

ENG 430 | Cultural Studies
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Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State
Antonio Gramsci

Key Concept 1

Hegemony

210. Binaries, i.e., polarized issues (e.g., governing body and/vs. anti-government party/-ies) result in the practice of hegemony. The politics of hegemony functions by the virtue of **(a)** the supremacy of a social group that manifests itself in two ways: (i) as 'domination'; and, (ii) as 'intellectual and moral leadership'.

210. Hegemony is the problem-child of orthodox class-consciousness among the people (expecting to be) in charge. **(b)** a class is dominant in two ways: (i) leading; (ii) dominant. "It [i.e., the center/central power/class, i.e., the leading group] leads the classes which are its allies, and dominates those which are its enemies." "there is a 'political hegemony'".

When a social group dominates antagonistic groups (e.g., governing body and/vs. anti-government party/-ies), "it tends to 'liquidate', or to subjugate ... by armed forces"; "it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power" ... but ... it must continue to 'lead' as well." So, here comes the essentiality of hegemony, an alternative option to the supreme authority and practice of power.

210. (c) Hegemony is a political practice by nature. "The 'normal exercise of hegemony ... is characterized by the combination of force and consent.'" (see p. 210 for more info).

211. (d) Hegemony is a politically correct weapon for the leading group. It is argued that “[in response to] the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, ... the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic corporate kind ... hegemony is ethical-political and economic [issue]... [It] must ... be based on the decisive nucleus of economic activity”.

211. Hegemony exists and will survive until politics dies; and, because politics is immortal, the functionality of hegemony will remain eternally active. That's why, Gramsci argued that (e) the next best phase in hegemony deals with the relation of political forces. This phase can be analysed and differentiated into various levels: (i) the economic-corporate level; (ii) the solidarity of interests [against the problem of the State]; (iii) the collective level (one's interests become the interests of other subordinate groups).

212. (f) at the end of the day, because literacy (i.e., ability to comprehend something) matters, “every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship”.

Key Concept 2

Intellectuals

212. For the State, intellectuals are no less than Squealer (Ref: George Orwell's *Animal Farm*) (a) every social group creates “strata of intellectuals” [= reliable Shield of Achilles; loyal supporters who will never betray] for getting [=ensuring quasi-votes through] “homogeneity and an awareness of its own function” in economic, social, and political fields. For example, they will argue that “an [wise and skilled, ~~not necessarily educated and honest~~] elite [amongst the social group] must have the capacity to be an organizer of society, ... or at least ... to choose the deputies (especialised employees)”.

213. "All men are intellectuals ... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals." Julien Benda has mentioned real intellectuals and unreal intellectuals, whereas Edward Said has mentioned organic intellectuals and traditional/inorganic intellectuals.

Organic intellectual (plural organic intellectuals): An intellectual or someone of professional standing (i.e. **a doctor, lawyer, or priest**) who rises to that level from within a social class that does not normally produce intellectuals, and remains connected to that class. **Organic intellectual** is an intellectual member of a social class, as opposed to a member of the traditional intelligentsia that regards itself as a class apart from the rest of society. ... Organic intellectuals perform an essential function in **assimilating (conquering) traditional intellectuals** ideologically and creating a system of solidarity among all intellectuals. Gramsci defines **traditional intellectuals** as those who see themselves as autonomous and independent from the ruling social group, believing to stand for truth and reason. **Organic intellectuals**, on the other hand, emerge from and are tied to a social class within an economic structure.

The teacher as an organic intellectual, in its various levels of performance, plays the crucial role in the formation of consensus, since they are creators, mediators and multipliers of public opinion (NOSELLA; AZEVEDO, 2012). [**Source: Internet**]

213. "non-intellectuals do not exist".

Key Concept 3

The State

214. Government survives "with the consent of the governed", ... the State educates this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations (see p. 215 for more info).

Gramsci talks about ethical State and the cultural State; he argues that the State is no less than a teacher, i.e., an educator. He says, "every State is ethical" since "one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level".

215. (c) "The entire function of the State has been transformed; the State has become an educator".

215. (e) the State plays educative and formative role. Its aim is to create "new and higher types of civilization", to adapt "the civilization and morality of the broadest popular masses", and to evolve "even physically new types of humanity."

215. (f) "the State must be conceived as an educator because] it [wants] to create a new type/level of civilization." "The State ... is an instrument of rationalization, of acceleration ... It operates according to a plan, urges, incites, solicits, and punishes".

216. "Law is repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilizing activity undertaken by the State."

216. (g) "The State is the entire complex of political and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules."