From Gramsci to the Theory of Essential Possessions: Politics, Culture and Hegemony in The 'The 45 Hungarian Knights'[1]

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Abstract

The Gramscian premise that culture is the main field of (re)production of domination and subordination as well as of the values that sustain inequalities and hierarchies is shared by many strands of political thinking, including the field of Cultural Studies. In Brazil, the concern with the complex intertwining of culture and politics has been object of reflection in various disciplines. In the field of political theory, this article draws attention to the thought of Oliveiros Ferreira contained in his book *The 45 Hungarian Knights*. The article presents and discusses the theory developed by the author, based on a particular reading of Gramsci. Thus, in the first section of this article we will show how Oliveiros Ferreira organizes the Gramscian thought (I). Next, we will expose the foundations of his remarkable "theory of essential possessions", which purposes to contribute towards a "theory of hegemony" inspired by Gramsci (II). It will enable us to present the important role of the theory of essential possessions in Oliveiros Ferreira's comprehension of the central Gramscian notions of civil society, political society, and state as well as his interpretation of the crisis of hegemony (III). Finally, we take up the question of the relationship between politics and culture in some of the exponents of the Cultural Studies, trying to point out the main differences between this strand of thought and the explanation offered by Oliveiros Ferreira for the same phenomenon.

Keywords

Brazilian political thought; political theory; hegemony; Oliveiros Ferreira; Cultural Studies; state.

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Introduction

The understanding that the cultural sphere is autonomous in relation to other spheres, such as the political or the economic arena, is a relatively recent manner of approaching social reality: although we can find its origins in earlier centuries, its establishment as a particular analytical field would not become consolidated until the end of the nineteenth century, when a new science, Anthropology, emerged as a curricular discipline. With the rise of a new field of human thought, accompanied by the advent of mass democracy in the United States and Europe, Political Science would gain new momentum in order to reflect upon some of its most distinctive subjects, among which the ancient questions of power and domination.

Born in Sardinia, Antonio Gramsci, who wrote during the dawn of the twentieth century, can be singled out as one of the political thinkers who sought to reformulate the conceptual apparatus available to political theory at the time. Gramsci (2001) defended that in order to adequately explain power, domination, and the state one would have to move beyond the economic and the political spheres. His argument in defense of the idea that the explanation for political obedience and domination under the rule of the state should be searched for in the domain of culture and ideological production (see Gramsci 2002) led the Sardinian's work to become a watershed, being enormously influential in the intellectual production of the twentieth century.

Among other significant references, the school of thought called Cultural Studies[2] would draw on Gramsci's theory, and also contributions from M. Foucault, as the starting point for the construction of a discipline. It was formed by a group of thinkers, as Marchart (2008: 34) clarifies, that adopted the notions of *culture*, *power*, and *identity* — the "magic triangle" — as some of the central issues of investigation. These social and political thinkers, despite their differences, share the perception that, in order to explain politics, one must take into account the notion of culture and its specific domain, which refers to values and the production of meanings and significations. The concept of culture in Cultural Studies thus serves as a prism to cast a gaze upon the world and the social conditions (Marchart, 2008: 21).

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In Brazil, Gramsci would also inspire works of the utmost importance produced by great intellectuals, such as Nelson Werneck Vianna, Carlos Nelson Coutinho, Francisco Weffort, and Marco Aurélio Nogueira, among other renowned authors. All of them would claim to be heirs of Gramsci and would carry out brilliant analyses of the Brazilian reality in light of the writings of Gramsci. In political theory, in particular, along names such as Marcos T. Del Roio, Gildo Marçal Brandão, Alvaro Bianchi Mendez and Miguel W. Chaia, stands out the piece by Oliveiros S. Ferreira, *The 45 Hungarian Knights*, due to the conceptual coherence as well as the originality of his argument. Building upon the Gramscian interpretation of the relationship between politics and culture, this text formulates the remarkable "theory of essential possessions."

In the same vein as authors linked to the Cultural Studies, Oliveiros Ferreira also sets out from the Gramscian thesis that a relevant fraction of the explanation for political obedience and domination was to be found in the domain of culture. It is curious to note that several of the issues debated by the Cultural Studies are similar to those discussed by Oliveiros Ferreira: the nature of power, the question of domination and resistance, hegemony, subalternity, the social reproduction of identities, etc. Also common to both is the Gramscian idea that identity is fixed and defined temporarily in the field of culture, in the form of struggles for hegemony. Culture would thus constitute the main domain in which hegemony, domination, subordination, and the values that sustain inequalities, as well as economic and status hierarchies, are (re)produced.

The similarities in terms of starting points, however, can lead to misinterpretations. As we shall see in greater detail, Oliveiros Ferreira aimed to explain how the cultural domain competes with the economic one in the (re)production of mechanisms of political domination and obedience. The project of the Cultural Studies, on its turn, as described by Stuart Hall (2005 [1996]: 396), one of the great figures of this strand and one of the co-founders of the CCCS, consists of a double attempt: on the one hand, it aims at determining the meaning of "the political" for the culture; and, on the other hand, it aims at defining the meaning of "the cultural" for the political. "I think that the question of the politics of culture or of the culture of politics is at the center of the Cultural Studies".

The differences become clearer as the categories used in the justifications and theoretical foundations offered by Oliveiros Ferreira for the complex interweaving of culture and politics are rendered explicit. Thus, in the first section of this article we will discuss the organization of the Gramscian thought according to Oliveiros Ferreira (I). Next, we will expose the foundations of his original "theory of essential possessions", which purposes to contribute towards a "theory of hegemony" inspired by Gramsci (II). It will enable us to show the important role of the theory of essential possessions in Oliveiros Ferreira's comprehension of the central notions of civil society, political society and state formulated by the Sardinian thinker, as well as his interpretation of how the crisis of hegemony unfolds (III). Last, we will return to the question of the relations between politics and culture in selected exponents of the Cultural Studies, trying to point out some of the main differences between this strand of thought and the explanation offered by Oliveiros Ferreira with regard to the same phenomenon.

I. Casting a gaze on Gramsci: the (re)construction of Oliveiros S. Ferreira

There is no doubt that the political theory of Oliveiros S. Ferreira is inscribed in the tradition of canonical Western political thought. From Machiavelli and Rousseau to Antonio Gramsci, alongside Trotsky and Barth, among others, Oliveiros Ferreira picks up

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classical elements and foundations, exploring and mobilizing them in his work, especially in *The 45 Hungarian Knights* [1982], with the intent of producing an analytical argument capable of dealing with the challenges of the times, marked as they were, especially in Latin America, by the ubiquity of authoritarian regimes of different stripes.

Already in the first pages of this text, Oliveiros Ferreira announces the register of his reflection, clearly delineating the theoretical strand he ascribes to: he hopes to understand, in this work, the question Jean-Jacques Rousseau had already made[3], namely, how can the "greatest number" (the vast swathe of the dispossessed) not only support the domination of restricted groups but also, first and foremost, act so as to "sustain the values and the social and political structures in which their subordination is evidenced — or, rather, how it can act to overcome these conditions, aiming to establish what it believes to be the kingdom of freedom. My aim is thus to understand the relationship between those in subordinated and those in commanding positions" (Ferreira, 1986: 5).

In what follows, a first important finding emerges: the fact that the masses are subordinated in the productive process and in the appropriation of the fruits of the culture does not allow us to conclude that they will necessarily erect barricades to destroy the extant order. There are elements in social reality that lead the masses to be "complicit" (even consciously so) in following those in commanding positions. And social structures are only maintained, as the author argues, because society (the greatest number) supports them. Therefore, explanation for the acceptance of the subordinate position by the greatest number is not to be found at the ground level of economic facts, but rather in the terrain of the struggle for hegemony, which involves political action. Here Ferreira (1986: 7) borrows from Barth the Hobbesian idea that political action is oriented by the notion of constant accumulation of power, which runs the gamut from "psychological influence to sanction by force."

In order to begin his theoretical construction, Oliveiros Ferreira explores, first, the notion of "hegemonic action", which he defines, distancing himself from Barth, as a *process* in which a movement in thought and life is judged (in the sense of a judicial procedure); but it is also, as Feuerbach would have it, a set of social activities that transform existing conditions, modifying, by doing so, itself and its agents, thus constituting a *praxis* that assumes the application of the will for the achievement of ends (see Ferreira, 1986: 9).

Yet, the end that guides human activity is the very maintenance or imposition of a unity of thought and of life (or a comprehensive worldview — *Weltanschauung*), a characteristic that defines hegemonic action. And the means to achieve this end, as he explains, in line with Barth, is the expansion of power. This initial "conceptual ordination" allows Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 9-10) to establish his notion of hegemony: hegemony is defined as the supremacy of one comprehensive worldview over another (or the supremacy of one form of conduct over another). It thus constitutes a privileged concept through which Political Science must try to grasp how the majority decided to serve the minority and how the greatest number of those subordinated can break the chains of domination and "make history."

As already noted, few political thinkers have devoted themselves to put into question the concept of hegemony in political theory more than Antonio Gramsci. The introduction of this notion by the Sardinian thinker, as Oliveiros Ferreira explains (1986: 10-11), responds to the need of differentiating the moment of violence from the moment of active acceptance of the dominating comprehensive worldview in a given historical

context. Barth teaches us that politics can be symbolized by a trihedron, composed of the three following planes: consensus and loyalty; sanctions; and authority and its attendant hierarchy. This conceptualization, advances Ferreira (1986: 11), makes it possible to characterize the three moments of political action without compromising its internal unity, and, at the same time, to "conceptualize hegemony as the supremacy of conducts in the plane of consensus, and not, as ordinarily seen, as the sum of consensus plus force."

This passage clearly unveils Ferreira's interpretation of the Gramscian concept of hegemony and establishes the theoretical arena he will oppose: those that, in his point of view, tend to confuse hegemony with the state itself, and, as a result, do not notice the theoretical and practical possibilities of the distinction made by the Sardinian thinker. Although Gramsci offers subsidies for this interpretation, as Oliveiros Ferreira admits, the work as a whole points a lot more clearly towards the affirmation that the concept more immediately translates the aspect of intellectual and moral direction capable of assuring the supremacy of a certain comprehensive worldview in detriment of others.

In order to support his reading, Oliveiros Ferreira closely and systematically scrutinizes the *Quaderni Del Carcere*, and from the outset tries to demonstrate the association (made by Gramsci in the *Quaderni* 19, 6, 8, and 12) between hegemony and "direction" and its expansion to the idea that it would constitute the "ethical content of the state." Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 12-16) then distinguishes basically the three senses in which the notion of *hegemony* is used by the Italian thinker: 1) as a complement of the theory of state-force (for example in the *Quaderno* 1); 2) as the aspect of intellectual and moral direction that manifests itself as a certain system of moral life (for example in the *Quaderni* 1, 6, 8, and 19); and 3) as the role of political life played mainly by political parties (for example in the *Quaderni* 5 and 6).

This interpretive move allows him to synthesize, based on Gramsci's own texts, the (re) definition of hegemony in the following terms: as the intellectual and moral direction *of the process* — or, in line with Gramsci, as the supremacy of one form of unity of thought and of life that is expressed in a comprehensive worldview. He thus proceeds stating that a social group will detain hegemony if it can make other groups accept their "way of living, thinking and acting" (1986: 16), using, to this end, the maximum of consensus and the minimum of force[4].

Having defined the terms of the issue, Oliveiros Ferreira returns to Rousseau's initial question concerning the domination of the strong over the weak, now in light of Lasswell and Kaplan, in order to argue that the division between those who dominate and those who are dominated is characterized by the possession of certain functions or qualities that society learned to value, even if they were introduced by those who in fact possess them (Rousseau), among which economic power (or property) is an important, but not sole, element. This perception entails the search for a response for two questions that are a consequence of this line of reasoning: 1) that of the foundations of hegemony; 2) that of the appearances that this foundation takes on the guise of (or the relationship between *being* and *seeming*).

In order to solve the first problem, Oliveiros Ferreira proposes that the notion of *political position* (or life-mode) — which is defined, according to the lessons of Rousseau and Lasswell and Kaplan, by the "values" associated to wealth, prestige, and authority — must be understood as the operating pattern of the foundation for the autonomy of the mode of thinking and acting. Thus, when political position is *high*, our author concludes (1986: 19), it is possible to extract the most out of the material and spiritual products of a given culture; when the political position is *low*, the opposite occurs.

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The notion of *political position*[5] is interesting as an analytical tool, he goes on to clarify, because it allows indicating the relevance of other social elements (in addition to the ownership of the means of production) in the elaboration of the fabric of social relations, besides permitting the comprehension of the notion of "class fraction". Yet it is also fundamental in another sense: the (re)introduction of the Hobbesian-Barthean notion that the first impulse of the political action is oriented towards the accumulation of power, supplying an additional explanation for the comprehension of how hegemony[6] (or the supremacy of one conduct over another) is constituted. "According to this line of reasoning, I would say that the unceasing and perpetual desire of individuals and social groups is always to move from a lower political position to a higher one, [an] objective social form of expressing the autonomy of individual conducts and of the collective values that ground them" (Ferreira, 1986: 30). Hence, it is important to underline that, in the examination of the actions that build hegemony, it is crucial to verify to which extent individual or group actions are aimed at achieving or maintaining a high political position.

However, as the notion of political position is not sufficient to explain the operation of hegemony or the cultural values considered primordial by the dominating groups, Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 36-37) then devotes himself to analyzing the field in which hegemony is *exercised*: following the footsteps of Gramsci, one can argue that the field in which hegemony is sustained is not that of economy but that of *politics* associated to that of *culture*. For it is in the field of culture that we find an answer to the question of why the greatest number is dominated and for the question of what is of the interest of the so-called "simple people" [*os simples*]. And for this same reason it is in the field of politics associated to the culture that we can find how *the unity of faith between a comprehensive worldview and the norm of conduct* operates. Hence the Gramscian distinction between "verbal" consciousness (subordinated) and "real" consciousness (autonomous) becomes relevant.

The consciousness of the world — which is a result of the situation of the human being in the world — stems from the actions people carry out upon nature and society, regardless of their political position. The adhesion of the greatest number to the reigning norms of moral and conduct, on its turn, is not a mechanic act — recalls Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 38), invoking one of the most prized subjects of modern social and political thought —, but rather an act of will, that becomes stronger with hegemony being exercised with greater intensity. Therefore, the existence of a comprehensive worldview that is autonomous and dominant (or hegemonic) suppose the existence, in global society, of a *system of common values* (or nuclear values) shared by the society as a whole, that requires, to a greater or lesser extent, the adhesion of individuals regardless of their political positions (despite class differences).

In order to improve his arguments, Oliveiros Ferreira seeks the help of sociological giants such as E. Durkheim, G. Gurvitch or H. Heller, with the intent of supporting his argument that this set of nuclear values shared by a society — upon which the adhesion of the "simple people" hinges — coexist with value systems specific to certain social groups, that is, it coexists with other different value systems. These nuclear values that exist in every culture (not to be confused with *all* the values that inspire the totality of social conducts) form a wide-ranging and inclusive "We," defines the author following Gurvitch, which overlays but also coexists with other "Wes" (included) in that society, which are the product of collective intuitions that differ from the nuclear ones, capturing values engendered in included social groups (see Ferreira, 1986: 46).

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This existence of inclusive values and its prevalence over included systems, claims the author (1986: 48) following H. Heller, account both for the moral cohesion of society and the form through which the group atop state power relates to the society in general. After all, values elaborated at the level of global society allow for the maintenance of consensus as well as the solidarity of the whole with each constituent part (and of the parts with the whole). Likewise, the existence of such values — permeating all groups and becoming an article of faith for some of them — is what will allow for the establishment of autonomous and heteronomous conducts[7]. In the terms used by the author:

> If these nuclear values did not exist or if they did not posses integrative force, juridical, civil and penal norms would hardly be able to sustain their empire — be effective and valid — for a long period of time over a territory in which groups and individuals had nothing to approximate them in the narrative of their common existence, except for the need of physical contact required by the struggle against need — when and if this necessity ever arises. When these general value systems no longer express themselves in the conducts of different groups, the links of solidarity among them tend to dilute, the interpenetration of consciousness transforms itself, and, to use once again the language of Rousseau, one faces a situation in which the relationship between the society at large and the particular societies is corrupted (Ferreira, 1986: 48).

After paving the conceptual path he intends to follow by articulating a coherent and systematic description of notions such as hegemonic action, political action, political position, class, autonomy, and values, Oliveiros Ferreira seeks to demonstrate the intertwinement between values and comprehensive worldviews (which allows him to elaborate the theory of essential possessions), so that he can, farther ahead, use this theoretical apparatus as the foundation of his interpretation of the notions of civil society, political society and state in Gramsci, and its relation to the concept of hegemony.

II. Hegemony and the theory of the four essential possessions: a fertile dialogue

The discussion concerning the idea of a comprehensive worldview and hegemony is perhaps the most original contribution of Oliveiros Ferreira's text. Based on a Gramscian reading, it goes beyond the formulations of his master. Resorting to Marx, Ferreira organizes the argument and grounds his "theory of the four essential possessions", an analytical procedure that allows him to argue that non-violent transformation is a superior form, based on the (re)production of hegemony, compared to the mere overtaking of the state apparatus. This theoretical elaboration allows him to formulate an "economy of value transformation" in detriment of the armed revolution — a theoretical position that aligned the ideas of an astute observer, thinker and political actor in a country that moved towards "slow, gradual, and unrestricted" change from an authoritarian regime to democracy, maintaining strong coherence with his political trajectory.

In order to weave together the strands of this narrative, Oliveiros Ferreira discusses the many meanings of the notions of comprehensive worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and philosophy in the work of Gramsci. He concludes that, in the Sardinian thinker's view, the philosophy of praxis is but a comprehensive worldview (one that brings together theory and practice) if the individual traits of the elaborated thinking entail the general traits of the thinking of the time (its "common sense"). In this sense, such philosophy of praxis must be necessarily capable of renovating common sense (see Ferreira, 1986: 56).

A comprehensive worldview, on its turn, "besides being the generic mode of reflection on the world's balance, is a system that organizes conducts" (Ferreira, 1986: 57).

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However, it is only possible to think of cultural manifestations as expression of the same comprehensive worldview when, as posited by Mannheim, there is a nexus of similitude in sense, which must be looked for not in *style* but rather in the *form* according to which expressive gestures are organized and so individual perceptions are translated concerning their relationship to the world, as argued by Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 57-58). This form in which the nexus of similitude in sense is found *symbolically* expresses a fundamental relationship in human interaction, namely, that of domination and subordination.

These constitutive forms of a comprehensive worldview, however, must not be sought for in all cultural manifestations of a collectivity: being the world vision both a generic mode of reflection on the balance of the world and a symbolical system of conducts organization, the author explains, the distinctive elements of a comprehensive worldview must be sought for in the *forms according to which norms of conduct are organized* in reference to the nuclear values of a given culture. And the nuclear values of a culture can be perceived basically as four forms of conducts, namely, religious, sexual, economic and political conducts. His justification:

> If I affirm values to be nuclear, it is because I believe human achievement relies on the systematic and integrative coherence of these conducts and the values that mold them, differing from others. Certainly, the choice expresses a generic idea of the human being: that the individual we must deal with in reality is made of flesh and bone, a person, as Miguel de Unamuno said in *El sentimiento trágico de la vida*, who is born, suffers, and, notwithstanding his desire not to die, dies, and that before being a rational animal is a being of affect and sentiment. It is this fundamental affectionate trait that, in different social formations, leads his life to center around the idea of death and how to organize during life his relationship to this strange world no traveler has returned from, and how to best make personal use, in his day-to-day travails, of his sexual partner. It is also this fundamental affectionate trait, associated to the need to survive and dominate in a world that seems to be coherent, that leads an individual made of flesh and bone relate in elementary or intuitive fashion to the realm of economy and of power, whose laws he does not understand and in relation to which he is an outsider, even though he may behave as if he were an insider and were in possession of them. Society and culture center themselves around these values and not others — proof, although this might be difficult to establish, can be found in the long human agony that aims at transforming Utopia into the real country and the concrete life of tomorrow, and Poetry (love and death) into the soothing remedy for the tragic sense of life and the revolt against death, abandonment and injustice. (Ferreira, 1986: 58)

In order to the set the foundations of his model, Oliveiros Ferreira will once again seek the assistance and the theoretical tenets found in *Class Struggle in France*, by Marx. The selection of these four domains of conducts is not haphazard, he argues, but originates in the Marxian observation concerning the motto of the Party of Order, summarized by Marx in four words: property, family, religion, and order (in other words: economy, sexuality, religion, and politics). Gramsci, although he did not articulate these ideas with these same words, justifies the author, confers these elements a relevant role in his work and acknowledges its influence in the configuration of a comprehensive worldview.

The forms assumed by the nuclear or essential values, goes on Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 59), can be perceived under the modes of appropriation (or possession and co-possession) and constitute valid criteria in characterizing how to feel, act, and think the world (or a comprehensive worldview). Thus, the forms according to which the four essential

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possessions are expressed — the possession of the souls, the sexual possession, the possession of surplus and the possession of power — make it possible to detect the degree of domination present in the relationship among people, varying according to the lesser or greater degree of fruition of the "possessed thing." There is a greater degree of domination when the "possession" is personal, restrictive and private; while the lesser degree of domination characterizes "co-possession," which occurs when the "possessed thing" is shared with others, being that in this scenario those in co-possession retain over each other the same mutual rights and obligations. Thus, the coherence and efficacy of a comprehensive worldview (the expression of the hegemony of the rulers) will be greater the more the comprehensive worldview of the "simple people" is expressed on the basis of the same organization of the forms established by those ruling.[8]

This line of reasoning allows the author to then state that *real hegemony* according to Gramsci (when there is a democratic relationship between rulers and those ruled) is the moment in the history of culture when the four forms of organization of the primal relations are compatible; the molecular transformations begin at the instant in which one of the forms starts to become incompatible with the others. This incompatibility is precisely what divides the "verbal" consciousness and allows the individual to question the validity of others forms and the coherence of the social whole, a move that can initiate the process of transformation of the reality. And given that the consciousness of domination is structured by the possessions to which we connect through our affection, this questioning will be all the more effective if it begins by the forms of affection (sex/family and religion, or body and soul) that populate the "ethics of everyday life." Once again, Oliveiros Ferreira refers to the Sardinian thinker:

> The long-lasting feature in the thought of Gramsci is that he established that the first moment of critical comprehension of the world does not occur through the consciousness of economic relations of domination (...). The effort he devotes in indicating the importance of transformations in the field of ethics is not only indicative of but also a confirmation that economic relations (...) *do not perform the same function from the perspective of individuals acting in society*. (Ferreira, 1986: 61 — emphasis added)

In Gramsci, Oliveiros Ferreira explains, the first moment of critical comprehension of the world often manifests itself through questions posed in the field of *ethics*: the reform of the comprehensive worldview is made possible, among others, through the introduction of changes in the domain of the *superstructure*. Thus, the masses will only overcome subordination when the "professionals" of the new political ideology succeed in introducing the elements of a new moral according to their comprehensive worldview, which can lead to the transformation of the contents of their "verbal," subordinated consciousness. Replacing one mode of organizing production for another will not suffice, as one learns from *Americanism and Fordism*, insists Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 63-65): *it is necessary to reorganize the essential possessions in a cosmovision which articulates the many domains of human experience*, from the emotional and sentimental to the rational and philosophical.

However, one must bear one point in mind: the relationship of the individual with the global society in which she/he is inserted is not immediate, but rather *mediated* by the inclusive social groups to which she/he belongs (family, neighborhood, church) and by those groups that integrate her/him through socialization (school, work, etc.). This leads the individual to reflect on the values of these groups, in the same way groups reflect on the values of society, adapting them to their needs. Since each group is defined by their political position in the global society, it is a result of the difference of positions

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that people and groups will have distinct manners of assimilating the general norm and conceiving the forms in which they manifest the possessions, becoming capable of translating the experience of life into the terms of collective representations.

Oliveiros Ferreira also reminds us (1986: 77) that the conflict of hegemony occurs precisely by the fact that collective representations of the society as a whole manifest themselves differently in individuals (given group differences). For this reason the conditions for the preservation of consensus as well as for social transformation must be sought not only in the way individuals combine and in the relationship between secondary social groups that are located between them and the global society, but also in the repetition and generalization of conservative or innovative conducts.

From this stems the idea that individuals can have as many perceptions of the reality as the number of groups they are involved with and in which they are integrated with more or less sympathy. This idea requires in turn: to ignore the emphasis stated so far on the search for similarities in the comprehensive worldviews on the basis of the symbolic forms in which the essential possessions are expressed; and to start seeking to understand how people move from the "life-experience", according to Dilthey, to collective representations and philosophy. A transition that the author explains as follows:

> When external conditions are favorable — when there is a coherence of the social system, that is, compatibility between the forms of the essential possessions; correspondence of institutional channels to the values to be respected, and harmony between the different roles, as well as between what the individual deems necessary for their valuation and what others require to recognize them, in sum, active sociability — the symbolic actions that result from the individual worldviews tend to converge towards a collective vision of the world in which the ideals and values of the included group are reflected, especially the way the group organizes the forms in which essential possessions are expressed. This *collective* and *partial* vision of the world is also a project in itself, in that the group is inscribed in the world as an active subject of History. This project does not result from a theoretical elaboration, *it is nothing but* a range of individual symbolic actions that converged into a collective proposal intended to maintain or change the defining conditions of *status* and the political positions of the group. (...) If I did not chance being misinterpreted, I would say that this collective project is not theoretical, it is *natural*, and that if it was theoretical it would be artificial in the sense that the theoretical expression, detached from life experience, is basically *denatured*. (1986: 79)

Thus, if life experience is what makes each individual represent the world in a particular way, the range of symbolic actions (group projects) reflects the way in which the group adheres to the world and sees itself in it, thereby producing the "common sense" of each social stratum. Common sense, in turn, continues Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 88) in light of Gramsci, is continually transformed, modified, and (re)adapted. Therefore, it is crucial for the analysis of hegemony whether the sense that the sender attributes to his/her messages is the same as the one attributed by the receptor. This means that, in order to be understood, the hegemonic core must mold itself not only to the repertoire of the "simple people" but also to their realm of thought. So ultimately, in the communication act, the greatest number is able to impose its discursive realm and way of thinking to the message. For this reason too the values that guide conducts in society, even if originated in dominant groups, must be sought in that set of symbolic systems that mirrors the forms that translate the essential possessions. For it is in the adherence of the "simple people" to the nuclear values that society finds the social equilibrium, in other words, the strength to keep its general symbolic systems and to make certain norms of conduct last (see Ferreira, 1986: 92).

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Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 101-102) delves deeper into the debate on the relationship of the "We" with the class — the inclusive "We" that encompasses the projects of different "We*s*" included — to show, in line with Halbwachs, that the political party (the modern prince) acts as " unifying zone " of a new comprehensive worldview, as the political expression of the kind of life, interests, and culture of the group. This requires the author (1986: 115) to enter the discussion concerning the distinction between class and party in Gramsci, which differs from that advanced by Marx, in order to further clarify his defense of the autonomy of the political in Gramsci's political theory. Such an examination leads him to conclude that hegemony (as the supremacy of conducts) responds to a *practice of the dialectic of organizations with simple people*, which is why it is necessary to analyze the relations between civil society, the hegemonic core (party), and the state.

With the explicit goal of understanding, in the realm of political action that aims at hegemony, the relationship between organization, social group, global society and the state, Oliveiros Ferreira focuses initially on the controversial issue of the relationship between the state and civil society, seeking to explain how and in which aspects they differ also in comparison with global society. To this end he refers to the *Quaderno* 6 (§ 24), in which Gramsci invokes Hegel to define how to employ the notion; following the German philosopher, Gramsci argues, according to Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 132), that the notion of civil society expresses the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the whole society, and may, in certain historical moments, even correspond to the ethical content of the state — as, for example, when a revolutionary party comes to power after establishing itself as "a homogeneous collective consciousness".

Civil society, as the state, is at once a concept and a reality. Civil society and the state may even coincide, as already mentioned, but also contradict themselves, each one operating according to a specific *legality*. The concept takes on different meanings in the work of Gramsci, as Oliveiros concedes and exposes (1986: 142), but the main one seems to be that civil society, not to be confused with the global society, is nothing more than global society *organized* under the hegemony of one party. It lies in the plane of *superstructure* (alongside political society), constituting both a methodological canon and a sociological *factum* (see 1986: 152). It is, within the superstructure, at once the realm of autonomy (or freedom) which is based on the individual as such and a pole antithetical to the state (which exists as a realm of authority and heteronomy).

In this sense, civil society is the (superstructural) plane where private organizations are to be found and in which the ruling classes as much as the subaltern ones *elaborate* their own comprehensive worldviews, which is why the dispute for hegemony occurs in civil society (and not in the state). So it is exactly in civil society that groups that aim at asserting hegemony should seek the exclusive dominion of the forms in which they express the four essential possessions (body, soul, surplus, and power) — a domain they will then confirm via the possession of the state apparatus (or political society). These Gramscian considerations, continues Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 161), lead to the definition of the state as the sum of political society and civil society — or hegemony armed with coercion.

Unlike global society, whose mode of reciprocal action and of relationship between groups are not characterized as a conscious will directed to an end, the form of constitution of the civil society is given by the consented and reflective fashion whereby its multiple segments become accustomed to living together. The formal distinction between global society and civil society arises, therefore, according to Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 163), from the fact that "the first, being as the second the set of selfish (particular) activities of

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the human being, cannot, by itself or by the dynamics of segmented interrelationships, become *a national and efficient organization* for the achievement of a project on the territory legally defined by the state" (emphasis added).

Therefore, the civil society, as a sociological *factum* due to the distinct form in which private activities agglutinate, can be defined as the global society with a project of destiny, which gives form to the relations between the different social groups and the structures in a cohesive manner; and which integrates and constraints the subordinated under the intellectual, cultural, and political orientation of the dominants. Civil society is too a political concept as well as a reality, continues the author (1986: 164), "since the necessary and sufficient condition of existence, in the Global Society, of a party with a project that is able to patch together distinct segments is fulfilled", and this party is able to maintain the old forms of appropriation or to formulate new ones that are accepted by all or by the majority.

The party (or organization) has the function, argues Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 172) in line with Gramsci's style, of patching together different social segments, playing the role of "unifying zone" (Halbwachs) endowed with an organizing, directional and pedagogical function. It is the most appropriate instrument to form leaders, and its "state spirit" reflects a comprehensive worldview that must reach the mass. But, though it must fight for the hearts and minds, the party, for Gramsci, recalls Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 176), is also actively coercive (since it fulfills in civil society the articulating function of the state in political society), constituting, by virtue of its discipline, a "school of state life" — or of submission to the positive law that the ruling elite elected as standards of moral conduct — and a "programmatic expression of a political and legal order."

Given the strategic importance of the political party (or the modern prince) in Gramsci, and his realization that it is the elite that organizes the mass in party, departing from a particular comprehensive worldview, sustains Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 180), it is important to acknowledge that the history of a country should be studied based on the comprehension of the *constitutive principle of the party* (along with its political action and its impact on the society). Thus Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 181) aims at showing that the parties are organized according to two constitutive principles that, in the process of seeking the direction of the conducts and in the phase of domination/coercion, will spread throughout the society in which they operate: the bureaucratic and the political principles (since deliberation is political before being democratic). And this is relevant to the extent that parties, aiming power, will occupy the state apparatus, and, through it, will lead the process of social change, adapting conducts and positive law to their comprehensive worldview and constitutive principle. This differentiation, concludes Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 187), entails that "the *bureaucratic* party will seek to organize social relations so that the sacredness of the tradition and the authority of the rulers will not be called into question; [while] the *political* party will make from the social *praxis* and from the Law that expresses, regulates, and directs it the translation of its principle."

III. Autonomy of the state, civil society, political society, and the crisis of hegemony: tying together loose strings

Now, if the party is for the civil society what the state is for the political society and its ultimate goal is the conquest of the state apparatus, one must then put the state into question. Thus Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 187-188) proceeds to an analysis of what the state is, how it is, in his view, historically and theoretically characterized, as it constitutes both a sociological *factum* (a fact of organization) and a normative order whose legitimacy is based on the

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observation of legal rules — a view that is the result of the need to understand the state as a subject of law and sovereignty. To explain its constitution, the author discusses at length its formation process going on to its consolidation as a sovereign state rendered autonomous in relation to the figure of the prince and the social groups (see Ferreira, 1986: 187-199).

This process of state autonomy in relation to the social groups and the prince has been concluded both in political practice and in legal theory, provokes Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 190), although we cannot say the same in relation to political science, which still insists on subordinating the state to the party (socialism) or reduces it, following the classical sociology, to a group of *sui generis* employees that is not deeply connected to the community it represents. So, the question is whether the state — which, as well-known, is originated in the complex social phenomenon of private property — "has its own legality or extracts it from the class that possesses the means of production; whether it is a complex organization or a fact of organization (...); if it can be reduced to the legal system, or if it can be confused with the government" (Ferreira, 1986: 191).

To these question, which are more rhetorical than theoretical, Oliveiros Ferreira answers by saying that the state is one of the facts of organization produced by the *social division of labor* (and not by the division of the society into classes, which is a parallel phenomenon), which is the reason why one social class cannot impose its legality upon it, even if, as Marx tells us, a class "in possession of 'political power' can use the illusory community to make its private interests appear as supposed universal interests" (1986: 192). One must take note that, since the legality of the state is a result of the social division of labor, which generates the functional differentiation between people (see 1986: 215), the state retains the virtue of transforming what is done in its name into valid standard for the society. Thus, unlike the civil society, which is only created if there is a hegemonic core, the state exists as a fact of organization, the author argues (1986: 199). However, in addition to being a social organization, the state is also characterized as an ideological and repressive apparatus, rooted in political society.

The political society, therefore, cannot also be confused with the state, insists Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 204), following Gramsci: it can be defined as a political organization (as opposed to the civil society) in which coaction (including armed coaction) is paramount and exerted by the bureaucracy which, becoming a caste, can be easily confused with the government. Just as the civil society, the political society is located in the superstructure; it constitutes a system of institutions (based on the constitution, the decision-making powers, and on the bureaucracy, and the parties) that may be established by an act of will of the ruling group. Its action relates to the phenomenon of the state (and not to the social phenomenon) and its operation, which can be achieved through law or force, shapes the ruling-coercive apparatus[9] — or "the state understood as ruling-coercive apparatus."

The state is characterized, therefore, in the Gramscian thought, both as a unit of decision and action (corresponding to a fact of organization) and as a privileged *locus* of political and hegemonic action, the author continues (1986: 205), since in the state social classes are politically actualized (once in the state, they become, as ruling class, unified), thus constituting the ultimate (political, economic, and social, or cultural) form in which a comprehensive worldview is (in act and action) expressed. Hence it is possible to say, in line with Gramsci, that the state is a cultural project, or rather that a certain state

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civilization "translates a given cultural project of domination that is always in constant transformation" (1986: 209), as far as the ruling group became the holder of power *in* the state (and not the holder of the power *of* the state).

Having established these terms, the next step is turning to the conditions under which the welding of the civil society and the political society occurs. Together, the former and the latter form the historical basis of the state and the basis of hegemony. And it is the comprehension of this welding process that allows us to understand both the crisis of hegemony and the affirmation of new forms of supremacy. To do this we must learn, first, that the welding of the civil society and the political society takes place when and if the ruling party of the process (hegemonic core) becomes, in the words of Heller, a "core of power" (princes and magistrates) and begins to exercise power *in* the state, organizing the political society from its position in the state and seeking to rationalize civil society in order to adapt it to the forms of appropriation of essential possessions that characterize its comprehensive worldview (see Ferreira, 1986: 210).

Because of its dual nature, the core of power (the elite that is distinguished from the party hegemonic core) should be able, among other things, to transform their collective representations into law and to mold the political institutions (law and education) to the projects elaborated by the class fractions, in addition to managing coaction. This means that there is a constant flow of people and ideas between the political society and the civil society, ensuring the welding (or the firmness of the basis of hegemony), which will depend on the degree of openness of the channels linking allied groups in the civil society to organizations in the political society. This leads to the understanding that civil society is the organizational realization of the global society; that it is by means of constitutional parties and the co-optation for the bureaucracy (civil and military) that the civil society is bound to the political society; and that the political society responds to the core of power, which, at last, is intimately bonded to the hegemonic core through the cultural project of the latter (see Ferreira, 1986: 212).

Bonapartism (or Caesarism), for Gramsci, is precisely the phenomenon that indicates the disruption of this balance: it occurs when the core of power is occupied by the bureaucracy (or part of it), a movement that decouples the core of power of the hegemonic core and renders the state autonomous. This phenomenon simply reflects the inability of a social group to make its comprehensive worldview *prevalent by consensus and valid by coaction* (or to establish the supremacy of certain conducts over others). In this case, there is the transformation of a state part (public force) into the core of power in the state, explains Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 218), which can only occur because of the absence of a party in the society that is able of organizing it and that detains a comprehensive worldview capable of formulating a new moral[10] (or of proposing new forms of appropriation of the essential possessions accepted by the society).

Detaining hegemony, thus summarizes Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 221), means "ensuring the intellectual and moral direction of the political-social process, or establishing the supremacy of a form of unity of thought and life which expresses itself in a comprehensive worldview." Thus, a group detains hegemony when it is able to establish conducts that are valid and binding for the other subordinated groups — that is, when it is able to make mandatory the respect of its forms of appropriation of essential possessions — and to expand the social space in which it operates, absorbing variant conducts and neutralizing the action of groups holding another comprehensive worldview.

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Similarly, hegemonic action aims at establishing the supremacy of a new comprehensive worldview. In this sense, the goal is to change and/or to enforce the will of individuals still subjected to the hegemony of other groups, requiring from them a "state spirit" according to the conducts prescribed by the group that is aspiring to assume the direction of the process[11]. It can be concluded from this proposition that hegemonic action refers to "invisible relations," in other words, to the social and moral realm in which individuals find their frames of reference. This allows us to see that, for Gramsci, hegemonic action lies in the social field in the broad sense (and not only in the political field), the realm in which comprehensive worldviews find their decision-making *locus*. Being hegemonic action the clash of antagonistic comprehensive worldviews, it seeks through a pedagogical relationship to create a new "collective human being", or to ensure the triumph of the old social type. It thus distinguishes itself from other social actions insofar as it has a clear purpose and goal and is the product of ruling groups that respond to the principle of the organization and act as organizers, in the sense of "molding culture to practical function" (see Ferreira, 1986: 230).

It is thus fundamental for the characterization of the hegemonic action that the hegemonic core responds to the condition of organizer of the culture as an educator, seeking to "transmit to the global society, despite differences of political views between groups and individuals and of the individual variants, the social type valid for a given period" (Ferreira, 1986: 232), which can be carried out through two main tools, education and law. If education is the institution that exerts coercion[12], thus integrating the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes, law, in turn, plays a similar role, albeit coactive, continues Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 259): in this case, courts function as instruments through which the pedagogical exercise of the rulers are imposed upon those ruled.

A relevant notion is therefore that the state, understood as "the cultural project of the ruling group of the process" (1986: 261), tends to create a certain type of civilization and of citizen, and, by means of law, imposes and eliminates (by coaction) social customs and habits, which is why the core of power in the state recognizes the influence of positive laws in establishing hegemony. The law, which for Gramsci is, in most cases, only derived from the state, as in legal positivism, appears often with the primary function of achieving the free and spontaneous conformity of the subaltern classes[13], in addition to constituting an important tool in maintaining or changing conducts (see Ferreira, 1986: 269).

Gramsci admits, in more than one passage, as Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 275) reminds us, that the legislator produces not only guidelines that should become standards of conduct for others, but also the instruments by which they will be imposed and enforced (that is, rendered positive law). This requires recognizing two great theoretical-practical moments of political action, which constitute different degrees of domination of the consciousness and conducts: 1) *direction*, the moment of the exercise of hegemony in its proper sense, in that the prevalence of a certain conduct is active, that is, it is derived from the emotional attachment of the "simple people" to the content of the informational values of the forms of appropriation of the essential possessions; and 2) *domination*, the political moment of enforcement, in which the prevalence of the conduct is passive, that is, it arises from the mere acceptance of the social rules and legal norms, when the values that condition them are respected out of fear of social/legal sanctions (see Ferreira, 1986: 277-278).

These two moments, direction and domination, will also determine the perspective that gives the direction of the process and of the conducts by the organizations: that of "Conservatism," dedicated to the "subversion of the will"; or that of "Insurgency", in which

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the "subversion of the reality" prevails (see Ferreira, 1986: 286). And the *organizers of the culture* are invited to prove their status as intellectuals (of the order or of the insurgency), demonstrating their ability to establish an intellectual, cultural, and political direction of the process, precisely in situations of self-subversion of the social reality, that is, of social change that is not voluntarily produced or directed.

When the moments of direction and domination coincide, it can be said that the hegemonic group, whether Conservative or Insurgent, controls the repressive apparatus that are essential to impose the conducts considered socially valid and can be sure that the positive norms will be actively accepted by the individuals. The adequate analysis of the conditions and of the social, cultural, and political context is thus of fundamental relevance for the evaluation of the type of war (maneuver, position, or usurpation) that will be waged in situations of sociopolitical change, and it depends on the determination of the degree of interpenetration of the "We" in which social organizations are constituted (see Ferreira, 1986: 300).

It is for this reason that, in war, the key is the (re)cognition of the terrain: understanding the organizations of the civil society, its possible gelatinous character, the degree of adhesion of individuals and groups to the values that are being combated etc. It is such knowledge that will permit the conduction of the maneuver: "Even if the will is present throughout the course of the hegemonic action, it cannot, however, overcome the limits imposed by the reality in transformation," notes the author (1986: 314), which is why it is ultimately necessary to look into the issue of the crisis of hegemony.

Where's the crisis of hegemony? is what Oliveiros Ferreira then wonders. The task of the political scientist is to ascertain, *sine ira et studio*, how domination is felt and under which conditions "the proposition of an insurgent group can impose itself upon that one in the Power, or, conversely, how can the intentions of social transformation be defeated by the rulers and reform movements be crushed in the heat of the battle or in the solitude of the prisons" (Ferreira, 1986: 315). The crisis of hegemony thus corresponds to an "inadequacy of the superstructures to new ideas, values, and symbols that appear in the deepest strata of the social life and that find groups that organize them into new forms of solidarity" (Ferreira, 1986: 319).

Thus, the first step toward the hegemonic crisis occurs at the moment of *distinction*[14], when the political society separates from the civil society, which leads to the weakening of the welding between the different life experiences of the subordinated (all tied together into a single view of life according to the comprehensive worldview that was intended to bind together the whole of society) and of the rulers.

The second step, the moment of *separation*, results from the deepening of the first step, explains Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 324-326), and occurs when a sufficient number of intellectuals is able to produce, by offering new mechanisms of interaction and organization, the fusion (or welding) of life experiences in a new range of symbolic actions. A process that allows an "active separation of the restless ones within the *greatest number*, and creates the elements of its own group consciousness."

Finally, the third step, the moment of *schism*, in which the parties break their solidarity with the social whole, is characterized by the transformation of these new ranges of symbolic actions into a structured comprehensive worldview in the form of the appropriation of the essential possessions and organized around functional parties with

a vision (or spirit) of the state, which will directly confront the ancient form of hegemonic domination (or comprehensive worldview), with the aim of destroying it[15].

Oliveiros Ferreira warns us that when the crisis of hegemony occurs without an insurgent hegemonic core capable of performing the duties of organizing a new culture, we have the false impression that domination is perpetuated through the primacy of the coactive apparatus. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge, following Gramsci, the difficulties of organizing a collective will. The lesson, however, can be learned from the "argument of the 45 Hungarian knights", the author urges us. It is an argument that restores the question of Rousseau, explains Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 345-346), already announcing the *grand finale*: by dint of what wonder the strong [the *greatest number*] became willing to serve the weak? Because the weak was *strategically* stronger, is the answer provided by our knight. Furthermore, the weak understood that, being domination the essence of the political fact, it can only be maintained through organization. It follows that "(...) only the organized can dominate; and in order to become organized it is necessary to have a comprehensive worldview that welds together the life experiences in a project voted [dedicated] either to transforming the world, or to keeping it as such on the surface."

IV. Final Considerations

As seen, the primary focus of Oliveiros Ferreira's political thought is to offer an explanation, building upon a theory of essential possessions, for the complex enmeshing between the cultural and the political, a concern also crucial for the Cultural Studies' theorists. In both cases, the notion of culture emerges in the center of the investigations on the historical and social transformation, a move that would have caused a real epistemic break dubbed by many as the *cultural turn*, as clarified by Marchart (2008: 56). We can say, without major caveats, that Oliveiros Ferreira follows a similar path.

As Raymond Williams, one of the intellectual fathers of the Cultural Studies, had already explained (*apud* Marchart, 2008: 30), culture was and is one of the factors through which class differences are transmitted and perpetuated among people. And it is this perception that makes innumerous authors maintain that it is necessary to analyze in a more detained fashion the "popular culture", since there it is possible to find the roots of consent and resistance in politics:

> Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged (...). It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture — already fully formed — might be simply 'expressed'. But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why 'popular culture' matters. (Hall, 1981: 239)

It thus becomes clear that the political thought of Oliveiros Ferreira as well as the Cultural Studies constitute a theoretical-political project with a strong Marxian influence, which seeks to revise Marxism in the light of Gramsci. For these scholars, the foundation for thinking about social interactions, explains Marchart (2008: 32), consists of the refusal to regard culture only as a phenomenon of the superstructure, which would be determined by the economic processes of the infrastructural base.

But, if the first generation of these thinkers still embraced the perspective of a reformulation of socialism, with the attachment of the Cultural Studies to the so-called *new social movements* (women, blacks, homosexuals etc.) — a shift that indicates new

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analytical categories such as "gender" or "ethnicity" —, the political project of several of its more recent exponents becomes increasingly organized, as Hall states (2002: 33-4), around the ideas of democracy and radical democratization. For the emergence of these "new social movements" did not allow battles — sometimes bloody — to be reduced to the scope of traditional class struggle: it became imperative to acknowledge the autonomy of such movements and their struggle. Thus, the second generation of the Cultural Studies, in the years 1970-80, will then look into and analyze the issue of cultural identities, in order to throw light on the relations of power, which, for them, "always have a cultural dimension" (see Marchart, 2008: 36).

The "magic triangle" of the Cultural Studies, which is translated into the articulation of the notions of culture, power, and identity, makes it possible to see the (re)definition of such concepts in authors linked to the second generation of thinkers: according to Marchart (2008: 35), the Cultural Studies engages in intellectual practice that investigates how the social and political identity is (re)produced *qua* power, in the field of culture, through the "game" of hegemony. It is therefore in the form of struggles for hegemony — expressed in domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion of social groups —, as Gramsci taught us, that identity is fixed and temporarily set in the field of culture[16]. According to this view, therefore, power relations are played "via the cultural."

Despite their similarities in terms of the relationship's perception between politics and culture, the paths taken and the consequences of each theoretical strand discussed here would lead to quite different visions: Oliveiros Ferreira, via Gramsci, takes the path of the theory of essential possessions to explain hegemony and the construction of hegemonic action and political action. In a sense, he moves to the opposite direction of that of the Cultural Studies' theorists: he seeks to reinterpret the classical conceptual framework in order to build a new *systemic* interpretation of the social reality and its conflicts. At this point, the influence of T. Parsons may have been decisive. As can be read in Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 79), when the adhesion to the form of appropriation assumed by the essential possessions is large, the social cohesion will be high and hegemony will be molded to the comprehensive worldview of the ruling group.

However, when distinction and separation from the so far valid comprehensive worldview is enabled by a group that is able to organize itself and to propose a new fusion of life experiences into new ranges of symbolic actions — which may give rise to a new comprehensive worldview capable of generating the adhesion of the greatest number —, the possibility of a schism in relation to this hegemonic conception opens up. This schism will generate a new solidarity of the whole in relation to its parts; at this moment, the moral and social realm in which individuals hitherto found their frames of reference will have been destroyed (see Ferreira, 1986: 79; 221; 226).

The proposal of the theorists of the Cultural Studies is the reverse: the key issue is not to seek how to build social cohesion, but rather to emphasize the *differences* and, in some cases, to assert its irreducibility, even if acknowledging the fluidity and the dynamic and procedural character of such differences. These authors start from a distinctive perspective of power, stemming from Foucault, according to which it cannot be located anywhere in the society (neither in police nor in politics): Foucault (1982: 791-793) rejects the notion of power as an object that can be possessed by certain individuals and/ or groups, characterizing it as primarily relational. A perspective which precludes power from being defined based on the ordering of "the forms of appropriation assumed by the

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essential possessions," as Oliveiros Ferreira would prefer. In this sense, the perspective of this school of thought is open, anti-systemic, and up to a point closer to a post-structuralist perspective. Something that our knight's approach is definitely not.

The model proposed by Oliveiros Ferreira in this work operates with the idea of community and of culture as a whole, as a closed social complex, within the horizon of the idea of a "nation-state," something the author makes clear in several passages. A good illustration is perhaps the one that appears in the discussion on the relationship between the global society and the civil society, when he states that the difference between them lies precisely in the fact that the former is not able to become "a national and efficient organization" for the accomplishment of a project on a territory legally defined by the state. Whereas civil society is defined as a global society with a *project of destiny*, which shapes the relations between the different groups and the structure in a cohesive manner, integrating and constraining the subordinates under the intellectual, cultural, and political direction of the dominants (see Ferreira, 1986: 163).

This patent difference between the approach of Oliveiros Ferreira and that of the Cultural Studies occurs, in my view, because of the perspective adopted by each of the two models: Oliveiros Ferreira is a thinker of *nation-building*; concerned, therefore, with the building of the nation. It follows that his perspective is that of the *institutionality*: our author thinks politics and culture from the perspective of the state and of the needs of the state power. Whereas theorists of the Cultural Studies emphasize resistance to the established power and see in the construction of the nation an enemy, an oppressor not only of class but also of gender, ethnicity, and so on. In this sense, the perspective of these authors takes on that of the oppressed, those who have no voice or influence in face of the oppressive hegemonic discourse — a fairly well demarcated anti- or contra-institutional perspective.

It is not accidental then that the Cultural Studies would culminate in the 1990s in the so-called "Post-Colonial Studies," so fashionable nowadays in the left-leaning media, and that they would, as noted by Hofbauer (2009: 119), emphasize the need to rethink the logocentric binarisms erected by the colonialist Western — which often legitimates (and legitimated) political interventions that include(d) the use of violence —, decolonizing the hearts, minds, and imagination of the oppressed peoples[17] and refusing the traditional identities through which Colonialism intended to establish "masters" and "subjugates".

These are clearly two paths and two entirely distinct ways of arriving at theoretical and practical consequences starting from very similar initial findings and the same theoretical forbear: Gramsci. If the Cultural Studies already point toward a new epistemic formulation, which would materialize especially in post-structuralism and its heirs, the remarkable political theory produced by Oliveiros Ferreira, in turn, would allow to reshape the terms and the foundations of the functional-structuralist approach, still so influential nowadays[18]. It is an excellent example of interpretative richness and fruitful imagination present in the analytical field of the humanities.

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'THE 45 HUNGARIAN KNIGHTS'
Raquel Kritsch

Notes

1. This article is part of a post-doctorate research project entitled "The
feminist and post-colonial political theory critiques of the political
thought of Jürgen Habermas: human rights, cosmopolitanism and
citizenship in debate", funded by the CNPq and supported by the State
University of Londrina.

2. The authors belonging to the strand of Cultural Studies convened
around the famous *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* (CCCS),
founded in the mid-1960s, and then transferred to the University of
Birmingham (UK). Its intellectual genealogy points out names such as R.
Hoggart, R. Williams, E. P. Thompson, among other influential thinkers of
the so-called "New Left" (see Lutter and Reisenleitner, 2008: 25-30).

3. In the words of Rousseau (1971: 158): "De quoi s'agit-il donc
précisément dans ce Discours? De marquer dans le progrès des choses
le moment où le droit succédant à la violence, la nature fut soumise à
la loi; *d'expliquer par quel enchaînement de prodiges le fort put se résoudre
à servir le faible*, et le peuple à acheter un repos en idée, au prix d'une
félicité réelle" (emphasis added).

4. This "empire" exerted by the hegemonic social group over other social
collectivities implies that the conduct of its members (leaders/governing
agents) — which derives from the position occupied in the whole of the
society – can be called autonomous, whereas the conduct of those who
are commanded/governed are objectively heteronomous (although not
resentful).

5. The political position (high or low) expresses the objective
manifestation of a certain "lifestyle", in addition to adhering more
objectively to the "seeming" (this is crucial in the analysis of the moves of
behavior and the transformations in the collective consciousness of the
masses). "The introduction of the notion of political position, especially
when associated to the tendency towards greater autonomy, can permit
a better understanding of the permanence of domination structures
by the desire of the so-called 'simple people' to partake in the lifestyles
acknowledged as exclusive, especially taking into account that, for
Gramsci, the transformations that are processed at the individual level
are fundamental for the consolidation of the hegemony of governing and
dominant groups; in the same manner, we know when certain conducts
started losing their sacred empire over the dominated" (Ferreira, 1986: 36).

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6. This impulse towards independence and autonomy is precisely what supports the transformative *praxis* of reality and the self-transformative *praxis* of the human being, he states later on, leading the so-called "simple people" to *distinguish* their own comprehensive worldviews from those of the ruling groups (a move that distances the "simple people" from the ruling groups); and, in case they find intellectuals capable of interpreting their new comprehension of the reality, to *separate* themselves from other "simple people" (rupturing the unity of the "simple people"), ultimately leading to a *schism*. This process of self-transformation of the human being and of transformation of the reality is thus connected to the consciousness of necessity, which requires an interior urge of improvement capable of thrusting the human being towards the expansion of their influence, sustaining what the author (1986: 33) describes as a *tendency towards increasing autonomy* (which Gramsci called "development towards integral autonomy").

7. In general terms, Oliveiros Ferreira concludes (1986: 51-52), the best positioned groups in the scale of fruition of the goods of the culture (that is, those in high political positions) can be the social point of origin of inclusive values, which spread through the social whole as the sociability of groups in high political positions is active and capable of founding, in spite of the different experiences of each social group, a dominant comprehensive worldview in society, building upon the ends intellectually elaborated by ruling groups, albeit accepted and reinterpreted by those subordinated.

8. In the words of the author (1986: 60): "(...) the systematic coherence of the comprehensive worldview can be evaluated by the similitude — possession or co-possession — of the forms that translate nuclear values, which can be verified in terms of the norms as source of social coercion and/or juridical sanction, and [in terms] of the conducts as manifestations of the efficacy of the value and of the adhesion or non-adhesion of the group to it."

9. The state, however, as Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 204) warns us, does not have solely coercive functions: among its tasks there is one relevant activity: that of the "educator", in the sense of establishing the systematic forms of assimilation of the other classes to the ruling class. In this sense, this educating function can be perceived in the task of coordinating social groups under the aegis of the state (Heller), when the state prepares, be it by means of schools or in courts, the "will to conformism" and/or when the state rationalizes and coordinates (through law) social and economic activities.

10. In the author's words (196: 218): "When the real Constitution and the written Constitution are out of step — when the Political Society starts detaching itself from the Civil Society — and consequently positive legal norms are only valid by their coercive aspect, and *a social group willing to assume the function of a party, the hegemonic core of the process, is inexistent*, the state loses its illusionary appearance

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as the interpreter of general sentiments and of common interests, and the core of power can no longer translate its comprehensive worldview into a legal order. It would be possible to say that this is the moment that state power — in the language of Kelsen, the efficacy of the legal order — is compromised due to the absence of a hegemonic core, and, consequently, the core of power seems supported only by tradition and by the void of values and opinions common to the whole of society; this is the moment when the conditions for the emergence of the phenomenon of "bureaucratism", viz., the expansion of the Government inside the state (in Rousseau's terminology), or for the full-fledged autonomy of the "law enforcement" in face of the state — to which it is theoretically subordinated — and of the society (in line with Engels) arises."

11. Its objective can thus be considered as the one of war: hegemonic action aims at disarming and/or destroying the enemy (Clausewitz), which in politics is equivalent to taking over the state apparatus, paving the way for the coactive use of state agencies as well as the modification of the legal order, enabling the establishment of new legal conditions of the definition of the *status* (hoping that legal imposition will become social imposition, or that coaction will become coercion) (see Ferreira, 1986: 225).

12. Coercion must be understood as the reduction of the free will by means of the internalization of social norms (of hegemony as pedagogy), as Oliveiros Ferreira warns us (1986: 238), meaning that it should be distinguished from (state) coaction — a distinction coined by Durkheim that, according to the author, is very useful in understanding the Gramscian thought.

13. Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 274) explains that, not being derived from custom, law inscribes itself in the legally neutral zones of morals and mores. Thus it is possible to say that, for the Sardinian thinker, " the grand ideas of the 'modern prince' are what make the Law and structure the State, insofar as the latter (…) is an organization with national pedagogical ramifications and in which the periphery communicates with the center, so as to form what could be called *organizational density*".

14. In the terms used by Oliveiros Ferreira (1986: 322): "At this step, we are facing a fissure in the hegemonic proposition: a group of subordinated individuals that is distinct from the rulers and those dominating. By distinguishing itself, intellectually doubting the established order and transposing this doubt to the validity of the forms of appropriation of the possessions of affection, it could have acquired consciousness of the unequal distribution of power and surplus, but is still not capable of generalizing its new conducts, due either to theoretical deficiencies or to practical impossibility."

15. According to the author (1986: 329), "(…) the final stage in the process of self-transformation of the reality and the replacement of one comprehensive worldview for another can only occur — *in a universe of*

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thought in which hegemony is a totalizing fact, not to say totalitarian, and hegemonic action is a relation of hostility — when the solidarity of the social whole with its parts is broken and each of these parts position themselves in relation to the others as enemies in the battlefield."

16. For Hall (*apud* Marchart, 2008: 24), for example, culture is the horizon in which social identities (and along with them power relations and subordination) are negotiated along and upon differences such as "race," "class," and " gender," which constitute markers elaborated in the realm of culture.

17. It is for this reason that H. Bhabha (1998: 247-8; 334), one of the icons of the first generation of post-colonial authors, for example, will insist on the importance of investing in counter-hegemonic projects, pointing out the "fringes" and sociocultural "interstices", "spaces" that would allow the colonized subject to begin processes of negotiation and questioning from within the fissures of the dominant discourse (or "original text"). On the contrary, one must value the "hybridization of the sign," that is, the moment when the signs are displaced from its hegemonic referential but have not yet been inscribed in another totalizing system of representation. The schism must not lead to the advent of a new hegemonic comprehensive worldview (reorganized on the basis of culture), as imagined by Gramsci, but rather culture should be assumed as an uncertain space of significations, open to endless processes of contextual (re)negotiations.

18. An interesting and useful discussion concerning the use of the Gramscian thought for the revitalization of structuralist Marxism, in light of Althusser and his heirs, can be found in the essay "Cultural Studies: two paradigms", by Stuart Hall (2003: 131-159).

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