

**DISCIPLINE AND ORGANISATION:  
PERFORMATIVITY AND REVOLUTIONARY SEMANTICS  
IN GRAMSCI'S AND TOGLIATTI'S TEXTS (1916-1928)<sup>1</sup>**

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## **I. Introduction**

For some time now in international historiography, marginalizing traditional Marxist interpretations has resulted in the study of language that is no longer seen simply as a supra-structural element, but rather as if it were a fundamental factor of the Marxist structure, that is of its socio-economic relationships and dynamics. In Italy, though, this trend has been slow to take off. In fact only recently have linguistic elements been introduced into Italian historiography, in the form of studies on the history of words and concepts,<sup>2</sup> qualitative semantic investigations of symbolic fields,<sup>3</sup> and quantitative

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of quotations are by Vanessa Di Stefano.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Andrea Baravelli, "Parole in azione. Percorsi di ricerca a proposito delle forme e dei linguaggi della violenza politica", *Memoria e Ricerca*, 13 (2003): 5-16; Francesco Benigno, *Parole nel tempo. Un lessico per pensare la storia* (Roma: Viella, 2013); Silvia Rosa, "Un'immagine che prende corpo: il 'popolo' democratico nel Risorgimento", *Annali della Storia d'Italia: Il Risorgimento*, ed. by Mario Banti and Paul Ginsborg (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), 379-400.

<sup>3</sup> For example: Giacomo Todeschini, *Il prezzo della salvezza. Lessici medievali del pensiero economico* (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1994); Giacomo Todeschini, "Ordini mendicanti e linguaggio etico-politico", *Etica e politica: le teorie dei frati mendicanti nel Due e nel Trecento*, ed. by Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1999), 5-27.

analysis of *corpora*.<sup>4</sup> However, apart from some justifiable exceptions,<sup>5</sup> any historiographical analysis of the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*) and its movement has generally been in the form of social or political science investigations. It is true that in the case of Gramsci there have been plenty of political-conceptual studies carried out on the words used by this leader<sup>6</sup> as well as on the linguistic theories to be found in his thinking;<sup>7</sup> however, at least in the historiographic field, historical-linguistic and semantic analyses are rare.

This essay, like the book itself, stems from the need to treat these topics from new and different perspectives (analyses of political discourse) and with new and different methodologies (in this case, through an historical linguistic and semantic investigation). In trying to introduce the Anglo-Saxon research methods of the (New) Cultural History into this historiographic area,<sup>8</sup> the intention is to contribute to the redefinition of the

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<sup>4</sup> Francesca Socrate, “Classici e romantici. Le generazioni del ’68 nel racconto di sé: un’analisi linguistica”, *Pensare la contemporaneità. Studi di storia per Mariuccia Salvati*, ed. by Paola Capuzzo et al. (Roma: Viella, 2011), 339-370; Francesca Socrate, “Maschile e femminile: memorie del ’68”, *Lo spazio della storia. Studi per Vittorio Vidotto*, ed. by Francesco Bartolini, Bruno Bonomo, and Francesca Socrate (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2013), 473-498; “Tra linguistica e storia: incroci metodologici e percorsi di ricerca”, ed. by Francesca Socrate and Carlotta Sorba, *Contemporanea*, 2 (2013): 285-333; Cesare Vetter and Marco Marin, *La felicità è un’idea nuova in Europa. Contributo al lessico della rivoluzione francese*, 2 vol. (Trieste: EUT, 2005-2013).

<sup>5</sup> Franco Andreucci, *Da Gramsci a Occhetto. Nobiltà e miseria del Partito comunista italiano 1921-1991* (Pisa: Della Porta, 2014); Franco Andreucci, *Falce e martello. Identità e linguaggi dei comunisti italiani fra stalinismo e guerra fredda* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005); *Visioni del comunismo. Harold Lasswell, Nathan Leites e Bertram Wolfe fra politica e scienze sociali*, ed. by Franco Andreucci and Andrea Mariuzzo (Milano: l’Ornitorico, 2010); Giulia Bassi, “Compagni, cittadini, fratelli, partigiani... Appelli e categorie identitarie del Partito comunista italiano”, *Quaderni di Farestoria*, 3 (2017): pp. 45-56; Giulia Bassi, *Non è solo questione di classe. Il ‘popolo’ nel discorso del Partito Comunista Italiano (1921-1991)* (Roma: Viella, 2019); Giulia Bassi, “‘Tutto il popolo sotto la bandiera della democrazia’. Il Partito comunista italiano e la costruzione discorsiva del popolo (1943-1945)”, *Storica*, 67-68 (2017): 31-81; Giulia Bassi, “Una ‘guerra semantica’. La Resistenza tra partito comunista italiano e Lotta continua: un approccio storico-linguistico (1970-1975)”, *Quaderni di Storia e Memoria*, 2 (2014): 31-41; Roberto Colozza, *Repubbliche rosse. I simboli nazionali del PCI e del PCF (1944-1953)* (Bologna: Clueb, 2009); Andrea Mariuzzo, *Divergenze parallele. Comunismo e anticomunismo alle origini del linguaggio politico dell’Italia repubblicana* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> *Le parole di Gramsci*, ed. by Fabio Frosini and Guido Liguori (Roma: Carocci, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Alessandro Carlucci, “The political implications of Antonio Gramsci’s journey through languages, language issues and linguistic disciplines”, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 2 (2009): 27-46; Alessandro Carlucci, “‘Viva sa comune!’. Il ruolo del sardo nella biografia linguistica di Antonio Gramsci”, *Antologia Premio Gramsci* (Sassari: Editrice Democratica Sarda, 2011), 183-241; Alessandro Carlucci, *Gramsci and Languages. Unification, Diversity, Hegemony* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> The most famous volumes: Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); *The New Cultural History*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Lynn

boundaries of a new political historiography that is epistemically and methodologically attentive to the symbolic, conceptual and linguistic dimension and not only to the historiographic study of political ideologies and public policies.

## II. Gramsci and Togliatti: Search Coordinates

The objective of this essay is, firstly, to identify and interpret some of the historical semantics of the Italian Communist Party and its movement at the point of formation, with the purpose of investigating the utopian ‘ratio’ – its ‘revolutionality’, we could say. Secondly, it is to try to understand why this performative potential had the power to overwrite and orientate models of identity, from socialism to communism in this case, and thus to rally militants.

Historically, the use of key-words by social and political agencies – parties, movements, churches – served to define the conceptual universe of the militants, the believers, or even those who simply saw themselves within a given symbolic universe, and thus to channel them towards their cause. The description and definition of identity and ideal practices (individual and collective) have enabled all political movements to steer those identities and social practices (individual and collective) towards specific goals. The purpose of this paper is therefore to show how the Communist movement, too, made extensive use of such a discursive device to undermine socialist hegemony, laying the basis, in the 1920s, for the absolute predominance of the Communist model in the panorama of the Italian left during the second half of the century. Enticing the militant to comply with a must-be ideal – the ‘good revolutionary’, the ‘good Marxist’, the ‘good Communist’ – had a dual purpose. On the one hand, to immediately give them a designation, a sense of belonging, meaning, value and social emancipation. On the other hand, to fuel, over the long term, the revolutionary *pathos* with the promise of just reward for every sacrifice made – primarily that of renouncing a part of themselves in the name of a collective of equals – and the achievement of an ideal goal: ‘future Communist civilization’.

For this reason, the present analysis focuses on a pivotal moment in the life of Italian communism, that of the birth of the Communist Party. The Communist Party of Italy (*Partito comunista d’Italia*) was formed from the split from the Italian Socialist Party (ISP) in January 1921, during the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISP held at the Goldoni theatre in Livorno, a port town in Tuscany. In the summer of the previous year the

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Hunt, *La storia culturale nell’età globale* (Pisa: ETS, 2010); Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: a Concise Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge; Taylor & Francis, 2011).

2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Comintern (also known as the Third International) had asked its members to underwrite twenty-one conditions, among which was the integration of the words ‘Communist Party’ in their party name and the eradication and expulsion of all internal reformist tendencies.<sup>9</sup> Among the promoters of the Communist fraction and subsequently the split, was the young Antonio Gramsci, then 30 years old. Originally from Ales, in Sardinia, but educated at the University of Turin, a man of letters, journalist, socialist, Gramsci was the secretary of the party between 1924 and 1927 and was elected, *in absentia*, to be the legendary founder of Italian communism a few years later.<sup>10</sup> He was also one of the founders, together with Angelo Tasca, Umberto Terracini, and Palmiro Togliatti, of the weekly newspaper *L’Ordine nuovo* in 1919, which from 1921 became a daily newspaper.<sup>11</sup> The slightly younger Togliatti was born in Genoa in 1893 but he had studied law at the University of Turin where he met Gramsci, and together they joined the Socialist Party. Thanks to a skilled management of the handover, Togliatti, who was in Turin running the newspaper during the split, was recognized and elected the legitimate successor to Gramsci and leader of the party from the 1930s, after the fascist regime had imprisoned the Sardinian leader in Turin prison, in Puglia, in 1926.<sup>12</sup>

This essay, therefore, takes into consideration the texts of Gramsci and Togliatti produced between the end of the 1910s and the end of the 1920s. All the extracts selected come from anonymous articles or those signed with pseudonyms, but con-

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<sup>9</sup> See Renzo Martinelli, “Il gruppo dirigente nazionale: composizione, meccanismi di formazione e di evoluzione. 1921/1943”, *Il Partito comunista italiano. Struttura e storia dell’organizzazione 1921/1979*, ed. by Aris Accornero and Massimo Ilardi (Milano: Annali Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1982): 363-386; Renzo Martinelli, *Il Partito comunista d’Italia 1921-1926. Politica e organizzazione* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> See for example: Norberto Bobbio, *Saggi su Gramsci* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1990); Luciano Canfora, *Su Gramsci* (Roma: Datanews, 2007); *Bibliografia gramsciana ragionata*, ed. by Angelo D’Orsi (Roma: Viella, 2008-); *Gramsciana. Saggi su Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Angelo D’Orsi (Modena: Mucchi, 2014); Angelo D’Orsi, *Gramsci. Una nuova biografia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017); Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2008 [1966]); James Joll, *Gramsci* (London: Fontana, 1977); Antonio Santucci, *Gramsci* (Roma: Newton Compton, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> See Patrizia Salvetti: *La stampa comunista da Gramsci a Togliatti* (Parma: Guanda, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Aldo Agosti, *Palmiro Togliatti* (Torino: UTET, 1996); Aldo Agosti, *Togliatti. Un uomo di frontiera* (Torino: UTET, 2006); Giorgio Bocca, *Palmiro Togliatti*, 2 vol. (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 1977); Roberto Gualtieri, Carlo Spagnolo, and Ermanno Taviani, *Togliatti nel suo tempo* (Roma: Carocci, 2007); *Palmiro Togliatti*, ed. by Ernesto Ragionieri (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976); *Palmiro Togliatti, La politica nel pensiero e nell’azione. Scritti e discorsi 1917-1964*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto and Giuseppe Vacca (Milano: Bompiani, 2014). See also the special issue of *Nuova Storia Contemporanea*, 2 (2014); Giuseppe Vacca, *Palmiro Togliatti*, Treccani, online Encyclopedia, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/palmiro-togliatti/>, last accessed on 2 May 2019.

fidently attributed to the two leaders: for Gramsci from *Il Grido del Popolo* and *La Città Futura* between 1916 and 1918; for Togliatti from *l'Unità* and *Lo Stato Operaio* between 1925 and 1928. During the period under consideration, Gramsci collaborated with several Socialist-inspired periodicals and newspapers, including *Avanti!*, the PSI newspaper founded in 1896, *Il Grido del Popolo*, the socialist journal launched in Turin in 1892, and he wrote almost all of the single edition dated 11 February 1917 of *La Città Futura*, the magazine for the Socialist Youth Federation in Piemonte. He was also the founder, in 1924, of the leading Communist newspaper, *l'Unità*, which went underground in 1927 and was published irregularly until becoming a daily newspaper in 1945. It then remained the mouthpiece for the party until its dissolution in 1991. Togliatti, on the other hand, was one of the promoters of the theoretical journal *Lo Stato Operaio*, which was founded in Milan in the summer of 1923 and published on a weekly basis until 1925. It re-emerged in Paris, where it was published clandestinely between 1927 and 1939.<sup>13</sup>

I have chosen a disjointed chronological period in order to show, in addition to the diversity of personal rhetoric and register, the linguistic mutations related to the different contexts and the political – and ‘moral’, in a sense – criticality of the period. These texts proved to be very good sources from which to observe the problematic nature of the transition, metaphorically speaking, from before to after the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), the Livorno split (1921), the advent of the fascist regime (which symbolically began with the 1922 March on Rome), and the Lyon Congress (1924).<sup>14</sup> A transition that has, in the words of this political discourse, historiographically taken on the significance of a watershed – symbolic more than chronological – and which has been defined by the implications ‘conferred’ on it by the historical setting. However, I intend to show both how that contextual mutation cannot be taken as the only discriminating analytic, and how it cannot fully explain the lack of homogeneity in the lexicon, intents, strategies, words, inducements and meanings of the writings of the two young ‘professional revolutionaries’.

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<sup>13</sup> ESMOI [ESSMOI], *Bibliografia del socialismo e del movimento operaio italiano* (Torino: ESMOI, 1956-).

<sup>14</sup> The Communist Party of Italy's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress was held clandestinely in Lyon in January 1926 and was an important political turning point for the party as it resulted in the approval of the so-called Lyon Theses, a document in which the leadership of Amedeo Bordiga (an influential member of the left wing of the party) and his faction was abandoned.

### III. The ‘Subjectifying Revolutionarity’ of Gramscian Discourse

We now have all we need to begin a renewed analysis of the early revolutionary lexicon. I will start with an article, entitled “Socialismo e cultura” (Socialism and culture) published in *Il Grido del Popolo* on the 29 January 1916, which offers immediate evidence of the intrinsic representative force of Gramscian discourse:

Culture [...] is organization, discipline of one’s inner self, a coming to terms with one’s own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one’s own historical value, one’s own function in life, one’s own rights and obligations. But none of this can come about through spontaneous evolution, through a series of actions and reactions which are independent of one’s own will – as is the case in the animal and vegetable kingdoms where every unit is selected and specifies its own organs unconsciously, through a fatalistic law of things. Above all, man is mind, i.e. he is a product of history, not nature.<sup>15</sup>

Features of Gramscian normative and moral precepts such as the predicative signifier are emphasised through the construction of a decisive and strongly revolutionary discourse: ‘revolutionarity’, in this sense, not because of or to the extent that it is based on a list of given orders, but because it is based on inducements and commands with the aim of an ultimate, utopian, goal.

Culture, that is society, understood as a network of relationships and influences that affect a given individual, is intended as the place where and through which the ego takes shape, is subjectified, ‘speaks’ – *ça parle!*, as Jacques Lacan would say.<sup>16</sup> And in this way, the individual can assume personal responsibility (“to live means to be partisan”, cf. *infra*) as an individual necessarily immersed within a sociocultural plexus that identifies and transforms him or her, and thanks to which he or she can identify and be identified, transform and be transformed. Or perhaps I should say ‘should’ or ‘must’ take shape, following a utopian logic, inseparably intertwined with the concept of ‘ideal necessity’. The validity of the prescribed moral norm, in this case, is justified not simply because it is a norm, but only inasmuch as it is based on the rational dominion of a ‘must-be-otherwise’ that it calls to mind (that is “one’s own historical value, one’s own function in life, one’s own rights and obligations”). Gramsci wrote:

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<sup>15</sup> Alfa Gamma [Antonio Gramsci], “Socialismo e cultura”, *Il Grido del Popolo* (29 January 1916). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920*, ed. by Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Lacan, however, referred to the unconscious. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1966).

It was through a critique of capitalist civilization that the unified consciousness of the proletariat was or is still being formed, and a critique implies culture, not simply a spontaneous and naturalistic evolution. A critique implies precisely the self-consciousness that Novalis considered to be the end of culture. Consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated and, once having set itself a goal, can judge facts and events other than in themselves or for themselves but also in so far as they tend to drive history forward or backward. To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order – but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal.<sup>17</sup>

What prevails, therefore, is the emphasis, an enlightened emphasis – an enlightenment which Gramsci intentionally calls “a magnificent revolution” but from which he diverges when he transfers his own concepts into forms of everyday life<sup>18</sup> – on the individual and his or her possibilities. What is emphasised, in fact, is “the consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated”. Other expressions and syntagms follow this pivotal theme: “to be oneself”, “to be master of oneself”, “to distinguish oneself”, “to free oneself from a state of chaos”.

It is 1916 and the impact that the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik model will have on the international revolutionary movement is still a long way off. When a small group of delegates of the intransigent-revolutionary factions of the most important socialist sections – including Gramsci – met clandestinely in Florence on 18 November 1917, the reference to the Bolsheviks was still little more than a hint. Most specifically this was through the use of the adjective ‘*massimalista*’ (maximalist), in the sense of ‘*maggioritaria*’ (majority), which was also one of the descriptors used for Lenin's party in Italy. The delegates still understood “little about what happened in Saint Petersburg in those famous ten days that shook the world. It would be months before they had an accurate perception of what the October Bolshevik revolution meant”. Not by chance is “the taking of the Winter Palace described in dispatches as a drunken riot”.<sup>19</sup>

However, in Gramscian text the self builds and differentiates itself “once having set itself a goal” (the ‘realm of historical necessity’, one might say), only because the individual renders him or herself “an element of order” with a view to a higher “ideal” that concerns the whole of society (it is the realm of the will, which is embodied in deterministic thinking of Marxist philosophy). In Gramscian discourse, the individual seems to have an almost universal power thanks to awareness, action and will.

<sup>17</sup> Alfa Gamma, “Socialismo e cultura”, *Il Grido del Popolo*. English translation, Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Quotation is from Guido Liguori, “Ideologia”, *Le parole di Gramsci*, 131-149, here 147.

<sup>19</sup> Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol. 1 (Torino: Einaudi, 1967), 3.

However, that it is culture, society, that organises and disciplines “one’s inner self, a coming to terms with one’s own personality” is an idea that is never abandoned: a culture that is never an abstract *Zeitgeist* but rather, always, a “product of history”, through which, if one is organized and self-disciplined, it is possible to reach an “understanding [of] one’s own historical value”. As the Sardinian leader wrote in the article “Individualismo e collettivismo” (Individualism and collectivism), published on 9 March 1918 in *Il Grido del Popolo*:

Logically, the principle of organization is superior to the one of pure and simple freedom. It is maturity compared to childhood. But historically, maturity needs childhood in order to develop, and collectivism necessarily presupposes the individualistic period, during which individuals acquire the skills necessary to produce independently of any external pressures.<sup>20</sup>

They are skills that, as seen above, do not stem from necessity or ‘natural’ mechanics, nor are they formed “unconsciously”, “through a fatalistic law of things”. They are generated thanks to the power of the “will”, that in Gramscian discourse is associated with “organization” and “discipline”, through education, knowledge and awareness (“To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself”), forms of redemption and methods of construction of that self/us – the new man, the class itself – capable of transforming worlds, working towards a higher end, conquering hegemony (“to exist as an element of order – but of one’s own order and one’s own discipline in striving for an ideal”). Furthermore, there is a dynamic organizational-disciplinary turn-about in Gramscian discourse, largely in connection with the fervour surrounding the new Russian revolutionary context. From this moment it takes on the explicit qualities of inducement and pressure regarding the organization, method and specific task to be carried out by all those who wish to be ‘good’ Bolshevik revolutionaries.

In any case, the word – intended as thought, awareness, theory – and the act – and therefore action, will, practice – are inseparable parts of a binomial in Gramsci. In a wonderful passage from *La Città futura*, in the article “Disciplina e libertà” (Freedom and Discipline), Gramsci says:

Joining a movement means taking your share of the responsibility for the events which are in the pipeline; becoming one of the people who are shaping these events. [...] By subjecting oneself voluntarily to a discipline, one becomes inde-

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<sup>20</sup> [Antonio Gramsci], “Individualismo e collettivismo”, *Il Grido del Popolo* (9 March 1918). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, ed. by Pedro Cavalcanti and Paul Piccone (Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1975), 59.

pendent and free. Water is pure, free and itself when it is running between the two banks of a stream or a river, not when it is messily spread on the ground, or when it is released, rarefied, into the atmosphere. Anyone who does not follow a political discipline is, precisely, matter in a gaseous state, or contaminated by foreign bodies: that is, useless and harmful. The discipline of politics sloughs off the waste, and refines the pure metal of the spirit. It gives an aim to life; and, without an aim, life is not worth living.<sup>21</sup>

This is a crucial moment in the prescriptive discourse: “The discipline of politics [...] gives an aim to life; and, without an aim, life is not worth living”.

Such discourse is to be read in terms of the ideal and as a direct result of the passage taken from “Socialismo e cultura” – “To know oneself means to be oneself” – according to a dialectic that keeps discipline, self-awareness and achievement of a purpose very closely tied together. It seems that the autopoietic process that the individual matures through the relationship with the other-than-self creates an irreversible separation between *zoé*, that is ‘natural’ or ‘bare life’, and *bíos*, ‘qualified’, ‘normalised’, ‘political’ life. A fundamental difference between simply ‘live’ (*zên*) and (the desire, the tension to achieve) ‘live well’ (*eu zên*).<sup>22</sup> Think of the text that appeared in *La Città futura* entitled “Gli indifferenti” (Indifferents [*sic*]):

I hate those who are indifferent: I believe with Hebbel that ‘to live means to be partisan’. We can’t only be *men*, foreigners to the city. Those who really live cannot but be citizens and partisans. Indifference is parasitism and cowardice: it is not living. This is why I hate those who are indifferent. Indifference is the dead weight of history. It is a lead ball to the innovator, it is the inert matter which drowns the most sparkling enthusiasms, it is the swamp which surrounds the old city and defends it better than the most solid walls, better than the bodies of its soldiers, because it swallows the assailants in its slimy mires, it decimates them, disheartens them and, at times, makes them desist from their heroic undertaking. Indifference has a powerful impact in history. It does this passively. It is fate; it is what one cannot count on; it is what upsets programs, what overthrows the best laid plans; it is brute matter which rebels against intelligence and strangles it. [...] I hate those who are indifferent also because I am annoyed by their whimpering as if they were eternally innocent. I ask of each of them an account of how they have carried out the duty that life has placed and places daily in front of them, of what they have done and especially of what they have not done. [...] I am a partisan, I live, I feel

<sup>21</sup> [Antonio Gramsci], “Disciplina e libertà”, *La Città futura* (11 February 1917). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-prison Writings*, ed. by Virginia Cox and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Concepts in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005).

pulsating already in the virile consciousness of those on my side the activity of the future city that my side is building. [...] I live, I am a partisan. This is why I hate those who do not take sides, I hate those who are indifferent.<sup>23</sup>

‘Live’, ‘really live’ (that here has been identified as *eu zên*), means to be “partisans”. It means, therefore, partaking, being empowered, being directed towards the “duty that life has placed and places daily”. Beyond this semantic plexus, a life lived in indifference “is not living”, but is death, despondency, heaviness. In the words of Gramsci, it equates to “parasitism”, “cowardice”, “dead weight”, “lead ball”, “swamp”, “slimy mires”, “fate”, “brute matter” that decimates, demoralises, makes those who live it desist, making cowards of them, “whimpering as if they were eternally innocent”. Against this, however, is the “heroic undertaking” of those who, instead, take sides, take responsibility and perform their historical task.

The departure of politics from the lofty corridors of power to home in on and address the individual, thus becoming biopolitics, is evident here: “modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question”, explains Michel Foucault.<sup>24</sup> The rational individual does not live a separate, solipsistic life from himself, but rather, even if seemingly isolated from the context in which he originated and from which he was formed, he is always a *politikòn zôon*, socially acquiring responsibility, expecting to be held responsible and therefore seeking contextual approval.<sup>25</sup> An individual who in this way gains identity, role, position, rights and duties and who, ultimately, gets the chance to ‘be’ through ‘being-in-society’. From this perspective a critique of Cartesian nativism and Bergson’s intuitionism is implicit, while a “non-negotiable link between the person and the person’s living body” is taken as a postulate.<sup>26</sup> Identity is always given, in this sense, by the sum of ‘I’ and ‘body’.

If disciplinary control – not only in the form of surveillance and punishment but also in the provision of pleasure and cures – allows the hegemonic class to train, to regulate, the body of people, the individuals, then does self-control, self-determination to a higher ideal (understood as *télos*, political purpose) allow for self-production and the breaking away from that (bio)power?

<sup>23</sup> [Antonio Gramsci], “Gli indifferenti”, *La Città futura* (11 February 1917). English translation, Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, 64–66.

<sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 188, quoted in Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 5. English translation, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, transl. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame. Essays in Cultural Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 132.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, 216.

The Gramscian text seems to suggest as much when it sustains that “subjecting oneself voluntarily to a discipline” means rendering oneself “independent and free”. Therein lies the idea and the proposition of a structuring of consent through a self-disciplining of individual conscience. This argument is a kind of variation or echo of the practice of ‘voluntary servitude’<sup>27</sup> which renders the individual a voluntary servant not yet of the tyrant (or of the hegemonic class in our case), as in the thought of Étienne de La Boétie, but rather of their ‘own’ ideal, with the aim of ‘real’ independence, ‘real’ freedom and ‘real’ life (to ‘really live’). The result – the “fantasy”, Foucault would say – of all utopian thinking is the idea of a social body constituted by the universality of the will, by consent, rather than by the materiality of the power over that body.<sup>28</sup>

In “Note sulla Rivoluzione russa” (Notes on the Russian Revolution) published on 29 April 1917, in *Il Grido del Popolo*, Gramsci asks:

But does the fact that revolution is the work of proletarians make it a proletarian revolution? [...] For that to be the case, other, spiritual, factors must come into play. The revolution is not simply a matter of power – it must be a revolution in people’s behaviour, a moral revolution.<sup>29</sup>

In late 1917, when the revolution was no longer an abstract concept but had found concrete corroboration and an ideal-type model in the Russian October revolution, the call to revolution, temporarily postponed to the end of the world war, began to be a widely accepted foregone conclusion. At the previously mentioned clandestine meeting held in Florence, Gramsci and Amedeo Bordiga, insisting on the need to act, presented the ‘extreme solution’. From that moment, citing the words of the then socialist Giovanni Germanetto, “the most resolute group gathered in that meeting organized themselves better and outlined their own platform of the *Italian left*, which was not the same as the old intransigent faction but rather much more than that”.<sup>30</sup> In “La Rivoluzione contro il ‘Capitale’” (The Revolution Against ‘Capital’), published on January 5, 1918, in *Il Grido del Popolo* but originally published in *Avanti!*, the Milan edition dated 24 November 1917, Gramsci explains that:

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<sup>27</sup> Étienne de La Boétie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (1576).

<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del potere. Interventi politici*, ed. by Alessandro Fontana and Pascale Pasquino (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), 137.

<sup>29</sup> A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], “Note sulla Rivoluzione russa”, *Il Grido del Popolo* (29 April 1917). English translation, Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-prison Writings*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> In Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol. 1, 4.

It was socialist propaganda that forged the will of the Russian people. [...] The revolutionaries themselves will create the conditions needed for the complete and full achievement of their goal. [...] So even in absolute, human terms, socialism now can be justified in Russia. The hardships that await them after the peace will be bearable only if the proletarians feel they have things under their own control and know that by their efforts they can reduce these hardships in the shortest possible time.<sup>31</sup>

The reference to the Russian example, to ‘do as in Russia’, served, obviously, to justify the validity of a certain course of action and specifically the intimate connection between revolution, will, self-meaning, morality, self-determination, sacrifice, organization and the ideal, with the aim of a greater good, a forward thrust that necessarily leads, if “the conditions needed” are capitalised on, from the first to the last phase. Even the name *L’Ordine nuovo* (literally, ‘the new order’) underlines the importance of and origin in the Russian experience, and two antinomies are implied in the title: ‘order’ against ‘chaos’ and the ‘new’ against the ‘old’.<sup>32</sup> Through individual then collective discipline and regimentation (“the close play of the class struggle”), thanks to the “intransigence” which is “living faith”, “untameable”, “clear will” and the fusion between being and action, man – that is to say, society – can move towards the ultimate goal, the ‘paradise on Earth’: the establishment of ‘Communist civilization’.

But can everyone reach and lead others to this ideal? The answer seems to be no at this time. There is in fact a principle of election which is characteristic of every utopian-religious thought: not all people are worthy of election, but only those who, through self-awareness and human mechanisms (the social man, the historical man), have reached the inevitable truth and inescapable acceptance that the “force (both mechanical as well as moral) is alone the supreme arbiter of strife”.

But are all those who have understood this invested with the responsibility of the prophetic task? Once again, the answer is no. Only “the socialists”, obviously, and not even all of them: only those, like the Bolsheviks, “who have internalized socialism”, the socialists for whom the “socialist ideas have penetrated all intellectual, moral, and aesthetic activity”. Only those “with a clear and real vision of historical development” and “who constantly aim at the maximum goal to be reached”. Only those who, one could say, have rendered their ego a ‘total’ ego, who have “seriously” sacrificed themselves to

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<sup>31</sup> A. G. [Antonio Gramsci], “La Rivoluzione contro il ‘Capitale’”, *Il Grido del Popolo* (5 January 1918). English translation, Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 35.

<sup>32</sup> *Ultima ricerca di Paolo Spriano. Dagli archivi dell’URSS i documenti segreti sui tentativi per salvare Antonio Gramsci*, ed. by Carlo Ricchini, Luisa Melograni, and Antonio A. Santucci (Roma: Edizioni l’Unità, 1988), 108.

the realization of a Communist civilization, who have stripped themselves of their robes, who have begun to self-determine starting with bare life: “they subordinate all of their actions, they teach themselves and they interweave relations with the world in which they are immersed in order to attain this goal”, to this end they put aside “their feelings, sentiments and the unconscious echoes of instinct”.

The revolutionary fervour reached its climax at about this time. The fact that at the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISP, held in Rome in September 1918, the ‘massimalista’ current was triumphant while the parliamentary group was accused of collaborating is not, in fact, to be underestimated. During 1918 the *Grido del Popolo* became an instrument of study, analysis and exaltation of the Russian experience.<sup>33</sup> Proof of this is in the article “Fiorisce l’illusione” (Illusions Flourish), published in the 15 June 1918, issue of *Il Grido del Popolo*:

Intransigence is not simply an external method used by political parties in political struggle. It is the result of a realistic vision of history and political life: it corresponds to a specific culture, to a specific mental and moral direction. Through the close play of the class struggle [...] the spirit is taught to recognize that force (both mechanical as well as moral) is alone the supreme arbiter of strife. Having become conscious of this original truth, the critical spirit accepts it as an ineluctable necessity. [...] Those socialists (who have internalized socialism and for whom socialist ideas have penetrated all intellectual, moral, and aesthetic activity) seriously propose the goal of instituting communist civilization. They subordinate all of their actions, they teach themselves and they interweave relations with the world in which they are immersed in order to attain this goal. They continually subordinate their feelings, sentiments and the unconscious echoes of instinct to this goal. They are preoccupied with always finding and clarifying a tight link between every one of their actions and this end: with relating every act to this untameable will. [...] For these socialists intransigence is the same thing as moral seriousness and courteous behaviour. [...] Thus, intransigence is also a democratic necessity. Only clarity and straightforward action can be followed and evaluated by the great mass which constitutes the already organized class or that part still in the tumultuous process of formation. This is how socialists with a clear and real vision of historical development think – those genuine socialists who constantly aim at the maximum goal to be reached, who have a living faith and a clear will.<sup>34</sup>

“Living faith” and “clear will”: utopia is located above all in this precept, in this specific principle of subjectification. One could say in this specific ‘subjectifying rev-

<sup>33</sup> Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista*, vol 1, 18-19.

<sup>34</sup> [Antonio Gramsci], “Fiorisce l’illusione”, *Il Grido del Popolo* (15 June 1918). English translation, Gramsci, *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, 62-63.

oluntality', which identifies, subjectifies, differentiates through subjective and utopian principles of vision and division.<sup>35</sup> A "consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated" and that "can judge facts and events other than in themselves or for themselves but also in so far as they tend to drive history forward or backward". It is only from this perspective that one must base the interpretation of the Gramscian precept I have highlighted: "To know oneself means to be oneself", "to be master of oneself", "to distinguish oneself", "to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order – but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal".

Gramsci's subjectivist and voluntarist position is evident here. In fact, "reaffirming the role of the revolutionary subject and freeing oneself of a concept of Marxism as a narrow-minded economic determinism" becomes a priority in his thinking.<sup>36</sup> This concept is present in Gramsci, but also more generally in the party – which, remember, is the Italian Socialist Party until 1921 –, at least until the establishment of the 'Party', that is, Togliatti's mass party (or 'party of the masses', *'partito di massa'*) from 1945, when the Communist Party of Italy changed its name to Italian Communist Party (ICP) and when the communist discourse became centred on the responsabilisation of the leaders and the removing of responsibility from the militants.

Here the emphasis is instead placed on individuals and on their potential: "Culture" is "organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness". This seems to be consistent with Gramsci's conceptualization of historical development as Marxist historicism and as a peculiar "subjective theory of reality",<sup>37</sup> and it appears especially consistent with the concept of hegemony as a sum of "direction" and "dominion" (Luciano Gruppi defined it, by extension, not just as politics, but also as a cultural, moral fact and as a concept of the world).<sup>38</sup> Gramsci in fact explains that "a class is dominant in two ways: it is both 'ruling' and 'dominant'. It is ruler of the classes that are naturally allied, and it is dominant of the classes that are naturally opposed".<sup>39</sup> The Gramscian text does not linger on the necessary and independent economic processes but on political activity, therefore giving an important role to judgement, will and determination (both individual and

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<sup>35</sup> The principles of 'vision and division' in Pierre Bourdieu, for example in *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979).

<sup>36</sup> Luciano Gruppi, *Il concetto di egemonia in Gramsci* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1972), 67.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Riechers, *Gramsci e le ideologie del suo tempo* (Genova: Graphos, 1993), 200.

<sup>38</sup> Gruppi, *Il concetto di egemonia*, 92.

<sup>39</sup> Giuseppe Cospito, "Egemonia", *Le parole di Gramsci*, 74-92, here 75.

of the group), and to what Giuseppe Cacciatore defines as the ineliminable “active and transformative role of subjectivity”.<sup>40</sup>

This is true even if the concept of hegemony as an exclusively political expression and initiative seems to be repeatedly refuted by Gramsci himself when speaking of “expressions of will, action and political and intellectual initiative [which are] an organic offshoot of economic necessities”, or when he says: “hegemony is political, but also and especially economic, it has its material base in the decisive function that the hegemonic group exerts on the decisive core of economic activity”.<sup>41</sup> However, without the “practical decision” and the “conscious arrangement of the means to an end, an end which is not given” by anything external but which is subjectively and voluntarily predisposed, the economic structures are not able to predetermine the revolutionary process: the ground for revolutionary organization is not on the “level of economic structure” therefore, but on the “spiritual” one.<sup>42</sup>

The individual, his/her subjectivity and will have a predominant place in Gramsci. In the period before the *svolta di Salerno*,<sup>43</sup> before the transformation of the communist party into a mass party and before the processes that accompanied fascism (and of which fascism became a convinced advocate), we are a long way from that dominant idea of a de-responsabilised society, that Remo Bodei defined as made of “individualists of the masses”<sup>44</sup> inspired – quoting a passage from Tocqueville – by the conflicting desires of dependency or autonomy and the “need” for a leader or a “desire” to remain free.<sup>45</sup>

But let us now see if this interpretation can be extended to Togliatti’s text or if, instead, in changing the agent, voice and prospective angle, we should also seek new paradigms and new categories of interpretation.

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<sup>40</sup> Giuseppe Cacciatore, “Storicismo speculativo e storicismo critico”, *Tornare a Gramsci. Una cultura per l’Italia*, ed. by Gaspare Polizzi (Roma: Avverbi, 2010), 197-212, here 204.

<sup>41</sup> The quotes are from Cospito, “Egemonia”, *Le parole di Gramsci*, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Massimo Salvadori, *Gramsci e il problema storico della democrazia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1970), 121-123. This is what the author defines as Gramsci’s “living Marxism”.

<sup>43</sup> Literally, “Salerno Turn”. This expression refers to the compromise agreed by the Communist Party in the spring of 1944 to put aside the question of the monarchy to form a firm political and military alliance between anti-fascist parties and institutional forces, in order to take part in the fight for the liberation of Italy.

<sup>44</sup> Remo Bodei, *Destini personali. L’età della colonizzazione delle coscienze* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2009), 226.

<sup>45</sup> Bodei, *Destini personali*, 376.

#### IV. The ‘Objectifying Revolutionality’ of Togliatti’s Discourse

To what extent does the *logos* of this discourse change when looking at Togliatti’s early texts? It does change, and not only because – as per Terence’s maxim – *quot homines, tot sententiae*.

First of all, the period is completely different. We are now in the phase after the acceptance of the twenty-one conditions of the Third International, the frictions within the party, the split that occurred at the Livorno Congress in January 1921, after the six days of heated debate and the formation of the Communist Party of Italy as a section of the Communist International. We are after the beginning of the violence and fascist action squads, after the March on Rome in 1922, and at the beginning of the semi-legal status of the party. We are in the period after the murder of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, the protest by some of the opposition parliamentarians (known as the ‘Aventine secession’) and the upsurge of the fascist punitive arm. After the early tensions with Amedeo Bordiga, after the ordered ‘Bolshevization’ of the Communist parties sanctioned at the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Comintern in June-July 1924 and the escalation of the controversy against leftism.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Congress itself was a fundamental moment in the history of the International Communist movement. While the revolution seemed to have consolidated in Russia, its standstill in Europe was patently clear. It was from this consideration that the need was formalised to adopt a rigid and disciplined authoritarian apparatus that referred to what from that moment was called ‘Marxism-Leninism’. It was decreed that organization, centralization and discipline based on the Soviet model should be at the top of the International member parties’ agenda. Without getting into the debate about the differences between Gramsci and Togliatti regarding communism in the 1920s, I find the idea Giuseppe Vacca had about the attitude towards the newly established Stalinist leadership rather convincing, which is that Gramsci’s attitude towards the hegemonic role of the Soviet party in the Comintern was less forgiving and more inclined to implicitly require a greater valorization of the Italian experience.<sup>46</sup> Internal conflicts and the leadership’s disapproval of Bordiga was heightened during 1925 while the equation between Trotskyism – the struggle against Trotsky is now understood as being part and parcel of the Bolshevization – and Bordigism took shape.<sup>47</sup> The Lyon Theses (the name by which the fourth thesis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress is known, discussing the Italian situation

<sup>46</sup> Giuseppe Vacca, “Introduction”, *Gramsci a Roma, Togliatti a Mosca. Il carteggio del 1926*, ed. by Chiara Daniele (Torino: Einaudi, 1999), 1-149. See also: Claudio Natoli, “Le campagne per la liberazione di Gramsci, il PCD’I, l’Internazionale”, *Studi storici*, 1 (1999): 77-156; Paolo Spriano, *Gramsci in carcere e il partito* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1984).

<sup>47</sup> Spriano, *Storia del partito comunista*, vol 1, 429-444.

and the Bolshevization of the party), drafted by Gramsci and Togliatti, reiterate the need for ideological unity in the Marxism-Leninism formula and pick up once more the arguments that had fuelled the pre-congressional debate, aggravating the dispute against the left, affirming the predominant and directive role of the Russian party in the International and declaring the incompatibility of the fractions.

Initially Togliatti also emphasised will and voluntarism. However, his appeal is formulated differently from the Gramscian discourse, which refers to an ego that is *causa sui*. Togliatti's is, indeed, a generic ego, but his is also an invitation to which everyone, taken individually and therefore strongly empowered, is called upon to respond in some way. In "La nostra ideologia" (Our ideology), published in 1925 in *L'Unità* and appearing during the debate preceding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the ICP which met clandestinely in Lyon in January 1926, he wrote:

Are we here just waiting for the revolutionary movement, or is our preparation, our action, and the degree of awareness and ability we manage to give the working class through these efforts, factors determining the active development of the revolution? Put like that, every good Marxist revolutionary should not hesitate to profess themselves 'voluntarist'.<sup>48</sup>

Through the obsessive use of 'we' and 'our' as well as verbs in the first person plural, Togliatti's discourse screams of voluntarism and collective responsibility. It is the party that assumes the role of hypernym of every possible identification; it is the party centred on the work of "every good Marxist revolutionary" (again the principle of choice, Schiller's "beautiful soul") which is now called to lead the 'working class'.

For both leaders it is the spirit that governs the body, which at the same time renders them 'servants' of an ideal and 'free' through the process of the realization of that ideal, which is action in the present and projection in the future. However, for Togliatti we can no longer talk about an *ego dominus* which finds reason and identity through qualities with performative potential – Gramsci's "living faith" and "clear will" – able, through this potential, to change the world with revolutionary determination. The Togliatti ego is rather an ego that subjectifies itself by declaring itself a collective ego ("we") and objectifying itself in the hegemonic, collective, all-encompassing figure of the party. It is an ego which ultimately loses its status of autonomy to acquire a new one within a 'form-of-life' that is (only apparently) external, that is the party ('apparently' because it was founded by the collective of militants), which is ultimately given every possibility of change.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> P. T. [Palmiro Togliatti], "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità* (1925).

<sup>49</sup> For the concept of 'Forms-of-life', see: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004); Giorgio Agamben, *Mezzi senza fine. Note*

This for Togliatti is a spirit, a ‘being-in-the-world’ which dialectically is expressed in a ceaseless antinomian double register: voluntarism and historicism, utopia and society, transcendence and immanence, present and future, will and action, intellect and sentiment, theory and praxis. The synthesis of opposites can only occur in a time and space ‘other-than-here’, in the ideal Communist civilization, where the State and inequalities disappear, and where necessity and freedom become the same thing. However in Togliatti, individuals, or rather, every person (that is everyone, *conditio sine qua non*) who is able to understand the inescapable truth of history, who has the dignity of self-control and is able to elevate (that is sacrifice), through discipline and organization, their spirit to the ideal of communist civilization: they are no longer summoned.

Here the roles seem to be already given: the party, the working class. In “La nostra ideologia” Togliatti clarifies:

Class is the component that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that ‘wants’ and imposes its organization on the whole process of social transformation. It is the party that is formed in the womb of the class that gives the latter its conscience, organization and will. Now, for us the party must never think it is dealing with a reality that develops automatically and mechanically by itself, it is always dealing with a system of forces in movement, it should seek to change this movement and its results, but it cannot achieve this without actively inserting itself into it.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, a class “that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that ‘wants’”, but which cannot and is not except through the guidance of the party that gives it its “conscience”, “organisation” and will. The act of the good revolutionary is still heavily steeped in romanticism and heroism, and therefore strongly utopian. It cannot be assumed that reality “automatically and mechanically develops by itself”, as it must be determined by the actions of those elected who propose to (and are capable of) “modifying this movement and its results”. The insistence on ‘mobility’ versus ‘immobility’, ‘voluntarism’ versus ‘fatalism’, antinomian pairs that are analogous to those of ‘utopia’ and ‘politics’ or ‘revolution’ and ‘compromise’, is the main feature of all the early texts by the two top leaders and, in this format, especially Togliatti’s.<sup>51</sup> He explains:

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*sulla politica* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> P. T., “La nostra ideologia”, *L’Unità*.

<sup>51</sup> That the concept of ‘revolution’ is discursively linked to that of ‘movement’ is clear by its use in astronomy and the natural sciences, and in particular in the work of Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, where the steady and unchanging motion of the constellations are mentioned. It is then used to identify disordered movements, the ups and downs of human destiny, and it is not until the seventeenth century that it acquires for the first time a socio-political meaning. See Hannah Arendt, *On revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 2016 [1963]).

If the party does not behave in this way, the chances for a victory of the proletariat are hopelessly compromised. In fact the proletarian forces [party and class], which have to be partly activated, partly made self-conscious, and gathered, ordered, led, are opposed by other forces, those of the bourgeoisie, which does not resist passively [...]. [...] It would be very convenient for the bourgeois if the voluntary element represented by the intervention of the class party and by the stance of its tactics failed. What the fate of the proletariat [party + class] would be in that case [...] was demonstrated very well by the Italian example in 1919-1920. And this example shows very well what was, in the face of the 'anti-voluntarism' of the Italian socialists of the time, the role of the 'voluntarism' of *L'Ordine nuovo*.<sup>52</sup>

At this juncture in history, the 'proletarian forces' continued (and for a long time) to be understood in two different ways depending on the slant given to the discourse. In fact, in some cases, they refer only to the working class, creating a distinction according to a driving/driven logic: party and class; in others, they are to be understood as a summation: party plus class. In the first instance, the removal of the working classes' responsibility (usually described as a heavy burden) is preferred, compensated by a sense of horizontal inclusion, of class, of moving towards a greater good. In the second instance, the empowerment of the class and the individual within the class, according to the logic of shared responsibilities and benefits, is redeemed by a sense of vertical inclusion. The passage is another utopian 'injection', that is constantly underlined by the assertive tone and a type of language that is strongly performative. But also by the use of the polarities 'fate' and 'action', 'anti-voluntarism' and 'voluntarism', which lead, as a direct result of each semantic pole, to the opposites 'stasis' and 'advent', (fatalistic) 'wait' and (inevitable) 'change'. And, by extension, 'evil' and 'good', 'dominated' and 'dominating', 'subjection' and 'freedom', 'bourgeois society' and 'communism', 'earthly suffering' and 'paradise'.

Once out of necessity, however, Togliatti referred directly to historicism:

This claim of voluntarism in the face of the fatalistic degeneration of revolutionary Marxism is not yet sufficient to put forward the problem of the value that the voluntary element has in the process of the revolution. [...] Two mistakes [are] to be avoided: 1) the error of separating the party from the working class, turning it into something different [...]; 2) the error of separating the action of the party from the objective situations within which it is constituted and operates [...]. [...] The result [of the errors] is to once more move away [compared to 1919-1920] from revolutionary Marxism, to get us away from the dialectic only to land us in metaphysics, and to therefore once more obscure the main points of the problem

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<sup>52</sup> P. T., "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità*.

of the will. [...]. Therefore to isolate the party and its action [...], means to isolate precisely the will from the rest of reality, making it something 'separate', defined in itself.<sup>53</sup>

The leader's insistence on the value of "voluntarism" and the danger of "fatalistic degeneration" caused by its absence is still clear, and we are still in the heart of the utopian-revolutionary semantic arena and the insistence on the opposites of activity and inactivity. As he writes in the article "Il nostro partito" (Our Party), published in the January-February 1928 issue of *lo Stato Operaio*:

If we had many dozens of comrades well prepared from a theoretical point of view in an 'inactive' party, the imbalance that we complain about could not be overcome, because our clever theoreticians would not have experience. Experience comes from movement.<sup>54</sup>

Togliatti echoes the vitality through the powerful pair of opposites discussed in the most famous Gramscian text, "Odio gli indifferenti". That is 'life' and 'death' in parallel to 'movement' and 'stasis': "a living, real Communist Party is a party that keeps its roots alive in the masses" (cf. *supra*). It is worth repeating it, though: Gramsci speaks of individuals, Togliatti of the party.

Recourse to the semantics of life and vitality is more pressing now that the death threat becomes real: "we must not simply 'be' in the factory, we must 'live there'".<sup>55</sup> The "revitalisation of the basic party organisms", he explains, "and the development of the initiative of the foundation of the party are two absolute conditions to 'move' the masses against fascism".<sup>56</sup> Semantic chains be/live and stasis/motion have as a premise the idea that vitality is given by the union of thought and action ("here the concepts of 'will' and 'organization'" are to be seen as "identical concepts"<sup>57</sup>). 'Being' and 'doing' should not, therefore, be understood as abstract and metaphysical realities but always as the encounter between "being conscious" and "doing consciously" (that is, the concept of life consists of 'being' plus 'doing'). In what way? Through – note the use of Messianic terms – "awareness of one's own vital mission".<sup>58</sup>

In fact, again in "Il nostro partito", the communist leader declares:

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<sup>53</sup> P. T., "La nostra ideologia", *L'Unità*.

<sup>54</sup> Palmiro Togliatti, "Il nostro partito", *lo Stato Operaio* (January-February, 1928).

<sup>55</sup> Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

<sup>56</sup> Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

<sup>57</sup> Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

<sup>58</sup> Togliatti, "Il nostro partito".

It is certain that the elements of loyalty, honesty, passion and revolutionary impetus feed [note the biological metaphor] the activities of our comrades. Without them revolutionary work is impossible; without them there is no revolutionary work, there is no revolution. These elements in fact are developed and reinforced in the organisation, in the collective work; and they become the faith in revolutionary success, faith in the proletariat, faith in the party, faith in the Communist International.<sup>59</sup>

Life is movement, and “movement” is “organization”, “work”, and if “fidelity”, “honesty”, “passion” and “impetus” (the results of consciously doing and being aware) are added to it, then one reaches the top level of “trust”, trust in “revolutionary success”, in the “proletariat”, in the “party”, in the “Communist International”. Trust (“faith”) is what alone makes the discourse about the actual achievement of communist civilization possible.

## V. Conclusion

Confirmation of how much has been gleaned through text analysis on the semantic and discursive front can be seen by briefly carrying out a more strictly linguistic analysis of the Italian language used in the revolutionary legacy of Gramsci’s and Togliatti’s texts taken together.

The discursive output in fact is evident. The peremptoriness and strongly utopian character, as well as the choice of words, is evidenced, first of all, by the predominant recourse to verbal tenses and moods that express certainty, reality, security (indicative, especially present, and future) or incitement, request, command (imperative). Secondly, by the frequent use of precise verbal phrases (for example, “it is necessary”, “it is certain”). Thirdly, by the frequency of phrasal and auxiliary verbs, whether expressing command/necessity (duty), capability (power) or volition (will). Fourthly, by the prevalence of separate, independent main clauses, mostly enunciative, and of subjective or objective subordinate clauses (see, for example, “class is the component that organizes, that acquires a conscience, that ‘wants’”), with the obvious role of affirming, convincing, directing, prescribing, reassuring. Fifthly, the incisiveness is also rendered through the repetition of the words they want to emphasise: “revolution”, “discipline”, “movement”, “will”, “order”, and conversely, but still in a demarcative role, except this time negative, “fatalism”, “indifference”, “waiting”, often in lists within the same sentence. Furthermore, if in some texts there is a predominant tendency to look for objectivity, evident for example

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<sup>59</sup> Togliatti, “Il nostro partito”.

by the position of the adjective in the nominal syntagma, in other texts, using the same gauge, there is a preference for an emotive rendering. The post-nominal positioning of the adjective in the nominal syntagma, where in Italian the adjective comes after the noun, such as for example in *peso morto* (dead weight), *gorghi limosi* (slimy mires), *materia bruta* (raw material) or *coscienze virili* (virile consciousness), tends to express objectivity and has a more restrictive role because it identifies and defines the referent of the substantive. The pre-nominal position (adjective + noun), on the other hand, such as for example in *serrato giuoco* (close play), *indomabile volontà* (untameable will), *viva fede* (living faith), tends to give a greater subjectivity to the utterance and usually indicates a more studied but also more emotional lexicon.<sup>60</sup>

From the above one can make various observations, both with regards to the specificity of the texts, authors, contexts and periods taken into consideration and, more generally, with regards to the possibility of using the same method to understand and question other texts, other authors, other contexts, and other periods. In particular, one can draw some clear benefits with regards to the interpretation of the political text of the two authors.

In the first instance, with the analysis of Gramsci's particular revolutionary lexicon, the advantage lay in grasping the disguised message and its particular legacy, thanks to the focus on his peculiar terminology,<sup>61</sup> the singular insistence on certain words,<sup>62</sup> on the specific ideal interlocutor,<sup>63</sup> the pragmatics, and the semantic links between the words.<sup>64</sup> Behind the opacity of what otherwise might appear merely a revolutionary, political, communist text, full of ideals and philosophically 'pre-packaged' models, one can see the exclusive and specific utopian result of Gramsci's text. And that is faith in and the invitation to a disciplined autopoiesis of the militant – awareness of the self and one's role – that, given the historical conditions, *can* and *must*, through it, evaluate, modify and reconstruct the world: "To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order", explains Gramsci. This is what here has been defined the narrative category of Gramsci's 'subjectifying revolutionality': the ambition to modify the subject enabling him to modify himself in order to modify the environment.

<sup>60</sup> For the role of adjective placement, see Maurizio Dardano and Pietro Trifone, *Grammatica italiana con nozioni di linguistica* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1999), 517.

<sup>61</sup> For example, the use of terms such as "spirit" and "life" that are, instead, virtually absent from Togliatti's discourse.

<sup>62</sup> Such as "life", "will", "spirit", "culture", "discipline", "morality", "intransigence".

<sup>63</sup> To go back to Gramsci, the "ego that opposes the others, that differentiates itself".

<sup>64</sup> For example "life" on the same semantic axis as "spirit" and "politics" and connected to the verbs "power" and "be", which are in turn linked to the words "morality", "will", "intransigence", and "socialists".

This is a type of analysis that above all has allowed us to see the peculiarities and profound differences of Togliatti's discourse. In the second instance, in fact, analysis of the terminology,<sup>65</sup> frequency,<sup>66</sup> interlocutor,<sup>67</sup> pragmatics and semantic bonds<sup>68</sup> has led to a different result. That is to say, an ineliminable mistrust in the capabilities of the individual, the highlighting of a necessary objectification inasmuch as it is intrinsically inevitable, the resulting hegemonic role of the party since it was collectively created, given the historical conditions, to change the status quo: “[what] today guarantees the minimum organization of the masses [...] is the Communist Party”, as Togliatti said. This is what I defined the discursive category of Togliatti's ‘objectifying revolutionality’: the ambition to change the autonomy of the subject, objectifying him or her in the collective to modify the environment.

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<sup>65</sup> Which insistently invokes the idea of the march and work through terms such as “movement”, “action”, “active”, “organization”, “work”.

<sup>66</sup> Very high frequency for “party”, “class”, “revolutionary”, but also “organization”, “movement”, “action”, “active”, “proletarian”, “faith”.

<sup>67</sup> Specifically, “we”, “class”, “proletarian forces”, the “party”.

<sup>68</sup> For example, “revolution” next to “faith”, “work”, “organisation”; “party” here connoted mainly for its “revolutionary” character, its relation to “class” and as an expression of the “proletariat” and in turn linked to the word “voluntary”; further links between “will” and “action”, “movement”, “active” and “conscience” almost indicating the symbiosis between awareness and possibilities of action.