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PERIODS OF GRAMSCI'S PHILOSOPHY

1. Interpretational presuppositions

Viewing this problem at least two things should be mentioned in advance: we are not going to discuss the historical periods of Gramsci's age, nor the periods of his life.

Historical events and the turning points of a career are external changes compared with the inner, intellectual ones. Of course, this approach is not meant to be one of the philosophy of ideas since we are also aware of what an important or even determining role these changes have. All the same we do not intend to study these external events since we do not consider the changes taking place in the external conditions to be automatically changes of philosophical kind. What we are concerned with is Gramsci's *relation* with the change of his external circumstances, as mirrored in his philosophy. In the early period of his activity this means a later reflexion to events, an a posteriori consciousness while in the mature period of his work it frequently resulted the foresight of historical events. The revolutionary events of Russia (1917) for example made a crucial impression in Gramsci but the fundamental change it made in his philosophy should be dated not from 1917, but from 1918—1919. He needed this time to make a basic change in his early conception and to become aware of the happenings. As a matter of fact, that so important and tragically ending episode of Gramsci's life: his arrest in 1926 does not bring a turning point in *his philosophical thought* even though it is the greatest landmark in his life. This remark is emphasized most of all against those interpretations according to which it is just his arrest that divides his work into two parts: before 1926 Gramsci was a politician and after 1926 a "man of culture".¹

On the other hand we do not wish to treat Gramsci's conception statically but dynamically, *in its development*.² By the way let us mention that two periods can be differentiated in the reception of the Italian philosopher in Hungary. At the beginning the task was Gramsci's *general introduction* which meant a necessary step in Gramsci's Hungarian reception. But a later point — in order to avoid unintentional deforming — the introduction of Gramsci's philosophy in its development seems to be required. This way it will be possible to comprehend Gramsci's philosophy *in its totality* without attaching excessive importance to one or other period relating to the whole.³ Althusser's Gramsci interpretation — for example — implies the supposition that Gramsci's early philosophy influences *all* of his work. Therefore, following Althusser, Gramsci is regarded to be a Hegelian, Crocean thinker in some interpretations, which conclusion, considering the original texts, seems to be a bit absurd.⁴ It is a similar — and equally frequent — misinterpretation to exaggerate the significance of his articles from 1919—1920 and thus declaring Gramsci to be a „philosopher of praxis”.⁵

2. Periodization of Gramsci's philosophy

The first important statement naturally follows from these presuppositions. Here we are dealing with the *whole* of Gramsci's philosophy and we intend to make difference between smaller turns and the changes marking a whole period. When viewing his work philosophically, as well, it can be observed how his thought had developed from step to step, how he approached the Marxian, Leninian standpoint, how he could understand and improve it, influenced by Comintern. Meanwhile his thinking has gone through several smaller modifications, in accordance with social-political changes. But not each of these changes caused *new period* in his work. For example Gramsci, the beginner, during the years of World War I. breaks with his early Sorelianism and turns to Croce's theory, which is not independent from Sorel's. All this — however important — did not bring fundamental novelties regarding his whole work, it did not alter the basis of his theory and it remained only temporal. Becoming materialist, as an effect of the Russian revolution, means a true landmark, which denies (*Aufheben*) the most characteristic feature of his previous views. Therefore 1819—1919 is regarded to be a turning point.

As a matter of fact, there is *only one more* turning point of the same importance in Gramsci's work, which can mark the period of 1923—1924. Gramsci, after having attained the Marxian and Leninian viewpoint in 1919, during the „biennio rosso” and in the struggle for physical being that followed, he accepted Marxism theory and the results of the Bolsheviks.⁶ This meant the trial of his Marxism as well as it resulted its intensifying. But during this period we can perceive traits of mechanical borrowing what he changes during his stay in Moscow and Vienna. The reason of this turning point may be due to Gramsci's understanding Lenin in his own reality and at the same time he realized the specific features characteristic of the Italian situation as compared with the Russian. After the turning point of 1923—1924 Gramsci works out an „Italian translation” of Marxism. In our view this means that from accepting and attaining Marx's and Lenin's theory, he turns to the creative elaboration of Marxism which is adequate to the Italian situation. He introduces a new terminology and fills the old with new contents to depict the concrete social-political conditions in Italy and to prepare and form revolutionary action. The description of the demands of „guerra di posizione” (War of position), his theory of the intellectuals, the hegemony, the concensus and other terms represent *the original elements* of Gramsci's philosophy *inside Marxism*. We should add however, that this second turn in his work is of course not of the same, quality, not so radical, as the earlier one was: then it was a turn from a viewpoint from near idealism to Marxism, while in the second case his previous views, that is his Marxism, *does not change* in its foundations, it is only modified in view of the necessity defined by the Italian situation.

3. The three periods

Gramsci's philosophical activity therefore can be divided into three main periods: „dualism” (1914—1919), „Marxism” (1919—1924) and „translation” (1924—1935) periods.

4. The period of „dualism”

Young Gramsci's theory is basically dualistic.⁷ On the one hand he is under the influence of the workers' movement from the beginning and this he attaches to the Socialist movement (but not to its official positivistic-reformistic leaders). This is

the reason of his relation with Sorel, the praxis-philosopher and moralist. On the other hand, as a consequence, he agrees with those opinions which regard ideality, morality to be important (Bergson, Croce, R. Rolland, Gentile ect.) Thus he expects the renewal of Socialist movement from a return to the ideality, and this means a positive alternative — to use Togliatti's expression⁸ — in contrast with the flat rendering of the Marxian theory of the time.

The period of „dualism” can be divided into *two more parts*. The simultaneous effect of the workers' movement and intellectuality can be detected clearly only in the first, so-called “culturist” period while the “transitional” period following it manifests a self-critical turn as an effect of the events of 1917 and the World War.

In his “culturist” period (1914—1917) his concept is basically defined by the neo-hegelianism of Naples, the “Renaissance of idealism”, and G. Sorel.⁹ Therefore *man* — his culture, his consciousness and moral behaviour — gets into the centre of his thinking. Gramsci regards *subjective factor* very important all through his work against positivism and economism (Loria, Bucharin).¹⁰ Although this is not subjectivism, the relation of culture and politics is treated in a manner characteristic of idealism during his beginning phase. He speaks of the primacy of culture against politics: “Culture is the basic term of socialism” — he said. But in contrast with George Lukács, Gramsci defines culture as a means for political ends.¹¹ Thus the element of subjectivity is naturally completed with an *immanent view* — originating from the Italian philosophical tradition (Machiavelli, Vico) — which strives to avoid transcendence and messianism. Political aim for him is socialist revolution, a conscious historical act, and therefore intellectual and moral antithesis of bourgeois society. In order to realize this political aim, an “intellectual and moral reform” is necessary which shapes the homogeneous consciousness and collective will of the proletariat.¹² Gramsci, with his humanistic views, did not realize the social role of force and considered the anti-jacobinic character of the revolution to be most significant.¹³ But the ideals of the old world are gradually smashed by the events of the world war: ideological crisis is added to the social-political crisis. This is what turned Gramsci's attention to a more realistic consideration of the *historical moment*.

During the “*period of transition*” (1917-1919) Gramsci gradually gives up his early dualism and as a result of the events, begins a “new, fresh study” of Marxian theory, as Lukács said in *Ontology*. This results that instead of mere economical fact he regards man to be the most important element of history, who is able to change society with his will and action.¹⁴ He stops criticizing jacobinism and shares the view which says that in Italy the same thing must be done as in Russia. The gaining of masses and the reshaping of their everyday consciousness are necessary for the activity to establish new institutions: this means the beginning of political and economical activity. This is the time when he first mentions the problem of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, he regards it a *necessary transitional* means for history as a process, that can be changed only with long and enduring work.¹⁵ This change can be realized with implementation the ideas — the ideas of Marxism. To Gramsci *praxis* means the same as it did to Hegel, Marx and Lenin: *the transition of ideal into real*, that is *practice*.¹⁶

By the end of the transitional phase the cultural, the moral and the ideal factors have become material in Gramsci's conception: he traces back their essence to economics and the relationsystems of society. At the same time this means that materialistic conception of history, the subjective factor and political-social praxis joined in his conception, and these became an organic unit. Tearing them off necessarily results a deformation of the interpretation.

5. Attempt for realizing Marxist thought

Several historical turning points can be found in the following period. From among them, the foundation of the Comintern, the movement of the factory councils in Turin, the foundation of the ICP and developing and strengthening of fascism are of special importance — in a positive or negative sense — for Gramsci, and he took part in them both as an active politician and a theoretician. All through the period of “Marxism” a common spiritual inspiration, the *ideal and practical influence of Comintern* leaves its mark on Gramsci’s conception. Regarding his philosophical development, this period — beyond historical turning points — may be called homogeneous.¹⁷ At this time he strives to deepen and realize the experiences resulting from the conceptions of Marx and Engels, as well as Labriola and Lenin. In acquiring the conception of Marx and Lenin his stay in Moscow and Vienna mean a turning point for this open the door toward a creative and original conception.

Further two periods — the so-called “ordinovism” (1919—1920) and the so-called “maturity” period (1921—1924) — can be found in the period of “Marxism” (1919—1924).

On the one hand, “ordinovism” is a movement (the Italian variant of world revolution), on the other hand, it is the method of revealing reality (“To tell the truth”). The term refers to a weekly: *Ordine Nuovo*, the fights of the Turin workers during the “red two years” were directed by young people gathering round this paper. Lenin wrote about this movement and method that they are „in complete accordance with the principles of the 3rd Internationale”.¹⁸

The movement of the factory councils in Turin was typically a “war of movement” growing from the perception that the factory is not only an economical, but also a political organization, therefore class struggle should be started from the factory: the soviets, the buds of the workers’ power are to be organized here. According to Gramsci, the “either-or” character of historical situation¹⁹ cannot be solved with force, so, first of all, the *workers’ psychology* should be unified and organized,²⁰ all the more so, since catholicism, nationalism and the beginning fascism also wished to make an influence on workers. The aim of “ordinovism” was the forming and network-like joining of proletarian institutes: factory councils, then the dictatorship and state of the proletariat in Europe.²¹ This is the guarantee of the success of the *world revolution*. This conception is very dynamic. Now he accepts jacobinism and at the same time condemns the general strike-myth of syndicalism. As Gramsci later says, general strike is a “passive activity” and not revolutionary praxis. He refuses mere spontaneity, too, and emphasizes that praxis must be spontaneous *and* conscious. Thus the movement should be connected with the fight for proletarian culture and organizing culture.²² In this process the party has an outstanding role: namely that gaining the power must be connected with its practice, forming the unifying of the psychology of workers and peasants, social consensus.

The “ordinovists” formulated these principles regarding mainly the results of the Russian revolution, but at the beginning of 1920 this movement spread beyond these borders: armed factory occupations began.²³ The outcome of this fight was not previously settled, but three factors contributed to its failure: regional isolation, the lack of the support of the South and of peasant masses, and finally the reformism of socialist leaders. Despite all these, it led to an important result — regarding Gramsci’s philosophical development —, the realization of the historical role of *force*. But he wished to use force after knowing the concrete situation. The method of “ordinovism”, i.e. taking reality into account, showed the influence of Comintern and the

refusal of messianism.²⁴ He has no more any illusion about the practical realizing of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This proves also that — according to Marxist tradition — he considers history, as well as revolution, to be *process*. It is obvious for him that society cannot be changed with a “Fiat!”, but long, enduring and steady work is needed for it. This is the reason of his activity towards founding proletarian cultural organizations.

The *period of “maturity”* contributes to the development of Gramsci’s philosophy with great historical changes. In 1921, the period of “war of position” begins maintaining the historical alternative of fascism and the workers’ movement. But the revolutionary impulse of the masses became slower and later the fight was fought for physical existence. This means the most “leftist” phase of his conception since by concentrating only on physical, armed fight, he temporarily failed to analyze the concrete situation, the debates with Bordiga and Tasca.²⁵ But he kept on accepting the analyses and slogans of the Comintern, and occasionally it seemed to be mechanical acceptance.²⁶ In 1921-1922 he analyzed mainly the experiences of the past. He showed that the economical fact, i.e. the organic crisis of capitalism, is not enough for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for gaining political power. On the contrary: as a result of the meakness of the subjective factor, fascism started a counter-attack. At the beginning he also explains the nature of fascism with the dictatorship born on the basis of the petty bourgeois, while later he realizes that fascism is backed by land-owners and capitalist plutocracy.²⁷

Beside the analysis of the experiences of the “red two years”, his stays in Moscow and Vienna greatly contributed to the maturing of his theory. This is the period of the *self-critic turn*. (1923—1924) As member of the executive committee of the Comintern, he gets acquainted with its work, its leaders and writes articles for *Imprekorr*. He works a lot, though his state of health is bad. In Moscow he writes the article of the turn, entitled *Che fare?* where he emphasizes the essential importance of historicity and ideology for effective praxis. It is here that he breaks with his earlier conception and emphasizes that the Italian situation should be analysed *concretely* taking into account the results of historical materialism, the ideology of the working class. This time he clearly draws up the need for the creative conception of Marxism and his strife for restoring the philosophical unity of Marxism.²⁸

This theoretical change was preceded and founded by a political change, as it can be seen in his letters from Moscow and Vienna. In these letters he calls upon his mates of finish with “leftist” Bordiga, to intervene with Bordiga’s attempt to separate from the Comintern and to form a centralized party.²⁹ In the meantime — possibly as an effect of the spatial and temporal distance — he basically outlines his later *theory of revolution*, according to which, in contrast with the Russian revolution, in Central and Western Europe much more complex and enduring tactics and strategy are needed for the success of the revolution.³⁰ After returning home from Moscow and Vienna he strives to make concrete and “translate into Italian” his international experiences:

6. Re-creating Marxist synthesis

After 1924 Gramsci accomplished the “creative developing of Lenin’s Marxism” as Togliatti said. Thus the *period of “translation”* means a new phase of Leninism, in which his conception becomes, more engrossed, basically maintaining his previous positions.³¹ In accordance with the conception of the self-critical change, being influenced mainly by Lenin, he begins the concrete analysis of the situation in Italy.

Thus he gets to the "re-creating of Marxist synthesis" (J. Davidov), to working out a philosophical conception matching the economical-social-political situation in Italy. Lenin's theoretical and political work provided him with guidance at this point. His later relation with Comintern was also formed by these principles: he joins Lenin, even when some leaders of the Comintern do not.

The period of "translation" may be divided into further parts: namely the "application" (1924—1926), "hiatus" (1926—1928), "culture—historical" (1929—1930), "polemical" (1930—1932) and "political" (1932—1935) phases. The *basic thematics* and the special *new terminology* of Gramsci's original conception are being formed in the course of this period of "translation".

During the "application" phase Gramsci, now secretary-general of the ICP, wished to put into practice the principles of the Comintern (worker-peasant government, bolshevization of parties) according to the Italian situation. But after the 5th congress he interpreted the concrete historical situation in a basically different way from the Zinoviev-leadership. This period does not offer a direct attack against bourgeoisie, on the contrary it is a *transition to fight for power, the period of preparations*, in which the main task is gaining and organizing the forces of society, the consensus.³²

In this phase of position war the most serious change was necessary in the field of ideology: the Marx-picture of the masses formed by reformism, had to be changed and Lenin had to be accepted by the Italian public opinion. The ideological work was begun with the party workers aiming at a change of the *everyday sense* of the wide masses.

Gramsci shived to take over two main principles from the experience of the bolsheviks: hegemony and alliance policy. The term of *hegemony*, first used by Plechanov in the workers' movement, than by Lenin and others, as well, is used by Gramsci for the first time in 1925, in the sense of leading ability, as taken over from the Comintern.³³ It is obvious for him that during the period of transition, the *direct* transition from the dictatorship of fascism to the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible, first a consensus should be formed. This implies the improving of leading abilities (*direzione*), which is the precondition of the domination of the proletariat (*dominazione*). Hegemony is not the abandonment of dictatorship, only a demand of the period of position war.

The "Italian translation" of alliance policy is also necessary for the realization of hegemony. Revolution is a "question of land" in Italy, as well, but the stratification and situation of Italian peasantry requires a specific solution, especially in the case of religious, Catholic peasants influenced by the *Vatican* and the Southern peasantry who are bound to the agrarian bourgeoisie by the *traditional intelligentsia* (the clergy). If the proletariat wants to be a leading and dominant class (*classe dirigente e dominante*), it should get the consensus of wide masses of peasantry, too. This necessarily raises the problem of fighting against the political power of Vatican and the so-called old-type intellectuals (eg. Croce), Finishing with Crocean philosophy is thus a *practical necessity* and at the same time it is an opposition with the Italian type of popular Reformation.

The consideration of the Italian special features is demonstrated by his pointing out that Italian capitalism, the state possesses such political and organizational *reserves* and such a resisiting administration that makes the realization of proletarian revolution as if by magic unthinkable. This analysis of the situation is different from the views of the leaders of the Comintern that time and it points at the reintegration of subjective factor.

"Translating into Italian" made Gramsci *not only* a philosopher of national cha-

racter: he knew very well the international political events, the work of the Comintern. In 1925 he goes to Moscow, gains first hand experiences regarding the debate between the majority (Stalin, Bucharin) and the minority (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kameniev) within the Russian bolshevik party. One year later (Oct. 1926), in his letters to Togliatti then staying in Moscow he supports the majority, but draws the attention of both sections to the international effects of an eventual break. In Gramsci's view, in the present situation the masses in the West can be made revolutionary not by the fact of the bolshevik taking over of power but by the proletariat's aptitude to build socialism.

Not long after these letters — neglecting the immunity of MP's, by Mussolini's order — he is arrested. A new part of his life begins.

Researchers generally disregard the analysis of the "hiatus" period for we have got only a few documents concerning his intellectual development between his arrest (1926) and the beginning of writing the *Prison Notebooks* (1929).³⁵ He is taken from one prison to another, his nerves are deliberately worn out, his state of health is undermined. Cut from political practice, reading and debates with other prisoners are his only activity and delight. His prison letters and the memoirs of his mates in prison demonstrate a significant *deepening* of his philosophical conception. Therefore this is an important phase: it makes us understand the "otherness", the different character of the *Prison Notebooks*. We can follow that thematic continuity is characteristic of Gramsci's thinking in this period: he speaks and writes much about the problems of the South, about the peasant-question, about hegemony, the Vatican, fascism and about the possibility of the dictatorship of the proletariat. His opinion has not changed: fascism is not "brief parentheses" in Italian history but will fall only after a long and enduring fight against it.³⁶ Beyond thematic continuity *new motifs* occur in this conception. He prepares various studying courses for himself for the wishes to do something "für ewig" He reads several books a day — he is interested mainly by books of economics, history and literature. Reading is followed by a long *meditation*. Thus he thinks over the works of Croce, Machiavelli, Michels. When he is finally given some exercise books and pen he begins writing in possession of a large material.

His thoughts born during the "culture-historical" period also show this variety. The central themes of the "miscellaneous" writings in the first four notebooks (Q. I—IV.) are not the proletariat and the bourgeoisie but the relation of the *subaltern and the dominant classes* in general (classi subalterne e classe dominante). He wishes to explore the cultural history of these classes what is suitable for drawing general conclusions regarding the practical struggle of the labour movement. Consequently, there is no break between theory and politics in the *Prison Notebooks* — on the contrary, the contents of the books substitute for political praxis that has become impossible for him.³⁷ He is interested in the economical world crisis, the quinquennial plan of the Soviet Union, the politics of the Comintern, fascism: thanks to his friend, P. Sraffa, the economist, he can read several political papers and weeklies.

The basic idea of the "culture-historical" period could be summarized as follows: at present — Gramsci says — we are living in a period of *historical crisis* and its most important feature is *repression* based on power. Modern state (i.e. fascism) has lost or rather has not gained the consensus of the subaltern classes, instead of leading it is *only ruling*. Repression must be *denied*, a negative standpoint should be taken against it — but since history is of a process character the rapid victory of the oppressed classes cannot be realized. In this case, the main task is the (negative) "comprehension" of the state, making people conscious of the crisis.³⁸ This means

first of all the creation of a *new culture*, which realizes the consensus of the subaltern classes on a new basis (*struttura*). The oppressed classes have not only to seize the power, but have to gain a "permanent victory" over the ideological organizations of the dominant class (press, library, school, clergy) on a popular-national basis.

In this field the general task is first of all to cease the gulf between high culture and popular culture that is characteristic of societies developed not on their own basis. The educated class — that has been *cosmopolitan* since the Renaissance, ranging from the men of letters to military and technological intelligentsia — has totally lost touch with the people in the course of Italian history. Therefore, the people-nation (*popolo-nazione*) has developed spontaneously — in contrast with the French way of development — and thus could not formulate a class-consciousness for itself.³⁹ This was one of the main reasons for the failures of the past few years. The spontaneous consciousness (*senso comune*), the *folklore*, as the "philosophy" of everyday consciousness must be known for gaining consciousness. Italian *popular-national literature* must be founded, with the help of which the cultural level of the wide masses could be raised, and thus the consciousness of the receivers could be elevated, as well, these are the criteria of establishing new hegemony.⁴⁰ Questions of art should thus be discussed not only because of the beauty of the work of art but also because of the cause of the reception.⁴¹ Catholic art, that wins cadres for the ruling class from among the workers and peasants, is an obstacle to forming the new national-popular culture. This explains the importance of attacking Jesuite Brescianism. Another main element of becoming conscious is popular education, the condition of which is the high level of culture and critical mentality. However, Gramsci does not detach culture and social consciousness from the political sphere. In the time of the war of position it is culture that makes political leading to be resistant, persistent and bound to the people.

All these are the deepening of the topic of the intellectual and moral reform he had previously profounded, its aim being the *realization of the nation's political and cultural unity*.

In his so-called special writings during the "*polemic*" period (Q. IV—XI.) he goes on with working out the basic problem: he offers a complex description of the theme of the intellectuals. In Gramsci's view — beyond the social group having intellectual function — *every man* belongs to the intelligentsia in case he has got a definite *Weltanschauung*. Therefore it is not indifferent how much consciousness the masses and the leading intellectuals who direct the masses have got.⁴²

The criticism of traditional views that have become collective, social forces is needed for the realization of the workers hegemony. In his "polemic" period Gramsci attacks mainly Croce's and Bucharin's views — both of them were connected with Marxism, as well: namely that Croce wished to "re-translate" Marxism into the language of speculative philosophy, and Bucharin, in his *Manual popular* broke up the original unity of Marxism — that had been present at Marx and Lenin —, and he vulgarized and dogmatized it. Gramsci propounds his special conception on the basic questions of the philosophy of praxis (*filosofia della prassi*) arguing against Croce's and Bucharin's conception.⁴³

He criticizes *Croce* on the one hand as the "leader" of European importance of bourgeois liberalism, on the other hand as a revisionist wishing to integrate Marxism into bourgeois culture. On the course of his criticism, Gramsci strives to understand Croce in his complexity: he acknowledges that as the beginner of a popular Reformation he had considerably promoted Italian intellectual life, but at the same time he raised the gulf between high culture and popular culture. He wished to stay far

from social-political movements with his Erasmian behaviour but this meant that he backed fascism unintentionally. In the *Anti-Croce* Gramsci had planned to write, he would have acknowledged Croce's anti-positivism and anti-economism, but he also tried to point out that Croce himself remained devoted to economism for he eliminated the element of *practical activity* in his philosophy. In contrast with Croce, *politics* is inseparable from history and philosophy but not in the sense of the ceasing of philosophy! Croce's historicism remains abstract, speculative. He was unable to clean his conception from transcendence and from theology. When Gramsci criticizes the basis of Crocean ideology, he clearly sees, that ideology is to be rejected not in general for one of the basis of creating the new hegemony is ideology "set afloat".

His polemy against *Bucharin* is even more violent.⁴⁴ One of his most important objections is that Bucharin starts not from the criticism of the philosophy of everyday thinking but criticizes the systematic philosophies. Thus he starts *not from practice*, but from concepts and thus carries out the manualization of Marxism. He explains history and politics mainly in a mechanic, dogmatic and positivistic way. He underestimates idealistic philosophies, does not debate with the opponants, consequently his arguments are trivial and his victory is a verbal illusion. Bucharin does not discuss but presupposes *dialectics* thus he often remains scholastic. The result of argumentation based on formal logics is *vulgarization*. He does not discuss the concepts of being and change either and so he is unable to comprehend the essence of revolutionary transformation. He — like Loria — makes social progress depend on technical instrument (*strumento tecnico*), therefore he necessarily eliminates the categories of *praxis*, *historicity*, *subjectivity* from Marxism and thus he returns to a pre-Marxian materialistic position. This can be proved by his thoughts on the acknowledgement of external world's independence of man, its mystic being and its "objectivity". Consequently he cannot understand the problem of quantity and quality dialectically, neither the concept of *immanence*, what he thinks to be idealistic and thus he totally moves away from Marxism.

What is characteristic of Marxism, the *philosophy of praxis*? On the one hand it is just the immanent attitude deriving from Bruno and Machiavelli, that means the recognition of reality, historicity, on the other hand it is the consideration of subjectivity.⁴⁵ This was deduced from the analysis of Marx's and Lenin's works, first of all of the "*Theses on Feuerbach*"⁴⁶. For Gramsci, the philosophy of praxis is a total and integral ideology (*concezione del mondo*), a mass-culture that is historical and focuses on man, but is not speculative: no trace of theology and transcendence can be found in it. This philosophy is autosufficient and an autonomous one, that naturally relies on the culture of the previous period, but being polemical, exceeds it. The philosophy of praxis is philosophy *and* politics, in which theory and practice are in unity by praxis. Another characteristic feature is dialectics, examined both in nature and in society.⁴⁷

In Gramsci's interpretation, the philosophy of praxis is the *surpassing both of traditional idealism and of traditional materialism*: it is a synthesis of new type and higher level.⁴⁸ He doesn't give all the details of this synthesis but his uncompleted interpretation shows what the true understanding and continued development of Marxism mean.

In the final, so-called "*political*" period of Gramsci's philosophy (Q. XII—XXIX.) — after carrying out a reform in writing — he wishes to bring his material into a *political synthesis*. Unfortunately he could not finish this work either and its incompleteness makes its understanding rather difficult. His main aim in this field is the creation of a *political science* that would mean the modernization of Machiavelli's theory.⁴⁹

This political science is a *part* of the philosophy of praxis: Gramsci is considering the pros and cons of political struggle and its outcome in it.⁵⁰ As a consequence of the historicity of the philosophy of praxis, the conditions of political struggle should always be pointed out and interpreted in the real weighing of the given historical situation. This requires the consideration of both the material and ideal-institutional sides and thus leads to the thorough analysis of the relation of the *basis* (struttura) and of the superstructure (sovrastuttura) — the novelty of which is the handling of the two as a *historical block* (blocco storico). The changes in the basis — in the fields of social, political and military (national and international) power relations — closely interrelate with the changes of superstructure. Gramsci points out that socialist revolution does not automatically follow from the crisis of capitalism, in case its basis is lacking on the level of superstructure, i.e. hegemony.⁵¹ The crisis of capitalism is at the same time that of hegemony, but a new society is born from it only in case the conditions of creating the *new hegemony* are present, which was not the case during the “biennio rosso”. Therefore the social group that aims to seize the power has to improve its leading talent *before* the getting of power in order to be able to lead besides ruling after gaining the government. After all he considers the dictatorship of the proletariat to be the means in forming new power and hegemony, and *active consensus* is needed for it. In all these historical processes the political party as collective intelligentsia, has a main role.⁵² Its most important feature must be that it respond to social changes elastically, be not anacronistic — these can be done by avoiding bureaucratism.⁵³

Its main task is to teach and accustom people to *political activity* so that new culture, new moral, new type of man can be formed beside the new power. All these should be done not according to the pattern of *Americanism* and *Fordism* which use outer pressure in the organization and rationalization of production and society. In the socialist society the mechanization of man should be ceased, *alienation* should be liquidated, a better life standard should be realized and the violence-function of the state should be gradually pushed into the background.⁵⁴

State is obviously the central category in the “political” period. Keeping the state-concept of Marx, Engels and Lenin in view, Gramsci strives to intensify the problem. But he has a closer and a wider interpretation of state. According to the closer interpretation, the state is a *bureaucratic instrument of oppression* beside the hegemonic apparatus of civil society (società civile), while in the wider interpretation the state is *dictatorship + hegemony*, i.e. it contains the institutions of civil society, as well. But in any case, the state should be viewed in its historicity — forms of forces and of hegemony change historically. The aim is to avoid — if possible — “passive revolution”, that means the passivity and resignation of progressive social groups forced on the subaltern classes by the dominant class.

In 1935, two years before his death, — due to the fast decay of his state of health — he stopped writing his notes.⁵⁵

7. Gramsci's fortune

Gramsci's fortune offers important lessons for the whole Italian philosophy and Marxism. In the year of his death (1937), *Croce* writes his work in which he places the “death” of Marxism in Italy in the turn of the century. (1900) Nor does he predict a long life for the European Renaissance of Marxism, since it is “in contrast with advanced thinking and culture”. For a time the appearances supported these statements for Gramsci's writings were published only after the end of World War II. In the year of its publication the *Prison Letters* was awarded *Premio Viareggio* founded

world literary masterpieces. Then slowly the *Prison Notes* came to light in six volumes — selected and edited by Togliatti. Old Croce also responded to some volumes — seemingly he could not escape their influence. He says Gramsci “one of us” with his deep humanism. Though, until 1956, Gramsci was mainly considered to have been “Stalin’s devoted disciple”, his original conception could easily be recognized. A whole school, a materialistic school, has grown up on his texts which attacked half a century of idealistic culture, represented by Croce. Thus the hegemony of bourgeois culture in Italy, had ceased.

Of course, Gramsci is a thinker not only of national but of *international importance*. He takes on the traditions of Marxism. As regards his political theory, he is the *philosopher of the transition*, not a “Lenin of the West”, but the theoretician of the *transitional period* — therefore he has actuality in our days outside Italy, as well.

JEGYZETEK

Thesis—like summarizing of the results of our Gramsci research.

¹ It was mainly P. Togliatti who attacked the conception of the “two Gramsci”. (8. 107—110., 144, 152, etc.) But all the same, this false standpoint can be found even in the later Gramsci-literature, e.g. Merolle thinks, 1926 divides Gramsci’s work into “two totally different” parts. (11. 42.) A more general opinion is represented by C. Boggs saying that there are “no two Gramsci” and the continuity in the differing periods should also be considered. (9. 15—16.)

² Gramsci also draws the attention to this important methodological problem in the *Prison Notebooks* when he writes about “the rhythm of developing thinking”. (Q. 1841.)

³ Illustrating the problem with the Hungarian publications of his prison letters it is obvious that the edition of 1949 (1.) was meant to kindle the interest while the enlarged edition of 1974 makes a thorough examination possible. (2.)

⁴ Althusser’s well-known interpretation (3.) was widely accepted in Hungary, as well, since it was published in Hungarian, too.

⁵ This tendency is emphasized especially by the members of the Praxis-circle in Zagabria, by K. Kosik and M. Markovic. (4. 5.)

⁶ In the Gramsci interpretations of the English-speaking world and of the Soviet researchers a properly demonstrable interpretation is quite wide-spread lately, according to which the influence of the Comintern has brought a fundamental change in Gramsci’s conception — vide the works of R. Simon, A. Davidson and B. R. Lopuchov and I. V. Grigorieva.

⁷ The concept of dualism here is not used in the generally accepted sense of the history of philosophy. (“Descartes’s dualism”) We mean the duality of theoretical and practical effects and we regard it to be of central importance for — in our view — his early conception can be descuted only with the help of this concept. (Vide our monography: 13.)

⁸ Gramsci understood — Togliatti writes — “che la nuova cultura idealistica italiana rappresentava un passo avanti nello sviluppo della nostra cultura nazionale... che non era possibile prendere un atteggiamento strettamente negativo verso questa nuova corrente intellettuale...” (8. 41.)

⁹ There is a debate in the Gramsci literature about the judgement and extent of these intellectual influences. In our view, for Gramsci the influences of Napolitan neohegelianism and of B. Spaventa are only indirect, although similar elements can easily be discovered — as E. Garin rightly points out (14.) — in his conceptions of society and of man about 1916. G. Gentile, the subjective idealist — although making an influence on Gramsci with his concept of “life” — did not have a serious influence on Gramsci, as suggested by later research: G. Bergami (15.), B. Brunetti and others. The influences of B. Croce and G. Sorel are of greater significance and more lasting from the point of view of the history of influence.

¹⁰ The term “subjective factor” is used mainly in Soviet studies. The interpretation of the subjective factor in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin was treated by Tshagin. (17.)

¹¹ In 1919 *Lukács* emphasized in connection with cultur politics, that “The communist cultural programme is to offer the proletariat the highest and clearest art and not to allow to damage its taste with editorial-poetics degraded into a means of politics. Politics is only the means, the aim is culture.” (18. 304.)

¹² The first phrasing of “intellectual and moral reform” can be found at Renan. Sorel took it over from him, and modified it and from Sorel, Croce, Gramsci adapts this term, materializes it and fits it in the frames of the class struggle for the new type of society.

¹³ "Culturism" and "antijacobinism" mutually complement each other in young Gramsci's conception. At the beginning he laid the emphasis on the antijacobine element of the Russian revolutionary events, as well. (SG. 106.)

¹⁴ "E questo pensiero pone sempre come massimo fattore di storia non i fatti economici, bruti, ma l'uomo, ma la società degli uomini che si accostano fra di loro, si intendono fra di loro, sviluppano attraverso questi contatti (civiltà) una volontà collettiva... finché questa diventa la motrice dell'economia, la plasmatrice della realtà oggettiva..." (SG. 150.)

¹⁵ The process-like concept of revolution is in close relation with the process quality of history. This proved to be one of the head-stones of Marxist philosophy, it was not accidentally emphasized that revolution is "the developing process of the masses for many years" (Engels), "not a single act", but "a whole period of class-conflicts of the widest range" (Lenin). Gramsci's conception fits into this line: "La rivoluzione non è un atto taumaturgico, è un processo dialettico di sviluppo storico..." (ON. 30.)

¹⁶ Lenin deals with this ontological aspect of praxis, in his conspect to the *Wissenschaft der Logik* by Hegel. (19. 95.)

¹⁷ In our view, the failure of the factory council-movement in Turin does not bring a change in Gramsci's philosophical development. Therefore we think the proposal of 1921 as a caesura is groundless in *A. Leonetti's* (20.) and *Grigorieva's* (12.) otherwise excellent interpretation, even if this is a date of great importance in Italian workers' movement.

¹⁸ We mean Lenin's writing: Thesis on the basic tasks of the 2nd congress of the Communist Internationale.

¹⁹ In the Comintern there were several warnings for the alternative situation — including Lenin. On this theme Gramsci writes: "Le condizioni create dalla guerra... possono determinare questi sbocchi: o la conquista del potere sociale de parte della classe lavoratrice per gettare le basi di un ordine nuovo, o la morte per inedia... o la strage in permanenza..." (ON. 27.)

²⁰ Gramsci took over the term "workers' psychology" from *Labriola* probably in 1918. *Labriola* thought the consideration of "social psychology" important already in 1896. The term used as a synonym for consciousness, can be found in the phraseology of the Comintern.

²¹ In this perspective of the world revolution, the Bavarian and Hungarian Soviet Republics have an important role in Gramsci's conception and he writes several articles on them.

²² *G. Sorel's* influence on the "Ordinovist" movements of 1919—1920 should not be exaggerated. He takes over Sorel's conception of the "factory as a political organization", but — in contrast with syndicalism — he lays emphasis not on the strike but on the upgearing of production. Thus it could be proved that the proletariat is able to direct the factory and the society autonomously. The cultural and conscious elements can also be found in this spontaneous activity. In contrast with Sorel's antiintellectualism this definitely shows the influence of Lunacharsky, whose articles he knew well from the international press (*Imprekorr*).

²³ The social-political tableau of the period of 1919—1920 is given by *P. Spriano* in a book of his that has become a classic. (21.) As regards later literature, *M. Clark's* interpretation is worth mentioning. (22.)

²⁴ It is well-known that messianism was not unfamiliar for some representatives of the Comintern, either. In this period of "activity by all means" Gramsci demanded "clear soundness" (ON. 53.) As an active and analysing person he underwent the social changes in this soundness and immanent attitude. Transcendancy and mysticism were really alien from him. This is one of the main differences between young Gramsci and young Lukács.

²⁵ In his letters from Vienna to Rome in 1923—1924 he strongly criticized his own, earlier way of behaviour — when he was abstaining from polemy for a short time. (D. 650.)

²⁶ By the Comintern's analysis there was a revolutionary situation. Gramsci sees that in 1922, after *Marcia su Roma*, in Italy, it was rather a wish than reality. All the same he accepted the slogans of the Comintern, and agreed with Lenin's view, according to which revolutionary fights can and should be continued in a not revolutionary situation, as well.

²⁷ This statement of Gramsci is relevant from the aspect of the research of the history of fascism, for he arrived at this conclusion already in 1925.

²⁸ Gramsci's strife for re-establishing the totality of Marxism began in these years, what is underlined by *Boggs* (9.), *Grigorieva* (12.) and *Buci-Glucksmann* (24.), as well.

²⁹ His letters from Moscow and Vienna can be found in *P. Togliatti's* book (25.), other letters and documents were published by *G. Somai* (26.) In these letters Gramsci writes, that "Il partito deve essere centralizzato". (D. 662.)

³⁰ Vide: D. 673.

³¹ The term "translation" is used in a different sense as the usual. Lenin often pointed out in the session of Comintern: foreign delegates should "translate" the documents, they should put them into the national language. "Translation" therefore means the application of general principles of Marxism in concrete circumstances.

³² "Il compito essenziale del nostro partito consiste nella conquista della maggioranza della classe lavoratrice, la fase che attraversiamo non è quella della lotta diretta per il potere, ma una fase preparatoria, di transizione alla lotta per il potere, una fase insomma di agitazione, di propaganda, di organizzazione." — he writes. (CPC 37.)

³³ The term of hegemony in Gramsci was first concisely interpreted by *L. Gruppi*. (27.) In English-speaking countries this term has become very popular and several books were written on Gramsci's conception of hegemony: R. Simon's and P. Anderson's interpretations are of great significance. (6. and 28.)

³⁴ The problems and relations of the Italian South, the intelligentsia and the Vatican are first concisely treated in: *Alcuni temi della questione meridionale*. (CPC. 137—158.)

³⁵ Besides the basic bibliographies — like the works of *G. Fiori* (29.) and *A. Davidson* (30.) — informations can be gained for this period in the collection of memories, entitled *Gramsci vivo*. (31.)

³⁶ In this case, his opinion differed from the standpoint of the ICP and the Comintern that time, what made great debates possible on the course of which several reports were sent to Paris and Moscow about Gramsci's opinion. (For more details vide *P. Spriano*, 32.) It is a fairly frequent — though, in our view, not wholly founded — conception, mainly represented by *M. A. Macciocchi* (33.), according to which this time relations between Gramsci and the party grew worse, what — after Gramsci's death — lead to his total monopolizing by the party.

³⁷ *Togliatti* regards his "Master", Gramsci, a "man of the party" and considers politics to be the main line of Gramscian thought. (8. 136.) Of course, this statement should be completed, but the still occurring scientist view saying that Gramsci is "a man of culture" without much to do with politics, is totally false.

³⁸ Due to repression, the motif of negation (Q. 323—324.), West-German *G. Roth* regards that Gramsci is near the *Frankfurt School*, and is a spiritual relative of Marcuse. (34. 180.)

³⁹ The gulf between high culture and popular culture in Italy was caused by the loss of popular Reformation. Gramsci — following and at the same time criticizing *Croce*, — presses for a popular Reformation on material basis, by the Marxian and Leninian conception. (Q. 515.)

⁴⁰ *J. Thibaudau* wrote about Gramsci's concept of literature (35.) and *Péter Sárközy* about the creation of national-popular literature and about its essence, giving the most genuine Hungarian summarizing of Gramsci's concept of literature. (36.)

⁴¹ From among Gramsci's culture-historical and literary-theoretical analysis the most important one is his central theses that in the case of a literary work, first of all not its beauty should be examined, but the reason of its popularity. (Q. 86.)

⁴² Gramsci's concept of the intelligentsia is very original within Marxism. Some researchers — like *E. Garin* — regard this to be the central element of his philosophy.

⁴³ Gramsci elaborates the essence of the philosophy of praxis against Crocean idealism and Bucharin's vulgar-materialism, as it is rightly underlined by *N. Matteucci*. (39.)

⁴⁴ It is not an easy task to judge Bucharin's relation to Marxism. He was the one, who offered a basis for the canonization of Marxism by creating the "Popular manual", moreover — as it is seen in Lenin's "testament" — Bucharin did not understand dialectics therefore his argumentations became scholastic. At the same time — despite his mistakes — Bucharin remains an important figure of the history of 20th century Marxism.

⁴⁵ "La filosofia della praxis deriva certamente dalla concezione immanentistica della realtà, ma da essa in quanto depurata da ogni aroma speculativo e ridotta a pura storia o storicità o a puro umanesimo... Non solo la filosofia della praxis è connessa all'immanentismo, ma anche alla concezione soggettiva della realtà, in quanto appunto la capovolge, spiegandola come fatto storico..." (Q. 1226.)

⁴⁶ Gramsci considered the *Thesis on Feuerbach* to be of great significance, and translated it into Italian in the prison. (Q. 2355—2357.)

⁴⁷ *István Hermann* notices that Gramsci does not deal too much with the dialectics of nature. (40.) But it is also true, as *Hermann* emphasizes, that he acknowledges dialectics in nature — in contrast with *Lukács* at that time. All well same, the main field of his interest is that of the dialectic movements in society. He emphasizes the problems of necessity—hazard, consciousness—spontaneity, contradictions, class-struggle, etc, mainly in his polemic against Bucharin.

⁴⁸ "Il significato della dialettica può essere solo concepito in tutta la sua fundamentalità, solo se la filosofia della praxis è concepita come una filosofia integrale e originale che inizia una nuova fase nella storia e nello sviluppo mondiale del pensiero in quanto supera (e superando ne include in sé gli elementi vitali) sia l'idealismo che il materialismo tradizionali espressioni delle vecchie società." (Q. 1425.)

⁴⁹ Several interpretations have dealt with the relations of the philosophies of Gramsci and Machiavelli. In Hungary, *Géza Sallay* gave a significant contribution to this question. (41.)

⁵⁰ In our view, Gramsci's theory of politics should be separated and separately treated from his philosophical and literary writings.

⁵¹ Thus superstructure gains a great emphasis besides the basis, but — in contrast with N. Bobbio's view (42.) — this does not mean that Gramsci is "the philosopher of the superstructure", for, as J. Texier rightly points out (43.), beside the superstructure, the civil society, Gramsci does not disregard the problem of the state — on the contrary, in some aspect, it is the central concept of his political thinking.

⁵² The Gramscian analysis of the political party is worth of attention. Here he joins Lenin in criticizing Sorel's conception — which can be found in the workers' movement, as well, and which does not attach an important role to the party, saying that the emphasis is on the activity of the masses — and Michels's charismatic party that influenced the fascist party-conception.

⁵³ Although not explicitly, Gramsci in this case reflects on the bureaucratism appearing in the communist parties — another proof that he understood Lenin's conception.

⁵⁴ For him, the demand for the new state, the new political activity, the new type of man is combined with the concept of state. The withering of the state can be approached by these and by stopping mechanization and social repression.

⁵⁵ Gramsci's publicistic achievement, the temporary nature of his notes, his letters, their urging for further consideration and their unfinished nature is the subject of an extensive debate all around the world. Our concept of periodization is an *attempt* for a homogenous interpretation of Gramsci's whole intellectual and practical oeuvre.

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GRAMSCI FILOZÓFIÁJÁNAK SZAKASZAI

A szerző a tanulmányban azokat a legfontosabb eredményeket foglalja össze, melyekre közel egy évtizedes Gramsci-kutatása során jutott.

Gramsci filozófiájának fejlődésében és totalitásában való vizsgálata során egyértelműen kirajzolódott, hogy felfogásában három fő szakaszt lehet megkülönböztetni. Az első, ún. „dualizmus” szakaszában (1914—1919) Gramsci egy idealizmushoz közel álló, kulturista pozícióról fokozatosan áttér — az első világháború és az orosz forradalom hatására — egy lenini, majd marxi pozícióra. A következő, ún. „marxizmus” időszakában (1919—1924) Gramsci éppen ezen inspirációk hatására, valamint a Komintern befolyása alatt a valóságba próbálja átvinni a lenini és marxi elméletet. Ebből a szempontból döntő jelentőségű filozófiai fejlődésében moszkvai és bécsi tartózkodása. A harmadik szakaszra, az ún. „fordítás” időszakára való áttérés nem olyan mélyreható, mint az 1918—1919-es fordulat, de nem kevésbé jelentős. A „fordítás” időszaka (1924—1935) tulajdonképpen Gramsci kísérlete arra, hogy a marxizmuson belül az új helyzetnek és az új időknek megfelelő, eredeti variánst dolgozzon ki. E periódusban — éppúgy mint az előzőekben is — számos kisebb fordulópontra található, de felfogásában sok konstans elem is van. Ilyen a pozitívizmus, az ökonomizmus elleni harca, a szubjektív faktor szerepének hangsúlyozása, stb.

Interpretációjában a szerző a legszélesebb nemzetközi irodalomban tájékozódva bírálja a Gramsci felfogását tendenciózusan félreértelmező felfogásokat.

Тибор Сабó

ПЕРИОДЫ ФИЛОСОФИИ ГРАМШИ

Автор в своей работе подытоживает те наиболее важные результаты, которые были им достигнуты в ходе почти десятилетнего исследования Грамши.

В ходе изучения философии Грамши в ее развитии и тотальности ясно вырисовывается то обстоятельство, что во взглядах Грамши можно выделить 3 главных периода. В первом периоде, так наз. периоде «дуализма» Грамши под влиянием первой мировой войны и русской революции постепенно переходит с культуристических позиций, близких идеализму, (1914—1919), на ленинские, а впоследствии на марксистские позиции. В следующем так наз. «марксистском» периоде (1919—1924) Грамши как раз под воздействием этих инспираций, а также под воздействием Коминтерна пытается перенести в действительность ленинскую и марксистскую теорию. С этой точки зрения в философском развитии Грамши решающее значение имело его пребывание в Москве и Вене. Переход к третьему, так наз. периоду «перевода» (1924—1935) не так основателен, как поворот в 1918—1919 годах, однако не менее значителен. Этот период, собственно говоря, является попыткой Грамши выработать внутри марксизма в соответствии с новым положением и новыми временами оригинальный вариант. На данном этапе, так же, как и на ранних этапах, можно наблюдать много незначительных поворотных пунктов, но во взглядах философа имеется много из постоянных элементов. Таковы борьба против позитивизма, экономизма, подчеркивание роли субъективного фактора и т. д.

В своей интерпретации автор, опираясь на многочисленную зарубежную литературу, подвергает критике мировоззрение Грамши, тенденциозно ошибочно истолковывающиеся взгляды.