

Gramsci's Plan



Kant and the Enlightenment
1500 to 1800

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My parents

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Generic masculine: In this document, the masculine form is used in many passages and quotations for reasons of readability. These passages should be interpreted in a gender-neutral manner.

Preface to the English Edition

The German edition of Gramsci's Plan – Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 was published on January 7, 2021, the day after U.S. President-elect Trump encouraged his mob to storm the Capitol in Washington and disrupt the democratic process of transferring power. The Stop the Steal campaign, which lasted several months, reached its climax that day. These events demonstrate the fragility of parliamentary democracies even in nations where such events previously seemed unthinkable. Trump's declaration of a state of emergency with a subsequent military coup in the U.S. would have been a historic disaster of incalculable proportions. The global offensive of nationalist, racist and anti-democratic forces that began in the last decade has been set back for now, but is far from over. The struggle for a democratic republic continues around the world, with new flashpoints being added every month, such as Myanmar after the military coup in early February 2021.

Gramsci's Plan Volume 1 Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 was written from the beginning with the intention of publishing an English version. The texts of classical German philosophy, especially those of Kant and Hegel, are poorly readable and often incomprehensible even to people whose native language is German. Translations often make this situation worse. The English version of Gramsci's Plan – Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800 – enables anyone with a good command of English to become acquainted with Kant's philosophy through selected quotations and the interpretations of Marx and Gramsci. In terms of content and language, the book is an attempt to reclaim philosophy for social life today and practical politics in the 21st century.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is one of the most discussed philosophers worldwide. He is considered an exponent of the bourgeois Enlightenment. This is mostly described as a cultural trend that promoted the transition to modern society in feudal European society. The interpretations of Kant go in all directions

and often come to nothing, which is shown, among other things, by the way, his “categorical imperative” is interpreted. So what does a preoccupation with Kant bring us people in the 21st century?

In “Gramsci’s Plan – Kant and the Enlightenment,” Kant is not classified – as in classical Marxism and Stalinism – as an exponent of “idealism.” For Gramsci, rather, he was the exponent of the rational law version within the broad spectrum of Enlightenment philosophy. Marx regarded Kant’s philosophy in this sense as the “German theory of the French Revolution.” Kant’s epistemology and ethics formed the basis for his political philosophy of the democratic republic. In accordance with his epistemology – the doctrine of the concept – and without religious or natural law ingredients, he founded the political philosophy of the democratic republic based on the reason of every citizen. The democratic republic is that form of government for which the American revolutionaries fought in the War of Independence from 1776 to 1783, the Jacobins in the French Revolution from 1789 and Marx in the German Revolution of 1848/9. For this reason, Kant formed for Gramsci the starting point of the Hegel-Marx line of philosophical development. The author firmly believes that Kant provided the best and still contemporary philosophical foundation for the worldwide struggle to establish, defend and expand democratic republics. To carry this thought into the world is the intention of the English edition.

Gramsci’s Plan is a long term project. Gramsci’s Plan is not backed by a publishing house or a political organization. The author is currently writing Gramsci’s Plan Volume 2 on “Hegel and the Dialectic”. My colleague Martin Stein has already supported me with ideas and suggestions during the last year. He will take over the maintenance and further development of the English website *gramsci-plan.net*.

The translation was done with the machine translation service deepl.com. A correction was made with two other spelling and grammar programs. After a hard struggle with English punctuation and since I had the pleasure to write a Master’s Thesis at the University of Albuquerque/USA in 1989, I am reasonably sure that my English is acceptable.

For better understanding, the titles of works by Kant, Hegel, Marx, and others have been translated into English in the text and footnotes. **But, the references in the footnotes refer throughout to the German editions.** The bibliography lists the German titles of the German editions. The selection and evaluation of English translations cannot be done by the author. At least the quotations of Gramsci are easy to find via the indications issue and paragraph. I hope that this hybrid solution will meet with the approval of the readers.

Robin Jacobitz, Juni 16, 2021

Foreword

I already became interested in Antonio Gramsci at the beginning of the 1980s as an activist in the anti-nuclear and peace movement and the freshly founded party “The Greens”. Gramsci’s concepts of hegemony and civil society were already making the rounds back then. I considered Gramsci’s “Prison Notebooks” – albeit rather shadowy at the time – a key document for understanding Marx’s philosophical intentions and the phenomenon of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. From the mid-1980s, I studied political science as well as economics and international law at the University of Hamburg. In 1989, I completed a one-year study at the University of New Mexico/Albuquerque with a Master of Arts in Political Science. In 1991, I rewrote the Master Thesis and published it as a working paper of the Research Group European Communities (FEG) No.5 with Prof. Frank Deppe under the title “Antonio Gramsci – Hegemony, Historical Bloc and Intellectual Leadership in International Politics”. In 1995, I was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Hamburg. I abandoned a planned career at the university in the following years for various reasons. For many years, I have been working as a partner manager for an IT company in Hamburg. More than 10 years ago, I rediscovered the old documents from the 80s and 90s. The topic grabbed me again and so I turned “Gramsci’s Plan” into an exciting and work-intensive hobby. Parallel to the publication of this book, the website www.gramsci-plan.net will go online, providing information about the book at hand. This website will also provide a forum for a lively discussion of philosophical issues and specifically the “Prison Notebooks.” Perhaps at some point, there will be enough material for a second edition, incorporating questions and criticisms from readers. My special thanks go to my colleague Lisa Horwege, who reviewed the introduction for errors and clumsy formulations.

Almost no month goes by without hundreds of thousands of people in some nation protesting against a repressive regime and demanding a democratic republic. In the past 12 months, these protests have taken

place primarily in Sudan, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Belarus, Thailand, but also as Black Lives Matter in the United States and around the world. I would like to take this opportunity to express my solidarity with all those who are risking their freedom, physical integrity, and lives in the struggle for the democratic republic.

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 comprehensible language and embedded in the 300-year struggle for the liberation of the bourgeoisie against feudalism,
- the importance of reason in our knowledge, in the sciences, and in the democratic republic is elaborated based on Kant's writings,
- in times of threat with Kant's philosophy a reassurance can be made regarding the foundations of the democratic republic and the world-wide spread of this form of government since the First French Republic,
- Kant's "categorical imperative" must be reinterpreted as a fundamental political norm of the democratic republic, if his ethics is understood as a "German theory of the French Revolution" (Marx),
- countering the postmodern discrediting of the philosophy of history by placing the current struggle for the democratic republic in the context of Kant's goal of history, which called for a democratically organized and federally unified humanity on the grounds of reason.

"Gramsci's Plan" is conceived from the outset as a series of books that build on each other chronologically and factually. The series is to be concluded with Gramsci's "Prison Notebooks" under the question "What am I to do?". Chapter 1, "Gramsci's Plan and the Legacy of Classical German Philosophy," is an introduction to the basic premis-

es and questions of the “Prison Notebooks” and the author’s project. Chapter 2 “Kant and the Enlightenment 1500 to 1800” presents the struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism and, embedded in it, the development of Enlightenment philosophy from the Renaissance/Reformation to the French Revolution and Kant. The first volume is to be followed by others, the contents of which have been conceived and, on average, about 30 % of which have already been written. Volume 2 is 60% complete and, if the author’s working conditions remain the same, maybe published in the second quarter of 2021. The preliminary planning is as follows:

Volume 2	Chapter 3	Hegel and the Dialectic 1800 to 1830
	Chapter 4	Marx and the Inversion of Hegel’s Dialectic 1843 to 1883
Volume 3	Chapter 5	Marx and the Emancipation 1830 to 1848
Volume 4	Chapter 6	The Categorical Imperatives of Kant and Marx
	Chapter 7	Marx, Engels and the Liberation of the Proletariat 1848 to 1883
Volume 5	Chapter 8	Darwin, Haeckel, Engels and the Dialectic 1850 to 1895
Volume 6	Chapter 9	Orthodox Marxism, Lenin and Materialism 1883 to 1914
Volume 7	Chapter 10	Lenin and the October Revolution in Russia 1917–1921
	Chapter 11	Luxemburg and the November Revolution in Germany 1918-1921

	Chapter 12	Gramsci and the Two Red Years in Italy 1919-1920
	Chapter 13	Bukharin, Trotsky, Stalin and Lyssenko – Philosophy in the Soviet Union 1917-1938
Volume 8	Chapter 14	Gramsci and the Dialectic 1929-1935
	Chapter 15	Gramsci and Bourgeois Hegemony 1929-1935
Volume 9	Chapter 16	The Everyday Mind and Dialectical Reason
	Chapter 16	Gramsci's Plan – What Should I Do?
	Chapter 16	What Can I Hope For?

For more up-to-date information, please visit the website
[*www.gramsci-plan.net*](http://www.gramsci-plan.net)

Hamburg, September 16, 2020

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

Gramsci's Plan and the Legacy of German Classical Philosophy

A book about Antonio Gramsci and his philosophy?

This book is intended for all those who wish to orient themselves in today's world, who wish to learn from which philosophical disputes our present world emerged, and who are looking for suggestions as to how today's world can be changed in a humanistic, progressive and socialistic sense. It was written with the intention to bring philosophy as a whole closer to our contemporary life; to reclaim it for today's social disputes. Philosophy deals very fundamentally with human life and the world in which it takes place. With Kant, philosophy can be fundamentally divided into epistemology, ethics, philosophy of history, and the final question, "What is man?" The issues philosophers address are in some ways "beneath" current political disputes, yet all social and political actors – from a citizens' initiative to governments – are constantly guided by philosophical considerations. In the 21st century, a new generation has set out to avert the looming ecological catastrophes and fight the misery in the world. It is about nothing less than slowing down the capitalist world economy, which is designed for profit and growth under competitive conditions and to initiate an ecological reconstruction of

the world economy based on solidarity. This task permanently raises philosophical questions today and in the future, such as the question of the cognitive capacity of meteorological science, the possibilities of human action as producer and consumer in a globalized economy, or the general chances of humanity to avoid a warlike or ecological catastrophe. Because of this situation, a study of the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci seems to make sense, because his work refers to the historically unique attempt to transcend the bourgeois social order as a whole and to build a new world without war, exploitation, and colonial oppression. This attempt was made in the years 1917 to 1921 by the revolutionary movements in Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, because they drew consequences from the hell of World War I and wanted to put an end to the capitalist world economy.

Oppressors and Oppressed – An essay by Antonio Gramsci from 1911: Antonio Gramsci's generation was also confronted with a very specific world political issue. In Gramsci's case, this was European colonialism and the threat of war that it posed. In the late 19th century, the great European states had begun to divide the entire world among themselves and build colonial empires. In the process, considerable tension arose between the imperial powers. After France occupied Morocco in April 1911, the German Kaiser sent gunboats off the coast of Morocco. With this threatening military maneuver, Wilhelm II wanted to obtain *quid pro quo*s for accepting French rule over Morocco. Following these events, which made headlines as the "Moroccan Crisis," large demonstrations against the impending war took place throughout Europe. The largest mass rally took place in Berlin in September 1911, with about 200,000 participants. In the same month, the Italian government, emboldened by a nationalist and pro-colonialist mood, declared war on Libya. Libya was then a part of the Ottoman Empire, that is, Turkey. During the course of the Turkish-Italian war, massacres of Libyan civilians were carried out by Italian troops, who dropped bombs from the air for the first time. In October 1912, victorious Italy annexed Libya and named this colony "Italian North Africa." Also in 1911, Antonio Gramsci, then 20 years old, wrote an essay in school entitled "Oppressors and Oppressed." In it, he protested the coloni-