

ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND THE CONCEPT OF HEGEMONY

Antonio Gramsci, (Ales, Sardinia, 22nd January 1891 - Rome, 27th April 1937), was a politician, philosopher, political scientist, journalist, linguist and literary critic from Italy.



In 1921 he was amongst the founding members of the Communist Party of Italy, becoming secretary and leader from 1924 to 1927, but in 1926 the Fascist Regime locked him up in the jail of Turi. After his health deteriorated considerably, he was conditionally released in 1934 and admitted to a clinic where he spent the last years of his life.

Considered to be one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century, Gramsci analysed the cultural and political structure of society in his writings, which are amongst the most original in Marxist philosophical tradition. Most notably, he developed the concept of hegemony, which shows that the dominant classes impose their political, intellectual and moral values on society as a whole, in order to cement and manage the power around a common sense shared by all social classes, including the lower classes.



"Few unchecked hands weave the fabric of collective life and the masses know nothing, because it is careless."

Gramsci was in favour of the middle classes and the populace, but also said that he despised the masses' tendency to inertia and disinterest to those who wielded power.

"I hate the indifferent, not least because their whimpering of eternally innocent ones annoys me."

As far as Gramsci was concerned, all men were intellectuals given that **"there is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded"**; regardless of profession, everyone is, in his own way, "a philosopher, an artist and a man of taste, participating in a particular conception of the world and having a conscious line of moral conduct", but not all men have a role as intellectuals in our society.



Even though Italian intellectuals have always been linked to the dominant classes, they have invariably refused any connection with the populace and they have never recognised its needs nor succeeded in interpreting its cultural requirements. **"Culture is not about possessing a well-stocked depot of information, but rather about our mind's ability to understand life"**