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On the Education of Modern Reason: Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci, throughout his work on the education of the proletariat, problematizes the modern tendency of naturalizing ideologies as evidenced by our all-too-fraught political relations. Taking this problematization for its implications in the task of renewing political intersubjectivity—giving voice to the silenced proletariat—we find two interimbricated threads: 1) education is the modern capacity for making speak what becomes silenced by the amibiguating objectification of late capitalism and 2) the possibility of education is the possibility of seeing anew our modern conditions. Inducing movement from static forms of capital-based misrecognition toward sustaining the movement of educated recognition, Gramsci locates education as the possibility for making ourselves responsible for our own time—regardless of how well we know it, who this implicates and whether or not we are certain of the future it may bring; for these are only more reasons to be responsible. In other words, education becomes a principaling of uncertainty itself—we are to be uncertain of our time so that we, in our active redefining, may begin.

Following Gramsci's presentation of unsolvable, but yet definitive contradictions, this paper seeks to bring to light equally the tendencies toward static intersubjective relations as attested to by failed reason giving practices and tendencies toward political intersubjective relations as attested to by reason giving practices that enable both the reason-giver and the one who the reason is given to, to continue to give reasons. Education, for Gramsci as well as for us, serves as that category which speaks to the education of hegemony, the education of speech to be within its socio-politico-ethico- historical context—reasoning as to what we are.

If capitalism has obfuscated a common ground for which speech can be shared, then we must educate ourselves to these modes of obscurity in order to best understand what meaning we already have and can continue to have.