

RELIGION AS SUBALTERN AGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of religion in facilitating the liberation of marginalised and oppressed groups, sometimes referred to as the subaltern. The word "subaltern," which connotes inferiority, was used by Antonio Gramsci to describe social groupings that are subjugated by the dominant ruling class. The subaltern classes primarily include individuals such as peasants, labourers, and other marginalised groups who have been systematically excluded from positions of hegemonic authority. This exclusion may be attributed to the historical focus on governments and dominant social groupings within the narrative of power dynamics. Gramsci posited that the historical trajectory of the subaltern classes has a comparable level of intricacy to that of the dominant classes. This work argues that, from Gramsci's perspective, the historical narrative of subaltern social groups is inherently fragmented and characterised by episodic occurrences. This is mostly due to the constant influence exerted by dominant groups, even in instances of rebellion. This work submits that it is evident that individuals belonging to this group possess limited opportunities to exercise agency over their own portrayal and encounter restricted access to cultural and social establishments. The cessation of subordination can only be achieved through a lasting triumph, not instantaneously.

Keywords: antonio gramsci; religion; ruling class; subaltern agency; subaltern classes

INTRODUCTION

The concept of subalternity, as articulated by Antonio Gramsci, represents marginalised groups systematically excluded from dominant power structures. These groups often lack the means for cultural and social representation, being perpetually subordinated by the ruling class (Green, 2002). Among such subaltern groups, the role of religion has emerged as a dual force both a means of maintaining subordination and a potential tool for socio-political liberation. This dual role creates a significant scholarly discourse around religion as an agency for emancipation (Jones, 2007). Two key phenomena highlight the empirical importance of this

topic. First, religious institutions have historically been used to validate existing power dynamics, reinforcing the hegemony of the dominant classes (Smith et al., 2013). For instance, in many colonised societies, the propagation of religious doctrines aligned with colonial powers served to suppress indigenous cultural identities and maintain socio-political control. Second, counterexamples exist where religion has provided marginalised groups a framework for resistance and emancipation. Liberation theology in Latin America exemplifies how religion can challenge hegemonic power structures and inspire socio-political movements. These contrasting phenomena demonstrate the complexity of religion's role within subaltern contexts and underscore the importance of this study.

Gramsci's work on subalternity and religion offers a critical foundation for understanding how religion functions within socio-political dynamics. Gramsci highlights the interplay of power, hegemony, and cultural discourse, positioning religion as a pivotal element in the development of subaltern agency (May, 2015). Building on this framework, contemporary scholars have deepened our understanding of this intricate relationship.

Recent studies provide significant insights. Reed (Reed, 2013) examined how religion reinforces common sense ideologies, showing its dual role in sustaining hegemony and facilitating dissent. Another study by Arnold et al (Arnold et al., 2012) explored the intersections of class, race, and religion, emphasising the importance of political praxis in reshaping the narrative of subalternity. These studies demonstrate the socio-political potential of religion in creating spaces for emancipation while also perpetuating structures of control. Both investigations highlight the necessity of a nuanced historical and contextual analysis to understand the evolving role of religion in marginalised communities.

This study aims to explore the dual role of religion in the socio-political emancipation of subaltern groups. Building on the findings of previous studies, it seeks to address existing research gaps by examining religion through the lens of Gramsci's theoretical framework. To achieve this, the research focuses on four primary questions: How does religion interact with the subaltern? What is the relationship between hegemony and the function of religion? How does common sense shape the role of religion? In what ways can religion serve as a subaltern agency of emancipation?

Through these questions, the study contributes to the broader understanding of religion as a socio-political force, offering new perspectives on its role within subaltern contexts. By

addressing these research gaps, this work seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical and cultural conditions shaping religion's dual role, thereby advancing scholarly discourse on the interplay between religion and subalternity.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this article is a qualitative approach with theoretical analysis. This approach focuses on the study of theoretical concepts, particularly Antonio Gramsci's ideas about the subaltern class, as well as arguments based on historical and conceptual analysis. The study begins by identifying and examining relevant literature, including Gramsci's writings on subalternity and previous studies related to the role of religion in the socio-political emancipation of marginalized groups. The research then analyzes how religion interacts with the subaltern class within the socio-political context, as well as the relationship between hegemony and the function of religion. This approach also explores the influence of common sense on the role of religion in society and how religion can serve as an agency of emancipation for subaltern groups. By analyzing this data through Gramsci's theoretical framework, the study aims to provide new insights into the role of religion within subaltern contexts and address gaps in existing research on this topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religion and the Subaltern

The traditional sociological perspective on the study of religion, notably as articulated by Durkheim, examines the role of religion as a cohesive force that serves to foster a collective social awareness (Crippen, 1988). In her 1984 paper titled "The Christian-Marxist Debate of the 1960s," Solle (1984) argues that comprehending the role of religion in society necessitates an examination of its dual function. According to the individual in question, religion has a dual purpose within society. On one side, it operates as a mechanism for justifying and validating the existing social order, including its culture of inequality. On the other hand, it also serves as a platform for expressing dissent, instigating transformative action, and facilitating freedom from oppressive structures. However, it is important to note that resistance against tyranny, exploitation, and dominance does not arise spontaneously. Religion, specifically, serves as a mediator in society, facilitating processes of tyranny and dominance.

The examination of the sociological aspects of religion often involves a significant focus on the role and influence of power within the governing and dominating class. The intricate nature of how different religious groups prioritise their interests is a multifaceted process. Antonio Gramsci's significant contribution to the field of sociology of religion lies in his provision of a conscious historical understanding of the socio-political influence exerted by the ruling or dominant class on the interests and preferences of subaltern groups. Conversely, Gramsci also explores how subaltern groups resist and counteract dominant influences in order to attain their autonomy. Marx and Engels placed more emphasis on the social relations that directly impact religion, while assigning comparatively less significance to the cultural aspect (Ortner, 1984). Contrarily, Gramsci acknowledged the cultural domain as a somewhat independent area inside society that serves as a significant intermediary in the whole of social existence.

Gramsci's views are deliberately encoded due to the constraints imposed by jail censorship. Furthermore, Gramsci did not alter his ideas at a later time, which contributes to the challenge in comprehending his concepts. In the perspective of Antonio Gramsci's writings, Geoffrey Nowell Smith asserts:

Gramsci's writings in the Notebooks are like a network, or a web. Although there is a coherence to them, this coherence is not linear; it is established through multiple branching out, with arguments that double back on themselves and reconnect laterally rather than in sequence, as a result the sort of univocal reading we expect to be able to make of writings in the Marxist tradition is difficult to achieve in the Notebooks. They require a different sort of suspended attention, an openness of reading to match their openness of writings (Gramsci, 1971).

Antonio Gramsci developed his critical social theory of religion via a rigorous critique of the idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce and the Marxist determinist philosopher Karl Kautsky. In his theoretical analysis, Kautsky has simplified the Marxist conception of societal change into a deterministic and mechanical principle (Harder, 2010). Gramsci is a member of the Marxist cohort that includes Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. In addition to Gramsci, these Marxist thinkers regard the socialist revolution as the ultimate outcome of political strife. In contrast, Gramsci places more emphasis on the significance of cultural warfare. According to his analysis, the class conflict seen in Western countries has undergone a transformation into a cultural battle inside civil society, with the aim of acquiring and exerting influence over state operations. Gramsci's work conceptualised this battle as cultural hegemony.

Hegemony and the Function of Religion

According to the theories put forward by Gramsci, the capitalist society operates in a manner where the ruling class maintains its power and control by either coercive means or through the establishment of hegemonic structures. According to Gramsci, hegemony refers to the socio-cultural and political authority wielded by the ruling and dominating class, which is sustained by the agreement of the people in order to maintain their hierarchical structure. Force and hegemony are inherent in all class societies, and both of these elements serve to reinforce the prevailing hegemonic ideology (Ayodabo & Amaefula, 2021). According to Gramsci, the concept may be understood as the notion of 'hegemony fortified by force.'

The notion of hegemony differs from the Marxist interpretation of false consciousness or hegemonic ideology. The idea of hegemony does not accurately represent socioeconomic reality. Gramsci's objective is to save Marxist theory from the constraints of deterministic and mechanical interpretations of the social reality's mode. Therefore, the individual has an understanding of hegemony as a political achievement that lacks any inherent historical assurance. The dominant social class places more emphasis on explicit coercion and, in some cases, resorting to violence in instances when they are unable to get permission from subordinate groups in order to retain their position of power and control.

The establishment of a hegemonic order has not been a spontaneous process. The sociocultural advanced group first aligns themselves with the perceived interests of inferior groups and garners their support. Consequently, the superior group assumes moral and intellectual leadership over the others. The ruling class use power and hegemonic order to assert their moral, intellectual, and religious perspectives as representative of the lower class. According to the theories put forward by Gramsci, the establishment of a hegemonic system involves a significant contribution from organic intellectuals, who play a vital role in disseminating their particular viewpoint to the broader population. The intellectual collective sustains and validates its perspective by exerting socio-cultural, ideological, moral, and religious influence on the broader community. The dominant social class asserts its leadership authority by the utilisation of its economic and political influence, as well as its lawful power and strategic alliances with subordinate classes. Consequently, the subaltern or dependent groups inadvertently internalise the dominant worldview without engaging in critical analysis. According to the theories put forward by Gramsci, the attainment of dominance in the socio-

cultural, moral, religious, and intellectual realms may be attributed to the establishment and maintenance of a hegemonic order by the ruling class.

According to the theories put out by Gramsci, the maintenance of ruling class dominance is not just reliant on the utilisation of repressive state apparatuses. Instead, this dominance is mostly maintained by the exertion of moral and intellectual leadership. This kind of leadership is manifested and enacted by the collective presence of educational, religious, and political institutions within the civil society. According to Gramsci, the attainment of hegemony over subordinate classes is primarily contingent upon the process of education. According to his assertion, every instance of hegemony inherently entails an educational dynamic. In the given situation, Gramsci posits that education serves two contradictory tendencies. Education, facilitated by institutions like as schools and churches, plays a significant role in fostering a transformative type of hegemony that challenges the prevailing viewpoint and supports the advancement of revolutionary movements. Furthermore, the repressive educational role serves to uphold the prevailing ideology by means of many institutions within civil society, including but not limited to legal, political, moral, and religious establishments. Gramsci interprets the coercive schooling system in a critical manner. The intellectual and moral implications associated with the dominant or ruling class align with prevailing societal norms, since the dominant worldview tends to be unquestioningly adopted by the general population. Consequently, the concept of hegemony undergoes a transformation whereby it manifests as a culture characterised by the exercise of dominance and submission. The aforementioned construct encompasses a prevailing perception of reality, serving as a framework of significance and worth that validates the hierarchical structure of society as inherent. According to Raymond Williams in his work entitled "Marxism and Literature":

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular class (Williams, 1977).

According to Marxist theory, the ruling class seeks to enforce its prevailing viewpoint onto society, however encounters resistance from the oppressed class on occasion. Gramsci's

critical critique of popular culture includes an examination of the resistance shown by the marginalised social class. According to the individual in question, popular culture, including religion, constitutes the societal and ideological framework of the general populace. Popular culture has the potential to erode the cultural underpinnings of the prevailing social group. According to the writings of Antonio Gramsci:

Every religion, even Catholicism (indeed Catholicism more than any, precisely because of its efforts to retain a surface unity and avoid splintering into national churches and social stratification), is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and often contradictory religions: there is one Catholicism for the peasants, one for the petit-bourgeois and town workers, one for women, and one for intellectuals which it itself variegated and disconnected (Gramsci, 1971).

In this context, popular culture has the potential to foster a reactionary movement via the incorporation of progressive aspects. However, the significance of the progressive element within popular culture has often diminished due to its inherent contradictions and lack of coherence. In Italy, the application of the Catholic Church's theology was often used as a means to suppress the prevalent religion among the populace. As a result, popular religion in Italy began to be seen as a kind of passive resistance.

According to the theories put forth by Gramsci, the cultural dominance of subordinate groups is closely tied to their worldview. As a result, in order to achieve political objectives, it is necessary to reshape the religious culture of these marginalised groups. This transformation aims to convert their religious worldview into a form that opposes the prevailing hegemonic order, making it more widely accepted and capable of challenging the dominant cultural norms. According to Otto Maduro, a prominent Neo-Marxist scholar, in his seminal work titled "Religion and Social Conflict," he highlights the challenge faced by subordinate classes whose predominant worldview is rooted in religion. Maduro argues that these classes may encounter obstacles in actively engaging in societal transformation unless their religious worldview undergoes necessary transformations. The aforementioned process of transition among subordinate groups gives rise to a novel and radical religious culture. Gramsci posits that the cultivation of organic intellectuals among subordinate groups is essential in order to enable their active participation in shaping the course of global history. To attain a state of revolutionary consciousness and effect societal transformation, intellectuals belonging to the subordinate class must disassociate themselves from conventional ideologies and prevailing philosophies. Simultaneously, it becomes imperative to cultivate a novel cultural milieu among

the masses, aimed at countering the prevailing common sense propagated by popular religion and folklore.

Gramsci argues that popular culture mostly assimilates the prevailing ideology without subjecting it to critical examination. Hence, the prevailing perspective held by the general populace is mostly characterised by a lack of coherence and critical introspection. The responsibility of intellectuals from marginalised groups is to cultivate a comprehensive, self-aware, and critical awareness. As Gramsci says:

To criticise one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you any infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory (Gramsci, 1971).

Common Sense and Religion

Gramsci used the concept of "common sense" to denote the unreflective manner in which individuals see and comprehend the prevailing worldview within a certain historical period. According to the individual in question, common sense may be seen as the philosophical perspective of those who are not formally trained in philosophy, as well as the philosophical perspective derived from traditional beliefs and customs. The author posits that common sense refers to the worldview that is passively assimilated by individuals within different social and cultural contexts, shaping the moral character of the typical person. Common sense may be described as a condition of belief that lacks coherence and is commonly shared among members of a certain community. According to the theories given by Antonio Gramsci, it may be argued that each civilization has its own distinct kind of common sense. The prevailing societal norms and values within a given community are subject to continual evolution.

During the process of metamorphosis, common sense consistently incorporates scientific concepts and philosophical perspectives, so enhancing its overall understanding and knowledge base. The entity in question is responsible for the creation and development of the field of folklore philosophy. Therefore, the role of common sense within a certain community is achieved via the socio-cultural position of the general population. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that common sense, although including elements of truth, often lacks cohesiveness, consistency, and comprehensiveness. According to Gramsci, the concept

of generating a novel common sense pertains to the emergence of a fresh culture and philosophy that firmly establishes itself inside the collective awareness of the populace, with a comparable potency and compelling nature as the conventional views that previously constituted common sense (Cooter, 1984).

The critical examination of Antonio Gramsci's work places emphasis on various factors, including common sense, popular religion, and cultural institutions. These factors play a role in conditioning subordinate social groups and contribute to the estrangement experienced by subaltern groups. This estrangement hinders their ability to effectively organise politically and challenge the dominant hegemonic order. The subaltern population has challenges in constructing a cohesive political and cultural framework due to the lack of conscious leadership. Consequently, individuals conform to the prevailing worldview and find themselves unable to transcend their subordinate status. The individual also recognises that the subordinate group's ability to generate and structure a cohesive worldview is hindered by their constrained cultural and political awareness. The author notes that although conscious leadership is evident in the ongoing political mobilisation of subaltern groups, it remains limited to the realm of conventional wisdom. According to Gramsci (1971), common sense is deemed insufficient as a basis for achieving a successful political and cultural revolution. Common sense operates inside society in two distinct ways. The act of establishing socioeconomic exploitation as natural helps to the subjection of individuals, while simultaneously fostering a critical knowledge of their circumstances.

In the Italian context, Gramsci notes that common sense gives rise to a paradoxical social dynamic that is heavily shaped by the cultural impact of the Catholic Church and the Risorgimento movement, a nineteenth-century political and economic unification effort. The cultural norms perpetuated by common sense ideology foster a social environment in which the peasant class is inclined to internalise and see their subjugation as an inherent and unalterable condition. According to the theories put forward by Antonio Gramsci, the ruling class in Italy engages in the consolidation and exertion of their power by means of barring the populace from active participation in many aspects of governance and societal affairs. Consequently, the general populace is unable to generate their own representative who can effectively guide their political and cultural endeavours towards a unified trajectory. In his theoretical analysis of common sense, Antonio Gramsci (1971) posits that religions, including

both the prevailing religion of a particular era and preceding religions, as well as popular heretical movements and past scientific concepts, constitute the primary constituents of common sense. The ideology of the Catholic Church in Italy exhibited a dual nature, serving as both the religious belief system of the general populace and as the religious affiliation of the educated or intellectual individuals. The Catholic Church's dual mission facilitated the maintenance of relationships between religious officials and the general populace, while also enabling a degree of aristocratic selection. The religious practises observed by the general populace include some Christian tenets and aspects of folklore. The Catholic Church has assimilated some aspects of popular religion and transformed them into a collective consciousness among the general populace.

In Italy, the lower-class individuals, including peasants and commoners, often succumb to superstitious beliefs influenced by the Christian church. This tendency arises from their desperate circumstances and a lack of optimism over their socio-economic conditions, compounded by limited opportunities for political mobilisation. However, the Catholic Church does not promote or endorse active political activity among the peasant class and ordinary people as a means to improve their living conditions. Contrarily, the Catholic Church's teaching espouses the notion of poverty as an integral component of the Biblical worldview. The Catholic Church acknowledges the concept of private property as an inherent right and cautions against any infringement against this right. Catholic beliefs advocate for the acceptance of suffering among the impoverished and marginalised individuals within society, seeing it as a manifestation of divine will. The Catholic Church views poverty as a moral and theological concern rather than only an economic one. Hence, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the issue of poverty is posited to be resolvable alone via the practise of charity, which is seen as the ethical obligation of adherents to the Christian faith. According to Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks:

This general question should be examined within the whole tradition and doctrine of the catholic church. The principal assertions made in the encyclicals of the more recent popes, that is the most important ones since the question assumed historical significance: 1) private property, especially 'landed property', is a 'natural right' which may not be violated, not even through high taxes (the programmes of 'Christian democratic' tendency for the redistribution – with indemnity – of land to poor peasants, as well as their financial doctrines are derived from these assertion); 2) the poor must accept their lot. Since class distinctions and the distribution of the wealth are ordained by god and it would be impious to try to eliminate them; 3) almsgiving is a Christian duty and implies the existence of poverty; 4) the social question is primarily moral and religious, not economic, and it must

be resolved through Christian charity, the dictates of morality, and the decree of religion (Buttigieg, 1992).

Gramsci posits that religion operates inside society via two distinct modes: the religion of the masses, and the religion of the intellectual or ruling elite. The prevalent religious system, which encompasses the convictions, rituals, and ethical principles of the marginalised community, serves as a means of articulating their worldview via a religious lens. The term refers to the theological understanding of the immediate manifestation and the connection between individuals. Contrarily, the intellectual and dominating class's religious beliefs prioritise a theoretical comprehension of global religions inside a cohesive and unified framework, as facilitated by priests and theologians.

Furthermore, the cultural phenomenon of folklore may be characterised as fragmented due to its composition of disparate elements from former cultures and practises, frequently exhibiting inherent contradictions. Gramsci used the word 'folklore' to denote the cultural expressions of marginalised social groups, as well as the manner in which these groups interpret their own experiences through the lens of their intellectual, moral, and religious frameworks. However, the development of folklore is often shaped in a systematic manner by the prevailing philosophical, hegemonic cultural, and religious ideological influences. Gramsci argues that a comprehensive and cohesive theoretical comprehension of religion has significant political influence. According to John Fulton's assertion:

[A religion] could not have become elaborated intellectually, morally and organizationally unless it had been in the past, or has become in the present, a hegemonic form in society, a means of social control at the level of the mind and the heart. There is a direct connection in Gramsci between social control and intellectual elaboration. That which is hegemonic in the thought and behaviour of people is also an intellectually detailed and integrated system of interpretation and organisation, though this integration and details exist outside the people and in the intellectuals (Grelle, 2016).

Gramsci posits that the Catholic Church effectively maintains social connection with subaltern groups by means of amalgamating the religious beliefs of the general populace with those of the intellectual or cultured individuals. The Roman Catholic Church consistently pursued the preservation of this dualistic religious framework. Nevertheless, the church has maintained the cohesion between these two factions; nevertheless, the intellectuals were not inherently connected to the subaltern groupings. Hence, the educated or intellectual segment of society tends to overlook the political concerns of the less privileged masses, thereby failing to elevate them to a higher intellectual standing. Consequently, the marginalised or subordinate

groups find themselves unable of participating in political activism without a clear and unified vision, as well as without the guidance of their own indigenous intellectual elite. Consequently, they are unable to improve their societal circumstances by any kind of religious revolution. Gramsci posits that the common sense derived from religious beliefs often offers an insufficient resolution to societal issues, resulting in a passive political mobilisation whereby the public see their socio-economic circumstances as both inherent and legitimate. Gramsci had a nuanced comprehension of the intricate nature of the Catholic Church within the context of Italy, but he always refrained from seeing religion through a negative lens.

Gramsci posits that subalternity encompasses a complex interplay of cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics that impede the autonomy of the subordinate class by assimilating them into the dominant hegemonic framework (Arnold et al., 2012). Within the realm of religious studies, the subaltern study delves into the exploration and analysis of how the prevailing class effectively maintains its hegemonic structure via the dissemination of religious ideologies, including social, political, cultural, and intellectual dimensions. The theoretical discourse of Antonio Gramsci has significant importance due to its focus on the notion of subalternity. This concept highlights the means by which marginalised groups might develop a viable political praxis in their efforts to overcome their subordinate position.

Gramsci's analysis reveals the presence of dual awareness among subaltern individuals. Initially, the awareness to effectuate societal change via their employment. The inherent awareness of the subaltern social class is hence liberating and self-governing. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the imposition of awareness onto the subalterns by the dominant social, political, and cultural forces. The consciousness that is forced onto the susceptible subaltern from an external source is seen as an alien consciousness. In the given context, Partha Chatterjee avers:

Religion which succeeds in establishing a dominant and universalist moral code for society as a whole can then be looked at from two quite different standpoints. For the dominant groups it offers the necessary ideological justification for existing social divisions, makes those divisions appear non-antagonistic and holds together a potentially divided society into a single whole. For the subordinate masses, religion enters their common sense as the element, which affords them an access to a more powerful cultural order; the element of religion then coexists and intermingles in an apparently eclectic fashion with the original elements of common sense (Guha, 1989).

The subaltern class has the potential to ameliorate their oppressive social circumstances by attaining a state of critical awareness, which is facilitated by their own organic intellectuals.

These intellectuals possess a shared critical understanding of history and arise from within the subaltern class, acting as their representatives.

Antonio Gramsci's critical socio-political perspective posits that religion functions as a kind of common sense that lacks the capacity to generate the essential critical awareness required for revolutionary activity. The production of critical awareness is not facilitated by religion due to its tendency to separate the thoughts and actions of ordinary people from their own agency. Gramsci argues that institutional religion always seeks to maintain the prevailing social order by impeding the subordinate class from attaining a transformational critical historical awareness.

Religion as Subaltern Agency of Emancipation

Throughout the annals of societal development, religion has assumed a multifaceted function, serving as both a tool for upholding the prevailing social order among the dominant and ruling strata, as well as a means of resistance used by the subordinate class. The idea of agency is often used in Gramsci's theoretical analysis of religion. The word 'agency' in this context pertains to the conceptualization of how marginalised populations engage in religious practises as a means to challenge and transcend their subjugation, exploitation, and lack of power. It also explores how religion, as an active agent, contributes to the formation of novel cultural norms, identities, and social structures.

In order to comprehend the role of religion in society as a catalyst for social transformation, it is essential to first grasp the dual roles of religion. Religion, in its role as the prevailing social order, serves to validate the dominant ideology, the inequitable allocation of resources, and the hierarchical structure of society as inherent or divinely ordained within the established governing framework. Religion serves as a mechanism to maintain the prevailing social order by offering a transcendental rationale. The prevailing notion of religion in contemporary culture is on its pursuit of ideological dominance inside a given state or empire. In order to achieve this objective, religion actively engages in proselytization, exerting considerable effort to propagate its teachings across all strata of society. However, it is inevitable that some factions within society would experience alienation and exploitation at the hands of the prevailing social class, since the established religious beliefs fail to effectively convince all sectors of the population.

Furthermore, the role of religion as a mechanism of resistance becomes apparent among the marginalised community. Across the annals of human civilization, religion has emerged as a means of resistance used by marginalised or disenfranchised factions, giving rise to an alternative religious milieu characterised by distinct cultural, philosophical, and moral frameworks. The ideology of resistance is intrinsically linked to the prevailing hegemonic social structure. Hence, it overtly shows animosity and dissatisfaction with the prevailing hegemonic social structure. The presence of many religious forms of resistance poses a significant challenge in attempting to encapsulate these various forms under a one, all-encompassing term. The shared characteristic of all religions of resistance is their critique of religion as an established societal norm.

Within the given framework, Bruce Grelle (2016), in his scholarly work titled "Antonio Gramsci and the Question of Religion," examines two distinct forms of resistance: passive resistance and active resistance. As to his perspective, the passive religious opposition has little inclination towards altering the prevailing social structure and is restricted to a certain geographic area. The objective of passive religious resistance is not to achieve hegemony, since it entails the critique of the intellectual dominance of religion as the prevailing norm. Instead, it generates a distinct subculture with relative characteristics. In contrast, active religious opposition places significant emphasis on the comprehensive change of the prevailing social structure, achieved by either reformation or revolution. Bruce Grelle argues that the roles of reformation and revolution may be distinguished by examining the dimensions of change, including the scope and tempo, as well as the level of violence inherent in the transformative process.

The Reformation primarily centres on specific concerns and exhibits a lesser degree of explicit violence, whereas revolution is characterised by its inherent violence and encompasses a broader range of societal phenomena, including social, political, economic, cultural, intellectual, and theological aspects. These entities also exhibit dissimilarities in terms of the consequences of discursive techniques, which include various forms of language. The discursive strategy is a very significant analytical and contextual technique that is used to examine the role of religion in society. The reformation technique involves the alteration or adjustment of some elements pertaining to the matters at hand, with the aim of imbuing religious symbols, ideals, and concepts with a new significance. In contrast to the process of

reformation, revolutionary strategy places significant focus on achieving a complete transformation of the current order of things. This encompasses several aspects, including the ethos, worldview, institutional structure, and ideology that are now in place. A revolutionary approach entails the simultaneous introduction of new symbols, values, meaning, and ethos. According to Gramsci, the effectiveness of revolutionary endeavours is not just contingent upon the critique and dismantling of prevailing societal conditions. Instead, it is also intricately connected to the establishment of a fresh and innovative framework including moral, legal, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions.

The political implications of reformation and revolution are inherently uncertain. The political role of reformation is shown via two distinct manifestations: conservative reformation and progressive reformation. The conservative reformation movement serves a political purpose by rejecting the principles of secular modernity, thereby generating a feeling of nostalgia and advocating for a restoration of past traditions. Contrarily, the progressive political role of the reformation movement places more focus on the alteration of the current social structure and extends beyond the confines of contemporary reality, including intellectual, moral, and ethical principles. Likewise, the multifaceted nature of the political role played by revolution renders it inherently ambiguous. The political nature of revolution, like to reformation, manifests itself in two distinct manifestations: traditionalist revolution and anti-traditionalist revolution. The anti-traditional revolutionary approach pertains to contemporary societal issues, including but not limited to injustice, inequality, oppression, dominance, and subordination of marginalised groups, as manifested in various social, political, economic, cultural, and moral contexts. As per the perspective of the anti-traditional revolutionary movement, addressing such a societal issue poses significant challenges within the current social framework. Hence, the resolution of this societal issue inherently demands a comprehensive transformation, including the rejection of the current social structure, while simultaneously establishing a whole novel framework for communal existence. The French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 serve as prominent instances of anti-traditional revolutionary revolutions. Contrarily, the political purpose of conventional revolution was to address contemporary societal issues with the intention of reinstating a condition whereby religious doctrine serves as the foundation for the reconciliation of the holy

and profane, as well as the material and ideal aspects. One instance that exemplifies a conventional revolutionary movement is the Iranian Revolution that occurred in 1979.

The anti-traditional revolution is characterised by its robust critique and rejection of the repressive social, political, and ideological establishments. However, it is important to note that this movement does not adopt an anti-religious stance. Within this particular framework, Antonio Gramsci argues that the French Revolution, despite its introduction of novel contemporary notions like as equality, liberty, and fraternity, was fundamentally grounded in the prevailing Christian culture of the bourgeois and peasant strata. Bruce Lincoln argues that the French Revolution brought about a shift from religious orthodoxy to a secular culture, as the revolutionaries saw the need of embracing a contemporary perspective. According to Bruce Lincoln:

For the vast majority of them, the struggle was not one of secular ideology against religion, but of true religion against superstition. One looks in vain for total nonbelievers in the French and English revolutions. As Robespierre, the most fascinating figure of the French Revolution put it: "It is not enough to have overturned the throne; our concern is to erect upon it remains holy Equality and the sacred Rights of man." Nor is his religious language either accident or hyperbole, for it was the Jacobins, led by Robespierre, who sought to establish the cult of the Supreme Being in place of Christianity, and who referred to their messengers as apostles going forth to establish a new religion (Lincoln, 2010).

In his scholarly work titled "Antonio Gramsci and the Question of Religion: Ideology, Ethics, and Hegemony," Bruce Grelle presents a novel perspective that complements the traditional dichotomy between reformist and revolutionist strategies for effecting social transformation. One of the new approaches outlined by Bruce Grelle is referred to as transformation. Gramsci's theoretical analysis of religion mostly revolves around the third strategy to facilitate the process of social transformation. In this particular context, it is crucial to comprehend that throughout the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, there existed a continuous discourse among Marxist researchers about the distinction between reformist and revolutionary approaches to the essence of profound societal transformation. Proponents of a revolutionary strategy for societal transformation highlight the need to engage in extra-legal and violent means to dismantle oppressive structures and systems, particularly within the context of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The proponent of reformism, in contrast, places emphasis on the attainment of socialism via constitutional methods. According to their perspective, it is feasible to garner the backing of a significant majority of people through active engagement in the

electoral process, therefore using the mechanisms of state governance as a means to institute socialist principles.

Gramsci posits that the attainment of socialism cannot be achieved just via the use of force but rather requires a multifaceted approach, including intellectual and moral reform as well as educational and political upheaval. The potential for such a revolution lies in the creation of an alternative dominant culture that is cultivated among the subaltern groups and their own intellectual circles. According to the theories put forth by Gramsci, socialism is the outcome that arises when people actively engage in the process of societal change, reaching a state of maturity. The successful implementation of this change necessitates the advancement of educational practises that can inspire and effectively connect with subaltern groups, fostering their alignment with socialist ideals. Additionally, active collaboration is essential to establishing and maintaining the desired social order.

The concept of intellectual and moral change in Gramsci is rooted in the historical influence of Christianity as a religious framework. Gramsci posits that the attainment of a new hegemonic culture is seen as a twofold endeavour, including both human and societal dimensions. This endeavour entails the ethical and cognitive metamorphosis of consciousness. The individual under consideration regards the intellectual and moral change as an embodiment of socialist practise, including a range of historical movements and ideologies, including but not limited to the Renaissance and Reformation, Calvinism, Protestantism, German philosophy, and the French Revolution. The nature of the reformation is characterised by its religious and moral aspects, as well as its inclusion of support from both subaltern groups and socialist intellectuals.

According to the theories posited by Gramsci, religion inherently has political characteristics due to its role in society, which is intricately linked to power dynamics. Gramsci also identifies some aspects of religion, like belief, devotion, and cultural elements, inside socialism, but in a more elevated manner. Within the framework of socialist praxis, the prevailing conventional wisdom undergoes a transformative process, whereby it evolves into an active conceptualization that transcends the realm of religion. The individual has a comprehension of socialism as a dynamic worldview that does not exist in complete opposition to religion. According to their perspective, socialism encompasses a comprehensive outlook on existence, including philosophical, spiritual, and moral dimensions.

Gramsci posits that the imposition of socialism from external sources is an unattainable endeavour, as socialism instead arises organically as a manifestation of awareness within the subaltern collective. Hence, the incorporation of new concepts or principles is not only a question of transmitting information but rather entails the assimilation of subaltern culture and the legacy of revolutionaries. The establishment of a reciprocal relationship between theory and practise may be facilitated by this approach, creating a foundation for the development of counter-hegemonic culture.

Gramsci posits that the philosophy of praxis serves as both the underlying basis and the substantive essence for the emergence of a new cultural paradigm. The author posits that subaltern groups possess the agency to construct their own cultural practises, which diverge significantly from those of the ruling and dominating classes. The emergence of a new subaltern culture has the potential to displace the conventional religious perspective, prevailing myths, and biases, establishing the subaltern communities as the primary creators of a genuine universal value. Antonio Gramsci's notable scholarly contribution is in his examination of the intricate connection between religion and morality in the context of power dynamics, particularly in advocating for the subaltern class throughout societal history.

Gramsci posits that the establishment of a socialist counter-hegemony is contingent upon the active and direct engagement of the people. According to his perspective, the establishment of socialist consciousness inherently necessitates an active and interactive engagement with the general populace. However, Gramsci posits that hegemony plays a crucial role in the establishment and perpetuation of the prevailing social order, relying on a combination of intellectual and moral persuasion with coercion and force. However, it is important to note that the subaltern has the potential to generate a counter-hegemonic stance and assume the role of an oppositional interpretation of the prevailing religious worldview.

In the contemporary global era, a range of ideological alternatives have emerged, posing a potential threat to the prevailing dominant worldview. These alternatives have the capacity to criticise and engage in struggle against the coercive nature of this dominant worldview. Particularly, subaltern groups, whose interests have been marginalised within the current social order, play a crucial role in this process of criticism and resistance. According to the theories posited by Gramsci, it is conceivable that throughout the course of consciousness transition, both intellectual and moral awareness may play a pivotal role in the

establishment of a new social order. However, the inquiry is focused on identifying the potential agent responsible for facilitating this societal shift. In this particular framework, Gramsci espouses a Marxist perspective that posits the organised proletariat as the catalyst for revolutionary societal transformation in contemporary industrialised society. However, Antonio Gramsci, in his influential work known as the Prison Notebooks, redirected his focus from the organised working class towards the political party. The individual comprehends that the political party would serve as the catalyst for implementing significant societal changes. The revolutionary political party actively engages in the education and mobilisation of subaltern groups, aiming to bring about intellectual and moral reform within society. According to Bruce Grelle (2016), the conceptualization of a political party actively involved in comprehensive societal reform is a challenging endeavour.

The process of revolutionary change encompasses not just the pursuit of power over existing structures but also a significant ideological fight. According to Gramsci, the socialist struggle arises as a result of an extended "war of position" that encompasses the pursuit of intellectual and moral leadership within civil society. The socialist revolution may be seen as a gradual and ongoing process rather than a singular event.

Gramsci contends that Marxism has two fundamental obstacles. Firstly, Marxism offers a novel mode of awareness that aligns with the development of society. Within this particular framework, Gramsci posits that Christianity derives advantages from the intellectuals who undertake the task of interpreting the Christian notion of the world and translating it into practical awareness. According to the individual, St. Paul assumes an active role in this particular situation. The moral and political stance of St. Paul at that particular era significantly contributed to the development of the Christian worldview, which Gramsci regards as a profound revolution. Gramsci viewed St. Paul as a prominent strategist who played a pivotal role in the advancement of Christianity's revolutionary agenda. According to the author, it can be said that Marx played a crucial role in the intellectual introduction of a new historical period, while Lenin was responsible for the practical implementation of this worldview. Furthermore, Marxism posits that the preservation of social order necessitates the presence of moral and intellectual integrity.

According to Gramsci, the primary responsibility of intellectual authorities involved in revolution is to generate a robust critique of the prevailing ideology and actively contribute to

the development of an ethical framework that aligns with a more advanced understanding of reality, surpassing conventional wisdom and embracing a critical perspective, albeit within certain limitations. However, a notable issue within the realm of the philosophy of praxis is that the individuals who attained great intellectual prowess in this field were not only scarce in number but also lacked a direct connection with the general populace. Instead, they were representatives of conventional intermediary social classes, from which they would retreat during significant historical junctures.

As per orthodox Marxism, revolution is the outcome of an inexorable social change occurring within a certain historical time. Lenin's idea of revolution centres on the attainment of governmental authority as a means of effecting political reform. Gramsci does not endorse Lenin's revolutionary paradigm. In contrast, Gramsci's perspective posits that the revolution occurs via intellectual and moral change facilitated by ideological conflict within civil society. As per his assertion, it is imperative to demystify the position of the ruling class within the realm of popular belief before engaging in any kind of violent conflict. Within this particular environment, the political party aims to consolidate intellectual and moral leadership by bringing them together within a unified democratic institutional structure.

Within the framework of endeavours aimed at societal transformation by revolutionary and reformist means, Gramsci consistently aligns himself with the revolutionary tradition, displaying a pronounced scepticism towards the approach of reformation. Bruce Grelle argues that the transformational method, as it pertains to Gramsci's theory, has significance in comprehending an alternative discursive strategy that religious movements might use. The use of transformational discursive techniques encompasses both reformative and revolutionary approaches, resulting in a comprehensive transformation of intellectual, moral, ideological discourse, and the institutional framework of society. The transformationalist method is shown by Martin Luther King's use in the United States. Martin Luther King, an African American Christian pastor, vocalized his opposition to the discriminatory and racially biased policies in the United States after the conclusion of the Second World War. During this historical period, individuals of African descent experienced severe mistreatment at the hands of those of European descent in several public settings. In the United States, there was a discriminatory policy that enforced racial segregation between black and white individuals. Martin Luther

King assumed a prominent and influential position in the United States' pursuit of equal rights, using the teachings of Jesus Christ as espoused in the Bible.

It is crucial to comprehend the dynamic character of religion and its role in the social, political, and cultural aspects of human existence by examining the many strategies used within the religion of resistance, including reformist, revolutionary, and transformational approaches. Hence, the endeavor to achieve social transformation via religious and moral discourses is aimed at establishing a connection with socio-political comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework developed by Antonio Gramsci pertaining to religion encompasses several categories, including hegemony, common sense, popular culture, and intellectual, which serve to elucidate the socio-political roles fulfilled by religion. Antonio Gramsci's notable contribution to the discourse on religion lies in his conceptualization of its role as being intricately linked to political power and the pursuit of socialist revolution.

The theoretical examination of religion has significant significance within the framework of the societal roles that religion plays. In his work, Gramsci undertakes a reconstruction of the Marxist understanding of ideology, with particular emphasis on the examination of the cultural role of religion. This is achieved via an elaboration of the notion of hegemony. The author provides a definition of religion as a "cohesive belief system that encompasses both a particular worldview and its corresponding ethical framework." The author presents a novel interpretation, moving beyond the conventional understanding of religion as a simple acceptance of the existence of supernatural beings. The author also used the term 'active conception of the world' as a means of defining religion. From a sociological standpoint, his concept of religion reveals two distinct facets.

In the realm of the supernatural, religion may be seen as a dynamic framework through which individuals engage with the natural world and their interactions with other human beings. Furthermore, the role of religion exhibits variation in relation to power dynamics. Consequently, the individual seeks to grasp the role of religion within various social strata, endeavouring to elucidate the interplay between the religious beliefs held by intellectuals and those embraced by the general populace. The author's understanding of common sense,

theoretical praxis, cultural hegemony, and popular culture is widely regarded as a vital resource for the critical examination of religious studies.

Bruce Grelle asserts that Antonio Gramsci's analysis is characterised by a notable aspect, namely his perception of Marxism as a novel secular religion that attempts to assimilate its comprehensive worldview and practical ethical framework within a unique cultural context. Gramsci articulated the notion of "modern intellectual and moral reformation" as a means by which the subaltern might engender a new social, political, cultural, and religious dynamic.

It would be inappropriate to assert that religion and morality consistently serve as instruments of oppression. Within the realm of ideology, it is important to acknowledge that religion and morality have a purpose that extends beyond just legitimising systems of oppression. In contrast, religious and moral discourses may function as a mechanism for subaltern groups to engage in protest and resistance, aiming to emancipate themselves from the repressive structures of the social system, as well as from conditions of poverty and helplessness. Throughout history, religious ideology has often functioned as a medium for the expression of social critique, the development of an alternative moral framework, and the establishment of a distinct societal structure. Gramsci's focus is on the role of ideology in generating transformative historical processes, rather than just serving to rationalise and legitimise prevailing systems of governance and societal conditions.

According to the theories put forward by Antonio Gramsci, it is posited that the popular masses has the capacity to generate a sequence of movements aimed at reforming religious culture in a manner that aligns more closely with their own vested interests. However, these groups were ultimately unsuccessful not just because to their communitarian perspective, but rather because they were unable to develop a viable strategy to counteract hegemonic forces. In order to achieve success in a revolutionary fight, it is necessary to cultivate an independent intellectual leadership, which in turn facilitates the creation of counterhegemony via the rejection of the prevailing hegemonic worldview.

In his theoretical discourse, Gramsci posits that the ruling class is able to sustain its hegemonic rule by means of cultural dominance, whereby they establish their own governing ideas as the ideas embraced by the general populace. Similar to Marx and Engels, he has an understanding that religion operates inside society as a hegemonic apparatus, serving to oppress the subordinate class. However, it is important to note that the subordinate class have

the ability to establish a counter-hegemonic system by using religion as a means, facilitated by their own organic intellectuals. Within the framework of counter-hegemony, the religious figure representing the subordinate class assumes an active role as an organic intellectual, effectively disseminating their own ideology in opposition to the dominant religious doctrine. Furthermore, under this particular framework, people such as mystics, religious leaders, and diverse socioreligious movements that are characterised by fragmentation have the potential to function as agents representing the subaltern.

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