

## **CULTURAL HEGEMONY TODAY. FROM CULTURAL STUDIES TO CRITICAL PEDAGOGY**

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**ABSTRACT** The concept of cultural hegemony is much broader than that of ideology, because it refers to the construction process of the collective experience, of the modelling of meanings, from the development of values, the creation of world conceptions and of the moral, cultural and intellectual direction of society through education. In this paper, the evolution of this concept is analysed from its origins to its configuration as a method of study in Cultural Studies by Antonio Gramsci and later, to its articulation through a system of representations, a discourse framed by political forces via an entire system of thought in Critical Pedagogy. According to Lorenzo Milani, this 'Pedagogy against Empire' searches for an approach to learning for social justice, emphasises the collective dimension of learning and action, and reflects the struggle for school and social reform. This education will combine instruction or a purely technical approach with a humanistic education, brooking no differentiation or social division between manual and intellectual work where the union between theory and action is perceived as key to understanding reality and, at the same time, to transform it.

**RESUMEN** (Spanish) El concepto de hegemonía cultural es mucho más amplio que el de ideología, porque se refiere al proceso de construcción de la experiencia colectiva, de modelación de significados, desde el desarrollo de los valores, de la creación de las concepciones del mundo y de la dirección moral, cultural e intelectual de la sociedad a través de la Educación. En este trabajo, la evolución de este concepto se analiza desde sus orígenes hasta su configuración como un método de estudio en los Estudios Culturales por Antonio Gramsci y más tarde, en su articulación mediante un sistema de representaciones, un discurso enmarcado por las fuerzas políticas a través de un sistema completo del pensamiento en Pedagogía Crítica. Según Lorenzo Milani, esta 'educación contra el

imperio' busca un enfoque para la justicia social, la dimensión colectiva del aprendizaje y la acción, la lucha por la escuela libre y la reforma social. Esta educación unirá la instrucción o la cultura técnica con la formación humanística y ninguna diferenciación o división social se producirá entre el trabajo manual e intelectual, donde la unión entre teoría y acción ayudará a comprender la realidad con el fin de transformarla.

**KEYWORDS.** Cultural Hegemony, Method, Cultural Studies, Critical Pedagogy, Antonio Gramsci, Lorenzo Milani, Education, Social Justice, Social Reform.

### **Introduction: Why Cultural Hegemony Today?**

In the course of different interpretations throughout history, the concept of hegemony has been shaped under several forms. What all those forms have had in common is the renewal of critical consciousness as the key to designing a new framework for a new kind of coexistence. For this reason, in the words of Antonio Gramsci, hegemony was a process where subalterns (Spivak, 1985, pp. 120-130; Nelson & Grossberg, 1988, pp. 271-313) had to impose another scenario not to irretrievably find themselves in the same previous social structure. For Gramsci, hegemony is exercised by the ruling class not only through coercion, but also through consensus, managing to impose their worldview, a philosophy of customs and 'common sense' that favour the recognition of its domination by the dominated classes:

Hegemony is not equal to (...) ideology, consciousness formations of the ruling class are not reduced, but include the relations of domination and subordination, according to (...) practical consciousness configurations, as an effective saturation of the process of life in full (...) hegemony is a body of practices and expectations regarding the whole of life. Our senses and energy (...) define perceptions we have of ourselves and our world. It is a vivid system of meanings and values. To the extent they are experienced as practices (they) appear to confirm each other. It is a sense of reality for most people in society (...) (Williams 1977: 109).

The hegemony of a social group, however, is the culture that this group has generated for different social collectives. The notion of hegemony is proved to be similar to that of culture, but with added values. Through its contribution, culture embraces a specific distinction of power, hierarchy and influence. In the late twentieth century, Paulo Freire claimed that by means of channeling critical concerns in a particular political, cultural, moral and ideological direction, scientific and humanist intellectuals and educators, according to their revolutionary commitment, must fight against the myth of the ignorance of the people. Although they may legitimately recognize themselves as having, due to their revolutionary consciousness, a level of revolutionary knowledge different from the level of empirical knowledge held by the people, they cannot impose themselves and their knowledge on the people. They cannot pepper the people with slogans, but must enter into dialogue with them. In this way, the people's empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders' critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the *causes* of reality (Freire 1968: 132). This transition from the people's empirical knowledge of reality to the *causes* of reality occurs through the awakening of critical consciousness. And this critical consciousness is raised through the process of hegemony. Gramsci's notion of *a moral and intellectual reform* or *hegemony* is based on subjectivity as being of primary importance for the development of a global process of humanistic study.

This new sense of the concept of hegemony as a cultural method, started to be developed through the writings of Matthew Arnold. The name of the English poet and essayist Matthew Arnold is immediately related to a defense of a very specific way of understanding the humanities and cultural studies. According to William Spanos, the writings of Arnold established the fundamental principles of humanistic research in our time. Spanos describes him as the "father of the most influential humanist modern period" (Spanos, 1993, p. 70). Eagleton detected in *Culture and Anarchy* "a drive to deepen the spiritual hegemony of the middle class" and to "convert the Philistines into a truly hegemonic class" (Eagleton 1978: 104). According to Edward W. Said, whose concept of culture was deeply influenced by that of Arnold, any aspect that has to do with human history has its roots in the earth (Said, 1993, p. 247). This means that the habitat is not only the

unique focus of concern. That is why there are people who plan to own more territory (this habitat) and recognise the need to do something with the native residents who populate that habitat.

Their imperialism entails establishing their presence in and controlling the lands that they do not possess, and which, moreover, are distant. They are inhabited and belong to others. For various reasons, this situation causes a double feeling, not only contradictory, but also antagonistic. On the one hand, this situation foresees how some people waken their colonialist vocation. But on the other, this situation carries an inexhaustible source of suffering for the colonized. As Edward Said has argued in his book *Orientalism*, the suffering of the people is the direct effect of cultural exchange between partners who are aware of the inequality of this exchange (Said, 1978, p. 95).

This entire universe, captured and re-ordered through the represented power, is transformed into literary productions where the passion for the East can be verified. And this passion neither can be understood if the origin of its birth is ignored. This passion is born as a result of the clash that happened between the West as a colonizer and the colonized East. This passion generates, in both the East and the West, an effect of *contaminatio* or impregnation. Thus, the East is impregnated by the political domination of the West, by its philosophy and with that, the philosophical justification for this invasion. And for the West, Eastern religiosity is transmitted in this process. The East begins to rationalize its feelings and the West begins to raise its thought. This passion that is born of this clash has the most immediate consequence: the continuous rebirth of self-criticism in the West conceived as a thought of resistance in the East.

From time immemorial, human history is the history of the cultural exchange that has emerged from an imperialist situation. Eastern history is the story of the gradual step taken through the religious movement from the East towards the West and the philosophical ideas from the West to the East. A large number of people that come from what is known as the Western world or metropolitan world and another group who were born in the colonized ancient world or Third World, agree that the era of classical or higher imperialism has continued to exert a considerable cultural influence till present times. Throughout this series of reasons, all these

people feel a new need to re-understand both what is concluded as what is still pending in the past. By means of critical consciousness, Gramsci's notion of a "moral and intellectual reform" (hegemony), is based on the primacy of subjectivity for the development of an overall method of humanistic study. The paper now turns to tracing the genealogy of the notion.

### **The Origin of a Notion.**

The term *hegemony* derives from the Greek verb *eghesthai*, meaning "to drive", "to be the guide", "to be the boss"; or maybe from the verb *eghemoneno*, that means "to guide", "to precede", "to drive", and hence "to stay ahead", "to command", "to rule". In Classical Greek, the term *eghemonia* was understood as the army's supreme direction. It is a military term. *Egemone* was the driver, the guide and also the commander of the army. At the time of the Peloponnesian War, reference was constantly made to the "hegemonic" city, the town that managed the alliance of Greek cities fighting each other.

The notion of hegemony, before being adopted by Antonio Gramsci, already had a long history. Knowledge of this history is vital to gaining an understanding of the term's immediate influence within Cultural Studies. Antonio Gramsci's notion of national-popular was conceived as part of an effort to recover the hegemonic class control in the service of the proletariat. For Gramsci, the national-popular notion is the rubric under which intellectuals could join the people, and therefore constitutes a powerful resource for the construction of a popular hegemony (Gramsci, 1975, 13-20; Azor, 1976). Edmund Wilson states that the term *gegemoniya* or hegemony, was one of the most important political slogans in the Russian Social Democratic movement from the end of 1908 till 1917 (Wilson, 1940, pp. 28-32).

After the October revolution, hegemony as a term ceased to be in force in the newly created USSR. It survived, however, in external documents of the Communist International. In the first two congresses of the Third International, Lenin adopted a series of theses which first led to the internationalization of the concept of hegemony under the Soviet Prism. The duty of the proletariat was to exercise hegemony over the other exploited groups. These groups, moreover, were allies in the

struggle against capitalism within their own Soviet institutions. Thus, hegemony would make possible the progressive lifting of the proletariat and the peasantry.

If hegemony could not extend to the working masses in all areas of social activity, it would fall into corporatism, because it would only confine them separately to and within their own particular economic objectives. If this were to occur, according to Lenin and Trotsky, the industrial proletariat could not meet its world historical mission, which was no other than the emancipation of humankind from submission in the services of capitalism and war. But Lenin's and Trotsky's fears became reality when, during the Fourth Congress of 1922, there was a transformation of the concept. For the first time, the term hegemony extended its semantic limits to the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. If the bourgeoisie managed to reduce the proletariat to a corporate role, this would have induced the latter to accept a division between political and economic struggles at the heart of its own praxis. For Lenin, the bourgeoisie has always attempted to separate Politics from Economics, because this class understands very well that if it manages to keep the working class within the corporate framework, no serious danger may threaten its hegemony (VVAA, 1969: 20). But one should not forget that the existence of the popular element had hardly been considered by exponents of Orthodox Marxism. The 'popular' was considered negatively within the paradigms of the so-called 'actually existing socialism', where culture was rendered subservient to ideology. The post-1924 Orthodox Marxist tradition had continued to use the concept of hegemony exclusively as domination. The effects of this definition were felt during the internal debate of the 1930s. Inability to capture and to reflect the complexity and the cultural richness of this moment was also reflected in the tendency to idealize "proletarian culture" and regard as decadent the cultural manifestations of avant-garde movements (Martín-Barbero, 2010, 30). Since the 1960s, criticism of this position targeted two aspects. The first target of criticism was the predominance of the negative conception of ideology, and the second, the use of hegemony in a reductionist manner. Both were imposed for decades through what was perceived by critics of the 1960s as a falsification of social reality.

Between 1924 and 1953, Stalinism had forced the acceptance of other considerations and meanings attached to the concepts of ideology and hegemony. These included only one conception of the world and the question of the capacity of the individual as a subject. In this regard, and from positions closer to democratic socialism advocated by Antonio Gramsci, break with this official and artificial orthodoxy occurred. A new theoretical space arose with regard to conceptions of the subject and the relations of production as external to the processes of construction of feeling. Gramsci's vision comprises key issues such as the relationship between culture and ideology and hegemony and education.

### **Consolidation of Hegemony as a Method by Antonio Gramsci.**

In the second half of the 19th century progressive utopia had become ideology. It was a vision of the world that was at odds with the real social situation. At that time, an intellectual movement came into being, one which sought to analyse, make sense of then-current events. They made their mark as did movements from the political right. Theories concerning the forging of partnership relations with the masses became one of the fundamental pillars on which the hegemony was restructured at a time when the bourgeoisie sought the means to control, curb and eradicate any kind of revolutionary fervour. So, therefore, the discussions that took place at the heart of the Social Democratic Party prior to 1914, were set aside after the October Revolution. It should be noted that, in 1922, there was a substantial effort with respect to the evolution of the concept of hegemony and subsequent creation of a relevant method of analysis. At that time, Antonio Gramsci travelled to Moscow to participate in the Congress; he spent a year in the Russian capital. During that period, it is practically unlikely that he obtained a direct knowledge of the texts of Martov and Potresov or Lenin, who had discussed the role of hegemony. On the other hand, Gramsci perfectly knew the decisions that had been taken by Lenin at that time, as a participant in the Fourth Congress as Italian representative. For this reason, it can be deduced that the basis of his concept of hegemony was established by the principles defined by Lenin during the Third International. But in the 1930s, the

concept of hegemony was transformed to reverse its direction giving it a Copernican twist. While Europe at first regarded much of mass culture as being a denial of what was then for them 'the culture', the 1940s and 50s decades, characterised by the influence of American thinking, rendered mass culture as an important aspect of a democratic society (Martín-Barbero, 2010: 89).

If we return to Gramsci's texts, it is evident, throughout the *Quaderni dal Carcere*, that the term *hegemony* is repeated in a multitude of different contexts. But there is no doubt that Gramsci retained certain connotations deriving from Lenin's formulations regarding the term. Against the rationalism of classical Marxism and his conception of the necessary development of history according to its own laws, Gramsci made an important contribution to the development of concept. He provided an approach to the issue of contingency in history, presenting it as an important factor when reflecting on the complexity of then contemporary reality (Butler, 2003).

Lenin used the term with reference to the proletariat's alliance with other exploited groups, notably the peasantry in the common struggle against the oppression of the capital. For this reason Lenin, supported by Leon Trotsky and Nadia Krupskaya, lays the groundwork for developing a New Economic Policy (NEP). Being in agreement with the reality that had been defined by Lenin in his NEP, Gramsci emphasized the need of concessions and sacrifices of the proletariat to its allies to be able to exert hegemonic direction over them, thus extending the notion of corporatism from a limited view of economic struggle to a view comprising struggle on a broader social class scale and involving other sections of the masses. According to Gramsci, to understand and to practice hegemony, one must first recognise and appeal to the interests and tendencies of the groups to whom the group leader aspires to provide direction. To earn their consent, there is need for a certain level of commitment between leaders and the allied groups. Even though the concept of hegemony is located within political and ethical parameters, for Gramsci this should also entail an economic commitment. Therefore, hegemony must be necessarily predicated on the critical role that the ruling group exerts in the decisive core of economic activity (Gramsci, 1975, p 55).

At the same time, Gramsci also underlined the cultural influence that the proletariat was to exercise on the allied



classes. Ideologies that had been previously developed come into conflict and confrontation, until only one of them, or at least one of their possible combinations, tends to prevail and is gradually diffused throughout society. Therefore, not only does hegemony entail a combination of economic and political objectives, but it also comprises intellectual and moral objectives, embracing all areas in which the struggle is carried out transcending corporate positions. The hegemony of a main social group is to be finally exerted on a number of subordinate groups. Later, Gramsci rejected the use of violence by the proletariat against the exploited classes. He did this to foster the commitment to hegemony as a constructive mechanism based on dialogue and consensus among such classes, generally being, in his time, those of the industrial proletariat and the peasants. Through this, Gramsci's conceptualisation superseded those characterising the traditional debate concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, and the hegemony of the proletariat, exerted on the peasantry, reminiscent of Leon Trotsky. According to Gramsci, if two forces are needed to defeat a third, the recourse to arms and coercion, assuming even that these are available, can only be a partial part of the struggle and not the only one. Coercion needs to be accompanied by consent.

Commitment offers important concrete possibilities. Force can be used against enemies, but not against those allied groups that need to be quickly assimilated, and whose good faith, trust and enthusiasm are needed (Gramsci, 1975, p. 62). The union that Gramsci refers to here takes a much more pronounced inflection than in the Bolshevik vocabulary. The Russian metaphor of the union or *smychka* between the working class and the peasantry that had been popularized during the New Economic Policy, is transformed into the organic fusion of a new historic block in the *Quaderni*. Gramsci also alludes to the need to absorb allied social forces, to create a new historical, political, economic and homogeneous block, without internal contradictions (Gramsci, 1975, p. 65). This new sense under which this concept has been developed, reflects the important role assigned to the moral and cultural dimensions of hegemony, key components according to Gramsci's conception of the concept. For Jesús Martín-Barbero the concept of hegemony, as elaborated by Gramsci, allows us to think about direction occurring not as a

result of imposition but through a process wherein the interests of the *clase dirigente* (directing class) are also felt to be the interests of the other classes and groupings involved in this block. (Martín-Barbero, 1991: 82-83).

### **Towards the Construction of a Critical Pedagogy.**

After having seen how this concept has evolved, we can move on to consider some sharp and creative uses made of it. Such uses can be found in the appropriation of Gramsci's ideas in Cultural Studies and Postcolonial theory, a development which dates back the second half of the 20th century, and which anticipated Critical Pedagogy. For this reason, some famous passages from the *Quaderni* should be considered, especially those where Gramsci contrasted the political structures of East and West. One should do so without overlooking the relevant revolutionary strategies contained in each. On the one hand, some of these texts, already cited, represent the most convincing synthesis of the essential terms and concepts in Gramsci's theoretical universe. On the other hand, they recur, in a non systematic manner, throughout the *Quaderni*.

These texts do not immediately introduce the issue of hegemony. However, all of them meet all the necessary elements for the emergence of hegemony as a key concept in Gramsci's discourse. For this reason, the relationship between the State and Civil Society should be considered as a starting point for understanding this concept. Drawing on the recent memories of the First World War, Gramsci appreciated that the war was becoming the basic organizing principle of society. When the State of emergency becomes the rule, with a war taking place, the traditional distinction between war and politics is refuted. After the Great War, the war metaphor gained widespread usage especially to describe ongoing social relationships. Apart from Gramsci, this situation was also availed of by such contemporary authors as Michel Foucault, who sought to reverse Clausewitz's classic formula. It may be that war is the continuation of politics by other means. But it may also be that politics is becoming the continuation of war by other means (Foucault, 1997, pp. 16 and 41; Pandolfi, 2002, pp. 391-410).

According to Gramsci, war has become the general matrix of all the relationships of power and domination,

involving bloodshed or not. For this reason, Gramsci divides political strategies into 'wars of position' and 'wars of manoeuvre.' Military experts were in favour of a 'war of position' (Gruppi, 1972, p. 128) characterised by advances and retreats. But they believe, however, that the war of manoeuvre should be deleted from military science. They simply maintain that, in those wars that have broken out among the most industrial and socially advanced States, the war of manoeuvre must be reduced to having simply a tactical purpose, and never a strategic one. The same would apply to the art of politics and science, at least in the case of states, where Civil Society has become a very complex structure resistant to immediate economic setbacks such as recession, depression, etc. The trenches system that had emerged from the concept of modern warfare is emulated by Civil Society's superstructure. In modern warfare, sometimes, a fierce artillery attack that prima facie appears to have destroyed the enemy defence lines might, in reality, have only caused damage to their external surface. The same effect occurs in political science, during major economic crises. Gramsci proposes a return to Lenin and never to his successors and interpreters. For Gramsci, this transmutation of strategic and tactical elements to the political and cultural scene by Lenin, laid the groundwork for the turn to Gramsci and hegemony in Cultural Studies.

### *1. The Shaping of the Method.*

When the configuration of this method is considered, there is a need to go back to the second half of the 20th century that marks the beginning of the debate concerning modernity. Imbued with that innovative spirit, Stuart Hall founded, in 1960, *The New Left Review*, a publication inspired by Gramsci. The debate on modernity ushered in discussions around key issues such as the relationship between Culture and Ideology and Hegemony and Education. The former echoes critiques by the Frankfurt School and subsequently Post-structuralism. The latter derives from Historicism and characterises debates in Critical pedagogy. In this sense, both visions complement each other to create a unique method.

A good starting point, for a configuration of this method, would be Henry Giroux's work. According to Giroux, Gramsci discusses hegemony in two ways. One centres around a

process of domination with which a ruling class exercises control, on other allied classes, through its intellectual and moral leadership. The second concerns the dual use of force and ideology to engender relations of socialization among the ruling classes and subordinate groups. The main issue for Gramsci is the role played by the State in terms of its active participation as a repressive and cultural/ethical force (educational). The role of the State was extensively discussed by Gramsci with reference to the relationships established between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Giroux, 1985). Gramsci opposes the concept of hegemony to that of domination. While domination is a form of coercive social control, only political and violent, hegemony is an ongoing social process of renewal of socio-cultural and economic influence of one class over another. The concept of hegemony is much broader than that of ideology, because it refers to the process of construction of the collective experience, of the modelling of meanings, including the development of values, the creation of conceptions of the world (*weltanschauung*) and the moral, cultural and intellectual direction of society through education. Similarly, Gramsci divides the State into two specific areas: the political society, which refers to the State apparatuses of Administration, law and other coercive institutions whose primary, not exclusive, function is based on the logic of force and repression. Civil society refers to public and private institutions that used meanings, symbols and ideas in order to universalize the ideologies of the ruling class, and at the same time, to form and limit the discourse and oppositional practice.

With regard to these practices, Raymond Williams insisted that hegemony is an ongoing process which is reconstituted in a perpetual manner through the popular passion in a form of genesis of the people's own culture. For this reason, renegotiating hegemony could be regarded as one of the methodological challenges for a Critical Pedagogy. Gramsci stated that the idea of passion is based on the concept of value. And the concept of value arises as a result of meticulous research that has been carried out through mechanisms for the perpetuation of the power of one social class over another. To elaborate this concept, Gramsci used another conceptual tool to describe class power. Gramsci refers to the dichotomy established by the distinctive terms: *leading/directing class* and *ruling class*. The ruling class is

distinguished from the former by being able to imbue society with its values and ideology for the sole purpose of developing the same society into its own image and likeness. The ruling class is able to do so by availing itself of the means that Civil Society has placed at its disposal, these being the ideological state apparatuses such as the media, educational institutions, the church, etc. This situation, according to Raymond Williams (Williams, 1958: 118), occurred in Italy in the 1920s.

Various factors that marked the pulse of Italy between the wars should be considered. These include Italian Liberalism's weakness, the Italian bourgeoisie, the day by day ever deepening influence of Socialist ideas and practices and the progressive breakdown of a potentially revolutionary society. In the course of these events, the bourgeoisie used its last resort to maintain its power. And this resource was none other than Fascism. In terms of the dominant class, one of Fascism's most predominant features was its increasing need to use the coercive power of the State to perpetuate its domination. The bourgeoisie resorted to the use of the army, the police and the judicial system, among others, due to their inability to acquire and maintain the passive consent of the subaltern classes, having lost its ideological and cultural dynamism. Gramsci's political project was to transform workers into a class for itself, in Marx's terms. Gramsci saw the working class as a social group whose interests were in dialectical relation with and antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, Gramsci affirmed the potential of subaltern classes to develop a counter hegemony in all areas of their daily lives, even though counter-hegemony is a term he never used in his writings. According to Antonio Gramsci, this was the only way forward to render the subaltern society's ruling class. The impetus for developing and sustaining political consciousness derives from the ruling class. The tension between Culturalism and Economism (Mouffe, 1991: 175-184) was presented as being occasionally creative. Gramsci encouraged critique deriving from an elaboration and reinterpretation of some of the main Marxist concepts around the base-superstructure metaphor –economic base and cultural superstructure.

The formula of base and superstructure was branded as 'rigid' by Raymond Williams, who preferred to study what was understood as relations between elements in a 'way of life'.

Williams was attracted to the idea of cultural hegemony. And regarding Cultural Hegemony, Williams followed Antonio Gramsci's suggestions, whereby the dominant classes directly controlled the rest of society not only by means of force and the threat of force, but also through their ideas and encouraged 'body of practices' that had come to be accepted by the subordinate classes or *classi subalterni* (Williams, 1977: 98-101)/*strumentali*. This vision for social stability and change lies at the heart of critical pedagogy. As a Marxist, Gramsci's thought regarded custom as lying at the epicentre, being "constituted by real human activity" as the main target, whereas human beings were perceived as the creator of reality and of society itself (Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, 2012, p. 19-44).

### **Cultural Hegemony as a Method in Critical Pedagogy.**

To serve as the basis for an analytical method, Cultural Hegemony must be implemented in two phases. The first phase entails the process of democratization of cultural production. The second phase, regards the potential for social change to be brought about as a primary consequence of this method. For Raymond Williams, this method essentially derives from the relationship established between culture and society. But, according to Edward Palmer Thompson, this method involved an attempt to study each specific culture as a whole, as an integral, autonomous and complementary part of a homogeneous superstructure. And this process of examination involves drawing on both scholarly and popular cultural traditions (Thompson, 1963). The idea of culture implies the idea of tradition. However, Thompson revealed a contradiction, in popular culture from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, recognition of which is key to a contemporary understanding of the shaping of hegemony. It is the contradiction produced between the conservatism of the forms and the rebelliousness of the contents. Thompson has often been criticized for his emphasis on analysing rebel consciousness. He saw elements of resistance in this rebel consciousness rather than what others interpreted as being glimpses of irrationality. To evade a very bold tradition one unfortunately has to exaggerate one's attitude and disposition with regard to knowledge and skills that have been handed down from one generation to the next.

So, therefore, it should not be forgotten that, within the same society, multiple traditions can co-exist. For this reason, two clear problems have to be confronted. First, the apparent process of innovation which seems to have modified the tradition can, in actual act, be masking its (the tradition) very persistence. The second problem would be a consequence of the first. No one better than Pier Paolo Pasolini can be called upon to lend authority to this view: that there is no revolution that dispenses with tradition (Pasolini, 1972, p. 182).

### **Raymond Williams and the *contents of consciousness* production**

The paper now turns to a discussion around Raymond Williams's ideas on the network of social institutions that conditioned the *contents of consciousness* production and broadcasting currently shaping the 'collective imaginary.' This imaginary is held to restrict the free development of subjectivities. Following this, some of Williams' proposals for cultural democratization will be described and contextualized with regard to his overarching vision for socialist transformation.

According to Williams, the institutional framework that directs the production and diffusion of contents of consciousness comprises four types: authoritarian, patronizing, commercial and democratic. The authoritarian system is characterized by muzzling the media, in a broad sense, to submit them to the whole apparatus controlled by a minority governing society. For Williams, the main purpose of this media is to broadcast instructions, ideas and rules of the hegemonic class (Williams, 1958, p. 121). In this kind of regime, the monopoly over these communication instruments is a necessary part of a political system where censorship is combined with direct control over the media, the population and the legal system. This authoritarian system was a characteristic of fascist and Stalinist dictatorships. Authoritarian systems lead to patronizing systems. A paternalistic system differs from an authoritarian system in that it takes the form of authoritarianism with a conscience. The patronizing system involves possessing values and objectives that extend beyond the maintenance of its exponents' own power. Both systems are, for various reasons, predicated on the 'right to rule'. When an authoritarian regime

leads to one characterized by a patronizing stance, the power elite are asserting "their" duty to protect and to lead the social majority in ways that appeal to the minority. Unlike the authoritarian regime that simply barks and transmits orders, the patronizing regime transmits values, customs and tastes that would justify the power of the ruling group. Williams would speak of a third typology, the *commercial system*. As a general rule, this system is regarded as standing in a contrary position to authoritarianism and to patronizing stances. According to Williams, the citizen has the right to sell any type of work which is performed because everyone has the right to buy all that is offered. This would be the key to freedom of communication. Therefore, the market plays its role in bringing freedom of expression under control. This process comprises the most important means of communication and, consequently, the most expensive and sophisticated ones at that. This power of control lies with groups who can avail themselves of the necessary capital. Then, for all practical purposes, the lack of representation in control of the media, in the authoritarian and patronizing control systems, can be reproduced in a system that appeals rhetorically to 'freedom'. This freedom is however none other than the freedom of capital rather than the freedom of the people, owing to the huge economic inequalities on which our societies are built (Blackwell, 1997: 48-49).

According to Williams, the authoritarian and patronizing systems tend to merge in the majority of societies. However, the fourth, the democratic model, is running at full tilt in any society. It is, rather, an ideal, an aspiration, a theoretical model that is the focus of reflection and permanent debate, often using 'hegemony' as tool of analysis. It is a model that should be based on the following fundamental rights of all populations:

- the right to emit and to broadcast culture and information.
- this right should not be limited without being widely discussed and decided upon by the entire society.
- the consolidation of hegemony as a method has necessitated an inter and transdisciplinary challenge (Mackenbach, 2014: 32) that is unbreakable, especially between Culture and Ideology and Hegemony and Education.



One notices several trends in debates concerning culture and ideology and modernity. They derive from Post-structuralism and Neo-Marxism. Most prominent, in these debates, are the positions defended by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Slavoj Žižek. According to Perry Anderson, Post-structuralism is the reviewed version of Structuralism from Lacan and Derrida's positions. One of the challenges that Neo-Marxism tried to confront is identity politics foregrounding the role of social movements. The debate was transformed into one concerning the relations between culture and postmodernism. Here the relationship between hegemony and the subaltern was raised. For Žižek, this relationship has a spectral character (Derrida, 1993; Butler, Laclau and Žižek, 2003: 235). In fact, the major problem lies with the relationship between identification and identity, between the subject and the real 'thing.' All this militates against the notion of 'association' since it foregrounds relationships regarded as 'antagonistic'.

Ernesto Laclau understood hegemony as entailing the indivisibility of the constitution of common identity within social power settings. The two elements occur in an indivisible and parallel way. In order to understand this parallelism of the identity of groups or social movements, Laclau speaks of three times or stages. The first stage is set by a *system of differences*, where roles or social behaviours are set. Here is where the groups are recognized as having roles that induce stability, for instance, those of parents, children, peasants, workers, industrialists, teachers, priests, etc. In a second stage, according to Laclau, we find the category of *displacement*, or the inability to successfully establish a definitive fixing of the identity of the social order to the extent that there is always one constitutive outsider, the *Other*, that is unsettling the formation of such a fixed or stable identity.

The process of displacement refers to something concerning all social orders because identities are always subject to destabilization and radical change. This existing duality between the stable and the unstable is part and parcel of identity configuration. In a third stage, according to Laclau, there is *the chain of equivalencies* triggered by a common enemy: an *Us* against a *Them*. The dividing line serves to forged a new identity, a political identity (Gadea, 2008, p. 13-14).

These categories are based on an intellectual spectrum deriving from Derrida and Lacan and also including Wittgenstein. This domain of the 'real', to echo Žižek, brings them closer to Hegel. Differing from Žižek, Judith Butler is looking for a slightly different Hegel, while she adds possibilities of denial in her work, along with some echoes from Derrida and Foucault, in order to consider what is not workable in the discursive constitution of the subject. What would be the relationship between hegemony and the subaltern? For Žižek, there is no logically possible answer to such a question, nor is there a politically possible answer. Regarding its logical impossibility, if the answer were in the affirmative, the subaltern would be eliminated. Put simply, once a subaltern group exercised hegemony it would stop being subaltern. That the answer to the question was based on the presence of a subaltern group or groups is a historical accident since there were structural or transcendental conditions that prevented the removal of the subaltern. Although denying transcendentalism in these terms, a particular kind of transcendental position would be assumed. The answer is that the conditions for a full social emancipation understood in the old Hegelian and Marxist terms, are no longer possible.

This 'full emancipation', for Laclau, Butler and Žižek, would be at the same time, necessary and impossible. For Laclau, if the logic of the transparency of Modernity was able to suggest the possibility of full emancipation of the social from its need, Nihilistic Postmodernism would now underline the denial of its need (Butler, Laclau and Žižek, 2003: 74-75). However, Laclau insists that hegemony is a useful category to describe the political leanings of a people. He adds that more than one useful category is needed to define the same ground where political relationships are developed in a 'real way.'

Laclau insisted on what Marx defined as the so-called *degree zero of hegemony*, stating that poverty does not come naturally, but is produced artificially. For this reason, Marx set out a challenge claiming that, as philosophy discovered its material weapons in the proletariat, the proletariat, for its part, found in philosophy its spiritual weapons (Butler, Laclau and Žižek, 2003: 49).

In view of this challenge, in my view still relevant to the early 21st Century, Gramsci became concerned for education due to the existing cultural crisis that had been caused by the

political and structural crisis in society during his time. According to Gramsci, it was a crisis that did transverse all social layers and gave education a distinctive bourgeois class imprint. The Italian traditional school was in crisis. This school was once considered by Gramsci as formative, humanist and able to understand all areas of society. Gramsci observed that this school was characterised by the imposition of a culture that was completely unconnected to the subaltern.

Based on the concept of hegemony, Gramsci defends the creation of a new culture. For Gramsci, a proletarian culture is the uniformity of common interests among the masses and intellectuals in a corresponding conception of the world that is to be built on the basis of an educational relationship. This education will see o the conjoining of instruction or a technical culture with a humanistic education. There was to be no differentiation or social division between manual and intellectual work. The unity of theory and action, brooking no dichotomy between the two, will help one obtain a better understanding of reality with a view to transforming it – echoing Marx’s sixth thesis on Feuerbach.

According to Joseph Buttigieg, for Gramsci, each relationship of hegemony is necessarily educative (Buttigieg, 2012, p. 153). Gramsci posits that education is not considered as a dissemination of ideas from above. It, to the contrary, involves an exercise of critical organic intellectuality engaging the people’s political practice. He defines the character of education as bi-directional, never one way, where people and organic and assimilated intellectuals educate each other (Mayo, 2014, p. 6), as the educator must also be educated, as, once again, in Marx’s theses on Feuerbach, this time the third thesis.

## **Conclusion**

To ensure the creation of a truly democratic society, institutions that could generate public service must be created which, under no circumstances, should mask attitudes of the authoritarian and paternalistic type. The basic principle which must rule these institutions is that of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci’s method of analysis, society is developed when the cultural workers, *the organic intellectuals*, control their own means of expression (Giroux, 1988). This

analysis emphasizes the need to covering the needs which the liberal ideology had left exposed. According to the liberal conception, which had also become popular in large sections of the labour movement, the "public" is identified with 'State'. According to this liberal conception, the vices of State bureaucratic management can only be eradicated through private and commercial management, the basis of the current Neoliberal policy regime. It is true that the problems of bureaucratic governance are considerable. However, history has shown that private management does not solve them, a point drive home in any analysis developed around Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony.

Adopting this type of analysis, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, following Williams and Gramsci, appeal to the idea of self-management of the cultural media as the most effective resolution to be adopted by the producers of culture and its professionals (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987, p. 86-92). In this way, cultural hegemony will evade the clutches of a management structure controlled by amateurish bureaucrats. The appeal is to administration being a matter of public responsibility. Other essential conditions that emerge from such an analysis include are that of creating a free and transparent broadcasting system.

Bureaucracy must developed according to society and never in opposition to it. This should never be the veil that covers political manipulation. Governments must not exercise any control over artists and producers of culture. In terms of resource allocation, these decisions must be taken in a public way, with extensive discussions, enabling its criticism and subsequent review. For these reasons, a progressive cultural democratization process would provide a huge stimulus for the active defence of democracy in general.

Today, the same situation that Gramsci defined a century ago is present in Europe. There have been moments since then when the official culture conceal widespread cultural concerns by way of greatly valorising narrow technical education to the detriment of humanistic education. Gramsci advocated a process involving the mutual and constant education of society. In the 60s, an Italian priest, named Lorenzo Milani, opened a school in the Italian city of Barbiana where he developed an approach that reflected cognizance, on his path, of the notion of hegemony in Gramsci. This approach has been referred to as *il metodo della Scuola di*

*Barbiana*. Faithful to these Gramscian principles, Milani was influential in his approach to education for social justice through his main focus on racial issues, comprising North/South dialogue and cultural technologic transmission, the collective dimension of learning and action, giving the necessary importance to reading and collective writing of the word and the world, the relationship between the people and the intellectual, the media and the merger of academic and technical knowledge. When Barbana's main work was published, in the form of an extended narrative titled *Lettera a una professoressa* in 1967 (round about Milani's premature death through cancer at 46), it provided a source of inspiration to the movement for change known as the movement of 1968. Pier Paolo Pasolini declared it as one of the few books that aroused his enthusiasm at that time.

In the same way that the *Lettera* anticipates much sociological work on social and cultural reproduction/production and resistance, deriving from France and the Anglophone world, 'hegemony as method' has still been defended by, among others, Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, Jürgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, Henry Giroux, G. A. Cohen, Peter McLaren, John B. Thompson, Carlos Alberto Torres, Antonia Darder, Paula Allman, Jorge Larraín, Jean Marsh, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron. For all these authors, this method cannot be understood apart from an analysis of the symbiosis of culture and ideology, hegemony or education.

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