Production, Consumption, and Consciousness

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PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION, AND CONSCIOUSNESS
'To discover a truth oneself, without external suggestions or assistance, is to create—even if the truth is an old one.'

-Antonio Gramsci

History, Hegemony, and Education

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Introduction and Methodology

To begin with disclaimers: the discussion which follows is not a 'treatise' on education in any sense of that term. Nor is it intended as a programme for educational reform, per se. Disciplines far more qualified for that task than is political theory must assume it, to assure a proper treatment of such an immensely important undertaking. Rather, the present effort is more than anything an attempt to bring two of the most significant Marxist writers of our century (namely Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser) into closer proximity to one another. Something of a justification of this approach is necessary to make sense of the trajectories that this essay follows.

At their bottom, these trajectories represent an attempt to broaden understanding of education, and more significantly-political education, as it relates to problems of hegemony in capitalist societies. This effort is a continuation, in many ways, of a similar initiative which is present in much of Gramsci's own writing. Education must be understood in its most enormous sense if it is to carry meaning, a sense of which (for the better, I think) any single writer can catch but the merest glimpse. With this understanding in mind, the current discussion takes two tremendously important theorists as the 'beacons' between which it navigates, with the space between those beacons as the real object of its investigation.
Such a methodology is an implied recognition of two very different sorts of 'evidence' in the construction of political commentary: that which comes into print as theory (that is, from the mind and pen of a theorist him or herself) and that which comes into history as event (that is, the course of political development in general, and in Marxist theory, the struggles of classes over the shape that such development takes). Both these types of 'document' are obviously crucial to political understanding, above all to Marxism in its efforts at 'historical science'. They are so critical though, not as mere reflections of one another, so that some theorist may look at the historical vindication of her thought and say: 'Aha! I was right'. The two are much more subtly interwoven than this, interwoven in this sense of political education rather than merely 'theory testing', and as part of a broader unity of theory and practice.

The lessons that political theory has to offer, then, can certainly never be explored within the hypotheses of a single critic; they must instead be gleaned from the common assumptions between several commentators. The intention here is to demonstrate that the common assumptions of Gramsci and Althusser, though their broader theoretical projects differ, allow for useful reconciliation when placed into a larger theoretical whole. In the present discussion, this larger whole is a constructed history of the development of hegemonic dominance within capitalism; its completion illuminates helpful correlations between Althusserian understandings of ideology and the strain of hegemony theory that has Gramsci as its founder.
The emphasis throughout this essay is on questions and understanding education as their 'asking', the political implications of this definition being rather obvious. For at the center of any class society is the assumption that certain 'questions' may never be asked by the underclass(es) if social order is to remain undisturbed. Schools within a capitalist society function to reproduce such silences, not so much by forbidding social questions, as by operating in such a way that these questions never occur to potential inquisitors. This is capitalist hegemony in its most effective and most devastating sense.

Questions about how schools function as institutions to reproduce the reigning capitalist ideology, and about the importance of the so-called 'hidden curriculum' (as well as what shape it takes) are of obvious concern. Part of an answer lies in thinking of schools as an organic part of the capitalist whole, rather than as merely a means of shuttling ideological manipulations between the spheres of social institutions and the capitalist economy.

Also of importance, however, is thinking about ways in which such ideological lessons are accepted by the students involved, and in the larger context, by the dominated class. This question, I think, necessitates a consent-based emphasis that is of natural concern for Gramsci, and that ends up in a metamorphosed form in Althusser's statement that social actors have no choice outside of their acceptance of their own subjection and determination by ideology. The question for study
here is how these similar understandings of ruling class dominance within capitalism can be understood as complementary within a larger theoretical and historical scheme. How is a Gramscian notion of the historical development of hegemony, with particular focus on the role of schools and of intellectuals, reconcilable with an Althusserian notion of ideological dominance that expressly denies this historical element? And ultimately, can hegemony itself be viewed as an historical structure?

History and Terrain

The most direct point of comparison between the two writers considered here, and the one which forms the basis of Althusser's critique of Gramsci, is that of historicism, specifically as it appears in Gramsci and more generally in its larger implications for the whole of Marxist theory. Let me first introduce this concern as it relates to Gramsci's project.

The question, 'how important was a logic of history to Gramsci' seems almost absurdly rhetorical, for it is the understanding of this logic that is the implicit task of so much of his writing, both in purpose and in method (the Modern Prince and Notes on Italian History being perhaps the readiest examples). These texts may indeed owe their very execution to what must have been for Gramsci an overwhelming sense that history was 'happening without him,' as he deteriorated in prison during the formative
days of Italian fascism prior to the first world war (a ghost of Machiavelli's historical situation, his own festering in exile during the formative days of the new Florentine state).

In his notes on the process of schooling, this interest is certainly present as well, as Gramsci places tremendous emphasis on the need to make education 'real' and on the importance of historical knowledge toward that end:

Pupils did not learn Latin and Greek in order to speak them, to become writers, interpreters, or commercial letter-writers. They learnt them in order to know at first hand the civilization of Greece and of Rome - a civilization that was a necessary precondition of our modern civilization: in other words they learnt them in order to be themselves and know themselves consciously.2

Two concerns above all present themselves in this passage. First of all is that of historical 'terrain' and the idea of 'precondition', a question central to Gramsci's larger understanding of hegemony. Is it possible to speak of a marxist 'pre-history', a period 'neutrality' or equilibrium in class power, during which some founding hegemonic battle was conducted? On what type of ground are struggles over social and political hegemony initially fought? Secondly, there is the first hint of a problem to be dealt with more later - that of consciousness and the degree of historical and class awareness that Gramsci wishes to attribute to classes in struggle. The importance of this second point to Gramsci's historicism is fairly clear: how aware are classes of the stakes of the hegemonic struggle throughout history, with the ultimate question for schooling being - how is consciousness understood in relation to Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals' and
what is their specific role as class actors?

Gramsci certainly held no assumptions about the neutrality of schools. He saw them, as must any Marxist commentary, as an indoctrinating tool of the ruling ideology. They serve this function, however, *from their belonging to a larger cultural and social whole*, not from their manipulation by a conscious ruling class. This understanding already has significant implications for structuralism, since it emphasizes the structuring of the social totality by capitalist production over any conscious bourgeois manipulation.

Althusser writes of the role of schools within capitalism replacing the role of the church in feudal society as the 'dominant Ideological State Apparatus'. What we must understand in regard to the concept of 'terrain' is the linkage of the modern school and the modern capitalist state within the same social whole. From the initial challenge to church authority during the period of the Reformation, we see this relationship emerging. Until the early sixteenth century, the Church had always been able to assume schools as an unquestioning ally by which to reproduce and re-affirm Church doctrine. By the 1520s, especially in England, schools had become tools of the broader hegemonic struggle being waged between the Catholic orthodoxy, the Reformation, and powerful monarchs beginning to question church power more seriously.

As the bases for the modern state are struggled over, schools and other institutions must become essential tools in that struggle, incapable of being seen as external to it. I don’t
wish to discuss the histories of specific schools at any length; the point is to emphasize the significance of Gramsci's hegemonic 'terrain': there is no point at which hegemony is struggled for on an 'even field'; the very evolution from feudal to capitalist production is weighted in favor of the class which will assume control of the latter social and economic organism.

Just as Marx wrote that every economic epoch lays the foundation for that which follows it, so does the arena of hegemonic struggle precede the class which will claim social victory within it (or in Gramsci's phrase- 'every real historical phase leaves traces of itself in succeeding phases, which then become in a sense the best document of its existence')⁵. Marx's statement is directed specifically at economic explanations. Cultural ones are much more delicate, and it is this essential problem to which Gramsci and Althusser both are directing their efforts. Schools are thus an understandable focus for both writers, since they are the institutions in which the cultural and the social intermingle most indistinguishably, and the difference in role between teachers of social knowledge and receptors of it is most in doubt.

Gramsci's assumptions are perhaps most clear in his theory of revolution or counter hegemony. Any overcoming of this hegemonic control must go beyond the material social structures of its existence, to initiate a 'transformation of the previous ideological terrain and the creation of a new world-view which will serve as a unifying principle for the new collective will'.⁶ This view has significant implications for Gramsci's
understanding of hegemonic control as historically rooted and developed, as well as for the assumptions he shares with Althusser about the inclusion of all classes in hegemony, capitalist as well as proletarian.

The concern in Gramsci and in later commentaries on him, with the setting of historical 'terrains' prior to actual hegemonic struggles, may be viewed as an acknowledgement of the need to see a more complete theoretical picture than that given by Marx. Gramsci as a dialectician is a theorist more sophisticated than Marx, for his picture of the capitalist state is more complete and his dialectical assumptions more encompassing. While Marx is concerned with the historical unfolding of subject-object determinations in social terms, Gramsci is interested in the boundaries within which these determinations are formed. The concept of hegemony should be understood not only as domination, but also as the very terrain on which struggles over that domination are conducted.

In approaching Gramsci's thoughts on schooling, then, we should not be surprised to encounter a series of similar divisions suggested by those inherent in the larger body of his thought. Divisions between state and civil society, between a knowledge based on learning as commodity and one based on learning as conscious experience ('the truly active participation of the student in school')⁷, and between the false discipline of the traditional classroom and the self-discipline such methods are meant to instill— all are examples of this emphasis. None of these divisions can be resolved without recourse to some larger social whole, some broader 'terrain', for they are not
'dialectical wholes' unto themselves.

That unifying role is of course played by the larger picture of society and culture and has a strong historical interest. Schools are reflections of a social and cultural climate that changes over time, and which itself becomes a terrain that bounds the very way that learning is organized:

The educational efficacy of the old Italian secondary school...was not to be sought in its explicit aim as an 'educative' system, but in the fact that its structure and its curriculum were the expression of a traditional mode of intellectual and moral life, of a cultural climate diffused throughout Italian society by ancient tradition. It was the fact that this climate and way of life were in their death-throes, and that the school had become cut off from life, which brought about the crisis in education.8

Concern with this 'pre-history' of hegemonic struggle, and the notion of historical and cultural terrain, then, is quite important. It is the second step though that, strictly speaking, is of more immediate concern here: the translation of historical and economic boundaries into cultural oppression. The task is to systematize these 'periods' of hegemony and to determine the points of contact between social structures and the class which controls them, the hope being to intermingle convincingly the structural emphases of Althusser while still retaining the pervasiveness of Gramscian hegemony and a defense of a more historical method.

Toward this end, we can propose a rough division of hegemonic development into three general 'phases', which will also form the framework for the discussion which follows:
(i) the formation of hegemony on the historical 'stage' of a new production-era, a stage which is already pre-set and anticipating this new class; this is the point at which the classes which are to bear the burden of building this new age (i.e. the working class, the non-progressive class here) become incorporated into the active process of its making; (ii) hegemonic control becomes invisible, because so all-encompassing; the 'moral and intellectual leadership' of the ruling class permeates all aspects of life; political questions become closed off, and the 'ideological question' never needs to be re-affirmed, since it is lived out every day; ultimately a separation between these ideological questions and questions of epistemology (seen more generally as questions of 'everyday life' and everyday social 'procedure') which is reproduced in and by institutions of education; (iii) the final 'phase' of a Gramscian system in which counter-hegemony is constructed, a phase that attempts to overcome the pre-determined historical and cultural terrain of the initial struggle.

The first of these 'stages' is the most crucial to the later developments of ruling class hegemony, because it is the point at which classes are the least antagonistic in their relations, because least at odds in their goal: the construction of a new social order. Hegemony in this period is at its most visible in the terms in which I want to understand it: not so much as the incorporation of the underclass onto the ideological ground of the bourgeoisie, but rather as a mutual construction of that ground on the implicit and historically prefigured terms of the
reigning class. This sort of fullness is, I think, necessary to do justice to the intricacy and totality of Gramsci’s theory. It is necessary to understand social formation as just that—formation (not yet as oppression, and not ever as oppression in a way that is conscious); to understand the new production era as what Raymond Williams calls ‘a process and not a state’⁹. He explains more fully:

...hegemony is not to be understood at the level of mere opinion or mere manipulation. It is a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives.¹⁰

Distinctions between dominance and experience are crucial to the subtlety of Gramsci’s thought, because they indicate differences in assumptions about the actions of the hegemonic class. Any more limited understanding of hegemonic formation would, for example, exclude a Gramscian element of consent, since the whole of social evolution would be brutally reduced to the historical duping of one class by another.

This view we must reject with equal brutality as it assumes both an historically conscious dominant class (conscious coercion) and a subordinate class without the capability of rational decision making (irrational consent). Both of these assumptions represent extreme simplifications of the complex historical and cultural meanings that Gramsci includes in his theories of hegemonic function and formation.
Such complexity I think owes a great deal to Gramsci's general historical method, both in the breadth with which it infuses his theories of the social whole and in the implications it holds for distinguishing Gramsci from more traditional Marxist interpreters. It is in juxtaposing himself with Croce's failure to recognize such complexity that is one of Gramsci's primary criticisms of his Italian histories; and at the same time, its recognition is the characteristic that enables Gramsci to speak of history in the typically Marxist terms of economic evolution, while not reducing it solely to the terms of the materialist dialectic, as with Lukacs or Lenin for instance.

Whether because of his great respect for Italian tradition or his dogged insistence on emphasizing society's complex whole, Gramsci refuses to be as reductive as the most orthodox of Marxisms would perhaps require. 'It may be ruled out,' he writes, 'that economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create terrain more favorable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought.' Such words have obvious implications for theories of schooling and the role of intellectuals in creating the cultural basis for counter-hegemony and ultimately political revolution. The order of events here is critical, since one of Gramsci's most pronounced distinctions from the Leninist school is his emphasis on the establishment of an alternative culture before the seizure of state power, thereby radically reformulating the task of intellectuals within the revolutionary effort.
An understanding of this fundamental expansion of Marxist historical method helps to locate the importance of Gramsci's ideas of 'terrain' and the identification of critical moments in the defining of such terrain. Machiavelli and Crispi come to represent (failed) moments within the development of the modern bourgeoisie, just as Erasmus and the intellectuals of the reformation serve as moments within the moral and intellectual development of the German people towards the high period of classical German philosophy. Ultimately this logic must extend to Marxism itself, as what Gramsci terms a 'moment of modern culture'.

The dialectic through which Gramsci approaches historical method is then a complete one, in that neither the evolution of production nor dispersed historical events takes precedence in historical formation. Both have a reciprocating function that is incomplete unto itself. Likewise, the concepts of a newly born hegemony without a specific terrain which it defines, or inversely- a terrain without a corresponding hegemony, are alien to Gramsci's thinking. They are much less so, I think, to Lenin's.

There is another element of Gramsci's historical approach that we should consider here; namely the sheer enormity of it. Gramsci states repeatedly the need to see current history as inheriting the entirety of the past, not just its most decisive characteristics. 'The present,' he writes, 'contains the whole of the past'. We thus inherit history's contradictions (the North/South question in Italy and the failure of a national, 'Jacobin' proletarian force), its failures (Lorenzo d'Medici's lack of class awareness), and its shortfalls. His historical
picture then is very large, as it must be in order to accommodate the comprehension of social evolution not only as the evolution of a class, but as a social totality.

This expansion of traditional Marxist approaches, however, provides ripe ground for contradiction if we are not careful. It lends his theory a rather schizophrenic character, being sundered between Bolshevik influences inherited from Lenin on one hand (especially in the acceptance of 'spontaneous' revolution) and more Hegelian-idealist ones on the other. 18

This 'divided' understanding of social history contains within it many of the criticisms that Althusser wants to make of Gramsci's historical method, since it is depends on a non-reductive interaction between base and superstructure rather than being able to posit the incorporation of the former into the ideological tasks of the latter. We need to locate, then, the interaction between base and superstructure in terms of the further development of hegemony and the spaces that it creates within schools as superstructures—spaces with potentially revolutionary uses.

This question is related to broader questions of Gramsci's theory of the state, the importance of class consciousness, and the possibilities for counter hegemony. Let me address these issues as they relate specifically to schools, in order to suggest both their larger implications and the contributions that structuralism makes toward their resolution.
'...the dialectic enabled Marx to show connections between phenomena that otherwise remain unrelated. Ideas no longer popped up inexplicably from the mind of some genius. Intellectual invention 'corresponded' to some aspect of social practice without being determined mechanistically by it.'

-Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism, and History*

As the capitalist state expands, the classes upon which it feeds must expand with it, and when these classes begin to use the structures which the state erects against it, the cultural groundwork for revolution is laid. Gramsci's notes on schooling are perhaps the most illustrative discussion of what we may call the 'elastic state', the understanding of the capitalist state as creating spaces for potential rebellion with the very expansion of its control. These spaces are separate from hegemony per se, as they have a structural quality rather than a cultural, moral, or intellectual one; and to understand Gramsci's theory of social whole, we must understand the nature of this separation.

Writers on education are extremely sensitive to this aspect of Gramsci's theory, and we should rely on them to light the way towards its larger political implications.

Just as Gramsci understood the rise of a new economic class to carry with it a specific type of intellectual and, more importantly, a specific type of *learning* process, so must the state apparatus which arises with this class carry already within it the marks of the newly hegemonic bourgeoisie. This is one of the answers that Gramsci poses to the relationship between base
and superstructure— a desire to escape a strict economic reductionism not only in the continuing development of capitalist culture, but at its very birth: an understanding of the birth of capitalist production itself as impossible without simultaneous condition of its class culture. The way in which learning is structured reflects a larger cultural climate that bears the mode of production within it. From this point forward, the formative moments of capitalist history become at the same time documents of the contact between superstructure and base. The emergence of capitalist production is not, to use Althusser’s phrase, an ‘unexpected birth.’

This understanding is attractive to education theorists who wish to see more complex relationships between society and education than those often pronounced by more traditional Marxist accounts, accounts which view the capitalist economy as the driving force behind the so-called ‘hidden curriculum’. Such theories, of which Bowles and Gintis’ Schooling in Capitalist America is perhaps the most visible example, pose a ‘correspondence’ between production and schooling in which the classroom becomes both a simulation of and a preparation for the capitalist production economy:

The production of commodities may be considered as quite minor importance except as a necessary input into people production. Our critique of the capitalist economy is simple enough: the people production process— in the workplace and in schools— is dominated by the imperatives of profit and domination rather than by human need... We shall argue that a major instrument wielded by owners and managers in stabilizing a totalitarian system of economic power is the organization of the production process itself.

Discipline, the lessons of careerism, meritocracy, expectation, and
authority are the lessons practiced and instilled behind those which are actually taught.

Critics of the 'correspondence theory' rightfully point out its inability to account for larger cultural means of oppression beyond the mere simulation of the production process and the authority relations behind it. Henry Giroux, for example:

To separate the ideological realm from the workplace is to lose sight of how the cultural and economic interpenetrate each other... In essence the correspondence theory has failed to develop a socio-cultural component that would refine the meaning of domination and reproduction and point to the spheres of culture and ideology as important hegemonic elements that reach deeply into the crevices and texture of daily life.21

Giroux goes on to argue, rightly I think, that notions of 'correspondence' de-emphasize the dialectical character of schools in a way that Gramsci would not. His conclusion is that schools must be seen as both locations of capitalist indoctrination and locations of potential resistance, functioning both to 'sustain and resist the values of the dominant society'.22 This is the essential 'elasticity' of Gramsci's view of the state. Wherever the ruling class erects new means of domination, so must it also erect new spaces for potential resistance. Such is the very mechanism by which Gramsci's 'war of position' can take place. Such is the way that a worker's counter culture can be built prior to the actual seizure of state power.23

Where this discussion leads modern education theorists, however, is in many cases problematic. A good deal of the problem lies in unclear distinctions between methods of resistance in the classroom and the larger resistance without, as well as in
assuming a separability of structure and social 'morality'.
Gramsci's emphasis was always on the formation of a new class of intellectuals, not on the reform of schooling as an end in itself; changes in curriculum were therefore secondary. He was not afraid to borrow 'traditional intellectuals' in the service of the working class, as remnants from pre-capitalist society without the strict class determination of modern 'organic intellectuals'. Likewise he proposes very traditional or 'conservative' lessons and learning material for the building of proletarian thinkers.

This emphasis is partially a matter of political expediency, a way to carry on the 'war of position' unnoticed. Superstructural changes that were seen as threatening to the ruling class would not be tolerated and would be punished by force (especially true in pre-fascist Italy, during Gramsci's period). It is also a necessary counter-hegemonic strategy to re-approach traditions in Italian history from new perspectives. This point is critical both to Gramsci's writing on education and to his theoretical project more broadly. The history which is taught in canonical fashion in bourgeois schools is a history which the working classes have helped to construct (have materially brought into their 'lived experience'). To forego the re-evaluation of Italian tradition is therefore to relinquish it fully to its understanding in the terms of the bourgeoisie. This approach may be part of the historical vision that Gramsci inherited from Labriola, who saw the critical capacity of Marxism 'to make react upon the knowledge of past conditions the consciousness of which we are now capable, and thereby to
reconstruct them anew. The building of an historical consciousness is an indispensable precondition for the revolutionary 'making of history'.

A focus on reforms limited to the classroom is obviously of greater immediate interest to writers on education, and this we have no reason to criticize. The means by which some educationists address this interest, however, carry deeper theoretical implications. Giroux for one uses a hegemonic critique of education to emphasize the positive possibilities of utilizing elements of disempowered or 'subaltern' cultures as tools against the reigning hegemony. We must be careful, though, both to avoid a reading of Gramsci that is overly 'relativist' in its views of educational practice—especially keeping the 'conservatism' of Gramsci's educational program in mind (see note 24)—and to emphasize the depth of hegemony as he understands it.

Cultures excluded from the capitalist mainstream still bear the smoldering marks of its hegemonic branding, since they are part of the 'terrain' which the evolving capital order has defined. One of the central most problems that Marxist hegemony theory wishes to address is the means by which capitalism is carried forth from the workplace and reproduced in the home, the neighborhood, the most personal spaces of cultural identity. Warning against so de-centralized a struggle as Giroux seems to advocate is part of Gramsci's emphasis on tradition and history, as well as part of his polemic against the provincialism of the Italian working classes of his day.

While Gramsci recognized the potential of each person, not
only the most educated, to become a 'philosopher', 'intellectual', or 'man of taste', he saw this process as revolutionary only insofar as subaltern social groups were able to shed their elements of superstition, folklore, and mysticism. Though he recognized these as significant elements of a lived culture, Gramsci felt that only by their subordination to science and rational explanation could they be useful as tools of class struggle- in the classroom and out. 'At most,' writes Harold Entwistle, 'Gramsci saw the child's own subculture as a bridge, or point of departure. In itself it could not constitute the data of an education'. The idea of a formative means of learning that incorporates lived experience is a critical tool in the rejection of a commodified knowledge of the type promulgated in capitalist schools.

Hegemony and Consciousness

There is a contradiction which we run up against in trying to reconcile this 'elastic' understanding of the capitalist state with an understanding of hegemony as 'lived experience', as a history made by its benefactors as well as by its victims. This is the problem of how such spaces for subversion can be opened at all, if the working class participates so fully in its own oppression by aiding in the construction of the society which is its enemy.

This is a contested point in theories of hegemony, which arises at the intersection of Gramsci's own writing and the depth
with which Marxist cultural theorists like Raymond Williams wish to understand hegemony as a social and cultural experience. If the proletariat is either devoted to the maintenance of the society it helped to construct, or devoted to learning the rules of surviving in it, why should we expect that this devotion should expire at the door of the classroom? This is a question which structuralism forces us to consider, especially in the all-consuming power that Althusser attributes to ideological interpellation, as well as the totality which Foucault attributes to power relations more broadly. Foucault suggests that 'power is co-extensive with the social body;' that, 'there are no spaces of primal liberty between its network.'

Gramsci himself seems unsure of his answer, seeming to waver in the extent to which he views the ruling class as practicing a conscious educational programme. He writes of the emerging chaos that was once a well-defined separation between 'the vocational school for the instrumental classes, the classical school for the dominant classes and intellectuals'. This separation arose as part of the evolution of capitalism and its need for a new type of 'urban intellectual'.

Even in its early history, Gramsci presciently observes the potential for fragmentation in production, the Fordisms and Taylorisms of the emerging political economy, which in their turn fragment the learning process. Educational changes are documents of these expansions in capitalism and the changes in its production process. The corresponding tendency with its increasing fragmentation and 'specialization' is 'to abolish every type of schooling that is 'disinterested' (not
serving immediate interests) or 'formative'... instead, there is a steady growth of specialized vocational schools, in which the pupil's destiny and future activity are prepared in advance'.

Gramsci seems to be talking here about the relation of one social structure (schools) to another (production), without the need for a conscious hegemonic programme on the part of the hegemonic class. He becomes even more explicit, in a passage that is especially striking, read in the modern context of post-structuralist Marxism:

It cannot even in all honestly be claimed that the bourgeois class moulds the school to its own ends of domination. If this were to happen, it would mean that the bourgeois class had an educational programme and was carrying it out with a single-minded energy: the school would then be a living thing. This is not the case. The bourgeoisie, as the class that controls the state, takes no interest in the school.

The troublesome aspect and the one that makes Gramsci's theory somewhat enigmatic is the degree of emphasis he places on the conscious ruling class. How can schools be 'lifeless', yet the bourgeois class still have a consciousness of itself? Gramsci is one of the few Marxist writers willing to speak of the historical consciousness of the capitalist class as well as that of the proletariat. He does so in a most schematic way, sketching a chronology by which the ruling class grows into a consciousness of itself and its class interests: the material forces of production are developed, capitalists and petty bourgeois begin to associate consciously with members of their own trades ('a tradesman feels obliged to stand by another tradesman, a manufacturer by another manufacturer, etc.'), and finally arises
the 'third moment' of this process in which 'one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class and must become the interests of the other subordinate groups too'. Again we ask the question where can the 'spaces of resistance' be if the timbre of society is but the voice of the 'wily bourgeoisie' (to borrow from Labriola).

Gramsci's answer, though less than explicit, lies in the very way that he thinks of class consciousness itself, a conception with an emphasis on relation to social, and more significantly cultural, structures rather than on abstract awareness. In this sense, Gramsci's project takes up where that of Marx and Engels leaves off, with an explanation of how the 'ultimately determining element' of the economic base limits superstructures in a way that is not primarily material (as it had been for Marx and Engels), but that is conscious as well. Hegemony must then be understood as the point at which capitalist organizational structures begin to structure cultural awareness itself.

The growth into class awareness that Gramsci explicates is above all a growth into a pre-existing culture, a culture born with the social structures of the new production scheme. Consciousness is gained not in the initial construction of society, as that is largely dictated by shifts in economic organization (from feudal to capital), but rather by the later awareness of the cultural assumptions that underlie it; these assumptions are the questions 'already answered', which continue to ooze forth from social institutions long after their...
nascence. Conscious recognition of one's ideological/class adversaries is less necessary than is one's own growth to awareness of the cultural underpinnings of one's own class. Both types of recognition achieve similar social ends, since these cultural underpinnings are the foundations for the social whole in which both classes exist.

We must logically think, with Gramsci, of learning method and education as itself a hegemonic structure, dictated by a largely unconscious (in the traditional sense) battle which doesn't pit class antagonists face to face, but opposes them in relation to an object of cultural struggle. Another snippet from Althusser is of use: schools understood as not only the 'stake' but also the 'site' of class struggle. A distinction between Gramsci's 'cultural consciousness' and the more traditional Marxist 'class consciousness' is necessary.

What does this distinction mean for Gramsci's broader understanding of the role of intellectuals? It is, above all, related to the critical term 'organic intellectuals'. If this term is to carry meaning, such intellectuals must be understood as what we could call 'structurally' organic rather than 'consciously' organic; that is, linked only to the mode of learning and transmitting knowledge that capitalism engenders, not to the conscious aims of the class that determines its economic mechanism.

Gramsci stands vehement against the intellectualism of those thinkers who are 'conscious' of the facts-based nature of capitalism's 'knowledge structures', intellectuals whose success
is based on the 'conscious' assumption and propagation of such a learning process. 'This form of culture,' writes Gramsci, 'serves to create a kind of weak and colorless intellectualism... The young student who knows a little Latin and history, the young lawyer who has been successful in wringing a scrap of paper called a degree out of the laziness and lackadaisical attitude of his professors— they end up seeing themselves as different from and superior to even the best skilled workman, who fulfills a precise and indispensable task in life...this is not culture, but pedantry, not intelligence, but intellect, and it is absolutely right to react against it'.

The very success of such intellectuals depends on their growth to consciousness of the forms of knowledge in capitalist societies, though not necessarily on an intricate understanding of its class division, either socially or historically. Though it is for others to identify more fully the implications of knowledge as a structure, it is certainly for Marxists to identify distinctions between knowledge and the mechanisms which give rise to it, mechanisms which are above all economic.

Structuralism and Hegemony's Second Stage

It is with Althusser that we enter this second stage of an evolutionary history of hegemony, that at which hegemony itself becomes invisible to those living under its dominion. Althusser speaks of hegemonic domination in terms of ideology and its all-
encompassing control, its 'interpellation' of political actors and political life itself.

Like Gramsci, Althusser wants to avoid a reductive economism by inverting associations between base and superstructure, giving pre-eminence to the latter. This method allows him to create a hierarchy between social actors and the ideology which forms their society. The conditions of capitalist society are reproduced by the interactions of these social actors ('subjects') with one another, under the social leadership of the bourgeois class. The limits of this interaction is determined by the ruling ideology ('Subject') and its all-consuming control, allowing Althusser to theorize the reproduction of capitalism in the realm of the superstructures where the ruling ideology is reproduced.\(^\text{38}\)

I want to begin by suggesting certain correspondences between Gramsci and Althusser, and then go on to indicate how these can provide a more complete structuring of this second hegemonic phase. Althusser must be understood as a logical extension of Gramsci's own thought in making certain revisions and purifications of hegemony theory, but his primary contribution to the discussion of schools in this scheme is as a fuller explication of this second hegemonic stage, \textit{not as a complete account unto itself}. Just as Gramsci understood Marxism as a historical and philosophical completion, corresponding to 'the nexus of Protestant reformation plus French Revolution'\(^\text{39}\), so we must understand a complete vision of hegemony as an historical picture corresponding to the nexus, Gramsci plus Althusser. Or, to return to our schematic history: development of productive moXe,
productive conditions becoming lived experience, counterhegemonic formation, with Althusser as critical to this second stage.

There are certain connections between the two writers which should be made straight away; the first of these is the idea of 'moment' and the second that of 'historicism'. It is of course this second issue which forms Althusser's central critique of his predecessor. Let us hear these objections in their author's own words:

Gramsci makes the expression 'historical materialism', which designates only the scientific theory of history bear a double sense: it means simultaneously both historical materialism and Marxist philosophy. Gramsci was so insistent on the practical unity of the conception of the world and history that he neglected to retain what distinguishes Marxist theory from every previous organic ideology: its character as scientific knowledge. Gramsci's conflation of concepts as Althusser reads it is a manifestation of his complex historical picture and his absolute refusal of a strict historical reductionism. Althusser's argument is a defense of an analytically pure Marxism that is able to separate itself (or 'think itself') from the ideological biases of bourgeois history and the humanism which is its theoretical groundwork. To do this successfully means the vindication of Marxist theory separate from its idealistic contaminations (culminating in the Hegelian contaminants of the early Marx) and its establishment of a truly materialist social theory.

This brief summary aside, we can move closer to some of the shared assumptions between these writers. We have spoken of the
importance of formative moments to Gramsci’s historical method, and we should take account of similarities in his use of the term with the usage of Althusser. Though their historical visions are largely antithetical, Gramsci’s understanding of moment, I believe, is far more complex than that of traditional Marxist historicism, and it anticipates Althusser. Gramsci understands an historical moment as a particular, yet not independent point within an historical continuum. It is a point which is identifiable, yet not fully meaningful outside of its relation to the evolutionary process of which it is a part. And in turn, the entire evolutionary process is not an isolated continuum, but rather part of an ensemble containing many other such continua: the evolution of the state institutions proper, of class divisions, of class consciousness, of different forms of culture, etc. (this is a very simplified list). A formative ‘moment’ for Gramsci, then, is an intersection of sorts between these separate but mutually dependent trajectories of social development.

The important realization here is to see Marxism itself as part of this intersection, since only in this way can we understand how a single historical event or the achievements of a single historical figure may be read as a document of the development of Marxism and its explanatory capacity. These are the implications for Gramsci’s carefully chosen code-word for Marxist theory: the ‘philosophy of praxis’.

Althusser rejects the historical associations of this terminology, replacing it with the corresponding idea of ‘overdetermination’, a replacement which allows him to assume the
ideas of intersection without the emphasis on historical
development. This is an ahistorical way to theorize the
interpenetration of base and superstructure (in a way similarly
addressed by Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and indeed this a debt
which Althusser himself acknowledges.42

I want to be extremely careful here, however, due to the
different intentions between the two writers in the usages of
their respective terms. Althusser's 'overdetermined' moment has
no history of its own outside of the development of each of its
contradictions, and even then only insofar as these
contradictions are reflected in and by the social whole at any
given time. Gramsci places no such emphasis on the revolutionary
capacity of capitalism's inherent contradictions, a perspective
that his admiration for Lenin's volunteerist revolutionary
practice should make clear. Furthermore, Gramsci's historical
project is concerned with the very assumption of such
contradictions and with the critical moments at which historical
actors solve, or fail to solve them.

Philosophies take up similar problems; thus Gramsci's vision
of Marxism as a philosophical moment that is both culminating and
formative. This vision is similar to that of Althusser, but
differs in its assumption of an intellectual past that includes
idealistic social theory (Gramsci's Croce for Marx's Hegel) as part
of Marxism's scientific capacity. Most significantly, this past
extends far beyond Marx himself and is inseparable from the very
development of bourgeois history. Althusser, contrarily, severs
these elements from Marxism's scientific capacity. Elements of a
scientific Marxism don't come from its inheritance as a
philosophy, but rather extend only from Marx himself, in his writings after 1844. These separations are critical not only as differences, but as indicators of similarities which lie behind them. One of the very reasons that Althusser rejects Marxism as historicism (aside from the need to separate Marxism from any idealist origins) is to focus instead on the way that capitalism resolves crises of contradiction in its present 'moment'; to contrast the dialectical purity of a Marxist social theory with the false means by which capitalism must reproduce its inherent contradictions. He is concerned tremendously with the reproduction of 'the material conditions of production', a task in which schools play a determinant role.

The distinction between reproducing only the means of production (as with Marx) and reproducing its conditions is critical. For when we extend its implications to the cultural realm, we get a picture quite close to that of Gramsci; and in this association, we find something more: the elements of a structuralist history of hegemony that might have, at least in part, pleased Althusser. The cultural means of reproduction are present within the very development of capitalism itself, and we must therefore come to understand the organic intellectual as existing within a larger structure of knowledge and way of learning. The intellectual's acceptance of this structure is the critical element in historical development.

This recognition again brings us back to questions of consciousness and its definition as growth to cultural awareness.
by the class whose economic system has created the basis, both materially and intellectually, for the culture of its entire society. Such a recognition happens on the scale of class as well, and it is in these terms that Althusser addresses it.

Humanism for Althusser is the philosophy of which the bourgeoisie must convince itself and so transform into the reigning, and indeed hegemonic, ideology. It is the philosophical/cultural basis of capitalism which the bourgeoisie, as the ascendant hegemonic class of the eighteenth century, assumed for itself and realized as a class ideology.

When, during the eighteenth century, the 'rising class', the bourgeoisie, developed a humanist ideology of equality, freedom, and reason, it gave its own demands the form of universality, since it hoped thereby to enroll at its side...the very men it would liberate only for their exploitation. This is the Rousseauian myth of the origins of inequality: the rich holding forth to the poor in the 'most deliberate discourse' ever conceived, so as to convince them to live their slavery as their freedom. In reality, the bourgeoisie has to believe in its own myth before it can convince others, and not only to convince others, since what it lives in its ideology is the very relation between it and its conditions of existence.

This realization, as with Gramsci's ideas of consciousness and cultural production, is not dependent upon the realization of class conflict itself, but merely on the cultural circumstances that are both its basis and its means of reproduction. Althusser again:

Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations
have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness'... The ruling ideology is then the ideology of the ruling class. But the ruling class does not maintain with the ruling ideology, which is its own ideology, an external and lucid relation of pure utility and cunning.46

The critical distinction that we must make, of course, in uniting Gramsci and Althusser is the understanding of a learning process and a mode of knowledge as a structure, insofar as it is not developed consciously by the ruling class, but rather precedes this class as a construct of production.

Althusser's response to the ideological evolution of humanism is its expulsion from Marxist science, while Gramsci's is an acceptance of it which is at the same time its transformation: the need for schools to teach 'a "new humanism" focused upon those modern forms of knowledge which were intrinsic to an industrial civilization'.47 It is in the implications that his understanding shares with Gramsci, that Althusser is able to refine and complete Marx's original problematic of understanding how social actors 'become conscious'.48 It is the understanding in more structuralist terms of Gramsci's theory of the growth of the ruling class beyond its economic-corporate interests.

Ideology and Epistemology

The culmination of this process is Althusser's understanding of ideology, because it allows us to think of a class society without a conscious ruling class, and subsequently to think of...
schooling as an institution which reproduces class oppression while still not being a 'living thing' in the hands of an instrumental reigning class. His approach to ideology is just as important as an analytic tool for understanding Gramsci.

With Gramsci's historiography as complex as it is, we remain uncertain as to where the critical moments of intellectual and historical formation lie, beyond those which he elaborates specifically, and uncertain of how to recognize them as such. In locating these formative moments as a way of understanding history, we must have some way of recognizing which of these moments are formative or hegemonic, and more importantly, which are not.

One answer might be to look for the cultural and political intersections that were spoken of earlier. This approach, though, depends too much on being able to isolate and 'count', separate social continua. To do this, we in the same action must deconstruct the social whole which is so centrally the object of Gramsci's method. Following this route, we are many steps along the road to something like the correspondence theory in regard to education, an inferior approach because it fails to consider what hegemony theory takes as primary: that social control is more than merely the sum of its parts.

The better answer lies in thinking about how formative moments are essentially evidence of the relation between social consciousness and social practice. This evidence is present in both concrete structures and, more significantly, in the relationship between social actors and the reigning cultural
hegemony, of which the structures themselves are the material evidence. It is helpful to recall again Gramsci's methodology in examining the educational crisis of Italian schools, the fact that the efficacy of schools 'was not to be sought in its explicit aim as an "educative" system, but in the fact that its structure and curriculum were the expression of a traditional mode of intellectual and moral life' (see above). This I think is the understanding that Gramsci had of any social history being simultaneously and inextricably the history of the development of a social consciousness and of social actors' acceptance of it.

Gramsci's method has significant theoretical implications here as well, for if the acceptance of the reigning cultural hegemony (the 'consent' emphasis left out of Althusser) is understood as an act of political consciousness, then locating formative moments in this process is at the same time a location of where theory and practice unite. As always, Gramsci takes this lesson from the history of capitalist consciousness as a guide for its cultivation within the working class.

There are the elements present in Althusser to continue the historical approach to hegemonic function suggested by Gramsci, and to give its second stage a more developed logic and scheme. We should begin by understanding ideology as he paints it as consistent of two parts, existing within a single social whole: ideology as a philosophy, the belief in capitalism as the 'natural' and best system of economic organization, and secondly, ideology as the everyday living of this belief, whether consciously or not, in the routine practices of life in the empire of capital. This is the model that Althusser suggests by
his division of 'subjects' (those living in ideology) and 'Subject' (ideology itself), as well as the separation of 'actions' from 'practices'. He writes:

If he [a social actor] does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which still a function of this idealist scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head, in addition to those he proclaims, and he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either 'inconsistent', or cynical, or perverse....This ideology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into practices.'49

His distinction is between actions that are explained by bourgeois rationalism as having an immediate reason or purpose, and practices which are the result of capitalist ideology and seem to have no such direct reason, or at least not one that is questioned. While one's going to work everyday may be based on the reason that one must earn what capitalists euphemistically call 'a living', one's using proper margins in the typing of a business letter for example is most certainly a practice: that is 'the way things are done'.

Althusser's aim here seems very much akin to that of Raymond Williams in his discussion of hegemony as 'lived experience', the difference being Althusser's greater emphasis on this experience as an unconscious one, both by the ruling class and by the ruled: 'that is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology.'50
To explain this distinction fully, especially as concerns the role of the intellectual in capitalist societies, we should break down Althusser’s idea more fully, into what we could call *ideology* (the level corresponding to actions) and *epistemology* (the level corresponding to practices). By this division, I think we can better construct a history of hegemonic control through the changing relationship between these two levels. A history of the ideological/epistemological relationship within a capitalist society allows for a greater sense of the historical movement which Althusser’s critics (in complete justice) say his theory lacks. Such a movement, though, depends not on the subjects of ideology changing the ideological structure itself, but rather changing their own relationship to it, a task that is both a cultural and intellectual one. This is also the significance of Gramscian ‘consent’ as it applies to the role of the intellectual.

To make some distinctions in regards to schooling: standardized scholastic aptitude tests illustrate this separation well. The reduction of one’s entire intellectual experience (which in Gramsci’s terms is social experience as well) to a few hours in an auditorium, filling in circles on an answer sheet with a *number two* pencil, fulfills a definite ideological function. It is above all an acceptance of the sort of facts-based commodity-knowledge that Gramsci criticized in the most vehement terms during in the early years of our century. It is the primacy of the transcript rolled up with the fetishism of the diploma.

We must understand this fetishism as a fetishism of the most
degrading and oppressive kind, for it is the treatment of one's entire experience as a number on a page, as a score on a test, as the name of an institution on a diploma. If we understand intellectual experience with the breadth that Gramsci did, as the understanding of one's cultural and political situation as well as the knowledge that one accumulates in the classroom, then the degree of the offense is clear. It carries cultural weight far beyond the fetish of another's labor through the consumption of a commodity.51

The acceptance of these conditions as part of the standard process of education, however, is an epistemological recognition. It depends not on a conscious acceptance of ideology, but on a recognition of the way that learning is structured in this country, an acceptance based far less on class than on social and cultural procedures which are conditioned by production. There are corresponding documents of this procedural acceptance to be found in any school; note for example the exalted Chicago Manual of Style, which in this context exists as a social document of the society's need for documentation— all a circle of circles.

Althusser is right to say that the subject ultimately has no choice outside of the acceptance of his own subjection, but this is an important acceptance to recognize, for it is the consent element of Gramsci's coercion/consent scheme. It is critical to any history of the development of hegemony, and it is critical as a tool for recognizing this history's formative moments. 'Consent' also has implications for Althusser's own problematic and its focus on the reproduction of the productive conditions:
an intellectual's training a student reproduces both the product and the conditions of production simultaneously. The production of 'a mind' is a different proposition from the production of a product strictly speaking, because a mind, a student, consciously accepts his production and the conditions thereof in a way that a product cannot.

Marx was forced to consider that the extraction of surplus value, though performed in production, was not fully realized (as an exchange value) until the product was consumed. This realization, in the production of intellectuals, is not a step that must take place at the hands of a third party. It occurs with the very realization on the part of the student, through a conscious recognition of the epistemological element, that he or she has been 'produced'. This is the link that the Marxist intellectual must at all costs destroy: that between recognition of the conditions of her production and her own reproduction of it.

Gramsci always understood the importance of social/cultural consent in terms of the problem of individual consciousness more broadly:

The individual does not enter into relations with other men by juxtaposition, but organically, in as much, that is, as he belongs to organic entities which range from the simplest to the most complex...to be conscious of [these relations] to whatever degree of profundity...already modifies them. Even the necessary relations, in so far as they are known to be necessary, take on a different aspect of importance. In this sense knowledge is power.

Hegemony exists as the dominant moral, intellectual, and cultural disposition of a society, with consciousness existing
only in the acceptance of that attitude, which is of course the same attitude out of which the society is born. The rejection of this disposition, through a conscious recognition of the ideological and epistemological separation, is the primary task of the intellectual in bourgeois society. Placing oneself between teaching and understanding is the means by which the intellectual plays her most creative role, a creativity that must first be based upon a destruction: the destruction of a cultural understanding.

The logical conclusion to draw from an ideology/epistemology separation is a means by which schools aid in disposing of the ideological element altogether. To retain this term, 'ideology', as Althusser does, makes it more difficult to sever the idea of the class-conscious bourgeoisie from the corpus of Marxist theory once and for all, and to understand hegemony and consciousness as part of the same whole.

Knowing this, we can expand Althusser’s approach to ask the broader question of why to reproduce ideology at all, if the conditions for its existence have become more important than the thing itself. The schools teaching one how to 'speak proper French' or how to 'handle the workers' become far less important than the acquiescence to the fact that the workers must be 'handled' at all.

Counter-Hegemony and the Role of the Intellectual

Let me conclude this discussion by suggesting some questions for further ones, questions related to the role of intellectuals
within capitalist society and their role in the construction of counter-hegemony. The intent here, in keeping with the larger themes of this paper, is to suggest affiliations between Gramsci and later structuralist thinkers, both Marxist and non-Marxist. We must begin I think by reformulating Gramsci’s understanding of counter-hegemony as a purely constructive process.

To repeat, it is the primary role of the modern intellectual within bourgeois society to reject the cultural assumptions of capitalism in the structuring of knowledge. The rise of a commodified knowledge is the essential achievement of capitalist hegemony in the intellectual realm, the seeds of which are identified in Gramsci’s critique during the earliest moments of this century, and today we may witness their full flowering, especially in the capitalism of own country.

This victory is the culmination of Gramsci’s understanding of hegemonic function, for it is the primary means by which capitalist culture, the 'moral-intellectual' force of the bourgeoisie, leads forward society as a whole. Gramsci’s initial answer to the problem of building a counter hegemony was a rejection of the two-stage model employed by Lenin, emphasizing the need to construct elements of a workers’ culture prior to the assumption of state power by the proletariat.

It is this emphasis on the creative aspects of revolution as a precondition for its destructive ones that is of central concern here. Is this sort of approach relevant to the placement of the intellectual, especially the bourgeois intellectual, today? The answer I think is to accept as indispensable Gramsci’s
understanding of schooling as a way to re-approach traditional history and traditional ways of learning, but to reject the possibility for counter-hegemony in relation to an ultimate 'war of manoeuvre'.

This strategy in the intellectual realm is dictated by two essential considerations: one- the intellectual developments both in and out of Marxist theory in the years following Gramsci’s death, especially the rise of structuralism, and two- the increasing unconsciousness of the bourgeoisie within an increasingly fragmented economic scheme. In addressing this first cause, we should acknowledge formally the importance of a writer whose relevance here will have long been discerned by the careful reader, namely Michel Foucault.

Foucault’s methodology of relating social actions/practices to larger epistemological changes in social organization has obvious relevance to the similar conceptualization of social actions and institutions serving as documents of hegemonic change. The important point is to emphasize the relationship between hegemonic structures, which are cultural structures, and the subject which accepts them ('consents' to them).

The great contribution of Foucault’s histories is to understand as constituted at the same time the individual’s overwhelming determination by historical structures, while realizing that precisely because this structural enormity is so overwhelming, that the most significant ground for struggle exists within the individual (thus Foucault own denial of structuralism). In this sense, the relationship between ideology
and epistemology that is discussed here is essentially an inversion of the way in which Foucault understands it, his view being that ideology in a specific system is but a mediation of a larger historical/epistemological construct. This is the problem I want to address in relation to intellectuals.

Foucault formulates the emergence of a new type of intellectual to fill a new socially determined space, an intellectual who lies between the role as 'universal bearer of truth' (which Foucault associates with Voltaire) and the specialist, 'specific intellectual' or savant (the type he associates with Darwin). The impact of structuralism, or at least that brand of it contained in Foucault, is to return the intellectual to a broad level of existence, able to question what Foucault calls the 'regime of truth' in a wide fashion, but one which still necessitates a specific location. The former division between the 'intellectual' and the 'scholar' no longer exists; it becomes the political task of the scholar to question and indict the broader 'regime of truth' from her own field of expertise:

It seems to me that what now must be taken into account in the intellectual is not the 'bearer of universal values'. Rather, it's the person occupying a specific position— but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth...his position can take on a general significance and his local, specific struggle can have effects and implications which are not simply professional or sectoral. The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that regime of truth which is so essential to the structure an functioning of our society.

This indictment, of course, depends upon the recognition of this task in the terms of cultural awareness in which Gramsci allows
us to think; it demands, however, a modification of tactics in struggle in light of Foucault’s thinking. Above all, the 'war of manœuvre' must be abandoned in favor of the means of struggle implied by structuralist critiques. Namely, Gramsci’s frontal attack for which counter-hegemonic education lays the foundation, must become a battle of subversion, carrying into educational practice the rejection by intellectuals of their own cultural climate.

There is a need, then, for Marxist intellectuals to place themselves in mediation between Foucault’s larger epistemological focus and capitalist society by the attack upon the 'regime of truth' as a specifically capitalist knowledge structure. Marxists must accept the specialized role which Foucault’s thought implicitly assigns them, but also expand this role to a certain degree, to include a recognition of capitalist cultural climates. This is the importance of Gramsci: formulating a broader place for Marxist intellectuals by understanding the struggle against capitalist hegemony as a struggle against culture, while at the same time arming this struggle with specific goals, tactics of procedure, and cultural understanding. Marxist intellectuals in this sense fulfill the constitution of the specialist and the 'universal intellectual' within the same individual, thereby filling both an organic critical need in the history of intellectuals and a strategic position for cultural struggle.57

But what is this situation means in terms of bourgeois intellectuals and bourgeois class history? These are questions
we must ask if Marxist intellectuals are to transcend their specific struggle, if they are to overcome in practice the class reductionism that Gramsci attempts to overcome in theory.

The control that the ruling class holds over schools, especially secondary schools, in the US is certainly no more 'conscious' than in the period when Gramsci wrote. Indeed, we may even be able to construct a history of the bourgeois classes growing increasingly unconscious regarding schooling in the years after the second world war. Here is not the place to construct such a history other than to suggest that the state must become more 'elastic' as its production process becomes more complex and its means of reproduction more varied. If the bourgeoisie has become the leading intellectual and moral force of the society, the fragmentation of its society (as a hegemonic force in cultural as well as economic terms) must play an equally determinant leadership role.

This fragmentation allows for a greater influence of alternative ideologies, though perhaps not epistemologies. Their influence, though, is less comprehensible in terms of the organic intellectuals which Gramsci wished to create, than in terms of the intellectual ranks of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci was always suspicious of the degree to which bourgeois intellectuals could be of use to the workers' struggle, feeling that their aid was only 'an unconscious desire to realize the hegemony of their own class of people.' These intellectuals were unreliable allies that, in times of historical crisis, always returned to their class of origin.

Classes in capitalism today, however, mean far less than in
Gramsci's period, not only because class divisions are less distinct, but also because the culture of capitalism pervades all classes. Revolution is no longer understood as the 'profoundly cultural event' of which Gramsci wrote, simply because the culture of the ruling class is the culture of all classes. It is by this very misfortune that the bourgeois intellectual finds herself in a tactical placement, as Foucault is aware:

It would be a dangerous error to discount him [the specific intellectual] politically in his relation to a local form of power, either on the grounds that this is specialist matter which doesn't concern the masses (which is doubly wrong; they are already aware of it, and in any case implicated in it), or that the specific intellectual serves the state or capital (which is true, but at the same time shows the strategic position he occupies).

If we ask questions about class consciousness in traditional terms, then we are left without a place to begin. So complete is the fragmentation of the consumption economy that we have trouble even locating the 'exploited class' (indeed Althusser wants to tell us that everyone living capitalist ideology is its victim). If we ask the question in cultural terms, then we see that indeed this is the case: everyone is the victim of capitalist means of learning and capitalist understandings of culture, understandings which are propagated in the schools. Just as capitalism may be conceived of as organization without organizers, so can its subversion be understood as rebellion without targets. The rejection of a capitalist culture, then, is the task of all intellectuals, prior even to the possibility of creating this organic intellectual class.
This news is certainly not all good, for while it does allow some sort of place for bourgeois intellectuals within the struggle against their own class, it at the same time fails to identify any organic link between classes in the struggle for a new culture, other than the pseudo-linkage of having a common enemy (capitalist learning), which both classes helped to create but which production has assured that both classes experience in entirely different ways. In this sense, intellectuals and cultural critics of the ruling class can never shed their respective consciousnesses; Gramsci is right that students and intellectuals of the bourgeoisie are not to be trusted. Their culture is entirely separate from that of the working class, in large part due to the increasingly decentered nature of production, and its corresponding segregation of neighborhoods by class (a segregation that has obvious implications for determining schooling backgrounds).

The very culture which may unite classes against a common enemy has as its more central effect their isolation from one another. In this sense, the 'war of manoeuvre' can never come, but the subversion of capitalist cultural structures must always be conducted in the terms which capitalism defines for it: the unending 'war of position'.

An Ending Note

The first remark, which is equally an apology, standard
among commentators on Antonio Gramsci is the difficulty posed by his incomplete and fragmentary writings. I make this disclaimer here as well, though with even less justification, having only dealt with Gramsci in English translation, and more narrowly still—the *Prison Notebooks* above all. Even this single 'volume' is food for ten more of its length, merely attempting its interpretation. Gramsci's thought is broad to be sure, being himself the kind of intellectual that his own writings anticipate. More important than the breadth of this thought, however, is the kind of interpretation which its form and method demands, an interpretation every bit as dependent on totality and wholeness as its view of the society it critiques.

With this in mind, we must look for threads of unity. Education and the role of schools is of course the focus of the discussion here, but there are important subthemes without which any such focused discussion would be impossible: history and historicism being the most critical. This is the aspect of Gramsci's work that Althusser is absolutely right to seize upon, and it is in his own contraposition with it that he elaborates his theoretical statements most vividly.

The thrust of this paper from its outset has been to indicate similarities in the thought of Gramsci and Althusser; one final correspondence should be made. This is the implicit hope that comparisons of Gramsci with later writers should charge the student of political theory to re-read Gramsci just as Althusser charges us to re-read Marx. Political education must above all be a broad and comparative process, one which allows
us the breadth to undertake what true understanding demands.
Also of mention here is Gramsci’s last letter to his son Delio: ‘I think you like history, just as I did when I was your age, because it is about living men. And everything that is about men, as many men as possible, all the men in the world united among themselves in societies, working and struggling and bettering themselves must please you more than any other thing.’ see The Modern Prince and Other Writings International Publishers 1959.


5 Prison Notebooks p. 409.


7 Prison Notebooks p.37.

8 Prison Notebooks p.37. The enormous significance of Gramsci’s notion of ‘cultural climate’ is in allowing us to think of hegemony as a kind of social consciousness, with this consciousness thus emerging as itself a social construct. The full implications of this for structuralism must be set aside until later in the discussion, but we should keep in mind this extremely interesting quotation as relevant to those issues.

9 Raymond Williams ‘Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory’ New Left Review 82(1973) pp. 3-16.

10 Raymond Williams New Left Review 82

11 see Prison Notebooks, pp. 118-119. For discussion of Croce’s theories on Marxism itself as a tool of historical evaluation, see Walter Adamson Hegemony and Revolution Univ. of Californis Press 1980 pp. 112-120.

12 Prison Notebooks, p.184.
13 Prison Notebooks, p. 397.
14 Prison Notebooks, p. 388.

15 Making distinctions of this sort between Gramsci and Lenin is a sticky proposition, since we know the respect that Gramsci held for the Bolshevik leader and for Bolshevik tactics more generally. He states explicitly the correctness of a spontaneous 'frontal assault' in the Russian revolution, but expressly denies that such tactics are appropriate everywhere. This is of course his famous distinction between 'war of position' and 'war of manoeuvre'; the latter he finds indispensable to the Italian situation. Appraising differences in strategies depends on proper evaluation of the degree to which hegemonic 'terrains' are determined, and the degree to which their corresponding structures are developed.

16 See the essay 'Marxism and Modern Culture' in The Modern Prince and Other Writings.

17 For commentary on Gramsci's reading of Machiavelli, see AB Davidson 'Gramsci and Reading Machiavelli' Science and Society 37(1973) pp. 58-80.

18 This duality makes its way into Gramsci's revolutionary practice in terms of contradictions between the questions of Catholic hegemony, the Action Party, and the development of an active 'Jacobin' force; see Paul Piccone Italian Marxism Univ. California Press 1983 pp.40-43.

19 Althusser's reference is to the 'births' of social theory: 'In the history of Western Reason, every care, foresight, precaution and warning has been devoted to births. In our crowded world, a place is allocated for birth, a place is even allocated for the prediction of birth: 'prospective'. To my knowledge, the nineteenth century saw the birth of two or three children that were not expected: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.' see Louis Althusser 'Freud and Lacan' from Lenin and Philosophy 1972.


22 Henry Giroux, p. 97.

Confusion exists, however, over the precise meaning of 'unnoticed' here. There is some question as to just how 'conservative' Gramsci's educational programme truly was, and how much of his language on the subject is merely euphemistic, another layer of this 'political expediency' which Gramsci's prison censor forces him to employ on a more personal level. His English translators are hesitant here: 'The apparently 'conservative' eulogy of the old curriculum in fact often represents a device which allowed Gramsci to circumvent the prison censor, by disguising the future (ideal system) as the past in order to criticise the present.' (Prison Notebooks, p.24.)


We should also consider, in a somewhat less optimistic way than Giroux does, other problems with the correspondence theory in relation to this question. For instance, that of the unique service that schools have for capitalism outside of production, their role in the promotion of consumerism for example. In simplest terms this is the function of having large groups of children tossed together in conditions of enormous social pressure. Catching on to the 'latest thing', especially in consumer items, is an incredibly important means of dealing with such pressures. At a deeper level, the consumer impulse is present in the very consumption of knowledge- the learning of 'facts' rather than life experiences, and finally the diploma as 'product'. Such an understanding is a critique of Giroux's 'new sociology' with its emphasis on social/cultural whole at the same time that is a critique of the reductiveness of the correspondence theory.

Entwistle Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics p.112.


Prison Notebooks, p. 27.


Prison Notebooks, p.181.

see Essays On the Materialistic Conception of History
34 From Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch, September 1890: '...the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if someone twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.' Robert C. Tucker The Marx-Engels Reader Norton 1972 p. 640.

35 These conclusions necessarily lead away from a Marxism that emphasizes production as primary; consciousness is a consent-based and therefore consumption-based idea. Production, though, of course conditions consumption. In the traditional Marxist terms of base and superstructure, this would mean a formulation emphasizing the role of the base in conditioning the way that superstructures not only are produced, but are received. I am certainly not familiar enough with the literature to draw the implications of this for Marxist theory. It is mentioned only to point out Gramsci's heterodoxy and his primacy on explaining the way that economic changes condition the cultural climate, over any loyalty to a strict production-based Marxism. (This is not to say that production was of no concern, see his notes on 'Americanism and Fordism' from the Prison Notebooks).

36 Louis Althusser Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

37 Forgacs An Antonio Gramsci Reader p. 57.

38 Althusser introduces all these terms in connection to schooling in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'

39 The Modern Prince and Other Writings p.87.


41 see Prison Notebooks, especially the section 'Problems of Marxism'

42 see Althusser's essay 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' in For Marx Pantheon Books 1969 p. 114.

43 see 'Marxism and Humanism' from For Marx p.227.

44 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' pp.128-130.

45 'Marxism and Humanism' p. 234.

46 'Marxism and Humanism' pp. 233-234.

47 Entwistle, p.20.

48 'Marxism and Humanism' p.233.
Groups who clamor for the 'equalization' of standardized tests to make them somehow more 'fair' therefore miss the point entirely. The issue can never be the 'equality of opportunity' on the pre-determined cultural terrain of the ruling class; this is a battle that the working class will always lose. The issue must instead be the reduction of intellectual ability from its understanding as experience to its understanding as something which can be 'tested'. This proposition we must reject unconditionally if the construction of any sort of counter-hegemony is to be even thinkable. This rejection, in turn, must be the absolute first action of the intellectual in capitalist society. The student who submits to these tests submits to far more than the process of being judged; she submits to the reconstituting of the terrain from which hegemonic struggle was born- the terrain of capitalist culture.


Michel Foucault 'Truth and Power' pp.73-74.

The literary critic Frederic Jameson is of particular relevance here. The methodology of Jameson and other Marxist critics like him is above all historical, concerned with constructing a place not only for the specialized study of literary texts, but also for a history of criticism itself within the Marxist tradition. Within a broader capitalist learning structure, however, this method may become problematic. For instance, we must consider the question of whether Marxist historicism becomes merely another means of what Raymond Williams calls 'critical theory as theory of consumption'. Is this type of historicism merely an abbreviated means for critics to place literary texts within a larger tradition, without approaching them on their own specific terms? Could it not be argued, that because an academic system based on a facts-based commodified knowledge requires intellectuals to keep abreast of the enormous amount of literature which mass production and commodification makes possible in their respective fields, that placing these texts into an historical tradition becomes a necessary abbreviated means of consuming them? The ultimate question to be considered then is- how is it possible to maintain a Marxist means of learning within its larger capitalist structuring?
59 Jerome Karabel p.163.

60 Michel Foucault 'Truth and Power' p.72.

61 For a discussion of the relationship between neighborhood segregation and the establishment of public schools in Chicago and San Francisco, see Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir *Schooling for All* Basic Books 1985 pp.58-86.