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Selections From The Prison Notebooks



Synopsis

PLEASE NOTE - There are some bad reviews here, based on the poor quality of the original kindle edition. This is to let people know that there's a new kindle edition now, which is much better, and totally improved. You can check for yourself by clicking 'look inside'. Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, written between 1929 and 1935, are the work of one of the most original thinkers in twentieth century Europe. Gramsci has had a profound influence on debates about the relationship between politics and culture. His complex and fruitful approach to questions of ideology, power and change remains crucial for critical theory. This volume was the first selection published from the Notebooks to be made available in Britain, and was originally published in the early 1970s. It contains the most important of Gramsci's notebooks, including the texts of The Modern Prince, and Americanism and Fordism, and extensive notes on the state and civil society, Italian history and the role of intellectuals.

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Customer Reviews

This volume was the first to present a coherent selection of Gramsci's thought in English. However,

it was published over 40 years ago and times have certainly changed, making it necessary to complement it with other writings. In the first place this was translated at a time when the critical edition of Gramsci's Notebooks did not exist even in the original Italian. Thus the excerpts here are taken from many different volumes of his writings, some of which had different editors and hence different priorities. Initially the Notebooks were brought out in part to facilitate the Italian CP's transition to reformist strategy after the war, so the reader should bear this in mind. Scholarship on Gramsci has advanced to the point as to discredit the editors' introduction and most of their notes. Hoare and Nowell Smith maintain that Gramsci's often obscure style was born out of a desire to hide what he was writing about from the prison censors, a widespread misconception that spread in English at least partly from their notes and partly from the influential essay by Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci." More recently it has been noted that given Gramsci's career it was highly likely he was writing about Marxism, and even his fascist guards would have realized this. His literary style has been deeply underestimated because of this conception. While he was constrained by material limitations such as not having access to a library and only being able to keep a certain number of notebooks in his cell at one time (plus the fact that they were notebooks, rather than fully fleshed-out works he intended for publication immediately), his writing is much clearer than he is given credit for.

Michel Foucault once remarked that Antonio Gramsci is a figure much cited and little read. Once upon a time (in the 90s, when things seemed more dismal, then they really were) neoconservatives were warned that Gramscianism was conducting a "long march through the institutions": leftists of a freethinking and free-wheeling bent threw around "organic intellectual" as denoting indigenous members of collective subjects not quite proletarian, and wondered whether "hegemony" was being orchestrated by hip-hop provocateurs. But in yet another retrenchment of yet another cruel decade, Gramsci has fallen off the map. The neocons wonder if Hillary Rodham Clinton is "angry" about things other than her man and Whitewater; the bohemian leftists wonder about Empire, or stay silent. Which is probably well enough, when it comes to the Gramscian corpus. For although this is the work of an ill-deserved confinement courtesy of one of the world's more notable totalitarian regimes, its stated aim is to be itself "totalitarian" in conception. Antonio Gramsci was something much more complex than a "freedom fighter", and his pronouncements regarding a multitude of subjects in this selection from his *Quaderni del carcere* deserve to be analyzed critically rather than merely sympathetically. "Open Marxism" this is not: Gramsci has three major tasks, all of which are compatible with Leninist-Stalinist orthodoxy (whether Gramsci would have been in full sympathy

with fully developed Stalinism is a question his being imprisoned moots).

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