

Study of Knowledge in Gramsci's Theories and Its Role in Epistemological Sociology

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Abstract: *The present study aims to study the sociology of knowledge in Gramsci's theories and its role in epistemological sociology and to analyse the part of Gramsci's ideas related to the sociology of knowledge. Considering that Gramsci and his theories are not related to the sociology of knowledge (that is, Gramsci has not deliberately discussed sociology of knowledge), the most important discussions of Gramsci's views related to the sociology of knowledge have been considered according to our context. The most important parts of Gramsci's ideas related to the sociology of knowledge investigate the influence of historical conditions as an awareness factor, the hegemony debate, dialectical theory, civil society, the emphasis on pragmatism of "will-mindedness", and the role of intellectuals, economic agents (infrastructure), and political factors (Workers' Council and etc.). This study is a fundamental research which is based on content analysis qualitative methodology. The library method has been used to collect the data.*

Keywords: *Gramsci, Sociology of knowledge, Hegemony, Dialectic, Civil society, Pragmatism, Intellectuals.*

Introduction

The revolutionary renaissance was the result of the awakening and movement of humanity harassed by a series of issues in the middle ages; the issues that annoyed people in all personal and social dimensions. Many thought that all problems are caused by the weakness of facilities and lack of production. Hence they were looking for a solution to the development of production tools and methods. This group believed that population growth was accelerating with geometric progression, while natural and economic resources remained steady and old production methods no longer responsive to today's consumption. As a result, the Renaissance further developed the industrial and economic aspects and, as a consequence, small industries became large factories (Naghdi, 2016: 67). However, it also had a great influence on other intellectual, religious and cultural spheres.

The industrialization of production paved the way for the emergence and formation of a capitalist system and, eventually, liberal democracy in the West. This movement led to some social changes that could be found in the following examples:

1. Industry and capital and everything that serves them became the value.
2. Severe 3-shift activity of factories for higher turnover and profitability
3. Migration of villagers to cities (Hajianpour, 2009: 52)
4. Employment of women in factories
5. The emergence of a colonial and arrogant current looking for: domination of the world economy, seizure of the political, military, and security sovereignty in the world, and intellectual and cultural domination of the world.

After more than three centuries, the capitalist system could increase industrial and agricultural production and saturate the consumer goods warehouses. However, it failed to overcome the complexity of human and global issues, and even added to its dimensions and complexities. Hence, human beings who suffered from a set of global human problems developed the Renaissance and then the Industrial Revolution, but despaired of this intellectual and economic system due to its inefficiency. Finally,

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thinking emerged in Europe: The root of the global human problems is not in the lack of production, but in the unfairness of distribution and injustice, and the solution must be sought in the equitable distribution of wealth and revenues. Thinkers such as Karl Marx insisted on this thinking, and the idea found supporters such as Lenin and Mao. One of the thinkers who favored the idea was Gramsci in Italy. Gramsci's significance is not only arisen from the scientific struggles and theoretical or historical significance of his life and works, but also his influence on thinkers such as Poulantzas, Bettelheim, Kelty, and Althusser. Therefore, we first give a brief biography of his life and works and then discuss the most important part of his ideas. Finally, we will examine his views on the sociology of knowledge.

Biography

Gramsci was born on January 22, 1891, in a poor household living on the island of Sardinia, Italy. His father was an employee of the Registration Organization, who was dismissed on charges of embezzlement. He had six siblings, and after completing his elementary school, he worked at a department at the age of 11 because of poverty and continued to study after two years. In 1908, he entered high school, and after completing his diploma, he got a scholarship for the University of Torino. The years 1912-1922 were the most important years of his life when his political character was formed. In 1923, Gramsci entered the Socialist Youth Center and collaborated with "Il Grido del Popolo" newspaper (The Cry of the People). In 1916, he collaborated with Avanti newspaper as a critic, history and essay writer on the events of the day. In 1917, the Russian October Revolution occurred, and Gramsci admired this revolution and introduced it as the triumph of the human will to the mechanical forces of history. World War I ended and Gramsci had not yet completed the university while he turned to a revolutionary life. In 1919, along with three of his friends (Umberto Terracini, Palmiro Togliatti, and Angelo Tasca), he published the weekly journal L'Ordine Nuovo (New Order). L'Ordine Nuovo was a socialist journal. Eventually, in 1921, he was split from the Socialist Party and supported the formation of the Communist Party. In 1924, Gramsci was elected as the secretary general of the Communist Party and began the struggle against fascism both inside and outside the country. He was arrested in 1926 and sentenced to 20 years and four months of imprisonment in 1928. His intellectual activities continued in prison. Gramsci was released from prison in 1937 after suffering much pain and died five days after his release (Fury, 1981: 11-15).

Gramsci's Works

Gramsci himself never published a book; his writings are all essays, except "Letters from Prison." Gramsci's works briefly include:

1. Writings from 1914 to 1916
2. Letters from Prison
3. Letters: A collection of 218 letters written in prison (Gramsci, 1993: 18-20).

Figures who influenced Gramsci

1. Gramsci was influenced by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce. Croce criticized the positivist faith in methods of the natural sciences and pointed out the importance of creative and intuitive understanding in the cognition of both historical change and artistic creation. Croce was closer to Hegel's thought than Marx, and he insisted that the key to understanding history is the transformation of the human soul, not his material conditions. Gramsci shared the belief with Hegel that history is the history of freedom. This succession of stages in its evolution is evident in the realization of human will. Croce gave young Italian intellectuals a sense of moral meaning and purpose and made them aware of the constant connection between past and present. Croce's insight into history covered all human activities so that the study of history was indeed the study of the whole life; and the young Gramsci was fascinated by these ideas of Croce (Joll, 2009: 21). What Gramsci learned from Croce was a conception of history as an activity that embraces and dominates all other activities from ethics and politics to art. He also removed the limits of positivism and insufficiency of the raw forms of historical materialism. However, he had a profound critical position on Croce. Croce as a philosopher of liberal democracy was the spokesman for European liberalism; a form of government that Gramsci

disagreed with. He also did not accept Croce that a philosophical stance necessarily should lead to political action; the philosophy of Croce was merely a hypothetical proposition - a hypothetical philosophy of the soul without the backing. However, in Gramsci's expression, Marxism was indeed the "philosophy of praxis." A philosophy that justified itself in practical activity. In fact, as Marx had reversed the philosophy of Hegel and used it for his own purposes, Gramsci did the same with Croce (Joll, 2009: 23).

Croce had shown an aspect of historical change that was very important to Gramsci's revolutionary theory. Gramsci wrote in jail: "The thought of Croce, at least as a valuable tool, drawn everyone's attention to the realities of culture and thought in the evolution of history, as well as the performance of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society and government."

2. Gramsci was influenced by the thought of Giambattista Vico. This great Italian thinker considered history as a periodic event that proceeded according to unchallenged rules, believing that the study of history embraces all aspects of thought and human history (Joll, 2009: 24).
3. Influenced by Wilfredo Pareto regarding the discussion of elite theory and the influence of elites on the thoughts of others.
4. Influenced by Gaetano Mosca; both criticized the parliamentary institutions.
5. Influenced by French Philosopher Georges Sorel; for Sorel and Gramsci, socialism was a pervasive phenomenon, and above all, a new culture.
6. With respect to the Marx's discussions, Gramsci focused more on the relationship between substructure and superstructure, as well as the historical issue of the transition from society to society. In his writings, there are several references to the Marx's book "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." In this book, Marx wrote that society never gets anything done unless it is necessary and sufficient conditions have already been met, and no society collapses or replaces the other until all forms of life that lie in its economic relations are evolved (Joll, 2009: 26).
7. Lenin influenced Gramsci; he had recognized the importance of the Bolshevik Party and Lenin's ideas and personality, and also considered the Russian Revolution as an appropriate model to guide the Italian revolution. Both Russia and Italy were countries where the industrial revolution was late and uneven, and both had large peasant population.
8. Gramsci expressed his views on history and historical changes through Bukharin's ideas.

In Gramsci's Letters from Prison, like Marx, he was more concerned with reaching a general understanding of the nature of the change in history, society, and economy, as well as the role of intellectuals and the political party in those changes. Rather than a society that comes after the revolution, he was interested in long-term processes through which the revolution would come about; he was not seeking to describe the utopia of the future.

9. In the discussion of public strikes, he was under the influence of Luxemburg; he was agreed with Luxemburg regarding the emphasis on the need to massive spontaneous support of the revolution.

György Lukács, Cyrus, Poulantzas, Bettelheim, Kelty, and Althusser have been deeply influenced by Gramsci (Milani, 2009: 188-199). Gramsci and his concept of hegemony have affected Marcuse's thought so that the Marcuse's dominance is very close to the Gramscian hegemony (Marcuse: 2008: 101).

Social Factors Influenced Gramsci

Hard working with low income in childhood had a great influence on Gramsci's intellectual tendencies; he was acquainted with socialist thoughts at high school that had a profound effect on his ideas because of the growth in unemployment, the rebellion of miners, and the rise of class war between local feudal and peasants, and the economic crises (Gramsci, 1993: 7). In one of his writings, Gramsci has written that the French Revolution had eliminated many privileges and favored many of the underprivileged people. However, it did not do anything other than replacing class power with class power. It can be learned that social privilege is not the birth of nature, but the birth of the community, so it can be overcome. Gramsci went to Turin, an industrial city, where he was impressed by seeing and touching the differences between the industrialized northern and the poor in the south of Italy and causing Gramsci's tendency to Marxism. He was looking for a theory that would explain these dramatic

differences between the North and the South, and Marxism was the best theory in this period. The First World War and Gramsci's analysis of the origins and causes had a great impact on his political life. Also, the October 1917 Revolution in Russia was another influential factor that had created a strange revolutionary passion in his thought, because it happened unlike Marx's thinking (Kolakofsky, 2008: 259).

Gramsci's Sociology

Marx and Engels had decisively predicted the decline of capitalism, an event that has not yet realized. According to Marx, the crisis and the collapse of capitalism and, eventually, the revolution will take place in industrially advanced countries. However, the survival of capitalism in much of the world, especially the industrialized countries, was a matter of explaining the continuity of capitalism to the Marxist thinkers; because capitalism had to be collapsed at its highest stage. Most Marxist thinkers have never succeeded in answering this question, and one of the reasons for the importance of Gramsci's ideas is that he has raised the reasons for the power and durability of liberalism and capitalism, and also the roots of the revolutionary movement even when the former system is in power (Joll, 2009: 9).

Gramsci's insight is closer to the dialectical viewpoint. His image of the society is a whole with substructure and superstructure, where the superstructure is given authenticity and importance, and objective historical laws have become less important". (Bashiriyeh, 1999: 139) From his point of view, idealist Marxism lacks a materialist base that includes parties, institutions, and ideologies. The whole thought of the society is transitory because of its dependence to the superstructure. Thus, in his view, the main factors of movement and revolution are mental and philosophical, and human is the only major factor in history. His thoughts trigger his action. Gramsci believed in blowing up fresh blood in Marxism, because "Marxism in Leninism had found completely political nature free of cultural and ethical factors; any influence of cultural and ethical factors in social transformations was denied." (Ibid; 138)

Gramsci's concern was about the relation between the superstructure of the society and the infrastructural, economic forces, which determines the superstructure, according to Marx and Engels. It is exactly the thing noticed by Althusser so that he said: "I can only think of Gramsci." Gramsci rejected the dialectical raw materialism that was proposed by the Bolshevik theorist, Bukharin. Then, he attempted to reformulate the doctrine of historical materialism in such a way as to take into account the influence of Hobbes's idea of history and the impact of individual human will. This emphasis on intellectual and cultural influences, and not just economic effects, enabled Gramsci to develop his "hegemony" doctrine (Joll, 2009: 12-10).

Positivist Marxists believe in the Iron Law, and Gramsci, on the contrary, believed that all laws are a tendency. The emphasis on this cultural aspect and social relations has given Gramsci a privileged position in Marxist philosophy. Gramsci showed the possibility of Marxism that was more humane and distinct than the one used to justify the bureaucratic dictatorship and brutality of the Soviet military. He also highlighted how a Communist Party in a liberal democratic state really hopes for achieving power. In the works of Gramsci, there are some novel ideas about the relationship between the past and present, the relationship between economic system and ideology, and about literature and education. He challenges the liberal intellectuals while dealing with the intellectual tradition to which he belongs. That is why Gramsci can be a bridge between Marxist and non-Marxist thought (Tovakol, 2004: 60). Indeed, one of Gramsci's major services to Marxism was his emphasis on the importance of culture and its relationship with politics; this emphasis made him never consider ideas as merely a product of economic power.

Experiences of practical politics in the Communist Party gave rise to his theoretical thinking. With the onset of the revolution, Gramsci soon realized that, even if the Marxist theory required the urban proletariat to be the pioneer of the revolution, the peasant masses would be the main constituent of the revolution and provide the most mass support from the revolution (Joll, 2009, 78). There is a kind of moral spirit in all of Gramsci's works, which is inspired by his attachment to the life of the public.

Comparing to any other Marxist thinker, he was more conscious of the history of Marxism, and also the most aware of its cultural implications. According to him, the problem of Marxism was related to the solid positivism and materialism. Gramsci believed that it had a devastating effect on the ideology and function of the Socialist Party (Ibid).

Gramsci has criticized one of the key theoretical works in the Soviet Union, i.e., Bukharin's Theory of Historical Materialism. These critiques give rise to the Marxist nature of Gramsci and his intellectual concerns and assumptions. Gramsci's criticisms of Bukharin were of three types:

- First, he disagreed with the distinction between history and sociology and Bukharin's insistence that Marxism is a sociological theory rather than a historical one.
- Second, he criticized the Bukharin's emphasis on natural sciences as a model to which all forms of intellectual activity had to adapt.
- Third, he criticized Bukharin's attempt to curtail dialectic down to the mechanical balance of forces.

Gramsci combined these three critiques in a sentence and said: Sociology is an attempt to create a historical and political method of science that is independent of a predetermined philosophical system; a kind of evolutionist positivism of sociology that has become a philosophy of non-philosophers; an attempt to provide a stereotypical description and classification of historical and political reality in accordance with the standards developed on the basis of natural sciences. Therefore, sociology is an attempt to "experimentally" define the laws of human evolution. As the oak tree comes from oak beans, sociology is the common perception of evolution. Sociology cannot identify the dialectical rules by passing from quantity to quality (Joll, 2009: 89). Gramsci sees the problem of Marxism in its absolutism and deterministic interpretations of history. According to Gramsci, it is simplistic to consider that economic entity determines all levels of culture and society. In addition to serious objections to orthodox Marxists, he challenges with some of Lenin's ideas about the pioneer party and its role in the outbreak of the revolution. Based on his experiences in factory councils, Gramsci considers these councils as a good solution to the occurrence and management of the revolution (Tasaloti, 2012: 85-86).

What separates Gramsci from previous thinkers is his argument that the cultural and ideological relations between the ruling class and the subordinate class are less based on the "domination" of the former over the latter, but mainly in the struggle for hegemony (that is, taking on ethical, cultural, and intellectual leadership of the society). Gramsci, in his writings, emphasized the importance of political culture as an important factor in the transformation of human fate and explored its dynamism from various dimensions. He prevented us from unilateralism and recommended multilateralism for the better transformation. Gramsci focuses on humankind and believes that humankind should not be forgotten even for a second because all efforts are made to realize humanity; i.e., dynamic relations for better realization of human need (Tullio Altan, 2002: 188).

Gramsci's Dialectic

Gramsci's dialectic is about the relationship between superstructure and substructure in economic and cultural forces, ideology and politics that create those forces. This relationship was called dialectical process by Gramsci, in which each sector affects the other, and creates a combination that Gramsci calls the "decisive front" in one of his most famous phrases. He never rejected Croce's historicism. It looks as if there was a constant dialogue between Lenin and Croce in his mind because he was deeply influenced by the theory of the dialectical progress of historical transformation (Joll, 2009: 58).

In Gramsci's opinion, the main point of Marxism was the integration of various aspects of life, thought, history, philosophy, politics, and science into a single system for the first time in human life. Gramsci believed that the special function and fundamental significance of dialectic could only be understood if the philosophy of praxis is regarded as an original philosophy; a philosophy that opens a new stage in the evolution of global thought. This philosophy achieves this goal if it goes beyond traditional idealism and materialism; a philosophy that reflects past societies and protects their vital elements. If the

philosophy of praxis is only subordinated to another philosophy, then one can no longer understand the new dialectic through which it is possible to overcome the old philosophies (Joll, 2009: 59). Gramsci's view of dialectics is common both with Hegel and with Marx. In other words, his dialectic was something between the views of Bukharin and Croce. It seems that he has understood dialectics in a way. In the simplest sense, he defines dialectics as the interaction of two things with something else. For example, the reflection of the leader and the intellectual guide both of them and the masses are under their guidance. Secondly, he uses the term dialectic in the Hegelian sense; that is, historical analysis with respect to the three concepts of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, as well as the Hegelian concept of "negation of the negation." The third Gramscian dialectical sense, which is important for one of the central issues in his Marxism, is the relationship between superstructure and substructure (Joll, 2009: 93).

In Gramsci's view, dialectics is a movement that human beings can help it with intentional transformation into force in the dialectical process. If it happens, then a somewhat new mutation of society and a new kind of consciousness has emerged; "Each antithesis must necessarily set itself up as a radical enemy of the thesis to destroy and replace it." In the analysis of the transition from quantity to quality and the relationship between substructure and superstructure; Gramsci emphasized some texts of Marx and Engels. For example, he paid special attention to political, economic foundations from the works of Marx. Marx wrote in a famous exposition that: "no social system would be destroyed unless all the productive forces capable of flourishing were fully realized, and the new production relations would never emerge unless the material conditions of its existence were found reached maturity in the ancient society. This exposition described for Gramsci the complexity of the historical situation and unknown possibilities that laid in any situation, because the change was probably slow, and the evolution of new forces is not always foreseeable (Joll, 2009: 94). Here, Gramsci explicitly emphasizes pragmatism on which human beings can change the status quo.

Voluntarism

Gramsci's disagreement with the reduction of history to sociology and equalizing Marxism with the sociological method is also related to one of his fundamental attitudes, namely, "voluntarism." This belief states that human beings can affect the events, the evolutions are not predetermined, and it is impossible to predict something in history decisively.

Hegemony

The term Hegemony or Hegemonic was one of the main political slogans of the Russian Social-Democratic movement (1890-1917). The thinking that contributed to the development of this slogan was first known in the works of Plekhanov in 1883-1888. In these writings, Plekhanov not only emphasized the necessity of an economic struggle against employers but also insisted on the vital necessity of the working class's political movement against Russian Tsarism. Thus, in Plekhanov's view, "hegemony" is the concept of a coalition of the proletariat with other hardworking classes for the struggle against Tsarism. After Plekhanov, people such as Menshevik leaders and Marnov used the term hegemony in their writings and interpreted it as the political supremacy of the working class in the coalition against Tsarism (Anderson, 2004, 41). At that time, Lenin also used "hegemony" for the coalition of the working-class with hardworking classes such as peasants, and the domination of the working class on other classes (Andersson, 2004: 46); Gramsci sees "hegemony" as an ideological and cultural tool by which the ruling groups preserve their domination with the spontaneous consent of subordinate groups, including the working class. For Gramsci, the "hegemony" of the ruling class means that this class has been able to encourage the classes of society to accept moral, political and cultural values (Strinati, 2008, 222).

Gramsci's "hegemony" represents a subtle form of cultural "domination". The bourgeois ideology influences the minds of the masses through the tools of civil society and gets their satisfaction and the legitimacy of the state. Tools such as churches, schools, education, family, and media are present in civil society and apply the domination of the ruling class indirectly (Gramsci, 2007: 65). Gramsci believed that hegemony could be applied on an international scale. Gramsci saw the hegemony as domination

with satisfaction; where the proletarians enroll their values and interests in the center of common culture, and the result is a kind of soft and velvet domination (Bretonz, 2003: 26). The concept of hegemony is the most important and original part of Gramsci's thought. This concept is of great importance in the eyes of the post-Gramscian thinkers because it could explain the mechanism of reproduction and the cause of the continuity of the capitalist system. Before this conception, Marxism resorted to Marx's economic views in order to explain the causes of capitalism. They argued that this class could have excelled in the economy in the pursuit of the means of production, and they dominated other domains because of the economic superiority. Despite the economic crises and the world war and other problems, the capitalist system remained stable. Hence, Gramsci tried to look at this subject from various aspects. The sovereignty of the bourgeois class continued due to its "hegemony" over other classes, and especially the working class. In his view, the cultural and moral superiority of capitalism in civil society and the acceptance of capitalist values by the working class have led to the reproduction of capitalism over time (Tasaloti, 2012: 88)

Intellectuals

Gramsci's insistence that political leadership should be based on cultural and moral domination alongside economic dominance turned into two other issues that Marxists and others in the Western world today are concerned about. Gramsci regarded the intellectuals as a major player in the revolutionary process. He had learned from historical studies that intellectual elites play an essential role in preserving the social and political system (Such as priests at the Church of the Middle Ages). Due to the importance that he gave to the role of the elites in maintaining the stability of the system and creating revolutionary changes, both in theory and in practice, the role of the political party became one of its major concerns (Joll, 2009: 10).

Gramsci considered the working class's path to escape from the "hegemony" of capitalism is the "hegemony" of the working class. He believed that the working class should be able to create its own "hegemony" in civil society in order to achieve power. He argued that the working class must necessarily take advantage of the tools of civil society, such as the media, education, and socialization, as well as capitalist patterns in order to achieve superiority. One of the most important patterns is the concept of the intellectuals and their role in creating hegemony for a class that Gramsci has studied in detail. To understand the normative dimension of Gramscian thought, it is important to understand the role of the intellectuals. Intellectual is the one whose mental and intellectual activity is more than others, according to Gramsci are. Thus, it divided the intellectuals into organic and traditional ones. In the case of organic intellectuals, he writes: "Any social group that originates in the core of a fundamental role in the production world; however, it produces organically one or more layers of intellectuals; these intellectual layers give converge or consciousness of their special role in that social group, both in economic and political context (Gramsci, 1978: 90). Traditional intellectuals include every class that emerges as a new ruling class in a particular historical context and encounters intellectuals with a historical continuity (Gramsci, 1979: 56).

Working Class Party

Gramsci believed that a revolutionary party belonging to the working class should be based on a particular type of class-consciousness. This party must completely free its organization and moral values from the dominance of the bourgeois world. Gramsci insisted on the necessity of a powerful and influential leadership (Joll, 2009: 60-59). Unlike Lenin, Gramsci believed that the revolution is not just the technical capture of power. In his view, the proletarian revolution was not merely an appropriate political opportunity, but also depends on the moral and cultural conditions; the conditions in which the masses come to consciousness and recognize their role in the process of revolution. These masses, who are conscious of their will for liberation and have intellectually enough sophistication for revolution, would take action. For this reason, the party must take steps in this direction, not to impose its manifestations on the masses. Mentioning these cases results in the issue of the "Working Class Party" in Gramsci's thought. According to the Gramsci's view, the Labor Council in the Leninist sense is the product of the capitalist society and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, they cannot constitute socialism (Kolakofsky, 2008: 283).

In the Gramscian thought, the socialist society is a free and decentralized society in which power is in the hands of the workers' council. In contrast to Lenin's conception of a centralized society in which power is at the hands of the party and its leaders. (Bashiriyeh, 2008: 136). One of Gramsci's ambitions was writing "The Prince" developed by Machiavelli 400 years ago. However, in the twentieth century, the role of the Prince as the initiator of political change is played by the political party of the Workers' Council; this is the task of this prince is the deployment of hegemony.

Civil Society

Civil society was a special concern for Gramsci as a complex whole of the "private" and public institutions, relations, organizations and traditions between the government and its law, as well as the economic substructure. Indeed, Gramsci had a significant contribution to the elimination of Marxism from the economic problems of Bernstein, Kautsky and other economists of the Second International. In this context, the role of the civil society and its importance for Gramsci has played a key role (Milani, 1998: 7). In Gramsci's viewpoint, the state is a dictatorship with a kind of compulsory system used to control the mass of people within a certain method of production and economy. The state is not a balance between the political and civil society, but also the hegemony and the leadership of a social group over the entire society through an nongovernmental organization such as church, syndicate, trade union, and schools. Civil society is the field of intellectuals. This is, however, the case of complex societies in the advanced capitalista. Gramsci extended the borders of civil society much more than the concept of Marx and Hegel. In his opinion, all cultural, political and social organizations and institutions in any society, and in short, everything that is not governmental would be in civil society (Milani, 1998: 28).

Historical Front

The attempts to analyze the relationship between superstructure and substructure and to describe the relations between structural and contingent explanations pushed Gramsci toward the "historical front." He uses this term to describe a moment when both objective and subjective forces are combined to bring about revolutionary change. The moment when the economic structure of the old order was collapsing, and some people were using the situation with historical certainty and insight; "the concept of the historical front, in which the historical forces are content and ideology." He wrote elsewhere: "the substructure and superstructure make up a historical front. Gramsci believes that recognizing that objective material force has reached a point where the occurrence of a revolution is possible depends on the correct analysis of the intellectual (Joll, 2009: 97).

Gramsci's Epistemology

1. An epistemological theory with a sociological context that requires attention to their definition of knowledge and its relation to society or social system
2. Fundamentals of thought, both philosophical and sociological from Gramsci's point of view
3. Different methods for analyzing the existing relationships between knowledge and social structure

Gramsci wrote in prison: "every day a new line of my link to the past is broken, and it becomes harder to re-link these discrete lines. I think the personality trait, which is a set of practices used to react to the relationship with the world around, has undergone a radical transformation. This is the transformation of an inhuman character (Tulio Altan, 2002: 188). The concept of the objective in metaphysical materialism means that objectivity can exist even outside of humanity. However, when it is emphasized that reality can exist without the presence of man, either we turn to metaphor or take a step into some form of Sufism and Mystery. We know the reality only in relation to mankind, and since human beings are a historical entity, the consciousness of reality and objectivity is historical. Gramsci states: "Through the generations, given that each generation represents the mentality of a historical period, an elderly generation can be born with old thoughts and younger generations with childish thinking; that is, there is no historical connection; a generation that can train young people."

Gramsci left school for two years because of their living conditions. Hence, from the very childhood, one of his motives in the hostility to the rich was his dropout, as he states. The social conditions had shaped his knowledge and worldview from the beginning in contradiction to the existing circumstances (Tulio Altan, 2002: 199). Gramsci emphasized the necessity of education for workers at the widest possible level; that is, there are external conditions that the worker does not understand so that consciousness would increase their level of understanding, and they would be aware of their own rights and status (Rev., 2009: 33). It means that workers come from the social determination of knowledge to the epistemic determination of the community.

The fact that the revolution and its preparation require a profound change in the consciousness of the masses is an essential element in Gramsci's philosophy. According to him, after such a change in the consciousness, the masses will no longer be the passive recipients of governmental plans, but they will be a vital factor in deciding on those plans and plays a positive and active role. As he suggests, "the standardization process of public sentiments is no longer mechanical and causal, but is a consciously and critical process." (Tulio Altan, 2002: 198)

Gramsci says that the perception of history is an activity that embraces a variety of other activities, from ethics and politics to art (Joll, 2009: 21). Gramsci's consciousness of the anthropological meaning of culture tells about a startling modernism. "In relation to the concept of the world of culture," individuals belong to certain groups that determine their way of thinking and action. Individuals are in some way altruist, so there are always masses or collective human beings (Tulio Altan, 2002: 191). It means that the individual's type of thinking is influenced by the class he belongs to. Here, the social determination of knowledge is evident in Gramsci's theory. Regarding the will and power, Gramsci sees man's nature in history. However, the will is not dynamic, because countless people constantly accept its rationality, that is, culture becomes desirable (ibid: 197). Gramsci has a clear insight into the link between the cultural dimension and the economic structures of society. Gramsci says that the technical relationship between production and a specific type of economic civilization should be considered, which requires a specific method of thinking, certain strategic norm, and special habit. Here, the relationship between the type of economy and technology reveals the social determination of knowledge.

The Epistemic Determination of the Community

Both in politics and in individual behavior, the human ability to rebuild itself and its environment are identified only through consciousness and historical analysis—that is, through an understanding of the historical conditions encompassed societies and individuals (Tulio Altan). This is the dialectical relationship between community and knowledge. The question now arises whether all people find this historical consciousness or certain individuals. Gramsci considers the role of intellectuals to be important in the historical consciousness. Thus, if only intellectuals can achieve such consciousness, it is one of the Gramsci's exceptions that can be taken. He emphasized the role of culture and thought in the evolution of history, as well as the performance of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society and the state (Tulio Altan, 2002: 192).

Gramsci was interested in the observable signs of the change of imminent history (will), as well as the system of cultural and moral values that specifically identifies each community (Joll, 2009: 36). Gramsci wrote in 1918 that: "the wider and more productive the cultural life, the closer his ideas to the truth;" therefore, he considered an external aspect for the truth. The idealistic and voluntarism tendencies are prominent in Gramsci's thinking (Joll, 2009: 37). Gramsci believes that the superstructure can cause massive changes and change the course of the movement of history. He also believes that knowledge of human beings sometimes plays a more decisive role than the economy, and might even affect the economic areas (Gramsci, 2007: 62). The epistemic determination of the community is quite clear in this statement of Gramsci. Throughout Gramsci's "Letters from Prison," he emphasized that any major historical change and the emergence of any new elite is characterized by a kind of intellectual and moral reform. In other words, Gramsci believes that any historical change requires consciousness. Here, Gramsci believes in the epistemic determination of the community.

He did not consider the ideas merely as a product of economic power. He believed that the ideas and culture could change the social system, and emphasized the importance of culture and its relation with politics (Joll, 2009: 37). According to Gramsci, the class-consciousness is not something that has developed itself but must be carefully developed. The expectation that the masses who have suffered from such material and spiritual slavery conditions could fulfill their own historical transformation or the expectation that the masses would somehow spontaneously initiate and continue the revolutionary practice is an illusion of ideologists. He is opposed to the Marx's point of view that the economic conditions led to the spontaneity of the proletariat, but also highlighted the role of the workers' council for enlightening the masses under the Lenin's influence (Joll, 2009: 58).

The Dialectical Relationship between Community and Knowledge

The relations between culture and personality in Gramsci's anthropology are of particular importance. As he says "human nature includes a set of social relationships that create a certain historical consciousness. This consciousness shows only what is natural. In addition, social relations are conflicting at every moment and are constantly changing. Therefore, human nature does not act as a homogeneous entity of all human beings at all times. Gramsci accepts that Marx's concept of consciousness is the product of social relations that acts as a norm for arbitration. However, Gramsci emphasizes these relationships not static but dynamic. Here, historicism and multiplicity of human nature find meaning in the conflict of various human beings (Tulio Altan, 2002: 195). He says that: "human beings can affect their own transformation and environment if they have a clear view of the quantity and quality of scientific facilities provided for them. The man understands the historical status in which he finds himself, and then he can play a role in improving the situation. The true philosopher is the man of action, and the philosopher must inevitably be the man of action (ibid: 197).

The fascist party and its existence have a dialectical relationship. The Fascism took its existence as well as its power among retirees who were despaired of the civil life and dissatisfied with their economic status, whose feelings were hurt due to the failure of Italy to enforce its territorial rights at the Peace Summit. Gramsci states that: "Fascism is an illegal aspect of capitalist violence, and the re-establishment of the state is the legalization of this violence (Joll, 2009: 62). On the one hand, social conditions created a turmoil situation. On the other hand, the middle class created fascism to preserve its self-interests. There is also a dialectical relationship between community and knowledge. Gramsci says: "New cultural creation does not mean exploration because we have taken values and norms from the past, but it means the critical generalization of the past truths or the socialization and transformation into the bases of living action, harmonious elements, and mental and moral order. In Gramsci's writings, a specific dynamics and desirability emerge between the individual, culture and social action (Tulio Altan, 2002: 189). Here is a kind of interactive and dialectical relationship between culture and human actions for building the new culture. Regarding the decisive front in which both objective and subjective forces are combined and lead to revolutionary changes, it should be considered that the superstructure or substructure is decisive in such circumstances. Thus, the substructure does not only cause a change, but also the superstructure can transform the conditions. The combination of these two factors lead to change, so there is a dialectical relationship between superstructure and infrastructure. (Joll, 2009: 37)

Sociological Approach to Knowledge

Marxists emphasize external factors and see everything in the base. They argue that this is the way of livelihood that shapes our thinking and knowledge, and the thinking changes whenever this livelihood changes. However, Gramsci as a right Marxist does not authenticate the external factors and looks at superstructure as the factors that can change the situation, and takes a stand against the determinist Marxists. In order to explain the issues and the continuity of capitalism, Gramsci proposes an idea that Marxists did not find; the Marxists considered the factors of production as the cause of the continuity of capitalism, while Gramsci knew the cultural factors and the hegemony that the capitalist class imposes to the subordinate class through civil society and its intellectuals as the reason. In Gramsci's epistemic opinions, there is a different epistemic determination between the masses and the intellectual class. For example, Gramsci speaks about the working class and says that: "Social conditions and the ruling class have canalized the workers' way of thinking so that they are not conscious of their rights and status."

Here, we see the social determination of knowledge. It is while one can find an epistemic determination in Gramsci has thought when the organic intellectuals or the workers' council comes to "consciousness for self." Gramsci believes that knowledge is determined by the social class, which in turn promotes relativism. He proposes exceptions to his sociology in order to get out of this relativism:

1. An organic intellectual: every intellectual class has its own thought that identifies and channelizes the policy of that class. The intellectuals recognize the position of their class by looking at historical developments and looking at the future. They attempt to make the masses conscious, in order to create the true consciousness with their help. Organic intellectuals are not socially determined like the masses. However, traditional intellectuals are dependent on the capitalist class, while they are not conscious of their dependence.
2. Culture
3. The proletariat class, who has become aware of its social and historical status and has reached wise sense from common sense, according to Marx, they have become conscious of themselves.
4. The Working Class Party, as the new prince, directs the masses and leads to innovation and creativity.

Critique of Gramsci's Ideas

1. Gramsci, in spite of his Marxist tendencies, considered the intellectual transformation of humankind as the cause of historical movement and revolution. He scholarly and fairly criticized the absolutism of Marxism and rejected it.

According to Gramsci, the factor of historical movement is the thought of man, and it is less clear among the peasant masses rather than the proletariat. Therefore, the peasants are background actors in the revolutionary movements.

2. According to Gramsci, the cultural and ideological relations between the ruling and subordinate classes have a diminished effect on the domination of the former. This suspicion can be criticized by the political thought of Imam Khomeini and religious texts.
3. For Gramsci, the main point of Marxism was the integration of various aspects of life, thought, history, philosophy, politics, and science into a single system for the first time in human life. This is an indication of their lack of consciousness of various philosophical schools, especially the divine religions. It is because philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle as well as other divine religions had integrated different aspects of the life, philosophy, politics, and science in a single system for decades before Marxism.
4. According to Gramsci, the reality is recognized in relation to humankind, and the reality is meaningless without humanity. In this opinion, he is opposed to the scientific realism of Marxism and agreed with pragmatists.
5. Gramsci, like other Marxists, has given authenticity to the community, and the individual is transformed in it. This belief has a fundamental bug, and the supporters of humanism have proved the weakness of this theory.
6. Gramsci considers that knowledge is determined by the social class, and proposes exceptions to his sociology: Knowledge of each person is formed according to his class requirement. Therefore, human positions will be based on his social class. Consequently, Gramsci sees class identity as the main factor in the emergence of human knowledge and position. While the individual and his epistemic tools, in particular, intuition and knowledge, have a major role in the formation of knowledge. He ignores individual identity and does not notice other collective identities. For example, gender identity or national identity can affect knowledge.
7. Gramsci is a Marxist Leninist but thinks as a non-Marxist in many cases. Therefore, he has dialectic thoughts. In his view, we can find the strings of pragmatism, idealism, and realism. Although his epistemology does not follow a certain philosophical school, he prefers Marxism in social and economic affairs.
8. Gramsci considers the human nature as social relationships that create a certain historical consciousness. Thus, Gramsci rejects innate things, and many philosophical schools obviously deny this idea.

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