, "the premise of an 'organic diffusion from a homogeneous center of a homogeneous way of thinking and acting' is not sufficient" (PN, 128). Insofar as general principles and local knowledge stand in a relation of reciprocal influence, the cultural strategy can be neither a forced imposition of new principles ("deductivism") nor a passive acceptance of things as they are ("empiricism").[18]

To the split between "deductivism" and "empiricism," Gramsci opposed a pragmatism that located the Archimedean point of political action neither on one side nor the other, but in the very process of their mutual interaction. The hegemonic work rested on the intellectual ability to seek the "identity underneath the apparent differentiation and contradiction and finding the substantial diversity underneath the apparent identity" (PN, 128). This epistemological premise underlies Gramsci's idea that the relation between high culture and popular culture had to be seen as one between "knowing" and "feeling."

5. THE "SAGE OF VULGAR WISDOM"

The unity of "knowing" and "feeling" brings us to Gramsci's notion of the understanding, which, already in his youth, he identified with the Socratic "know thyself." In 1916, commenting upon Novalis's *Fragments*, Gramsci wrote that the supreme task of cultural emancipation was for the individual to learn to master oneself—to become "the self of oneself"—not as an egoistic being, but as a "transcendental self" (PPW, 8). "Know thyself" was an imperative of moral autonomy, in a Kantian sense. A self-mastering self could construct a dialectical relation with the outside world, which then would cease to be experienced as a reified fatal necessity. "Knowing thyself" meant knowing your condition in the world, so that your will would no longer act out of anarchical rebellion, but would express true freedom, a "passage from the 'objective' to the 'subjective' " (Q, 1244). As one can see, Gramsci's notion of an "intellectual and moral reform" (hegemony) is grounded in the primacy of subjectivity.[19]

To clarify the political meaning of the imperative to "know thyself," Gramsci used a passage from *The New Science* in which Vico traced Socrates' motto back to Solon, the "party leader of the plebeians in the first times of the aristocratic commonwealth at Athens." Solon was the "sage of vulgar wisdom," able to overcome the power of the heroes and the nobles who "believed [themselves] to be of divine origin" and "kept within their own orders all the public and private rights." Solon turned to the people and challenged them "to reflect upon themselves and to realize that they were of like human nature with the nobles and should therefore be made equal with them in civil rights." The transition from aristocracy to democracy transformed not only the subordinate classes but also the whole society: "We shall demonstrate that the plebeians of the peoples universally, beginning with Solon's reflection, changed the commonwealth from aristocratic to popular" (PPW, 8-9).[20]

Gramsci's intellectual was the "sage of vulgar wisdom" who could dialogue with his fellows, not to accept their way of being, but to incite them to become conscious of their subjectivity as "transcendental selves," as equals. The seeds of the Socratic emancipation were already present, even if in a disorganized and folkloric form. The difference between high culture and popular culture was a difference of degree, not of kind (SPN, 199).

The "organic intellectual" can know and feel because, as Vico suggested, she is moved by the "force" of "imagination." The imagination is dramatic fantasy, a faculty that can vividly represent the problems and hopes of society to the mind and sentiment. Thus politics is not simply a strategic calculus, or

the implementation of an abstract model. Politics is a combination of reason with an empathetic disposition. "In order to provide for the needs of human beings living in a city, a region, a nation, it is necessary to feel those needs; it is necessary [for the politician] to represent concretely to his fantasy those human beings as beings who live and work daily, to represent their sorrows, the sadness of a life they are forced to live. If one does not possess this power of life dramatizing, one cannot guess the general and particular provisions able to harmonize life's necessities and government's availabilities" (SG, 101).

Because Italian politicians and intellectuals lacked "dramatic fantasy," their deeds were characterized by domination and arrogance. Instead of governing, they worked "to embitter the uneasiness." Their distance from the people, their rancorous contempt for the poor, made them bad politicians and bad intellectuals. "They are amateur. They do not have any sympathy for human beings. They are rhetoricians of sentimentality, not men who feel concretely. They force others to suffer needlessly in the very moment they glorify virtue and the force of sacrificing of the Italians" (SG, 101). "They are incapable of representing to themselves the suffering of others, hence they are pointlessly cruel" (SG, 104). As Gramsci wrote in his *Notes on the Southern Question*, rural intellectuals developed "a strong aversion for the peasant labourer whom they look on as a living machine that must be worked to the bone. . . . They also inherit an atavistic and instinctive feeling of crazy fear of the peasant and his destructive violence, and hence a habit of refined hypocrisy and a most refined skill in deceiving and breaking in the peasant masses" (SQ, 43).

Like Gramsci himself as a prisoner, and like his fellow Sardinians, the peasants had only two options: to surrender to fatalism or to resist and rebel. Various scholars have argued that Gramsci's notion of hegemony sacrificed spontaneity to discipline and organization. But Gramsci "blessed" that spontaneous rebelliousness he had felt as a child because it saved him from a life of passive acquiescence to an inevitable destiny: "What was it that stopped me from turning into a stuffed shirt? The instinct of rebellion."[21] He felt the same way about the peasants, the seeds of whose liberation might lie in their "instinct" for rebellion.

The words Gramsci used to describe his condition as prisoner can also be used to understand his view of the South as a realm of a thick necessity: "When you don't have the initiative in the struggle and the struggle itself comes eventually to be identified with a series of defeats, mechanical determinism becomes a tremendous force of moral resistance," a way to maintain moral and psychological cohesion. A loser thinks "things" themselves will work on his behalf. To survive, the will to resist has to convert itself into a natural necessity. But Gramsci had no doubt that even in such extreme

circumstances "fatalism is nothing other than the clothing worn by real and active will when in a weak position." His conclusion sounded like a political program: fatalism was a "cause of passivity, of idiotic self-sufficiency . . . when it is adopted as a thought-out and coherent philosophy on the part of the intellectuals" (SPN, 336-7). Intellectuals must keep alive the people's volitional instincts to help them "emerge from the chaos" and become the subjects of their own liberation. To know means to find the origin of power not outside ourselves, in mechanical necessity, but inside ourselves, in spiritual necessity. Gramsci was reading Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* through Vico, like Giovanni Gentile years earlier.

6. PHENOMENOLOGY OF PASSIONS

In 1926, Gramsci defined the South as a "great social disintegration" (*disgregazione*): disintegration among the classes, which did not communicate with each other, and within the classes themselves, which were composed of individuals sharing the same material interests but spiritually estranged from one another. The cultural environment of social disintegration was a schism between the intellectuals as encyclopedic rhetoricians and the poor as "empty containers to be filled." The failure of the liberal moderates of Risorgimento was the outcome of a cultural distancing whose viciousness became obvious once middle-class intellectuals embraced it: "The smug little student who knows some Latin and history, the vain little lawyer who has taken advantage of his teachers' laziness and apathy to wangle himself a threadbare degree" (PPW, 9). The middle-class intellectual was Janus-faced, populist, and democratic in his peasant soul, arrogant and reactionary in his landlord outlook (SQ, 43).

Concern with cultural separateness was a constant topic of Gramsci's writings, beginning even before 1926 and running through his letters from prison and finally the *Notebooks*. His treatment of this subject bore a vivid similarity to Salvemini's description of the rural petit bourgeoisie and moreover recalled Aristotle's representation of the savage passions that flourish along the borderline between social classes: envy, mistrust, hypocrisy, hatred, revenge, resentment, anarchy, and sudden rebelliousness. Those very passions divided Italian society and hampered the creation of a politics of consent. The South's "great social disintegration" was a highly segregated society, where the new rich, who lived in permanent fear of losing ground, despised the very poor and envied the very rich; where the very poor hated their superiors but, overwhelmed by fear, slid toward a fatal acceptance of their condition, and where the very rich despised the members of both the

other classes, and, like gods, set too far above them to be touched by their mean feelings and misery (SQ, 42-3).

Gramsci's hegemonic project shows its emancipatory meaning when one reflects upon his moral picture of the South. For the middle class and the agrarians, the peasant was a mysterious and frightening enigma, a seething cauldron of primordial passions, ignorant, rebellious, and unpredictable. He represented the other against which they had to defend themselves, either through religion or state repression, or both.

The phenomenology of liberty and necessity, consciousness and being, which lay beneath Gramsci's Socratism, permeated his own life no less than his thought. Like an invisible thread, it unified Gramsci's relationship with his own deformed body, his island, the South, and his condition as a prisoner. Each was the locus of a recalcitrant necessity against which he struggled endlessly. His description of the Communist, in 1918, was indeed a piece of autobiography: "A Communist is someone who acknowledges himself to be weaker physically but not inferior intellectually and spiritually; his body may be imprisoned, but not his mind. . . . What makes man is the spirit of liberty and revolt."[22]

His body was a dull necessity. To get it under control and correct his deformity (he was hunchbacked and nearly a dwarf), Gramsci had to develop an iron will, exercising "every day" with extraordinary and methodical "determination" and discipline from the time he was six years old.[23] His childhood in Sardinia, when he had struggled against hunger, humiliation, and injustice, was a terrible necessity. Like prisons, those experiences made him think of himself as locked in a permanent "war of position" against an oppressive nature that defied any order and rational control. To resist that "absolute and almost fatal impossibility," he donned a mask of distance and irony (LC, 29). So did the peasants he described in his writings, who fought against middle-class intellectuals (doctors, priests, lawyers) as Gramsci did against his environment: with "impassioned anger" and unpredictable rebelliousness (SPN, 14).

Segregation made communication impossible and undesirable. In the South, and between the North and the South, relationships were based on reciprocal ignorance and reciprocal fear, because neither could foresee what the other might have done: the peasants because of their superabundance of "feeling," the intellectuals because of their arid erudition, and the Northerners because they thought of the South's "misery" as "unexplainable" (SPN, 70). "The popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel" (SPN, 418).

How was Gramsci to direct the energy of those passions toward a positive and not self-defeating end? How was he to reconcile knowledge and feeling without falling into either Mazzini's humanitarianism or an impatient Jacobinism? As a student in Turin, Gramsci had been interested in understanding the practical value of the "intellectual factor," in learning why ideas had the power to make us act. His teacher directed him to the theory of the *idées-forces* of Alfred Fouillée, an earlier version of William James's "will to believe," which helped many intellectuals of Gramsci's generation escape from determinism and abstraction.

Gramsci saw two ways to overcome necessity: through a single heroic act ("war of maneuver," or force) or through the slow and prosaic work of cultural reshaping ("war of position," or consent). As we know, he discarded the first strategy because, according to him, it was suitable only for a dichotomous society. In Western countries, civil society was much more articulated and pluralistic than in contemporary Russia or eighteenth-century France.[24] For the working class of the West, Jacobinism's moment was over. As Georges Sorel had noticed in 1919, social transformation could not be attained by implementing some truths from above. "If the Church had been merely a school of philosophy preaching pure morality, it would undoubtedly have disappeared like many other groups."[25] No elite, no charismatic leader could create a new society by force. To use Walzer's language, Gramsci's intellectual would not force the truth from outside.[26] This was the meaning of Gramsci's hegemonic project to combine the Renaissance with the Reformation, high theory with common sense.

The struggle of the South was thus not simply a struggle for survival or for economic progress. For the South it was primarily a struggle to liberate itself from its "tremendous" passions. To succeed it was not enough to invert the relationship between "knowing" and "feeling." As a young journalist for a radical Sardinian newspaper, Gramsci saw firsthand the powerlessness of a rebellion unable to master necessity. In 1910, the peasants had been ready to show their "startling and fearful" determination to obtain universal suffrage in local elections. To calm them down, it had been enough for the government to send eighty soldiers. Paralyzed by fear of repression, their rebellious instincts were impotent.[27] The road toward moral autonomy and political dignity had to lead in another direction, because the peasants' weakness lay not in their material conditions but in their lack of subjective consciousness, their inability to guide their "spontaneous" tension toward liberation.[28] To distinguish oneself from the other, Gramsci wrote some years later, means to attain consciousness of oneself as an independent subject, to be able not simply to will, but to have an "exact notion of one's own power" so as to know what one can will (PPW, 57).[29]

The idealist conception of subjectivity was the seed of Gramsci's notion of *catharsis*, the passage from the purely egoistic-passional moment (economics) to the ethical-ideal moment (politics) (SPN, 366). The emancipatory function of politics (the primacy of the political over the economic) stood against enslavement to biological needs in a way that echoed the Aristotelian duality between the realm of the household (necessity) and the political realm (liberty). From the former sphere, paralyzing passions arose; from the latter, the intelligent will arose. Emancipation from "private" passions, such as fear and hatred, was the precondition for political action and corresponded to the passage from a common sense that saw the "enemy" as an irreducible other (total enemy) to one that saw him as a specific antagonist (political enemy).

7. A FUGITIVE FROM BACKWARDNESS?

The phenomenology of dominion and subordination undertaken by Gramsci contradicts Michael Walzer's interpretation of hegemony as a subspecies of the Enlightenment project. Walzer has recently argued that to become the intellectual who knows how to liberate the subordinate classes, Gramsci had to leave behind the backwardness of common sense and learn to see things from a "universal" and external point of view. Gramsci's intellectual "must break as radically with the 'Sardinia' of common sense as he had done with the actual Sardinia where he was born and raised."[30] Indeed, the image of Gramsci as a "fugitive" from backwardness, seeking modernity, was first suggested in 1924 by his friend Piero Gobetti, who described him as a man who came "from the countryside in order to forget his traditions, to substitute the sick heritage of the Sardinian anachronism with a solitary and inexorable effort toward the modernity of the city."[31] Both Gobetti and Walzer capture an important truth, even if what was for the former an act of heroism is for the latter a sign of a culpable estrangement.

Although appealing, the image of Gramsci as a fugitive from local knowledge ("his rejection of home and homeland")[32] is far from convincing. Moreover, it reduces Gramsci's complexity to too sharp a dualism, while it indulges in a contrast—that Gramsci would oppose—between an elegiac popular culture and a wicked high theory. This image seems to be abstract and anachronistic. It is abstract because, as we have seen, the very popular culture is for Gramsci a multifarious combination of high culture and folklore, not a realm totally separated from the culture of the intellectuals. It is anachronistic because in interpreting Gramsci's own experience from the ideal-type perspective of Socrates' choice of remaining and thus accepting

the culture of his own people, it fails to consider that Gramsci's Sardinia was far from looking like Socrates' Athens.

But did Gramsci actually reject his origins? During his first years in Turin, he associated only with Sardinians and chose to study glottology to deepen his knowledge of his native language. Indeed, it was this affection for his origins that kept him far from socialist circles, where a loyalty to a simplistic "high theory" fomented deep anti-Southern prejudices (SG, 32).

In fact an Idealist Marxism was for him a way of dignifying Southern identity, rather than rejecting it. Indeed, a critical interpretation of Sardinian backwardness required first of all the rejection of all "scientific" theories based on a biological reading of cultural difference. Because the South was not "special," composed of constitutionally "different" people, the Southern problem could not be solved by "special legislation" (as both conservatives and socialists believed). It was a "national question," a political question of "a general policy, both domestic and foreign" (SG, 31). Gramsci's idealization of modernity reflected first of all his desire to combat those prejudices and their easy diffusion within the working class, thanks to the old Italian socialist culture (SQ, 31).

Precisely because Gramsci never totally rejected his identity as a Southerner (and as a Southerner gave his first and last parliamentary speech), he was able to see the limits of the working-class culture that treated the peasants of the South as obstacles to progress, as a "lead weight" for the whole nation (SQ, 31; SPN, 71). Gramsci's opposition of the "universal" (the general or national) to the "corporate" should be seen from this perspective. His promotion of a "new humanism" for all was an attempt to "deprovincialize" both the North and the South, purging the North of its racism and its egocentric localism and the South of its fatalistic resignation. Northerners—both intellectuals and common people—never felt "solidarity" with the South because of their colonizing ideology, their total "ignorance" of Southern society, and their prejudices. No less than the Sardinians, they had to submerge their localism in a "transcendental" (or national) outlook. They did not have to deny their cultural identity; rather, they had to free themselves from their selfish provincialism.

Should we see Gramsci as a "victim" of Marxist teleology? "The more advanced his theory, the more detached he is in practice from working-class backwardness."[33] I am inclined to adopt a milder reading than Walzer's, because Gramsci never resolved this tension once and for all. Besides, had he embraced teleology he would not have been content with his disorganized notes. In the intellectual solitude of his prison, he could have constructed a system out of the sparse empirical evidences he had and would not have felt in need of that "huge amount of materials" (LFP, 79).

Gramsci's attitude is always in balance between spontaneity and constructivism. In prison, he grew plants. He tried constantly to "draw them up a bit to help them grow" (LFP, 144). He was never able to solve his "uncertainty" concerning the two opposite methods of education: if he should have been "Rousseauian and let Nature, which never errs and is basically good, do what she wants," or "voluntarist, and force Nature by introducing into its evolution an expert human hand and the principle of authority" (LC, 72; LFP, 144).

To avoid seeing Gramsci's common sense as a manipulatory outcome of the emancipatory ambition of the high theory, we should first of all pay attention to the communicative role he assigned to middle-class intellectuals (like "lieutenants"). Common sense looks like a medium that keeps alive the connection between the two extremes of high culture and folklore. Like the *axiomata media* of John Stuart Mill, Gramsci's common sense comprises the whole of the maxims through which principles are translated into moral judgments in everyday life. In this sense, Gramsci wrote that every high culture and every discipline has its own folklore. In the case of judicial culture, for instance, the belief in natural rights is a form of folklore, that is, a translation of the judicial principles of the "experts" into common sense and common language. When we say that a judge should interpret the *spirit* of the law, we are asking him to adapt general principles to the shared culture of the whole society (SCW, 193-4). Between these two levels, a process of reciprocal accommodation, rather than imposition on one side and passive absorption on the other, occurs.

Thus, Gramsci did not contradict himself when, at the very moment he accepted the leading role of intellectuals, he also insisted that between them and popular culture there was a difference of "quantity" not "quality" (SPN, 347). Using Rawlsian language, we might say that common sense looks like a reflective equilibrium, or, as Gramsci himself said, "a reciprocal 'reduction' so to speak, a passage from one [principles] to the other [common sense] and vice versa," a movement back and forth between universality and common knowledge. He remarks additionally that one should "recall that Immanuel Kant believed it important for his philosophical theories to agree with common sense" (SPN, 199).

If nothing else, Gramsci's notes might suggest to us a way of amending a commonplace prevailing in contemporary philosophy: the idea of a divorce between general criteria and local meanings, between theory and interpretation. The relational and communicative character of Gramsci's notion of hegemony looks very much the same as the conflicting and yet always open connection between a local dialect and a national language. "Someone who *only* speaks dialect, or understands language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the whole which is more or less limited and provincial" (SPN,

325; italics added). The same can be true of someone who speaks only the national language. As he wrote to his sister, not teaching her children the Sardinian tongue would mean depriving them of the possibility of understanding their whole culture, which was a blend of the local and the national. I think that this image exemplifies convincingly Gramsci's vision of hegemony and makes it quite hard to conclude that it was an organic utopia without an inner plurality, that it dreamt of a homogeneous society where to treat themselves as equal and feel part of a common narrative, people must speak only one standard language and forget their local slang.

APPENDIX
Abbreviations of Antonio Gramsci's Writings

SQ = "The Southern Question" (1926), in *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ed. L. Marks (New York: International Publishers, 1983)
SG = *Scritti Giovanili. 1914-1918* (Turin: Einaudi, 1958)
ON = *L'Ordine Nuovo. 1919-1920* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954)
LFP = *Letters from Prison*, ed. L. Lawener (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1973)
LC = *Lettere dal carcere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955)
SCW = *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith, trans. W. Boelhower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985)
PPW = *Pre-Prison Writings*, ed. R. Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
PN = *Prison Notebooks*. Vol. 1. Ed. J. A. Buttigieg, trans. A. Callari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)
Q = *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. V. Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975)
SPN = *Selections from The Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare, trans. G. N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971)
SPW = *Selections from Political Writings*, ed. Q. Hoare, trans. G. N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1978)

NOTES

1. Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought. Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 171-2.
2. John A. Davis, "The South, the Risorgimento and the Origins of the 'Southern Problem,' " in *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution*, ed. idem (London: Harper and Row, 1979), 67-103; Sidney G. Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).
3. Antonio De Viti De Marco, "La questione commerciale e gli interessi del Mezzogiorno" (The Commercial Question and the Interest of the Italian South) in *Antologia della questione meridionale* (An Anthology on the Southern Question), ed. Bruno Caizzi (Milan: Edizioni di Comunitá, 1959), 225-34. I discussed this topic in *Le civili libertá. Positivismo e liberalismo*

nell'Italia unita (Civil Liberties: Positivism and Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Italy) (Venice: Marsilio, 1990), 109-47.
4. Gaetano Salvemini, "La questione meridionale" (The Southern Question) (1898), in idem, *Opere*, vol. 4, tome 2 (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1963), 71-89.
5. I use the term "Idealism" to designate a humanistic approach pivoting around the normative idea that political emancipation envisions also an individual self-emancipation from the domain of every form of necessity not reducible to a reasonable control. Idealism implies thus an antithetical dualism between inward and externality. I do not assume the concept as referring to the Idealist ontology professed by Hegel and his philosophical school. "Idealism" has here a broader connotation and designates a long-lasting and inwardly articulated tradition that combines together Socratic and Stoic sources. Among the early modern and modern teachers one would include Giordano Bruno and the Humanists, Spinoza, Kant, the early Romantics, and partly Hegel and Marx. As Gramsci writes on many occasions, self-culture, self-dependence, and moral autonomy are the main values an individual should aim at, and the main cultural goals a society should promote. Whereas the Idealist system produced a teleological picture of human history and predicted the time when human emancipation would be completely achieved, the humanistic vision fostered the notion of a perennial confrontation between the human aspiration for freedom and self-dependence and the many and always new forms of necessity. While the former wanted to close the searching process to break the cycle of human unhappiness, the latter rests within the human praxis and testifies of a restless effort toward a goal that is always a little bit ahead of any human accomplishment. Gramsci's maxim on "the optimism of the will and the pessimism of the intelligence" describes the second condition, not the first one. See the appendix for definitions of abbreviations of Gramsci's writings.
6. See, for instance, Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (London: Merlin & Humanity, 1977).
7. Richard Bellamy and Darrow Schecter, *Gramsci and the Italian State* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1993), 157, 161, 163.
8. See, above all, Michael Walzer, "Antonio Gramsci's Commitment," in *The Company of Critics. Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 95.
9. Following Lichtheim, Bellamy and Schecter argue that it is wrong to ascribe to Gramsci's hegemony a character of pluralism and democratic articulation because his model was one of "functional differentiation" or "functional organicism"; *Gramsci and the Italian State*, 161. However, I tend to agree with Chantal Mouffe and her pluralist interpretation, at least because Gramsci did not produce a comprehensive social theory but elaborated ideas that, very frequently, contradict each other; Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. idem (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 168-204.
10. Gramsci never completely abandoned this position nor totally rejected regionalism. As he wrote in 1923, to consider the Southern question a national question did not mean to think in terms of centralization: "The real tendencies of the peasant class . . . have always had in their programs the slogan of local autonomy and decentralization" (SPW, 162).
11. "Why can't one recall," wrote Gramsci in 1919, "that Sardinian miners are paid starvation wages? Why should it be prohibited to recall that two-thirds of the inhabitants of Sardinia (especially women and children) go without shoes in the winter and summer . . . because the price of hide has gone sky-high due to the protective tariffs that enrich the Turin industrialists and leather manufacturers?" Antonio Gramsci, *Scritti 1915-1921*, ed. Sergio Caprioglio (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), 103-4.
12. Massimo L. Salvadori, *Gramsci e il problema storico della democrazia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), 78.

13. Palimiro Togliatti, *Gramsci* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1967), 205.
14. The word "disintegration" (*disgregazione*) should be read as having two meanings, a moral one and a political one: as denunciation of conditions of suffering and injustice, and as the identification of the critical point from which to begin the transformation of the entire society.
15. Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), 27, 614-17.
16. As Gramsci wrote in 1918, Italy's only chance of becoming a nation lay in educating Italians to become responsible citizens with a clear sense of their rights and duties (SG, 186-9).
17. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. James Strachery (1930; reprint, New York: Norton, 1989), 12-17.
18. Gramsci's observation recalls that of Alexis de Tocqueville: in Europe, intellectuals "suddenly draw general conclusions" from Descartes's method, while in America philosophy has never separated itself from people's daily lives. In Europe, democracy never became common sense, because from the beginning it took the form of a forced imposition of principles shared only by a narrow circle of *savantes*. Democracy was decreed by the "authority of the masters" and left the empirical realm of everyday life generally untouched. By contrast, the Americans "have needed no books to teach them philosophic method, having found it in themselves." They were democratic in their mores (common sense) not in obedience to a decree of Reason; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer (New York: Harper Perennial, 1969), 430-1.
19. Norberto Bobbio, introduction to Rodolfo Mondolfo, *Umanesimo di Marx. Studi filosofici, 1908-1966* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), xlv.
20. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1948), 119-20.
21. Giuseppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary*, trans. T. Nairn (London: NLB, 1970), 26.
22. Dante Germino, *Antonio Gramsci. Architect of a New Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990), 128.
23. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary*, 19.
24. Leonardo Paggi, *Le strategie del potere in Gramsci. Tra fascismo e socialismo in un solo paese 1923-1926* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984), 14-15.
25. J. L. Stanley and C. Stanley, eds., *From Georges Sorel. Essays in Socialism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 73.
26. Walzer, "Antonio Gramsci's Commitment," 90.
27. Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary*, 59-60.
28. Salvadori, *Gramsci e il problema storico della democrazia*, 136.
29. Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution. A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 152-4.
30. Walzer, "Antonio Gramsci's Commitment," 95.
31. Piero Gobetti, *Opere complete* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1969), 1003.
32. Walzer, "Antonio Gramsci's Commitment," 95.
33. Ibid., 99.

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from "A Mathematics of Chaos"

Only after taking in my mother landscape (along with the voices of that place)—

a girl who looks like her father is born for luck, alcohol, Algiers, alligator, Amazing Grace, Amelia, Angola, Atchafalaya, Aunt Noni, Aunt Sister, Azerine, back a town, bayou, because her daddy died or left, because the first-born baby died, beignets, bitch, Butsie, café au lait, Calliope projects, Canal St., Cardella, cast iron, catching coconuts, catching sense , cayenne, Clio St., cockroaches, "comb them kitchens," Congo Square, cornbread, courtyard, cousins, CPT, crawfish, creole, dark-skinned, daughters, dead-end, Desire projects, desire unmet is desire multiplied, dirty rice, Dorothy, Elysian Fields, Erato, etouffe, Euterpe, Ezekiel, Father John's, file, first-born, first-born done died, fleur de lys, flood, "for true?" front porch, Galvez, Gerttown, "gimme some," "girl, gimme got shot," "git up in here," "God don't like ugly," good hair, gran'ma, grandpa done lost his mind, grief grown rooted and wild, hard-headed, her mouth don't know no Sunday, high yellow, holy ghost, hoodoo, "how sweet the sound," "how ya'll doin'?" "how ya mama and 'nem?" "I ain't playin' wit chou no," jambalaya, jazz, jumpback, jumprope, Katie, kickback, kick your ass, kitchens, kitchens on your neck, knick-knacks, kool-aid, lagniappe, lakefront, levee, light-skinned, lighter than a paper bag, Louis, St. Louis, Louis XIV, Ma Belle, ma dere, magnolias, make groceries, Martin Luther King Blvd., Melpomene projects, memory, mental ward, Mississippi, Mississippi bridge, Mississippi river, Miss Myrtle, Miss Tit, Moreal, morning, mosquitoes, mourning, mudbugs, muffeletta, nappy-headed, neckbone, neutral ground, nutria rats, "nobody likes a bone but a dog," NOPD, not luck enough to keep a body strong, okra gumbo, out front of town, oysters, pecans, pickled pigs' lips, piss po', po' boys, porch monkeys, potholes, quadroons, quarter, quiet, rain, rain through the living room windows, red beans, red bone, Rev. Profit, rice, river, river, river, roux, rue, Saints, sadity, sassafras, Satchmo, screendoor, semen, seventh ward, snowballs, "speak the word to me," spit on the broom to stay out of jail, St. Charles Ave., Stronger Hope Baptist Church, superdome, swamp, tambourine, Tchopitoulas, tender-headed, tender-hearted, Terpsichore, thought, "throw me somethin' Mister," Tippitina's, "trouble don't last always," uppity, vagina, Virginia, voodoo, wade in the water, water, wishes go the way of sweepstakes, "where y'at?" "where you from?" woman, wrought iron, "yo maw, yo paw, yo greasy, greasy gran'ma," "you ain't nothin'," "you thought like Aunt Hannah who thought shit was a banana," Xavier, Zataran's, Zulu, zydeco, Amen

—was speech possible.

A DAILY LECTURE FROM MARCUS STEINWEG

70th Lecture at the Gramsci Monument, The Bronx, NYC: 8th September 2013
ON MICHEL FOUCAULT
Marcus Steinweg

1. In a review of Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966), Gilles Deleuze, responding to the analytic of finitude elaborated in that book, brings a thinking into focus that "would of itself be in relation to the obscure."[1]

2. A thinking after the death of God, it investigates and traces the radical finitude of man to the bounds of his inexistence.

3. This new thinking, which owes much to the "Nietzschean revolution,"[2] rives all humanisms that trust in a stable identity of *homo humanus*.[3]

4. It rives all those phantasms that promise the finite subject an infinite future and guarantee it an absolute origin.

5. By beginning thinking from the "rift in man," by beginning to think that rift itself, it rives man as such, not in order to make him disappear without a trace but in order to define him as the vanishing trace of himself (of what he never *really* was).

6. This rift "cannot be filled in, because it is the highest object of thought: the Human does not fill it in or glue it back together; the rift in humanity is the end of the Human or the origin of thought. A cogito for a self underneath ..."[4]

7. A thinking after the death of God must take its beginning from the impossibility of man, from an originarily evacuated subject, a primordially splintered cogito, whose task will henceforth be to confront this void and fragmentation rather than strive for a substantial beginning and a reasoned finality.

8. Let us recall the famous sentences Foucault wrote: "It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think."[5]

9. It is clear—and Deleuze underscores—that this thinking that arises in the space of the void by seeking to leave God and the humanisms of the tradition with their compatible conceptions of the subject behind, begins to outline "a new *image of thought*": "a thinking that no longer opposes itself as from the outside to the unthinkable or the unthought, but which would lodge the unthinkable, the unthought within itself as thought, and which would be in an essential relationship to it." [6]

10. At issue, patently, is a thinking that conceives itself as a primordial being-open toward the unthinkable and unthought, a thinking that does not simply resist the void and its own limitations, instead understanding these limitations to be elemental and constitutive of itself.[7]

11. At issue is a thinking that is aware of its originary (or "archaic") ties to the unthought, which we may call the "unconscious" in order to associate it with "dim mechanisms" and "faceless determinations."

12. "Man and the unthought," Foucault writes, "are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries."[8]

13. This is a thinking, obviously, that has broken free of the illusion of its own omnipotence—not in order to indulge in the phantasm of total impotence, the narcissism of impotence-worship, which is nothing but an indicator of luxurious self-victimization and intellectual laziness of the sort often manifest in the celebration of the celebrant's own weakness and vulnerability—but in order to confront both at once, the object-status of the subject as much as its subject-status, its capacity for receptivity as much as spontaneity, or to put it in Heideggerian terms: itself as *geworfener Entwurf*, thrown projection.

14. The dimensions of a radical passivity and a hyperbolic activity intersect in the subject.

15. The subject is the scene of this intersection.

16. Translated into categories of ontotopology, this means that the subject is the place where the future intervenes in the past and the past determines the future.

17. Intervention and determination are strictly compossible, however forcefully they seem to exclude each other.

18. Foucault consigns thinking to its indeterminate future as much as its complex *arché*, "an unthought which [thinking] contains entirely."[9]

19. Let us quote the following important passage in full: "The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is linked to him in an entirely different way; it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind stain by which it is possible to know him. In any case, the unthought has accompanied man, mutely and uninterruptedly, since the nineteenth century. Since it was really never more than an insistent double, it has never been the object of reflection in an autonomous way; it has received the complementary form and the inverted name of that for which it was the Other and the shadow: in Hegelian phenomenology, it was the *An sich* as opposed to the *Für sich*; for Schopenhauer it was the *Unbewusste*; for Marx it was alienated man; in Husserl's analyses it was the implicit, the inactual, the sedimented, the non-effected—in every case, the inexhaustible double that presents itself to reflection as the blurred projection of what man is in his truth, but that also plays the role of a preliminary ground upon which man must collect himself and recall himself in order to attain his truth."[10]

20. It is surprising that Foucault does not see this spectral man-beside-man emerge until the nineteenth century; as though thinking were not accompanied from the very outset by a phantom double, be it the Socratic *daimon* or, at all times during which thinking interprets itself as male, the figure of female assistance; not even to mention all the animals that haunt the subject in order to assure it of its animal origins, which, like all that is repressed, acquire the presence of a phantom. What is decisive is that within the subject or beside it, in extreme proximity to it, something non-subjective is lodged or abides, an element that is now blind and obtuse, now clairvoyant but forever lays claim to its presence.

21. We might address it as the elemental itself, as chaos or wild nature, as a pre-subjective stratum of orderless materiality and Dionysian-archaic groundlessness that allows no thinking to come to rest, for it appeals to any thinking to be thought as long as the status of the unthought applies to it. Any thinking, any subject, it would seem, has "already 'left' itself in its own being."[11]

22. A chasm opens up within it so that it understands that to think itself—to be self-consciousness, thinking thinking itself—means to attend to this split or rift, this wound that will not close.

23. That makes thinking, as Foucault puts it, "a perilous act."[12]

24. The opening toward an element that closes itself off to it, that denies it full self-consciousness, closed self-presence, that, by slipping from its grasp, destabilizes the subject in its entirety and makes it stumble in order to call upon it to adopt a conception of itself that would leave the phantasms of a presence and self-presence rid of all specters behind.

25. That the subject, moving on the trace of its own disappearance, encounters, on the line of its rampant absence, itself as though it were its own spectral double, means that it is itself a phantasm, one that does not cease to beset itself by riddling itself with questions it cannot answer.[1]

26. The legacy of metaphysics would perhaps be nothing but this riddling that drills a hole into the subject, never ceasing to drill, a hole or hollow large enough to make room for all sorts of specters that begin to spread through the subject and will ultimately supplant it altogether.

27. And yet: as Jacques Derrida has shown,[2] it would be a mistake to trust in the deferred action of specters, as though there had ever been a non-spectral subject whose unperturbed self-certainty and self-presence were only now being unsettled by a spectral power.

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[1] Gilles Deleuze, "Humans: A Dubious Existence," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, trans. Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 92.
[2] Ibid., 91.
[3] Nietzsche, Deleuze argues, is by no means the "inventor of the famous phrase 'God is dead.' On the contrary, he is the first to believe this phrase to have no importance whatsoever as long as the human occupies the place of God. Nietzsche was trying to uncover something that was neither God nor Human, trying to give voice to these impersonal individuations and these pre-individual singularities ... that's what he calls Dionysos, or also the super-man." Gilles Deleuze, "On Nietzsche and the Image of Thought," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, 138–39. On the compossibility of subject and singularity see Marcus Steinweg, *Subjektsingularitäten* (Berlin: Merve, 2004).
[4] Deleuze, "Humans: A Dubious Existence," 92 (translation modified).
[5] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 373.
[6] Deleuze, "Humans: A Dubious Existence," 92.
[7] Blanchot described the void as the moment at which writing begins: "Language can begin only with the void; no fullness, no certainty can ever speak; something essential is lacking in anyone who expresses himself." Maurice Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1995), 324.
[8] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 355.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 355–56.
[11] Ibid., 357.
[12] Ibid.

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[1] On the "disappearance of man" as the "disappearance of man in favor of language," i.e., in favor of the anonymous murmur of pre-subjective or non-personal structures, see Michel Foucault, "L'homme est-il mort?", in *Dits et Écrits. 1954–1988*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 425.
[2] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

MICHEL FOUCAULT - BIOGRAPHY

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher or more specifically a *historian of systems of thought*, a self-made title created when he was promoted to a new professorship at the prestigious Collège de France in 1970. Foucault is generally accepted as having been the most influential social theorist of the second half of the twentieth century. He was born on October 15, 1926, in Poitiers, France, and died in Paris in 1984 from an AIDS-related illness. As an openly homosexual man he was one of the first high-profile intellectuals to succumb to the illness, which was at the time still most unknown. However, it would appear that he knew he had AIDS and he reportedly was not afraid to die as he sometimes shared with his friends his thoughts of suicide. Yet, he continued working relentlessly until the end, spending the last eight months of his life working on the last two volumes of The History of Sexuality, which happened to come out just before he died in Paris at the hospital on June 26th 1984. He is buried at the Cimetière du Vendeuvre in Vienne, in the Rhone-Alpes Region, not far from Poitier the city where he was born.

Foucault's father was a surgeon, and encouraged the same career for his son. Foucault graduated from Saint-Stanislas school having studied philosophy with Louis Girard who would become a notorious professor. After that Foucault attended the Lycée Henri-IV in Paris, then in 1946, equipped with an impressive academic record he entered the École Normale Supérièure d'Ulm, which is the most prestigious French school for humanities studies. Fascinated by psychology he received the equivalent of a BA degree in Psychopathology in 1947. In 1948, working under the famous phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, he received another BA type of degree in Philosophy. In 1950 he failed his his agrégation (French University high-level competitive examination for the recruitment of professors) in Philosophy, but succeeded in 1951. During the 1950s he worked in a psychiatric hospital, then from 1954-58 he taught French at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He then spent a year at the University of Warsaw, and a year at the university of Hamburg.

Through his impressive career Foucault became known for his many demonstrative arguments that power depends not on material relations or authority but instead primarily on discursive networks. This new perspective as applied to old questions such as madness, social discipline, body-image, truth, normative sexuality etc. were instrumental in designing the post-modern intellectual landscape we are still in nowadays. Today Michel Foucault is listed as the most cited intellectual worldwide in the humanities by The Times Higher Education Guide. This is not so, however if we consider the field of philosophy alone, and that in spite of it being the discipline Foucault was largely educated in, and which, it is safe to say he might have identified with the most. This is probably because Foucault's definition of philosophy focuses on the critique of truth and does so by conceiving it as inextricable from a critique of history. This is because according to him, it makes philosophy a much richer discipline. Linking philosophy and history, however is considered by many as irreconcilable with the generally accepted definition of philosophy as being independent of it.

In 1959 Foucault received his doctorat d'état under the supervision of Georges Canguilhem, the famous French philosopher. The paper he presented was published two years later with the name *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (*Madness and Unreason: History of Madness in the Classical Age*, 1961). In this text, Foucault abolished the possibility of separating madness and reason into universally objective categories. He did so by

book (arguably his most difficult to read). It is an archeological study of the development of biology, economics and linguistics through the 18th and 19th centuries. It is in this book that he makes his famous prediction at the end that "man", a subject formed by discourse as a result of the arrangement of knowledge over the last two centuries, will soon be "erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea." Less poetically and in the same book: "As the archeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of a recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end."

Foucault's book *Archaeology of Knowledge* was published in 1969. As with *The Order of Things*, this text uses an approach to the history of knowledge inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's work, although not yet using Friedrich Nietzsche terminology of "geneaology", and this is a rare major work for Foucault that does not include a historical study per se. Because what Foucault is really after in this book is the question of archeology as a method of historical analysis. This attitude to history is based on the idea that the historian is only interested in what has implications for present events, so history is always written from the perspective of the present, and fulfills a need of the present. Thus, Foucault's work can be traced to events in his present day. *The Order of Things* would have been inspired by the rise of structuralism in the 1960s, for example, and the prison uprisings in the early 1970s would have inspired *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975). Discourses are governed by such historical positioning, which have their own logic, which Foucault refers to as an "archive". Archeology, Foucault explains, is the very excavation of such archive.

In 1975 with the publication of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, his work begins to focus more explicitly on power. He rejects the Enlightenment's philosophical and juridical interpretation of power as conceptualized particularly in relation to representative government, and he introduces instead the notion of power as "discipline" and takes the penal system as the context of his analysis, only to generalize it further to society at large. He shows this kind of discipline is a specific historical form of power that was taken up by the state from the army in the 17th century, which spread widely across society through institutions. Here he begins to examine the relationship of power to knowledge and to the body, which would become a pivotal Foucaultian move in his future research. He argues that these institutions, including the army, the factory and the school, all discipline the bodies of their subjects through surveilling, knowledge-gathering techniques, both real and perceived. Indeed, the goal of such exercise of power is to produce "docile bodies" that can be monitored, and which lead to the psychological control of individuals. Foucault goes as far as arguing that such power produces individuals as such. In maping the emergence of a disciplinary society and its new articulation of power, he uses the model of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon to illustrate the structure of power through an architecture designed for surveillance. The design of Bentham's prison allows for the invisible surveillance of a large number of prisoners by a small number of guards, eventually resulting in the embodiment of surveillance by the prisoners, making the actual guards obsolete. The prison is a tool of knowledge for the institutional formation of subjects, thus power and knowledge are inextricably linked. The rather controversial conclusion of the book is that the prison system is actually an institution whose purpose is to produce criminality and recidivism.

During the 1970s and 1980s Foucault's reputation grew and he lectured all over the world. In 1971 he was invited to debate Noam Chomsky in on Dutch television for The International Philosophers Project. It gave rise to a fascinating debate, which has been published several times since then. Chomsky argued for the concept of human nature as a political guide for activism while Foucault

During the later years of his professorship at the Collège de France he started writing *The History of Sexuality*, a major project he would never finish because of his untimely death. The first volume of the work was published in 1976 in French and the English version would follow two years later, entitled *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*. However, the French title was much more indicative of what Foucault was after: "Histoire de la sexualité, tome 1 : La Volonté de savoir", which translates as *The History of Sexuality Volume I: The Will to Knowledge* (a newer edition is simply named *The Will to Knowledge*). It is an amazingly prominent work, maybe even his most influential. The main thesis of the work is to be found in part two of the book called "The Repressive

Hypothesis" where Foucault articulately explains that in spite of the generally accepted belief that we have been sexually repressed, the notion of sexual repression cannot be separated from the concomitant imperative for us to talk about sex more than ever before. Indeed, according to Foucault it follows in the name of liberating so-called innate tendencies, certain behaviors are actually produced. With the contention that modern power operates to produce the very behaviors it targets, Foucault attacks here again the notion of power as repression of something that is already in place. Such new notion of power has been and continues to be incredibly influential in various fields.

His last two books, the second and third volumes of the history of sexuality research, entitled *The Uses of Pleasure and The Care of the Self* respectively, both relate the Western subject's understanding of ourselves as sexual beings to our moral and ethical lives. He traces the history of the construction of subjectivity through the analyses of ancient texts. In The Uses of Pleasure he looks at pleasure in the Greek social system as a play of power in social relations; pleasure is derived from the social position realized through sexuality. Later, in Christianity, pleasure was to become linked with illicit conduct and transgression. In *The Care of the Self*, Foucault looks at the Greeks' systems of rules that were applied to sexual and other forms of social conduct. He analyses how the rules of self-control allow access to pleasure and to truth. In this structure of a subject's life dominated by the care for the self, excess becomes the danger, rather than the Christian deviance.

What Foucault made from delving into these ancient texts, is the notion of an ethics to do with one's relation to one's self. Indeed the constitution of the self is the overarching question for Foucault at the end of his life. Yet the point for him was not to present a new ethics. Rather, it was the possibility for new analyses that focused on subjectivity itself. Foucault became very interested in the way subjectivity is constructed and especially how subjects produce themselves vis-à-vis truth.

In his last few books Foucault works with a system of control, not understood by traditional concepts of authority, which he calls bio-power. Bio-power can be understood as the prerogative of the state to "make live and let die", which is distinct from the rule of the sovereign power which would "let live and make die" by rule of the king. This attitude toward the lives of social subjects is a way of understanding the new formation of power in Western society. Foucault's history of sexuality suggests that pleasure is found in regulation and self-discipline rather than in libertine or permissive conduct, and encourages resistance to the state through the development of individual ethics towards the production of an admirable life: "We must at the same time conceive of sex without the law, and power without the king."

studying how the division has been historically established, how the distinctions we make between madness and sanity are a result of the invention of madness in the Age of Reason. He does a reading of Descartes' *First Meditation*, and accuses him of being able to doubt everything except his own sanity, thus excluding madness from his famous hyperbolic doubt.

In the 1960s Foucault was head of the philosophy departments at the University of Clermont-Ferrand. It was at this time that he met the philosophy student Daniel Defert, whose political activism would be a major influence on Foucault. When Defert went to fulfill his volunteer service requirement in Tunisia, Foucault followed, teaching in Tunisia from 1966-68. They returned to Paris during the time of the student revolts, an event that would have a profound effect on Foucault's work. He took the position of head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Paris-VIII at Vincennes where he brought together some of the most promising thinkers in France at the time, which included Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière. Both went on to become leading thinkers of their generation, and both have taught at EGS. It was also in 1968 that he formed, with others, the Prison Information Group, an organization that gave voice to the concerns of prisoners.

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*, one of his last far-reaching works he wrote: "[W]hat is philosophy today–philosophical activity, I mean–if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself?". Foucault is here practicing the very kind of critical questioning he is hinting at. It is a sort of reflective movement of thought that challenges the all-too-often uncritical tendencies of philosophical thinking, especially when it fails to see that it is itself part of what needs to be critiqued. In this light, Foucault is not simply stating something to be accepted or refuted, for that too would lead to complacent thinking. On the contrary, in his very use of language here and elsewhere there is a clear opening for something other, perhaps even unknown, which is made possible in part through a challenging use of the questioning mode.

Foucault's project, then, should not be confused with traditional history and needs to be wrestled with. He helpfully continues: "In what does it [philosophy] consist, if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?" Significantly, he is questioning the very discourse of philosophy as an established tradition whose tendency towards rigidity needs to be interrogated. Foucault's re-defining of "philosophical activity" characterizes what philosophy needs to be today if it is to do more than simply perpetuate the status quo. There is thus in a very real sense a political and ethical level to Foucault's work. This is to varying degrees evident in all of his corpus, hence the appeal many critical thinkers still find in his research today.

Foucault always endeavors to write what he calls a "history of the present" and in spite of the apparent contradiction it is a critical move that has political reach. Because what matters today has roots in the past, a history of the present is a productive space for critical thinking. In Foucault's own words: "The game is to try to detect those things which have not yet been talked about, those things that, at the present time, introduce, show, give some more or less vague indications of the fragility of our system of thought, in our way of reflecting, in our practices." Early on he refers to such history in terms of archeology and later as his research become more directly political, as genealogy, taking his cue from Friedrich Nietzsche.

His numerous archaeological, or epistemological studies recognize the changing frameworks of production of knowledge through the history of such practices as science, philosophy, art and literature. In his later genealogical practice, he argues that institutional power, intrinsically linked with knowledge, forms individual human "subjects", and subjects them to disciplinary norms and standards. These norms are produced historically, there is no timeless truth behind them. For him truth is something that is historically produced. Foucault examines the "abnormal" human subject as an object-of-knowledge of the discourses of human and empirical science such as psychiatry, medicine, and penalization.

Foucault published *The Order of Things* in 1966, which immediately became a bestseller in France, perhaps surprisingly given the level of complexity of the

RESIDENT OF THE DAY

CHRIS BENDER