At Kant's Tercentenary: Relevance of Kant's Categorical Imperative for Revolutionary Politics

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This paper was completed after I wrote the four parts seen below and intended both to discuss Kant in an engaged way, and not neutral – as is the fashion between the professional philosophers, and to popularize him in a blog, in order to show to non-philosophers that he is not incomprehensible and far from their everyday concerns but, on the contrary, helps them. Now, at the advice of a colleague from the board of *Revolutionary Marxism*, I grouped the parts in a single article. They signal the actuality of Kant when such sensitive topics as the wars in Ukraine and Palestine are approached, as well as Kant's contradictory attitude towards the French Revolution. And the analysis and the conclusion highlight that, despite the limits of Kant's liberalism, just his revolutionary ethical theory of categorical imperative was continued – and by surpassing it – by Marx.

(1) Introduction

We are in a Kant philosophical year (Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804). In fact,

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philosophy is interested and reflects about what *common people* think and are interested in; and, irrespective of the historical frames and limits of the technical philosophical effort, philosophy as such is valuable and remains in the memory and patrimony of humanity only at the extent of real solutions for the *real problem of the human history*: the situation, reason-to-be and dignified life of *every common human being on Earth.*

From all the exploits of the world thinkers we retain only that which is *significant/ useful to us, now, in an always present-day reality*. The professional philosophers and analysts of different kinds are, on the one hand, interested to better understand how and why the forerunners thought in a way or another; but on the other hand, they seem to shut themselves between the walls of an esoteric language and an illusion of elitism. Actually, the technical language can be understood without troubles if it is explained. And this explanation is not a reduction, a vulgar simplification, but just the absolutely necessary activity – and somehow, the reason-to-be – of bringing the professional research closer to the general public, to whom the research is actually intended, serves it.

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Kant is a giant in the patrimony of humanity: through his *epistemological* breakthrough of *cognition as a multi-stage idea formation process*, and through his *ethical* revolution of the *categorical imperative*. The categorical imperative is the moral law of – keep attention – *all the rational beings*: *to never treat the others only as means but always also as ends* – as ends of both *every individual* and the *human species*, because *every* human being is a representative of humanity and humanity exists only if this moral law is fulfilled.

The professional philosophers – as during the Kant celebration this year – focus on the countless technical aspects of the epistemological theory, and sometimes on some of its applications: but almost never on the main application, the *categorical imperative* theory. Famous philosophers seem to have given to this condensed formula of the moral way of humans, bad marks: that it would be formal, abstract and emotionless, related to a non-earthly command of *duty*. However, just the categorical imperative means clear *content* of the duty and thus, not abstract calls for compassion, charity or reciprocity, but a concrete way to measure and control one's own limits and criteria.

Philosophers have always believed that they refer to every man, but the abstract reduction to the image of their historical and social condition never corresponded to every human being. Kant was the first who, through his *demonstrated* ethical application of the epistemological theory of what does reason mean, clearly highlighted that the human moral is not fulfilled by individuals isolated in their frame and struggling to "survive" on the expense of "others"/ "faraway", thus "exterior" to the frame from which one speaks about "moral". Kant was the first who advanced the quality of the human individual as a *species being*, representative of not only the human species but also of the category of "all rational beings" (in the universe).

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(2) The duty of a species being

After 1785 – when Kant produced *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, demonstrating the theory of categorical imperative – he no longer subordinated his philosophical analysis to mainstream ideological ideas legitimating race differences and inherent submission. Obviously, his reasoning was limited by the highest level of political emancipation in Europe in the 18th century, that of the bourgeois citizen, but nevertheless just the strictness of the transcendental perspective led him to suggestions transcending his epoch.

One of such suggestions is in *Metaphysics of Morals*[2], when the problem of *duties* was deployed in relation with the concept of *freedom*. Both this concept and the one of *duty* are *transcendental*, they are *determined by the laws of reason* and have the function of *regulative principles generating practical moral laws*, both unconditional/imperatives and technical ones, conditionally commanding. Duty evaluates the hypothetical (contingent) purposes, maxims and imperatives from the standpoint of the categorical imperative which shows the ultimate reason-to-be of goodness: *one cannot infringe the reason to treat the others as ends in themselves, as unique and unrepeatable individuals representing, each of them, the species of rational beings on the Earth, if one wants to keep one's own representativeness of the human species and of its reason.*

(Do not be afraid of apparently sophisticated words. "Transcendental" simply means a level of reasoning *from concepts*, and not from experience: so, a strict logic derived from already existing ideas, and not from the everyday experience that generates ideas related to this experience, without interest for general ideas and their substantiation. The concept is abstraction from abstractions. As it is well-known, Kant unified the levels of cognition, showing their interdependence: "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding no object would be thought by us. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind"[3]. But the importance of concepts – giving the transcendental level of inferences, now this term became familiar, isn't it? – is obvious not only in the real process of thinking, where we simply cannot do it without concepts, but also, and for us now a priority, in the fulfilment of the coherence/truth/development of our thinking giving *universals*, *beyond* a direct image of reality given to us through empirical abstractions. This "beyond" means here to focus on the *causes* of things, and to not consider that we understand events and facts according to their labels and images given to us by those who control the world.

Thus, neither the concept of "metaphysics" is scarry either. It means a demonstration rather from concepts and aiming to find the basic *principles*

2 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Introduction, translation and notes by Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

3 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787), Translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998, B75/A51, pp. 193-194.

explaining and generating reality. So, a level of knowledge that is beyond a direct image of reality given to us through empirical abstractions. Here, "beyond" means ideas which seem to be more profound than those which are related to reality).

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So, the first duty of the human individual is his/her duty *qua* species being. Why is the duty of the human individual *qua* individual not the first human duty? Because the duty of the individual *qua* individual (to live, to persist, to survive) is specific to every living being, to every animal, or the human has reason, thus it's the *duty arisen from human reason* that is specific to this species, and not the instinctual will to live.

It's obvious that the first duty of man to himself is "*to preserve* himself in his animal nature". But, although first, this duty is *not* principal[4], because *if this "natural end" is not fulfilled in a moral way*, the result is not the lasting of a "person" – a living being having reason and, essentially, a moral reason that allows him to being responsible[5] – but of an animal. And the basis of the moral way of the first duty of man to himself – *implying even the right to be authorised to take the life of those who assail me* – is to not infringe both the right of others (who have the same first duty of man) and the law.

(3) Duty and right in the state of necessity

Here Kant answers to the nowadays ardent problem of the "right of pre-emptive actions". There is a huge difference, Kant says, between the right to kill an assailant – this right being both *moral*, and only from a moral standpoint being recommended "moderation" in exercising the right to kill the aggressor, and *lawful* – and on the other hand, a "supposed right" (Kant is the one who put the quotation marks) to kill someone who did nothing to harm. This supposed right is absurd: because in order to be a right it must correspond to a *state of necessity* (Kant gave the example of someone in a shipwreck who shoves another off a plank that cannot support both) and this state is already i*nstinctive*, outside reasonableness. And thus, *to a state of necessity only the primary duty to preserve one's life corresponds, and not a right*.

For this reason, we can characterise from a *moral* standpoint such *state of necessity*, as well as the guy himself can after his fact: "from outside" *we* cannot say that the guy who saved his life by drowning the other is guilty (according to the primary duty), because we understand that his *instinct* of self-preservation was stronger that the restraint required by the moral law; but, and even though, after the fact the guy himself feels deeply shocked and considers his deed as profoundly immoral, because now as always he has "in his soul" the moral law to help the other human being as helping their common humanity; and thus, because he knows that they both belong to this species, for him this *internal moral law* is the instance, and not the *instinct* of self-preservation: although he knows as well that this instinct governed

4 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 218 (AA VI: 421).
5 *Ibidem*, p. 50 (AA VI: 223).

him in that unfortunate moment. (The example of Kant, the guy drowning the other in order to save himself, reminds us the Medusa's shipwreck (1816))[6].

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With his example, Kant raised an extremely important issue of the *existential state of necessity* or, in present researches, *extreme situation*, synonymous to *extreme violence* related to war and getting out of the war[7]; but synonymous also to perplexity and defeatism in peacetime.[8] What is common to these different faces of the state of necessity is the challenge of the moral law and the generalisation of an abductive movement from this law.

However, Kant posed the problem of *juridical sanctionability* of this fact, of a presumed correspondence between an instinctual state of necessity and the external juridical sanctions as right/wrong, namely the position of society represented by the legislator in front of instinctual states of necessity. Well, society itself – *as if* it would be a single human – takes over the moral self-judgement of the guy: (from a societal standpoint) the fact "must not be judged" as blameless, he was *not* innocent, and *if* there would exist objective sanctions, a law, for punishing him, he would be. But there is no law for this fact, thus the guy is "*inculpabile*", he cannot be deferred to justice. And thus, he neither can be punished; or, conversely, an *instinctual* violent action of self-preservation is not a wrongdoing against a right, and thus it is unpunishable ("*impunibile*"). And Kant underlines that the juridical practice has both a subjective basis (in front of reason) and an objective basis (in front of "a court"), and we must not confound them: in front of the juridical reason, the guy is not punishable, but in front of a court he could be brought and judged, *if* there was a law for his act. Because, ultimately, the court represents *vox populi*, the moral conscience.

(From this distinction, we can deduce the necessity to legislate according to the complex multitude of facts, thus to establish rights and juridical duties in order to *prevent infringements against the reason-to-be of justice*).

(4) Kant's actuality: the present war in Ukraine

But – and just the model of the "supposed right" to kill someone who did nothing to harm helps us – what about the *pre-emptive actions against a supposed future destructive attack* against my life? Here, *the judgement of the previous facts of*

6 See Nebiha Guiga, Aurélien Portelli, « Les récits du radeau de la Méduse : L'histoire d'une situation extrême au prisme des violences et des sorties de guerre », *Napoleonica. La Revue*, 2023/2 (N° 46), p. 139-172.

7 See Véronique Nahoum-Grappe, « Anthropologie de la violence extrême : le crime de profanation », *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, 2002/4, p. 601609 ; Michèle Battesti, Jacques Fremeaux (dir.), *Sortir de la guerre,* Paris, Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014.

8 Ana Bazac, "*Conatus* and the worth of life in a time of crisis", in *Philosophy and Crisis: Responding to Challenges to Ways of Life in the Contemporary World*, 2013 Conference Proceedings, G. Maggini, H. Karabatzaki, V. Solomou-Papanikolaou and J.Vila-Chã (Eds.), vol. II, Washington D.C., Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, book series IV. "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change", vol. 11, November 2018, pp. 137-152.

the presumptive aggressor is *sine qua non*. And in this judgement, the r*easons* of the presumptive aggressor must be revealed, obviously by distinguishing between imagined pretexts and legitimising stories and, on the other hand, the responsible technical analysis of these reasons.

If so, we can relate the American destructive war against Vietnam – whose anti-popular and pro-American "South Vietnam" was constructed by the USA who forbade, stopped and punished the popular will of popular democracy – that did never intend to harm in whatever way the US, and, on the other hand, the supposed "unprovoked aggression" of Russia against Ukraine, that would be rightfully opposed by NATO.

The Vietnam war was initiated by US in order to stop the spreading of communist ideas in Asia (as before, in the Korean war), and thus in order to develop and preserve the American economic and political domination in Asia, and obviously in order to prevent the influence of communist ideas in the world. Is the American war against Vietnam an illustration of the duty of self-preservation? And is the American goal to preserve its power in Asia assimilable to the metaphysical instinct of self-preservation? Actually, all the modern wars were for the preservation and increase of the political and economic influence of different ruling strata against each other (and thus, and ultimately, over the ruled of all these countries, in order to preserve the domination-submission pattern of societal organisation).

But is "plunder and conquest"[9], "oppression of domination"[10], similar to self-preservation? Of course not, our moral conscience warns us: because "the moral principle in the human being is never extinguished"[11].

The tacit *justification of all the war originators* was just the equivalence between the self-preservation of the individual life and the preservation of political and economic domination. Therefore, morally, this was also the justification to wage war against those who did not harm and could and want not harm the war originators. Consequently, to pre-emptively attack and killing those who do not wage war against the pre-emptive war originators was and is "morally justified".

This "*moral law*" governed all the wars waged between the Western powers and the "rest". The *juridical law* of war appeared *only between Western powers* which, on the one hand, had similar means of self-preservation and attack, and on the other hand, similarly fought for each one's power. And which, ultimately, had the "rest" of the world to plunder in order to compensate the eventual transferring of a slice of power from one Western power to another and the buying of the popular "consensus" from their own countries. This Western law of war – imposing rules for restraint, for correspondence between the means and the results of tactical operations,

9 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, Edited and with an Introduction by Pauline Kleingeld, Translated by David L. Colclasure with essays by Jeremy Waldron, Michael W. Doyle, Allen W. Wood, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 95 (AA 8: 371)).

10 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Translated, with an Introduction, by Werner S. Pluhar, With a Foreword by Mary J. Gregor, Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company,1987, p. 318 (5: 430).

11 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace*, *ibidem*, p. 103 (AA 8: 380)).

for the treatment of civil population and the interdiction to use it as a means – was, however contradictory and absurd morally, the criterion developed after the WWII as a progressive step in the humanisation of global relationships.

After the Vietnam war, there were more than enough proofs that USA infringed the law of war – including the Geneva Convention, by the use of Agent Orange to indiscriminately kill civilians directly and in time (as in its use of nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 6 and 9 August, 1945) – but as it is known, these proofs were erased from the public conscience and the public agendas and were never followed by the legal punishment of perpetrators.

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Concerning Russia's war against Ukraine, things are different. Ukraine – which was a periphery of the Russian empire, with mixed populations of mainly Ukrainians and Russians – was juridically established as a state *after* the October Revolution and in a soviet and socialist federation, where the juridical, political, economic and cultural rights and equality of *all citizens* of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were established and imposed by law. There were no borders between republics, all citizens freely circulated in the Union, and Ukraine has developed its culture and economy just within the USSR.

Ukraine is now the tragic battlefield for the Ukrainian and Russian populations, but after 1991 the Ukrainian ruling class fully subordinated Ukraine to the imperialist powers *in order to preserve its own ruling power, against the popular will to preserve the popular democracy*. The function of this subordinated Ukraine was to be the ground of the decisive blow of imperialism to Russia, the coronation of the 1989-1991 destruction of Eastern socialism. This goal of imperialism and this function of a sold Ukraine were prepared by encircling Russia with new NATO member states in Europe, as huge miliary bases bearing the newest and destructive weapons, and by transforming Ukraine into a declared enemy of Russia, the Ukrainian state poisoning the mind of its population with the permissiveness and recommendation of extreme violence against the Russian speaking population. And because the decisive blow to Russia cannot be done without the NATO membership of Ukraine, if not *de jure* at least *de facto*, by transforming it into a trigger of the decisive attack against Russia, this state *prevented the imperialist decisive attack* by initiating in February 2022 its "special operation" intended to change Ukraine's war function against it.

Therefore, only *formally* did Russia a pre-emptive aggression against Ukraine. *Really*, the aggressors are NATO and Ukraine. But this first move of Russia was and is used by NATO and Ukraine in order to deploy the intended decisive attack against Russia. Ukraine, with the full help of NATO, bombed the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, in a Russian territory, and destroyed dams and civil buildings in Russian territories, *expressly* targeting civilians. While Russia never targeted civilians. And the war, assassinating so many Ukrainian soldiers, continues with the weapons of NATO. However, the NATO and Ukraine's justification is "the Russian

aggression"[12].

Since, using Kant's theory, both parts have the first duty to themselves (to preserve their lives), can we conclude that the war is, indeed, caused by Russia's aggression? No, because Kant emphasised: there is no necessity "that would make what is wrong conform with law" ("*gesetzmäßig*", legal, that is, juridically legitimate)[13]. Thus, not only from a moral but also from a juridical standpoint, too, the war is not caused by Russia's movement in February 2022, but by NATO's facts *at least from the 2014 Maidan*.

II

Kant's actuality: Kant dismisses the "Right" to colonise

(5) Neither the utopian liberalism is coherent

Yes, Kant's *distinctive* philosophy – that of his already mentioned breakthroughs in epistemology and ethics, actually, after *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785 – *does not lead to racism*[14]: on the contrary, and on the basis of his demonstration of the human cognition, just the categorical imperative emphasises what is *universalizable* in the human moral, *opposing any particularism*.

But Kant was the son of his epoch. He could but taking over the dominant ideology of his time, *liberalism*, and thus he tried to accommodate the *universalizable* moral with the *particularism* of class domination over inferior human beings, both in the internal and in the international space. The dominant liberalism deployed only as *juridical and political freedom*. Because just these types of freedom assured, internally, the constitution of a consistent bourgeois class together with some consensus of the labour force[15]: and thus, the constitution of states with free citizens. These states were supposed to be the institutionalisation of the original

12 Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh Holds a Press Conference, Aug. 8, 2024, https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3867296/deputy-pentagon-press-secretary-sabrina-singh-holds-a-press-conference/: "Ukraine's incursion into Kursk" "is consistent with our policy" "a region that are within the US policy of where they can operate, you know, our weapons, our systems, our capabilities".

13 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 60-62 (AA VI: 235-236), here p. 62 (AA VI: 236).

14 See Ana Bazac, "The Enlightenment Epistemology and its Warning against the Instrumentalisation of Science", *Noema*, 2020, pp. 29-75, and "Understanding the Virtues of Enlightenment Epistemology", *Dialogue & Universalism*, 2/2021, pp. 211-230; also, "Our Most Important Everyday Use of Kant: The Categorical Imperative", *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Filosofie*, 2/2024, forthcoming.

But see Kant's critique of racism, both empirically and theoretically *as infringement of the principles of right*, Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Colonialism", in Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi (Eds.), *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 43-67.

15 Robbie Shillian, *Race and the Undeserving Poor*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Agenda Publishing, 2018.

social contract between free citizens transferring their right to decide the policies of the state to the sovereign. These states were the Western European ones and were free states: free to do what? Had these free states limits in their exploits to acquire more power for a well-off "survival"?

However, although Kant took over the *never questioned social contract theory* and his time's liberalism, he could but mark it with the idea of the *moral universalizable*. Thus, Kant gave to liberalism a *utopian* guise. And this once more revealed the *incoherency* and *inconsistency of bourgeois liberalism as such*. There cannot be class domination and exploitation of the "free" labour force and, at the same time, an ethics of the universal moral equality of all human beings.

An aspect of this inconsistency was the international manifestation of liberalism. And although the model of international liberalism was only that of free Western European countries, nevertheless the "rest" of the world had to appear.

(6) There is no Right of Nations / there is only the right of free states

Well, even based on the model of free states, things were direr on international level than on the internal one. If there is a Right regulating the relations between the citizens of a state, there is not, and *not* only during Kant's time, a *Right of nations*: because – said Kant, representing the political liberalism not rejected even by the present dominant ideology – the states have no the equality that the citizens of a state have, obviously an equality of the political and juridical citizen status. Accordingly, the states cannot have a universal law of international Right that would regulate the contracts between them as juridical (Kant said, "moral") persons.

For this reason, the international *status quo* is in a "nonrightful condition"[16]. "This nonrightful condition is a *condition* of war (of the right of the stronger), even if it is not a condition of actual war and actual attacks being constantly made (hostilities)"[17].

Anyway, Kant continued, the nonrightful condition is that of "lawless savages"[18] for whom only the right to declare war is natural. However, it is not even a universal law of the present states: because only the "free states"[19] can have this right. Anyway, both the right to declare war and to prepare or prevent war take part from the Right of nations that is deeply contradictory: one cannot "even form a concept or to think of law in this lawless state without contradicting oneself"[20]. This is why Kant listed aspects of war and post-war which are right and aspects which are not, in the confrontation of unjust enemies.

But "what is an *unjust enemy* in terms of the concepts of the Right of Nations in which – as is the case in a state of nature generally – each state is judge in its own

16 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Introduction, translation and notes by Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 151, § 54 (AA VI: 344).
17 *Ibidem*.
18 *Ibidem*, p. 151, § 54 (AA VI: 344).
19 *Ibidem*, p. 151, § 55 (AA VI: 344).
20 *Ibidem*, p. 153, § 57 (AA VI: 347).

case?"[21] It is, Kant answered, "an enemy whose publicly expressed will (whether by word or deed) reveals a maxim by which, if it were made a universal rule, any condition of peace among nations would be impossible and, instead, a state of nature would be perpetuated"[22].

But isn't this the definition of states which dominate peoples and territories and consider that this domination is their right, imposing an international law (order based on rules) according to this "right"? Is an international law based on domination-submission, anything other than a "state of nature" – deplored by the first (liberal/bourgeois) social contract theorists – where cruelty and non-human irrationality provide the rules? And can we, in the 21th century, think that this international law is fair and benign for the human species?

In a state of nature, Kant insisted, the *rights* acquired by states – through war or otherwise – are only *provisional*. As a result, the Right of Nations itself can never be but *provisional*. However, what gives to the present nonrightful condition of states some stability and order is the *principle of clear contracts between parts*. To promote a state's own rights means to advance them within contracts: and just this type of *promotion of rights through contracts* gives states the quality to being free.

In Kant, "the rights of *humankind" that is represented in the moral reason* manifests as *juridical* rights of the people and, internationally, the free peoples. These rights, as Right, are "sacred" and thus their formulation is a *categorical imperative of politics*: one cannot respect them with "a half measure" and "devise a hybrid, pragmatically conditioned right (between right and utility)"[23].

(7) There is no right to colonise

In this frame, Kant examines the right to make a settlement on the land of other state[24]. We should not forget that it is about free states, thus this right requires a specific contract. But Kant also discusses this problem related to *peoples*, and not to states ("Hottentots, Tungusi and most of the American Indian Nations") and here he claims also a contract, one "that does not take advantage of the ignorance of those habitants". This claim is based on the principle of *justice*, and *no pretext of beneficial results of the infringement of justice* (as, he insists, that of "civilising of these backward peoples", pretext already used for the excusing of the bloody introduction of Christianity in Germany; or as the cleaning of the states that colonise from "corrupt men") *is legitimated*.

Thus, colonialism is not moral, it cannot be legitimated as a juridical right, because no subjugated people could have been and could be an equal part in a contract

21 *Ibidem*, p. 155, § 60 (AA VI: 349).
22 *Ibidem*.
23 Immanuel Kant, Toward *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), in Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, Edited and with an Introduction by Pauline Kleingeld, Translated by David L. Colclasure with essays by Jeremy Waldron, Michael W. Doyle, Allen W. Wood, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 104 (AA 8: 380).
24 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals,* p. 159, § 62 (AA VI: 353).

selling its own territory. Can we really think – and could Kant really think – that the "Hottentots, Tungusi and most of the American Indian Nations" have sold their territory in a contract based on equal information and gains?

(8) How would Kant characterise the present international life

The present international Order based on Rules is not a Right of Nations, but a "nonrightful" imposition of domination of the states which had and have the most implacable means of violence, the "carrot" at the end of the "stick" still being a form of violence.

This frame generates and is supported by an Orwellian "newspeak": as that describing as "humanitarian behaviour" the authorisation by the state of Israel of camions transporting international "humanitarian aid" to Gaza. But the hypocrisy and absurdity of this description belongs not only to the state of Israel, but also to all states benefitting from and supporting the present international Order based on Rules, eventually sending to Gaza "humanitarian aid" but at the same time weapons to destroy it. Whose rules are the ones that sustain this Order?

Kant did not elaborate further the problem of the concrete situation of the "American Indian Nations" on a territory that no longer belonged to them and where a settler colonialism established its rules with an incredible will to exterminate them and to erase the memory of their civilisation. He considered that the demonstration through transcendental principles – which, in fact, are the result of the human reason and, thus, understandable and created by every human being – would change the existing cruel path toward a *fait accompli*. He did not arrive to see, in the second half of the 20th century, the "coexistence" of the settler white domination and the non-white peoples, native or forcefully brought in order to work for the masters. Would have Kant said that these non-white people have no the right to impose a modern constitution proclaiming the juridical and political freedom of all residents of the state?

The destiny of colonised peoples intertwined with the type of social system that controlled and continued to control these peoples. The Tungusi and all the other local native peoples radically changed their status in the USSR: they became citizens, and *equal citizens* with all the other peoples of the Union, having the right to develop their language and culture and benefitting, together with all the other peoples and citizens, of the economic and social rights which allowed a dignified life of all.

The "Hottentots" and the American Indian Nations remained in colonies or, as pariahs, in the settler colonial countries. Nowadays, the Africans gained their political independence, and in the Republic of South Africa they succeeded to abolish the apartheid.

(9) The present war against Palestinians

But capitalism is a system that cannot exist without disposing of always more and more material and human resources, and thus, without an aggressive politics

imposing its power on the world. The Middle East – Arab land – is an example. Israel is a *settler colonialism* established on the Palestinian land, in order to promote in this region, the power and interests of the Western, mostly American, power and interests.

The present war of Israel against Palestinians is a pro-apartheid war of Israel, and against the modern liberal principles claimed by it and its Western supporters. It has an international deep resonance[25] and, indeed, is a threshold toward a new world order – but paid by the tragic death of Palestinian and Lebanese children, women, elderly, and young warriors: the future and the real wealth of Palestine, Lebanon and, actually, of humanity –. Israel backed by the Western capitalism think that it/they will achieve what the American and English capitalism did in the 19th century: a *fait accompli* of full domination of a foreign land, where the remnants of the – now called – "First Peoples" will bow their head forever. But the communist ideas of all citizens' equality in the control of the means of production and existence, and the abolishment of apartheid in South Africa are precedents no longer allowing a shameful repetition of that historical moment.

The incredibly savage war against Palestinians, a clear war of extermination, is a blow even to its perpetrators. It definitely discloses the *structural limits* of capitalist liberalism: on international scale, but even in the privileged countries. Every criticism is strangled, accused of "antisemitism", in the name of a false universalism of equality of all particular ethnical groups. But the present criticism of the imperialist war against Palestinians is based just on the moral universalism of all the human beings and the rejection of the "survival" of a group at the expense of other ones. The present criticism is not one of an ethnical or whatever group, but a criticism of politics based on imperialist and racist ideology, a criticism of capitalism. Contrary to this criticism is just the more or less covered *racism* of imperialism[26].

And once more the *bla bla ideology* of *capitalism that is, structurally, imperialist* reveals to be absurdly contradictory: it advances the precept of the universal human nature – prescribing, accordingly, "stress reduction exercises" which in fact fit only for the real or idealised "middle classes" struggling with the "uncertainty" surrounding them but closed in the Western type "gated community" – and at the same time, assumes subordination of the inferior, racism[27], and inevitably, the merciless extermination of the opposing *realist, and not utopian, universalism* of *human beings advancing the universalizable*.

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25 See Tenth emergency special session, Agenda item 5, Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 13 September 2024, United Nations, General Assembly, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/ltd/n24/266/48/pdf/n2426648.pdf.

But also, Alain Marshal, *Pourquoi risquer la prison pour la Palestine ?*, 21 octobre 2024, https://alainmarshal.org/2024/10/21/pourquoi-risquer-la-prison-pour-la-palestine/.

26 As revealed in Angela Saini, *Superior: The Return of Race Science*, Beacon Press, 2019.

27 Ana Bazac, "The Problem of the Coexistence of the Concept of Human Nature and Racism", *Dialogue & Universalism*, 1/2021, pp. 139-156.

III
Kant's actuality: Kant's contradictory attitude towards the French Revolution

(10) Justice and popular revolts

Kant related the injustice made to the colonised peoples to the injustice made by the European "Ancien Régime" against the French Revolution: but where "the revolutionaries" *can pretext* that "when constitutions are bad it is up to the people to reshape them by force". That is to say, the European counter-revolutionary governments and principles made an injustice to the French Revolution: and at the same time, this revolution was "against nature".

But he wrote this in 1797 (*The Metaphysics of Morals*), after the victory of the big bourgeoisie aided and followed by the petty one against the raising of the "sans culottes"; and the winers depicted the losers as unjust terrorists. Under this influence, by putting the important problem of justice during the revolutionary upheavals, Kant said: injustice made first cannot be the price for latter justice[28].

At the level of abstract sense of justice, this means that the punishment of unjust deeds is not allowed, even though this punishment involves and brings justice. But, still at this level of abstract sense of justice, where then is justice, how can it be established? At the level of judgements about politics, this meant for Kant – and for all the liberal supporters of the systems based on domination-submission – that the revolution against the established order of domination-submission is not allowed, and that the critiques of this order provide only pretexts.

Therefore, even though Kant emphasised before that to implement justice means and is a step towards achieving the requirement (the categorical imperative) that morality itself contains, the pressure of the dominant spirit of counter-revolution was so huge that he considered that the political and juridical liberalism of free citizens would be enough to progress toward justice.

However, this abdication from the maximalist principle of morality was not related only to the French Revolution and took place not only as a result of the influence of the winers of the French Revolution. The problem is indeed related to the bigger one: *the legitimating of the popular revolts*.

But here Kant *did not take to the end* the "transcendental" principles of reason he created. Because, as he demonstrated:

- (*if*) moral is duty for the implementation of the categorical imperative;
- (*if*) it is obligation;
- (*if*) *justice* (even expressed in Right) is the empirically expressed *contents* of moral;
- (*if*) politics is the executive theory of Right (Therefore, Right legislates in politics, moral does not legislate, it is inner obligation);
- (*if*) politics is not based on the legislation of Right (simpler expressed, if it is refractory to justice),

28 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 159, § 62 (AA VI: 353).

- *then* – also because "the implementation of (the) idea (of unity of a people in a commonwealth) in practice can rely on nothing but violence to establish the juridical condition, and it is hence the coercive force of violence upon which public right will subsequently be based"[29] – "a state can govern itself in a republican manner, even if it still possesses a despotic ruling power *according to its present constitution*, until the people gradually become able to be influenced by the mere idea of the authority of the law (as if it exerted physical force) and hence are found capable of their own legislation (which is originally based on right)"[30]. So, *the state resulted from the French Revolution is legitimate and viable according to the transcendental principles. But…*

Do not forget, a republican constitution is based on juridical freedom and juridical equality of citizens, and provides a unique legislation that has its origin in the social contract.

(11) What kind of revolution did Kant endorse?

May the above quote rather fit for the modern states which did not implement all the "reforms" to remedy flaws in the constitution which is, however, quite good? It is fit for both these states *and* the revolutionary France. As it is known, Kant oscillated between the idea of gradual reforms – helping also the transformation of the civic culture of people into an enlightened one – and the idea that the revolutions are allowed when these reforms do not happen (when "concept of right is an empty thought", and the rulers do not fulfil their duty toward s the people[31]). But he distinguished between revolution *as a political transition to a legal state*, like the "transfer" of sovereignty from the king to the National Assembly, and thus both becoming the representatives of the people, and, on the other hand, revolution *as unlawfully use of the sovereignty of the people*[32].

But with all this swing, Kant could not annul the idea of *sovereignty of the people* as the ultimate origin of realisation of the pure juridical principles which are a transposition of the moral right. Accordingly, he *supported the right of the French Republic to defend itself from the counter-revolutionary European armies*: "Even if the impetuosity of a revolution provoked by a bad constitution were to bring about a more lawful one illegitimately it should no longer be deemed permissible to return the people to the previous constitution, even though under the old constitution any person who had violently or maliciously participated in that revolution would have rightly been subject to the punishment accorded rebels". The illegitimate manner Kant refers to is the deployment of the French Revolution from the first moment of *transfer of sovereignty* to the National Assembly in June 1789 (and after which still a constitutional monarchy followed) to that of *declaration of republic* in 1792. Kant considered that the 1789 moment was a legal one[33].

29 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace*, i*bidem*, p. 95 (AA 8: 371).
30 *Ibidem*, I underlined.
31 *Ibidem*, p. 96 (AA 8: 372).
32 See Reidar Maliks, "Kant and the French Revolution", *Las Torres de Lucca. Revista internacional de filosofía política*, 12(2), 2023, pp. 113-119.
33 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 133 (AA VI: 323).

(12) Nevertheless, the new revolutionary state had the right to defend itself

Kant's argument for the right of the French Republic to defend itself was: "one cannot demand of a state that it abandon its constitution, even if the latter is despotic (which indeed makes it a stronger one with regard to foreign foes), as long as the danger exists that it could be swallowed up by other states. It must therefore be permissible to delay the carrying out of such a change of constitution until a more fitting opportunity arises"[34]).

And he insisted in the footnote: "These are laws of permissibility. They allow for leaving in place a condition of public right that is tainted with injustice until everything has either itself developed to the point at which it is ripe for a complete change or been brought closer to ripeness by peaceful means. For any kind of juridical constitution, even if it is only to a small degree in conformity with right, is better than no constitution at all. The latter fate, anarchy, is precisely what a hasty reform would lead to. Political wisdom will thus make it a duty to pursue reforms in accordance with the ideal of public right under existing circumstances, but will not use revolutions brought about by nature as excuses in order to engage in an even greater oppression, but rather take it to be an appeal of nature to bring about a lawful constitution based on principles of freedom, the only enduring kind of constitution, by means of thorough reforms"[35].

An interesting demonstration was made about Kant's view that nevertheless, the revolution is not only allowed, but it is a duty when the sovereign does not accomplish the rights of citizens in a civil society: when either the subjects who revolt are not citizens – thus do not enjoy the civil society that is necessary as organisation that assures the political and juridical freedom and rights – or are citizens in a state where the sovereign does not fulfil his duty to assure Right[36]. However, does this view suggest that the Prussian serfs would have been allowed to revolt?

(13) Loving the idea of revolution of the people, but…

Kant summarized his conception about the French Revolution in *The Conflict of Faculties* (1798), chapter 6, On an event in our time which proves this moral tendency of the human race[37]. Here he separated the reasoning about the Revolution as such from the evaluation of the mindsets of humans, related to Revolution.

Concerning the second aspect, Kant showed that the "sympathy in wish that borders on enthusiasm" is caused by the *moral* capacity of the human race. However, "enthusiasm is aimed solely at the *ideal* and, indeed, at the purely moral, to which the concept of right belongs". Consequently, "the outside, viewing public then sympathized with this feeling of exaltation without the least intention of participating".

34 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace*, *ibidem*, p. 96 (AA 8: 372).
35 *Ibidem*, p. 97 (AA 8: 373-374).
36 See Chris W. Surprenant, "A Reconciliation of Kant's Views on Revolution", *Interpretation – A Journal of Political Philosophy*, Volume 32, Issue 2, 2005, pp. 151-169.
37 Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties* (1790), in Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, pp. 155-157 (Ak 7: 85 and 86).

It is a very realistic picture of the average "prudence", isn't it?

Concerning the reasoning about Revolution, Kant emphasised two kinds of arguments, intertwined. First, it is the transcendental moral approach that, as a cause, generates a transcendental concept of *right*: "that a people must not be hindered by other powers in giving itself a civil constitution that it itself regards as good". And the fulfilment of this right is a *duty*. But still a duty, says Kant, is that "only such a constitution of a people is *in accordance with right* and morally good in itself which, in its nature, is made such that wars of aggression are avoided as a matter of principle". This prevention of war is assured by a "republican constitution, at least in its conception". (Kant saw that monarchical constitutions cannot prevent wars).

Well, what to be done when other countries attack the country governed on the basis of a republican constitution? *This country must defend itself*, as showed above.

But, and now Kant passes to the arguments related to the practical experience, if the need of a republican constitution is a transcendental need, the citizens from a monarchical state have *no the right* to change the constitution into a republican one. Because the monarchy (Kant refers to England, "a country that lies more than a hundred miles from the site of the revolution") has in its possession "extended territories in Europe" and in order to keep them ("maintain itself") "amidst powerful neighbors", "perhaps" this monarchical constitution is the best. And just because of this economic power of the state, "the grumblings of the subjects are not due to the government's domestic policies" (the same was said by Tocqueville when discussing the causes of Revolution in a prosperous state). There are only some ones who protest against "its policy toward foreign nationals when it, for instance, hinders foreigners in forming a republic, and are in no way proof of a people's dissatisfaction with its own constitution".

Therefore, the dialectics of things shows a tangled situation. On the one hand, the subjects rise up – and must do this – for "the *principle*" that is "capable of the universality of a rule", their *freedom*, based on their rationality, to demand "according to the *formal* principle of his will, (a) government for the people (in) which the people co-legislates"; (AB, with the sovereign to whom the people transferred its sovereignty, in the original contract). "It is something which no government, however beneficent it may be, may infringe on".

However, too much radicalism is not good, so "this right is always only an *idea* whose implementation is restricted by the condition that its *means* are consistent with morality, which the people must never contravene, and it may not be realized by means of revolution, which is always unjust".

Consequently, on the other hand, *the uprising of the people is never allowed because of its misery and neither because of lacks in its well-being*. On the contrary, if it obeys "like obedient sheep, led by a kind and understanding master, well fed and strongly protected, would have nothing to complain about concerning their welfare". Consequently, "Autocratic *rule* and yet republican *governance*, that is, in the spirit of and analogous to republicanism, are what makes a people content with its constitution". This was the theoretical recipe for both the "constitutional monarchies" and the *modernisation without political revolution* (as Gramsci called this, "passive revolution") that was the process suited for all the modern states, ir-

respective of their form of governance.

(14) Even though limited, Kant's liberalism was utopian; the present liberalism of "the left" is a cynical defeat

Can't we see in this original liberal contradictory position the latter attitudes towards the October Revolution and socialism? Of those benevolent, "progressive" and even "socialists" who supported the theory of necessity to abolish capitalism, but not the practice to do this, and they opposed to this practice in a ruthless way? Do we not see that they never understood that the *ideal conditions for realising socialism can never be met*, and that the power of all common people of the world must be unleashed in order to build a society of dignity of all human beings? Do we not see that the beautiful creation of the human mind, the categorical imperative, vanishes if we do not consider the *consequences* of the capitalist relations? We obviously do not sneer at the above care related to revolutionary "means" – that is, proletarian *class violence of abolishment of privileges and main private property*, not personal revenge; or, destruction of the domination class characteristics of people, not their physical destruction – saying that "so, the capitalist means were okay and allowed, but the proletarian means are "unjust", isn't it?" But can't we see that the means the revolutionaries practise are just in accordance with the moral principles forbidding and annulling the use of man/ of those outside the dominant class only as a means?

Kant could not see all of these, obviously, but the witnesses of the WWI could, seeing that capitalism wants to resist at the cost of the destruction of civilisation, including of the humanist beliefs in the transformation of cruelty into moral behaviour.

IV

Kant and Marx on the Road of Universalism

(15) Marx's attitude towards the Kantian moral metaphysics

Obviously, here only the moral and social aspects of the two are mentioned, and only indicating main elements of continuity and discontinuity.

Marx constructed a *scientific demonstration* of the *possibility/viability* of a communist alternative to capitalism. And this was a theory, having different theoretical origins. In the ethical domain – although Marx did not have ethical papers – it is Kant[38].

38 For the relations between Kant and Marx, see: Harry van der Linden, Kantian Ethics and Socialism, Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1988, Butler University Books. 17; Howard Williams, "Karl Vorlaender's Kantian Synthesis of Marx and Kant", Kant Yearbook, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2021, pp. 129-152; discussing Hermann Cohen in the neo-Kantian Marburg School, Elisabeth Widmer, "'Left-Kantianism' and the 'Scientific Dispute' between Rudolf Stammler and Hermann Cohen", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, October 18, 2023.

To a thinker focused on the *objective* and *subjective* conditions of a proletarian revolution, the reduction of concrete freedom and rights to the political and juridical ones, as Kant did, is a proof of theoretical inconsistency of the author. However, even though Marx criticised Kant's metaphysical approach of the law and politics, he saw both the *implicit critique of their real modern forms this metaphysics allows* and also, and especially, the *critical valences of the moral metaphysics*. Very early, Marx characterised the Enlightenment's, thus Kant's, penchant to metaphysics as a display of scepticism "in regard to the rationality of *what exists*"[39], just opposed to the denial of rationality as such by the promoters of "think positive!" – if this allusion to the present is allowed – /by those who consider both that *what is real is rational* or that, *however is the real irrational, it still must be taken for granted and as a basis of the legal forms*. Thus, if these ones are "irrational" and "uncritical" and their point of view is assumed by the official modern state, *Kant is rational and critical*[40]. Just what was needed for a critical, thus fruitful analysis of the modern organisation of society. The uncritical "positive" obsequious approach – where "the right of arbitrary power"[41] is principle – emphasised the valences of the moral metaphysics, of the categorical imperative: it is the *ought* that must regulate the norms of power relations if we moved away from outdated rules, as everyone considers modernity.

Kant showed how is to understand the levels of knowledge and that the level of concepts allows catching the real phenomena not as individual and particular occurrences but as *universal and necessary* facts. In his turn, Marx – who was interested only about the methodological aspect of epistemology, the succession of concepts (*defined according to their contents*) in the development of theory – related the universal and necessary to the *historical process* and to the *social relations*. Kant's critical method concerned the *theoretical* and the *metaphysical*, the concepts with their meanings and function of *form* needed to be re-viewed; Marx's critical method concerned the *development of real social relations* and only on this basis he confronted the concepts. However mentally conceived, the universal and necessary ideas do not develop by themselves, but only in connection with the historical and social reality. For this reason, Marx's critical method concerned the *whole*, the complex interdependencies and feedbacks of ideas – and different types of ideas – and/with economy, politics, law, culture, consciousness. And the whole can be caught only if the *forms* are related to *contents*, given by experience.

Marx criticised Kant's moral "idealism" not from the standpoint of its practical conclusions: on the contrary, just this perspective of moral idealism showed to be and "must be rightly regarded as the German theory of the French revolution"[42], precisely opposed to those who mocked it from the point of view of closing the real within institutions that hinder its development.

39 Karl Marx, "The Philosophical Manifesto of the Historical School of Law" (1842), *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Volume 1, Lawrence & Wishart, (1975), 2010 Electric Book, pp. 203-210 (here, p. 205, I underlined). (Marx-Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, I, pt. 1, 251-259).
40 *Ibidem* (2010), p. 204.
41 *Ibidem* (2010), p. 210.
42 *Ibidem*, p. 206.

Thus, for Marx the groundwork of the moral metaphysics was okay, even highly necessary; but not the "metaphysics of law" that rejected the social reality[43]. Exactly the legal norms – and thus, the political institutions and relations – must correspond to the social reality. If in moral, the common good happens when the humans are not treated only as means, but always also as ends, it cannot manifest *realiter* – not only when the political and legal norms remove from *what is* and impose domination, *structural asymmetry of freedom* – but, fundamentally, in economic relations which once more make them helpless and ineffective.

(16) Kant's forms and Marx's contents

The metaphysical demonstration of Kant – i.e., the quest for principles from deduction from concepts, they themselves defined in the frame of meanings given *in abstracto* – is not a philosophical oddity we can well drop out. Its alternative is not the cynical "realism" that affirms the *status quo* as rational, thus "quite good." On the contrary, just Kant's insistence on the *ought to be* fuels the *realism* of the creation of the common good. This Kantian spirit was continued by Marx, both showing the necessity to *re-examine the essential structures of the modern society*. Both made a "*transcendental* critique" of society – this adjective meaning here a highly theoretically proven analysis – and moreover, Marx made a *grassroots* critique.

Kant presented the formation of ideas *qua* ideas, as *forms*. Marx pointed out the formation of ideas as *contents* and their dependence on both the concrete contents given by experience and, in this frame, on the way of thinking *these contents*: this was the reason of not only his explanation of *ideology* but also his focus on the *methodology of thinking the contents*.

Kant was not the first philosopher who made obvious how determinative is to have a *clear conscience* of the ideas we "naturally" arrive at. But he was the first who explained that this clear conscience of ideas is the awareness of ideas as *forms*, i.e., as *our* mental synthesis that, although starting from the information given by senses, slightly removes from it because the concepts ensue from processing the empirical notions and the ideas from the processing of concepts. Marx continued the focus on the clear conscience of ideas, because without this focus the *cardinal role of ideas in the conscience and deeds of people* is not understood.

And he proved that the clear conscience of ideas always involves their *contents*: which are not at all neutral copies of the state of facts but reflect just the experience of humans, their historical experience and, regarding the inherent social experience obviously in the frame of social relations, their *position* within the concrete social relations. And of course, the ideas circulate, are emitted, taught, learned, assumed, thus, regarding the ideas about their social experience, people take over, consciously or not, even ideas which do not correspond to their social position. People *interpret* the facts – letting here aside that even the information describing the facts reflect

43 See the analysis of the very young Marx's analysis of jurisprudence, his starting point, Donald R. Kelley, "The Metaphysics of Law: An Essay on the Very Young Marx", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Apr., 1978), pp. 350-367.

the power relations and are emitted according to the social position/interest of the rulers – only in principle according to their own social position, in reality their ideas related to society are subordinated to the dominant social position. Therefore, a clear conscience of ideas involves the awareness of the "social positions" of ideas/ of their *ideological* characteristic, because only this awareness helps the humans to understand the *development* of these ideas and their *consequences*: their *telos/ reason-to-be* as *ought to be* and their deterring from it, but nevertheless their continuation, duration, by an inertia that makes people and the social reality they live within sick. The inertia of ideas leads to the inertia of the social reality.

Consequently, in order to shake it, the ideas themselves need to be shaken.

(17) Kant's publicity as main element constructing the subjective conditions of the communist transformation

Kant's deduction of *publicity*, thus freedom of speech, from within his metaphysical construct, his enlightenment urges and commitment to contribute to the *daring* and *knowledge* of the common people were in line with Marx's lifelong goal to contribute to the *subjective conditions* of a proletarian revolution – the proletarians being a *world* class within a capitalist *world* system –: the human reason[44] does not accept "cognitive *Untermenschen*", was both Kant's and Marx's warning.

(18) Kant's and Marx's paradigms

The breakthrough and demonstrated (philosophical) *principles* rarely appear; in general, the same ideas are discussed and explained according to the new experience.

The categorical imperative principle is, for ethics, as Darwin's theory is for biology. They are *paradigms* for the development of science and human cognition: and cognition never remains only thinking.

Marx, too, was a creator of *paradigmatic principles*:

-the outcome of the historicity of class struggle,
-the necessity of the "dictature of the proletariat" – actually,
the takeover of political power by the proletariat – as the essential,
absolutely necessary condition for
-the abolition of private property as structural social relation of the modern society (and that never must be confounded with the personal property).

Indeed, *the social condition – that which is the frame of the interhuman relations – to treat the others not only as means but always as ends is just the abolition of the*

44 And the feelings – as suffering, first of all – also. Kant showed that, ultimately, the feelings have a basis and justification in thinking, in reason, and his goal was to formalise this rational basis. This basis was obvious for Marx, too. But his scope was to change the social settlements which generate cruelty and suffering. The feelings are individual and random. Can they justify our knowledge that involves and searches for the general and the necessary? No, knowing must take into account the conditions of feelings. Only analysing these conditions can we arrive to general and necessary, thus objective knowledge. Just because the feelings reveal the mediated character of objectivity, Marx focused on the scientific decomposition of the social relations in their development.

private property. These are the founding principles, but there are much more. And from this standpoint of paradigmatic principles in society, between humans, *Kant and Marx completed each other*.

The categorical imperative as ethical formula and the *takeover of political power by the proletariat in order to abolish the private property* are the *most concrete, most functional, most clear and revealing*, as *ultimate conditions-criteria for the real worth of every human being and of all*. But the achievement of the ethical imperative is *conditioned* by the achievement of Marxian principles. As we see nowadays, apart from these principles, all the slogans and "reforms" are impotent and, concretely, harmful; they waste the time and life of humans. We are justified to say that as the categorical imperative is a *regulative idea of moral*, so the communist idea – as a synthesis of the above principles – is a *regulative idea for the practical life*.

(19) The universalizable of Kant and Marx

Kant brought about the requirement – and principle, since it is a synonym of the categorical imperative – of the *universalizability*, of the *universalizable*. In his turn, by emphasising the social classes, Marx did not support the division and discord of society: on the contrary, he demonstrated the *proletarian* status of the vast majority of the world population, irrespective of the popular "shares" held as crumbs dropped by the *restrictive private control of resources and life*. This proletarian status is the negative of the humans behaving according to the categorical imperative., is the *negative universal*. "Through Kant", Marx promoted the concrete universalizability. "Through Marx", Kant signalled that the universalizability is not utopia.

Yes, we must not forget the Kantian meanings of rational beings as both *persons with rights* and *beings without rights*, or of *states with civil society* and *without it (colonies)*; as well as we should consider the cosmopolitan federation of states with civil society only as a model for a world integration of all states; and if so, Kant himself deviated from his epistemological tenet to consider the principles as only forms containing universal and necessary, general prescriptions: would a federation aiming only to forbid a mutual attack of states be accordant with a categorical imperative?

More: the categorical imperative as *universalizable* is discordant with the Kantian rights of states, because these states, or nations, are *groups. We cannot posit rights of no matter what kind of groups above the universalizable rights in their* moral *meaning*. A proletarian taking over of power is not at all an instituting of the rights of a group over the rights of another one. Because the proletariat – denoting the *proletarian feature of all the working people of the world, their dependency on the private control of resources of the whole world* – is *universal*: not in the simple sense that it is a world class, but in the substantive sense that its *purpose* is universal, the abolition of the private property and the establishment of the *public control of resources and social objectives*.

In this respect, Marx's *internationalism* is pendant with the *categorical imperative*: it is the *political imperative* corresponding to the *moral* one. All the humans of the

world are each other's ends *if* and *only if* they get rid of the internal and international structural relations which determine them to consider each other only as means. Differently put, *if* and *only if* they construct internal and international structural relations which allow their real social equality and fuel their active involvement in the control of resources and social goals. On this basis, the humans have the *freedom to act according to their thoughts* as aspirations to manifest the *unique creative power of everyone*. On this basis, all the interhuman relationships and feelings can evolve in their complexity marked by the good-evil couple of values which, however, are hindered by the profound restraint to not treat the others only as means. Anyway, *universalism is learned, the closing in groups stops it*.

The Marxist universals – thus, not only the Marxian (that is, created by Marx and Engels) but those created in his/their wake – do not annul the pluralism of cultures. Actually, just this pluralism and its necessity depend on these universals. Can we conceive the development of the specific culture of *every* people in the world, and of *every* human being, without the abolition of the private property, the emancipation of the peoples of colonies and semi-colonies, the rejection of the principle of "chosen" groups and their "historical" "justification" as well as "social" justification, and without expanding social rights on the basis of large social expenditures of the state? *Can we consider historical facts and myths as more important than the categorical imperative?*

(20) The practical relations of Kant and of Marx

Kant described the practical relations, morally regulated, as *political* and *juridical* relations.

Marx demonstrated that the practical relations are, first of all and obviously through the attitudes of people which are moral in their essence[45], *economic*. By analysing the *modern market economy* – i.e.,

economy based on *private property* and not on "possession of the rich" or of an abstract citizen preaching the private acquisition as a natural right;

45 The *attitudes* are *moral* because they involve the consideration of both the subjects who think and act and the ones who are in any type of relations with the former, and the thoughts and actions as such, according to meanings beyond the strict and direct causality and efficiency, thus according to the *telos* asking *what for* those thoughts, actions, attitudes and relations. Thus, the *moral* characteristic doubles the *practical* character that consists just in the deployment of causal and efficiency evaluation of thoughts, actions, attitudes, relations, institutions, values. The moral evaluation according to the *what for* is practical, too, because it is a reason's level of *content*, but it is *special* in that it is the background of human attitudes; however, its own deployment in the human mind takes place consciously and thus, it is not superposing exactly on the practical. The moral evaluation asks, imposes, requires, but if the social organization imposes practical priorities which are not suitable with the "moral voice" of the conscience, it is silenced (postponed, perverted etc.). This splitting between moral and practice is a question of *contents* of the social ends, means, values, forms, and was emphasized by Marx.

The humans acquired the capabilities of moral evaluation as restraints. The restraints themselves have an instinctual basis of interdependence between humans and thus the restraint to kill other humans, etc. See Konrad, Lorenz, *On Aggression* (1963), Translated by Marjorie Kerr Wilson, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.

goal/law of *maximisation of the private profit*;

competition between the private property holders and structures, and thus, competition between the wage earners also;

domination and exploitation of the world by the states representing the most powerful and advanced private property structures, or modern colonialism (later on called imperialism, or Centre-Periphery domination) –

Marx did not consider it as a deviation from the "former" societies of "society's control of economy"[46]. And neither did he assess capitalism as a good social arrangement as such, better than the former systems, as Polanyi believed that Marx would have thought in this way, but he stressed the historical role of the modern system:

to develop the productive forces at a level not only superior to the former productive relations but also and thus *at a level no longer supporting the capitalist productive relations, or at a level when the productive relations hinder the development of the productive forces*,

to globalise economy and civilisation as such – by generalising worldwide the market economy, science, technology, and mass culture – and thus to create the *objective* basis for a communist society.

And because that globalisation is a *capitalist* one, subordinated to the capitalist pursuing of private profit, it's obvious that it develops in a *contradictory* and *self-destructive* way for both *economy* and *society*.

(21) Judging the mature capitalism and the socialist transition through Marx's lenses

Capitalism *separated* economy from social arrangements and considered economy the domain where the rule is exclusively the private profit and that is regulated exclusively by its own rules. Even the social expenditures of the state were only the result of the internal class struggle and the international socialist practice – as in USSR and later, in the East European and Asian socialist countries – of which it was afraid of and hated them, implementing them only depending on the priority of private profit achieved through international extortion and domestic expansion of consumption. Thus, *the idea of self-regulating economy became the tenet of capitalism*, even though the capitalist economy itself needed and needs the state intervention into economy, and even though "self-regulation" determined the attack on the substantive economy, by draining the investments towards the financial "Ponzi system" (this is the so-called *financialisation*). *Financialisation itself is a removal of finance from the logic of substantive economy*, determining also high financial imbalances (raise of debts etc.). Thus, that draining determines the weakening of the former developed substantive economies and accentuates the

46 As Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1944. And as he thought that Marx would have thought this way.

substantive imbalances of colonies which, after the formal de-colonisation, became "developing countries". If, with the raise of capitalism, "a social dislocation of stupendous proportions" from the rural to the urban working poor's exploitation took place, the globalisation of the socially deregulated economy led and leads to another, not amazing but epical dislocation on global scale.

More, capitalism *subordinated society to this economy* and *transposed the capitalist market rules to the understanding and evaluation of intangible social values*. In this society, the social rules are no longer regulative, thus neither for society nor for economy. So, condemning capitalism from an ethical standpoint – that of the precapitalist economies significantly based on reciprocity and symmetrical gains from exchange – is not efficient at all in order to explain why and how the capitalist rules have been generalised and are general. The fact that economy needs to be controlled by society is not spontaneously fulfilled by society. And the control by the state subordinated to the private profit does represent, although an alleviation of the condition of the many, only an instrument to help the development of capitalism as such.

For this reason, although the former USSR, appeared in a backward country, had to develop in the frame of a world capitalist market, in fact it and the other socialist countries *were not "state capitalism"*. Both USSR and the other socialist countries had to play internationally according to the capitalist market rules, while internally *mixing* this logic with the goal to develop an economy subordinated not only to the *modernisation of economic structures* – and this goal involved both market and non-market rules – but also to the *implementation of socialist values*, even in their communist meaning, *and attitudes* as mutual assessment of men according to their inherent human dignity and social equality: because "the condition of politics" assured this.

Because the *legitimating values* of the socialist system were not the sanctity of private property and the domination of the "fittest", but just social justice and equality: this system was, indeed, the first phasis of the construction of the post-capitalist society, as Marx, from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* to the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, showed. Simply, socialism. Not "state socialism". Can we not see that the huge economic state intervention in the capitalist societies – including by sponsoring the culture and mass education – was and is not tantamount to "socialism", just because of the *values* and *ends* of these *different kinds* of state interventionism? And can we not see that the capitalist state intervention did not solve the problems of meaningful lives of their population? Can a meaningful life be that of consumption and selfish "survival"?

The socialist values had both a socialist aspect – responding to the objective requirements of the construction of a new society *within the old one* – and a communist aspect: where equality meant – as in Kant – equality *qua* human being. Of course, we don't have to and we don't need to idealise the first socialist practical experience and, letting aside the concrete evolution of this experience, the mixing of values themselves in the real life. But just following the new legitimating values, the social justice was – and not as a desire or a prescription for the future – "an egalitarian politics *in actu*". And the socialist politics was just this: with all

its shortcomings. Therefore, the "condition" of a socialist politics reflected the Cartesian and Kantian equal endowment with reason of all the human beings.

In this, the socialist politics – substantiated by Marx – is both the *surpassing* of Kant's image about the possibility of justice (as equal social rights) in a society based on capitalist political and juridical freedom of citizens, and the *continuation* of his moral requirements as the real foundation of politics and society. A very difficult continuation, because of the opposition of the capitalist forces worldwide through a model in which no one is responsible. And in which the "horror beyond description" (Mazin Qumsieh, http://www.defenddemocracy.press/please-end-extermination-campaign/) is covered by the consumption and spectacle annihilating the conscience of the real and fake privileged, and in which even Orwell's "newspeak" is incredibly exceeded.

But Kant's historical limits do not affect the value of the categorical imperative. On the contrary, they emphasise it.

(22) Kant's categorical imperative as a call for Marx

However, this principle demands to be surpassed. In ethics, Kant made a *revolution*, but in morals Kant is only a *call for Marx*: for the real understanding of the *value* of every human being, an explicit theory of the *concrete integral development of society* is needed. Kant did not subordinate the multi dimensions of the humans to rationality (as his critics say), but he explained the *cognitive* basis of these dimensions and their *moral* basis. Marx is not superior to Kant because he considers all of these dimensions, but because he explains their *interdependence* and their *dependence on the economic structural relations*. And because his principles, conclusions of the fathoming of the real, highlight frames ("forms") realised and fulfilled by all people and by all peoples. They give the *contents* of the regulative idea of communism, inventing also their *forms*. Essentially, these contents with forms cannot annul the Marxian paradigms because, indeed, "the content of every human act has to do, ultimately, with the production-reproduction of human life in community"[47].

But concretely, the real conditions determine the problems, their understanding and thus, the rhythms, the priorities, the scales, the phases, the means, the correlations between tactical movements and strategical tendencies, in a word, the *methodology*. For instance, according to the Marxian original theoretical demonstration, where the contradictions are sharper, there they are more acutely felt and thus, the revolution occurs. However, as it was shown by history, not this was the case, because the West is not only the "fatherland" of modernity and its development as the master of the world capitalism but also its *show-window*, the welfare and the dominant ideology paid by the Western capitalism stopping the process of social awareness.

Therefore, not the sharper *structural* contradictions between the productive

47 Enrique Dussel, "El reto actual de la ética: detener el proceso destructivo de la vida", pp. 143-152, in Heinz Dieterich, Enrique Dussel, Raimundo Franco, Arno Peters, Carsten Stahmer, Hugo Zemelmann, *Fin del Capitalismo Global. El Nuevo Proyecto Histórico*, Mexico, Txalaparta, 1999, p. 143.

relations – requiring the socialisation of the means of production which are private, restrictive – and the productive forces, including science and technology, which are highly socialised, led to revolution, but on the contrary, the sharper *principal* contradictions between the colonised and semi-colonised peoples and the Western colonisers evolved in semi-peripheries and peripheries. But all of these contradictions intermingle. The more so because the Western capitalism is the *mirror* of the structural contradictions and their results: the level of scientific and technological discovery is huge and, at the same time, its application is perverted, the Western decision-makers generating war, famine and malnourishment, destruction, complex ecological crisis even to the point of no return, raise of irrational and absurd beliefs, ignorance, fear and reduction to the fight for survival. Today, the world is confronted with the globalised capitalism in its *neo-liberal and system crisis* stage. It's obvious that the difficulties are much bigger than a century ago. First of all, the hegemonic role on the conscience of the world proletarians is what must be defied. And in this process, Kant's categorical imperative is a beacon.

(23) Kant and Marx confronting the necessity

Both Kant and Marx signalled the future, a society *à venir*, if we use Derrida's expression for democracy. Both were moderately optimistic. But while Kant's moral metaphysics can be seen by a common non-philosopher as an abstract desire, Marx's theory is, indeed, the *key* for his *active* propensity: more than a hope, a *practical method*. That is only a sketch, continuously evolved in reality by all the humans *à venir.*

Kant's moral categorical imperative signalled a new moment of the concept of *necessity*: to treat all the humans as ends, and not only as means is the *sine qua non* condition of the persistence of humanity. Marx's principle of political revolution in order to destroy the cause of considering the humans as means and not as ends, was and is the *sine qua non* condition of the fulfilment of moral necessity. Kant gave the frame of necessity. Marx's principle showed the possibility of the frame.

If so, "Marx" means not only the Marxian theoretical breakthrough but also and essentially *the Marxist thinkers* who pursued it: and first of all, Lenin, because he first put the principle of the communist revolution into practice, showing that *it's possible*. The practical process emphasises another relation between the philosophical concepts of *possibility* and *necessity*: revealing that necessity requires a deviation from it, just in order to fulfil it. Necessity is strict, possibility is open, because otherwise the necessary frame cannot be accomplished. This is the *originality* of the creation of possibility: the Leninist and Stalinist "socialism in a country", the Cuban "unique experiment in Latin America", the Chinese, North Korean and North Vietnam "people's republics", the present "socialism with Chinese characteristics", are the *original creation of possibility*. The realisation and sustainability of communism requires and implies the awareness of its *necessity* by the proletarians of the whole world. Possibility is *positive*[48], it shows how necessity

48 Kant pointed out positive means to apply knowledge into practice, "to extend the boundaries of sensibility… beyond everything, and so even to dislodge the use of pure (practical) reason", while

is accomplished, despite all the obstacles, while the world proletarians are only in the *negative* phase where they do not yet criticise the dominant "use of reason" and accord with this use, seeing only *that which is not* but it *is presented to them as knowledge*: so, where they only learn to distinguish these.

This de-phasing/disjunction of phases between *the negative that deprives possibility* and the *original struggle for necessity* is the mark of our epoch. Theoretically, necessity makes, ultimately, the world. Practically, its process is open: even to its destruction, because of the destructions of so many lives. *Theoretically, the human life is sacred, and this assumed principle by all is and leads to the moral principle of universalizability*. This means, according to Kant, that not reason is specific to the human beings – there are other beings on the Earth also thinking – but the *moral* reason. And the moral reason is that which gives the unique specificity to all rational beings in the universe[49]. *But in the practical surrounding us, we see that the human life is not sacred.*

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negative is to remain only within the boundaries of theoretical knowledge, or of sensibility", Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the second edition, Bxxiv, p. 114.

49 For this reason, the contemporary dominant ideology spreading fear of "aliens invading the Earth" is ridiculous: can we imagine extraterrestrial civilisations able to undertake trips inter galaxies but devoid of "the moral law within" every individual being constituting these civilisations? Since the moral law raises just "the worth as an intelligence" made by everyone's pursuit of the reason-to-be of intelligence as such, thus by everyone's pursuit of the common good of all moral beings in the universe, can we imagine the extraterrestrial civilisations as alike the capitalist logic of survival of the "fittest", meaning strongest? Do we not rather understand that the fear of aliens is the transfer from the *homo homini lupus* relations in order to divert the general attention just from these relations? The quotes from Kant are from *Critique of Practical Reason* (AA 5: 162), p. 129.

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