

Gramsci and Possibilities of Organic Intellectuals as Agents of Filipino Proletarian Hegemony in Post-Duterte's Necrofascism

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential theoretical grounding of possible Gramscian intervention of organic intellectuals toward the construction of Filipino proletarian hegemony. The authors reflect on the relevance of the working classes in sustaining the world being inspired by Gramsci's dedicated life to the proletarian cause. Further, the trajectory is the recent historical event of the global COVID-19 pandemic as well as localized in the Philippines under the necrofascist (stimulated by the scholar Achilles Mbembe's term *necropolitics*) Duterte regime which we see as an event-basis to situate a reconsideration of the Gramscian theory that highlights the political involvement of the organic intellectuals. As the Philippines remains a backward agricultural sector and service-sector-reliant economy in the service of the global capitalist mode of production, this study shows the abundant grounds for the development of Filipino proletarian hegemony in the Gramscian sense. This study takes on the continuing struggles from various social movements that arose since the pandemic as a basis for how a possible unitary hegemony can mobilize Filipinos toward proletarian emancipatory politics. Therefore, through the theory of Gramsci on organic intellectuals, the authors propose the necessity of an organic intellectual's role of unifying the people and leading the proletarian hegemony that will be the basis of political emancipation. Now moving past the Duterte necrofascist regime, such proletarian hegemony can happen through people's active creation of their class hegemony toward societal transformation. This paper closes with notes on forming a unitary bloc among classes and identities or using Mao Zedong's signifier—*people*. Further, there should be a necessity in this people's bloc what the theorists Laclau and Mouffe call *hegemonic articulation*.

Keywords: necrofascist, Filipino proletarian hegemony, Gramsci, organic intellectuals, Duterte

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has announced this year (2023) that the COVID-19 pandemic has really reached its official end.¹ Nonetheless, the pandemic of COVID-19 has marked not only a public health crisis to date but phenomenally, a political event. Within the almost three-year stretch of the pandemic—March 2020 to May 2023, we saw various political occurrences, such as the military junta in Myanmar,² economic crises in Sri Lanka and many parts of the world,³ and the rise of Asian hate in many parts of the world,⁴ among others. In the Philippines, through the executive command of former President Rodrigo Duterte, the country was put into the longest lockdown during which we witnessed thousands of human rights violations⁵ alongside intense social media-based rightwing political propaganda.⁶ More or less two years from 2020, the 2022 presidential elections were held where the son of the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., Bongbong Marcos Jr., was declared as the 16th president of the Philippines through a landslide number of vote counts. Alongside him is the winning vice president Sara Duterte, the daughter of former president Duterte. Despite the ineffective and violent lockdowns due to the pandemic under Duterte and fascism under the regime of Marcos Sr., the same bloodline holds the offices of the highest position in public service. Many recent studies have concluded that the victory of the incumbent leaders in the highest political posts is highly attributable to massive disinformation campaigns and sponsored political propaganda.⁷

1 United Nations, “WHO chief declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency,” in UN News, May 5, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367> (accessed: July 5, 2023).

2 Verena Hoelzl and Cape Diamond, “Myanmar military steps up attacks as coronavirus spreads,” in Aljazeera, April 16, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/4/16/myanmar-military-steps-up-attacks-as-coronavirus-spreads> (accessed: May 7, 2023).

3 Chulanee Attanayake, “Years of policy failure and COVID throw Sri Lanka into deep crisis,” in *East Asia Forum*, April 24, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/04/24/years-of-policy-failure-and-covid-throw-sri-lanka-into-deep-crisis/> (accessed: May 9, 2023); see United Nations, *World Economic Situation and Prospects: Midyear Update*, January 5, 2023; retrieved from https://desa-publications.un.org/file/1160/download?_ga (accessed: August 30, 2023).

4 Human Rights Watch, “Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide,” in HRW, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>.

5 See Karapatan, *The Surge Of People’s Resistance And The Struggle For A Future Free From Tyranny*. Quezon City: Karapatan Alliance Philippines), 2021.

6 Rein Tarinay, ‘Fake Facebook accounts meant to silence dissent’ in *Bulatlat*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.bulatlat.com/2020/06/09/fake-facebook-accounts-meant-to-silence-dissent/> (accessed: June 1, 2023).

7 See Fatima Gaw, Jon Benedik A. Bunquin, Samuel I. Cabbuag, Jose Mari H. Lanuza, Noreen H. Sapalo, and Al-Habbyel B. Yusoph *Research Report: Political Economy of Covert Influence Operations in the 2022 Philippine Elections* (California: Internews, 2023).

Truly, the global and localized pandemic situation under Duterte's regime and his response to the public health crisis remains a source of critical lessons for any political movement that aspires to the enduring cause of proletarian emancipatory politics. This paper wants to explore the aspects of possible theoretical grounding of intervention of organic intellectuals toward the construction of Filipino proletarian hegemony drawn from the concepts of Antonio Gramsci. This further reflects on the recent historical event of the COVID-pandemic in the Philippines under the Duterte regime which we see as an event basis to situate a post-Duterte reconsideration of the Gramscian theory that highlights the political involvement of the organic intellectuals. As the Philippines remains a backward agricultural sector and service-sector-reliant economy in service of the global neoliberal capitalist mode of production⁸, this study shows the abundant grounds for the development of Filipino proletarian hegemony in the Gramscian sense. The authors take on the continuing practice of social movements (grassroots organizing, political mobilizations, community pantries, and so on) as a basis for how a possible unitary hegemony can mobilize Filipinos toward proletarian emancipatory politics in the post-pandemic but in a continuing class-divided society run by capitalist hegemonics. Therefore, after elaborating on Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals, the authors propose the necessity of an organic intellectual's role of unifying the people and leading the proletarian hegemony that can happen through people's participation and initiative to transform the society.

The endurance of the working class in the pandemic

The pandemic has revealed the long way rotten economic structure that configures the social reality, the ontology kept up according to the necessities of elite-ruled global capitalism. The structure that divides the rich and the poor paved the way to inequitable access to proper medicine and healthcare which have been long privatized as normal business ventures.⁹ The working class all over the world are the ones who suffered the deepest impact of the health crisis. But even with the public health crisis shutting down many economic activities and pushing many to remote work setup, some reports have shown how several capitalists pushed their employees to continue working to continue productivity as much as pre-COVID era. Many big business owners worry full shutting down their enterprises and, hence, forcing unfair measures against their workers.¹⁰

8 IBON Foundation, "Ang Budol ng Taon," in *Ibon*, July 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.ibon.org/ui-23jul-praymer/> (accessed: July 20, 2023).

9 See Paul Quintos, "Notes on Monopoly Capital in the 21st Century," in *Lenin's Imperialism in the 21st Century*, ed. Antonio Tujan (Manila: Ibon Center, 2017), 21-44.

10 See Ricardo Antunes, "Labour in Pandemic Capitalism," in *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power* 1 (2021) 44-61.

Even though the virus killed many businesses and economic operations, the world still ran because of the working class who continued to be productive.¹¹ The basic contradiction of capital and labor, being labor subsumed under the dictates of capital accumulation, working classes are pushed to grim necessities of such double disadvantage. Despite the *prima facie* reason that our proletariat¹² needed to have money to buy their bread and butter, the network assemblages of the working class's desire have been decisive in making the world work even with the direst crises that humanity has faced recently. The world owes itself to the resiliency of workers around the world to upgrade and adapt to the maximum level of sustenance—from a work-from-home setup where they updated their technological capacities at home, engaging in the gig economy even as precarious, low-paid, and no security, sharing economy, the health workers who suffered the broadest plight because of a worldwide operating class system that has been favoring the few for a long time. This is not to romanticize such things done by workers despite exploitation and precariousness, but we just want to recognize that it is impossible to have a world without labor—and much of essential labor can sustain itself through proletarian bodies even with no CEOs, corporate heads, and other higher managerial bureaucrats. The paradox has been much alive and apparent since the time of Marx—the laboring bodies who are most vulnerable *but* mostly contributing to the overall ontological possibilities of society remain the most undervalued, deprived, and even sacrificed.

Hence, this work would like to continue the lineage of theorizing that gives the center to the laboring class in winning the world that they have created and the future that is always for them. This strategy of proletarian politics is based on Gramsci's proletarian hegemony that seeks to be constructed if we want to challenge the ruling order. In a nutshell, an ideological-hegemonic intervention that inclines toward the ontology of the working class should be a central worldview.

11 The meaning of this “productive” resonates with Marx's notion of the dialectic between production, distribution, and exchange. Capital and labor are intertwined contradictions of the singular substance of labor, but labor is more *ontologically* primary since without it running, capital-becoming-profit is impossible. See Marx's “Introduction” to *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin, 1993).

12 Generally used in this work, the authors here retain the usage of the *proletariat* to equivocally refer to the working class.

Gramsci in Political Theory

As a country's economy is predominantly run by the working class from the service sector, manufacturing, and peasant classes, with thousands of migrant workers based abroad, there is critical relevance in going back to the political philosophy of Antonio Gramsci in the time of fascist politics as well, to which the authors see a notable parallelism between Gramsci's time and in the contemporary times. The diverse social movements through trade unions, civil society, and mass organization movements demonstrate that theories reflective of working-class interests are always timely and relevant in theoretical and political discourses. Antonio Gramsci lived, wrote, and died committed to the cause of the working class. Gramsci co-organized fellow working classes in Turin in Italy. Becoming the leader of the Factory Councils movement, he organized the newspaper *Ordine Nuovo*, publishing polemics and pamphlets for the emancipatory cause of the proletariat.¹³ He, then, introduced the concept of *hegemony* in his written pamphlet "The Southern Question," which according to Ercan Gündoğan, is one of Gramsci's crucial articles that introduces the vista and conceptual questions that his later *Prison Notebooks* would expound further.¹⁴ Gramsci's theoretical overview of the concept of *organic intellectuals* was introduced and examined in his writings in prison. His political theory is vital to political discourses as it reinforces the critical role of the *superstructure*—to use the classical Marxist term for ideological spheres such as laws, beliefs, and other practices that signify the expression of thoughts, positions, and ideals.¹⁵ Within this superstructure, there is the dominant power, which Gramsci then calls hegemony, which was first understood as force and leadership.¹⁶ As philosophy also includes the default worldview possessed by the working class, they have the reflexivity to make sense of their situation of exploitation. Hence, since philosophy for Gramsci is articulating a social, intellectual, and moral order that can be challenged, the proletariat can have the praxis to liberate the world and themselves. Intellectuality is always tied with the possibilities of emancipation—the very essence that ties philosophy and politics.

Gramsci has been broadly significant in critical and Marxist theories of politics and society that highlight the superstructural—the rich realm of ideas and socio-mental

13 Louis Marks, "Introduction to" Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 13-15.

14 Ercan Gündoğan, "Conceptions of Hegemony in Antonio Gramsci's Southern Question and the Prison Notebooks," *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* Vol.2, No. 1 (November 2008), 45-60: 46.

15 Karl Marx, *Marx / Engels Collected Works* Vol. 29. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), 262-264.

16 Thomas Bates, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1975), 351-366: 352.

spheres.¹⁷ Contributing key concepts on cultural and mental production, his theory offers a way of thinking about resistance and social change that is not just about conquering the status of social inequalities through the discourse that opens up the acts of challenging dominant cultural narratives and ideals.¹⁸

The political theorist Nicos Poulantzas notes Gramsci's important contribution to Marxist theorizing that the State actively develops its ideological role through its apparatuses; thus, the state's worldview extends to the private realms.¹⁹ He credits Gramsci to be the first principal theorist to have unanimously introduced and analyzed the notion of how the state needs ideological apparatuses aside from the use of force and repression.²⁰ State apparatuses do not need to be always in the collar of civil society, since the latter can expound the consent of the dominant class that is at its service. The dominant groups work to captivate the consent of the subordinated groups. Gramsci claims that this consent is not just attained through coercion but also through cultural and ideological means such as education, media, and popular culture.²¹ In this way, hegemony is upheld through the power and incorporation of dominant ideals and norms. Although the force of ideas in maintaining power is not absent in the writings of Marx, Engels, and other previous Marxists in the classical tradition, what Gramsci significantly focused on is a substantial discussion of spheres of superstructure that can be an object of separate analysis. Hence, Valeriano Ramos argues Gramsci's novel contribution is to see how social and class formations are intertwined aspects involving ideological formation.²² Since Gramsci's theory stresses the role of intellectuals in determining political and cultural narratives, intellectuals do not narrowly refer to the field's formal academic environment or any other institutions that use their higher education but anyone contributing to constructing and disseminating ideas and culture.²³ Organic intellectuals, above all, arise from within proletariat and marginalized groups and articulate their experiences and struggles in a means that examines and challenges dominant ideas and narratives.

17 Chantal Mouffe, "Introduction to" *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), 3.

18 George Hoare and Nathan Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 125.

19 Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism* (London: Verso, 1979), 299.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 300.

22 Valeriano Ramos Jr., "The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism," in *Marxists.org*, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-7/tr-gramsci.htm> (accessed: May 20, 2023).

23 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, International Publishers, 1971), 3.

Necrofascism in the Philippines

Historicizing the term *fascism*, Karlo Mongaya states that the word came from the Italian word *fascio* which was used in Italy from 1872 onwards that refer to names of union groups. This was then eventually appropriated with *fasces*, a word signifying axe bundles of rod with axe, used to symbolize people's unity and submission to central power.²⁴ As a worldview, it seeks to uphold the conservation of values of national identity, and advocates national identity as the forefront of its worldview; with its utter opposition to liberalism and Marxism, fascism undermines liberalism and shows hostility toward socialist and communist alternatives.²⁵

Poulantzas argues that fascism cannot be detached from its bigger context of origin—the imperialism, or capitalist stage that has gone worldwide, subjugating the globality into political and economic logic of capitalist production.²⁶ Parallel to Poulantzas's observation of the rise of fascism in 20th-century Europe, and with the continuing legacy of the practice of imperialism, fascism has maintained a momentum of return and stipulated conditions under capitalist hegemony. Since the Philippines is not a capitalist state, but a neoliberal state in service of world imperialism,²⁷ the state under the Duterte regime has actualized the characteristics of fascism. The use of coercion through repressive apparatuses and authoritarianism is elementary to fascistic Duterte's years in office. The backdrop of fascistic politics is put herein since the peak of such a political regime founded on the right to decide who to let live and kill—*necropolitics*—to use the scholar Achilles Mbembe's term in his seminal essay.²⁸ Mbembe states that "sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must

24 Karlo Mongaya, "Fascism, Fascisation, and Neoliberalism from Marcos to Duterte," in *Authoritarian Disaster: The Duterte Regime and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency* ed. Regletto Aldrich Imbong (Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2023), 1-2. DOI: [10.52305/JCVL4870](https://doi.org/10.52305/JCVL4870).

25 Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," 1932. Retrieved from <https://sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/2B-HUM/Readings/The-Doctrine-of-Fascism.pdf> (accessed: September 25, 2021).

26 Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, 11-13.

27 Despite having a tiny capitalist class within the country, the Philippines as a whole is but a recipient of capital and portfolio investments from the Global North and other developed countries. Lacking big industries, we supply cheap labor and raw materials to foreign territories and ventures through neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and austerity politics. See Tujan, Antonio, "The Second Century of Imperialism: Neoliberalized 'Globalization' and Permanent War Project of Monopoly Capital," in *Lenin's Imperialism in the 21st Century*, ed. Antonio Tujan (Manila: Ibon Center, 2017), 1-18.

28 As a side note, we firmly believe that fascist politics did not start nor end in Duterte's presidency. It has long existed since the creation of the Philippine Republic, heightened in Marcos Sr.'s dark regime, and continued in the neoliberal policies during Cory Aquino until Noynoy Aquino, and we see its continuation in Marcos Jr.'s regime. The relationship between the neoliberal economy and fascism is not discussed in this essay; however, the authors claim that neoliberalism has always needed fascism. Mongaya, "Fascism, Fascisation, and Neoliberalism from Marcos to Duterte," 4-14.

die,”²⁹ and where the sovereignty exercises “control over mortality and define life as the deployment and manifestation of power.”³⁰ The authors call Duterte’s fascism more exactly a *necrofascist*, a neologism formed from the words necropolitics and fascism. Before and during the pandemic, we saw the public crises under Duterte where thousands died and were seen as mere casualties; to add insult to injury, Duterte deliberately endorsed his rabid necrofascism leading to the deaths of thousands. At the core of necrofascism is his use of enmity as motivation for policies and rhetoric. This is parallel to Carl Schmitt’s political concept for the Nazi’s sovereign definition of establishing friends versus enemy distinction,³¹ which we witnessed in the regime of Duterte pre-pandemic war on drugs where the tagged enemies have been the drug users. Whereas, during the middle of Duterte’s regime, it was the leftists and communists. “*Mahirap kayo? Putang ina sige! Magtiis kayo sa hirap at gutom, wala akong pakialam.*”³² This has sustained through the pandemic the truly monstrous normalcy of legitimized killing through Duterte’s necro-rhetorics that have enabled the state forces and its covert arms to wave their antipoor violence and political killings: ““My orders to the police and military... If there is trouble and there’s an occasion that they fight back and your lives are in danger, shoot them dead.”³³

The dominant worldview may be in the form of religious or political ideologies and other cultural codes. In Gramsci’s time, the height of economic crises bred the grounds for the consolidation of Italy through the hegemonic force of fascism.³⁴ Necrofascism has become a hegemonic force under the regime of Duterte through subjugating the nation to the popularization of the bloody war on drugs, weaponization of law through the Anti-Terror Law, and enabling the police and military through his necro-rhetoric. The militaristic lockdown, thousands of human rights violations such as mass arrests and rabid redtagging, and proliferation of state-sponsored disinformation all brewed in the last years of Duterte’s necrofascistic politics that exploded its fitting moment in a public health crisis. Before the public health crises, Duterte used a version of populism that leaned toward such necrofascism—the bloody war on drugs, politically motivated killings, and

29 Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics” in *Public Culture* 15(1): 11 –40: 11. Duke University Press. Project Muse. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/39984>

30 Ibid. 12.

31 Ibid., 18.

32 This rabid antipoor statement became infamous when Duterte uttered it in a press conference during the fight of jeepney drivers against the jeepney phaseout in 2017.

33 The Strait Times, “‘Shoot them dead’: Philippine President Duterte says he won’t tolerate violators of lockdown against coronavirus,” April 2, 2020, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/shoot-them-dead-duterte-says-he-wont-tolerate-violators-of-lockdown-against-coronavirus> (accessed: July 19, 2023)

34 Poulantsaz, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, 293-4.

rhetoric that enticed killings. The creation of NTF-ELCAC signaled the sophisticated form of state terrorism, to which red tagging and vilification of mass organizations that are formed by members of a wide spectrum of grassroots and communities have heightened. For instance, the “Bloody Sunday”, where killings of union leaders, occurred a bloodbath in a perilous time when the militarism of the pandemic was being taken as an advantage to murder.³⁵ Many human rights and peace advocates were killed in a spree amidst the lockdown; and since Duterte’s assumption, 61 lawyers were murdered for the record.³⁶ The blood and fire under the Duterte necrofascist regime marked a response to political and economic crises of deteriorating neoliberal politics of Capital. Such a political atmosphere of necrofascism actually continued in Marcos Jr.’s regime even without the crass mouth of old Duterte as there is still noticeable continuity between the two regimes.³⁷ Red tagging, attacks on human rights, enforced disappearances, and police killings keep going on in Marcos Jr. No substantial transformation of life happened in the necrofascist regime other than terror coming from the state. Such a showcase of necrofascism cannot wither away without a truly revolutionary transformation of society oriented to capital and elite; hence, a world that truly serves the majority—the working classes—needs to be a philosophical project.

Gramsci himself witnessed the rise of fascist politics in Italy. The crisis in ruling class hegemony, being contradicted by ongoing societal and economic problems, violence becomes an open solution.³⁸ This way, charismatic “men of destiny” (to use Gramsci’s term himself) in the likes of the populist fascist faces of Duterte and revered former president Marcos Sr. become hegemonic forces especially when “the crisis does not find this organic solution, but that of the charismatic leader, it means that a static equilibrium... it means that no group, neither the conservatives nor the progressives, has the strength for victory, and that even the conservative group needs a master.”³⁹ Even though there is no need for Duterte nor the succeeding leadership of Marcos Jr. to admit that they are fascist, Gramsci argues that a state “can be of a military character even if the army as such does not participate in it openly; a government can be of a military character even if the army as

35 Bulatlat: Journalism for the People: ‘Bloody Sunday’ spells killings, mass arrests in Southern Tagalog’, March 28, 2021 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2021/03/08/bloody-sunday-spells-killings-mass-arrests-in-southern-tagalog/> (Accessed: August 5, 2023)

36 This record was as of April 2021, from Ted Regencia, “Record number of Filipino lawyers killed under Duterte’s watch,” in *Aljazeera*, April 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/1/record-number-of-filipino-lawyers-killed-under-dutertes-reign> (accessed: August 25, 2023)

37 Reflecting on Marcos Jr.’s two-year presidency, Human Rights Watch stated that the president had done so little on Duterte’s legacy of a violent and anti-poor war on drugs and the attack on leftists. Human Rights Watch, “Philippines: Marcos Failing on Rights: A Year On, Course Correction Needed,” June 28, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/28/philippines-marcos-failing-rights>

38 Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 210.

39 *Ibid.*, 211.

such does not take part in it.” The army’s duty to “defend the Constitution, in other words, the legal form of the State together with its related institutions.”⁴⁰ The reactionary attitude of the Philippine state to undermine any organized attempts to propose alternatives, from social protests and rallies, disrupting community pantries in times of food crises, and banning revolutionary and progressive literature, and the railroading of mandatory ROTC reveal the fascist veins of the neoliberal state.

Gramsci’s Core Concepts in Hegemony, Politics, and Organic Intellectuals

Living in really precarious times of war and Italian fascism, understanding Gramsci’s philosophical and theoretical core cannot be detached from his political commitments, which also cost him lifetime incarceration. Commencing political activeness, Gramsci submerged in the timely Italian intellectualism, being the editor of *Ordine Nuovo*, a militant magazine in Turin. Being an active leftist writer for the cause of the working class is his historical backdrop, consistently contributing polemics to pursue political advocacies while advancing Marxism as a weapon of the proletariat. Settling in Turin, Italy, Gramsci saw the union struggles of the industrial proletariat.⁴¹ Gramsci spent his political activism writing for the cause of workers, such as the debate of whom leadership will dwell between the workers and peasants, leading to Gramsci’s treatment that there should be an alliance between these classes.⁴²

One of Gramsci’s most remarkable contributions to political discourses is his concept of hegemony. It is said that hegemony is made through ideologies that operates mainly at the level of the superstructure, and progresses through the instruments of political negotiation and intellectual persuasion.⁴³ The dominant groups in society exert effort to organize, influence, and control the actions and thinking of the general public to the political direction that will benefit them. It is essential to understand that hegemony combines the elements of consent and coercion.⁴⁴ Like the philosopher Louis Althusser’s notion, ideological state apparatuses have continuity within the repressive state apparatuses. The state forces can teach the masses about the need to be docile and obedient; teachers and lawmakers can justify the legitimacy of property society and the need for police and military to protect the status quo.⁴⁵ Hegemony can be preserved and continued with the support of all the classes through whatever means that can make them help to maintain the existing hegemony. In a hegemonic phase in society, a

40 Ibid., 212.

41 Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Introduction to Selections from Prison Notebooks*, xxvi.

42 Gündoğan, “Conceptions of Hegemony,” 45.

43 Hoare and Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy*, 125.

44 Ibid., 122.

45 Louis Althusser, *On Ideology* (London: Verso, 2020), 19-20.

class is not just representing their interest but expressing other classes or the people's collective interests. Ramos attributed to Gramsci the Marxist novelty of overcoming the so-called epiphenomenalism and class reductionism to critique ideology.⁴⁶ The ideology, which belongs to the superstructure in classical Marxist terms, has its own materiality that assumes social ontology *distinct* from the economic formations and class relations. Nevertheless, we should not overstate the distinction of ideology from the ontological category of class. After all, in a class society, the intellectual sphere will remain its interwovenness with the material world. Social interests are hardly separable from class interests as everyone strives to survive in various levels and forms.

Gramsci, with his concept of *intellectuals*, asserts that all humans are intellectuals by nature.⁴⁷ Categorically speaking, everyone is an intellectual; hence, non-intellectuals do not exist.⁴⁸ On the contrary, not all people have the *function* of intellectuals. How can this be? There are two levels of intellectuality in Gramsci. The first level is the ontological intellectuality. This is the notion that everyone is ontologically an intellectual, whereas, Gramsci asserts that there is “no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded,” dissolving the dualism between thinking and being. Gramsci continues that a human being “carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a “philosopher”, an artist, a man of taste. He participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore, contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.”⁴⁹ One can be an intellectual since everyone can posit a worldview as also argued by Althusser as spontaneous philosophers. To state that everyone is an intellectual is to recognize to ontological truth that all human beings use a worldview to interpret the world and their actions; thus, there is always self-reflexivity in consciousness.

The second level of Gramsci's notion is the social intellectuality which underscores the moral function of thinking. Here, intellectuals at this level are conscious of their economic, social, and political roles. An intellectual is defined more by their social position, which may contain the creation and circulation of knowledge in society. They satisfy a specific social, political, or practical function and are the agents of hegemony. The intellectuals are responsible for making the hegemony and accountable for it, not failing. The intellectuals are not separate members of a social group or class. They exist within the socioeconomic continuum of the class they belong to. Hence, Gramsci calls them *organic intellectuals*. Gramsci visualizes this organic relationship of intellectuals with their class by citing the capitalist entrepreneur as an example, which alongside them,

46 Valeriano, “The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism.”

47 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 3.

48 Ibid., 9.

49 Ibid.

creates the “industrial technician”, “specialist in political economy”, and “organizers of a new culture”.⁵⁰ The classes of capitalists summon its organic intellectuals to persist in the technical science that will serve the needs of the hegemonic order, and cultural producers who will sustain the ideological needs of the population which will satiate the overall dominant sociopolitical worldview and popular sensibilities. This is contrary to the bourgeois notion that intellectuals, by themselves, can think that they are autonomous or independent from their social class.⁵¹ Truly, as Marx and Engels argue in *The German Ideology*, the production of ideas, consciousness, and any conceptions, are interwoven in material life.⁵² Referencing Baruch Spinoza, the dualistic separation between the *ideal* and *physical* are conceptually superfluous since ontological categories about thought and extension are only expression of the substance of matter.⁵³

Gramsci cites the religious ideology as important and solidified organic intellectual since the ecclesiastics and religious promoters nominate a coherent worldview that covers morality, science, and even other ideologies (non-believers as sinful or Other). For a long time, the Church (under Papal leadership) with its ideologues have served the feudal order, rendering them a monopoly of ideology, which is later more precisely referred to by Gramsci as hegemony.

Gramsci distinguishes between two types of intellectuals as social groups or individuals regarded as fundamental members of society: organic intellectuals and traditional intellectuals. The traditional intellectuals are professional intellectuals who are to be distant from the production of the workers. For Gramsci, a vital characteristic of the traditional intellectual is the tendency to be self-perceived as free and independent from history and as a guardian of a centuries-old cultural tradition that discusses legality.⁵⁴ They have the opportunity for further studies in school and tend to keep the existing traditions in place. They may work in a political or administrative function in the State. The ruling class has its own intellectuals, organically producing the ideas, conceptions, politics, and culture that are the material repercussion of their class role and participation in society. The superstructural levels—the civil society and political society or state—become a systematic playing field of organic intellectuals in propagating the hegemony held by the dominant group, directing the political and legal commands over the other groups of society.⁵⁵

50 Ibid., 5.

51 Ibid., 8.

52 Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, 42.

53 The authors speak of *matter* here as another signifier of Spinoza’s substance, since he calls it Nature or God. See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001).

54 Hoare and Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, 36.

55 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 12.

Gramsci's organic intellectuals are not just defined by intellectual activity but by their active participation in practical life as constructors, organizers, and persuaders of the proletarian hegemony.⁵⁶ The difference between organic and traditional intellectuals is that organic intellectual is known less by their professional description or characteristic of their class. Organic intellectuals are distinguished more by their role in leading the social movement and towards the aspirations of the class to which they organically belong. A critical part of the organic intellectual is to ideologically integrate with the people and succeed in leading the masses.⁵⁷ Organic intellectuals are defined by their role in producing ideas and narratives and organizing work and their directive political role in political parties. It is also their role to connect the proletarian and marginalized classes and specific sectors of the traditional intellectuals for the same goal of proletarian hegemony.

Gramsci, Philosophy, Marxism, and Praxis

Dominant ideologies shape the norms, values, and beliefs of the people. Gramsci's concept can be used in the Philippine setting because the country is experiencing a lot of social inequalities, and a few individuals and groups dominate the country through their hegemonic ideas that preserve the status quo. They shape the narratives in the country to preserve their control of the popular consciousness. Albeit this oppressive hegemony, there have always been forms of counter-hegemonic practices that can be substantiated by the politics of Gramsci.

Gramsci emphasized the intellectuals' role in challenging the dominant class's hegemony. Filipino intellectuals can use their ideas to examine the country's power structures and cultural and economic reality. Formal, informal, and spontaneous forms of education are relatively accessible to the working class in the Philippines. Whether formally educated or not, as all humans are naturally intellectuals, the working class can think and posit a worldview. Given that the state ushers its own apparatuses and machinery, counterhegemony is possible through the very medium of continuing working-class sensibilities. Through alternative forms of proletarian education, they can analyze how dominant groups oppress the people and create social movements that can push forward the needs and actions of the working class and marginalized groups. Organic intellectuals will help empower the masses in the country. They have experienced the class struggle, so they know their people in creating social movements and awakening their social consciousness.

Gramsci also highlights the significance of praxis, the incorporation of theory and practice, and the necessity for political activity and engagement. His so-called

56 Ibid., 3.

57 Ibid.

philosophy of praxis (termed by various scholars) underscores philosophy must not be just for academic or professional ones since all humans are philosophers themselves.⁵⁸ Gramsci supplements this natural philosophical attitude of people for the reasons that (1) humans can totalize the world through language; (2) people can discriminate between common sense and good sense; and (3) there have been existing belief systems such as religions of folklores that can be considered also as spontaneous philosophy.⁵⁹ Humans always tend to group-think, since they are social animals and “always man-mass or man-collective.”⁶⁰ Humans in the raw sense of philosophizing are often uncritical because of elements of disconnectedness and conformism.⁶¹ The essence of philosophical thinking, Gramsci warrants, does not always reside in generating original or novel ideas, but a critical assessment of one’s own worldview, but in intellectualizing the beliefs at hand, and co-ordinate it with the existing moral and intellectual order and can offer ways to critique and change it.⁶² This is the reason that Gramsci admonishes that “we cannot separate philosophy from politics.”⁶³ Criticism, let alone philosophical criticism is always a political act. Thereby, Gramsci sees religion and common sense, being passive modes of thinking, as not sufficient to offer a challenge to ruling intellectual conditions. This is in contrast with philosophy which is rife with such possibilities, whose epitome is Marxism.⁶⁴ In his essay “Marxism and Modern Culture”, Gramsci asserts Marxism’s phenomenal importance in its self-reflexivity as a worldview to reside in its search for a consistent theoretical critique of the ideology of the ruling class and practical guide to the masses through education.⁶⁵

Gramsci and the Proletarian Condition in the Philippines

In this section, we render a short overview of the proletariat situation in the Philippines. The exploited and precarious conditions of the proletariat classes in the Philippines cannot be taken in isolation in analysis. This has a long history of labor domination that has existed since the advent of property relations in the Philippines since colonial times.⁶⁶

58 Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 58.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 59.

61 Ibid. 60

62 Ibid. 60-1.

63 Ibid., 61.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 85.

66 According to Amado Guerrero, the sharp class contradictions were already present in the precolonial, only to be worsened and widened in the Spanish colonization. Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Pulang Tala Publications, 1971).

One important category in the essay is the proletariat, which the authors wager herein to interchangeably refer to as the workers, laborers, and/or working class. The problem that unites various sectors and identities, the authors propose, resides in the impetus of the category of class. Following the notion of class in Marxist theory, the category of class is understood as a social grouping based on the matrix of people's participation in the production and consumption of economic benefits and distribution of resource control.

To solidify our trajectory on the notion of social class, the essay of Benjamin Velasco "Using Marx to Understand the Working Class in the Philippines" is helpful. We agree with Velasco that people who are involved in economic activities are justified to be included in the category of workers even though they are not strictly speaking part of the working class.⁶⁷ Velasco integrates Marx's own notion of a "reserve army of labor" to ontologically include the other sectors of working classes who, strictly speaking, are not employed in industrial or service sectors, but are actively participating in the matrices of life. They are the semiproletarians proper, or the classes who engage in the informal sector such as street vendors, freelance workers, and contractual construction workers, among others—but largely contribute to survival.⁶⁸ Even with the advent of global informatization and computerization of production and distribution, the Philippines largely remains a backward agricultural country with manufacturing and service sectors.⁶⁹ We persist in having a few elites running the economy and the majority and middle- and working classes, peasant classes, and semiproletarian classes. Hence, even though the Philippines has various kinds of classes, we posit that they can still be summed up into two—the most prominent are the bourgeois and proletarian classes. This distinction is only based on the generalized notion of ownership in production, whereas, the bourgeois signifies whose social existence in the economic realm is filled with access to capital and productive property in contrast to the proletariat whose access to capital is labor and small personal ownership. Nothing in the likes of false dualism or binarist thinking is accentuated here because the proletarian experience is heterogeneous. Class struggle exists in various spheres—from precarious labor due to uncondusive working conditions or lack of job security; underpayment and work burnout; difficulty of commuting to work; conflict in the workplaces due to hierarchization of professions, peasant landlessness, debt-driven expenditure, and so on. But the point of this tactical dual distinction between ownership and labor is the general fact that the proletariat needs to sell their labor power to the ones owning the capital. Here, we do agree with the critical geographer David Harvey that capital is a value in motion in society that flows in spaces, one's socioeconomic formation,

67 Benjamin B. Velasco, "Using Marx to Understand the Working Class in the Philippines," *Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives* (2023).

68 Ibid.,18-20.

69 IBON Foundation, "Ang Budol ng Taon."

configures their economic class—what is a person’s role in the overall production, distribution, and realization of value in the cycle of capital accumulation. Harvey makes an analogy with capital that it is like a water cycle that flows in society⁷⁰; the value that sets economic blood in motion in a world capitalist system,⁷¹ to which an economic rule configures the spaces of society.⁷² As Marx postulates in his *Grundrisse*, one’s class position largely depends on the distribution one gets in the dialectic of labor and capital.⁷³

In the classical work *Philippine Society and Revolution*, Amado Guerrero examined different classes in Philippine society to understand and be conscious of the course of the historical progress in the country.⁷⁴ Commonly, these classes have different economic statuses and political views that distinguish them. This also explains each class’s stand against the revolutionary struggle against imperialism, feudalism, and capitalism.⁷⁵

The first class is the class of landlords, the owners of enormous areas of agricultural land. They exploit the peasant masses mainly by the payment of land rent and also by lending money at a high interest rate.⁷⁶ They are also known for buying lands of poverty-stricken peasants and land grabbing those owned by minorities and small settlers. The landlord has police, military, and courts to suppress the peasants in organizing and creating mass movements to claim their just rights for lands. The second class is the bourgeois, divided by the comprador big bourgeois, the middle bourgeois or the national bourgeois, and the petty-bourgeois. The comprador big bourgeois gains massive profits by trading with the US and other imperialist countries.⁷⁷ The middle bourgeois is also called the national bourgeois. They are businessmen whose profits came from cottage industries, transportation, and enterprises related to imported raw materials.⁷⁸ They mainly manufacture alcohol, leather, textiles, lumber, scrap metal, and many more. Lastly, the petty-bourgeois consists of the intellectual people of college or university students, teachers, low-income professionals, office workers, government officials, middle peasants,

70 David Harvey, *Marx, Capital, Madness of Economic Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3.

71 David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2019), 121.

72 Ibid.

73 Marx states in *Grundrisse* that to “the single individual...distribution appears as a social law which determines his position within the system of production within which he produces, and which therefore precedes production. the individual comes into the world possessing neither capital nor land. Social distribution assigns him at birth to wage labor. (London: Penguin, 1993), 96.

74 Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, 147.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 148.

77 Ibid., 150.

78 Ibid., 152.

small business people, paid skilled workers, and so on. They may have education, special training, or skills that give them small property and low-income work.⁷⁹ The third class is the peasantry, notable for their work to cultivate lands. There are three kinds of peasants: rich, middle, and poor.⁸⁰ The rich peasants have the land that they develop, and they also have excess grounds that they might put on rent for other peasants. They have more wealth to enhance their crops and irrigation services, increase work animals, and they may also own a store in the community. The middle peasants own only a part of the land and rent some needed land to grow more crops, or they do not have their land and rent all of the land they need to cultivate. They rely on their work and crops to earn money as their primary source of income. Lastly, the poor peasants do not have land and work for the feudal lords as tenants. The proletariat consists of industrial workers and other wage earners.⁸¹ Industrial workers work in mines and quarries, factories, manufacturing, processing plants, and other enterprises and industrial works. Rural proletariats work on farms chiefly in sugar, pineapple, banana, and vegetable plants. They are the class that primarily sells their labor power to the capitalists to gain income because they have no own means of production.⁸² They work overtime in exchange for a low wage compared to the surplus value that the capitalist employer gains. There is also a semi-proletariat because of the high number of unemployed and underemployed Filipino people.⁸³ Many are fishers, handicraftsmen, carpenters, masons, dock porters, market cargadores, pedicab drivers, jeepney drivers, house servants, restaurant helpers, and more. They suffer from under-compensation, uncertain income, and security. The researchers agree with Guerrero's grouping of industrial workers, service workers, and informal workers under the category of proletariat or working class since what unites them is their absence of productive property ownership and consequently sells labor power to produce and consume.

Going back to Velasco's essay, we underscore the importance of the category of social class in the lines of economic production and formation.⁸⁴ This distinguishes the notion of class from the simple politics of identity. But it does not mean that one's social position in the economy has no whatsoever effect on one's consciousness. As Gramsci agrees with his Marxist predecessors, he argues that "it is in the field of ideologies that men become aware of the conflict which takes place in the economic world."⁸⁵ One being

79 Ibid., 156.

80 Ibid., 157.

81 Ibid., 162.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., 167.

84 Velasco, "Using Marx to Understand the Working Class," 2-5.

85 Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 156.

aware of their social position in the economy of classes shapes their understanding of what hegemony operates to preserve the kind of wealth hierarchy that arranges our society.

Gramsci's Organic Intellectuals and Role in Filipino Proletarian Hegemony

Through Gramsci's theory, we have posited the intellectuality and politicality of the working class comprising the possibility of proletarian hegemony. Hence, we dive into the role of organic intellectuals in forming the Filipino proletarian hegemony.

As any goals and ideals have in the last instance material applications in the real world, genuine transformation cannot arise from mere ideas—hence, a practice of hegemony, integrated ideologies guiding practices should encourage the engagement of individuals. It is essential to have a deep understanding of the power dynamics within the society, and the theory needed to have a successful particular political action. In the Philippine setting, political participation and activism are vital to transforming society. Gramsci's ideas offer a theoretical foundation for understanding the role of intellectuals, social movements, and political organizing in challenging the existing hegemony of the dominant class.

The relationship between intellectuals and the world of production, Gramsci argues, is not always directly linked even intellectuals serve as functionaries of their respective classes.⁸⁶ Therefore, it is a call to form a hegemonic bloc that shall unite the interests of the oppressed and exploited classes that shall be at the forefront to challenge the hegemony of the ruling class. In this way, they can be truly organic of the classes of their origin and they want to articulate for. As such, the concept of organic intellectuals proposes a framework for understanding their contributions and their possibility to reshape society so that they will form hegemonic ideas and narratives. The organic intellectual is an organizer in advancing the new productive, legal, and cultural system that evolves simultaneously with the rising power of the emerging class.⁸⁷ The organic intellectual who has chosen to articulate the proletariat class produces a new culture since they play a directing role in political struggle. They are political organizers within the party and are permanent persuaders to gain the masses' consent for the societal transformation that will bring the collective will and demands of the people the greatest priority. They are pushing actions for the good of the working class and the marginalized classes that experience exploitation and marginalization, within the classes of petty-bourgeois, peasants, laboring classes, semiproletarians, and various classes under the matrix of non-ownership.

⁸⁶ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 124.

⁸⁷ Hoare and Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, 34.

Organic Intellectuals Toward Proletarian Hegemony

Gramsci claimed that aside from economic factors and class struggle, culture and ideologies have a vital role in preserving capitalist hegemony. The ruling class upholds its domination by creating and disseminating ideas and standards that strengthen its power. Organic intellectuals are part of the working class or other marginalized groups that have critical social consciousness. They arise from within their social strata, compared to those of the traditional intellectuals who commonly come from the bourgeoisie. Organic intellectuals have the experiences of the oppressed and play a critical role in challenging dominant ideologies and countering the hegemony of the dominant class.

Gramsci conceived of two methods to challenge hegemony: a war of maneuver and a war of position.⁸⁸ A war of maneuver physically overwhelms the State's coercive apparatus, the direct clash of the revolutionaries and the State. Gramsci's idea of a war of position is a nonviolent way of gaining support by educating people and disseminating ideas and ideologies. But he insists on winning the revolution at all costs, no matter what it takes. Gramsci admitted to the proletarian hegemony that a reserved military force should be used for defense in case the bourgeois class would resort to violence⁸⁹.

As conceptualized by Gramsci, proletarian hegemony refers to the working class's ability to launch its intellectual and moral leadership in society. The proletariat, before overthrowing the ruling class through any kind of revolution, must first establish new intellectual and cultural ideas and narratives that pursue their interest. They must build a counter-hegemonic bloc by fighting the cultural and ideological battles against the existing bourgeois hegemony. After all, proletarian hegemony is an ideological battle that values the consent of the people being led. The country needs a proletarian hegemony to establish a new state of equality and consent.

Hegemony is impossible without its organizers, organic intellectuals, to make a revolution successful. In this sense, intellectuals could find their most significant importance in the struggle. Gramsci sees hegemony as the vital way power is exercised and works. The organic intellectuals will help eradicate the ideologies imposed on the workers. They will help the workers realize that they should reject the stereotype that they cannot think and should all work together to gain the power to attain their interests. Organic intellectuals will create a political party that is revolutionary and collective for the marginalized.

88 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 136.

89 Ibid.

Gramsci believes that the working class must lead the revolution autonomously and away from the dominant ruling class.⁹⁰ There will only be proletarian hegemony when the allied classes that are downtrodden would have a collective will. This is likewise Jean Jacques Rousseau's *general will*, which means that power should come from a common singularity from diverse interests, the class power of the real makers of society. Gramsci even said that one of the most noteworthy features of any group rising towards dominance is its struggle to conform to and overcome 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals.⁹¹ One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest are made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals.⁹² The more traditional intellectuals incorporated and subjugated, the faster and more effective the recruitment of other intellectuals and people. The traditional intellectuals are still allowed to be part of the struggle, but they must first be educated with the consciousness of the proletarians.

Hegemonic articulation of Filipino proletarian hegemony

Observing the conflict of the peasants of the Southern Italy due to ruling landlords, Gramsci concluded that:

The proletariat had to make this own line to give it political effect: that is understood. No mass action is possible unless the mass itself is convinced of the ends it wants to reach and the methods to be applied. The proletariat, in order to be able to rule as a class, must rid itself of all corporative hangovers of all syndicalist prejudices and incrustations. What does this mean? That not only must the distinctions which exist between trades and crafts be overcome, but that it is necessary in order to win the trust and consent of the peasants of the semi-proletarian categories in the cities, to overcome prejudices and conquer certain egoistic traits which can exist and do exist in the working class as such...⁹³

Gramsci's emphasis on class alliance is the political ocean of the proletarian hegemony. The fact that an alliance is necessary for Gramsci, the category of class is not a homogenous ontological category but there is a possibility of unitary grounding, the various classes must be forged with the worldview that seeks horizons of emancipation toward a future to come. The capitalist order, through its constant class warfare against

90 Ibid.

91 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 10.

92 Ibid.

93 Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 36.

the proletariat in various forms, and its apparatuses in the state continues to ignore and deny the people's demands for better benefits, compensation, and living conditions. Organic intellectuals are finding ways to address their daily problems within their area or community. As we have seen in the pandemic, people initiatives are joint during the crisis, and people are willing to extend help and platforms for those who need it. We may see that the development of a unitary (but not homogenous) class consciousness is already in its potentiality through the rise of community pantries and various forms of mutual aid. But what is lacking is a hegemony that recognizes the totality of capital working in society, subjugating the labor and labor value of the multitude. This is the crux of hegemony—the notion of collective emancipation through a political struggle. Hence, organic intellectuals make their moves individually or join groups and movements to voice out their struggles which include disadvantaged groups, not only of the downtrodden classes but also those of various oppressed identities such as children, youth, women, indigenous groups, and the LGBTQIA+.

The proletarian consciousness, ideologies, and cries for social transformation should be disseminated and educated to others to see the change we want in society. There are various means to disseminate ideas and movements, such as social media, traditional media, public speaking engagements, and so on. It can raise awareness and build support for the movement, leading to more people getting involved and amplifying its impact. Everyone can become an organic intellectual and functions as one as long as we actively participate in community social and political life.

Organic intellectuals play a crucial role in any social movement, as they possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and education to help articulate and popularize the ideas and demands of the movement. They can operationalize the likes of community pantries and other social movements by using their intellectual abilities to organize, strategize, and mobilize people toward achieving the movement's goal. The proletarian hegemony can occur through people's participation and initiative to change the society. There should be movements where people can learn about each other and collect wisdom that can help build alternatives to bourgeoisie rule and slowdown capitalist expansion to more facets of people's lives. Alternatives should not be read here as a utopic instant portal to a new socioeconomic setup but as a set of contradictory practices and consistent theorizing that expose the crux of the root of the problem in our class-divided society. Everyone who wants to reach the goal of a hegemonic bloc of proletarians must understand that material participation is necessary. All should be able to help in decision-making and attract more people to join the movement guided by emancipatory hegemony that emancipation from the class power of capital should be a commitment. Writing on the concept of Gramsci's hegemony, organic intellectuals are free subjects who should pursue what the political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call "hegemonic articulation".⁹⁴ They state

94 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014), 121.

that autonomy can only be possible within this hegemonic formation that is consistently articulated;⁹⁵ thus, the agency of freedom in the last instance can only genuinely work within the continuum of a program that must be put into active articulation. Laclau and Mouffe are right in their observation that differences premeditate existence of social ontologies—hence, antagonism within a project of hegemony is inevitable. Further, any hegemonic formation “is constructed through regularity in dispersion, and this dispersion includes a proliferation of very diverse elements: systems of differences which partially define relational identities; chains of equivalences which subvert the latter but which can be transformistically recovered in so far as the place of opposition itself becomes regular and, in that way, constitutes a new difference...”⁹⁶ This kind of antagonism becomes possible in spaces where differences are upheld and, hence, it is logical to recognize such antagonisms, which comprise the totality of the discursive formations that organic intellectuals would want to rally for. This resonates with Mao Zedong’s notion of handling contradictions among people.⁹⁷ The signifier “people” here amasses heterogenous and contradictory identities which although possibly antagonistic, can be properly solved by hegemonic articulation which shall draw the line between strata of classes and identities for alliance versus who the enemy is. These contradictions are necessary in the dialectical progression of constructing a proletarian hegemony that is based on the needs of Filipinos. The articulation of a hegemonic discourse ought to be a complex aggregate unification of disparate elements through an overdetermination of articulative discourses that seeks synthesis among the plural elements of the hegemonic project of the proletariat.

Organic intellectuals bring hope through action and the active formation of discourses. They ought to create movements, organizations, and other platforms to help ordinary people in their battles, whether in goods and services like medical or legal consultations. The organic intellectuals lead the organization to make Filipinos have a collective will and living. Every Filipino citizen should think critically in articulating the convergence of capitalists in gesturing forms of oppression without realizing what they are going through. In terms of value, the notion of *Bayanihan* is an organic notion in our culture. Hence, pushing for the ethics of volunteerism which is one core of Gramscian organic intellectuals where one sees their immanence with their classes and further act on critical praxis. Aware of the great number of Filipino masses in disadvantaged situations, organic intellectuals can commence their empathy by becoming volunteers. *Bayanihan* which is deemed a Filipino core value in the community pantries might be appropriated in synthesis with organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals render their time, skills, and knowledge to benefit the people and their cause. They conduct community service and support even without financial gain just for their mission of change and transformation

95 Ibid., 127.

96 Ibid., 128.

97 Mao Zedong, *On Practice and Contradiction* (London: Verso, 2017), 130.

of society in favor of the low-income class, the working class, and those in disadvantaged situations.

It is important to understand that social movements and initiatives are not just momentary but a long-term commitment, understanding that the goal might come to reality many long years beyond the existence of the movement's founding members. Mass protests and campaigns are essential with the help of media coverage; they can gain momentum when it is evident to the masses and gain new members. The alternative way of fighting hegemonic order is through changing the ways of thinking of others and having small meetings and local initiatives by involving them in discussions and in various forms of class struggles.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is always a historical task to pursue proletarian hegemony; hence, it should not be expected as an overnight work of change. The peak of rotten-to-core class society took hundreds of years to solidify its waning structures. In the final analysis, the unitary hegemonic articulation cannot be pursued without a vision of an alternative, socialist order. Now that the economy and other activities are slowly going back to old normal—hence, the ruling class of the rotten hegemony has shown to have learned nothing in the pandemic—the task of political emancipation endures a project worth pursuing.

Organic intellectuals can engage in various activities, such as organizing educational and cultural events that raise awareness about the issues faced by the working class and potential solutions. They can also facilitate discussions and debates that enable the working class to articulate their political aspirations and shape the direction of the movement. The community pantry movement, as an example, began as a grassroots initiative to provide food and other necessities to those affected by the pandemic. However, as the movement gained momentum, it became noticeable that there was an urgent need for a more organized and sustained effort to address the structural issues that underlie poverty and inequality in the country. Hence, a class-conscious movement must be a common horizon of the construction of this hegemonic articulation of the Filipino proletariat.

A critical aspect of operationalizing movements is ensuring they are guided by working-class or proletarian leadership. The people leading the movement should come from the working class or be intimately connected to their struggles and demands. The movement's demands are grounded in the material reality of the working class and not just abstract ideas. It is also essential to recognize that events like the community pantries can have potential for future proletarian politics. They create spaces for people to come together, share their experiences, and collectively organize for change. These events serve as a starting point for building a more substantial and sustained movement that challenges

the existing power structures and advocates for genuine progressive political changes. For instance, the community pantries as an immediate solution to food crises, are only one of the plural initiatives that may materialize proletarian leadership as exemplified by its popularity in the pandemic. Albeit what the pantries lacked is that it had been limited to being a liberal façade of charity. What should be necessary includes a hegemonic articulation of a demand. Political struggle cannot work without a demand that is in line with a hegemonic articulation. This demand is revolutionary in nature—it seeks to reveal to a wider horizon of social change; that a class society should be transformed into a kind where there is genuine free association of producers as Marx and Engels envision in their long-proposed alternative.

Proletarian hegemony, when it flourishes, can change society's political directives and economic relations and answer the demands of the hegemonized groups. It is an ethical and rational uprising of the people for societal transformation since the masses realize that their economic needs cannot be satisfied under the prevailing conditions of the present. Universalizing the interests of the locals and the whole country with different social classes is crucial to building a hegemonic bloc. The proletarian hegemony must represent the entirety of the masses and can only be possible when the groundbreaking social class grasps its hegemonic potential against any form of fascism. All members must understand this shared potential and be self-conscious about their struggles and capabilities—as proletariat hegemony cannot be realized without a thorough political struggle, conscious of a destiny in the making.

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