Gramsci and the Forging of Collective Will

One of the most frequently recurring themes in Gramsci’s thought is that of the will. In it come together (thus increasing its scope) many other complementary theses, which can also be seen as its internal oppositions: fatalism and spontaneousness, passivity and rebellious tendencies of the lower classes, the regulation of instincts and the development of the forces of production. Since the notion of the will has caused several misunderstandings and is central to Gramsci’s thought, it is appropriate to deal more directly with this problem.

The point of departure of Gramsci’s meditation can be condensed in these terms: class-consciousness did not develop within the proletariat in an automatic and spontaneous manner; nor did it develop in tune with the process of crisis and of conflictual growth of the economy and of the political structures of ‘capitalism.’ That is to say that class-consciousness, for a long period, remained subordinate, unbalanced vis-à-vis the general development of social relations: it remained immobilized within the twofold and complementary vice-like-grip of fatalism and spontaneity which, although in their appearance they seem to be in total opposition, in reality obey the same force field and emphasize only particular aspects of it. For this reason they then try, de facto, to integrate the ideological voids with social practices apparently contradictory with the basic premises. In fatalism, in fact (the expression in Gramsci indicates mainly the passive attitude of German social-democracy and of Italian socialists during the period of the second International) the wait for the ‘spontaneous’ breakdown of capitalism is accompanied by the creation of organisms of the masses, i.e. mobilization, while in Sorel and in revolutionary syndicalism the presumed spontaneity must be artificially fermented by “Myth.” In fatalism the mechanical necessity presides over the process of transition; in Sorel, instead, it is the liberty in as much as vital force, creative evolution, and emancipatory vio-
lence. Yet each of these necessitates, unknowingly, borrowings from the other, or at least, it tolerates the other’s presence at its side. Thus in Sorel the guarantee that the collective will conjured up by the “structure” of the myth will not dissolve like a flash in the pan comes only by imagining necessity as a via a tergo of spontaneity. In Italian reformist socialism (Treves, Turati), on the contrary, in which every political initiative (including the October Revolution) was defined as “voluntarism” and “bergsonism,” a certain margin was left for a true and uncontrolled spontaneity, for a rebellious tendency that in the aftermath of the war, according to Gramsci, drove, gratuitously, the middle classes into the arms of fascism. The 1) fatalistic conception of history according to which power will fall from heaven when times are ripe, and 2) sorelism, with its ambiguous politics of the myth and praise of violence, are therefore not only theoretical, but political errors as well.

3) In fact, they abandon collective will at a primitive, elementary, passive phase, instead of establishing it as a lasting, conscious force. Yet, according to Gramsci, determinism and the economic-corporative phase (Sorel does not go beyond trade-unions) are children’s diseases not only of the workers’ movement, but also of every new class and of every new State as it first comes into existence. We find here a sociological setting of the problem which is influenced by Weber, by the reading of The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism. The proletariat, just like the bourgeoisie at the moment of the first growth of capital, conceives of its historical task in fatalistic form, that of predestination. Thus it succeeds in keeping its internal cohesion and its capacity of resisting in the hardest moment of its success: “one can observe how the deterministic, fatalistic element has been an immediate ideological ‘aroma’ of the philosophy of praxis, a form of religion and of stimulant (however in the manner of narcotics), made necessary and justified historically by the ‘subordinate’ character of particular social classes. When we do not have the initiative in the struggle, and the struggle ends by being identified with a series of defeats, mechanical determinism becomes a formidable force of moral resistance, of cohesion, of patient and obstinate perseverance. ‘I am momentarily defeated, but the force of things works for me in the long run, and so forth.’ True will disguises itself as an act of faith, a certain rationality of history, an empirical and primitive form of the passionate finalism that appears like a substitute for predestination, providence, etc., a substitute for confessional religion.”

⁠¹
However, there is also a deeper, non-sociological justification for this phenomenon. Fatalism prevailed because the consciousness of the proletariat was still accustomed to suffer the initiative and the hegemony of the dominant class, to resist it, to become a "thing," to become inert. Fatalism (just like rebelliousness) is the expression of this defensive passivity now in the process of disappearing: "the limits and the dominion of the 'force of things' are contracted. Why? Because, in the final analysis, if yesterday the subordinate was a 'thing,' today he is an historical person, a protagonist; if yesterday he was irresponsible because he resisted an extraneous will, today he feels responsible because he is not resisting, but he is an agent, and by necessity an active and enterprising one" (Q., p. 1388). The balance of force weighs in favour of the working class; the old ruling class is going through a crisis of leadership. The escape into fatalism and myth is not only unnecessary, but also dangerous, paralyzing; it contradicts the active function of the proletariat. The proletariat now can abandon the primitive economic-corporative phase and replace it with the theory of hegemony, with active and not empty will, with the rational, morphological forecast and the control over the mechanisms of society and of production.

4) But how can the will be made active? To be sure, the will already existed, although weak, "veiled," camouflaged in predestination. How to rouse to action the latent, potential energy of millions of men? The Russian Revolution demonstrated, according to Gramsci, how the working class is capable not only of taking control of the process of production, but also of leading a great Nation, of being hegemonic. The fatalistic concept was only the reflection of the passivity of the masses, who had abdicated their will in favour of small active minorities, of those élites about whom Mosca and Pareto theorized. Millions of men, excluded from the conscious making of history, become active. History can now shine with millions of new lights and points of strength, it can become more complex and change qualitatively. The immense energies until now scattered, wasted, will finally be put to work. At the beginning there will be the most horrendous cacophony, just as when musicians tune their instruments, but then there will be the melody of a superior civilization.\textsuperscript{2} The task and the importance of the intellectuals consist in raising the consciousness of the subordinate classes from economic primitivism to a less local vision. Here Gramsci translates Lenin into Italian: just as in Lenin the proletariat cannot by itself overcome the trade-unionist phase without the intervention of politicians who have reneged their so-
cial class, for Gramsci the proletariat needs the intellectuals as winches to raise class-consciousness. The intellectuals represent both a universalistic fossil in a divided world, and those who — very much like medieval monks vis-à-vis the Church — allow the transmission of knowledge from another class into the new society.

It is certain that Gramsci meditated upon those words of the Manifesto which say that the struggle between the classes does not necessarily result in revolution. It can in fact end "either with a revolutionary transformation of society in its entirety or with the common ruin of all the classes involved in the struggle," and he has clearly kept in mind Sorel's analogy between the end of the ancient world and the waning of capitalism. Thus, in the face of the threat of a new state of barbarism, Gramsci has tried, through the intellectuals, to emphasize the problem of the retrieval and transmission of humanity's inherited knowledge and customs to a new class (which, unlike the bourgeoisie, did not prepare in advance its political domination with an intellectual hegemony). The proletariat, therefore, cannot be considered, according to Gramsci, only as the heir of German classical philosophy, of the English industrial revolution, or of French utopian socialism, but must also be considered the heir of all the driving elements of civilization. It follows that the intellectuals must not become courtiers to the "modern Prince," nor merely loudspeakers for the revolution. The passivity of large masses implies, from an historical perspective, domination on the part of small groups. When the masses become active, they will overturn the government of the elites. The elites are not destined to rule for ever (as Pareto believed, together with the other neo-machiavellians), because man is not destined to remain for eternity like a sheep, to be passive and to be led by the psychology of the masses developed by the Sigheles and the Le Bons. It is quite true that during the thirty-years war 45 Hungarian horsemen kept Flanders under control, and that a few thousand British soldiers ruled over hundreds of millions of Indians. Yet, it will not necessarily always be true: the collective will, in the long run, is also an answer to the theoreticians of the elites. In these "times of fire and sword," the will must be tempered in self-discipline (which is the essence of the party in comparison to the State), in the capacity to command and obey, in order to be able to withstand victoriously the enemy; that is to say, a bourgeoisie that leans more and more towards militarization. Gramsci illustrates this necessity by means of a short story taken from Kipling's Jungle Book. Queen Victoria gives an order,
and everyone obeys, from the governor down to the last mule of the artillery. To a native who wonders at such an organization, the British answers: "If you are subject to us, it is because you cannot do that." It is therefore indispensable to do the same, especially in a long trench-like warfare that requires unprecedented sacrifices and the greatest concentration of will and self-discipline.

5) The relevance of the theme of the will comes from the fact that behind history there is no "invisible hand" to steer it ahead, no spontaneous teleologism. There is no force of things, but only conscious planning, construction. Or better: such an invisible hand, such blind necessity, can operate until individuals and groups begin to forge their intelligence and will in order to bend necessity. The entire conception of the will and of hegemony is based upon a complex historical and theoretical analysis of the changes that have come about in the economy and in the civic and social spheres since 1871, a date considered by Gramsci symbolic. What happened beginning with that year? The bourgeois Estates, following the defeat of the Commune of Paris and being faced with a great depression, reorganized themselves, in the sense of an ever increasing penetration into civic society, of a search for a consent that would make coups de main like those of 1848 and 1871 impossible (that would thus prevent the "mobile warfare" and the Jacobinism within it), of an extension of bureaucracy, of a capillary organization of power, of a colonial expansion and of a reciprocal interrelation between the various Estates. Around the citadel of the political State, upon the soil of civic society, sprang up the "trenches," the casemates, the fortifications and the walls that must protect it from any attack. For the first time we can speak, in an organic and programmed sense, of an integral Estate, a "... political society + a civil society, that is to say, of an hegemony armed with coercion" (Q., p. 784).

After the Commune of Paris (1871) an historical period begins in which the State, in order to function, requires more and more the active or passive collaboration of the citizens, and therefore it needs to obtain or to extort their consent. From this point of view, such a tendency culminates in fascism and nazism, in the total militarization of society, in the extortion of approval by means of force, in the annulment, at the limit, of the difference between dictatorship and hegemony. The strategy of the trench war and the resulting concentration of the collective will are imposed by this reorganization of the modern bourgeois State. Mobile warfare is no longer sufficient (the October revolution was its last episode: Russian civic society was still "gelatinous" and it was sufficient to de-
stroy its autocratic and repressive apparatus), nor is the pure struggle at the level of economy. In fact, "... in the countries where capitalism is well advanced, the ruling class possesses political and organizational reserves that it did not possess, for example, in Russia. This means that even very grave economic crises do not have immediate repercussions on the political level. Politics always lags behind the economy. *The State apparatus is much more resistant than one usually thinks,* and it is capable of organizing forces faithful to the regime much better than the depth of the crisis would make us believe possible."  

Reformist fatalism and Sorelism have not understood the depth of these transformations: just as Trotsky did not understand it. In his desire to preserve mobile warfare he is in fact close to Sorel.  

In order to prevent the tendential fall of the profit-rate, the economy, society, and the capitalist State must restructure themselves, concentrate on the "molecular chance" of technical progress and, at the same time, on a more accentuated political control of the labour-force and of its production. The tendential fall of the profit-rate is thus restrained, shattered, momentarily defeated. *Crisis and development* alternate, producing a molecular disintegration of the old forms, rendering difficult the evaluation of the overall links, shifting the plane of control to levels of extreme complexity and localized specialization, throwing in the field progressively all the political and human "reserves" accumulated. In order to react to this long term project it is therefore necessary to proceed in the opposite direction: to bring together, by means of the collective will, the will and political awareness made passive and defenceless because of this strategy; to elaborate a theory up to this complexity and molecular interlacing of new structures in the making; to study a policy suitable for a struggle on this terrain; to divest the enemy of all his political and human reserves; to fight therefore within the bounds of the whole State ("political and civic society"): to lead the proletariat into an economic and political crisis, a crisis of hegemony, which is a crisis of the idea of linear progress.  

Fatalism presupposed this very mechanical progress; it did not perceive the complexity of the historical space activated by the counter-tendencies, while Sorelism, though it dimly perceived the difficulties, tried to avoid them mythically, with the vital élan of political imagination. Neither of them understood the "tendential" character of the collapse, its peculiar nexus of liberty and necessity.  

For Gramsci the best suited philosophy for the new situation opening up after 1871 is historicism in its various manifestations.
It, in fact, points out the complexity and the disintegration of the events, hiding the structural moment or reducing it to tendential function, to élan. Behind events one can no longer presume anything static, anything objectively set, but only lines, generating functions of progress, such as the Crocian “categories” of the spirit. Historicism fruitfully complicates reality, emphasises the conditionings, the delays, the difficulties, and the uncertainties of given accomplishments. Historical time loses its linearity, it becomes — so to speak — “syncopated,” it allows the co-existence of different levels of chronological contemporaneity, of different synchronic degrees of development, which it tries to join and to rearrange. In essence, it binds crisis and development, backwardness and forward lines. It can, as it has happened before, give rise to conservative approaches, to the justification and defense of the delays and of the historical blockades, thus becoming an adequate support of “passive revolutions.” — But for Gramsci it can also be translated into a revolutionary form, by accepting it as a battlefield and transforming it, by seeing, beyond the dust of the particular events and the old conditionings, the emergence of the new social evolution.

For Gramsci, Croce is not only an essential cultural point of reference, but he is also a useful political point of reference, since he represents in Italy the highest level of the elaboration of this strategy. Against Gentile (of whom Gramsci in 1917 had given a positive opinion), who seems to represent a higher phase, but in reality embodies a much more primitive and corporative phase of the political struggle, Croce understood that the highest state of the struggle is played at the ethical-political level, at the level of the hegemony, of the control, and not at the level of the extortion of consent. He is therefore willing to relinquish much, in order to make the Italian bourgeoisie not only the dominant class, but also the ruling class. Hence his “classicism,” his thinking himself closer to Aristotle than Agnelli, his placing himself — in the “small politics” — outside the fight, the immediacy, and the historical limits of the Italian bourgeoisie. The sense of his philosophy is, from a political view point, the invitation to abandon the over-ambitious dream of nationalist and colonialist glory, to try in a realistic manner to reconcile the interests of the various classes, pleasing in a subordinate manner some needs of the workers’ movement, to sacrifice the bizarre and rhetorical aspects that Italian society had inherited from the past. For Gramsci, while the position of Gentile is related to futurism, to the romantic notion of “throwing the heart over the obstacle,” Croce provides the the-
oretical grid for evaluating and for controlling the process. A grid which is articulated in the paths of objectivation, of effective realization, which is the product of precise choices, of the capacity of deciding, of commanding, of weighing a high number of variables. That which is not objectified, which is not concretely connected with the world, has no value. For this reason art must be "expression," and not an inexpressible and nebulous inner world; for this reason the will must be effective decision, not vain fancy or desire or blind passion. Therefore Crocián philosophy — in those aspects that interest Gramsci the most — manifests itself as political pedagogy, as the training of a class for hegemony, for the forsaking of the corporate-passionate phase (to which the workers' movement would still be tied), for the cathartic elimination of the worse, de-productive conscientialistic and individualistic lags. In the field of the will, this means the struggle against indulgence in vain fancies and against Nicodemites-like behaviour in which choices tend to fade out or to disappear, the struggle against these old Italian plagues which are due to the social disintegration and to the historically-determined weakness of the bourgeoisie.

In a work that Gramsci considers "very beautiful" and "the most advanced" of Croce's output, Religione e Serenità, Croce tries in the most forceful manner to fight against religious illusions, in the name of an immanentism as revindication of the dramaticity, of the seriousness, of the pains and joys of his world, and of ours, the only world possible. And against the secret illusions of religion, especially that of individual immortality, he indicates what he considers to be the only immortality to which we can aspire, that of our actions, of the imprints left upon the world, fruit of the will.

Croce, however, did not succeed in eliminating the "transcendent." Just like reformist socialists, who had left uncontrolled spontaneity at the margins of the party, Croce endured, next to his lay historicism, the mythological passion of the Church and of the masses, considering it as one of the many factors of its equation. Croce had seen Marxism as a new transcendence, but for Gramsci it is the true fulfilment of historicism, the courageous "absolute" historicism, for the very reason that it strives to eliminate mythology all together — and especially within itself — to provide large masses of men with will and consciousness. In Crocián terms, politics in Gramsci is no more "volition of the personal," blind passion, sublimation, special interests, but "volition of the universal," the role that Croce attributed to morality. Politics is knowledge, rationality, passion permanently organized and
therefore overcome, an attempt at foreseeing how every action of ours, which "detaches itself from us and lives an immortal life" can reasonably be directed towards an emancipatory end, towards a freedom which is not congealment of existence. Also here the function of the intellectual is shown with clarity: he provides the instruments for knowledge, for overcoming the subordinate, fatalistic or over-ambitious passion.

Besides coming to terms with the Church, Crocian historicism also satisfied itself by flirting with common sense, that is to say with the disintegration, with the secular sedimentation of the style of life of the lower classes. Thus Croce tends to maintain this mass-disintegration, in order to raise over it the banner of the élites, whose highest expression is philosophy.\(^{13}\) Philosophy therefore is not a mere personal painstaking work or a mental exercise, but a refined tool of hegemony: coherence for those who must lead, disintegration for those who must obey or, in other words, visibility and control of the process to the élites, dust and passivity to the masses. Obviously Gramsci’s project is antithetical, for it is based on the all-pervasive diffusion of a "new order" of knowledge and of collective energies. Common sense must be overturned in its present disintegration and passivity and re-constructed at a higher level of coherence, of maturity, of suitability to hegemonic tasks. It must be restructured in unison with the growth of the competence for hegemony.

In the face of Croce’s passive revolution, Gramsci comes to a revaluation of Jacobinism. Thus Jacobinism becomes an antidote against every form of "passive revolution" transformistically intended. It is an anti-Sorelian substitute for Sorel’s "spirit of division" which in part should, however, be preserved. Everywhere in fact, in Europe and in America, we witness passive revolutions, attempts to rationalize the economy and to control the consensus of the people. Fascism, too, is a "passive revolution" which, with corporatism and State interventionism, aims at creating a new combination of economics and politics, for the fact of "... transforming 'reformistically' the economic structure from an individualistic one to a planned economy (direct economy) and the coming of a 'middle economy' half way between the purely individualistic one and the one planned in an integral sense" (Q., p. 1089).

On the other hand in the United States, where — in relation to Italy — the expansion of a parasitic class is much reduced, hegemony grows directly from the factory.\(^{14}\) The overt intervention of the State is here almost minimal and all is waged mainly within the civic class, vanguard of the political class, which is kept in re-
serve. Yet this gives rise to a tight control upon the life of the citizens, it reaches their most intimate spheres, their sexual life and social needs (prohibitionism). Under the traditionalist flag of puritanism, Fordism brings about a revolution, albeit a passive one: it is "also the greatest collective effort undertaken until now in order to create, with incredible rapidity and with an unheard of awareness of purpose, a new kind of worker and of man" (Q., p. 2165).

Fordism and its application on a large scale of the methods of Taylor produce a mechanical compression of the instincts and attempt to subjugate despotically the will of the workers. Gramsci studies the phenomenon from the perspective of certain epochs. Fordism is nothing but the intensification of a process, that of industrialization, that began long ago and that represents, aside from a certain advancement of the forces of production, also an accumulation of sufferings and of immense discipline. This has happened every time the forces of production have undergone a process of development. They have demanded the sacrifice of habits, ways of life, rhythms of work, and instincts, which were the result of an historical process, second nature which has become a first nature and that now are violently displaced:

the history of industrialism has always been (today in an even more accentuated and rigorous form) a continuous struggle against man’s "animalistic" part, an uninterrupted process, often painful and covered in blood, of subjugation of instincts (the natural instincts, i.e. the animal and primitive ones) to new, more complex and rigid norms and customs of order, exactitude, and precision. These allow more and more complex forms of collective life which are the necessary consequence of the development of industrialism. Yet has not every new way of life always been, at the moment when the struggle against the old ways asserts itself, at least for a period of time, the result of a mechanical compression? Even the instincts that today must be overcome because they are too "animalistic," in reality have represented considerable progress when considered against the more primitive ones: who could possibly describe the "cost," both in human lives and in painful subjugation of the instincts, caused by the transition from nomadism to a fixed, agricultural life? . . . Until now all the transformations of our ways of being and of living have occurred through brutal coercion, that is to say through the dominance of a social group over all the productive forces of society: the selection or "education" of a man suitable for the new types of society, i.e. for the new forms of production and of labour, has occurred through the application of unheard-of brutality, by throwing into the inferno of lower-classes the weak and the unwilling, or by eliminating them altogether. (Q., pp. 2160-61)
At every turn of civilization, therefore, there is a crisis, a mechanical compression of the instincts, an increase of despotism and a tendency towards standardization. As a matter of fact, the dream of Taylor (and of dictatorial regimes) is that of turning men into "trained gorillas," of reinstating the forced co-operation of a slave-driven mode of production.

Gramsci however — unlike, let us say, Adorno and other representatives of the School of Frankfurt — does not limit himself to the denunciation of this innate demolition of the policy of individuality or of that of the introduction of Taylorism and of the mechanization of life. First of all, according to Gramsci, it is a process which can also be considered as an advancement foreshadowing an anthropological mass-change and an increase of psychomotory coordination and of human freedom. The discomfort of the present times will be in fact overcome "... with the creation of a new psycho-physical nexus of a different type from the preceding ones and without doubt of a superior type" (Q., p. 2165).\textsuperscript{15} It is necessary, even if we must go through such a calvary, to produce a new man, capable of transforming coercion into freedom, into a second nature, into habit (this is in fact the path that can lead to the "well-ordered society," and not the paradisiac disappearing of every necessity). Coercion can be absorbed and transformed into freedom, into a larger expansion of human abilities: and therefore a superior "psycho-physical nexus" will be reached.

Gramsci does not reject — to use an expression from Adorno — the idea of an "administered society," of "conformism," of rigorous and capillary organization. He believes the standardization of man and his intellectualization to be irreversible processes: "a tendency to conformism in today's world is even more profound than in the past... standardization of our way of thinking and of behaving assumes a national, even continental extent. The economic basis of collective man: large factories, Taylorization, rationalization, etc." (Q., p. 862).\textsuperscript{16} It is today's process of production which generates "from the bottom up" the homogenization of individuals. Conformism, however, imposes itself in every corner of our society and culture. When only a child, Gramsci recalls, his fantasy used to rove freely:

I was instead a fearless pioneer and I never left home without carrying in my pockets grains of corn and matches wrapped in small pieces of waxed paper, just in case I might be thrown onto a desert island and left to cope all alone. ... Radio and the airplane have forever destroyed Robinsonism, which has been a way of fantasizing for so many genera-
tions. Even the invention of Meccano shows how the child is rapidly becoming more intellectualized; his hero cannot be Robinson, but, at least in the West, the policeman or the scientist-robber.  

Even individual ties to family "islands" have weakened, now that the institution of the family has entered into a crisis and that education is left to a greater degree to the State. The State, in dictatorial regimes, oversees the future citizens from an early age in order to standardize them.

The mechanical compression of the instincts and the growing rationalization cause uneasiness, apprehension, desires of escaping into a mythical idyllic past. Psychoanalysis, for Gramsci, is the alarm-bell of such a situation, and Freud, from this perspective, is perhaps "... the last of the 'ideologists'" (Q., p. 453), and the champion of a return to the "noble savage." These are overgeneral opinions, and Gramsci is well aware of it: he admits to not knowing Freud first hand, and he realizes he is formulating only hypotheses. He asks Sraffa to get him the French translation of Freud's *L'introduction à la psychanalyse* edited by Paeyot, but as far as we know he never received it.

Today, Gramsci says, "... the coercion of man by the State increases, and the pressure and the control of a part of society over the whole, and of the whole over every one of its molecular components also increases." Even psychoanalysis is the expression of a complex crisis of hegemony, rendered more acute by the passions and by the fiery needs of the war and of the post-war period. In such conditions the injunction to "know thyself," one of the central elements of what has been called the "political Socrates" of Gramsci, becomes increasingly more difficult. To know oneself, in fact, means not only to "unravel" one's personality (if only with the help of the psychoanalyst), but also to go through a "struggle of hegemonies" (Q., p. 1385), to build collectively one's own will and the organization of one's own impulses. In these times of "steel and fire," the will must strengthen itself in order to bend the drives, to rationalize them, to have them become instruments of freedom. The will of the individual, within certain limits (and within the tradition of the rigorist, revolutionary ethics), must assume the function that it had for the Stoics, that of *hegemonikon*, of guiding principle. It is perhaps for this reason that Gramsci loved the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, and why, while in prison, he used to speak of his "stoic serenity." There is for certain an homology between the structure of the will of the individual and that of the collective will: both are founded
on a guiding principle, on a concentration of energies stretched out towards a "far-away end." Yet they are not detached from a rational knowledge of situations, from a cold, dispassionate, non-rhetorical evaluation of reality, from a constant criticism and self-criticism. In spite of a certain tendency to politicize, there is nothing in Gramsci to resemble Stalin's primacy of politics — understood in the sense of a force free from consent or "truth." Gramsci's collective will is not a Leviathan nor a "general will" which is assumed to be already in existence and which we should simply and uncritically accept. Collective will is rather an instrument of liberation, a transitory necessity: the concentration of will, its self-discipline, is the supporting element of the transition, the level which will raise the "regulated society" and which, merely by its coming, will be capable of relaxing its tension, of attenuating its hardness.

Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa

NOTE

1 A. Gramsci, Quaderni del carcere, a cura di U. Gerratana (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), p. 1383. All quotations from this edition will be henceforth identified in the body of my text with Q. followed by the number of the page. All translations from the Italian are my own.

2 Cf. Q., p. 1771.

3 A. Gramsci, "La situazione italiana. Elementi per la linea politica del partito" (August 1926), in Rinascita, 15 (April 14, 1967). In the more advanced States, civic society "... has become a very complex structure, resistant against the catastrophic 'irruptions' of the spontaneous economic element" (Q., p. 1615).


6 Cf. Q., pp. 1325-26, 1335-36.

7 Q., p. 1864.

8 Q., p. 1306: "It seems to me that the philosophy of Gentile, actualism, is more national only in the sense that it is closely bound to a primitive phase of the State, to its economic-corporative phase, when all cats are grey. For this same reason we can believe the greater importance and influence of this philosophy, just as many believe that in Parliament an industrialist weighs more than a lawyer who represents industrial interests (or more than a professor or a leader of the workers' unions) without thinking that, if the entire parliamentary majority were made of industrialists, Parliament would immediately lose its function of political mediation and its prestige altogether. ... Croce's influence is less clamorous than that of Gentile, yet more profound and rooted." It is interesting to note that Gramsci looks at the Hegelian concept of "civic society" not from the view point of the "system of needs," but from that of corporations.

9 Q., p. 475.

10 Cf. Q., p. 2038.

11 Cf. Q., pp. 852, 1217.

12 Cf. B. Croce, "Agli amici che cercano il trascendente," in Etica e politica (Trani: Vecchi e Co., 1931), pp. 378-79: "I too have tried and fought with the transcendent, and suffered necessary crises, markedly in two moments of my life
the first took place between my adolescence and youth, when the old faith began dissolving in me and the new one to mature. ... The second happened when I was about thirty years old, when the transcendent re-presented itself clothed in an earthly, secular vest, which completely hid its contradictions with an historicist appearance philosophical and dialectical in nature. It took the form of a generous, radical liberation from evil, injustice and irrationality by the grace of a new world to build, which would have been the only, the true 'realm of liberty,' after so much centuries-old anxiety from servitude."

13 Cf. Q., p. 1378.
14 Q., p. 2146.
15 For another example of internal, psycho-physical transformations caused by the prevailing of the value in exchange, see Q., p. 1276.
16 Cf. Q., p. 1430 for the effects of popular parties.
17 A. Gramsci, Lettere dal carcere, a cura di S. Caprioglio e E. Fubini (Torino: Einaudi, 1965), p. 287 (to Tania, July 1, 1929).
19 Lettere dal carcere, p. 584 (to Tania, March 7, 1932). One of the major crises caused by the war and by the post-war period was that of the compression of sexual instincts, due also "... to the violent disappearance of so many males and to a permanent unbalance in the numerical relationship between the individuals of the two sexes" (Q., p. 2162). Its main cause, however, can be found in industrialization and in the rationalization of existence. The system of the factory imposes upon the workers controls and inspections (especially in the United States), it leaves less time for the "pursuit" of women, and therefore the workers, just like the farmers, are driven towards the "... fixity of sexual unions...," towards the Horatian Venerem facilem parabilemque. Even in this case Gramsci considers the process as being irreversible, and in many ways justified, since it can be tied to a new non-bourgeois-"liberte" morality and can favour the emancipation of women, ridding the sexual question of "its morbid character" (cf. Q., pp. 2162, 2167, 2149-50).
20 Lettere dal carcere, p. 434 (to Tania, May 18, 1931); p. 477 (to Giulia, August 31, 1931).
21 Q., p. 1385.
23 On the primacy of political will in Stalin, cf. V. Gerratana, "Sui rapporti tra leninismo e stalinismo," Problemi del socialismo, s. IV, XVII, 3 (1976), 124 ff.