the whole social formation reproduces itself ideologically. The effect of the struggle over "black," if it becomes strong enough, is that it stops the society reproducing itself functionally, in *that* old way. Social reproduction itself becomes a contested process.

Contrary to the emphasis of Althusser's argument, ideology does not therefore only have the function of "reproducing the social relations of production." Ideology also *sets limits* to the degree to which a society can easily, smoothly, and functionally reproduce itself. The notion that the ideologies are always-already inscribed does not allow us to think about the shifts of accentuation in language and ideology, which is a constant, unending process—what Volosinov (1973) called the "multiaccentuality of the ideological sign" of the "class struggle in language."

LECTURE 7

Domination and Hegemony

The topic of this lecture is the organisation of power and the nature of domination in the social formation. In particular, I want to talk about the contribution of Antonio Gramsci to an understanding of the forms of domination and the possibilities for struggle in advanced capitalist democratic societies. I do not intend to give a complete reading of Gramsci's work or even of the many important insights and concepts he has contributed to contemporary Marxist theory and Cultural Studies. In fact, much of the preceding argument has depended on the advances Gramsci offers us. For example, I have used Gramsci to both enrich Althusserian concepts and to define an alternative or limit to Althusser's "hardening of the structuralist categories." I will limit myself in this lecture to those concepts which directly enter our understanding of domination: in particular, the State, ideology, hegemony, and hegemonic politics. First, I will make some preliminary remarks about Gramsci and situate his notion of hegemony in the broader context of his strong anti-reductionist project.

Gramsci was an Italian Marxist intellectual and a militant, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party. He was born on Sardinia, one of the islands off the Italian coast. He was a socialist journalist, an active figure in the factory struggles in Turin and northern Italy in the period after World War I. He was, therefore, actively engaged in the

moment of high proletarian consciousness. It is in the period immediately before and after World War I that one sees an advanced working class—a class actually advanced by capital itself, standing at the forefront of the very processes which contain it—beginning to feel the capacity to make the rest of the world in its image. That moment can be found in many struggles throughout Europe: in labour strikes in Wales and England, in the Hungarian Soviet, in the aborted German revolution, in the mass strikes in France, and in the Turin occupations. When people say that Marx and Engels predicted a revolution in Europe and it didn't happen, I wonder if they realise that it very nearly did happen. It almost happened, although the particular form it took, at least in Britain, France, and to some extent in Spain and the United States, was not the "class consciousness" of classical Marxism but syndicalism. Syndicalist forms of consciousness foregrounded the activity of the proletariat, its capacity to master the scientific and industrial revolution, to know that it had the keys of capitalist production in its hands and to be confirmed in the belief that it could rule. If you read, for example, Gramsci's and others' articles in *Ordine Nuevo* (The New Order), *Avanti* (Forward), and *L'Unità* (Unity), you will see represented a proletariat that believed it could now rule. Of course, it could not; it did not. As it turned out, this was not the final gasp of capitalism but one of its most recuperative periods. It comes out of that series of struggles even stronger and more dominant but only by transforming itself, by giving up its old forms and finding new ones, by articulating itself within new systems of representation. It does this and it pushes back the proletarian advances of the period.

This historical conjuncture—a strikingly condensed and contradictory moment of political struggles, victories, defeats, and transformations—enabled Gramsci to see some very important and profound things about Marxism, about the nature of Western industrial capitalism, and about the nature of proletarian and other forms of social struggle. I think there is a clear relationship between Gramsci as a political militant, the political moment in which he is formed, the forms of consciousness and action to which he relates, and his legacy as a Marxist thinker. Gramsci's thinking in this particular conjuncture is dramatic and original in relation to a number of particular sites. He is not a universal and systematic theorist, but in relation to a number of political and theoretical sites, he develops concepts that represent substantial achievements and advances:

first, in relation to mechanistic and reductive forms of Marxism; second, in terms of confronting the reality and complexity of the State and civil society, and of ideology and the superstructures, in Western capitalist democracies; and third, in confronting the moment of the degeneration of capitalism into Fascism. The latter is crucial of course to understanding Gramsci, given the constraints under which he produced his most important work: He was imprisoned by Mussolini. The *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci 1971; except where indicated, all page numbers that follow in this lecture refer to this text) owe part of their obscurity to the fact that Gramsci had to speak around the censor. He comes out of prison virtually a broken man and is dead within a few years.

But it must always be kept in mind that Gramsci's project was not that of offering another reading of Marxism or another set of abstract concepts which could define a materialist analysis. Rather, Gramsci understood that Marx's general framework had to be constantly developed theoretically, applied to new historical conditions, related to developments in society which neither Marx nor Engels could have possibly foreseen, and expanded and refined by the addition of new concepts. It is this "sophisticating" work that Gramsci contributed. His work brings into play concepts which classical Marxism did not provide but without which Marxist theory cannot adequately explain the complex social phenomena we encounter in the modern world. Thus, his "theoretical" writing was always developed out of a more organic engagement with real political struggle, and was always intended to serve, not an abstract academic purpose, but the aim of "informing political practice." Gramsci's work uses theory to illuminate concrete historical cases or political questions, what Gramsci called the "conjunctural." Consequently, Gramsci's work often appears almost *too* concrete, too historically specific, too time and context bound, too descriptively analytic. His most illuminating ideas and formulations are typically of this kind. To make more general use of them, they have to be delicately disinterred from their concrete and specific historical embeddedness and transplanted to new soil with considerable care. This is different than both Althusser's and Poulantzas's attempts to "theorise" Gramsci's insufficiently theoretical texts, who rely, I think, on a mistaken perception of the appropriate level of abstraction on which Gramsci is operating.

Gramsci was strongly opposed to the mechanistic interpretations of Marxism that not only survived but were still canonised in both theoretical and political forms (through the Second International and the ideas and practices of Lenin and Stalin). Gramsci emphasised instead the importance of the relationship between the structure (the term he used instead of the base) and the superstructure. He substitutes for the reductionist approach which would "read off" political and ideological developments from their economic determination, a far more complex and differentiated type of analysis. This is based, not on a "one-way determination," but on the analysis of "the relations of force" which aims to differentiate (rather than to collapse as identical) the "various moments or levels" in the development of such a conjuncture. Only through rather complex processes can one extend one's analysis from the description of the base relationships of a capitalist social formation through what he calls "the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures" (181). Although he is still using the language of base and superstructure, he sees an integral and irreversible relationship between structure and superstructure. Once the contradiction of classes is elaborated in any particular society at the level of economic, political, ideological, and cultural formations, there is no way those complex forms of articulation can be squeezed back into the base from which they arose. That is to say, Gramsci can only think the relationship between structure and superstructure in terms of the effects which their interrelationship have in the end; or in my own terms, whether or not they effectively reproduce the social and political conditions for the real expansion and development of the capitalist mode. Although Gramsci himself takes his philosophical orientation from a "Marxism of praxis" (which bears close relations to the culturalism of Williams and Thompson), I would argue that he thinks the questions of determinacy and of the effects of different practices for the reproduction of capitalism in a structuralist way.

Gramsci has little tolerance for, and often wrote quite satirically about, the attempt to impose an instrumental Marxism, an economic or class reductionism, on that complexity. Such theories satisfy only the Marxism of exposure, which seeks to expose evil capitalists operating behind the scenes. It substitutes an analysis based on the assumption of "immediate class interests" (in the form of the question, who profits directly from this?)—as if every class interest were intrinsic to the social position and inscribed upon each member's back—for a fuller, more structured analysis of "economic class formations . . . with all their inherent relations" (163). On every particular occasion, it asks, how much of the capitalist class has been paid off in profits? That, Gramsci says, is a vulgar economic question. The functioning of the capitalist mode frequently requires that no fractions of the capitalist class are paid off; it often requires the power of the State to impose the terms of concession on capital as the price for its continued existence. So the idea that you can undo and ignore all the complexities of economic, class, political, social, and cultural relations and struggles, simply by looking for someone who profited financially from a particular event, merely undercuts the realities of the situation; it only *appears* to be materialist and scientific. The notion that one can understand history as a series of rip-offs, by various fractions of the capitalist class, of various fractions of the working class, receives only scorn from Gramsci; it has nothing to do with the processes by which a mode of production reproduces itself. Does this mean that the economic plays no part in the development of historical crises and conditions? Not at all, but its role is rather to "create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life" (184). In short, until one has shown how "objective economic crises" actually develop, through the changing relations in the balance of social forces, into crises of the State and society, and are taken up in ethico-political and ideological struggles influencing the conception of the world of the masses, one has not conducted a proper kind of analysis, rooted in the decisive and irreversible "passage" between structure and superstructure. This is what he meant by saying that the relationship between "structure" and "superstructures," or the "passage" of any organic historical movement right through the whole social formation, from economic "base" to the sphere of ethico-political relations, was at the heart of any nonreductionist or noneconomistic type of analysis. To pose and resolve that sort of question demanded an analysis of the complex relationships of overdetermination between the different social practices in any social formation. (Here you can see the strong Gramscian influence in Althusser.)

This is the protocol Gramsci (1959) pursued in "The Modern Prince" where he outlined his characteristic way of "analysing situations." The

details are complex and cannot be filled out in all their subtlety here, but the bare outlines are worth setting out, if only for purposes of comparison with both a more reductionist approach and a more rigorously structuralist approach. He considered this effort "to establish the various levels of the relations of force . . . an elementary exposition of the science and art of politics—understood as a body of practical rules for research and of detailed observations useful for awakening an interest in effective reality and for stimulating more rigorous and more vigorous political insights" (175–176)—an effort, he added, which must be *strategic* in character.

First of all, he argued, one must understand the fundamental structure—the objective relations—within society or "the degree of development of the productive forces," for these set the most fundamental limits and conditions for the whole shape of historical development. From them arise the major lines of force or tendencies which might be favourable to this or that line of development. The error of reductionism is then to translate these tendencies and constraints *immediately* into their absolutely determined political and ideological effects or, alternatively, to abstract them into some "iron law of necessity." In fact, they structure and determine only in the sense that they define the terrain on which historical forces move; they define the horizon of possibilities. But they can neither in the first nor last instance fully determine the content of political and economic struggles, much less objectively fix or guarantee the outcomes of such struggles.

The next move in the analysis is to distinguish between "organic" historical movements, which are destined to penetrate deep into society and be relatively long lasting, and more "occasional, immediate, almost accidental movements." In this respect, Gramsci reminds us that a "crisis," if it is organic, can last for decades. It is not a static phenomenon but rather one marked by constant movement, polemics, contestations, et cetera, which represent the attempt by different sides to overcome or resolve the crises and to do so in terms which favour their own long-term interests. The theoretical danger, Gramsci argues, lies in "presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or in asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones" (178). The first leads to an excess of economism; the second to an excess of ideologism. (Gramsci was preoccupied, especially in moments of defeat, by

the fatal oscillation between these two extremes, which in reality mirror one another in an inverted form.) Far from there being any "law-like" guarantee that will inevitably convert economic causes into immediate political effects, Gramsci insisted that the analysis only succeeds and is "true" *if* those underlying causes become a new reality. The substitution of the conditional tense for positivistic certainty is critical.

Next, Gramsci insisted on the fact that the length and complexity of crises cannot be mechanically predicted, but develop over longer historical periods; they move between periods of relative "stabilisation" and periods of rapid and convulsive change. Consequently, periodisation is a key aspect of the analysis; it parallels his concern with historical specificity. "It is precisely the study of these 'intervals' of varying frequency which enables one to reconstruct the relations on the one hand, between structure and superstructure, and on other between the development of organic movement and conjunctural movement in the structure" (180). There is nothing mechanical or prescriptive for Gramsci about this study.

Having thus established the groundwork of a dynamic historical-analytic framework, Gramsci turns to the analysis of the movements of historical forces—the "relations of force"—which constitute the actual terrain of political and social struggle and development. Here he introduces the critical notion that what we are looking for is not the absolute victory of this side over that side in the relations of force, nor the total incorporation of one set of forces into another. Rather, the analysis is a relational matter—i.e., a question to be resolved relationally, using the idea of an "unstable balance" or "the continuous process of formation and superceding of unstable equilibria." The critical question (not to be converted into an explanation) is "the relations of forces favourable or unfavourable to this or that tendency." This critical emphasis on "relations" and "unstable balance" reminds us that social forces which lose out in any particular historical period do not thereby disappear from the terrain of struggle; nor is struggle in such circumstances suspended. For example, the idea of the "absolute" and total victory of the bourgeoisie over the working class or the total incorporation of working-class demands into the bourgeois project are totally foreign to Gramsci's notion of domination (and even more so to his notion of hegemony)—though this is often misunderstood in scholarly and political commentary. It is always the tendential balance in the relations of force which matters.

Gramsci then differentiates the "relations of force" into its different moments. He assumes no necessary teleological evolution between these moments. The first has to do with an assessment of the objective conditions which place and position the different social forces. The second relates to the political moment—the "degree of homogeneity, self-awareness and organization attained by the various social classes" (181). The important thing here is that so-called class unity is never assumed, a priori. It is understood that classes, while sharing certain common conditions of existence, are also crosscut by conflicting interests, historically segmented and fragmented in this actual course of historical formation. Thus the "unity" of classes is necessarily complex and has to be produced—constructed, created, articulated—as a result of specific economic, political, and ideological practices. It can never be taken as automatic or "given." Coupled with this radical historicisation of the automatic conception of classes lodged at the heart of classical Marxism, Gramsci elaborates further on Marx's distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself." He notes the different stages through which class consciousness, organisation, and unity can—under the right conditions—develop. There is the "economic corporate" stage, where professional or occupational groups recognise their basic common interests but are conscious of no wider class solidarities. Then there is the "class corporate" moment, where class solidarity of interest develops, but only in the economic field. Finally, there is the moment of "hegemony," which transcends the corporate limits of purely economic solidarity, encompasses the interests of other subordinate groups, and begins to "propagate itself throughout society—bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity," and "posing all the questions around which the struggle rages . . . thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups" (181–182). It is this process of the coordination of the interests of a dominant group with the general interests of other groups and the life of the State as a whole that constitutes the "hegemony" of a particular historical bloc. It is only in such moments of "national popular" unity that the formation of what he calls a "collective will" becomes possible. Gramsci reminds us, however, that even this extraordinary degree of organic unity does not guarantee the outcome of specific struggles, which can be won or lost on the outcome of the decisive tactical

issue of the military and politico-military relations of force. He insists, however, that "politics . . . must have priority over its military aspect and only politics creates the possibility for manoeuvre and movement" (232). I want to say more about the notion of hegemony, but first it is necessary to make some brief remarks about Gramsci's conception of the State and his theory of ideology.

The question of the role of the State had been, at best, marginal within classical Marxism (with the exception of Lenin). The centrality which has been given to the State in contemporary Marxist debates is largely due to Gramsci and those who have learned from him. The State is a new kind of structuring force which often interposes itself between the direct play of economic or class forces and the relationships of culture. Consequently, in advanced democratic capitalist societies, the domains of culture and ideology have to be understood as much in relation to the State as to the mode of production. The State is frequently what Gramsci would call the instance which organises the terrain of civil society. It is the point where the rule of an economic class is converted into political power; it is where it becomes centralised and condensed, invested with the power and authority of the State itself.

Moreover, the State is frequently the primary agency through which cultural relations are organised and reorganised. One need only think of the relations between the ideological fields of public or popular opinion and the institutions of civil society—newspapers, the mass media, educational institutions, and the church—in terms of access both to the technology and to the means of the formation of people's identities, to realise that it is the State which regulates many of the forms in which cultural and ideological production take place. Gramsci's recognition of the importance of the State's regulatory function—as the agent of the regulation of social relations, as the instance of law and of rule—is a crucial insight which prior to Gramsci was not a part of Marxism's common vocabulary for thinking about the relationship between culture, ideology, and other domains of social practices.

Gramsci undermines the classic Marxist-Leninist language of the State as simply a coercive instrument of the ruling class. The State in advanced industrial capitalist societies is not simply coercive, nor are its noncoercive activities simply a disguise or cover for the real apparatuses of coercion. Gramsci insists that the State is also educative: It enlarges social and

cultural possibilities; it enables people to enter new terrains. It is necessarily a contradictory site on which concessions have been won. Without this double-sidedness of the State, how could one possibly understand the importance of the introduction of the welfare apparatus—through legislation—throughout Western industrial capitalism? One would have to argue, as some Marxists indeed have, that this is really just a ruse of the capitalist class, in spite of the fact that millions of people struggled for it, struggled to win from the State what was owed them, and continue to engage in political struggles to enlarge that aspect of the State. What sense can be made of these struggles if we talk about welfare as if it were just a clever way in which the capitalist class continues to exploit workers? It is impossible to define the State in that simple way, as if it had only an instrumental coercive role, which is not to say that the State does not have a coercive role.

It is sometimes through coercive measures, sometimes through educative and regulative measures, and most frequently through a combination of these, that the State attempts to mobilise cultural and ideological consent. Part of the object of the State's concern is public opinion in the sphere of civil society, which it cannot take hold of and manufacture directly, but which it organises. This leads us to recognise that the State, while always a contradictory instance, is articulated to the dominant social forces, the dominant ideological systems, and the dominant class positions in the economy. But it is not, by virtue of that, simply controlled by the capitalist class; its relations to that class are not already "wrapped up" and guaranteed. It is, as Lenin began to understand, an instance which requires its separation from the capitalist class. It is often the State in advanced industrial capitalist societies which brings about the unity of the capitalist class, which unites those fractions of capital which are unable to unite themselves in their ordinary economic dealings; it frequently proposes to those fractions the political program on which they can become more united. But the State requires a degree of separation, specificity, and relative autonomy from the direct play of classical class contradictions if it is to perform its many and diverse functions.

Gramsci adopts what, at first, may seem a fairly traditional definition of ideology, by beginning with "any conception of the world, any philosophy which has become a cultural movement, a 'religion,' a 'faith,' any that has produced a form of practical activity or will in which the philosophy

is contained as an implicit theoretical 'premiss'" [*sic*]. "One might say," he adds, "'ideology' here, but on condition that the word is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life" (328). This is followed by a clear statement of the problem ideology addresses or its basic function: "that of preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc which that ideology serves to cement and unify" (328). However, even this definition is not as simple as it looks, for it makes the essential link between the philosophical nucleus or premise at the centre of any distinctive ideology or conception of the world, and the necessary elaboration of that conception into a practical and popular form of consciousness, which affects the broad masses of society in the form of a cultural movement, political belief, faith, or religion. Gramsci is *never* only concerned with the philosophical core of an ideology; he always addresses *organic* ideologies, which "organise human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." (377).

This is the basis of Gramsci's critical distinction between "philosophy" and "common sense." Ideology consists of these two, distinct "floors." The coherence of an ideology often depends on its specialised philosophical elaboration. But this formal coherence cannot guarantee its organic historical role. That can only be found when and where philosophical currents enter into, modify, and transform the practical everyday consciousness of the masses. The latter is what he calls "common sense." Common sense is not coherent; it is usually "disjointed and episodic," fragmentary and contradictory. In it the traces and "stratified deposits" of more coherent philosophical systems have sedimented over time without leaving any clear inventory. It represents itself as the "traditional wisdom or truth of the ages," when in fact, it is deeply a product of history, "part of the historical process." Why then is it important? Because it is the terrain of conceptions and categories on which the practical consciousness of the masses of the people is actually formed. It is the already formed and "taken-for-granted" ground on which more coherent ideologies and philosophies must contend for mastery, the ground which new conceptions of the world must contest and even transform, if they are to shape the conceptions of the world of the masses and in that way become historically effective:

> Every philosophical current leaves behind a sedimentation of "common sense": this is the document of its historical effectiveness. Common sense is not rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. . . . "Common sense" creates the folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time. (326n5)

It is this concern with *popular thought* which distinguishes Gramsci's treatment of ideology. Thus, he insists that everyone is a philosopher or an intellectual insofar as they think, since all thought, action, and language is reflexive, contains a conscious line of moral conduct, and thus sustains a particular conception of the world (although not everyone has the specialised function of "the intellectual").

In addition, a class will always have its spontaneous, vivid, but not coherent or philosophically elaborated, instinctive understanding of its basic conditions of life and the nature of the constraints and forms of exploitation to which it is commonly subjected. Gramsci described the latter as its "good sense." But it requires a further work of political education and cultural politics to renovate and clarify these confused constructions of popular thought—common sense—into a more coherent political theory or philosophical current. This "raising of popular thought" is part and parcel of the process by which a collective will is constructed, and requires extensive work of intellectual organisation—an essential part of any hegemonic political strategy. Popular beliefs, in this sense, Gramsci argues, are not an arena of struggle which can be left to look after itself. They "are themselves material forces" (165).

Gramsci's thinking on this question also encompasses novel ways of conceptualising the *subjects* of ideology. He altogether refuses any idea of a pregiven unified ideological subject—for example, the proletariat with its "correct" revolutionary thoughts or the blacks with their already guaranteed antiracist consciousness. He recognises the "plurality" of selves or identities of which the so-called subject of thought and ideas is composed, and that this multifaceted nature of consciousness is not an individual matter but a consequence of the relationship between "the self" and the ideological discourses which compose the cultural terrain of a society.

"The personality is strangely composite," he observes. It contains "Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history . . . and intuitions of a future philosophy" (324). Often, there is a contradiction in consciousness between that conception of the world which manifests itself, however fleetingly, in action, and those conceptions which are affirmed verbally or in thought. This complex, fragmentary, and contradictory conception of consciousness is preferable to the explanation by way of "false consciousness," which is nothing more than an explanation in terms of self-deception, which he rightly regards as inadequate.

Similarly, though Gramsci recognises that questions of ideology are always collective and social, not individual, he is aware of the complexity and interdiscursive character of the ideological field. There is never any one, single, unified, and coherent "dominant ideology" which pervades everything. "There co-exist many systems and currents of philosophical thought." The object of analysis here is not the single stream of "dominant ideas" into which everything and everyone has been automatically absorbed, but rather an analysis of the different discursive currents, their points of juncture and break: in short, an ideological complex, ensemble, or discursive formation. The question is, "how they are diffused, and why in the process of diffusion they fracture along certain lines and in certain directions" (327).

I believe it clearly follows from this line of argument that, though the ideological field is always, for Gramsci, articulated to different social and political positions, its shape and structure do not precisely mirror, match, or "echo" the class structure of society. Ideas, he argues, "are not spontaneously 'born' in each individual brain: they have a centre of formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion" (192). They are not psychologistic or moralistic in character "but structural and epistemological." Consequently, they are not transformed or changed by replacing one, whole, already formed, conception of the world with another, so much as by "renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity" (331). The multiaccentual, interdiscursive character of the field of ideology is explicitly acknowledged by Gramsci when, for example, he describes how an old conception of the world is gradually displaced by another mode of thought and is internally reworked and transformed:

> What matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex is subjected. . . . This criticism makes possible a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight that the elements of the old ideologies used to possess. What was previously secondary and subordinate . . . becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially. (195)

This is an altogether more original and generative way of perceiving the actual process of ideological struggle—and obviously the ground from which I was able to reread Althusser. It includes such ideas as the existing cultural ground, structured by previous history, on which all "new" philosophical and theoretical currents work and with which they must come to terms; the given structure or determinate character of that terrain; the complexity of the process of deconstruction and reconstruction by which alignment can be effected between elements in different discourses; the gradual disarticulation of one mode of thinking from another, and the rearticulation of that mode to a different set of social practices and political positions.

For Gramsci, classes are formed in relation to the State; they do not appear before the State, already unified, with their program in hand. The State is not an empty instrument or conduit merely carrying out that program through its coercive powers. It is perhaps comforting to think that our society is ruled by that kind of transitive domination, but Gramsci's conception of hegemony radically challenges any such simple notion of domination. Although many contemporary Marxists use hegemony and domination as interchangeable, they are importantly different. When we use terms like domination, cultural domination, or incorporation, we are immediately simplifying what Gramsci means by hegemony. It is useful then to begin to explain hegemony by describing what Gramsci did not mean by it. Then we can appreciate the ways in which he was suggesting a much more open and enlarged notion of the nature of rule, of politics, and of domination. And we can appreciate as well that his analysis centered on the real circumstances and conditions of politics as we know them in advanced mass industrial capitalist societies.

He did not mean hegemony to suggest that everyone is incorporated into the existing system because they are mesmerised by the ideological

forms and media. There is no more reductionist, instrumentalist, class-delusionary position than to assume that the extraordinary complexities of the society in which we live are really held together by the cement of the media's messages. As crude as this may sound, a large part of the Marxist literature which tries to explain how Western societies are held together consensually—how the consensus is constructed, why it is that the working class is not revolutionary, and why it is that history is not following the punctuating rhythm of class struggle—relies on that position. Hegemony is not ideological mystification. Nor is it merely cultural domination as total incorporation, as if all the contradictory and oppositional forces and practices simply were engulfed and disappear, forever lost to history. While that may happen on some occasions, the actual establishment of domination in hegemony is more that of having the capacity to actively contain, educate, and reshape oppositional forces, to maintain them in their subordinate places. The work of subordination is what Gramsci emphasises in hegemony rather than the achievement of total incorporation.

Nor does hegemony refer to either the coercive power of the State or simple instrumental rule by an economic class. Hegemony does not mean rule by an economic class. Gramsci was interested in the variety of political formations and political class fractions through which the bourgeoisie has ruled. He takes nineteenth-century Britain as exemplary; it was a society becoming bourgeois in its relations while the actual system of rule was still predominantly in the hands of a landed capitalist class rather than a merchant, industrial, or commercial one. What interested him is the capacity of a particular form of economic (class) domination to exercise itself politically through a variety of other mediations—through particular political parties and through the formation of a particular historical bloc. This is how Gramsci thinks the nonreductive relationship between economic contradictions and political forms. When hegemony is established as a form of political rule, it does not involve whole classes but the formation of a historical bloc which provides the political, social, and economic underpinnings of a period of hegemony. Such a bloc combines the leading section of the dominant class with subaltern and subordinate sections of other classes, of the middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie, as well as of the popular classes which have been drawn into the matrix or configuration of power. That is to say, hegemony refers to

the way in which those elements that rule politically and dominate ideologically (in the rule of a particular State) do so by having the capacity to mobilise popular forces in support; by mobilising, colonising, incorporating, grasping, circumventing, or containing those elements necessary to pull into and hold to itself the support of sections of the popular classes. Hegemony entails the formation of a bloc, not the appearance of a class. It is precisely the establishment of the ascendency of a particular historical bloc or formation over the society as a whole that constitutes hegemony, and this can only be accomplished if that bloc is able to generalise the interests and the goals of a particular group so that they come to command something like popular recognition and consent. The political project of rule in that sense has been changed completely by Gramsci's terminology and concepts. Many political formations have established rule without the capacity to establish hegemony. Only hegemony enables the leading bloc to constitute a set of historical tasks for the society as a whole, to begin to make a variety of different social groups and institutions conform to and cooperate with that particular task. Sometimes it is the overcoming of a particular crisis; sometimes it is the setting of a new goal for the social formation, having the society undertake some new historical venture. Hegemony thus involves the way in which political forces are able to win or mobilise popular support for historic tasks.

Hegemony does not obliterate the difference between those who rule and those who do not. It does not erase the line separating the subordinate classes and those who are in the dominant position. On the contrary, it precisely allows for the space in which subordinate and excluded peoples develop political practices and social spaces of their own. Hegemony does not mean that they have to be driven out of existence or brutalised into acquiescence. They can maintain their own space as long as they are constantly contained within the horizon of political practices and ideological systems of representation which place them always in the subordinate position. It is perfectly compatible with a moment of hegemony to have a substantial area of working-class life, organisations, and institutions. It is only necessary to contain the forms of class consciousness and struggle that emerge around the ideological distinction between us and them. The position of a subordinate group—"We are of course of a different class. We don't belong up there. We have our own spaces. Come down to our communities, come down to our clubs, come down to working-class culture. See us in our own space."—can perfectly well be a subordinated space over which hegemony is exercised. Subordination remains alive, as real social practices, political spaces, and genuine institutions that allow a class to elaborate its life always do so in a language spoken by others, always in a political space defined by others. That is the way in which the hegemony of one group is established over another. Hegemony is about leadership and not only about domination.

Nor does hegemony ever function without opposition, because it cannot overcome all of the fundamental contradictions within the structure of the society in which it is established, and it cannot totally contain all of those elements which are not part of the historical bloc. But it is capable of taking the leading, defining position. It is capable of a certain mastery of the terrain. It is capable of generalising its rule across the society, of becoming the "taken for granted," that is, of establishing the point at which the conversation begins, the scale within which the calculations are made. The place from which a society begins to move is the point of a certain balance of power, a balance of forces across a number of key domains, and that is the point at which one can recognise hegemonic formations.

Of course hegemony is never without coercion; no State has attempted to lead and establish its authority while abolishing its police force. The fact that consent is often the leading instance through which hegemony is generated does not mean that there isn't coercion. Consent is always supported, reinforced, and underpinned by the capacity—when necessary—to enforce the terms of consensus and domination over others. But the moment of hegemony is never a moment of pure coercion. The moment of pure coercion is clearly a moment of relative instability for a dominant or ruling group. The point at which you have to call upon what Althusser (1971b) called the "repressive State apparatuses" to get people into line behind you is a moment of greater exposure than the point at which you can appeal to the people's right to a free election and a secret ballot which somehow always tends to deliver a victory to those already in power. The moments of coercion and consent are always complementary, interwoven, and interdependent, rather than separated elements. Most systems of exploitation are maintained by the double modalities of coercion and consent; they are both always present. Coercion functions as what Gramsci called "the support system," even when power is functioning principally through consensual modes. But

we must also recognise that there are important shifts in the tempo or rhythm by which societies structured in dominance maintain and reproduce their dominance. Hegemony points, not to the overthrow of one modality in favor of the other, but to the movement from the coercive to the consensual pole. For example, there is a moment in recent British history, as the 1970s advance, where, while the existing political forces are still in command of the State—electorally and in every other way—there is nevertheless an important shift in the balance between coercion and consent. As the consensual becomes more difficult to sustain, as the material conditions which allow consensual mechanisms to operate become more fragile and increasingly contested, one finds the coercive elements of the State and social institutions playing an increasingly important role in maintaining the mode of domination. That is the moment in which the law, the practices of the "policing of society," and authoritarian discourses become more pronounced in their capacities to discipline and regulate the society.

Hegemony is leadership which is in control, and that is what hegemony means: mastery. It means continually exercising the mastery of a situation. It entails forms of domination, if you will, that are not explicitly repressive. The notion that once hegemony is established it goes on forever is also quite foreign to Gramsci's conception. Hegemony is difficult work. It always has to be won. A dominant bloc has to constantly work for the establishment and continuation of its hegemony. It has to occupy the spaces which are required to reproduce its authority in the society. And what it gains is leadership and the containment of alternative forces. It need not incorporate or destroy them. It has enormous space within it for those who cannot live within the system. It is perfectly capable of tolerating marginals and deviants. It boxes them in, partly by the iron fist and partly by the velvet glove. But the fact that those open spaces exist is a testimony to its capacity to rule.

In Gramsci's view, it is only in such hegemonic moments of leadership that a historical bloc can get hold of society and shape it to meet the new conditions required to establish, develop, and expand the power of a particular bloc and its economic forms. A historical bloc is genuinely hegemonic—morally, intellectually, culturally, politically, *as well as* economically—when it can reshape the social formation and bring it

into line with those forms of social and political practice and ideological representation which are the conditions for a new historical task, for the development of something different, or for the power to deal with a crisis. It is important to notice that Gramsci arrived at the conception of hegemony because he thought it had never been achieved in Italy. This cannot be explained by appealing to the lack of a ruling class but rather to the fact that there are two constantly fighting with one another: one, based in the south, was still powerfully attached to a feudal mode of production; the other, based in the north, was built upon a mixed although largely modern economic system. Therefore, it was not the case that Italy was not under the determining influence of particular modes of production. But there had been no Italian force capable of establishing an identity between the capitalist project and the project of the people as a whole, on the terrain of what Gramsci calls the "national popular." The lack of hegemonic rule in Italy was then due to the failure to work on the terrain of the common sense of ordinary people, outside of the direct imposition of State constraint, in order to create the necessary ground on which capitalism can develop as a national project. This is where the moment of hegemony operates to create the conditions—cultural, economic, moral, and political—which are required for modes of production to genuinely expand, to change direction significantly, or to resolve a particular crisis.

It follows that hegemony can only be conceived as a historical process, not as a thing achieved. But on the other hand, it is not merely the ongoing maintenance of rule and domination. It has to be specified "empirically" if the power of the ruling class or the dominant bloc is in fact a moment of hegemony. Additionally, because hegemony is the establishment of the leading position on a variety of sites of social and political struggle, it includes domains that are usually ignored by Marxists, like the discourses of morality. Anybody who wants to command the space of common sense, or popular consciousness, and practical reasoning has to pay attention to the domain of the moral, since it is the language within which vast numbers of people actually set about their political calculations. The Left has rarely talked about that space in which the difference between the "good" and the "bad" is defined; it has rarely attempted to establish the language of a socialist morality. Consequently, it is left

entirely in the keeping of religious and moral entrepreneurs, of the churches and the moral majority. For Gramsci, failing to recognise the importance of giving people the capacity to make the necessary calculations—in their own idioms, languages, and everyday life—of moral judgments (as well as of social, political, and intellectual ones) simply means that a particular political force (e.g., the Left) has abstained from engaging on a front where it ought to be present. Consequently, the subordination of the cultural field in the effort to construct a hegemonic politics—the notion that it is merely a matter of whim whether you enter into it, that it is someplace that you can get into or not as you like—would be ludicrous.

Consider the question of Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, the period in which the modern British State is formed, the period of mass democracy, the period of the establishment of a particular form of working-class socialism ("labourism") which gets institutionalised in the Labour Party. It is also the period of the collapse of a genuinely hegemonic formation from the past, namely, of liberalism. In the previous period, liberalism was the leading philosophy, the leading political formation, the one which was able for a long period of time to contain the working-class organisations. It is in the leading position even when the Conservatives are in power; it defines the ideas with which people thought about their project in the world, the way in which they came to understand what British society was like, what its achievements were, what its historical destiny was, as well as the nature of British politics and culture. The formation of liberalism was able to contain, for a very long time, the trade union movement, working-class socialism, and the representations of working people. It was a formation in which everybody could find their place, a "mansion with many rooms" as it were. Thus, radicals did not have to position themselves within the established parties or political alternatives. There were spaces for everybody in the *same* house, and one knew what the leading elements which defined the formation were. It is when those key elements begin to be challenged, both in terms of material practices—its economic conditions of existence (e.g., the decline of Britain in competition with the United States, Japan, and Germany)—and of ideological representations, that there is a real disintegration of that particular hegemonic formation.

And then there is a struggle to construct a new hegemony; and that struggle is particularly interesting because, in part, all of the different sides understood that the relationship between the individual and the society had to be constructed differently from its articulation within the liberal formation. Consequently, it is a period when the individualism of liberalism is broadly challenged under the banner of what I call collectivism. Whether on the Right, the Middle, or the Left, one finds attempts to articulate forms of collectivism: There is a socialist collectivism, a conservative collectivism, and a collectivism of those people who are involved in enunciating a new era of national efficiency and imperial destiny. All operate under some notion of collectivism because they all have to come to terms with the destruction of the hegemony of that conception of the State embodied in liberalism, although they all attack it from different points. It is only out of the struggle itself that one begins to get the elements which might lead to a new hegemony. And the results of the particular ways in which those struggles are conducted are very important in defining, not only what happens in the 1920s and 1930s, but what has happened ever since. That is the period in which a particular form of social democracy, a particular kind of labourism, is generated. It wins out over a whole range of other kinds of socialism which were active in the labour movement during that period (e.g., Fabianism, which has survived as a kind of permeating middle-class socialism; and syndicalism), movements which were struggling for new ways of representing the emergent interests of working people in the new industrial classes and, indeed, of wider social categories. This is, not coincidentally, the period of the struggle for women's rights. You cannot understand this period as if there was a single ruling class with its one ideology which had repressed and incorporated all opposition and difference. It is only out of an ongoing and continuous struggle in which different groups ascend and descend that the actual configuration of new forms of hegemony are generated.

This example raises important ambiguities in Gramsci's use of the concept of hegemony. It is, on the one hand, as I have suggested, a very particular, historically specific, and temporary moment in the life of a society. It is rare for such a degree of unity to actually be achieved. On the other hand, later in his work, Gramsci expands the notion beyond that of the formation of a particular class alliance and suggests that it is at least a strategy of all ruling classes, that it applied to the formation of all leading historical blocs. But that distinction is complicated by a historical question. Gramsci

connects hegemony to the distinction between "East" and "West" formations; the distinction is a metaphor for a particular historical shift which took place in the Western capitalist nations after 1870, a shift characterised by the internationalisation of capital, the emergence of modern mass democracy, the complexification of the role and organisation of the State, and an unprecedented elaboration in the structures and processes of civil society. One could equally well point to other significant changes that mark the transition into modern capitalism. But the decisive point for Gramsci was that these changes marked the increasing diversification of social antagonism and the dispersal of power. Consequently, forms of domination were required to ground their power more and more in an increasingly complex and autonomous civil society, in the processes of winning consent within the voluntary institutions of civil society. Thus, according to Gramsci, hegemony is a specific formation of domination with particular conditions of existence and, hence, a specific historical location. But it is unclear whether Gramsci continues to hold to this historical specificity, or whether we are obliged to take the fruitful historical example as necessary and constitutive of hegemony.

Gramsci's conception of hegemony entails, not only a different notion of domination, but also a different notion of political, cultural, and ideological struggle. Gramsci identifies three different moments of political struggle; he does not—as he has often been misread—divide politics into two exclusive types as if one had then to choose one or the other. These are the "war of maneuver" (or movement), "underground warfare," and the "war of position" (229–239). The "war of maneuver" occurs when there is a genuine division of society, not only between classes, but more generally, between the oppressed and the oppressors. In such profound moments of rupture, society is split by a mass mobilisation of the popular forces against the power bloc, of the people against those who command power. The two sides or forces can be clearly isolated and identified, and there is a direct contestation or confrontation of power. The moment of "underground warfare" exists where there are already pertinent sites of political and economic struggle in the society, and the contestation cannot be head-on. It is not class against class or people against the power bloc; it is the development of raiding parties which strategically attack the strongholds of power of a particular class. It is, for Gramsci, the beginning of mass or popular mobilisation. Finally, a "war of position" can only exist in societies that have a fully formed mass democracy, in which the working classes and other popular democratic forces have already engaged in successful struggles to win particular economic, political, and civil rights and powers. These are societies of extraordinary social and political complexity; within them, civil society does not have the kind of simple structure which would permit the State to overwhelm it instantly and easily. Civil society has developed a great deal of autonomy and independence from the direct mediations of State power and it includes institutions which have been developed to some degree outside of the immediate purchase of the dominant or ruling classes. Consequently, the direct confrontation between the excluded and the included classes, or between the powerless and the powerful, is now subject to the extraordinarily diverse and often displaced forms of political struggle that are common in parliamentary and democratic regimes. In those societies, politics will be conducted through a war of position much of the time, although not all of the time. Struggle will be differentiated, conducted in what Gramsci calls the "'trenches' and . . . fortifications" (243) of civil society (culture, language, ideology, and morality), as well as in direct confrontations with the condensed power of the State or with the economic power guaranteed in capitalist class relations.

Gramsci's opening of Marxism to the possibility, indeed the necessity, of differentiated forms of political struggle grounds a useful effort to adapt the forms of class struggle to the historically emerging conditions of capitalism between the two world wars. Once the "high proletarian moment" described above had ebbed and the capitalist social formations went on, the new formations began to acquire a degree of hegemony. They reorganised themselves both politically and economically. It is not simply that the struggle had been defeated and turned back, but rather, that its very form and nature have had to change. It has had to adapt to a new kind of terrain on which new and diverse forms of mass politics are demanded.

The only politics capable of confronting a hegemonic position is a hegemonic politics, a war of position. Only a hegemonic politics is capable of the degree of organisation which can confront bourgeois ideology on the terrain of common sense. A hegemonic politics operates in the

cultural apparatuses, the discourse of moral languages, in the economic struggle, in the political space (including electoral struggles as well as other forms). It tries to occupy each and every front and understands that victory is not the great battle which ends with the final collapse of the enemy. Victory is the seizing of the balance of power on each of those fronts of struggle. It is commanding the balance of political, social, and ideological forces at each point in the social formation. That is a lesson which few on the Left have understood, but one which the bourgeoisie (especially in its contemporary forms) absolutely understands. They do not leave the cultural, intellectual, and moral spaces alone. They do not ignore the academies because there are relatively few people involved. They do not refuse to do battle on the terrain of sexual, social, and religious problems because that is not the domain of politics and power. They know that if they are to make a difference in history, they are going to have to make a difference on all those fronts.

When Thatcherism emerged in England, it entered the struggle on every single front on which it calculated it could advance itself. You know that their project is to be hegemonic when, for example, the minister for education takes the time to propose changing the name of the body which gives grants to higher education from the Social Science Research Council to the Social Studies Research Council. After all, since 1968, everyone knows that sociology is not a science: That is working on the ground of common sense. That is a formation which means to contest every single idea, to have a theory for every single arena of human life, a definition for every single social position. It means to contest Keynesianism, in its simple and its most advanced forms. It intends to tell you how to bring up your children, how a teacher should act and appear, what languages to use at various times, and so on. It means to occupy and define a dominant space at every single point. It separates itself from those forms of paternalist conservatism which would accommodate themselves to corporatism and social democracy—the "wets" [old-style conservatives] who borrow from and accommodate to oppositional formations—because they are not fighting for a real victory. Thatcherism understands that hegemony requires you to block out the spaces and to define the new reference points for the entire social landscape. It has the capacity to operate hegemonically, at one and the same time, in the most advanced theoretical language and in the idioms of ordinary language. For example, it elaborates monetarism as an economic theory (if you can believe that possible) at the same time that it presents the complexities of monetary supply in the idioms of ordinary language: for example, comparing the national economy to running a domestic family budget—"You can't spend what you don't have." The ordinary commonsense wisdom of the people, forged often in historical confrontation with those dominant forces, generated in the subordinate spaces of society, can be won, colonised, turned around, and made to speak in the idioms in which hegemony is produced. The hegemonic bloc is always a radical bloc. It seeks to cut the ground from under the previous forms of hegemony, settlement, and consensus. It wants to reverse the historical trends and make a new common sense. It needs to insert itself into the pores of the practical consciousness of human beings. And the notion that this has nothing to do with culture, is outside of ideology, or is really dictated by their position in the class structure, is absolutely absurd.