

On Gramsci's 'conceptions of the world'

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Antonio Gramsci is widely celebrated for his conceptualisation of hegemony. This paper elucidates a related concept that appears frequently in Gramsci's prison notebooks yet has been surprisingly under-emphasised: 'conceptions of the world'. By conceptions of the world, Gramsci refers to things that inform our understanding of the world and our place in it. Each conception of the world is inherently practical and philosophical, relational and political. Gramsci argues that producing a new, effective conception of the world is the key to successfully building communism. It is therefore important to situate this concept in Gramsci's thought. That is the aim of this paper, which elaborates on the implications of 'conception of the world' through a reading of Gramsci's prison notes – particularly his commentaries on humanity and worldliness.

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§1

In 1976 Perry Anderson lamented that 'the spread of Gramsci's renown has not ... been accompanied by any corresponding depth of enquiry into his work' (1976, 5). Certainly this was true at the time, but the same could not be said today. Gramscian studies are enjoying a renaissance – the three volumes of Buttigieg's critical editions of the *Prison Notebooks* (1992, 1996, 2007) have set sail, along with a flotilla of monographs¹ – and, within geography, appreciation for Gramsci continues to grow. Bob Jessop recently argued (2005) that Gramsci should be considered one of the preeminent spatial thinkers of the 20th century, and as a growing body of recent work on Gramsci in the discipline attests (cf. Asher and Ojeda 2009; Ekers *et al.* 2009; Ekers and Loftus 2008; Glassman 2004; Karriem 2009; Kipfer 2008; Mann 2009), his thought remains a source of inspiration in human geography. Gramsci's thought attracts geographers for many reasons, but to generalise, many find that his *Prison Notebooks* (1971) provide a unique theoretical resource for an open (i.e. non-dogmatic) Marxism centred on the struggle for hegemony – a struggle that is clearly spatialised in Gramsci's writings. In fact, Gramsci's deeply geographical sensibility partly inspired Edward Said's critique of Orientalism (1979), which

has been of great inspiration for critical human geography.

The purpose of my paper is to contribute to our appreciation of Gramsci in one limited, but I believe crucial, respect. At the heart of Gramsci's thought, and drawn like a red thread through his *Prison Notebooks*, is a concept that should be of great interest to geographers: what Gramsci calls 'conceptions of the world'. I contend that Gramsci could be described as a Marxist philosopher who investigated conceptions of the world. I have compiled a set of statements where Gramsci uses the expression 'conception of the world'. Space does not permit a systematic description of these statements (which number over 100), although in what follows I will discuss what I see as the most significant passages. Suffice to say that 'conceptions of the world' appears in discussions of every one of the major themes in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* – hegemony, state/society, education, intellectuals, religion, journalism, the party, nature and human nature, Pirandello, folklore, Dante, Croce, Manzoni, Marx, Lenin, language, linguistics, and historiography – and, equally remarkably, often where it matters most. Yet, notwithstanding its centrality to his thought, Gramsci's 'conceptions of the world' has received very little emphasis in the vast secondary literature. After searching, I have found no studies

of this concept.² Nor does Jessop, for instance, include this concept in his study of 'spatial metaphors' in Gramsci (2005, 423).

This paper aims to begin to correct this lacuna by arguing that 'conceptions of the world' represents one of the most creative and radical elements of Gramsci's thought. What is at stake here is the question: how should we conceptualise ourselves and the world to enable transformation? As David Harvey (2009 [2010]) recently pointed out, one of the fundamental requirements for building a radically different world is to transform our 'mental conceptions of the world'. He asks,

What might these [new conceptions] be and who will produce them, given both the sociological and intellectual malaise that hangs over knowledge production more generally? (Harvey 2010, 237)

This is indeed a fundamental question for us today – and arguably the central one for Marxist geography in particular. In posing it, Harvey almost literally repeats Gramsci's argument in the *Prison Notebooks*, as I will show. It is therefore lamentable that, for all the recent interest among geographers in Gramsci (Harvey included), little attention has been paid to the way that Gramsci himself pursues these questions.³

'Conceptions of the world' [*concezione del mondo*] conveys several meanings.⁴ As a starting point, we can say that Gramsci uses 'conceptions of the world' to refer to practical, relational approaches to being-in-the-world.⁵ By crystallising it in these terms, I am borrowing language from Martin Heidegger's *Being and time* (1996 [1927]). This is justified by the remarkable correspondence – discussed below – between Gramsci's and Heidegger's questioning of 'conceptions of the world' in these texts. Suffice to say here that for both Gramsci and Heidegger, our 'conceptions of the world' are not strictly 'mental conceptions' (as for Harvey), but rather are *practical*, rooted in ordinary social activity. Moreover they are *relational* insofar as they reflect living social relations – the very relations that define the existence of particular social groups. And they express something fundamental about the way that we are what we are. In other words, they are conceptions of *the world* – not of just anything in particular – because they concern the worldliness of our existence. Finally, Gramsci consistently treats these conceptions as *plural*.⁶ Everyone has a conception of the world, and they are not all fundamentally the same. For instance,

they vary *geographically*: 'The conceptions of the world ... against which the bourgeois spirit had to struggle in Italy are not like those that existed in France' (Q8§3; 1985, 249). This is not to open the door to pluralism, however, as if to say, 'well, you have your conception of the world and I have mine'. Indeed, Gramsci's 'conception of the world' explicitly condemns such pluralism.

This is only a preliminary, abstract summation of the concept, and my paper will elaborate on these claims. But before going further, let me clarify my central argument. I claim that 'conceptions of the world' is one of the threads that tie Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* together. Through 'conceptions of the world' we see Gramsci groping for an ontological register in which to explain communism as a fundamental, transformational questioning of one's being-in-the-world, one's relation to the other. 'Conceptions of the world' therefore should be seen as central to Gramsci's political philosophy and his celebrated worldliness. Buttigieg writes:

Gramsci never aspired to the privileged position of the 'objective' (i.e. disinterested) spectator, he never ceased being political, he never lost sight of the worldliness of his task. (1982/83, 25)

I think Buttigieg is exactly right, but we should add a further point: one of Gramsci's key tactics to avoid slipping into the privileged position of the 'objective' spectator was to problematise 'the worldliness of his task' by questioning conceptions of the world. If we fail to see this, we miss a key to his *Prison Notebooks*.

§2

Let us turn to an especially important note, Q11§12, 'Some preliminary points of reference [for the study of philosophy]', where Gramsci provides guidelines for conducting Marxist criticism (Q11§12; 1971, 323; 1975, 1375–95). This is an especially significant note in the prison notebooks, since it stands at the head of a series of notes on the foundational principles for Marxist philosophy. Gramsci begins by defining criticism as the movement from a pre-critical (dogmatic and mechanical) conception of the world to one that is *conscious*. He asks:

[I]s it better to take part in a conception of the world mechanically imposed by the environment, i.e., by one of the many social groups in which everyone is

automatically involved from the moment of his [sic] entry in to the conscious world ...? Or ... is it better to work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world and thus, in connection with the labours of one's own brain, choose one's sphere of activity, take an active part in the creation of the history of the world, be one's own guide, refusing to accept passively and supinely from outside the mould of one's personality? (Q11§12; 1971, 323–4)

In this second rhetorical question, Gramsci provides a powerful definition of the task of criticism: to 'work out consciously and critically one's own conception of the world'. This may sound like idealism. Yet, Gramsci wrote these lines as reflections upon the failure of communist revolution. Rosengarten reminds us that

it should always be remembered that, for Gramsci, the study of how we understand phenomena and of how and why particular conceptions of the world ... filter down into the consciousness of the masses was part of a larger enterprise whose aim was the socialist restructuring of capitalist society. (1984, 65)

Gramsci not only argues that 'the choice and criticism of a conception of the world is itself a political fact' (Q11§12; 1957, 61). He contends that political transformation requires grasping how particular conceptions of the world become *effective*: how, that is, they become realised.

Gramsci's appeal to apply 'the labours of one's own brain'⁷ and thereby participate 'in the creation of the history of the world' stands at the head of Q11§12. We then encounter four notes on the relationship between criticism and 'conception of the world'. All four emphasise the necessity of strengthening one's conception of the world. The first note begins:

In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. ... To criticise one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy [O]ne cannot be a philosopher, by which I mean have a critical and coherent conception of the world, without having a consciousness of its historicity and of the fact that it contradicts other conceptions or elements of other conceptions (Q11§12; 1971, 324)

And this is why (as Gramsci concludes this first note)

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. (Q11§12; 1971, 324)

This infinity of traces shapes one's conception of the world. Thus for Gramsci, the first step of Marxist criticism is to 'compile such an inventory', i.e. assemble a critical and coherent conception of the world:

In the most immediate and relevant sense, one cannot be a philosopher, by which I mean have a critical and coherent conception of the world, without having a consciousness of its historicity and of the fact that it contradicts other conceptions or elements of other conceptions. One's conception of the world is a response to certain specific problem posed by reality (Q11§12; 1971, 324)

Gramsci therefore equates Marxist criticism with the formation of a coherent conception of the world, in fact with *philosophy* itself. And, in turn, the essence of philosophy lies in the critical historicising of one's conception of the world.⁹

Yet there is an important caveat here. Gramsci insists that 'philosophy' is not a rarified activity executed only by traditional intellectuals; nor is it restricted to those who have already achieved a critical conception of the world. Rather, he insists that 'everyone is a philosopher, even if in his [sic] own way, unconsciously (because even in the smallest manifestation of any intellectual activity – 'language' – is contained a definite conception of the world)' (Q11§12; 1957, 58; compare 1971, 323). This may seem paradoxical. On one hand, Gramsci argues that everyone is always already a philosopher (albeit unconsciously), to the extent that language, folklore¹⁰ and common sense¹¹ provide an inherent conception of the world. Here is his logic: language, folklore, practical activity, religion, and so forth provide everyone with some conception of the world; thus, everyone is a philosopher because the *potential* for critical reflection is inherent. For Gramsci, the achievement of a coherent conception of the world involves the *critical transformation* of the prevailing common sense, folklore, ideology, and so forth.

And yet, on the other hand, Gramsci contends that this inherent capacity is everywhere lacking. Everyone has a philosophy qua conception of the world, yet only 'unconsciously'. (Here Gramsci's Marxism seems to be a question of making the

unconscious conscious¹²). This unconscious philosophy is not without consequences. For Gramsci the core paradox consists in the fact that 'everyone is a philosopher', and yet most people do not think critically – and indeed many Italians even supported fascism. Thinking through this problem, Gramsci insists on addressing this paradox through the (potentially revolutionary and potentially limitless) process of deepening the criticism of our conceptions of the world. This is what Gramsci means when he defines philosophy as criticism of one's conception of the world: Marxism is a means to enact and *achieve* this critical labour.¹³ Thus Gramsci's 'conception of the world' functions (perhaps paradoxically) in the prison notebooks as both an analytical/descriptive and political/normative concept. We should not rush to resolve this complexity by formulaically reducing it to ideology or practice.

§3

Gramsci defines criticism as working out one's conception of the world. This is his interpretation of Marxism. So far, so good. Yet why are these conceptions of the *world*? Why doesn't Gramsci simply treat 'the world' as given, as the basis of Marxist philosophy? In other words, why not presume that 'the world' = the real world = matter? This was, after all, the path taken by most orthodox Marxists during this period (who called themselves 'dialectical materialists' after Engels). Alternatively, why doesn't he leave out 'the world' and simply problematise 'conception' itself, i.e. consciousness? Or again, why not 'conceptions of X', where X = humanity, knowledge, value, class, will, history, power, or morality? Any one of these could plausibly serve as a basis for Marxism. In short: *why* is 'conceptions of the world' so central to Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*? And what does this mean for geographers?

I claim that by grounding his approach to philosophy in the question of the conception of the *world*, Gramsci prioritises ontology (over epistemology, political philosophy, ethics and aesthetics) in a very particular way. With 'conceptions of the world', Gramsci opens a path to a non-essentialist Marxist account of being-in-the-world, one that is radically non-essentialist with respect to both matter and humanity – and therefore a fundamental critique of both liberal humanism and dialectical materialism. This is suggested by the way he

treats 'world'. In the expression 'conceptions of the world', the 'world' is *not* an object. Nor does 'world' mean 'nature' here. Nor does the 'world' mean Earth or the planet. The 'world' in Gramsci's 'conception of the world' means something closer to that which we are a part of, that makes us what we are, and yet resists our labour to achieve critical consciousness, to become other. Gramsci's equation of Marxism with the transformation of 'conceptions of the world' is no mere appeal to think differently. Rather he is insisting on the fundamental priority of the labour of consciousness to forge itself in the world. Mooring his analysis in the perpetual conflict between distinct 'conceptions of the world' allows Gramsci to ground Marxist thought in worldly relations. In 1934, Heidegger wrote: 'Being as a whole, as it rules through and rules around us, the ruling wholeness of the whole, is the world' (2009 [1934], 140). In this light, we could say that Gramsci also asks us to grasp being as the wholeness of the world – as a way to realise communism.

One way to appreciate the implications of his emphasis on 'conceptions of the world' is to contrast this with two related but distinct concepts: common sense and ideology. Gramsci uses these concepts not infrequently in his notebooks. Yet, they are nearly always treated in a highly qualified fashion, and typically in a derogatory sense. Space does not permit me to examine Gramsci's critique of common sense – a term that is almost always used negatively¹⁴ – but it has been discussed elsewhere (Green and Ives 2009; Liguori 2009; Robinson 2005; Thomas 2009). Unfortunately, but perhaps symptomatically, these excellent studies treat conceptions of the world as a secondary matter. This leads the authors to over-emphasise, in my view, the formation of what Green and Ives call a 'new common sense' (2009, 12) in communist strategy. Yet 'new common sense' is not an expression Gramsci used to describe Marxism, to my knowledge, and notwithstanding Gramsci's recognition of the importance of common sense to communist strategy, there can be no doubting that his Marxism presupposes the necessity of its essential transformation. Thus, to speak of 'new common sense' confuses Gramsci's argument. Moreover, it is introduced at the expense of the very concept Gramsci carefully specified for this purpose, i.e. conception of the world.

The relation between conceptions of the world and ideology is philosophically more substantial. Consider Gramsci's standard illustrations of

what he calls 'ideologies': imperialism, fascism, Christianity, free trade – but never *Marxism*. Indeed, Gramsci harshly criticises those Marxists who would reduce Marxism to ideology critique: he complains that Bukharin 'has remained trapped in Ideology; whereas the philosophy of praxis represents a distinct advance and historically is precisely in opposition to Ideology' (Q11§63; 1971, 376). By contrast, Gramsci *sought* Marxism to become a conception of the world, that is, it should strive to produce a kind of 'unity of the whole mass ... and strive to ensure that the higher intellectual stratum does not get separated from the lower' (Q11§12; 1971, 328). Such unity cannot be achieved by a mere 'ideology' but requires a coherent conception of the world.

This raises an important question. Given the centrality of 'ideology' to Marxism in the early 20th century, what motivated Gramsci to draw this distinction and criticise ideology? I contend that it was his desire to overcome the idea-matter distinction. Gramsci called for us to 'go beyond the traditional conceptions of "idealism" and "materialism"' (1996, 153), and he does so via 'conceptions of the world', which does not carry this idealist connotation.¹⁵ Gramsci intuitively recognised that however much one 'concretises' ideology (by speaking of its material qualities or social existence), it remains indubitably shaped by the metaphysics of the idea-matter distinction. Thus, in response to Mann's (2009) argument that we 'need a conception of ideology as historically co-constituted by both moments of hegemony Gramsci identified: the economic and the ethico-political' (2009, 338) I would reply that this is precisely what Gramsci offers us with 'conception of the world'.¹⁶

§4

At this point a word is needed on the relation between Heidegger and Gramsci. I respect that many readers may reject the proposition, but I contend that these thinkers may be read together, as would-be interlocutors, to examine conceptions of the world. Coincidentally, their radical approaches to being-in-the-world emerged around the same time – the mid-1920s to mid-1930s – in, we may conjecture, parallel responses to that distinctive political-philosophical moment (including the encounter between phenomenology and Marxism; the rise of fascism; and more). Notwithstanding

their different political orientations, their conclusions share more in common than we might expect. As I have mentioned, both emphasise the necessity of questioning being, human nature, and worldliness. Both begin their analysis of the fundamental ontological question by drawing a distinction between (in Heidegger's terms) the ontic and ontological. Both prioritise the constitutive quality of practical relations for being-in-the-world. And they demand us to question these relations in ways that do not lapse into empiricism.

The proximity and distance between these two thinkers may be calibrated by reference to their uses of 'conception of the world'. Consider this statement by Heidegger from a 1969 television interview:

Another question is to what extent we can speak of a change of society at all. The question of the demand for world change leads us back to Karl Marx's frequently quoted statement from his Theses on Feuerbach[:] ... 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.' When this statement is cited and when it is followed, it is overlooked that changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world. A conception of the world can only be won by adequately interpreting the world. (Heidegger 1969)

In emphasising the primacy of a change in 'conception of the world', Heidegger here repeats Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* almost verbatim. Heidegger's statement 'When [Marx's thesis] is cited and when it is followed, it is overlooked that changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world' could have been written in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*; Gramsci recognised that the Leninist strategy of seizing the state could not defeat capitalism in the West. Something else was needed: a struggle for communist hegemony.

Yet their difference is also plain. Gramsci did accept Heidegger's conclusion that 'a conception of the world can only be won by adequately interpreting the world', except that for Gramsci 'interpreting the world' always implies a political transformation of the ensemble of relations that shape us. As he writes in an important note, entitled 'What is Man?' (Q10II§54, discussed again later):

each one of us changes himself [...] to the extent that he changes and modifies the complex relations of which he is the hub. In this sense the real philosopher is, and cannot be other than, the politician, the active man who

modifies the environment, understanding by environment the ensemble of relations which each of us enters to take part in.

The primacy Gramsci gives in the *Prison Notebooks* to interpreting conceptions of the world through practical transformation is intended, I believe, to overcome the conservative interpretation of Heidegger's argument that 'changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world'. Gramsci, anticipating Heidegger, replies: 'Precisely so! But of course changing the world presupposes a change in the conception of the world! What else do you think Marx was talking about?'

§5

Suppose we accept Gramsci's contention that the task of Marxism is to criticise conceptions of the world. On what basis do we evaluate these distinct conceptions? How does a Gramscian know what makes for a strong or weak conception of the world?

Gramsci offers three answers in the *Prison Notebooks*. We have already seen the first, *coherence*: 'Criticizing one's conception of the world means ... to make it coherent and unified' (Q11§12; 1957, 59). Relative coherence measures the self-consistency, unity and cohesiveness of a conception of the world.

Gramsci's second standard is *historicism*. For Gramsci, a conception of the world will be strong to the extent that it is historicised, i.e. integral to its historical conditions of becoming and able to consciously account for these. Gramsci frequently represents the intervention of Marxism into the history of philosophy as the historicising of thought such that it may become an integral (meaning here theoretical + practical) conception of the world. This is perhaps clearest in his note on "'Creative" philosophy':

Until classical German philosophy, philosophy was conceived as a receptive, or at the most an ordering activity, i.e. as knowledge of a mechanism that functioned objectively outside man. Classical German philosophy introduced the concept of 'creativity' of thought, but in an idealistic and speculative sense. It seems that the philosophy of praxis alone has been able to take philosophy a step forward, basing itself on classical German philosophy but avoiding any tendency towards solipsism, and *historicizing thought in that it assumes it in the form of a conception of the world ... and diffused in such a way as to convert*

itself into an active norm of conduct. ((Q11§59) 1971, 346; emphasis added)

The third standard is *self-sufficiency*. By this I refer to Gramsci's argument that conceptions of the world should be evaluated for their capacity for integrating other conceptions of the world. Here Gramsci asks us to evaluate the precise degree to which a conception of the world is historically responsible to the 'collective life' from which it is derived. In this manner, each conception of the world should be judged for its capacity to represent and ultimately transform the world of the very social group from which it derives. Gramsci explains:

A prime criterion for judging ... conceptions of the world ... is the following: can the conception of the world ... in question be conceived of as 'isolated', 'independent', bearing entire responsibility for the collective life? Or is that impossible, and must it be conceived of as 'integration' [*'integrazione'*] or perfecting of – or counterweight to – another conception of the world...? ((Q15§6) 1971, 157; 1975, 1759–61)

Thus, a conception of the world should be capable of a high degree of self-determination, must have the capacity to serve as an organic whole within which other fragmentary conceptions are integrated. One model is Catholicism, with its capacity to absorb, or integrate, distinct religious practices into its conception of the world.¹⁷

Taken together, Gramsci's three standards can help us evaluate the relative strengths and capacities of distinct conceptions of the world. The point, Gramsci insists, is for Marxists to struggle to make communism more effective – in this triple sense – as a conception of the world. Every conception has effects, but all are partial. For a conception of the world to achieve hegemony literally means that it is a *leading conception* of the world, and therefore world-shaping. Gramsci's model here is, indubitably, the world-shaping thought and practice of Marx and Lenin:

Surely what Marx wanted to indicate was the historical function of his philosophy...? With Ilich [Lenin] this really came about in a particular territory. I have referred elsewhere to the philosophical importance of the concept and the fact of hegemony, for which Ilich is responsible. Hegemony realized means the real critique of a philosophy, its real dialectic. Compare here what Graziadei writes in the introduction to *Prezzo e sopraprezzo*: he puts forward Marx as a unit in a series of great men of science. Fundamental error: *none of the others has produced an*

original and integral conception of the world. Marx initiates intellectually an historical epoch which will last in all probability for centuries, that is, until the disappearance of political society and the coining of a regulated society. (Q7§33; 1971, 381; emphasis added)

The implication is clear: Marx alone 'produced an original and integral conception of the world', albeit one that was not realised until the 1917 revolution. His accomplishment was to produce a new conception of the world with potentially profound coherence.

Gramsci's emphasis on 'conceptions of the world' thus underscores his intellectual debts to Marx and to Lenin. But it also signals a concomitant shift in communist strategy away from Leninism. How so? On one hand, 'conceptions of the world' emphasises the central lesson that Gramsci took from Lenin, i.e. that revolutionary leadership is fundamental to communist revolution because *leaders must produce a new conception of the world.* Gramsci places enormous emphasis in the prison notebooks on the production of such leadership (even defining hegemony as 'moral and intellectual leadership'). Gramsci solders a strong connection to 'conceptions of the world' on just this hinge-point. In what may be his earliest use of the expression, Gramsci summarises the failure of Italian communism as the failure of its leaders (himself included) to produce an integral and coherent conception of the world:

[I]t is also necessary to say that we, the working class ... *have a conception of the world which transcends all religions and all philosophies* born hitherto on the terrain of class-divided society. Unfortunately ... *we do not have that conception*, and this is the reason for all these theoretical errors, which also have their reflection in practice and have so far led us to defeat and to fascist oppression. (1978 [1923]; emphasis added)

The Italian communists failed where Lenin succeeded: in producing a hegemonic conception of the world. Gramsci's concept represents, in this sense, a monument to Lenin; Leninism is his model conception of the world.

And yet, with 'conceptions of the world' there is a profound shift away from Lenin. The concept is an implicit critique of Lenin's empirio-criticism (1972 [1908]) and an explicit critique of all the elements of teleological and mechanistic thinking that plagued the Second and Third International. Remember that Gramsci's use of 'conceptions of the world' become more common in his prison

ruminations on the failure of the Italian communists. Reflecting upon the failures of Marxism in 'the West' – i.e. outside of Lenin's circumstances – Gramsci concluded that it would not be enough for the proletariat to seize the state, since the state was no mere thing, but an ensemble of social relations that are woven through the entire fabric of society. From this well-known point he leapt to the conclusion (repeated, we have already seen, by Harvey) that communism requires a new conception of the world. Thus, Marxist criticism means criticising every existing conception of the world, Marxism included. For Gramsci, Marxism necessarily works from a contradictory position, insofar as Marxists must interpret the world upon a perpetually unsettled foundation of 'conceptions of the world'. As a critique of metaphysics, Marxism has a responsibility to bracket every 'truth' – even the truth represented by Lenin. Gramsci writes:

If the philosophy of praxis affirms theoretically every 'truth' believed to be eternal and absolute has had practical origins and has represented a 'provisional' value (*historicity of every conception of the world and of life*), it is still very difficult to make people grasp 'practically' that such an interpretation is valid also for the philosophy of praxis itself, without in so doing shaking the convictions that are necessary for action. (Q11§62; 1971, 406; emphasis added)

Yet shake those convictions it must. This implies producing effective, integral Marxist conceptions of the world – as well as the concomitant convictions toward action.

§6

Allow me to restate my central claims. 'Conceptions of the world' is one of the threads that tie Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* together. With this concept, Gramsci asks us to see communism as a fundamental questioning of one's being-in-the-world and one's relation to the other. This thinking emerges out of his radical return to Marx in prison to theorise the relations between capitalism, social change, and the existential experience of space and time, which begins to explain the attractiveness of his thought to many radical geographers. I think we can attribute much of the attention to Gramsci's examination of the relationship between nature and society (see especially Mann 2009) to the original way that he problematises the naturalness of humanity's being-in-the-world.¹⁸ Because of this

interest, at this point in my analysis it will be useful to examine how Gramsci theorises the relations between *humanity* and *worldliness*. To do so requires us to consider his critique of religious humanism, which will also allow us to reexamine the Gramsci–Heidegger relation.

One of Gramsci's key insights lies in his characterisation of Marxism as 'philosophy of praxis' (Thomas 2009). Simply put, this means that Marxism is philosophical activity grounded in worldly affairs, a radical philosophy of practical human activity. By centring philosophy on praxis, Marx and Gramsci after him cannot but oppose the humanist abstractions taught by the monotheisms (and taken up by liberalism). As Marx explains in his 1843 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:

Man is the world of man – state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, ... its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. (Marx 1970 [1843])

Gramsci, following Marx, argues that communism must displace the religious conceptions of 'man'. This is why any attempt to understand Gramsci's (or Marx's) conceptions of the world must consider their criticism of religion.

Arguably the key note of the *Prison Notebooks* on this theme is Q10§54, entitled, 'What is man?', a brilliant, concise statement on the nature of humanity.¹⁹ Gramsci begins by observing that the question 'What is man?' is 'the primary and principal question that philosophy asks' (1971, 351).²⁰ Gramsci responds to this problem by immediately rebutting any attempt to look for a definition of 'humanity' in the existence of any individual: 'But, we are not interested in what every "individual man" is.' This is because (to draw on Heidegger's key distinction from *Being and Time*) we cannot answer the ontological question (what is man/being?) by merely looking at a human being ontically.²¹ We must instead establish some means to query humanity ontologically. And this is exactly what Gramsci, in a series of lapidary questions, proceeds to do:

Reflecting on it, we can see that in putting the question 'What is man?' what we mean is: what can man become? That is, can man dominate his own destiny, can he 'make himself', can he create his own life [*dominare il proprio destino, può 'farsi', può crearsi una vita*] (1971, 351)

Gramsci answers these questions in two ways. First, he defines 'man' as 'the process of his actions' (Q10§54; 1971, 351). Narrowly interpreted, this means that humanity is *praxis*, nature in its practical form as living labour. But Gramsci stresses that this should be conceptualised not so much as a statement about the work of 'man' upon 'the world', but rather about how we *make ourselves* as beings of the world: 'we want to know', Gramsci writes,

what we are and what we can become; whether we really are, and if so to what extent, 'makers of our own selves', of our life and of our destiny. And we want to know this 'today', in the given conditions of today, the conditions of our daily life... (1971, 351)

Gramsci claims that the result of this demand is a conception of the world. In other words, the 'origin' of every conception of the world lies in questioning, by actual human beings, about our lives, our world, and so on. Gramsci affirms the universality of this questioning as a potential source of transcendence, while also criticising metaphysics and lamenting the general weakness of popular philosophical thought. For unfortunately, this questioning is typically short-circuited by religion – and specifically by Catholicism in the Italy of the 1930s, which provided the dominant answers to these questions (and making it fundamental to fascist hegemony). Thus he writes:

when we ask ourselves, 'what is man?', what importance do his will and his concrete activity have in creating himself and the life he lives? what we mean is: *is Catholicism a correct conception of the world...?* (1971, 351; emphasis added)

For Gramsci, of course, it is not. But that is not all. It is not so simple for a Marxist to 'prove' that Catholicism is an incorrect conception of the world. First of all, as we have seen, conceptions of the world are not simply right or wrong; they are differentially coherent, historicised and integrated. Second, Gramsci knows that Catholics would reply to an argument that tried to show the 'incorrectness' of Catholicism by observing that 'no other conception [of the world] is followed punctiliously

either', and, Gramsci adds, 'they would be right. But all this shows is that there does not exist, historically, a way of seeing things and of acting which is equal for all men, no more no less.' This is why we cannot answer the question 'what is man?' by discovering what any 'individual man' is. There is no essence, no singularity, with which to answer this question.

I noted earlier that Gramsci offered two distinct answers to the question, 'What is man?' First, he defines 'man' via the process of his action, or *praxis*. His second answer is to define humanity *relationally*. This is why it is impossible to understand humanity on the basis of a study, however exhaustive, of an individual. Gramsci argues that 'man' must be examined on three horizons: the individual; the relations with others; and the relations with nature. This inherent relationality of 'man' binds each of these three dimensions to the others. He writes:

[A]ll hitherto existing philosophies [before Marxism] ... reproduce this position of Catholicism, that they conceive of man as an individual.... It is on this point that it is necessary to reform the concept of man. It means that one must conceive of man as a series of active relationships (a process) in which individuality ... is not ... the only element to be taken into account. The humanity which is reflected in each individual is composed of ... 1. the individual; 2. other men; 3. the natural world. (Q10§54; 1971, 352)

Two things should be stressed about this critique of the conventional conception of humanity as a mass of individuals. First, Gramsci proposes that each individual is 'composed of ... other men'. Thus the *other* is constitutive for Gramsci (this is the opening to a postcolonial or transmodern Gramsci). Second: humanity is 'composed of ... the natural world'. Humanity *is* world. To recapitulate: Gramsci is trying to awaken in us a way of conceptualising being-in-the-world that displaces essentialism and materialism. Balibar's comments on Marx may be repeated here *apropos* Gramsci:

To say [as Marx does], 'in its effective reality' (*in seiner Wirklichkeit*), the human essence is the ensemble of social relations is clearly not to *reject* the question. But it is to attempt radically to *displace* the way in which it has until now been understood, not only where 'man' is concerned, but also as regards 'essence'. (2007 [1993], 29)

To put it mildly, the question of being also preoccupied Martin Heidegger in the late 1920s and

1930s. During the summer of 1934 – perhaps during the very months when Gramsci penned 'What is man?'²² – Heidegger taught a summer seminar, ostensibly on logic and language but better understood as a pathway into the question of being. In this seminar, Heidegger at one point arrives at the question as to why the past has a 'self-evident preeminence in the characterization of history' (space does not permit me to elaborate upon the course of the questioning that leads him to this problem, but my reason for picking up here will be clear). Reflecting upon this question, Heidegger characteristically subdivides it into two parts. First, he writes, this question should be taken to mean: 'Why has the past preeminence for us [...] in the characterization of that which once was, over that which we name *beingness*?' (§20; 2009 [1934], 87). In other words, he asks why our philosophical tradition has prioritised the *past as past* for conceptualising present being.²³ Briefly sketching a reply to this question, Heidegger offers two concise answers. The first is 'the influence and the dominance of the Christian world-conception [*Weltauffassung*]', and the second is the 'kind and direction of the first decisive philosophical thinking about time', i.e. Aristotle's *Physics*, Book 4. Elaborating on his first answer, Heidegger writes:

For the Christian world-conception [*Weltauffassung*], the proper being is God as that which is uncreated, eternal. That which we call 'the world' [*Welt*] is created from out of him. With the world and, simultaneously with it, time is created.... All that which has been created is that which is transient. So, transience is equated with temporality: that which is temporal is that which is transient, that which goes by. That is why everything is determined by time, that we experience the human being itself, situated in time, in advance as transient. (§20; 2009b [1934], 87–8)

At the risk of stating the obvious, this essentially restates Gramsci's commentary on the Catholic conception of the world in 'What is man?', which was written at almost the same time, and likewise in response to the task of thinking through the question of being. Like Heidegger, Gramsci attributes enormous influence in popular thought to the Christian conception of the world, and saw in Catholicism the basis for the conception of the world of the Italian subaltern social classes.

Many geographers have an intuition that Gramsci was a radical and Heidegger a conservative thinker, but as their analysis of the Christian

conception of the world suggests, they are not opposites. This recognition is to be welcomed. In a recent polemic, Slovenian Žižek argues that the time has come to confront the idea that Heidegger's politics in the early 1930s should keep us from studying his philosophy. Indeed, Žižek claims that 'Heidegger was right in his doubt about liberal democracy; what he refused to consider was a radical leftist engagement' (2008, 121):

Heidegger ... was not 'totally wrong' – the tragedy is that he was *almost right*, deploying a structure of a revolutionary act and then distorting it by giving it a fascist twist. Heidegger was closest to the truth precisely where he erred most, in his writings from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s. Our task thus is to *repeat* Heidegger and retrieve this lost dimension/potential of his thought. (2008, 139)

If we are to take up Žižek's suggestion and 'repeat Heidegger' today – and I think we should – then we will find a crucial resource in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. More precisely, to imagine what it might look like to read Heidegger qua communist, we could do no better than reconsider the figure of 'conception of the world' in these texts.

§7

What is at stake in reading Gramsci's notes on 'conceptions of the world' today? No doubt our interest in Gramsci today stems partly from the challenges and opportunities posed to Marxist theory by the collapse of actually existing socialism. We should revisit Gramsci's famous remark that in Russia, 'the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relationship between the State and civil society' (Q7§16; 1971, 238). By conquering the Russian state – momentarily weakened by war – the Bolsheviks won the revolution. Yet this was impossible in Italy because civil society supported the state. Gramsci recognised that Marxists in the West could not rely on a direct assault of the state: they must shift from a war of manoeuvre to a war of position. Commenting on Gramsci's analysis, Kojin Karatani writes:

A mature civil society is established only where the wedding of Capital-Nation-State is well established. In Italy, fascists smashed the Leninist struggle that was led by Gramsci and centered on the occupation of factories. Its weakness was due to its reliance on nationalism. Meanwhile, in Russia, where the wedding of Capital-

Nation-State had not been completed, wars were fought on behalf of the tsar himself and not for the nation; therefore, the socialist revolution had been able to, or had to, resort to nationalism. (2003, 280)

Karatani further argues that Gramsci's analysis of hegemony, with its emphasis on the state and civil society, fails to account for the trinity of Capital-Nation-State and the way that nationalism in particular has proved to be the durable source of resilience for capitalist states. I agree with this. Saccarelli (2008) demands that we consider Gramsci's relation to Stalinism. Following Karatani, we could rewrite Gramsci's famous lines thus: in Russia under Stalin, nation and state were strengthened and became everything; Capital was defeated, but nation and state wreaked their own violence on subaltern social groups. Whether this particular interpretation is correct or not, it underscores the value of Gramsci's call for us to grasp – and to grasp 'practically' – the historicity of Marxism.

In the wake of the collapse of actually existing socialism, and in the midst of the greatest crisis in global capitalism since Gramsci's passing, communists face the urgent task of producing a new, integral conception of the world. I write 'communist', but here we could substitute 'Gramscian'. For to follow Gramsci's example means this: to struggle to produce a new, integral conception of the world – no more, no less.

In one of his earliest letters, written in January 1927, Gramsci wrote to his sister-in-law Tania, asking her not to worry about him because he was able to keep his mind occupied in the prison:

Dearest Tania, ... I assure you that I'm very well and that my existence runs along excellently. I've received many books from Milan and from this point of view too I'm well taken care of. I can read and study. What's more, we've organized a school of general culture. I teach history and geography.... [P]lease don't worry.... I can still study and keep usefully occupied. ... So you can put your mind at rest.²⁴

Upon imprisonment, Gramsci's first practical act was to organise lessons on geography and history. He was labouring to produce a new conception of the world.

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Notes

- 1 Consider four recent excellent studies published in English: Ives (2004), Morton (2007), Saccarelli (2008) and Thomas (2009).
- 2 Guido Liguori discusses this concept in a subsection in *Sentieri gramsciani* (2006), but my attempts to locate this book have been fruitless. 'Conceptions of the world' is taken up briefly by Finocchiaro (1988), Robinson (2005), Liguori (2009), and Green and Ives (2009), albeit only on the margins of their studies. The most substantial recent study to examine the concept is Thomas (2009).
- 3 I am not accusing Harvey of failing to cite Gramsci and I agree with his essay's central argument. Yet one critical comment is due. Harvey consistently characterises 'conceptions of the world' as 'mental'. Yet as Gramsci insists, conceptions of the world are not solely in our minds; they are embodied and lived. Harvey's essay awkwardly refers to 'mental conceptions of the world' three times before explaining that they are material too:
Marx, while not in any way inclined to embrace philosophical idealism, held that ideas are a material force in history. Mental conceptions constitute, after all, one of the seven moments in his general theory of co-revolutionary change. (2009, np; compare Harvey 2010, 122–3)
Harvey puts his finger here on a lingering tension in the Marxist tradition; most Marxists profess to be materialists, yet credit ideas with material force. One way of explaining the value of Gramsci's 'conception of the world' is that it overcomes the relatively formulaic way of framing the problem we find in Harvey's essay. (See also note 7.)
- 4 Gramsci's notes make it clear that 'conceptions of the world' is a term developed by Croce and also discussed by Gentile (cf. Q10II§1). For instance, Gramsci complains that for Croce, 'a religion is any conception

of the world that puts itself forward as an ethic' [Q10I§10]. I suspect Gentile and Gramsci adapted the term from Croce (my suspicion was seconded by Maurice Finocchiaro; 2009 personal communication). Yet whether or not Croce used the concept is not critical, because Gramsci developed his own, original, nuanced uses of it, much like he did with Marx's 'philosophy of praxis' and Lenin's 'hegemony'.

- 5 I adopt this term, 'being-in-the-world', from Part One, Division One, Section II of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996 [1927], §12–13). This concept, which emerges from Heidegger's attempt to produce a non-Cartesian conception of the worldly character of being and thought, defies simple definition. The status of 'world' is a fundamental and constant matter in Heidegger's texts, dating at least from 1919, where he argues that an environmental milieu 'does not consist just of things, objects that are then additionally conceived as meaning such and such; rather, the meaningful is what is primary... Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, it all has the character of world, "it worlds" [*es weltet*]'. (2009a [1919], 35)

His attempt to explain the character of this 'worlding' is central to *Being and Time* (1996 [1927]), where Heidegger examines the question of being through an analysis of Da-sein's fundamental ontology. In §12–13 Heidegger examines the 'correct point of departure of the analytic of Da-sein', i.e. 'that constitution of being which we call *being-in-the-world*' (1996 [1927], 49). This is a 'unified phenomenon' (1996 [1927], 49) that Heidegger suggests we examine by asking about how Da-sein encounters the world. But this raises a problem. Heidegger proposes that we cannot understand this simply by asserting the existence of beings that are encountered, pre-phenomenologically, as objectively present 'within the world'. For Heidegger, this would only lead to an 'ontic description of inner-worldly beings', i.e. a mere description of perceived objective things. What is needed instead is 'the ontological interpretation of the being' (p. 60) of inner-worldly beings (as opposed to what Heidegger calls merely 'ontic' interpretations). But Da-sein is not simply located within the world (understood as an object, i.e. ontically). So how to proceed? Heidegger argues that any conception of 'a world' presupposes a more general conception of the 'worldliness of the world', that is, of that which makes 'a world' what it is. Yet the difficulty in grasping this, Heidegger contends, has been skipped over by modern Western philosophy, which has cast the problem 'in terms of nature' – but 'nature can never render *worldliness* intelligible' (p. 61). Instead of starting with nature (or the intuitive notion of the objective existence of 'the real world'), Heidegger examines the worldliness of the immediately surrounding world, 'the closest

world of everyday Da-sein', which is 'always already 'there' in all things at hand' (p. 77). Heidegger contends that worldliness emerges from the practical manner in which things are at-hand for Da-sein. These 'factual entanglements' arise from practical connections with the things that surround us and have a certain use for production, shelter and pleasure. Da-sein's spatiality is thus constituted through 'factically entangled existing' (p. 336) with beings and manifested as being-in-the-world. In sum: being-in-the-world is where we find Da-sein.

- 6 In a criticism of an earlier version of this paper, Maurice Finocchiaro explains that he has reservations about [the] formulation of the phrase 'conceptions of the world' in the plural. ... [T]he plural has no basis in the Gramscian texts. ... [A]lthough this term can and does occur in the grammatical plural, I see no special significance to this plurality other than the usually grammatical convention about referring to more than one thing.

Finocchiaro gives as a counter-example Gramsci's analysis of 'relations of forces': these *must* be pluralised because Gramsci examines things which are essentially multiple. Finocchiaro contends that this is not the case with Gramsci's analysis of conception of the world. I take Finocchiaro's criticism to heart but I am not convinced. On one hand, I agree that Gramsci's analysis of conception of the world implies that for a given time and place, there is only one prevailing hegemonic condition with its corresponding conception of the world. Yet, Gramsci frequently writes statements such as this: 'various philosophies and conceptions of the world exist and one always makes a choice between them' (Q11§12; 1957, 61). The thought that we could 'choose between' conceptions of the world seems to imply that they are inherently plural – though perhaps only *potentially*. In sum, I think Finocchiaro's criticism is fair, but should be directed at Gramsci's own wavering position on this question.

- 7 Though Gramsci emphasises the brain, the whole body is written into his notes on conceptions of the world. Consider Gramsci's discussion of the role of education in producing thinking, living people with critical conceptions of the world in his note on the 'Formation of Intellectuals' (Q12§1):

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world. (1971, 9)

The material basis of an integral conception of the world is therefore 'muscular-nervous effort', i.e. embodied living labour.

- 8 Gramsci (Q11§12; 1971, 324). Edward Said rightly complains in the introduction to *Orientalism* (1979, 25) that Hoare and Smith's 1971 edition of the *Prison Notebooks* does not include the subsequent sentence, 'Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.' Yet while Said refers to the Hoare and Smith text as 'the only available translation', he forgets that the first edited volume, by Marks (1957), includes this sentence (p. 59). On Said's debts to Gramsci's approach to geography, see Wainwright (2005, 2008).

- 9 Gramsci writes in Q11§12:

In the most immediate and relevant sense, one cannot be a philosopher, by which I mean have a critical and coherent conception of the world, without having a consciousness of its historicity, of the phase of development which it represents and of the fact that it contradicts other conceptions or elements of other conceptions. (1971, 324)

- 10 'Folklore should ... be studied as a "conception of the world and life" implicit to a large extent in determinate ... strata of society and in opposition ... to "official" conceptions of the world' (Gramsci Q27§1; 1985, 189).

- 11 Gramsci begins Q11§13 with a scathing critique of Bukharin, arguing that any effort to popularise Marxism must begin by transforming common sense, which is nothing but the uncritical conception of the world of the average mind:

A work like the *Popular Manual* ... should have taken as its starting point a critical analysis of the philosophy of common sense, which is the 'philosophy of non-philosophers', or in other words the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed. Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the 'folklore' of philosophy, and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which ... is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is. (Gramsci 1971, 419)

The corollary to this is that Marxism must give coherence and consequence to common sense, i.e. transform it into an *integral* conception of the world (see also Robinson 2005; Green and Ives 2009).

- 12 One of the principal ambiguities of Gramsci's 'conceptions of the world' concerns his theory of consciousness. The ambiguity can be ascertained in a fluctuation in Gramsci's treatment of the task of changing 'conceptions of the world'. At times it seems as if he sees this task as ontological (this is – if you would – the 'Heideggerian' Gramsci); at other times,

he seems to treat the transformation of conceptions of the world as the result of conscious labour (this is the 'Leninist' Gramsci). A reason for this ambiguity, I suggest, is the lack of an explicit theory of consciousness in the *Prison Notebooks*. In this paper I have tried to do justice to this fluctuation by not fixing it.

- 13 Henri Lefebvre, whose thought is deeply indebted to Marx and Heidegger, writes similarly in the conclusion of *De L'Etat IV*:

The world and the worldwide are also understood by Marx from the point of departure of philosophy, that is, from its overcoming. Philosophy makes itself world: it makes the world and the world is made through it. The world is produced to the precise extent that philosophy is realized and, realizing, becomes world. (1978, 277)

- 14 Robinson (2005, 470) notes that he finds 'only two passages (Gramsci 1971: 145, Q15§4; Gramsci 1995: 128, Q5§51) where Gramsci gives ... positive connotations to the term "common sense".'

- 15 Compare Harvey's 'mental conceptions of the world'; see note 3.

- 16 Robinson similarly notes that, for Gramsci,

Between the economic level and the level of elite and mobilisatory politics (the 'political-military' level), there is always the 'ethico-political' level of the formation, articulation and transformation of conceptions of the world. (2005, 472)

- 17 I am indebted here and in my discussion of coherence to Maurice Finocchiaro. In a commentary on an earlier version of this paper, Finocchiaro writes:

Gramsci talks of *integrazione* (i.e. integration), but with this word he means to convey a point which is the opposite of that of organic wholeness [as I had mistakenly interpreted it – JDW]. ... Gramsci is saying that a conception of the world is inadequate insofar as it needs to be integrated into or with another, i.e. insofar as it needs such 'integration...'. (2009, 8)

I concede this point. However, the matter is complex. With regard to the second standard, Gramsci seems in fact to be pointing to the fact that a powerful conception of the world may potentially serve as a kind of *totality*; for instance, the Catholic conception of the world provides a totalising system for incorporating morality, history, and so on. As Finocchiaro elaborates: To be linguistically faithful to Gramsci, one should use the term 'totalitarian', and speak of totalitarianism as a criterion of adequacy of conceptions of the world. Gramsci's term totalitarianism means pertaining to totality, i.e. self-sufficiency and universality. However, the use of the term totalitarian would be problematic, to say the least, because of its pejorative connotations.... So it might be best to speak simply of self-sufficiency or organic wholeness, and drop both the un-Gramscian 'integrity' and the Gramscian 'totalitari-

anism'.

I follow Finocchiaro's suggestion here.

- 18 On Gramsci's treatment of science as a privileged conception of the world, see Wainwright and Mercer (2009).

- 19 Note the gendered language typical of Gramsci. To avoid taxing my reader's patience I will not insert '[sic]' after each 'man' throughout this section. Gramsci writes that 'What is man?' is 'the primary and principal question that philosophy asks' (1971, 351). The dual meaning of 'man', as a referent to both 'humanity' and 'males', and the folding together of the two questions that the phrase poses as a result and their difference for Western philosophy, calls for feminist-deconstructive reading.

- 20 This note is found at pages 1343–6 of Gerratana's 1975 Italian edition of the prison notebooks; pages 76–81 of Marks' 1957 English translation; pages 351–7 of the 1971 Hoare and Smith's English translation; and pages 437–9 of Sacristán's 1980 Spanish translation. Each of these texts were consulted for this discussion of the note. The complexities of reading Gramsci's notebooks can be gleaned from the fact that the number of paragraphs that comprise 'What is man?' varies in each of these texts: Gerratana (3); Sacristán (6); Marks (12); Hoare and Smith (13). As the concordance tables at the IGS website note (International Gramsci Society 2010), the Hoare and Smith (1971) version of this note is forged from the unity of two different notes: Q10II§54 = 351–4 (up to 'every man is a man of science, etc.');

- Q7§35 = 354–7. Here I focus on Q10II§54.

- 21 The ontological–ontic distinction is drawn by Heidegger (1996 [1927], §3–4); see footnote 5.

- 22 The 1934 lecture course was given shortly after Heidegger's resignation of the rectorship of the University of Freiburg.

- 23 This problem – what we might call the ontological relationship between the past and the present – is a major theme in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci poses a similar question in the midst of his discussion of conception of the world in Q11§12 (cited earlier):

One's conception of the world is a response to certain specific problems posed by reality.... How is it possible to consider the present, and quite specific present, with a mode of thought elaborated for a past which is often remote and superseded?

- 24 Gramsci, letter of 3 January 1927 (Gramsci 1994, 60).

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