



## Gramsci's Plan - Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 - A Summary

Gramsci's Plan Volume I encompasses almost 700 pages. That is a thick board even for practiced readers. Gramsci's interpretation of Kant had to be sufficiently densely supported by quotations. The historical drama of the Enlightenment, which began with the Renaissance in Italy and the Reformation in Germany and culminated in the American and French Revolutions, was to be preserved in its unity and not divided among several books. The following text contains a summary of the 2nd chapter "Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800". The genesis and content of Kant's rational law based foundation of the democratic republic are presented in this text in about 20 pages. Quotations, historical facts and a number of topics such as the treatment of Spinoza's philosophy have been largely omitted. This summary is intended, first, to convey the core message of Gramsci's Plan Volume I more easily to the world and, second, to arouse interest in extended reading. In presenting this philosophical topic, the author is not merely concerned with providing historical insight or moral support. It is also intended as an effective argumentative handout in the worldwide struggle for the democratic republic.

My interest in Antonio Gramsci developed already as a political activist in the 1980s. The content of my Master-of-Arts thesis, Albuquerque/USA 1989, was published in 1991 by Prof. Frank Deppe as Working Paper FEG No. 5 under the title "Antonio Gramsci - Hegemony, Historical Goat and Intellectual Leadership in International Politics". There is a link on the author's site [www.gramsci-plan.net](http://www.gramsci-plan.net) to download the paper. I received my Ph.D. in 1995 with a thesis on the decline of institutionalized cooperation in world politics between 1945 and 1990. Over 10 years ago, my interest in Gramsci's "prison notebooks" reawakened. I have since made the study of his work a labor-intensive hobby alongside my employment as a partner manager in the IT industry.

Robin Jacobitz, February 20th, 2022

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## Science, Politics and Reason - Kant and the Rational Law Variant of the Enlightenment

In 2022, humanity faces two acute challenges: The Covid-19 pandemic must be overcome and the looming climate catastrophe averted. In both cases, it is a matter of saving millions of lives and fighting for a future worth living for all in an intact ecosphere. In addressing these crises, the global community - the United Nations and its member states - relies on science. Science does not establish dogmas, certainly not religious dogmas. The natural sciences in particular try to describe reality with the help of logically founded hypotheses, mathematical models, with experiments and simulations. The observed phenomena, such as the corona virus or global warming, are to be explained, the causes determined and effective, scientifically based countermeasures identified. Science thrives on the dispute between different views, which in a constant process struggle for the truth with arguments - i.e. in the form of proofs, refutations and counter-theses. In the case of the pandemic as well as in the case of global warming, there is a working global consensus of the vast majority of scientists from all nations involved.

Science in the sense just described is referred to by Kant as theoretical reason. Politics should critically evaluate the results of science and translate them into concrete measures. Both - science and politics - are to be monitored and corrected by a critical public, which can only flourish in political freedom. Politics, with Kant, is called practical reason. Both theoretical and practical reason do not produce eternal truths, but only a process of constantly contested consensus, in which, in a democracy, every person should participate with his or her vote in public disputes and elections. The foundations of the democratic republic and of theoretical and practical reason were developed in this sense by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) at the time of the French Revolution. Without taking this philosophical foundation into account, Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis" and his central concepts such as "hegemony" and "civil society" must remain pale or incomprehensible.

### Gramsci and Kant - how do they fit together?

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was the leader of the Italian Communist Party, a philosopher, and a victim of the fascist regime under Mussolini in Italy. Gramsci served time in prison from 1926 to 1937 and died shortly after his release. In his "Prison Notebooks," he undertook an attempt in some 2,000 pages to gain an understanding of European history from the Renaissance (rebirth) and Risorgimento (resurgence) in Italy, the Reformation in Germany, through the French Revolution, to the workers' revolutions of 1917 to 1921 in Russia, Germany, and Italy. "Gramsci's Plan - Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800" presents his view of the Enlightenment in Europe and the historical significance of Immanuel Kant's philosophy.

Kant (1724-1804) was the most important theorist of the rational law variant of the Enlightenment. He developed not only a theory of knowledge and science but also the basic features of bourgeois ethics and a new form of state that emerged from the 300-year struggle for the liberation of the bourgeoisie against feudalism: the democratic republic. The First French Republic, founded in 1792 in the course of the French Revolution under the leadership

of the Jacobins, was the first state in which the constitution provided for general suffrage – a suffrage only for men. Threatened from within and without by feudal counterrevolution, the First French Republic perished in Jacobin terror only a few years later. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant nevertheless defended this republic because it corresponded to the principles of reason he had outlined. Kant therefore saw in the democratic republic the future of humanity. Gramsci, in his "Prison Notebooks," examined a thought of Hegel, who had pointed out that Kant had given a philosophical form to the demands of the French Jacobins - liberty, equality, fraternity. Marx had written in 1842 that Kant's philosophy must rightly be regarded as the "German theory of the French Revolution." Kant is better known for heavy-handed philosophical constructions such as the thing-in-itself and the categorical imperative. In his "Prison Notebooks," Gramsci pursued a track that runs counter to all of Marxism-Leninism, - better, Stalinist philosophy. He conceived of Marx's philosophy as a reworking of Hegelianism. Hegel, although completely at odds with Kant's principles of a representative republic, is inconceivable in many regards without his great predecessor Kant. Consequently, Gramsci saw in Kant's philosophy the beginning of a Kant-Hegel-Marx line of philosophical development. To mark Kant's position in this chain, he used the metaphor of the first annual ring of a new philosophy in the "Prison Notebooks."

### The struggle for the democratic republic - today

Today, a clear majority of people worldwide live in a state with a parliament and universal suffrage for women and men. In many nations, however, the political freedoms as well as human and civil rights first proclaimed by the French National Assembly in 1789 are weak or threatened. In other nations, even these rights must be realized in the first place. In the last decade, two trends emerged in the global struggle for a democratic republic. Beginning in 2011, a democratic awakening in Arab nations began with many hopes. However, except for Tunisia, these hopes were shattered. In recent years, other protests and uprisings for democratic republics have taken place primarily in Sudan, Chile, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Belarus, Thailand, and Myanmar, but also as the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. The other trend is that over the last decade, political forces have been elected to office in democratic states in various nations, threatening democracy from within: Orban in 2010 in Hungary, Erdogan in 2014 in Turkey, Modi in 2014 in India, Donald Trump in 2016 in the US, Bolsonaro in 2018 in Brazil. All five politicians pursue nationalist policies against international cooperation in their foreign policy and the undermining of democratic achievements on their domestic policy.

All five heads of government rely significantly on reactionary, anti-science religious milieus in their countries. Orban, Modi and Trump incited against refugees and went with restrictive measures against people in need. Specifically, Trump and Bolsonaro downplayed or denied the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change and its consequences. Trump and Bolsonaro rely on factions of capital that want to prevent a global phase-out of fossil fuels and continue the depletion of nature. A transition to fascist forms of rule cannot be ruled out in all five politicians. In the politics of Trump, his party and his movement, fascist moments were recognizable from the beginning. This trait was clearly demonstrated on January 6, 2021, when several thousand Trump supporters attempted to storm the Capitol to prevent Congress from confirming the results of the November 2020 elections. The struggle for a democratic republic is thus being waged not only in Sudan, Myanmar, Belarus and Chile, but

also in the world's metropolises. In "Gramsci's Plan - Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800", the historical development of the Enlightenment, which achieved its breakthrough in the First French Republic, its justification by Kant and its world-historical significance are presented.

## Antonio Gramsci - the thinker of the defeats of the European labor movement

Antonio Gramsci was born in Sardinia in 1891. At the age of 22, he began studying in Turin in the fields of literature and philosophy. During World War I, he joined the Italian labor movement and began writing articles for socialist newspapers. Gramsci already showed a strong interest in classical German philosophy during this period. This philosophical current, whose most important representatives were Kant and Hegel, had gained much greater relevance and vitality in Italy in the late 19th century with the philosophers Antonio Labriola and Benedetto Croce than in its country of origin, Germany. In the "Prison Notebooks," Gramsci made the demand that the heritage of classical German philosophy must not be inventoried, but must become active life again. In 1919, after the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the November Revolution of 1918 in Germany, the Italian workers' movement tried to impose workers' control over production in order to be able to define an independent way out of the economic crisis of the postwar period. In the course of the struggle for workers' control, large-scale factory occupations and mass strikes occurred in 1919/20. Gramsci took part in these struggles in Turin in a leading position and wrote much-discussed reports to the just-founded Communist International. The phase of the offensive of the workers' movement ended in Italy by 1922, with the installation of the fascist Mussolini as prime minister. In the years that followed, democracy in Italy was stifled bit by bit. Incarcerated from November 1926 on, Gramsci reflected on the defeats of the revolutionary movements in Europe in the years 1917 to 1921. What is truly significant in Gramsci's work comes from the combination of his profound knowledge of the philosophies of Kant, Hegel and Marx and his experience of the Turin factory councils movement.

### Gramsci's Plan

According to the author's understanding, Gramsci developed a plan in his "Prison Notebooks" that included four themes: the reconstruction of Marx's philosophy, the critique of Soviet philosophy and its precursors, the hegemony of the bourgeois classes, and the emancipation of the subaltern classes. The presentation of Gramsci's thought along these four themes contains at the same time the core of his "philosophy of praxis". The aim and purpose of the plan was the philosophical preparation of a second attempt to overcome bourgeois society. Volume I of "Gramsci's Plan" is devoted to the reconstruction of Marx's philosophy and specifically to the significance of Kant in the epoch of the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800. In traditional Marxism, Kant is held to be either an idealist, a reactionary, or a subscriber to fideism, that is, someone who would hold to religious faith against reason. In contrast, Gramsci saw Kant's philosophy as the starting point of a new current in the history of philosophy, which was continued by Hegel and Marx. Gramsci's thinking in prison collides with all the major currents in philosophy. His interpretation of Kant breaks with the tradition of orthodox Marxism, Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism, bourgeois-liberal understanding, and the standard academic interpretation. For the Marxist tradition, the very attempt to trace a Kant-Hegel-Marx line of

development is an outrageous scandal, because it calls into question the materialist foundation of Marx's philosophy. Gramsci even went a step further; he proposed to bury everything that had been said about this Marxian philosophy since Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The bourgeois-liberal and the academic philosophy have largely ignored the revolutionary content in Kant's thought. His concept of a democratic republic, a democratic and federal world order as well as his positive reference to the First French Republic were rarely appreciated. Thus, the categorical imperative, which grounds and calls for the movement of reason in the democratic republic, became an individual compass for moral questions such as whether I may commit suicide or bear false witness in emergencies. In contrast, Gramsci's whole endeavor was to restore the heritage of classical German philosophy in Marxian philosophy to relevance for the tasks and problems of humanity in the future. For Gramsci, access to Karl Marx's philosophy had to be sought through Hegel. Hegel, in turn, cannot be understood without Kant - neither in continuity nor in difference. This outlines the theme of the first volume of "Gramsci's Plan." The first volume will be followed by others on Hegel and Marx.

### [Gramsci's Suggestions for a Book](#)

Volume I of Gramsci's Plan on Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is oriented to the suggestions Gramsci made for books based on his preliminary work in prison. For example, he advocated understandable language without many foreign words. Gramsci also suggested that the history of philosophy be told as a historical drama in progress. This rather rarely practiced approach should lead to the philosophical thought remaining tied to the needs of its time, to the geographical space in which it was thought, and to the social conflicts, it reflects.

A reading of the relevant passages in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks revealed that Gramsci himself chose a classical order for the thematic subdivision of philosophy. Gramsci took this order from the work of Kant; it is formed by four questions. These questions are: What can I know? This question outlines the thematic field of epistemology and philosophy of science. What should I do? Herewith the field of ethics is entered. Not individual moral questions are discussed, but the fundamental question of how social norms or laws come about. What may I hope for? This question opens the field of the philosophy of history. Are there any trends at all in the history of humankind? If so, by which criteria do they become recognizable? The concept of hope aims at a rational account of one's own historical project. Kant's fourth question reads: What is man? The answer to the first three questions, according to Kant, should allow a philosophical answer to this question.

### [The feudal historical block and philosophy](#)

Philosophizing is understood as thinking about life and the human world. Beyond the tumult of daily politics, fundamental questions are raised. Philosophy in this sense means to reflect consciously on essentials in order to give one's own activity a conscious direction. Guided by Kant's four questions, Gramsci illuminated the changing responses of science, religion, philosophy, and everyday mind in the era of the Enlightenment. It is specifically through his analysis of the everyday mind that Gramsci stands out from the crowd of philosophers. He tried to get all people in focus with this term, because they are the ones who really make history in their daily lives. All people are philosophers and philosophy is neither an esoteric nor an academic enterprise. Gramsci's entire oeuvre cannot be understood without this fundamental reappraisal of philosophy and the everyday mind. In his view, feudal society in



Europe must be understood as a "historical bloc" expressing the inner unity of socio-economic content and ethical-political form. This bloc, whose emergence can be placed at around 1250, underwent a process of dissolution and decomposition from 1500 onwards, followed by the transition to the bourgeois epoch around 1800. The history of the feudal bloc is inextricably linked to the development of the dominant philosophy and the dominant way of thinking of the people of that epoch, that is, the Roman Catholic religion. So how did the long-term transformation of the everyday mind in Europe from the strictly religious imagination of feudal society to a democratic republican consciousness come about? How did philosophers at the time of the Enlightenment discuss the drivers and motives of such a colossal development?

## The 300-year struggle for liberation of the bourgeoisie against feudalism

**Gramsci's Plan - Volume 1: Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is an interesting read even for philosophical nonprofessionals because ... the philosophy of the Enlightenment is presented in understandable language and embedded in the 300-year liberation struggle of the bourgeois classes against feudalism.**

Gramsci, in his reappraisal of European history, had the 300-year struggle for liberation of the bourgeoisie begun with the Renaissance in Italy and the Reformation in Germany from about 1500. With his investigations, he tried to understand the Europe-wide revolt against the feudal society, a society whose economic structure was characterized by landowning nobles and serf or bonded peasants and whose intellectual life was determined by the religious dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. The Holy Roman Empire was a state structure with the Pope in Rome as its head, which held together large parts of feudal society in Europe since the 13th century. The Holy Roman Empire was a divine state in which the word of the Bible and pope generally held more sway than the secular rule of emperors, kings and princes. The Catholic Church had its own position of economic power within feudal society: the Church was the greatest of all feudal lords. Gramsci understood the philosophy of an epoch in a broad sense to include the sciences, religion, philosophical currents, and everyday mind. Within the feudal "historical bloc", religion was the dominant component. Its principles of life and the world determined the sciences, everyday mind, and left little room for divergent views even in philosophy.

### The epoch of Enlightenment began with the Renaissance and the Reformation

The commercial city-states of Upper Italy had been able to gain special status within the Holy Roman Empire as republics, as states without a princely ruler. In the 15th century, a new culture emerged in these cities in northern Italy, which was later called the Renaissance (rebirth). Connected with the return to the cultural achievements of Greek and Roman antiquity was a humanism that clearly set itself apart from the Roman Church's view of man. From about 1500 onward, various kingdoms, some under the leadership of the Pope, attempted to crush these republics and their center, the Republic of Venice. In Central Europe, bourgeois society flourished, especially in the cities where the Reformation had spread rapidly from 1517. Protestantism, with its leading figures Luther and Calvin, spread across Central and Western Europe to England, Scandinavia, and later to the American colonies. The

bourgeois economy, i.e. modern capital, grew out of the large manufactories in the commercial cities, and it was in these that the modern proletariat emerged. The Italian Wars between 1494 and 1559 and the peasants' revolt against serfdom in Germany in 1524-26 were the prelude in the 300-year struggle for liberation against feudal society. Until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the Catholic and Protestant camps waged a relentless war against each other throughout Europe. The new form of state for which the anti-feudal forces fought was the republic, that is, a state in which the church and kings formally had no power and the state itself could become a public affair, in Latin a "res publica". Thus, the state entities and their people were also no longer subject to feudal succession. The state did not initially become a public thing in the modern democratic sense, but it became so for the bourgeois manufactory owners, merchants, master artisans and civil servants.

### The goal of the bourgeois revolutions was the establishment of republics

The history of republics in Europe began with the Upper Italian republics and continued in the English Republic under Cromwell and the Republic of the United Netherlands in the 17th century. Upper Italy, the Netherlands, and then Great Britain were the centers of bourgeois wealth production in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. The founding of the federal republic of the United States of America in 1787 and the First French Republic in 1792 marked a culmination of the bourgeois struggle for freedom and, at the same time, a temporary conclusion. Although only a shadow of earlier days, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation did not fall until 1806, after Napoleon defeated the troops of Austrian Emperor Francis I at the Battle of Austerlitz. In his notes, Gramsci introduced the most important philosophical masterminds of these republics: Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Rousseau, and, indeed, Kant. Both Kant and later Marx and Engels referred to the great liberation struggles of the bourgeoisie. What they had in common was that they simultaneously pointed to another side of bourgeois society in the epoch of enlightenment: colonialism, i.e. the seizure, colonization and plundering of non-European territories and the oppression, enslavement and extermination of their indigenous peoples.

The following interpretation of Kant's philosophy follows the thoughts of Gramsci, who tries to work out its lasting value in European history. In this sense, Kant's missteps in relation to women and "savages", which are discussed today, will not be addressed. Kant's position within the broad spectrum of Enlightenment philosophers is unique. He elaborated a comprehensive counter-proposal to the philosophy of feudal society even before the revolutions in America and France: in epistemology, the sciences, religion, ethics, and the philosophy of history. The goal of his philosophical intervention was the transformation of the everyday mind - so that man recognizes himself as a free and rational being and acts accordingly.

### Epistemology and the meaning of reason

**Gramsci's Plan - Volume 1: Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is an interesting read even for philosophical nonprofessionals because ... the importance of reason in our cognitions, in the sciences, and in the democratic republic is elaborated based on Kant's writings.**



Kant's first question "What can I know?" refers to the subject of epistemology and the philosophy of science. Kant epistemology was the doctrine of the concept, which attributed to each person the capacity to use his mind and reason. This doctrine was associated with the intention of freeing the everyday mind from the religious doctrine of knowledge, which intended to recognize the work of God in nature and the relationships of human beings. Hegel's dialectic built on Kant's doctrine of the concept; Marx, in turn, reshaped Hegel's dialectic, using the metaphor of "inversion" for this work. Without his theory of knowledge, without his concept of reason in the theory of knowledge and science, Kant's ethics and thus his theory of democracy must remain incomprehensible.

### Does the sun revolve around the earth or the earth around the sun?

The 300-year struggle of modern natural sciences against the dogmas of the Catholic Church was one of the most important socio-political aspects of the Age of Enlightenment. This conflict ignited primarily over one overriding issue. The physicists and astronomers of the time questioned the validity of the geocentric view of the world and thus the place of man and the earth in the universe. Had God created the Earth and placed it in the center of the solar system, as the Bible stated, or was it that the Earth had to revolve around the Sun, as many philosophers and astronomers had recognized and proven from the 1500s onward. Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and countless other scientists risked head and neck when they publicly advocated the heliocentric worldview. Many ended up on the pyres of the Inquisition. The world-famous physicist Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was able to publish his proof of the heliocentric worldview because he already had better working conditions in England under the sign of the Enlightenment. In this sense, the Enlightenment continuously fought for the freedom of science, which consists in the fact that a new, better hypothesis can prevail in scientific dispute against an old one. For example, the assumption that the planets move in circular orbits was replaced by the assumption that they must move in elliptical orbits.

Kant stood in the tradition of these great scientists. He began his career as a polymath in 1755 with an anonymously published book on the origin of the solar system. His model worked without the assumption of God as driving force, which Newton had still woven into his calculations. Kant drew a central epistemological conclusion from the more than 300-year dispute over the position of the Earth, which was later called the Copernican turn in epistemology. The truth of human knowledge cannot be found in the Bible or sense impressions, but in the constructions of reason, which can be proved, improved, and, if necessary, disproved. The statements of the Bible about the position of the earth in the solar system were wrong. Just like the sensual impression of a movement of the sun in the form of a sunrise and sunset. This movement of the sun was firmly anchored as truth in the everyday mind in accordance with religion. The assumptions of a movement of the earth around its own axis and around the sun, on the other hand, were correct and lead to demonstrably correct predictions about the movements of the planets in the solar system. In 1781, Kant published the "Critique of Pure Reason." The book caused a philosophical earthquake because in it Kant refuted all the proofs of the existence of God that were common at the time. In the years that followed, Kant became a fierce critic of religion and especially of the denominations established in Germany. In this context, he states the incompatibility of theology and reason.

### The faculty of the mind: The processing of perceptions into concepts

In the "Critique of Pure Reason," Kant developed an epistemology that was appropriate to the newly emerging conceptual worlds of bourgeois society in, for example, the natural sciences, the judicial system, and technology. The central statement of this epistemology was, "All cognition requires a concept." The true knowledge of the solar system and the position of the Earth in it can be obtained precisely only from the scientifically founded concept of the solar system. Kant's doctrine of the concept was incompatible both with the Christian worldview and with a sensualistic theory of knowledge, which wanted to gain knowledge from sensual perception. The senses can be used to receive stimuli from the object world. The mind, however, judges objects by means of a concept. The ability of the mind consists in processing impressions to concepts. Man preforms his sensual impressions by means of space and time and elaborates concepts with the help of logical categories (quality, quantity, cause-effect, interaction, possibility, probability etc.) and logical operations (compare, reflect and abstract). Space, time and logic are subjective-human forms of cognition. Because humans can only know things in this way, therefore things cannot be known as they are "in themselves". The construction of concepts happens by the processing perceptions into ideas and the linking of the meaning of these ideas with words. It is true that every single person as an individual being is involved in this process, thinks and works with his concepts in his/her own language. According to Kant, however, concepts are "socialized", i.e. they are social constructions beyond individual arbitrariness and capriciousness. Concepts, such as that of the car, are constantly changing, are contested, change their meaning without or with changing the word, as in the case of the e-car. Concepts form the linguistic building blocks in the sciences, in technology, in the laws of the state, but also in colloquial language, that is, in social communication as a whole. In the 21st century, we learn concepts in school and college, we look up terms, their current meanings and nuances mostly on Wikipedia. Kant's doctrine of the concept forms the starting point for Gramsci's investigations into the historicity of languages and colloquial language, following the linguists Michel Bréal (1832-1915) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913).

### The faculty of reason: the production of ideas

According to Hegel, putting reason at the side of mind was an innovation of Kant. According to Kant, the faculty of reason consists in the production of concepts, cognitions and principles a priori and of ideas. A priori means as much as independent of all sensuous experience. A concept a priori is, for example, that of consciousness, a knowledge a priori is the knowledge that the earth must revolve around the sun. A principle a priori is the principle of cause and effect. An idea is a mental construct of an object that does not exist and therefore cannot be sensually experienced. Kant did not link ideas with their material realization in the reality of people's lives; this step was taken by Hegel after him. Kant created a first version of a doctrine of the concept, on which Hegel would later build. Kant expanded his theory of knowledge into a theory of science whose principles still claim validity today. According to this, man does not take laws from nature; rather, logically founded hypotheses, often based on mathematics, that are tested against natural phenomena as models of reality. If these hypotheses are confirmed over a long period, some of them might be called laws. Science thus becomes a "historical category" (Gramsci). New theories and hypotheses replace the old ones after they have been disproved or shown not to explain certain phenomena. Reason always

sublates itself in this process, as the development of the sciences in the two centuries after Kant has shown. While astronomy in the 19th century still assumed an ether in connection with an absolute time and an absolute space, in the 20th century the big bang was investigated, a construction which completely contradicts the conception of an ether. If the atom model at the beginning of the 19th century assumed smallest, indivisible particles, the standard model of the particle physics comes today on 17 elementary particles. The "thing-in-itself" as a central element of Kant's theory of knowledge and science results in this consideration from the fact that an infinitely developing reason will discover again and again hitherto unknown aspects in things by the use of new mathematical models, methods and experiments. The real essence of things is therefore not recognized, but always only redefined according to the state of science. The "thing-in-itself" thus becomes a boundary term indicating what is not yet known.

### The maxim to think for oneself at all times is the Enlightenment

The feudal-religious philosophy of life and the world increasingly lost its persuasive power during the 300 years of the Enlightenment. Many people could not and no longer wanted to implement the eternal truths and the miracles of the Bible, the belief in a God who exists and guides the destinies of people, as guiding principles of their lives. The primary goal of feudal science was to know the divine creation. Everything that left this narrow framework - for example in astronomy, medicine or technology - was denied, forbidden or even persecuted. The feudal order, with its serfs, guild system and the dogmas of the Catholic Church, proved incapable of reform and became a shackle for the burgeoning bourgeois economy, which depended on the modern natural sciences. In the cities of Europe, an independent culture emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. Natural science, law and technology broke out of the feudal university and research establishment. The classes of bourgeois society - the free citizens and wage laborers - gained in importance. The image of man that developed in the cities was no longer compatible with that of a serf subject. Serfdom in feudal agriculture was successively pushed back in Europe between 1750 and 1860 and finally legally abolished. The demands of the enlightened bourgeoisie for a codification of the separation of church and state, for freedom of religion and opinion, for freedom of research and a free press, and ultimately for guaranteed civil rights and political participation grew louder. In this phase, Kant wrote an article in 1784 entitled "What is Enlightenment?" In it, he formulated his famous phrases "Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own mind! is thus the motto of the Enlightenment." Kant thus summed up a long-lasting transformation of the everyday mind, the reach of which extends into the modern age and now across the entire world. Without such a transformation taking hold of the vast majority of people in a nation, there can be no solid social basis for living under self-imposed laws. Thinking for oneself, coming of age, thinking rationally, logically and scientifically means thinking beyond religious dogmas and sensual certainties. According to Kant, all human beings possess the faculty of reason. Whether a person allows himself to be convinced by the astronomers' evidence for the movement of the earth around the sun or whether he remains with the traditional religious view is a decision of the subject. Becoming mature, thinking and acting rationally cannot be forced.

## Kant's Ethics and His Foundation of the Democratic Republic

**Gramsci's Plan - Volume 1: Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is also an interesting read for philosophical nonprofessionals, because ... in times of threat with Kant's philosophy, a reassurance can be made regarding the foundations of the democratic republic and the worldwide spread of this form of government since the First French Republic.**

Kant's question "What shall I do?" referred to morality, to the ethical foundations of a society. The central principle that Kant saw growing up in bourgeois society and in the break with feudal society was the mutual recognition of people as rational beings. On this basis, he formulated his imperatives, those injunctions that every rational being should follow.

### Only rational beings can set their own ends

In 1785, also well before the French Revolution, Kant published a book entitled the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals." In it, he elaborated a new conception of the morality of bourgeois society as distinct from feudal society. It was an attempt to bring the ethical substance of bourgeois culture "to the concept". In contrast to the divinely ordained order of feudalism, which had divided people into a few masters and many servants, Kant recognized in man a being who could set his own ends. However, according to Kant, man can not only set his own purposes, but also exhibits a will of his own, in order to select from a multitude of purposes, those which correspond to his own interests and needs. In order to realize purposes, appropriate means are required. Every human being is in principle capable of developing his own will by using his reason to think and realize his/her own purposes. In accordance with his epistemology, Kant declared that the autonomy of the will consists precisely in its independence from religion and nature. The will is practical reason and autonomous in the creation of its rules. In defining the will, Kant was not concerned with individual decisions. These can be characterized by arbitrariness and be based on reflexive or instinctive patterns of behavior. For Kant, the will was the capacity to act according to self-established general principles. He called these principles maxims, i.e. individually as well as socially founded conventions for life in a society. The general laws of a state also pursue a purpose. They arise from an idea of a social being-ought to be achieved in the future and thus have an a priori character. Reason is required for the determination of the legal purpose and the provision of the means for its realization. If the general law comes about through the will of an individual, there is a monarchy or a dictatorship. If the law arises from the will of a few, an oligarchy rules, which amounts to a dictatorship too. If different variants of the law can be discussed in freedom and all citizens have an equal right to vote, then a democratic republic has been established. For Kant, only the laws of a democratic republic were entitled to truth and respect. For the existence of reason rests at all times on the consent of free citizens, who must be able to express their concerns, even their veto, without restraint.

### The will of every rational being is to be recognized at all times as part of the general law giving will

Kant summarized the ethics of bourgeois society, insofar as it had developed under feudalism, in terms of a set of imperatives and accompanying principles that rational beings should follow in their decisions. An imperative is an answer to the question "What shall I do?" The imperative on which all others are built is the so-called ends formula. Kant wrote in 1785:

"Act in such a way as to use humanity, both in your person and in the person of everyone else, at all times at once as an end, never merely as a means." This imperative calls on individuals to recognize each other in their everyday lives as setting their own ends, that is, as rational beings. Thus, the ethical basis of the democratic republic is pronounced. For this mutual recognition of individuals as rational beings endowed with a free will opens the way to a society that can give itself laws in freedom. From this Kant derived the principle that the will of every rational being is to be recognized at all times as part of the general law-giving will. Kant based this ethical principle, which can be regarded as the ethical justification of general suffrage, on his own epistemology. Both the laws recognized in nature and the general laws of a republic are constructions of reason, historical, i.e. changeable categories. 8 years after the publication of the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" a republic was founded in France in 1792, whose constitution corresponded to the principles developed by Kant. Therefore, Kant defended the First French Republic with the general suffrage for men older than 21 years several times. So that no misunderstandings arise here: The Jacobins in France did not orient themselves on Kant, but on Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers. That is why Kant's philosophy is only the German theory of the French Revolution. In the 19th century, the experience of the French Revolution gave rise in many nations to the call for general suffrage: One man, one vote! Women's struggle for universal suffrage became successful only at the beginning of the 20th century. A consequence that is of decisive importance for the consciousness of the citizens of the state and the character of the laws is: The will of the citizens of the state is itself law-giving; they are subjected only to those laws as whose author they can regard themselves. For Kant, the dignity of man was not a gift from God or a derivation from man's position in nature. Rather, he saw the autonomy of the will, and thus reason, which can be brought to fruition in the form of its own general laws, as the true ground of human dignity. Therefore, for him, the dignity of humanity consists in the ability to be generally law-giving. Thus, the dignity of man springs from his own thought and action, which can be fully realized only in a state of self-legislation in the democratic republic. Kant's philosophy did not deal with overcoming the social classes of feudal society or the emerging bourgeois society. The impulse that emanated from his philosophy on the everyday mind related to the ethico-political form that those new bourgeois state entities - the republics - were to assume. This ethico-political form consisted in the political equality of all citizens of the state based on mutual recognition as rational beings. The ethical core of the democratic republic, the realization of a new form of freedom, also grew out of this principle. Kant coined the liberal concept of freedom, which unites the arbitrariness of one with the arbitrariness of the other according to a general law of freedom. Kant lived in a time when neither slaves, serfs, day laborers nor women were recognized as independent rational beings. The entire 19th century, in those nations where there was anything at all like representative democracy - England, the United States, and, in phases, France - was filled with the struggle for the political equality of these people. In England, the Chartists, with whom Marx and Engels were closely associated, fought to extend census suffrage. In the U.S., a civil war was fought over emancipation and thus political rights for slaves in the South. The era of the realization of women's equality in suffrage did not begin until 100 years after Kant's death in the early 20th century. Kant advocated that people who were not recognized as rational in his time should not have obstacles placed in their way in the process of becoming mature.



## A necessary reinterpretation of the categorical imperative

**Gramsci's Plan - Volume 1: Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is an interesting read even for philosophical nonprofessionals because ... Kant's "categorical imperative" must be reinterpreted as the fundamental political norm of the democratic republic if his ethics are to be understood as the "German theory of the French Revolution" (Marx).**

The categorical imperative, with its answer to the question "What shall I do?" forms the summit of Kant's ethics of bourgeois society. Without its observance, the movement of reason cannot be established; a democratically constituted society cannot come about. The traditional interpretations miss this content, which is significant historically as well as for the present, because the revolutionary content of Kant's philosophy is not recognized in the upheaval of the epochs.

## Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a general law

As early as 1785 in the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals", Kant formulated an imperative of which there can be only one: the "categorical imperative". This forms the summit of the ethics developed by Kant and brings movement to the ethical core of the democratic republic. In the categorical imperative, Kant used two nouns: the maxim and the law. The maxim is a particular subjective rule of a group of enlightened individuals for practical behavior in society. The law is a general and objective rule of the democratic state for the practical conduct of all citizens. The categorical imperative, as formulated in 1785, reads, "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it become a general law." It was suggested in the sentence to replace "by which" by "of which", which is incomparably more meaningful. The individual should act only according to that maxim of which he can will that it become a general law. In the "Critique of Practical Reason" of 1788, the categorical imperative was: "Act in such a way that the maxim of your will can at the same time be considered the principle of a general legislation." The concept of general legislation makes the thrust of the categorical imperative even clearer. The categorical imperative demands from citizens of the state an ethical conduct that not only tolerates the conflict between the maxim of a minority and the general law of the majority, but also recognizes it as the supreme principle of the development of reason in freedom. The categorical imperative is the practical translation of the Enlightenment's motto - "to think for oneself at all times" - into the political space of the democratic republic. This can only succeed if political freedom, a free press and public discourse are guaranteed by the state. The categorical imperative gives rise to the fundamental political norm of the democratic republic, i.e. a process that goes to infinity, in which one maxim of social reason, which is currently a general law of the republic, can be replaced by another maxim of social reason. Kant attached three preconditions to a reasonable maxim: it must have a general character, that is, it must be valid for all citizens and not arbitrary; people must not be reduced to a means; and the maxim must prevail in a political process in which all citizens participate with one voice. In modern democracies, social maxims are "broken" and reformulated many times by parties, parliaments, governments and ministries. However, there are also procedures of direct democracy (referendums, etc.) in which Kant's principles are directly applied.



## The Categorical Imperative - Instead of a Long Explanation

In the book "Gramsci's Plan - Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800", on p. 424, an attempt is made to explain the categorical imperative in an easily understandable first person form. "I am a rational being because by virtue of my reason I can check all rules to see if they hold up before my thinking - my logic. I am a rational being whose reason becomes practical by giving myself my own maxims for my life by virtue of my will. I know that I can also think up reasonable maxims for social coexistence and stand up for them in freedom. I can also act practically according to these maxims, even if - in certain cases - at the price of violating applicable laws. I know from experience that my maxims, but also those of all other rational beings, can become general laws through a political process in which everyone participates with their voice. I therefore know that I, together with all other citizens, am the author of all existing general laws. In this way, I confirm my dignity as a rational being who has free will and recognizes only those laws in the creation of which all have participated with their vote. The highest moral principle of the social living together consists for me in the fact that my maxims, but also those of all others in a certain procedure can become general law. If I live in a state that does not allow or prevents me and others from advocating that my maxims or theirs can become general laws, then I will rebel."

## Kant's "Perpetual Peace" and the Philosophy of History

**Gramsci's Plan - Volume 1: Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 is an interesting read even for philosophical nonprofessionals because ... the postmodern discrediting of the philosophy of history is countered by placing the current struggle for the democratic republic in the context of Kant's goal of history. Kant called for a democratically organized and federally united humanity on the grounds of reason.**

Kant explained the question "What may I hope for?" by the formulation, "If I do what I am supposed to do, what can I hope for?" If people would adhere to his imperatives, then it may be hoped that - despite all adversities and the possible relapse into barbarism at any time - a democratically organized and federatively united humanity can be achieved as the goal of all efforts.

## The philosophy of history unjustly ended up in the lumber room of philosophy

The philosophy of history deals with the course and possible goals of human history. Is there progress in human history and if so, what are the criteria for it. Is human society moving inexorably toward barbarism or toward its self-destruction? Has the end of history been reached with the liberal, democratically constituted society? Can there be a "scientific socialism"? At the time of the French Revolution, Kant drafted a plan whose explicit goal was to replace the entire feudal order with a bourgeois order of the world of states. As early as 1784, he wrote his "Idea for a general history with cosmopolitan intent." Kant was followed by Hegel and Marx, both of whom put forward independent philosophies of history, the content of which will be presented in the next volumes of "Gramsci's Plan." In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of race-theoretical philosophies of history emerged that invoked the "fall of the West" or the struggle for survival of the "Aryan race." With the fall of the Nazi regime in Germany, this variant of the philosophy of history was decisively weakened. In the 1980s, late in the Cold War, postmodern philosophers developed the theory that all "grand narratives of history," including Kant's Enlightenment philosophy and Marx's

establishment of a socialist society, were obsolete. As a result, the philosophy of history disappeared into the lumber room of philosophy. An expression of this tendency is that on "Wikipedia" the German page "philosophy of history" was decoupled from the general page "philosophy". The reason given there is that the "contemporary philosophy of history, which has withdrawn from the analysis of historical content", has thus become "marginalized in the philosophical cosmos". Therefore, it's not looking good for the philosophy of history. This is to be counteracted here by putting Kant's philosophy of history up for discussion with a cosmopolitan intention. It is - like the philosophies of history of Hegel and Marx after him - a progressive philosophy of the possibilities of human beings in their history. It opposes all ancient and modern dystopias from the Last Judgment to race war to environmental or zombie apocalypse. Thereby the "Perpetual Peace" does not design a utopia, but contains a guideline for the actions of reasonable individuals and makes its realization only dependent on the success of the efforts of these individuals. Kant's philosophy in cosmopolitan intent is comprehensively contained in the writing "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," published at the height of the French Revolution in 1795.

[Kant demanded democratic republics, federalism, and universal human rights](#)

In his "Perpetual Peace," Kant set forth three demands aimed at achieving lasting peace through movement toward a democratically organized and federally united humanity.

**The first demand reads: "The civil constitution in every state shall be republican."** In 1795, there were only two relevant states in the world at all that called themselves republics and could be counted as such: the United States of America and the First French Republic. For Kant, four characteristics were essential for a state to be called a republic. In a republic, there is no king or prince, the separation of state and religion is complete, parliaments resulting from elections pass the laws, and there is political freedom, especially freedom of the press and freedom of speech, embedded in the civil and human rights proclaimed by the French National Assembly in 1789. The content of his demand is thus: The abandonment of feudal society and the entry into a form of state appropriate to bourgeois society consists in the establishment of a republic. Another form of state (constitutional monarchy, dictatorship, etc.) was out of the question for Kant. Kant saw the preservation of peace best guaranteed by a republic with a representative system of government, because in this way the citizens could decide for themselves on the question of war or peace. On this basis, he considered representative democracy to be the form of government with which wars could be avoided.

**The second demand reads: "International law should be founded on a federalism of free states."** This demand meant that, beyond a mesh of agreements between states under international law, there should also be a federal process to ensure lasting and sustainable peace. In the course of the liberation struggle of the bourgeoisie, there had been repeated attempts to unite several free states in a federation, as in the case of the Swiss cantons, the seven Dutch republics in the 17th century, or the United States of America with the founding of the Republic in 1787. A federation is a voluntary association of sovereign states. As a rule, the member states delegate certain powers to the central level of the federation, establish a common internal market with the free movement of goods, capital and people, and organize a customs union externally. Kant repeatedly spoke out against establishing a superstate. In his time, he considered the First French Republic a suitable starting point for a federal process in Europe. The best-known example of a federation in Kant's sense in modern times is the

European Union. The United Nations was also founded in 1945 in the spirit of Immanuel Kant.

**The third demand reads, "World citizenship should be limited to conditions of general hospitality."** The title of Kant's third demand may be confusing at first. In fact, this section contained the demand for human rights to apply worldwide and an end to colonialism. Kant advocated that human rights be guaranteed by the international community of states as legally binding world citizenship rights. Every person should be entitled to these rights individually, regardless of the state in which he or she lives. The demand for globally valid human rights for all only makes sense if it is combined with the end of the colonial rule of the Europeans. For colonial rule means precisely the deprivation of human rights, political freedom and the right of peoples to self-determination. Consequently, Kant strongly condemned the colonization and enslavement of the peoples of America, Africa and Asia by the European nations. Europeans should not be granted more than a "general hospitality," a right of hospitality, the limits and conditions of which are determined by the host, that is, by the peoples visited.

**It follows from all three demands that the goal of history is a democratically organized and federally united humanity.** In defining this goal and achieving it, Kant in no way resorted to ingredients from religion or the nature of man. It is attainable solely through the rational action of human beings in compliance with the categorical imperative. In achieving this goal - a democratically organized and federally united humanity - Kant's philosophy of history initially ran up against a stop. He immediately skipped this in the concept of the realm of purposes in order to set humanity another task: Humanity should prove its dignity as "reasonable nature" in a systematic unity of freedom and nature. A kingdom of purposes is only conceivable as a global process that has a united humanity as its prerequisite. The idea of a kingdom of purposes is taken up and modified by Hegel and Marx.

### [The worldwide struggle for the democratic republic](#)

Kant did not stop at the draft for the creation of a bourgeois world order in peace. As early as 1794, he dared to make a far-reaching philosophical prediction: the form of government of the bourgeois world of states now found in the First French Republic would sooner or later spread to all peoples of the earth. Kant called the foundation of a democratic republic a "historical sign". How can the future be predicted? Kant and Gramsci agreed that a prediction of the future could only be made if the one who predicts it also ensures that the prediction becomes reality. The last 50 pages of "Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800" trace the development of the "historical signs" over the last two centuries in a highly condensed form. Three historical turning points were of particular importance: the revolutions in the middle of the 19th century in Europe and the outcome of the First and Second World Wars. The defeat of democratic forces throughout Europe in the course of the revolutions of 1848/9 had strategic consequences for the next 70 years. During this phase, the monarchist forces, in alliance with large sections of the bourgeoisie, were able to consolidate their positions within the framework of constitutional monarchies. Thus, Marx described the German empire founded in 1871 as a bourgeois-influenced, bureaucratically carpentered, police-guarded military despotism. In the 2nd half of the 19th century, European nations and the United States established their colonial domination around the world. These conquests were secured by various international agreements. The competition between imperial powers escalated in

World War 1, at the end of which the three great empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia perished. In the wake of the revolutions of 1917 and 1918, both the Soviet Union and a number of democratic republics were established in Europe, for example the Weimar Republic in Germany. However, Mussolini came to power in Italy as early as 1922. In the following period, Mussolini established a fascist corporative state in Italy step by step, to which the elected parliamentarian Antonio Gramsci fell victim in 1926. With the Enabling Act in Germany in 1933 and after the civil wars in Austria in 1934 and in Spain in 1939, fascist parties were able to establish their power in three other states. At the height of its power in World War 2, European fascism had eliminated all democracies except those in Switzerland, Sweden, Britain and Ireland. After mainly the Soviet Union, the USA and Great Britain had defeated fascism in Europe, they founded the United Nations together with another 51 states in 1945. During the Cold War period between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and in the context of decolonization and the struggle of liberation movements, the number of states grew dramatically. The Cold War came to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The establishment of the democratic Republic of South Africa in 1997 signaled the global end of colonialism, at least in formal terms. To summarize: The overcoming of the great monarchies as representatives of the old feudal society did not take place until 130 years after the French Revolution. The overcoming of colonialism took another nearly 80 years. In the 2nd decade of the new century, according to the data of the American human rights organization Freedom House, the following picture emerges with regard to Kant's "historical signs". If the criteria of the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 are strictly applied, Freedom House's 2020 annual report counts 83 of all 195 states as "free states." In the same annual report, Freedom House counted 63 states as "partially free." In these nations, elections are enshrined in constitutions, but political freedoms and other human rights are realized only to a limited extent. Freedom House classified 49 nations as "not free." This group can again be divided into three subgroups. The religiously oriented dictatorships in the Middle East, with Iran and Saudi Arabia as the two leading powers of one and the same religion, engaged in fierce competition and open fighting in a number of states. Second, a handful of socialist states in which the leading role of the communist party has been enshrined in the constitution. The most important state in this group is the People's Republic of China, which could overtake the U.S. as the leading economic world power in the coming decades. The third group consists of states that emerged from the Soviet Union. In these states today, a corrupt oligarchy is backed by a system of political rule euphemistically called "managed democracy." Kant's second demand envisioned a worldwide process of federalization. Today, nearly 100 states in Europe, Africa and South America are involved in regional federalization or integration processes. However, the depth of these integration processes, their conditions and prospects for success vary widely. The largest association of states is the European Union (EU) with 27 European nations. In recent decades, a dense network of treaties binding under international law has been established to protect civil and human rights, but also, in an extension of the classic catalog, the rights of women, children and ethnic minorities. Although the effective implementation of these treaties is far from assured in many states, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all states have signed them. With the end of the Soviet Union and colonialism, a new "historical bloc" has emerged at the beginning of the 21st century in which Kant's principles for perpetual peace are at least beginning to be realized. The philosophy of this bourgeois historical bloc is strongly influenced by the sciences, as the

examples of the Corona pandemic and global warming mentioned at the beginning show. The dogmas of the Christian churches are largely dissolved, as Kant had thought possible and necessary, and as the legislation on homosexuality and the "family for all" shows. The everyday mind in the 83 free states is lastingly determined by Kant's ethics of the democratic citizen. Free elections take place in a regulated manner and changes of government are conducted peacefully. Progressive laws can be passed and the opposition can move freely. 200 years after Kant's death, democratic republics are the dominant force in world politics, processes of federalization are taking place on at least three continents, and civil and human rights have become the dominant ethic worldwide. With the United Nations, an instance of global reason was brought into being in 1945, which in the 21st century is in a position to define the most important tasks facing humanity and, in the form of the "sustainable development goals," for example, to point out concrete ways of tackling them. So that no misunderstandings arise at this point: According to Kant, there is no such thing as their inner substance that would have put humanity on this path or paved the way for it. It gives only the commitment of rationally acting individuals in their time and against all odds. Kant therefore emphasized several times that the relapse into barbarism is possible at any time.

## On the Universality of Rational Law Variant of the Enlightenment

The importance and historical merits of the religious and natural law variants of the Enlightenment are in no way to be diminished. Their philosophical representatives, such as Hume and Locke from Great Britain and Rousseau and Diderot from France, were much more successful in practical terms than Kant. The political formations inspired by them created world political events with the American and French revolutions, which made it possible to break out of feudal society. Kant's practical relevance in Germany, on the other hand, was limited to a continued struggle with the Prussian censorship authorities. There were a few Jacobins in Germany, and the Mainz Republic lasted only a few months in 1793. Nevertheless, Kant was given a preeminent position in Gramsci's interpretation. In Kant's rational law variant of Enlightenment, men were neither equal before God nor equal by nature. Rather, the decisive criterion for human equality was universal: the capacity to use their reason is common to all human beings. This criterion of equality was established by embedding it in the cognitive process of the natural sciences and the development of bourgeois society as a historically evolved relationship between people. For Gramsci, those philosophies that started from this principle of equality formed the most powerful chain links in the overcoming of feudal society. Kant's Enlightenment philosophy showed a way out of the feudal order in a theoretical way; it showed bourgeois society four forms of its self-movement in the development of concepts, in the natural sciences, in politics, and in the establishment of a bourgeois world order. With the constantly expanding world of concepts, the accumulation of reasonable scientific knowledge, and legislation in the democratic republic, Kant outlined a social movement from the principle of reason transcending itself. The fixed points of this movement result - linguistically, scientifically, politically and in terms of international law - from the consensuses of the subjects involved in each case. Gramsci described the transformation of everyday mind, which had made the French Revolution possible in the first place and became increasingly prevalent in the 19th century, as a "molecular process." The molecular process first takes place in the consciousness of the individual and then, once certain fundamental decisions have been made, passes over into



political action. According to Gramsci, the most important transformation of the everyday mind takes place in the field of ethics. God as the authority guiding people's lives, determining their destiny, is displaced by self-determination over one's own life; the religiously ordained monarch or dictator is replaced by the law-making authority of politically equal citizens in the democratic republic. The two centuries after Kant were filled with this struggle of the Enlightenment for political freedom, and this struggle continues today both in the former colonies and in the metropolises.

## On the historicity of philosophies

Marx wrote in his dissertation that the becoming philosophical of the world is at the same time a becoming worldly of philosophy. For Gramsci, the becoming worldly of a philosophy becomes a characteristic of its universality. By virtue of this universality, philosophy that has become worldly inserts itself into reality as if it were a self-evidence of this reality itself. The mutual recognition of human beings as rational beings has become a matter of course for a large part of humanity in the 21st century. However, because the Enlightenment has become a matter of course, the rationale and awareness of the centuries-long struggle to establish its philosophical principles is evaporating. Gramsci arrives at the following determination about the historicity of philosophies: a philosophy is historical insofar as it spreads, insofar as it becomes the conception of reality of a great multitude of people. The history of the transition of epochs in Europe was a struggle of two philosophical currents against each other and for their relevance in people's consciousness and actions. The rational law variant of Enlightenment was not a creature of individual tinkering; it was distilled out of the 300-year struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism. It should therefore, according to Gramsci, produce certain effects on society. The extent to which a philosophy has an effect on society is the measure of its historical scope, of the fact that it was not an individual contrivance but became a living tendency in history. The historical fact is that the principles of the First French Republic, which perished in the chaos of the Revolution, shape the conditions of our world in the 21st century. In stark contrast to this stand the claims of postmodern philosophers that the great historical narratives of freedom and emancipation, and especially those of Kant, Hegel and Marx, have become historically obsolete. Against this, the development of the historical signs since Kant must be brought into the field and, above all, that today in dozens of nations under authoritarian rule the insurgent opposition sees in these principles the future of their society.

## Marx on democracy as the solved riddle of all constitutions

In history of philosophy, Kant and Marx are usually assigned to two opposite camps. Kant stands for the liberal order of the bourgeoisie and Marx for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the "Prison Notebooks" Gramsci no longer submitted to the paradigm of the October Revolution, which amounts to the dictatorship of the Communist Party in the name of Marx and the working class. An understanding of Kant's philosophy became a prerequisite for him to understand Marx in theory and practice. Barely 40 years after Kant's death, Marx took up his political and philosophical work. The memories of the French Revolution and Hegel, who died in 1831, were still present at that time. In France, the next revolution had already taken place in 1830, imposing a liberal parliamentary monarchy. Germany was in a pre-revolutionary situation in the 1940s. The absolute monarchy of the King of Prussia was to be



replaced by a democratic constitution. Marx, a prospective professor of philosophy, had already acquired a great deal of knowledge about Kant's philosophy when repression blocked this path for him. In 1842, for example, he wrote in an essay on philosophies of history that Kant had developed the "German theory of the French Revolution." A year later, he wrote a critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, in which the latter had proposed a constitutional monarchy without parliament and general suffrage. In his critique, Marx posed the question that would haunt the entire 19th century: "Sovereignty of the monarch or of the people that is the question." In substance, his further remarks were in line with Kant's theory. Marx wrote: "The constitution of the democratic republic appears as what it is, the free product of man. All forms of government have for their truth democracy, and therefore, as far as they are not democracy, they are untrue. The final sentence on the subject of democracy in his critique of Hegel was: "Democracy is the resolved riddle of all constitutions." Marx, for all his criticism of Kant and the German circumstances, showed himself to be a follower of this "German theory". Kant was regarded by him as the theoretical conscience of the European Enlightenment. Accordingly, the democratic republic and universal suffrage were the first two demands of the political program for Germany that Marx and Engels published in 1848 in connection with the "Manifesto of the Communist Party." After the March Revolution in Germany in 1848, parliamentarians were elected for a constituent assembly under general suffrage. The draft constitution of March 1849 provided for a German emperor and general suffrage for the parliament called the Reichstag. The republicans in the assembly, as well as Marx and Engels, had sharply criticized this solution. The King of Prussia nevertheless rejected the offered imperial crown in April 1849 and sent his regiments to put an end to the beginning of a democracy in Germany. Friedrich Engels served during this period as aide-de-camp to August Willich, that insurgent general who later became general of the Union Army in the War of Secession. The civil war-like fighting in Germany ended in July 1849 with the surrender of the fortress of Rastatt. The 1848 revolutionaries were then forced to flee Germany. Over the next several decades, Marx and Engels repeatedly criticized the abandonment of the demand for a democratic republic with universal suffrage in programs of social democratic parties. For them, this was equivalent to a retreat from monarchical dictatorships in Germany and other nations. Marx considered practical political emancipation, that is, the elimination of census suffrage and other suffrage restrictions, to be the last form of emancipation possible within the bourgeois world order. In his analysis of Napoleon III's December 1851 coup d'état, he defended the democratic republic, calling it the "form of political transformation" of bourgeois society. The economic emancipation of the working class, which Marx wrote into the statutes of the International Workingmen's Association in 1864, presupposes the Enlightenment, the democratic republic, or in Marx's parlance, "political emancipation." Gramsci's much-discussed theory of the hegemony of the bourgeois class can only be understood in the context of the legacy of classical German philosophy. For hegemony in Gramsci's "prison notebooks" means much more than a banal combination of coercion and consensus. The concept of hegemony, which encapsulates Gramsci's understanding of modern bourgeois society, cannot be separated from Kant and his German theory of the French Revolution. To suggest the direction in which the concept of hegemony is developed in the series "Gramsci's Plan," three quotations from the "Prison Notebooks" will illustrate this connection.

Kant, the Jacobins and the First French Republic

"The development of Jacobinism (in content) has reached its formal consummation in the parliamentary regime, which, in the period richest in 'private' energies in society, realizes the hegemony of the urban class over the whole population, in the Hegelian form of government with permanently organized consensus." (Gramsci, 1929-1935, Prison Notebooks, vol. 1, issue 1, § 48, p. 119, German Edition)

What does hegemony have to do with epistemology?

"The philosophy of praxis conceives the reality of human epistemological relations as an element of political 'hegemony'." (Gramsci, 1929-1935, Prison Notebooks, vol. 6, issue 10, § 6, p. 1260, German Edition)

What do ethics have to do with Marx?

"In the founder of the philosophy of praxis, the ethical-political aspect of politics, or the theory of hegemony and consensus, is contained in nuce." (Gramsci, 1929-1935, Prison Notebooks, vol. 6, issue 10, § 41.X, p. 1322, German Edition) In nuce - in a nutshell - means in a condensed form.

Gramsci's Plan, Volume 2, Hegel and the Dialectic 1800 to 1830, contains how Gramsci envisioned a Marxism as a reform of Hegelianism and what Marx did and did not adopt from Hegel.