

**EDUCATION IN GRAMSCI AS A HISTORICAL RESULT OF SOCIAL
RELATIONS AND ITS PROXIMITY TO HEGELIAN AND MARXIAN THOUGHT**

***A EDUCAÇÃO EM GRAMSCI COMO RESULTADO HISTÓRICO DAS RELAÇÕES
SOCIAIS E SUA PROXIMIDADE COM O PENSAMENTO HEGELIANO E MARXIANO***

***LA EDUCACION EM GRAMSCI COMO RESULTADO HISTÓRICO DE LAS
RELACIONES SOCIALES Y SU PROXIMIDAD CON EL PENSAMIENTO
HEGELIANO Y MARXIANO***



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ABSTRACT: Considering the context of the 20th century and the ascent of totalitarian regimes, it is clear how work conditions and human freedom were depreciated during this period. This essay aims to investigate Gramsci's analysis of that event to understand how he is connected to a philosophical tradition, which helps him think about his social context and, consequently, education. To achieve these objectives, we delineated similarities between Gramscian, Marxian, and Hegelian thought to compare and relate critical concepts of each philosopher, such as critique, ideology, intellectual, and history. In view of these analyses, we conclude it is plausible to indicate a proximity between Gramscian thought and the Hegel and Marx philosophies in favor of showing why Gramsci's view of education is the means of changing the world.

KEYWORDS: Gramsci. Hegel. Marx. Education. Philosophical basis.

RESUMO: Considerando o contexto do século XX e a ascensão dos regimes totalitários, é notório como as condições de trabalho e a liberdade humana foram desvalorizadas durante tal período. Sabendo disso, este escrito possui como objetivo investigar as análises feitas por Gramsci ao longo de sua vida sobre este fenômeno, de modo a compreender como ele se encontra conectado à uma tradição filosófica que o auxilia a pensar seu contexto social e, por conseguinte, a educação. Para atingir tais metas, foram traçadas semelhanças entre o pensamento gramsciano, marxiano e hegeliano, de maneira a comparar e relacionar conceitos centrais de cada filósofo, como os de crítica, ideologia, intelectual e história. Diante destas análises, conclui-se que é plausível apontar uma proximidade entre o pensamento gramsciano e as filosofias de Hegel e Marx, de jeito a evidenciar o porquê da educação em Gramsci é o meio de transformação do mundo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gramsci. Hegel. Marx. Educação. Base filosófica.

RESUMEN: Considerando el contexto del siglo XX y la ascensión de los regímenes totalitarios, es notorio como las condiciones de trabajo y la libertad humana fueron desvalorizadas durante tal período. Sabiendo esto, este escrito tiene como objetivo investigar los análisis hechos por Gramsci a lo largo de su vida sobre este acontecimiento, de manera a comprender como él se encuentra conectado a una tradición filosófica que lo ayuda a pensar su contexto social y, por consecuencia, la educación. Para alcanzar las metas, establecimos similitudes entre el pensamiento gramsciano, marxiano y hegeliano, de forma a comparar y relacionar conceptos claves de cada filósofo, como los de crítica, ideología, intelectual y historia. Ante estos análisis, concluimos que es plausible indicar una proximidad entre el pensamiento gramsciano y las filosofías de Hegel y Marx, de modo a colocar en evidencia por qué la educación en Gramsci es el medio de transformación del mundo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Gramsci. Hegel. Marx. Educación. Base filosófica.

Introduction

The threshold of the 20th century is marked by the emergence of several totalitarian regimes in Europe that sought to sacrifice freedom of thought through a nationalist discourse aimed at maintaining the hegemonic social system of these countries. These systems legitimized an unequal social order, as nations had an intense concentration of income in the hands of a few.

However, a vast mass of workers, the more they produced, the poorer they became and were subject to relations of domination. In this context, the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci appears, who, seeking to understand the reasons for these phenomena, finds a way to modify this adverse reality in education.

Because of the above, we will analyze the philosophical basis of Gramsci's thought since, due to the historicist character of the Italian author, it is coherent and indispensable to understand his historical and cultural formation to reach a better understanding and clarification of his pedagogical proposal capable of changing reality and making human freedom effective.

From this perspective, we will investigate the central concepts of Gramscian thought to relate them to their genesis. These include his notion of the intellectual, which constitutes the essence of all people in a society so that all subjects of a social group are equal, and the differences between them are explained by historical conditions that legitimize hegemony.

Furthermore, the concepts of historicity, criticism, and ideology will be deepened, and it will be analyzed how education in Gramsci represents a field that mixes theory, practice, culture, and politics, as Attilio Monasta² (2010, p. 12) indicates. In this way, it is clear that current education reflects historical and social conditions; therefore, if we seek to make society fairer, we must make the school this societal project.

In this sense, it is worth highlighting that at this point, Gramsci opposes different educators of his time who defended spontaneity (verbal information)³. The pedagogy of spontaneity is a term used by the Italian philosopher to refer to thinkers who argued that children should choose the subjects of their interest to learn so that learning occurs in a "natural" way. In this context, these pedagogies were strongly influenced by positivism, which saw a natural and objective tendency in the world, unlike the Italian thinker, who understands that this "natural world" is a product of our social relations.

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³ Boto provided the information during classes in the subject Introduction to Education Studies: Philosophical Focus, Sao Paulo, 2022.

Knowing this, it is intended, through the presentation of Gramscian concepts, to indicate the proximity between them and the thoughts of Hegel (2014) and Marx (2007, 2008, 2013), to conclude and connect Gramsci's thought to a philosophical tradition based on these philosophers. Therefore, the Italian thinker's education can extend these bases.

Given this, comparative readings of the three authors' texts will be carried out to relate the following concepts: 1) Hegelian immanent criticism and Gramscian criticism; 2) concerning historicity, there will be a rapprochement with Hegel; 3) in relation to the conception of the subject as an intellectual, which will be compared with the Marxian conception of the subject as the possessor of labor power. 4) Finally, regarding the concept of ideology, an approach will be made to Marx again.

To clarify further, a division into two parts is proposed, each with subdivisions and treated based on excerpts from the works of Gramsci (2010a, 2010b, 2010c) published by Monasta (2010). Firstly, the comparison and similarity between Gramscian philosophy and Hegelian philosophy will be analyzed, taking *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* as a reference, sometimes using the interpretations of Luiz Repa⁴ (2019), Marco Aurélio Werle⁵ (2022) and Pinkard (1994). As a second point, there will be a comparison of the Italian philosopher in question and Marxian thought, operating the analysis through the following works: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, and *Capital*. Always keeping in mind, the differences that Marx presents in these works.

In this way, we seek to synthesize Gramsci's thoughts about education because of social and historical relations to attribute historical and philosophical significance through this writing to the concepts he used.

Some Gramscian concepts based on Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

Hegelian immanent critique and Gramscian critique

Gramsci's philosophy is called the philosophy of praxis. This, in turn, according to Monasta (2010, p. 31), is capable of, through criticism, discovering the foundations of other thoughts and constantly articulating theory with practice. In this sense, criticism is responsible for weaving the unification between theory and practice and for highlighting the roots of the current social reality. In this way, it is essential to expose how criticism operates in Gramsci.

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The Italian philosopher Gramsci (2010a, p. 78) sees criticism as capable of transforming the world. However, it is vital to note that complaints must be carried out based on the current reality so that the act of criticizing indicates an analysis of reality and that, based on research, problems can be overcome.

From this perspective, Gramsci ends up opposing the common sense of criticism usually employed, as indicated by Monasta (2010, p. 30), since in the usual sense, there is a conception that is articulated through the opposition of two independent theories of social reality and, consequently, independent of each other. Gramsci (2010a, p. 70) finds in criticism the possibility of creating a more coherent, unitary conception of the world that reaches a more developed stage of human thought.

It is possible to indicate similar features of Gramsci's conception of criticism with Hegel's immanent criticism. Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* presents us with the basis of criticism right in its introduction, which finds its origin in Kant's critical philosophy (REPA, 2019, p. 274), which postulated the need to examine/criticize what is considered true to reach the truth itself.

Hegel, in turn, intends to maximize this act of criticizing, as Werle (2022, p. 10) indicates. This maximization will lead to the fact that criticism can remove us from the merely theoretical plane, as it was in Kant, and advance to the plane where theory and practice are unified so that the subject recognizes his power to transform and build the world (WERLE, 2022, p. 12).

In this way, Hegel articulates his work through several figures of consciousness – which can be understood, in general, as different forms of life⁶ –, each figure is necessarily a consequence of the previous one. In this sense, the transformation of different ways of seeing society occurred due to the collapse of the previous way.

This collapse was guided by what Hegel called immanent criticism, since for him, when a specific form of life was elaborated, the contradictions were already present, that is, immanent (HEGEL, 2014, p. 97). In effect, the subject only highlights the contradictions in their way of life, and when they become evident, they create a new way that seeks to solve the problems of the previous one.

Because of this, the immanent criticism in Hegel is the attitude of criticizing based on the already established reality to, based on it, build a new form of society. At this point, there

⁶ This expression is used by Terry Pinkard (1994) in his book *Hegel's Phenomenology: The sociality of reason*. Like the idea we intend to convey here, Hyppolite (1999) uses the term “ways of existing”.

are similarities with Gramsci's (2010a) criticism, which postulates the attitude of analyzing reality itself to highlight the problems – which in Hegel would be contradictions – and, from there, transform the society.

Furthermore, it seems that Hegel (2014) and Gramsci (2010a, 2010b, and 2010c) understand society as being the result of human action, a position contrary to the spontaneity of educators of Gramsci's time who saw the current form of organization as natural and that the humans only adapted to this natural world, so social life would only be guided by laws of nature. Among these authors, it is possible to cite, as an example, what Decroly (2010, p. 102) called women's maternal instinct, which served as justification for the roles of sacrifice and self-denial played by them. In this way, the Belgian author tried to make natural and necessary what Gramsci and Hegel would understand as a social reality constructed by human beings and which, therefore, can be changed.

In effect, the reason for criticism in Gramsci (2010a) is understood to weave the union between theory and practice so that Hegel's philosophy can have a similar conception of criticism. Consequently, one can point to Gramscian criticism as a possible derivation of what would be criticism for the German author.

Concept of historicity in Gramsci and Hegel

So far, the movement that criticism makes in Gramsci has been pointed out, however, it is necessary to check in more detail what the result of the criticism process is. In view of this, it is required to investigate the concept of history in Gramscian thought since, as Monasta (2010, p. 37) indicates, the philosophy of praxis is historical and is, therefore, historicism itself radical.

Thus, criticism analyzes reality to understand its history as a way of operating in the philosophy of praxis. In turn, the truth of the object of study is reduced to its history of formation. However, it is essential to understand how this conception of truth as history opposes different schools of thought, as Monasta specifies:

For historicism, truth is not a given; it is a fruitful horizon that energizes human energies. Therefore, historicism frustrates the aspiration of metaphysical philosophies to reach the ultimate cause through some divine revelation or infallible scientific method. For historicism, the last foundation is also the first: man (MONASTA, 2010, p. 37, our translation).

This shows us that the philosophy of praxis makes people's actions the object of its investigation, so the result of any historicist analysis is the detailed listing of the material and

social reasons that determined people's efforts to build the present culture. Moreover, historicism implies that people can change the world through this historical analysis when they feel that their aspirations have not been satisfied and represented by this model of society.

Therefore, Gramsci (2010b, p. 68) states that the school must provide the means for enlightening those who are oppressed and exploited, with the aim of making this layer of the population – more precisely, the workers – capable of being owners of their thought, action and, therefore, builders of their history.

Furthermore, the purposes are one of the main reasons why Gramsci opposed spontaneity pedagogy since, in his view, these would only legitimize the existing culture and, consequently, would continue to attest to the exploitation of workers, since traditional education was built to ensure the maintenance of the current culture.

From this perspective, it is possible to find a similar concept of historicity in Hegelian philosophy, given that the German philosopher's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* initially attempts to reach the truth, as do the metaphysical philosophies mentioned above. Indeed, the contradictions and errors lead the work to conclude that what can be stated as the truth of all these frustrated attempts is the fact that the different experiences constitute a series of figures that the only thing to be said is about the history of their training (HEGEL, 2014, p. 73).

In this way, Hegel states, for example, that the moment of thought is the result of its formation when he postulates: "[...] and sensible certainty [which is the figure discussed up to that moment in the work] itself is nothing else than this story alone" (HEGEL, 2014, p. 90, our translation).

In view of this, it is possible to notice similarities between the concept of history in Gramsci and Hegel so that such an approach allows, once again, to understand the history of the formation of Gramscian educational thought.

Approximations of Marxian thought with Gramsci

Concept of an individual in Gramsci and Marx's *Capital*

In the work of the Italian philosopher, it is expected to see the term intellectual to refer to individuals in a society. Gramsci places all human beings as intellectuals to make everyone equal (MONASTA, 2010, p. 21). In view of this, the differences between humans are due to historical conditions that perpetuated injustices, so the historically consolidated belief that there are individuals of low origin (commoners) and of divine origin (kings) is just an absence of the subject's self-knowledge. Therefore, through a historical analysis, the researcher will conclude that everyone has the exact human nature (GRAMSCI, 2010c, p. 52).

Furthermore, the use of the term intellectual is, however, understood by common sense as a glorification of "geniuses" who deal with a reality different from material reality in a way that diverts the focus from injustices, from reality and, consequently, finishes perpetuating the current existence (GRAMSCI, 2010a, p. 72).

Additionally, the worker becomes an organic intellectual in this context as he merely mechanically reproduces the current social order. However, in this act, he also thinks, but he does not believe on his own but through thought, which puts him in the position of being dominated (GRAMSCI, 2010a, p. 72). Therefore, the worker becomes alienated, becoming just an object of the system he creates mechanically.

In view of this, Gramsci (GRAMSCI, 2010c, p. 57-58) attempts to demonstrate the importance of the school of work by seeking to value the actual mass that makes up and sustains society to realize the freedom of thought of workers so that they can be capable of reflecting on their history and realizing it. Therefore, Gramsci's objective in treating all subjects as equal is to indicate that everyone can think for themselves and construct their reality collectively.

From this perspective, it can be compared with the political economy critique that Marx operates in *Capital*. The German philosopher (MARX, 2013, p. 312) states that all men have their workforce to mobilize workers oppressed by the system in question. The sale of this transforms workers into commodities – read objects – so that this objectification of the worker allows the current model of society to be perpetuated.

Consequently, the more the worker produces value when commercializing his labor power, the poorer and more objectified he becomes (MARX, 2008, p. 79). In this way, the purpose of Marxian thought is to prevent the worker from becoming just an object and, thus, assuming his position as a subject capable of building the world based on his thinking.

The purpose mentioned above is mainly like the Gramscian purpose. Furthermore, both attempts to construct a conception of an individual through an attempt to equate them to a common substance, in the case of Marxian theory as the owner of their labor power and in the Gramscian case as an intellectual subject capable of thinking.

However, the differences between the two to achieve these goals occur, in the case of Marx (2013), through class consciousness and armed revolution against the dominant class. In Gramsci (2010b), the means occurs through the modification of culture and, consequently, of school so that the oppressed learn the philosophy of praxis to analyze reality to transform it.

Ideology in Marx and Gramsci

Another central concept in Gramsci's thought is the concept of Ideology. For him, as Monasta (2010, p. 28) mentions, ideologies are a series of principles that aim to guide human behavior, however, the problem arises from the ideological use of Ideology. This means of use is based on a doctrinal education that intends to apply ideas outside the subject. Therefore, Ideology, in the negative sense, objectifies the working mass, planning to make workers mere reproducers of the current system. Because of this, Gramsci opposes spontaneity education, as mentioned before.

Comparing Marx, again, a similar term can be found in the work *The German Ideology*, when he intends to criticize the "philosophers" of his time by accusing them of being Ideologists. The German author substantiates this accusation due to the large number of authors who formulated their theories without a basis in material conditions, so Marx (2007) understood that this thinking, in addition to reality, only legitimized the injustices that occurred in the economic-political system of the time.

Hence, it is possible to notice, due to the context, how the work found the materialist method, quite evident in Gramsci, by proposing the analysis of material conditions as the starting point of all theories to alter reality.

Therefore, through this quick and superficial analysis, there is some similarity between the conception of Marxian and Gramscian Ideology, so it is plausible to point out a possible influence of Marxian thought again on the Italian philosopher, who could be thinking about ways of readjusting and interpreting, for its historical moment, the concepts left by this Hegelian and Marxist tradition.

Final considerations

Considering the above, we have a general indication of what the philosophical bases of Gramscian thought could be, so this observation can attribute historical and cultural meaning to the concepts he used. From this perspective, it is possible to see Gramsci as connected to a philosophical tradition encompassing Hegel and Marx's thought.

Furthermore, it is notable how Gramsci sees education, through the reinterpretation of previous thoughts, as the means for transforming the world. In effect, it actively positions itself against other educational models, making Gramsci's pedagogy unique, even though no clear prescription of the steps that this pedagogy should follow, as indicated by Monasta (2010, p. 27).

There is, then, a description of the purposes associated with political, cultural, historical, and social purposes. What is certain, however, is that in Gramscian pedagogy, the philosophy of practice must be taught, making the need for a more detailed method a mere detail.

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