

Antonio Gramsci

PRISON NOTEBOOKS

VOLUME I

Edited with Introduction by Joseph A. Buttigieg

Translated by Joseph A. Buttigieg and Antonio Callari

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NOTEBOOK I

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First Notebook

generations of the same national origin, and the working generations are being swollen by masses of foreign immigrants who modify the base: as in America, a certain division of labor is taking place (skilled jobs as well as managerial and organizational functions for the indigenous population and unskilled labor for the immigrants). In every country the same relationship is established between the city with its low birth rate and the prolific countryside, creating a rather serious economic problem; industrial life demands a general apprenticeship, a psycho-physical adaptation to conditions of work, nutrition, housing, etc. which are not "natural": the acquired urban traits are passed on as a legacy. The low birth rate requires a continuous expenditure for apprenticeship and brings with it a continual change in the sociopolitical composition of the city, hence also raising a problem of hegemony.

The most important question is the protection of the feminine personality: until woman has truly attained independence in relation to man, the sexual question will be full of morbid characteristics and one must exercise caution in dealing with it and in drawing legislative conclusions. The abolition of legal prostitution will bring with it many difficulties: apart from the unbridled wildness that follows every crisis of repression.

Work and sexuality. It is interesting how American industrialists take an interest in the sexual relations of their employees—the puritan mentality, however, conceals an obvious necessity: there cannot be intense productive labor without a regulation of the sexual instinct.

Cf. Notebook 22, §3.

§(63). *Lorianism and Graziadei*. See in Croce (*Materialismo Storico* etc.) the note on Graziadei and the Country of Cockaigne.¹ See in Graziadei's 1929 book, *Sindacati e salari*,^a the rather comical response to Croce after almost thirty years.² This response to Croce, somewhat Jesuitical as well as rather comical, was undoubtedly provoked by the article on *Prezzo e sovrapprezzo* published in 1926 in *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, an article that opened precisely with a quotation of Croce's note.³ It would be interesting to search the works of Graziadei for possible references to Croce: has he really never responded, not even indirectly? And yet, the sting was powerful! In any case, the "homage" to Croce's scientific authority, so unctuously expressed after thirty years, is really comical. The motif of the Country of Cockaigne traced by Croce in Graziadei is interesting, moreover, because it strikes at a subterranean current of popular romanticism created by the "cult of science," by the "religion of progress," and by the general optimism of the nineteenth century. In this regard one must consider the validity of Marx's reaction; he poured cold water over

^aIn the manuscript Gramsci erroneously wrote, *Capitale e salari*.

the enthusiasm with his "law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" and his "catastrophism": one must also examine the extent to which these optimistic currents have hindered a more accurate analysis of Marx's propositions.

These observations lead back to the question of whether all the notes on Lorianism are "useful" or not. Setting aside the dispassionate "judgment" of Loria's work as a whole and the "injustice" of stressing only the eccentric manifestations of his ingenuity which can be discussed separately, one still needs a set of reasons to justify these notations. Since they lack scientific and critical habits, autodidacts are especially prone to fantasize about Cockaignes and about easy solutions to every problem. How to react? School would be the best solution, but that is a long-term solution, especially for the large masses. In the meantime, then, one must strike at "fantasy" with some forms of intellectual helotism which would create an aversion to intellectual disorder (and a sense of the ridiculous). This aversion is not enough but it does help establish an indispensable intellectual order. It is very important as a pedagogical device. Remember typical episodes: Rab.'s Interplanetary of 1916-17;⁴ episode of the "perpetual motion" in 1925, I think;⁵ 1919-20 types: the question of rents (Pazzoni of Como, etc.).⁶ The lack of sobriety and intellectual order leads to moral confusion as well. The sexual question with its daydreams causes many disorders: the scarce participation of women in collective life, the attraction of fatuous publicity seekers toward serious initiatives, etc. (Remember the episode recounted by Cecilia De Tourmay: it could be true, because it is likely;⁷ I have heard that in Naples there would be an immediate rush of free-love advocates with their neo-Malthusian pamphlets, etc. whenever women's meetings were held.) All the most ridiculous daydreamers descend upon the new movements to propagate their tales of hitherto unrecognized genius, thereby casting discredit on them. Every collapse brings along intellectual and moral disorder. It is necessary to create sober, patient people who do not despair in the face of the worst horrors and who do not become exuberant with every silliness. Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will.⁸

Cf. Notebook 28, §11.

§(64). *Lorianism and G. Ferrero*. Recall the blunders contained in the first edition of his histories: The Persian linear measure [of distance]^a confused with [believed to be]^a a queen of whom one could write the biography, etc.¹

Cf. Notebook 28, §12.

^a Variants added between lines by Gramsci.