Kant's Universalism in Historical Context:
Repoliticising the Foundations of a Seminal Political Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary global political milieu, Immanuel Kant's universalist political philosophy has assumed a prominent role, eliciting substantial discourse and scrutiny due to its enduring significance in shaping the fundamental principles that underpin the present-day international order. Kant's philosophy is celebrated for its commitment to universality and its pioneering articulation of political ideals aimed at establishing the foundational principles requisite for the construction of a peaceful, sustainable, and self-regulating global order, grounded upon universally applicable moral precepts. While an array of scholarly works has meticulously explored Kant's groundbreaking contributions and intellectual influence, a discernible gap exists in comprehending how his philosophical framework intersects with the multifaceted social and material backdrop of his era. This thesis embarks on a critical exploration of Kant's universalism, employing a novel approach grounded in the social history of political theory, firmly rooted in historical materialism. Diverging from abstract interpretations of political theory, this method seeks to historically recontextualise Kant's ideas within their original social, political, and class contexts.

To illuminate Kant's universalism from this perspective, a pivotal question must be addressed: *What kind of political project does Kant's universalism propose in terms of the political polarisations between absolutism, feudalism, and liberalism in the Prussian context?* This research endeavours to reevaluate Kant's universalist political philosophy by examining its connection to the protracted crisis of German feudalism, its influence on social and political thought, and its entanglement with the power struggles between absolutist-paternalists, traditional feudalists, and liberal reformists vying for control over social property relations in the Prussian *Ständestaat*. Within this context, Kant's philosophy also intersects with the reform project of the rising educated professional classes, known as the *Bildungsbürgertum*, whose growing influence shaped the trajectory of social property relations and the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) in the Prussian state-building period.

A distinctive contribution of this thesis is that it highlights the unique class character of the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*, distinct from the British and French bourgeoisie traditionally analysed in Marxist perspectives. Notably, the thesis contends that this state-dependent educated professional class had a particular affinity for Kantian universalism, making it, for a time, the prevailing ideology of the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*. By adopting this historical materialist perspective of the social history of political theory, this thesis aims to shed light on the intricate relationships between Kant's universalist political thought and the historically specific conditions of 18th-century Prussia, ultimately elucidating the nuanced limitations imposed by his class context on his philosophical contributions.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF KANT'S WORKS

Anthr *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

CBHH *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*

C.F. *Conflict of the Faculties*

Cor *Correspondence*

CPJ *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

CPR *Critique of Pure Reason*

CPrR *Critique of Practical Reason*

D.S. *Differentiation of Directions in Space*

Disc *On a Discovery Whereby any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by an Older One*

Dist *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*

Dreams *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*

Was *An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?*

G *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

ID *Inaugural Dissertation*

Idea *Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent*

JL *Jäsche Logic*

L.P. *Lectures on Pedagogy*

M.F. *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*

M.J. *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*

MM *Metaphysics of Morals*

NE *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*

O.P. *Opus Postumum*

Prac *Practical Philosophy*

PP *Perpetual Peace*

Prog *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*

Pro *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

Rel *Religion*

RH *Rezensionen zu Johann Gottfried Herders Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*

TP *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, but no Use in Practice*

INTRODUCTION

"Without sensibility (experience), no object would be given to us, and without understanding, none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind."

— Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 51, B 75

PREFACE

In his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the global triumph of key elements of Enlightenment universalism. Fukuyama argues that the triumph of Western liberal democracies over late Stalinism has led to the universal acceptance of principles such as human rights, the rule of law, and peaceful conflict resolution, which are no longer seriously opposed politically or ideologically in late modernity. The final victory of liberal universalism seemed symbolised in the fall of the Berlin Wall and was once and for all secured in global history. As Wuriga (2003) already pointed out, Fukuyama's political analyses and predictions are not only rooted in the discursive history of Anglo-Saxon and French Enlightenment and liberalism but also refer to German-speaking thinkers such as Immanuel Kant. The epistemological as well as the ethical, political, and historical-philosophical theories of Kant and Hegel, among others, had informed Fukuyama's seminal study, sharing the assumption "that history is moving towards an end point or goal." Says Wuriga, "It is from [philosophers like Kant] that Fukuyama appropriates the idea of universality to envisage the universality of liberal democracy" (Wuriga, 2003, p.5)

Thirty years later, Fukuyama's claims and forecasts seem oddly naive and uninformed; at worst, they appear as ideological wishful thinking. For although large parts of Eastern Europe introduced bourgeois democratic political systems, enshrined basic and human rights in their constitutions and guaranteed freedom of expression and freedom of movement, the universal liberalism announced by Fukuyama, especially in Russia, but also in other successor states of the Soviet Union, could not be ideologically and politically established. In Africa and Latin America, too, Western liberalism did not prevail. Similar to the successor states of the former Soviet Union, precarious parliamentary democracies alternated with fascist and autocratic forms of government; sometimes, only mafia-type political structures remained. In the first decades of the 21st century, even the numerically largest democracy in the world, India, appears to be far removed from the universalistic ideas of Fukuyama in terms of domestic governance and external polices. Most especially in China, Fukuyama's predictions did not materialise. One of the basic assumptions of Fukuyama's neo-liberal approach to universal history is that, at least in the medium term, the spread of Western capitalism based on American and European models would also lead to the development of parliamentary systems, civil societies, and the rule of law, has not been confirmed, particularly in China. One can therefore conclude that Fukuyama's assumption that universal human rights, freedom of expression and peaceful international conflict resolution as a result of the spread of neo-liberal capitalism is not correct. There is no evidence that in the neo-liberal era, the basic rights enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights are universally honoured and worked towards. To put it bluntly, these humanistic universals remain abstract regulative ideas for all those many people who are harassed by hunger and exploitation or who, without the slightest say in the matter, are driven into international conflicts by murderous rulers who may very well be champions of neo-liberal capitalism.

After 1980, (neo-) liberalism and capitalism did not resolve the difference between the two former superpowers. In the USA, the first modern democracy based on enlightened, universalist ideas, the 1990s saw a dramatic decline in rational political discourses and civil society. During the Trump era (2016-2020), which some political analysts have described as semi-fascist (Reich, 2016), the Western Alliance saw a rapid decline in political culture and the appeal of, and attempts to implement, liberal and universal ideas. Under Trump, US human rights universalism, which is part of the Enlightenment tradition which provides the ideological foundation of the US, and which had been represented by all American presidents since the end of World War II, was replaced by an America First approach. Amongst other policies, this drastically reduced American co-financing of the United Nations.

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the world public also witnessed the failure of peaceful conflict resolution between states that boast high educational levels and rational decision-making. While the United Nations was still in session to prevent war through negotiations, Russian troops were already marching on Kyiv. Fukuyama's high-spirited announcement of the global spread and implementation of enlightened universals and philosophical and political practices in the tradition of the Western Enlightenment has evidently failed.

It was the philosopher Immanuel Kant who, in his essay *Vom Ewigen Frieden/On Perpetual Peace* (1795), was one of the first modern Europeans to theoretically think about the prevention of war through reason and rule-based international diplomacy. The formulation of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which, as a regulative idea, serves as a foundation for worldwide debates about their best realisation, also owes important impulses to the work and philosophical reception of the Königsberg philosopher. In his '*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten/Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals'* (1785), Kant famously spoke of the fundamental dignity of man: "Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, at all times also as an end, and not only as a means." (Kant, 2002, p.421, *G*, 4:429) Kant's definition of fundamental humanity as a right and obligation, which he saw as being based on the universal right to freedom, was also of particular importance to the post-World-War II discourse on ethical and political universals. Kant undertook to underpin 'natural law' principles through rational-argumentative philosophies and, in his *Categorical Imperative*, to secure the basic freedom of human thought and action with a universally rationally recognisable conceptualisation of the *Golden Rule*, and thus free the human rights discourse from older theological theories.

Historically, Kant's influence on liberal philosophical and political discourses was immense, especially in the German and English-speaking world. However, his impact reaches far into contemporary discourses of political philosophy and questions around the epistemological and ethical grounding of universals, truth, and relativism. As an example, I would like to mention the seminal contemporary philosophies of John Rawls (1993) and Jürgen Habermas (1991, 1994), well-known to a wider academic public, who have taken up key elements of Kant's thoughts on universality by relating the basic validity claims of humanistic ethics to all human beings regardless of their ethnicity and gender and arguing for their fundamental regulative independence from geographical, and cultural conditions. This conceptualisation of universality, which is an integral part of the Kantian tradition, is represented in particular in debates with proponents of cultural and linguistic relativism, e.g., Lyotard or Derrida.

It is, therefore, safe to say that Immanuel Kant is one of the central figures in the modern discourses of universalism. It can be argued that his ideas, but also the criticism and further development of his ideas, have had significant philosophical and political implications for contemporary discourses in the humanities. In order to evaluate the discursive and political

history of the success of modern universalism (as argued by Fukuyama) or their failure, an understanding of Kant's work remains of the greatest importance.

Nevertheless, what were the social and intellectual prerequisites for his work? Who was this thinker whose ideas influenced modern notions of freedom, human rights, democracy, republicanism, and universals like few others? In which contexts of the history of ideas and the history of universalist discourses did his thinking develop? Which historical precursors and which of his contemporaries did Kant absorb and take issue with? In what historical environment and under what socio-psychological conditions did his writings emerge? Attempted answers to these questions fill half a library. There are numerous Kant studies in the area of systematic philosophy, which reconstruct and criticise Kant's epistemology and ethics and their connections to his conceptualisation of universalism[1]. There are also a large number of discourse analyses, e.g., on the position of Kant's universalism within the development of the German-speaking and European Enlightenment (Beiser, 1992; Hunter, 2004, 2006, 2012; Maliks, 2014, 2022; Shilliam, 2009, Wood, 1972). Several works present and critique international law-making and law from a Kantian perspective (Doyle, 1983, 1993; Molloy, 2017). Some monographs analyse Kant from a psychoanalytic point of view and see his highly cognitive and cerebral theory of reason, his 'idealism', in the context of long-term European discourses on body-mind dualism (Böhme, 1995; Cassirer, 2020). In addition, there is a wealth of Kant biographies that depict his life story and the genesis of his work within the context of contemporary Prussian history in the 18th century (Cassirer, 1981; Kuehn, 2001). With regard to Kant's crucial contributions to modern philosophical and political universalism, many of these works are confronted with a strange paradox: The question arises how a person who spent his entire life on the 'European periphery' in Königsberg and only ever made one journey out of his hometown, was able to express superbly crafted ideas on topics such as universalism and global validity claims of rationality. How did the Prussian professor in the provinces become a philosophical world phenomenon? How was it possible for the man who came from the humblest of backgrounds to become a well-respected authority in the areas of state-building and international communication?

The current state of academic literature regarding Immanuel Kant's philosophical, political, and legal reflections on universalism is marked by a lamentable deficit in terms of a thorough examination that situates his ideas within the complex interplay of the persistent crisis of feudalism that pervaded the German context and its subsequent impact on the political and philosophical debates surrounding the establishment of a universal common ground for German philosophy, all while taking into consideration Kant's own social class affiliation as a member of the newly emergent German-speaking *Bildungsbürgertum*, his humble and almost proletarian origins, and his academic pursuits as a representative of the educated class. The tradition of Marxist Kant research, which sees Kant within the framework of his class relations and in connection with the political and economic disputes between absolutist centralist cameralists, traditional feudalists and proto-liberal citizens in Prussia and in German-speaking Central Europe during the Enlightenment era, has lain dormant for decades and thus missed the opportunity to challenge (neo-) liberal theories such as Fukuyama's by uncovering problematic aspects of Western liberal universalist discourses at their origin. The last major Marxist

[1] Many other scholarly works were used in relevant sections of the thesis in addition to the recent significant works on Kantian political theory (Beck, 1999; Beitz, 1999, 2005; Bohman & Lutz-Bachmann, 1997; Booth, 1986; Browning, 2011; Doyle, 1983a, 1983b, 1996; Elis, 2005, 2008, 2012, Fine & Cohen, 2002; Flikschuh, 2000; Franke, 2001; Gallie, 1978; Habermas & MacCarthy, 1984; Hinsley, 1963: Hutchings, 2013; Ion, 2012; Jahn, 2005; Pogge, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2008, 2008; Rawls, 1971; Shell, 1980; Williams, 2001).

monographs on Kant (van der Linden, 1988; Williams, 1977, 1983; Wood, 1972; Vörlander, 1926, 1977) were written quite a long while ago. Since Marxist theory on the history of political thought has made great methodological advances in the past thirty years, especially in the area of the social history of political theory (Comninel, 1987, 2018; Wood, 1995, 2008, 2012; Wood & Wood, 1997; Wood, 1978), I believe the time has come to explore these new methodological approaches within the contexts of Kant's philosophical and political writings on universalism.

This scholarly endeavour seeks to engage in a nuanced analysis of Immanuel Kant's universalist political philosophy, incorporating a historical materialist methodology to shed light on the complex interplay between Kant's intellectual and political predispositions and the cataclysmic structural crisis of feudalism in the Germanic milieu. By situating Kant within the broader historical, political, and ideological landscape of late 18th-century Prussia, a moment marked by the efflorescence of the *Aufklärung* and the rise of a bureaucratic class exerting its hegemonic influence, this research aims to illuminate the genesis of some of Kant's seminal works on universalism, including *Perpetual Peace, Idea for a Universal History*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals*. The overarching objective of this study is to catalyse a re-politicisation of Kant's universalistic ideation, which has been subject to a degree of anachronistic ahistoricism and detached from the political and economic realities of its time. In so doing, this research constitutes a seminal contribution to Marxist scholarship on Kant, advancing the existing contextual analysis of the philosopher's class context.

Kant's 'idealist' construction of universalism, which, theoretically, aims to rescue (the human subjects') universal rights from a historical dependence on systems of rule and social orders, elevates them into a truly unquestionable realm, or at least into a highly self-referential system of rational thought. It also transforms concrete historical reality into an unworldly, abstract, and idealistic system which prioritises the coexistence of multiple poles of the Prussian political crisis under one universal moral order. While Kant, under the progressive influence of Enlightenment thinkers, establishes new approaches to the interrelationship between the individual, society, and the state by justifying these conceptions regarding human sociality, public interest, and impersonal universal moral principles, his universalism has political and philosophical limitations. Kant's philosophical 'republic' remains a scholar's republic, an affair of thinkers and the exchange of ideas. The material and social needs of the majority of the population in his contemporary Prussia (Kant excludes women and poorer social classes from certain political, civil, and legal rights) are largely ignored by Kant and then, later on, by his 'liberal' successors. The 'universalism' of Kant's universalist discourse is, in much of its political implications, universalism without the majority. This abstract universalism ignores crucial political and economic power structures in modernity; it ignores the very concrete bodies and emotions of the people it is theoretically intended to serve. Furthermore, it is precisely this problem of idealistic universalism, complicated by modern technological innovations and globalisation, that extends into late modernity and the unsuccessful (neo-) liberal attempts to establish fairer state rule and an international political order. Historical materialist archaeology of the class and power structures in which Kant's ideas originated may, thus, have further interpretative power for analysing the predicament of modern capitalist societies, especially their (neo-) liberal, Kant-based discourses.

In this PhD project, I am animated by a steadfast commitment to advancing the seminal work of Ellen Meiksins Wood on the method of *Social history of political theory*. My scholarly curiosity in this approach is fuelled by Wood's innovative endeavours in providing a historically nuanced and materially informed exegesis of the development of political thought. Specifically, I am drawn to her unfinished project, which aimed to re-politicise and re-

contextualise the political thought of the late 18th century (Wood, 2012). In this vein, I have elected to concentrate on the figure of Immanuel Kant, as I perceive him as a mysterious political thinker whose class positionality and response to the prolonged crisis of feudalism have been long occluded.

Through this project, I aspire to proffer my research as a PhD thesis that constitutes a substantial contribution to both the perpetuation of Wood's legacy and the disciplinary discourse of Political Marxism. In doing so, I aim to validate and underscore the import of the method of the *Social history of political theory* as a sophisticated and updated historical materialist perspective. I am hopeful that my contribution will furnish a novel perspective on Kant and advance our understanding of the complexities of the historical trajectory of political thought.

RESEARCH TOPIC

This dissertation draws from the same point that Immanuel Kant (1781) stressed when sketching the essential dialectical relationship between the powerful potential of ideas and their practical nature. This dialectical relationship puzzled Kant for more than half a century, enabling him to position the potential power of thought as the key to interpreting the real world. While reading the world, Kant claimed to discover where the power of thought comes from and how it will shape history; in other words, how the subject who can establish and direct thought can interpret the historically given. It was not a discovery he came to alone, of course.

Throughout history, political thinkers have sought to explore the human/subject's relationship to social reality. In doing so, they have largely sought to expand and interpret the worldview presented to them by their historical context. Often, this exploration ended at the point of defining social reality through the 'historically given'. Throughout history, political thinkers have emphasised the relationship between human nature and historical development by ensuring that the man/subject intersects the historically given, and in this case, the historically given determines the subject.

It was at this point that Kant's difference emerged. Kant developed an approach that would try to reverse the common belief that absolute and fixed reality defines man's relationship with his nature; with this approach, Kant argued in a critical philosophical way that the human/subject is free to the extent that it is rationally activated. In this sense, the absolute and fixed are not external to humanity.

Taking these factors into account, it becomes obvious that Kant's potential for thought and its dialectical relationship with reality must be reconsidered in light of today's systemic crisis. In recent decades, the value systems, institutions, and practices used in conceptualising and enacting the international political order have been called into question once again as capitalist systems have become destructive towards the human and natural environment. The estrangement from the political sphere throws us into personalised fights against the people and institutions that hold political power and clouds our critical approach towards the system. Populist movements gaining strength in this direction are holding the people and establishments (not the system) accountable for the crisis. In the end, solving the problem of the planet turns away from looking for a new structure and system, and the conflict turns into a personal power struggle between individuals.

As his three hundredth birthday approaches, the necessity of reconsidering Immanuel Kant reappears here. Kant is not far from the problems of our modern world since he was among the

few founding thinkers, along with Marx, who influenced liberalism and socialism, the two political ideologies which most shaped the modern world we live in. This is primarily due to the epistemological and methodological discoveries I outlined earlier, as well as the political universalism Kant expresses when he identifies human beings with social reality. However, the world has changed and transformed in many ways since Kant began to interpret it three centuries ago. Hence, reconsidering Kant requires more than classical methods.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Immanuel Kant's relationship with his historical context, the long political and social crisis of his context. To do this, it will uncover the historical and social relationships that influenced his propositions about building a political order based on universally applicable principles. Kant's universalism will be illuminated in this way, and his visions' limits will be highlighted. By exposing the limits of Kant's vision, this research hopes to tie these limitations to Kant's political project to reform the context through the promotion and ideology of his class: *Bildungsbürgertum*. Thus, a clear assumption of this thesis is that Kant's political universalism has limits and restrictions tied to the material and social background of the thinker's class.

Further, this thesis will use the social story of political theory as a method for analysing the political theory of the thinker. By re-evaluating political thinkers on a material basis, the social history of political theory reflects the implications of historical materialism, taking into account class antagonisms and conflicts over property, along with the political problems resulting from this conflict (and those with which political theory directly interacts).

This thesis examines Kant's relationship with his class in light of structural and systemic factors that set it apart from classical Marxist readings, which only affiliate thinkers with their class positions and present them as political propagandists. In this study, Kant will not only be examined within the historical context of Prussia but also viewed through the lens of a materialist perspective that examines him in the context of a structural crisis.

In parallel to all of these, this dissertation proposes that Kant's relationship with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, his own class, can be understood in terms of the long-term impacts of the crisis of feudalism on German political and social thought. It will use the method of the social history of political theory to examine the responses to the main questions of politics and philosophy that evolved in the context of the long crisis of feudalism. So, Kant's original political philosophy was to overcome the crisis by critically examining the other responses within a universalist attempt to consolidate his own class through theoretical and ideological integrity. In parallel, the primary purpose of this research is to show that Kant's universalist political philosophy can be reconsidered using the social history of political theory method by reviewing Kant's relationship with (i) Prussia, where the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) flourished under an absolutist state-building process, and (ii) with the ideology/reform project (*Bildungsbürgertum*) of the rising educated bureaucratic classes who became more influential in the control of social property relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Building on the main premises of analysis in the historical materialism of Marx and Engels (Marx, 1993, 2009; Marx & Engels, 1974), this thesis will engage with the literature on the social history of political theory of Neal Wood (1978, 1997) and E.M. Wood (1972, 1991, 1998, 2008, 2012) and scholars of Political Marxism (Comninel, 1987, 2018; Mooers, 1991; Teschke, 2003, 2014; Knafo & Teschke, 2020), I here try to extend the method of the social history of

political theory by developing the analysis of the social property relations in the Prussian state-building process to critically examine Kant's political universalism in the context of the crisis of feudalism in Germany along with the class origins of *Bildungsbürgertum*. Besides being an examination of Kant's political universalism, this research aims to create an example of a study undertaken with the social history of political theory method.

There are two key literatures which are pivotal to the positioning of my research.

Literature on Approaching the History of Political Thought: The Methodological Debate

One of the most vital and controversial issues in the history of political thought is its relationship with its historical context. As the relationship between political thought and history is problematised, methodological approaches to the history of political thought become more contested and polarised. When the history of political thought is considered alongside history and social relations, the production of political theory and political thinkers is either contextualised or philosophised. Therefore, in this process, the theoretical output is either "violently abstracted" (Sayer, 1987) and formulated as imaginary laws, or reduced to, and broadly explained only with, the very specific cultural, linguistic, and textual characteristics which cause the authentic elements of the social and material context to be negated in the analysis. In both ways, political theory is squeezed into certain narratives that obscure historically specific relationships in the related society that constitute class positions, ideological alignments, and pursuits of material interests in specific complex periods. Do ideas have a social and material ground? This question becomes vital when considering the content of the history of political thought regarding the relationship between historical context and the production of political theory by political thinkers.

As the primary provider of the 'new mainstream' content in writing on the history of political thought, the *Cambridge School*, led by Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, approached this field intending to reveal the historical context surrounding political thinkers, with documentation of the intellectual and textual content of their theoretical production[2]. In this documentation, the *Cambridge School*'s concern is to philosophise and link the textual content with the relevant thinkers' political theories[3] (Dunn, 1996; Hampster-Monk, 1992; Pocock, 2009; Skinner, 1969, 1974, 1978a, 1978b, 1988).

[2] Skinner's departure point was the early medieval renaissance which examined early humanist texts from Ancient Greece to Italian city-states. He drew attention to the intellectual circulation of ideas created by religious and moral philosophers who frequently emerged from different churches (Skinner, 1978a). The rereading of republican ideas, the early rational ways of political theorising and essential debates on human nature appeared to undermine the medieval scholastic argument around the nature of political ideas. Skinner's subsequent work on the *Foundations* examined this early detailed effort within the Reformation period, paying attention to the political figures in early modern Germany (Skinner, 1978b). Skinner's texts offer a recognised, detailed, and consistent analysis of the content that has influenced modern political theories, providing strong historical evidence. His linking of the historical reconstructions of the intentions of political thinkers continues to provide a valuable perspective to trace intellectual traditions across the centres of Western political thought (Skinner, 1969, 1974, 1978a, 1978b, 1988). However, Skinner's approach does not investigate the social and political context in which the theories have been developed, influencing political thinkers' social life. Following Skinner's analysis, the relationship between the context and the theories is still ambiguous. Skinner's and the *Cambridge School*'s ideas around the history of political thought remained popular, and no alternative attempts that challenged their approach emerged until the end of the 1970s.

[3] A deeper investigation on the objectives of the *Cambridge School* can be pursued through "Alexander, J. (2016). While investigating the roots of the various traditions inside the making of the *Cambridge School*, Alexander focusses on the point that the main objective of *Cambridge School* is to establish a relation between history and

Against the take of the *Cambridge School*, Neal Wood reconsidered the notion of context in the history of political thought. From the critique of Skinner's *Foundations* and Macpherson's *Possessive Individualism*, the *social history of political theory* emerged as an alternative approach that tried methodologically problematising the context of the history of political thought (Wood, 1978). Neal Wood describes the central premises of this new approach, much earlier than the method completely defined by George Comninel (2018):

> [the method that] … particularly emphasises the way in which the social, political, and economic context of an author – and not merely the contemporary context of ideas - not only powerfully shaped the author's thought but generally constituted the terrain of its engagement.[4] (p. xvii)

What constitutes the 'political' for political theory or a political thinker? Although there are various explanations for the definition of political for each political thinker, the only historical way to analyse the main assumptions of the content of the political theory is to illuminate what it corresponds to in the social and political context. The focus on changing social property relations plays a vital role in shaping this method since it is considered the source of the development of unique forms of the social and political structure in each context. Neal Wood and Ellen Meiksins Wood's perspective on the history of political thought is based on production and context combined with stories of historical development[5] (Wood, 1972, 1991, 1998, 2008, 2012; Wood & Wood, 1997; Wood, 1978).

The social history of political theory can be applied to demystify the impact of transition in a political context on the political theory. The contributions of Comninel, Mooers and Teschke investigated the contexts of England, France and international political thought in these

politics (Alexander, 2016: 1). In this series of efforts on this objective, the tradition becomes an intersection point for intellectual history and political theory.

[4] Neal Wood was trying to develop an alternative method, distinct from the 'over philosophised and abstract' understandings of political texts of the *Cambridge School* within its intellectual context. Wood's approach was also distinct from the canonical Orthodox Marxist effort to reduce political texts and thinkers to contributors to the emerging class of bourgeois, as Macpherson advocates for Hobbes and Locke (Macpherson, 1964). Wood concentrated on the context as the terrain full of social and political relations that political thinkers engage with and problematise. What constitutes the terrain or context of engagement was, for Wood, the social and material relations of the mode of production. However, he could go further only in his later works. He developed the social history of political theory in more detail with the contribution of Ellen Meiksins Wood.

[5] As Ellen Wood defined her method in 2008, the primary purpose of developing this method indicates an open route without any reduction of content to the context:

> The 'social history of political theory' [...] starts from the premise that the great political thinkers of the past were passionately engaged in the issues of their time and place. This was so even when they addressed these issues from an elevated philosophical vantage-point, in conversation with other philosophers in other times and places, and even, or especially, when they sought to translate their reflections into universal and timeless principles. Often, their engagements took the form of partisan adherence to a specific and identifiable political cause or even fairly transparent expressions of particular interests, the interests of a particular party or class. But their ideological commitments could also be expressed in a larger vision of the good society and human ideals. (Patriquin, 2012, p.141)

Wood's definition here continues to clarify specific differences of the social history of political theory from the Orthodox Marxist canon:

> At the same time, the great political thinkers are not party-hacks or propagandists. Political theory is, certainly, an exercise in persuasion, but its tools are reasoned discourse and argumentation in a genuine search for some kind of truth. Yet if the 'greats' are different from lesser political thinkers and actors, they are no less human and no less steeped in history. (Patriquin, 2012, p.141)

transition processes and enriched the social and material explanation of political theories (Comninel, 1987; Mooers, 1991; Teschke, 2003, 2014).

The first wave of contributions was focused on demystifying the controversial characteristics of specific historical contexts. In contrast, the second wave analysed the relationship between class struggles and the reproduction of the 'politically constituted property' (Brenner, 1987) as the key to understanding historical developments (Knafo & Teschke, 2020). This new concentration included a more vigorous polemical engagement with the Marxist literature, which followed World System Theory(ies) (Anievas & Nisancioglu, 2013, 2019; Knafo & Teschke, 2020). The contributors of the second wave articulated the approach as a tradition: Political Marxism.

Some contributors define Political Marxism as a tradition that gained its uniqueness from its denial of structural accounts in Marxism (Knafo & Teschke, 2020, p.6). From this view, the strength of Political Marxism is its ability to historicise the material grounds that originate the political constitution of property in a specific historical context. Unlike Political Marxism, the structuralist traditions obscured the social and material conditions[6]; instead, they focused on the patterns of development of the structures. Another definition[7] of Political Marxism considers its capacity to emphasise the specific conditions that mainly emerged with the capitalist mode of production to contextualise and politicise the related historical setting (Comninel, 2018, p.xvii).

This research is aimed at providing a critical expansion of the social history of political theory, as well as presenting an alternative historical materialist interpretation of Kant's political universalism. In this way, this research could also be considered as a case study in the social history of political theory.

Literature on Kant's Context

Immanuel Kant has been the subject of a vast body of research in a wide range of disciplines[8]. Although a great deal of literature discusses Kant's influence on Marxism and historical

[6] Structural explanations tend to obscure the importance of social and material contexts and typologically justify social change by the transformation of institutions and certain structures.

[7] Political Marxism as a tradition seeks to emphasise that in pre-capitalist forms of class society the supposed separation of political and economic spheres of social existence does not exist even in superficial appearance as it does under capitalism (Comninel, 2018, p. xvii).

[8] This research can only take some representatives of the most recent and significant literature on Kantian political theory. Elisabeth Ellis', *Kant's politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World* (Yale University Press, 2005); *Kant's Political Theory: Interpretations and Applications* (Penn State Press, 2012); *Provisional Politics: Kantian Arguments in Policy Context* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) are three very helpful works in understanding the nature of Kant's political thought and the second also includes various other contributions from highly regarded Kantian scholars. Besides these, on the topic of the universalism of Kantian political theory, a recent account by Huseyinzadegan illuminates Kant's careful effort to present a teleology that promotes a non-ideal world (Huseyinzadegan, 2019). Pauline Kleinfeld concentrates on the relationship between Kant and cosmopolitanism from universalism, autonomy, the idea of a world citizen, and patriotism (Kleingeld, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020). Sean Molloy's recent account explores the impact of Kant on theories of international relations and shows the literature developed from Kant's international political theory (Molloy, 2017). Many other scholarly works were used in relevant sections of the thesis in addition to the recent significant works on Kantian political theory on universalism (Beck, 1999; Beitz, 1999, 2005; Bohman & Lutz-Bachmann, 1997; Booth, 1986; Browning, 2011; Doyle, 1983a, 1993, 1996; Fine & Cohen, 2002; Flikschuh, 2000; Franke, 2001; Gallie, 1978; Habermas & MacCarthy, 1984; Hinsley, 1963: Hutchings, 2013; Ion, 2012; Jahn, 2005; Pogge, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2008, 2008; Rawls, 1993; Ripstein, 2009; Shell, 1978, 1980; Williams, 2001).

materialism (van Linden, 1988; Williams, 1983), there is no historical materialist study that analyses Kant's thought within its own historical context, in conjunction with the major political considerations revealed by its historical context. Similarly, Wood's early work *Mind and Politics* (1972) is the only Kant study with a historical materialist perspective that points to Kant's methodological and epistemological ruptures.

Analysing a historical subject through a historical materialist perspective involves analysing the mode of the production model of the period within which the subject is situated (Carchedi, 2011; Jessop, 1990; Marx & Engels, 1974; Sayer, 1987). As a result of this analysis, the social property relations underlying class conflicts are illuminated. The social history method, on the other hand, adopts these general principles of historical materialism and examines political thinkers using structural analysis (Wood, 1978). Additionally, social history of political theory (SHPT) uses the class relations of the thinker to analyse and contextualise them through the mode of the production model and the social property relations (Wood, 2008, 2012). Using the method of the social history of political theory, a study of Kant must examine the social property relationships revealed by the structural crisis of the ongoing mode of production (the long crisis of German feudalism) in the historical period in which Kant lived (Prussian state-building era), the class dimensions of these relations (*Bildungsbürgertum*), and the reflections of these class dynamics in Kant's philosophy (political universalism) to define Kant's context.

Building on the *Mind and Politics* of E. M. Wood (1972), I try to extend Wood's early historical materialist interpretation of Kant and contextualise the thinker's political universalism among the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism in German legal and political thought. Hence, Kant's political philosophy is examined first through an analysis of the long crisis of German feudalism and the responses developed by different class actors seeking more influence in the social property relations of this historical context.

Using the method of the social history of political theory, this study will explore how the structural crisis of feudalism in the German historical context was characterised and how it transformed social and political thought. The crisis and transformations of feudalism in Germany and its impacts were discussed in detail by historians, political scientists and philosophers who studied the time period, and the majority of them are covered in this dissertation's historical analysis (Anderson, 1982; Blickle, 1992, 2004, 2012; Blickle, 1979; Braudel, 1986, 1994; Brenner, 1990; Carsten, 1947; Chrisholm, 1911; Dahrendorf, 1965; Frank, 2011; Ganshof, 1952; Ghosh, 2016, 2017; Hagen, 1985, 2002, 2005, 2011; Hamerow, 1958; Harnisch, 2016; Hilton,1976; Koch, 1978; Mooers, 1991; Rosenberg, 1966; Sreenivasan, 1991, 2001, 2004, 2013; Strayer, 1965; Wilson, 2004; Wunder, 1985, 1996). The class conflicts shaped by these social property relations were discussed following the analysis of the transformations brought about by the crisis. To complement the analysis of how political thinking reacted to the crisis, an analysis of class perceptions of social realities was undertaken.

In line with this analysis, it is viable to determine that there are three basic responses to the crisis in German political philosophy (absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudalist, and liberal reformist). The political philosophies of the representatives and theorists of these responses have been examined in relation to the legacy of Kant's period, which is the main subject of study (Achenwall, 2020; Althusius, 1997; Justi, 1760; Leibniz, 1969; Pufendorf, 1990, 1991; Seidler, 2021; Wolff, 1720). Considering both the effects of the long feudal crisis on German political philosophy and the politicisation that was brought about by the crisis, Kant initially

wanted to establish a universalist basis on which he could build his political philosophy in order to establish an integrated methodological and epistemological break (Kant, 1998). The second thing he worked on was a project that would bring the estate together with *Bildungsbürgertum*, which is his own class, in an effort to consolidate it with the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) movement. Kant, who was able to achieve this in the 1780s with his increasing sphere of influence, became the original intellectual of his class by providing its ideological and political integrity. At this stage of the research, accounts that examine German political thought in detail Beck (1969), Beiser (1987, 1992), Hunter (2000, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2012), Sheehan (1973, 1978, 1989, 2011), Shilliam (2009), and Thornhill (2007) are used and critically reviewed. As part of my study, I analyse Kant's historical context, the structural crisis that feudalism underwent, the resulting new property relations and social classes that were brought about by this crisis, and the political theories proposed by these social classes to solve the crisis in which they found themselves. This analysis has led me to categorise the primary problems Kant faced during his lifetime.

After defining Kant as the intellectual of *Bildungsbürgertum*, it is fundamental to critically review his class origins and identify how he accomplished an epistemological and methodological break. Composed of two main examinations of both the class origins and the methodological and epistemological break undertaken by Kant, in the second part of the research, I aim to uncover the main social and material conditions, philosophical and political influences and motivations of Kant that guided him towards being the intellectual of *Bildungsbürgertum*. Benefiting from the biographical accounts of Kant (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Cassirer, 1981; Guyer, 1987; Kuehn, 2001; Shilliam, 2009), I analyse the social and material conditions of Kant's early life and tried to understand his class engagements with the *Bildungsbürgertum* in his early career (precritical years) as a public servant in academia in Königsberg (Schönfeld, 2000). The influence of the philosophical works of Achenwall, Hume and Rosseau on Kant (Achenwall, 2020; Hume, 2000; Rosseau, 1979, 1997) is also important here.

In the methodological and epistemological examination, I aim to extend Wood's historical materialist analysis of Kant in *Mind and Politics*, emphasising the original contribution of the thinker to the making of social epistemology (Wood, 1972). Social epistemology here refers to a new discussion of Kant's revolutionary intervention to activate human reason to interpret social reality (Kant, 1998). Although Kant promoted a philosophical approach to consider human beings as free subjects through the activation of reason, he also preconditioned this activation to the universally applicable moral principles, which could be established with the public sphere in the related social and political regime (Kant, 2006). In this public sphere, the emancipation of human beings with reason is realised through the public use of reason, which is essentially a social capacity that promises to actualise the principles of the *Aufklärung*.

Through the promotion of his critical approach, Kantian philosophy gradually dominates the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Combined with an examination of Kant's political and ideological background during the crisis of Prussia, Wood's early work is very useful in providing supportive arguments for Kant being the premier intellectual of his class. The significance of the *Aufklärung Project* for Kant is twofold. On the one hand, the *Aufklärung Project* establishes a universal ground for *Bildungsbürgertum* to reform Prussia in a non-violent/revolutionary way. Second, it consolidates the politicised *Bildungsbürgertum* under one movement. So, the *Aufklärung* for Kant is a multifunctional project that could generate the most convenient response for the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism in Germany on social and political thought.

Kant could be considered a unique intellectual due to his establishment of a relationship between his class and a philosophical and political response to the structural crisis that undermined Prussian reformation and enlightenment.

In the last part of the research, I contextualise Kant's political universalism in the public debates of the 1790s, where we see the politicising impact of the French Revolution (1789) on the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The French Revolution was a turning point for the *Aufklärung Project* as it radically politicised the once consolidated *Bildungsbürgertum* (Beiser, 1992). As the Revolution ontologically threatened Prussia with the revolutionary overthrow of the absolutist regime, the *Bildungsbürgertum* abandoned the pursuit of their reform project through the *Aufklärung* (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2014, 2022; Mooers, 1991; Shilliam, 2009). For Kant, the politicisation and fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* was critical as it threatened his philosophy's hegemony and achievements. It is essential here (after the Revolution) to review Kant's intervention in the political issues of his context through his political writings (Ripstein, 2009; Kant, 2006). Locating Kant in the public debates of the 1790s uncovers his universalist political theory, as this period made Kant directly involved in some very crucial discussions on the new conceptual framework of revolutionary politics. Kant had to clarify his political position and distinguish himself from the other politicised *Bildungsbürger* through the promotion of his universalist political theory. Therefore, his late political theory emerged with the development of his universalist response to his peers on the new conceptual frameworks that the Revolution reintroduced, such as republicanism, citizenship rights and duties, the right of resistance/revolution, and the role of the state in defining individual rights/social contract. Kant's response to his peers developed in the debates, including these new political frameworks.

The method of the social history of political theory can be used to analyse Kant's intervention in the public debates about the *Bildungsbürgertum* through his universalist political theory. By embracing universalism, Kant transformed the political polarisation that developed with the political crisis in Prussia. The main axis of universalism in Kant's political texts, in the context of Prussia, is the proposition of a very subjective but singular political system in which class tendencies coexist, easing/ceasing harsh political polarisations within the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The purpose of Kant's universalism is not only to bring together under one roof those fragmented political grounds which make up the original thinking of him but also to form the essence of a global system. Hence, Kant reveals the class interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* by proposing an approach based on multipolar and universal principles, which allows it to coexist with other political classes. Here, the social history of political theory integrates Kant's political writings to reread Prussia's class conflicts and analyse Kant's universalism from the perspective of its politically polarised society.

Apart from engaging the second literature on Kant's context, while examining Kant's political philosophy, I mainly prioritise using the primary sources both in German (Preussische Akademie / *Gesammelte Schriften*) and English (*Cambridge Edition of Works of Kant*). Therefore, Kant's original works are used during the second and third parts of the research (Kant & Erdmann, 1882; Kant & Weischedel, 1966; Kant & Guyer, 1998, 2001; Kant & Wood & Di Giovanni 1996; Kant & Ladd,1999; Kant, 1949, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2006). In the fourth part of the research, I mainly focus on Kant's political writings to limit the scope of this study (Kant, 1991, 2006).

In a doctoral dissertation, it is obviously not possible to review all the studies on Kant that have been published to date. This research has therefore examined Kantian literature critically by selecting literature that defines and analyses the historical context of the thinker. Critically reviewing this literature, which focuses on Kant's historical context, is necessary to show how this study differs from others with the use of the social history of political theory method. The

critical review of the literature summarised here is also crucial for understanding Kant's dialectical relationship with his historical, political, ideological, and class contexts.

METHODOLOGY

It is clear that the method of the social history of political theory requires a methodological justification if it is to be used in a doctoral thesis because, so far, it has only been used in a limited number of academic studies (Comninel, 2000; Wood, 1978; Wood, 2008, 2012; Wood & Wood, 1997). Recentring a critically revised social history of political theory method gives room to consider historical materialism as a non-reductionist method to examine the history of political thought. Taking this perspective, one can categorise the application of the method of the social history of political theory into three main phases according to the ways in which it is implemented. This categorisation is presented below by illustrating the subject of this research.

A. Defining the Historically Specific: Locating the Social and Political Conflict

Based on the main premises of historical materialism, any methodological inquiry begins with empirical observation[9] (Carchedi, 2011; Marx & Engels, 1974; Sayer, 1987). Empirical observation refers here to the analysis of the related historical context. Unlike the Orthodox Marxist attempt to define the related historical context with class and mode of production (or productive forces and relations of production) (Cohen, 2001), the social history of political theory attempts to return to the original premises of the historical materialist method, which prioritises distinguishing the historically specific peculiarities of the mode of production that constitute the foundations of the social formation (Marx, 1976a, 1976b, 1988, 1993). In other words, rather than making generalisations while defining/analysing the historical context, the social history of political theory aims to examine the specific distinctions that distinguish historical contexts from each other. Therefore, identifying the historically specific peculiarities that characterise the social formation of the related historical context is the initial step towards avoiding a reductionist analysis.

Uncovering the historically specific peculiarities in a context necessitates locating the moments when there is a change in the continuous trends that define the "political". These moments most often correspond to the periods where the politically defined order has turbulence. Long-term developments in social relations, property forms, and state formation can erupt episodically into specific political-ideological disputes, and it is unquestionably true that political theory flourishes when history intervenes most dramatically in the dialogue between texts or traditions of discourse at times (Wood, 2008, p.2). Therefore, the first stage of analysis in the social history of political theory is defining the historically specific peculiarities of a historical context

[9] The notion of 'production' is crucial *vis-à-vis* the core question of ideas' social and material grounds. Production, therefore, appears to be the constitutive conceptualisation of the evolution of social relations since the early materialists. It is also crucial to refer to Marx and Engels' 'foundational assumptions to grasp the roots of the mode of production to a concept related to economic relations and the *mode of life'*[9] (Marx, 1993). It is also emphasised in the work of Marx and Engels that the mode of production contains, for an epoch, the essential power relations, the control over means of production and the further social and political sustainability[9] (Marx, 1993). The essential power relations of a mode of production are defined by the ruling class's control over the conditions, process, and results of production. Class-based modes of production are ultimately about the ruling class maintaining and legitimating its exploitation of the producers (Marx, 1976a, 1976b). Class divisions based on surplus extraction also contain conflicts between the same classes as intra-class struggles. Different factions of the ruling classes are in contestation since control of the means of production and the surplus are always controversial (Marx, 1988).

by locating the periods of social and political conflicts and turbulences that reveal the disputes over changing social and material relations.

In this research, regarding this stage, the first chapter explores the historically specific features of the German context by looking into the long crisis of feudalism and its impacts on domestic and regional power relations. The crisis of the feudal mode of production in the German context is examined and discussed through the unique structure of the Holy Roman Empire/German-speaking Europe, the origins of the power of the landowner classes, and the impacts of having multiple formations for organising the feudal society (*Gutsherrschaft*, *Grundherrschaft*).

B. Discovering Social Property Relations & Class Positions

From a historical materialist standpoint, there is a strong link between political power and the social and material relations that sustain and replicate its coercion (Marx & Engels, 1974). As what distinguishes different modes of production from each other is how the surplus value of the producers is extracted/appropriated (Marx, 2009), then, in order to identify who becomes the "ruling", it is crucial to examine who appropriates and accumulates, who rules and become determinative, and whose power is reproduced. The material source of power relies on the ownership of property and the power of appropriating this property from the producers. The ways in which this appropriation, with or without extra-economic coercion, is organised characterises the political sphere. In this regard, from a historical materialist analysis, it is secondly necessary to identify how property is politically constituted in a social formation (Brenner, 1985, 1990).

This identification can be done through a deeper examination of the changes in social property relations. Social property relations here refer "multi-layered and complex configuration of social power that orients how classes reproduce themselves while also allowing a class to appropriate a surplus at the expense of another (or several others)[10] (Lafrance & Post, 2019, p.23). The second step in analysing a historical context through the lens of the social history of political theory is uncovering how changing social property relations define political-social formations. To illuminate how social property relations develop in a historical context and become definitive, it is necessary to identify the actors, classes, and groups who try to control or become influential with regard to these relations. Therefore, the notion of class appears here in conjunction with social property relations.

The characterisation of the political sphere is affected by the connection between class interests and ways in which property relations are constituted in the historical context. The analysis of the conflicts between social classes, which have historically sought to control or dominate social property relations, can be a starting point for decoding the complex structure of how property is structured within the political arena.

From the perspective of the social history of political theory, in order to reveal the social and material background of the political theory, it is a necessity to analyse the relationship between social property relations, how class struggles shape these relations, and how the relationship between these two characterise the politically constituted property. In the second step, the social history of the political theory method analyses the relationship between class struggles and

[10] Brenner defines social property relations as "the relations among direct producers, relations among exploiters, and relations between exploiters and direct producers that, taken together, make possible/specify the regular access of individuals and families to the means of production (land, labour, tools) and/or the social product per se" (Brenner, 2007; Lafrance & Post, 2019, p.23).

social property relations to identify how these relations are politically constituted. By doing so, it would be feasible to reveal the origins of sophisticated political and philosophical responses to disputes over social property relations.

Through the combination of these two steps, the social history of the political theory method can reveal historically specific responses by political thinkers to crises and conflicts that occurred within their contexts, as well as struggles over social property relations. A further examination of differences in property relations and state formation must also be made to discern one European society from another and to identify how these differences resulted in a variety of theoretical interrogations and different sets of questions for political thinkers to address.

By situating the period of social and political conflict within a German context and analysing the long crisis of feudalism and its impact on property relations and class struggles, this research contextualises the main responses produced for overcoming the crisis. According to this research, there are three main responses (absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal, liberal reformist) to the long feudal crisis of the German context that will be examined. These main responses contain not only political theories but political ideals, values, and projects to restructure and/or reproduce social property relations and state power.

C. Identifying the Social History of Political Theory

> *The text of political thought, therefore, speaks both practically and ethically to the delineation of the political subject, to a set of rights and duties regarding social reproduction, and, ultimately, in this way, to the moment of surplus extraction (Shilliam, 2009, p,15).*

As commentators on the human condition, political theorists have been able to speak to us through the centuries. However, one must not overlook the fact that, like all human beings, political theorists can also be classified as historical creatures, and it is by understanding what they say that we can gain a much deeper understanding of our own historical moment. It is more likely that we will gain a deeper understanding of what they are saying if we are aware of *why* they say what they say, *to whom* they say it, *with whom* they are debating (explicitly or implicitly), *how* they perceive the world and *what* they think should be improved or preserved (Wood, 2008, p.2). Understanding political thinkers cannot be done only by presenting a biographical profile or by documenting their historical background. In order to understand what political theorists are attempting to explain, one must understand what these questions are intended to answer. These are not mere philosophical abstractions but rather specific problems that result from a specific historical context, in particular practical activities, social relations, pressing issues, grievances, and conflicts (Wood, 2008, p.2, 2012).

In the third and last stage of the social history of political theory method, the analysis of the relationship between social property relations and class struggles, the historically specific peculiarities of the social and political conflicts, and the main responses to the crisis are used to reveal the main philosophical and political questions that define the political theory and concern the chosen political thinkers. In light of the historically specific peculiarities in each context, different political theories and discourses will not address the same questions; rather, there is a great diversity of historically specific theories and discourses.

In other words, the diversity of historically specific theories and discourses does not just reflect the idiosyncrasies of personal or national intellectual style among political philosophers engaged in dialogue with one another across geographical and chronological borders, but rather it reflects the variety of historical perspectives. It is because of the diversity of the political problems political philosophers face, in part, that their 'discourses' reflect not only philosophical traditions but also the problems presented by political life. This does not indicate that the individual contributions of political thinkers are unimportant. Instead it is crucial to contextualise the individual contributions not only to gain a better understanding of their meaning and intent, but also because theory emerges from the realm of pure abstraction in the context of history and enters into the world of human practice and social interaction (Wood, 2008, p.3)

Consequently, the aim of the social history of political theory is not just to illuminate certain political texts and the conditions in which they were created but also to demonstrate by example a distinctive approach to contextual interpretation. A significant aspect of this method will be to explore not only texts nor discursive paradigms but the social relations that enabled them to exist and that pose the particular questions that political theorists address. The social history of political theory aims to examine how certain fundamental social relations influence human creativity, not only in political theory but also in other modes of discourse. An important part of this analysis is the balance between contextual analysis and interpretation of major texts that describe the historical context and the social and political climate in which political theory developed.

As this research identifies the main questions in German political thought through an analysis of the social and political turmoil in the German context, including changes in social property relations, class conflicts, and major responses to the crisis, it seeks to reveal how Kant integrated his universalist political theory into his understanding of his context. First, it is important to understand how Kant became politicised and engaged his own class: the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Kant's class origins and his class engagements are crucial to contextualise his political theory. The key objective of the social history of political theory in the context of this thesis, however, is to contextualise Kant's political theory in the light of his response to the crisis in German/Prussian society.

In this regard, Kant's reflections on the three main responses to the long crisis are extremely relevant. In the German context, each response to the crisis of feudalism has its own political theory that refers a political project to overcome it (absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudalist, or liberal reformist projects aiming to consolidate German-hood under one or more political entities). A significant difference between these responses and Kant's critical philosophy lies in the way he approached them. In the Prussian *Ständestaat*, Kant was interested in historically realising his class's interests as a member of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Class interests demanded increased influence over the Prussian state, and they overlapped with the *Aufklärung Project*, which was originally a movement designed to reform Prussia through a series of non-radical reforms. Kant became the unique intellectual of his generation by establishing both theoretical and practical connections between the *Aufklärung* and *Bildungsbürgertum*.

The study also examines Kant's challenges from the 1790s in addition to his reflections on the three main responses to the crisis. Especially after the French Revolution, once consolidated, the *Bildungsbürgertum* gets factionalised and politicised, undermining the hegemony of Kant's critical philosophy. Thus, Kant participated in the public debates on the new conceptual framework introduced by the Revolution in order to re-consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

However, Kant was faced with a more politicised environment this time. Political universalism plays an essential role in distinguishing Kant and putting forward a theory of co-existence and balance between conflicting positions in the Prussian context.

Through these examinations, the social history of political theory method can be used to understand Kant's class context, his vision, and his historical perspective. The social history of the political theory method exposes Kant's limitations by materialising his philosophy in his class context. In a similar way to every other political thinker, Kant's universalism addresses political issues in a historically specific way that is original but still retains a historical perspective which belongs to his particular context.

In three steps, this research aims to provide the literature with a historical materialist analysis of Immanuel Kant's universalist political theory. As the use of social history of political theory has been limited only to a few studies, this research provides an experimental investigation that also models the methodological steps.

CONTRIBUTION

The research has four main contributions to the literature of methodological research on the history of political thought and on the historical context of Kant's political theory.

Firstly, the main purpose of this research is to conduct a historical materialist analysis of Kant's political universalism with the use of the social history of political theory method. Following the main principles of the method, the essential contribution of this research to the literature is the examination of Immanuel Kant's political theory with the social and political context of the long crisis of feudalism in Germany. This is the first time Kantian scholarship has examined of Kant from a historical materialist perspective and within the feudal crisis and class context of the Germany/Prussia of his day. While contextualising Kant and his critical philosophy with the long crisis of feudalism, social property relations and class conditions, this study establishes links between the political theories engaging with the impacts of the feudal crisis in the German context. Therefore, uncovering Kant's context from a historical materialist perspective reveals the organic connections that political theory establishes with the social and material conditions of the German historical context.

Secondly, departing from the exact organic connections described above, this study contributes to the literature by defining Kant as an intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Moreover, the *Bildungsbürgertum* is, in this research, defined for the first time as a social class rather than a stratum or an intelligentsia (Beiser, 1992; Hunter, 2012). Rather than focusing on the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s intellectual and philosophical outputs only, this research aims to uncover the material class interests that this class internalises inside the Prussian *Ständestaat*. Therefore, defining Kant as the intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum* considers both his material-ideological and philosophical-intellectual contributions to his class.

A historical materialist exploration towards defining Kant's epistemological break provides the third main contribution of this research. After examining the class background of Kant, the research aims to analyse Kant's method through his purpose of presenting a social epistemology. In the context of this research, social epistemology refers to Kant's attempt to link the activation of human reason with a socialisation process that is defined in the public sphere. Kant's social epistemology is an attempt to socialise the human condition and emancipate human beings from being passive recipients of social reality.

The fourth and last main contribution of this research regards Kant's political universalism. Political universalism here refers to Kant's universalist political theories that he presented mainly in the 1790s in response to the public debates on the new conceptual frameworks introduced by the politics of the French Revolution (1789). By contextualising Kant's responses to these debates with his relationship with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, *Aufklärung Project* and the future of the Prussian regime, I intend to bring in a historical materialist analysis of Kant's late political theories, particularly uncovering the class limits of his universalism that could be considered as the main source of restrictive elements of Kantian thought when we look back.

In total, this research aims to present a historical materialist analysis of Kant's universalism by examining the political thinker with the historically specific features of his social and political context.

KEY FINDINGS

In terms of the contributions made by this research, there are four key findings.

Through the examination of the impacts of the long crisis of German feudalism, this research reveals three main responses to the crisis that are also interlinked with the main social classes that engage in conflicts on social property relations. Their disputes characterise the social property relations and how the politically constituted property becomes historically specific in the German/Prussian context. The research locates three main responses to the crisis: (i) the traditional feudal response, which intends to overcome the social and political crisis by reorganising the Holy Roman Empire/German-speaking Europe by consolidating the power of the princely authorities; (ii) the absolutist-paternalist response; which aims to consolidate power under an absolutist state; and (iii) the liberal reformist response which emerges from bureaucratic absolutism (connected to the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum*) and attempts to reform Prussian state with Enlightenment ideas to recode the political foundations of the state. All these responses formulate their political theories on the historically specific features of their historical context. The first key finding here is that Immanuel Kant distinguishes himself from these responses to address the impacts of the social and political crisis and in doing so becomes a unique intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

The second key finding of this research is Kant's method. With the purpose of overcoming the impacts of the long crisis on social and political thought, Kant's departure point was to develop a methodological and epistemological break which could provide his philosophical context with a common ground to develop inclusive and universal political theories that would help to unify the long ongoing political and philosophical disputes. Influenced by the political developments underway in his context, Kant developed his critical philosophy on the basis of human reason to become actively involved with the socialisation process in the public sphere in the enlightened absolutism of Prussia. Kant's epistemology is characterised by its reliance on universal conditions that could provide the related context with certain social dynamics. Kant's social epistemology is an attempt to socialise the human condition and emancipate human beings from being passive recipients of social reality. This conceptualisation of Kant's social epistemology becomes a key finding that could define the foundations of his political theory.

Thirdly, through a contextual and methodological examination of Kant, this research presents a historical materialist analysis of Kant's engagement with his class context. Previous studies had contributed to this area to the extent that they revealed Kant's ideological context. However, this research is the only study that aims to understand Kant's political theory with his class engagements and crisis in his own context. Kant's engagement with his context can be defined as a concern with class relations and an attempt to expand the political horizon of his class with

the *Aufklärung*. Kant's relationship with his class the *Bildungsbürgertum* became a unique one, especially in the 1790s when the *Bildungsbürgertum* largely abandoned the *Aufklärung* project, which used to be compatible with their main material goal of reforming Prussia without dismantling the state apparatus. Therefore, the third key finding is that with this unique relationship with his class, Kant became the major public intellectual of the period and mainly determined the original agenda of his class interests.

The fourth and last key finding of this research is that Kant's political universalism is directly related to his understanding of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and largely characterised by the limitations it carries, although Kant's contributions expand it. Although Kant's universalist political philosophy is highly original and theoretical, it has very practical concerns, such as consolidating the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the *Aufklärung* Project, presenting a political theory of a mixed system which would not adopt a revolutionary agenda, and establishing a political system that would internalise the universal moral principles of its society. To address the political polarisation and fragmentation inside the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Kant develops a highly original universalist approach which does not categorically reject any of the sides of the conflict but aims to resolve the tensions by promoting principles that every actor becomes an active part of. Therefore, the last key finding is that due to the very material concerns and class engagements of Kant, his political writings must be firstly considered as pieces that try to resolve the crisis of his own historical context. From today's lens, Kant's universalism becomes a very restrictive or limited understanding of universalism that disfranchises many components of society, and this is due to the class limits of his universalism.

OVERVIEW

Taking into account the titles mentioned in this introduction, the first chapter of this study discusses the structural crisis of the historical context in which Kant's political philosophy developed. A central theme of this part of this research is the transformation of social property relations in Germany/Prussia caused by this crisis of feudalism. In parallel, the political and philosophical context of Kant is analysed through the political responses by traditional and new classes in these transformed social property relations, as well as the main dilemmas confronting his political and philosophical concerns within his own context. Based on the method of the social history of political theory, the present study examines the specific historical elements of the development of Prussia following the feudal crisis (the emergence of bureaucratic absolutism, the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and the Hohenzollern consolidation). Through engaging in historically specific developments, legal and political theories were developed as responses to the crisis. Chapter I focuses on three main responses to the long crisis of feudalism (absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal, liberal reformist). Kant, who distinguishes himself from these three approaches, determined which main issues to address to overcome the long crisis of feudalism in the German political and philosophical environment. Thus, the chapter concludes by identifying the main questions in German political thought that need to be resolved in order to overcome the long crisis. In this particular case, Kant could accurately be described as a unique intellectual because he attempted to construct the interests of his class on philosophical and political grounds despite its fragmented and politicised nature.

The second and third chapters of the research examine Kant's relationship with his class, his differences from his contemporaries, and how he differentiated himself from his contemporaries. This investigation examines Kant's intellectual status through two examinations. The first examination of Chapter II explains Kant's methodological and epistemological break, which is another element that makes him a unique intellectual of his age.

Compared to other thinkers of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Kant's political philosophy is characterised by this rupture. The research also examines the significance of the epistemological rupture Kant created for the future of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In Chapter III I examine Kant's epistemological break in a new light through the concept of "social epistemology", which describes a new epistemology that preconditions the capacity and potential to understand social reality through collective human socialisation. Kant is also discussed in relation to his involvement in the class ideology of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and how he defined this relationship philosophically, as well as the names that influenced him.

In the latter portion of the chapter, Kant proffers a novel exegesis that endeavours to rationalise his epistemological break by integrating anthropological and historiographic dimensions. The objective of this undertaking is to elaborate a teleological schema that contextualises the interdependence between his epistemological break and the fundamental attributes of human sociality. Through this teleological schema, Kant postulates a historic-cultural stages model, wherein the rational human subject experiences a mandatory sociocultural transformation to actualise their rational endowments and promote the advancement of humankind. The focal point of the teleological schema is the endorsement of the *Aufklärung Project* as the penultimate universal stage where the *Weltanschauung* of the *Bildungsbürgertum* exerts dominance in the political arena in accordance with universal moral postulates. Kant endeavours to enshrine the *Aufklärung Project* within the political ontology of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, seeing that the *Aufklärung Project* presents a historiographic juncture to homogenise the class perspectives of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and effectuate a reform of Prussia under a cohesive ideological paradigm.

The final part of the research focuses on how *Bildungsbürgertum* was politicised through the new conceptual frameworks introduced by the revolutionary period (the French Revolution) and how this class abandoned the *Aufklärung* movement as a consequence. In this direction, the ground of the *Aufklärung* movement, in which Kant became hegemonic, shifted in 1790 Prussia, after the members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* abandoned this project, and a complex process emerged in which public intellectuals engaged in an intense political struggle with each other with these new ideas. The fourth chapter of the research explores Kant's participation in the crisis at this point in his career as a unique intellectual with a universalist political philosophy. The purpose of this review is to examine Kant's attempts to re-evaluate the new conceptual frameworks that emerged as a result of the post-revolutionary political revolution. Ultimately, Kant strives to re-establish the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the *Aufklärung* movement. With *Aufklärung* as the centre of his worldview, Kant proposes a non-revolutionary reform and progress project to protect and expand the class interests and power of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Under the *Aufklärung* movement, Kant's goal is to realise an ideal political order based on universal principles in which many subjects coexist, class tension stops, and progress is made for eternal peace and reform.

This research culminates, in the conclusion of this thesis, with some evaluations of this effort for rereading Kant's political texts. Hence, Kant's political texts should be viewed as the culmination of his theoretical interests regarding class struggles prior to the global and universal dimensions that liberal or Marxist ideologies have so far identified.

CHAPTER I - RETHINKING THE FEUDAL CRISIS IN GERMANY: A CATALYST FOR KANT'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

While numerous scholars have made commendable efforts to delve into Kant's philosophical and intellectual milieu, successfully forging connections between Kant and various philosophical, ideological, and intellectual facets, a substantial void persists in the existing literature[11]. This void revolves around a fundamental question: *What did Kant's broader historical context signify for him, and how did it mould his universalist political philosophy?* While some endeavours have sought to contextualise Kant within the broader tapestry of Enlightenment Europe's philosophical and scientific developments (Hunter, 2012; Israel, 2001), these efforts often remain confined to exploring Kant's intellectual, scientific, and philosophical dimensions. Consequently, a discernible lacuna emerges within scholarly discourse, characterised by the omission of in-depth inquiries into the material and political underpinnings that Kant cultivated within his broader historical milieu. It is the contention of this research that a comprehensive exploration of these intricate relationships bears substantial potential for shedding light on the multifaceted and contentious implications inherent in Kantian political thought; notably his universalism, as it manifests within the contemporary landscape of political theory. This can be attributed to two principal factors which will be explored below.

To embark on a comprehensive exploration of Kant within the broader scope of his historical context, necessitates a concerted scholarly endeavour aimed at unravelling and interlinking the intricate web of historical developments within the German milieu and the philosophical responses they elicited. However, within the confines of contemporary academic practice, dedicating substantial time and effort to these exceptionally intricate historical processes and the nuanced philosophical contributions they engendered is a less frequented path.

Moreover, Kantian scholarship continues to evolve and expand while primarily focusing on Kant's philosophical and ethical implications. Rather than offering alternative perspectives or interdisciplinary inquiries, this body of scholarship often delves into the critical philosophy's internal intricacies. This emphasis on internal philosophical discourse can serve to dissuade scholarly attempts to bridge the historical dimensions of the German context with Kant's political thought. Such endeavours may not readily align with or contribute to the ongoing academic dialogues, thereby discouraging their pursuit.

Within this contextual framework, the primary objective of this research is to diverge from the prevailing trend within Kantian scholarship. The aim is to make a substantive contribution through a rigorous materialist analysis, thus forging robust connections between Kant's political philosophy and his encompassing historical milieu. This pursuit, in turn, will pave the way for the exploration of the understudied interconnections between Kant and his socio-economic class context within the Prussian landscape. As this ambitious endeavour necessitates a comprehensive methodological investigation, it is imperative to employ an elucidative methodology capable of meticulously tracing Kant's historical connections and facilitating the establishment of cohesive links between his philosophical oeuvre and the broader intellectual currents unfolding within the German-speaking world.

[11] There are some very prominent studies on Kant and his context which try to illuminate the social, political, and philosophical connections (Beck, 1969, 1999; Behrens, 1985; Beiser, 1987, 1992; Cassirer, 1981; Dyck &Wunderlich, 2018; Kuehn, 2001; Maliks, 2014, 2022; Shilliam, 2009; Wood, 2006)

In this juncture, historical materialism emerges as a propitious methodological framework worthy of revisitation and reinterpretation.

Throughout the 20th century, the historical materialist method was usually employed by scholars and thinkers of the socialist regimes, and under the influence of the Cold War, they only produced a very limited number of studies examining the history of political thought. Most historical materialist accounts from this period considered political thinkers as propagandists or party hacks representing the ruling class's interest or projected them as the pioneers of the early bourgeoisie (Macpherson, 1964). However, adopting this approach, which considered political thinkers only as products of their class context, did not popularise historical materialism but rather impeded its ability to contextualise political thinkers and prevented a materialist analysis on the field of history of political thought from being conducted.

A vital step in this attempt towards developing an analysis of the material foundations of political thought is the adoption of a method that does not directly reduce the relationship between theory and material ground to the conditions automatically determined by the latter, but instead focuses on how the political thinker problematises the political issues that are generated by the material context (Wood, 2008). In the context of historical materialism, an examination of political thought requires the analysis of social property relations in the relevant historical context and the social and political struggles in which these relations are interconnected. The historical turning points when social and political antagonisms become more severe are also the times when class struggles, which emerge in the context of social property relations, become most visible. Accordingly, it is inevitable that at these moments of turning points, political thought must reflect the issues that are evident in the context of the political events of the time so that its goals are oriented toward solving those problems.

Responding to these considerations, the *social history of the political theory* of Neal and Ellen Meiksins Wood emerged as a method in response to the reviving debates on the origins and history of the capitalist mode of production in the late 1970s (Wood, E. M. & Wood, N., 1997; Wood, 1978). The main purpose of this reinterpretation of historical materialism was to contextualise the canon of Western history of political thought in relation to the conclusions derived from the debates about the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which radically historicised and politicised the historical processes that led to the making of the contemporary era. Accordingly, Neal and Ellen Meiksins Wood produced significant examinations of prominent political thinkers by not considering them as the products of their historical context but rather contextualising the development of their political thought as responses to the main problems concerning particular disputes over social property relations (Wood, 1991, 1995, 2008, 2012).

In the backdrop of his historical context, Immanuel Kant emerges as a singular philosopher who embarked upon the ambitious task of restructuring the epistemological underpinnings of the social and political order. This endeavour, in turn, gave rise to his political universalism. Kant's universalism transcends mere methodological reformulation; rather, it constitutes an epistemological break wherein human reason becomes the driving force behind political ideation, thereby contributing to the formulation of universal principles as a means to navigate the course of historical progress.

The core contention of this research is to assert that these universal principles possess a tangible foundation rooted in the repercussions of the protracted feudal crisis gripping the German-speaking world. In Kant's case, these principles emerged from the highly politicised milieu of eighteenth-century Prussia. Consequently, this study delves not only into the political figures, intellectual networks, and philosophical dialogues in which Kant engaged or participated but

also, and predominantly, into the profound impact of the ongoing feudal crisis on the landscape where all social, political, and class conflicts of the era found expression.

To contextualise Immanuel Kant's political universalism within the framework of the long-term structural crisis of feudalism, it becomes imperative to scrutinise the material origins of the social and political tensions characterising the period. In doing so, we can discern how and why Kant was influenced by the intricate web of interrelationships and conflicts engendered and intensified by the crisis of feudalism, and which particular issues this material foundation rendered amenable for his intellectual exploration.

Examining Kant's political philosophy, particularly his advocacy of political universalism, within the context of the feudal crisis departs from the conventional approach to the philosopher's legacy. Given Kant's relatively secluded life, his socio-economic background, and his position within academia, it is convenient for scholars to contemplate Kant as detached from the tumultuous events and crises of Prussian society. Conversely, scrutinising Kant's political thought through the lens of the historical crisis within his context unveils the distinctiveness of his philosophical approach in contrast to the prevailing traditions of absolutism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism—the dominant ideological currents of his time.

Kant's responses to the prolonged crisis of feudalism are vital to contextualise his political theory since were focussed on developing a post-feudal political order that would resolve the political polarisations between absolutist-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism in Prussia and the rest of German-speaking Europe. However, Kant's consideration of constitutional-republican-cosmopolitan regimes based on universal moral principles was weakly related to the slowly emerging capitalist, modernist, liberal values that would become dominant in the next century. Rather Kant's main purpose was to challenge and undermine the epistemologies of these main traditions by centralising metaphysics in the relationship between morality and politics so that it would be workable for Kant to promote a universalist political system that could overcome the structural crisis of feudalism without relying on any organic components of feudalism. It was a post-feudal vision that contained some elements of the market society growing in England (property ownership, rule of law), but offered no full commitment to a classical liberal tradition.

In light of these purposes, Chapter I begins by analysing the characteristics of the long crisis of feudalism in the German context and identifies the main responses of absolutism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism to overcome the crisis. By uncovering the relationships between these main responses with their ideological and cultural engagements and conflicting political projects, Chapter I investigates what kind of social and political context these conflicts/rivalries/struggles for social property relations left for German intellectuals. The most important defining moment for the German intellectuals in this social and political context was the political polarisation inside the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the class of professionally educated bureaucrats (Benes, 2022; Bollenbeck, 2000; La Vopa, 1990). The *Bildungsbürgertum* represented the class orientation of several generations of professional, educated middle participants in Prussian state-building processes (Conze & Kocka, 1985, 1989; Hunter, 2012; Köhler, 1985; Schmid, 1984). Due to the intensifying political polarisation between absolutist centralisation, the resistance of traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism, the *Bildungsbürgertum* was divided into several groups, of which three were most important (Beiser, 1992; Schlich, 1990). On the one side, those *Bildungsbürgertum* members who admired Prussian expansionism, the absolutist centralisation of the paternal state, and the welfare regime can be grouped as the absolutist-paternalist line. Meanwhile, those opposed to the absolutist project were grouped around traditional feudal classes and/or reformist liberals and wanted either to maintain the pluralist structure of feudal particulars (principalities and local/regional

jurisdictions) or concentrate on liberal reforms to redesign the relationship between individuals and the state in light of the classical liberal ideals.

At this point, Chapter I draws connections between the discussion of the social and political context and Immanuel Kant. The main question needs to be addressed here: What factors resulted in Immanuel Kant becoming a prominent figure and later becoming the intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*? Only by responding to this question would it be possible to undertake a historical examination of Prussia relevant to Kant's making of his political theory on universalism.

The relevance of this chapter for the remainder of the thesis lies in its identification of the main features of the long feudal crisis, its critical discussion of the material roots of the absolutist, feudal and liberal projects, and its interpretation of the legacy of Prussian political polarisation on German intellectuals. By examining all these factors, Chapter I aims to define the social and material conditions that allowed Kant to be a prominent political thinker and the intellectual of his class (*Bildungsbürgertum*) by his promoting political universalism as an original post-feudal political theory.

1.2 DEFINING THE CRISIS OF FEUDALISM IN THE GERMAN CONTEXT

1.2.1. On Feudalism and Absolutism

Feudalism has been in the spotlight as one of the most controversial topics of debate amongst modern scholars for some time. Historians mostly define feudalism in relation to the social institutions that generate and control legal frameworks between individuals and the state (lords). The relationship consists of an obligation on the part of a freeman (vassal) to serve an overlord, who, in turn, is obligated to protect and maintain the freeman through a fief, an estate held for the vassal in return for service (Hilton,1976). Political scientists, on the other hand, generally define feudalism as a form of government or power relations. In this form of government, there is no territorial or geographical unity; political power can be privatised, inherited, and divided amongst the rulers in fragmented and competing particulars (estates, principalities). Since political power is privately held, it can be passed down, divided among heirs, given as a wedding gift, mortgaged, and bought and sold (Strayer, 1965; Ganshof, 1952). Finally, sociologists tend to define feudalism as referring to the organisation of society, focusing on the social roles and how production and reproduction form these social classes. From this approach, there are two main classes: the first being peasants, whose number constituted the majority of the producing population, and who possessed the land and the means of production to maintain themselves. Additionally, there were lords and rulers who depended on appropriating the surplus from peasants in exchange for providing a sense of security and stability. Although their contribution was not productive, lords monopolised the extra-economic coercion of peasants to stay in power and organise the state apparatus, which was basically nothing, but their legal and political status combined.

Extra-economic coercion[12] became the key property of the feudal ruling class since it was the only legal possession that allowed it to dominate the producer classes (Koçak, 2017). To

[12] Extra-economic coercion was a function of feudalism, which was an order composed of the unified and solidified political and economic spheres. The social property relations were based on their unification, exercised by landowners (aristocracy). Through the long decline of feudalism, the extra-economic coercion could not be maintained in the same way. Through the contribution of labour mobility caused by the retreat, the political elite lost its total control over economic activities. The gradual independence of economic activities caused even the commodification of basic needs to regulate the supply and demand. (Koçak, 2017, p.114).

institutionalise this extra-economic coercion, lords were required to actualise their power by exercising legal and political actions which led them to organise highly localised governments capable of waging war, administering justice, and keeping the peace in the form of "mini-states" (Brenner, 1990, p.2). For the lords, these highly local mini-states became the instruments of gathering, distributing, and consuming the wealth they depended on.

In feudal society, the ties that bound men together were key to forming the fragmented, locally based, and politically competitive feudal ruling class and creating the peculiarly particularised feudal state. As feudal lords appropriated the surplus by collecting levies, in contrast to the decentralised structure of lordship, the parcelised nature of the feudal state allowed rent to be easily appropriated from the peasantry through the obverse of the decentralised nature of the feudal state. In other words, while feudal particulars remained highly decentralised and competed with each other throughout history, in their dominion, feudal authority was consolidated to exercise power and maintain the productive dynamics of the society.

There is no doubt that this complex quality is a result of the evolution of feudalism. Starting from the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire, the succeeding empires and kingdoms adopted the tradition of distributing land and jurisdiction to the particulars who cooperated and contributed to the formation of the Empire. This policy resulted in the emergence of multiple landed nobilities amongst the conquered territories, which later found a chance to declare their independence from the declining Empire or kingdom. The formation of the large empires like the Carolingians or the Frank groups emerged mainly in Western Europe, the traditional geography of feudalism was situated in certain parts of Western Europe, including much of France, northern Italy and western Germany and specifically appeared in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries.

For the purposes of this study, there are important points regarding the general understanding of feudalism that should be brought into focus. Firstly, feudalism refers to not only a mode of production as the Marxist accounts tend only to focus on. Doubtless, feudalism is a mode of production that developed an original form of appropriating the surplus and politically constituted social property relations. As important as it may seem, it is important to point out that feudalism, in its classical form, refers to a number of decentralised, politically, and legally autonomous mini-states (or lordships) which compete against one another on a large scale. In that sense, feudalism is distinct from forms of centralised power, such as absolutism by nature (Anderson, 1973; Mooers, 1991). A second reason why feudalism is referred to as a more pluralistic political system is that it is based upon a highly localised organisation, as opposed to absolutism or modern nation-states, which are more monolithic (unitary or centralised). Thirdly, feudalism refers to a class-based society in which the aristocracy largely determines political power. The feudal system differs from absolutism in that the aristocracy shares power, divides labour, and organises itself based on rank, as opposed to the complete concentration of power in absolutism. The organisation of the aristocracy could be constituted through the assembly, the court, or militaries and councils. Therefore, in the context of this research, there are two main understandings of feudalism. Firstly, feudalism as a mode of production in certain precapitalist societies and secondly, feudalism refers to decentralised, autonomous, localist, traditional, hierarchical, pluralistic, and aristocratic social organisations.

In order to examine how feudalism is organised in the German context, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between feudalism and absolutism. The concept of absolute power or absolutism refers to the practice and doctrine of unlimited centralised authority and absolute sovereignty, especially as it is vested in a monarch or dictator (Anderson, 1974). An absolutist system is characterised by the ruling power being immune to regularised challenges or checks by any other agency, whether judicial, legislative, religious, economic, or electoral. Absolutism emerged as a response to the long downturn of the feudal order in Europe, presenting a new

model of reorganising feudal particulars under one central supreme authority represented by a monarchy. This way, the absolutist project designed a new relationship for the rulers, forming a new compromise between the ruling elites against rising threats from mass social (peasant) movements, especially throughout the sixteenth century. Absolutist restructuring meant the monopolisation of power in the hands of a single authority, centralisation of the mechanism to collect tax revenues, unification of jurisdictions, formation of a standing army, the introduction of a bureaucracy, and the establishment of territorial unity. Additionally, the sovereign's language, religion, and cultural codes were embodied within the state in most of the examples.

Even though absolutism initially appeared as a distinct form of government, economic activities were still largely based on land, and the appropriation of surplus labour from peasants was still based on their exploitation by the lords. According to historical materialist theory, historical regimes are defined depending on the way in which surplus labour is appropriated; absolutism remains in the feudal mode of production, despite the fact that appropriation is centralised, bureaucratised, and the state distributes revenues (Marx, 1993, 2009; Marx & Engels, 1974). An absolutist regime still exerts extra-economic coercion on producer classes but on a much larger (national) scale. Despite being distinct from typical feudalism, absolutism is still a constituent of a feudal mode of production.

1.2.2. Feudalism in the German Context

In the context of this research, it is essential to analyse how feudalism in the German context, after a prolonged period of stability, went into a structural crisis followed by a decline of the aristocracies and the rise of absolutism. Since there are widespread assumptions that feudalism had already been urbanised, commercialised, centralised, and secularised by the eighteenth century (Braudel, 1986, 1994; Frank, 2011; Ghosh, 2016, 2017), defining feudalism in Germany is highly relevant and important to identifying the socio-political context of Immanuel Kant. Kant still lived in a largely feudal, hierarchical, and religious society, although Königsberg, his only setting, was relatively urbanised and educated compared to the other parts of Prussia. While this research does not subscribe to the broad assumptions that consider urbanisation, commercialisation, secularisation, and the centralisation of the state to be indicators of modernisation and the dissolution of the feudal order at this stage (Braudel, 1986, 1994), they does remain within the boundaries of the social and material conditions that explain the series of transformations through the changing social property relations and the emergence of the new forms of organising feudalism.

The transformation of the feudal society in Germany mainly happened in the nineteenth century with the unification of Germany and industrialisation under Bismarckian rule (Mooers, 1991; Zmolek, 2013). Until then, it is only viable to categorise the rise of absolutism as an attempt to respond to the crisis of feudalism by centralising the feudal particulars under Prussian rule.

Historically, the German provinces have been the scene of some of the most diverse developments of feudal fragmentation throughout history, as they were the site of the collapse of the Carolingian Empire. At the peak of the Holy Roman Empire, more than three hundred feudal principalities were organised as mini-states. During this period of fragmentation, there was naturally a plurality of feudal organisations (Wilson, 2004).

The first and most widespread feudal organisation in the south and the western parts of the German hinterland was *Grundherrschaft*, a form of feudality with three typical classes: nobilities, burghers, and peasants "among which the nobility was dominant" (Carsten, 1947, pp. 145). *Grundherrschaft* was a widespread structure that could be found everywhere in continental Europe, and it was based on production on smaller land, allowing the production to be more diversified. Since production was diversified and small, it necessitated trade to

circulate these goods around the related territories. The circulation creating gradual commercialisation was visible; however, the market, as in the context of capitalism, did not exist, and thus the destabilising effect on feudalism of capital accumulation, as widely discussed in the literature of development of capitalism, did not exist (Frank, 2011; Wallerstein, 1974).

In contrast to the south, on the east side of the Elbe River, feudalism, due to the colonisation of the Teutonic Order in the previous centuries, became *Gutsherrschaft*, an organisation of feudality with large manorial estates based on a systematic production involving more peasantry. The class composition of this form promoted *Junkers*, the landowners with larger territories who were holding power in these estates, which produced livestock and fundamental agricultural production. *Demesnes* were predominant in the East, and till the Peasants War, the peasantry in these regions was more organised, allowing them to gain an advantageous position compared to southern provinces. Since large manorial land requires more peasantry, demographic stability was crucial to the maintenance of production[13].

During *Gutsherrschaft*, serfdom in Elbe-east had relatively better conditions, but later, under *demesnes* and *Junkers*, it was situated in the largely landed production[14] (see Table 1.1).

Table 1: Western and Eastern Models of German Feudalism

Characteristic	*Grundherrschaft*	*Gutsherrschaft*
Private estates	few/none	large
Landlords' income	rents in money or kind	labour service/
Peasants' legal status	free	serfs
Peasants' property rights	good	poor
Settlement pattern	large villages	fewer, smaller villages
Lordship	fragmented	concentrated

Source: Wilson, 2004

On top of these models of organising the feudal mode of production, the German context under the Holy Roman Empire had a unique feudal political order which rested mainly on a polity of various principalities organised under regional and local levels (see Figure 1). At the local level, nobility shared the power with the clergy, village communes (*Gemeinde*) or tenure-owning peasantry, and the town guilds. While this feudal polity determined territorial politics, they also directly chose or influenced the election of representatives and territorial rulers. The *Landrat* appeared as the local assembly where the representatives of this feudal polity participated in politics. Territorial Estates (*Landstande*), which were constituted by the feudal polity at the local level, had partial jurisdiction on the local and regional levels. The entire composition of the local organisation was connected to the estate system in which each principality/territorial estate had the power to choose representatives for the imperial diet (*Reichstag*). Under the

[13] "As the system of *Gutsherrschaft* only came into being in districts which had been colonised and Germanised in the course of the Middle Ages and in which Slavonic influences remained more or less strong, it is only natural that many historians should have tried to trace back its origins either to those Slav influences or to the German colonisation and the agrarian system which it created" (Carsten, 1947, p. 147).

[14] "In many instances, *Handfeste* (village charters) were granted, which stipulated the customary rents, dues, and labour services, defined communal rights which were to be paid (usually modest) and set out of conditions of peasant mobility (usually minimal). The terms of these agreements were overseen by the *Gemeinde* (village community) under the tutelage of the village *Schulz* – who functioned more or less as a mediator between the peasant community and the seigneurial authority" (Mooers, 1991, p. 106).

Emperor, the *Reichstag* ran the macro-management and harmony of the Empire, mostly dealing with the military services, mobilisation of the grand armies, or imposing jurisdictions on the lower levels. In addition to this, the feudal political system of the Holy Roman Empire indeed excluded most of the population, including women, children, domestic servants, and the poor (Wilson, 2004).

Although the Holy Roman Empire had this complex organisation, it never represented a centralised state like France. Unlike the absolutist state in France, the Holy Roman Empire was based on a feudal polity that was highly organised at local and regional levels.

Kleinstaaterei (small-state-ery) is a term of German origin that has been employed with a certain degree of disparagement to characterise the territorial fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire, particularly after the *Thirty Years' War*, as well as during the period of the German Confederation in the first half of the 19th century (Whaley, 2011, p. 653). This condition refers to the extensive presence of small and medium-sized secular and ecclesiastical principalities, as well as free imperial cities, which were practically sovereign, and some of which were scarcely larger than a single town or the immediate surroundings of an Imperial abbey. The total number of German states during the 18th century varied according to estimates, ranging from 294 to 348 or even more (Whaley, 2011). Nonetheless, the onset of German mediatisation in the early 19th century led to a swift reduction in the number of states.

It is noteworthy that certain principalities, in order to gain an advantage in the rivalries among the princes of the time, sought to establish their distinctiveness by delineating certain regions within their territories outside the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire, thereby bolstering their autonomy. Among these principalities, the Kingdom of Prussia emerged as a significant entity, with numerous territories beyond the purview of the Empire. Consequently, the political and legal status of Prussia acquired a singular character within the German-speaking world.

During the 18th century and beyond, until the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, not all the provinces comprising the Kingdom of Prussia were included within the Empire's domain. The coronation of Prussian monarchs, in fact, transpired outside the Empire's boundaries in Königsberg, situated in East Prussia. This strategic selection of location by the Prussian monarchy was intended to demonstrate a measure of independence from the political structure of the Empire.

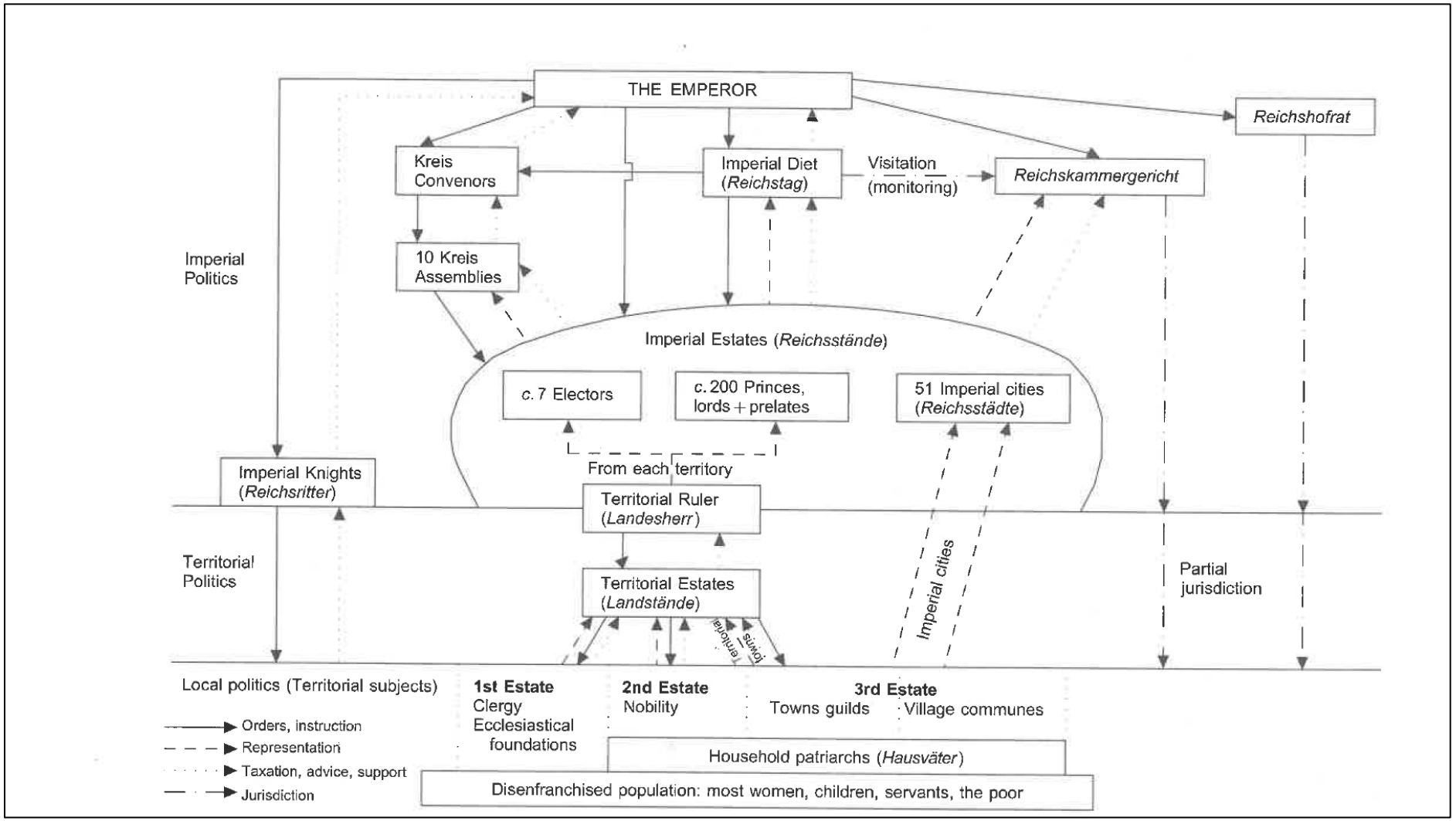

Figure 1: Imperial Constitution

Source: Wilson, 2004

Within the scope of this research, these conceptual frameworks of feudalism have significant significance in determining the primary feature of the German-speaking realm, which is its multifariousness. In contrast to neighbouring historical milieus, the German context perseveres as the most fragmented and diverse milieu, encompassing a myriad of distinct political and legal jurisdictions, hierarchies, and societal configurations. In pursuit of this objective of this thesis, various models of feudal organisation assume a pivotal role, as they not only illuminate disparate avenues for social strata to initially grapple with the protracted crisis of feudalism within this milieu but also chart distinctive trajectories for their endeavours to govern social property relations.

In relation to the main focus of this research, as urbanisation and commercialisation remained low except in northern port cities, in the east, urban classes (*Bürgertum*) developed parallel with the centralisation of the state and became state-dependent without obtaining full control of the social property relations. Therefore, educated urban classes (*Bildungsbürgertum*) in Prussia became public servants or bureaucrats without creating a capitalist bourgeoisie (Beiser, 1992).

Secondly, an analysis of the origins of the feudal systems in Germany allows this research to identify what kind of socio-political superstructure these modes of production generated. The relationship between base and superstructure has become the topic of many significant debates in the social sciences, especially among Marxist scholars (Cohen, 2001; Thompson, 1975; Wood, 1995). Therefore, it can be challenging to show a relationship between a mode of production's main economic formation and its institutional, cultural, and social establishment. In accordance with the main purposes of this research, combined with the focus on the social history of the political theory method of Political Marxism, the relationship between the base and the superstructure will be only analysed with the concept of 'politically constituted property' (Brenner, 1985, 1990). This concept aims to analyse how social property relations have changed in a specific historical context, highlighting how the state, as the main social formation, politically constitutes property by means of its forms of controlling these relations. Therefore, the relationship between the base and superstructure in this research will be discussed by responding to two questions: (i) 'how did the different feudal models organise and control the social property relations during the crisis of feudalism in the German context?' and (ii) 'what do these modes of organising social property relations represent for understanding the socio-political superstructure and the classes in German context?'.

To contextualise the political responses to this crisis, it is imperative to define and understand the feudalism crisis within the German[15] context. Describing the structural reasons for the crisis of feudalism which had spread for more than three hundred years, is challenging. Therefore, this research discusses the crisis of feudalism in the context of the main political responses to it. It argues that in the German context, there were three main responses to the crisis of feudalism which manifested themselves through their political projects for Prussia: absolutist paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism. In relation to these responses, the crisis went through three main stages: the decline of aristocracies & the *Junkers*, the consolidation of Hohenzollern Absolutism, and the emergence and fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. They also reflect the dimensions of Prussia's social and political conflict in response to the crisis of feudalism. The following sections examine these three stages of the crisis together with the political projects of the main classes involved.

[15] My intention with this research is to define Germany as a hinterland that is composed of German speakers in Europe, and not as a nation state.

1.3 RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS OF FEUDALISM

1.3.1. Reconsidering the Long Feudal Crisis as a Catalyst for German Political Thought

To explicate the relevance of the long crisis of feudalism in illuminating the emergence of Kant's philosophy, it is imperative to comprehend the multifarious historical complexities that led to its occurrence. The crisis, which resulted from a protracted agricultural and demographic downturn, profoundly destabilised the entire social and political structure of feudal Europe. The concomitant labour shortages and demographic crisis gravely undermined production in the feudal system. Furthermore, towards the end of the fifteenth century, instability challenged the landed nobility and gradually diminished their control. As the landowners' monopolisation of extra-economic coercion decreased and peasant organisations under *Gemeinde* grew, the class conflict caused systemic instabilities.

The long crisis was protracted and insidious, gradually eroding the aristocratic feudal order. In the sixteenth century, Germany had the first major wave of feudal crisis, with peasant unrest leading to the *1525 Peasants War*. Although the coalition of landed aristocracies managed to restore their hegemony after 1525, the second major wave of instability came one more century after that with the *Thirty Years' War* (1618-1648), which compounded the feudal crisis with religious, cultural, and military conflicts. By the end of the seventeenth century, feudal ruling classes found themselves vulnerable due to the long-term impacts of social, political, and economic instability. As both of these developments contributed to undermining the aristocratic structure, they made the aristocracy as a class weaker and more vulnerable to the absolutist empires surrounding German-speaking Europe.

The erosion of aristocratic power was the result of a series of peasant movements and social unrests that had challenged the traditional order from below. As the power of the nobility declined, the foundations of the feudal society also began to crumble. The *Kleinstaaterei*, or the system of small and independent states, that had long characterised German-speaking Europe, now posed a significant challenge to consolidation, and the various uprisings further eroded the aristocratic control.

The long-term impacts of the crisis are of paramount importance to grasp since they substantially shaped the state-building process of Prussia and, within Prussia, the vulnerable position of the traditional feudal elites. As a result, the crisis generated new debates on how to reconsolidate power in German-speaking Europe. The questions that the crisis posed are significant since they underpinned the long-lasting debates on the origins of social and political legitimacy in German-speaking Europe. The questions pertained to how to reconsolidate this German-speaking milieu under one or many robust political entities. This query was answered by three primary responses: absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal, and liberal reformist.

In response to these challenges, scholars, jurists, and philosophers of the political and legal entities of German-speaking Europe began to engage in intense debates on how to redefine the political and legal foundations of their society. The decline of aristocratic power in German feudalism sparked various different approaches to this topic, as thinkers sought to create a new philosophical framework that could adequately address the challenges of the time.

The crisis brought to the fore issues of social and political legitimacy, which became central to the philosophical debates of the time. It led to the re-evaluation of traditional forms of authority and the emergence of new ideas concerning the relationship between the individual and the state. The crisis also prompted discussions on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the limits of state power, and the nature of the resulting social contract.

It is conceivable to consider the long crisis of feudalism in Germany, particularly the developments during the *German Peasants War* and the *Thirty Years War*, as game-changing developments that shaped the philosophical, political, and legal debates in the German-speaking world. Consequently, the long feudal crisis in this research will be regarded as a "catalyst" that sparked new debates on the constitution of the tripartite relationship between the subject (later citizen), state, and society, illuminating the contextual significance of Kant's philosophy.

1.3.1.1 The German Peasants War 1525 and the Crisis of Feudal Polity

The *German Peasants War* of 1525 marked a significant moment in the ongoing crisis of the feudal polity in German-speaking Europe. This conflict emerged in response to a series of challenges from below, as the peasantry demanded greater political and economic rights. The underlying tensions between the aristocracy and the peasantry were long-standing, and the outbreak of the War highlighted the deep-seated contradictions of feudalism.

The War had profound consequences for the aristocracy, as it led to a decline in their political and legal legitimacy. The challenges posed by the peasantry undermined the power of the aristocratic ruling class and sparked new debates on how to consolidate the political order in the face of shifting power dynamics. The significance of the War was not just in the fact that it presented an alternative political project based on the social organisation of the peasantry (*Gemeinde*), but also in the way it exposed the limitations and vulnerabilities of the feudal system.

In regional competitions on the appropriation of agricultural surpluses, the rights and privileges acquired by serfdom were a primary concern for landowners. As the sixteenth century dawned, the conflict between landowners and peasants intensified, leading to a peasant war and a restoration attempt to favour landowners. At the centre of this struggle, the *Gemeinde*[16], as a form of communal organisation for the villages, played an essential role in mobilising the peasantry against the local authorities and successfully demanding the necessary recognition. This impact, along with the reorganisation of farming without *demesnes*[17], led to a division of powers among local and regional governments, transforming the *Gemeinde* into a decision-making agency.

In the late fourteenth century, starting from the 'fragmentation of jurisdiction'[18] caused by the long-run resistance of *Leibeigenschaft* (serfdom) and the emergence of the *Gemeinde* (peasant union) in the southern and western parts of German hinterlands, the hegemony of the local nobilities and *Junkers* had been shaken. That forced these landowning classes to search for new ways to organise and assert their authority. This reassertion focussed on increasing the dues the lords received by undermining the customary rights of pasturage and access to common lands (Blickle, 1979, pp. 233-5; Moore, 1991, p. 106). The power and influence of *Gemeinde* on behalf of the serfdom showed itself in the political demands of the *Peasants' War*; in the famous declaration of *Twelve Articles*, with the demand of establishing the *Gemeinde* "as an equal working partner with the landlords" (Mooers, 1991, p. 107).

The emergence of the *German Peasants' War* (1525) was the peak of the rising power of the *Gemeinde*. After the *Peasants' War*, the stability of feudalism ended, primarily through

[16] *Gemeinde* has been discussed widely in German history concerning their role in centuries of rural development. Concerning its political character, by some, *Gemeinde* is considered a resistance organisation against vertically structured feudalism[16] (Blickle, 1975, 1980, 1995, 1998); by others, thought to be led by a rural elite that dictated their interests in the reorganisation of land ownership (Sreenivasan, 1991, 2001, 2004, 2013).

[17] *Demesne* refers to the domain in which all the land was retained and managed by a lord of the manor under the feudal system for his own use, occupation, or support (Chrisholm, 1911).

[18] For Mooers, the fragmentation of jurisdiction was the result of labour mobility of peasants and meant "individual peasants could owe dues to a number of different lords" (Mooers, 1991, p. 106).

demographic changes due to war and labour mobility that diminished the region's labour force. However, as Blickle (1979) continues to argue, the revolt also caused peasant demands to be incorporated into the constitutions of dynastic rulers, which took control in the following period[19].

Even though they crushed the rebellion and established their authority, the landowner classes met with even more challenging conditions that threatened their role as 'surplus extractors', which caused them to develop the *Bauernschutz*[20] (protection of the peasantry) (Brenner, 1985)[21]. The *Bauernschutz* was designed to protect the region's demographic stability by guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of *Leibeigenschaft*; but eventually, it reawakened the *Gemeinde,* and the same problems for *Junkers* recurred.

The inter-class competition between landlords and regional and ecclesiastical rulers never reached the level of similar examples in France; however, it unintentionally shielded the peasantry from harsher seigneurial exploitation. From the sixteenth century onwards, the *Bauernschutz* allowed the peasantry to benefit from this competition and opened the way for them to gain more rights and freedoms over their property and production. The emergence of this protection also showed the concrete relationship between the determining power of property relations and the political forms of feudalism. Moreover, the local authorities' gains towards establishing mini-absolutisms for the later period would set the stage for more diversified contextual change and lead to discussions on consolidating legitimate political power against regional and ecclesiastical rulers in these micro-contexts.

It is vital to mention the situation on the other side of Elbe once again since the contextual differences caused the emergence of another type of feudal organisation for property relations, allowing Prussia to expand these territories before the Southwest. As mentioned earlier, the relatively advantageous position of the eastern peasantry remained until the mid-sixteenth century. The colonising purposes of the *Teutonic Order*, requiring substantial peasant settlement and stability in the region, caused the significant development of the peasant economy with greater costs overall. This development was organised with stable rents allowing the settling peasantry to pay fixed amounts. In most of the eastern feudal mini-states, the peasantry found a chance to be involved in negotiations with the landowning classes. In addition, as the manorial system of *Gutsherrschaft* was based on distributing tenures to the peasantry, it naturally put the peasantry in a powerful position to challenge the landowners politically through communal solidarity. In this period, it was common to observe that peasantry could be represented in the local assemblies and negotiate with the *Junker*s about the tenures and production.

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[19] Blickle argues that the destruction of the peasantry ended with 50,000-130,000 men having perished, representing a vast number for land/labour ratio for the period (Blickle, 1979).

[20] *Bauernschutz* took different forms according to the related principality and its level of need for serfdom, so in some provinces, it led unfree serfs to acquire the best vacancies for the land ownership and use of it, and in some, it led the free peasants to lose their previous advantageous positions. As Mooers argues, *Bauernschutz* "provided the peasantry increasing rights and privileges at the same time as it tied the peasant more firmly to the land" (Mooers, 1991, p. 108). *Bauernschutz* can be considered as reorganising some of the typical social relations in *Grundherrschaft* politically. Taking advantage of the tension and competition between the landlord and the ruler in land-related law affairs benefited the peasantry. As the local authorities organised as mini-absolutisms, their typical relationship with regional provinces and the ecclesiastical authority also weakened. In some cases, such as the Paderborn region, *Bauernschutz* was promoted even by bishops and local notables since it protected peasant interests from ecclesiastical or regional intervention.

[21] Robert Brenner has insisted the mini-absolutism developed as 'archetypal' instances where the state assumed the role of a 'class-like surplus extractor' was connected to the need to protect the peasantry against overly harsh exploitation. These states thus became pioneers of the practice of *Bauernschutz.* (Mooers, 1991, p. 108, citing Brenner, 1985, p. 56)

The local assemblies (*Landrat*), which managed the distribution of the land tenures, and the main economic and legal statutes and ordinances, were where the landowning classes traditionally had more influence. However, especially after the labour shortages of the 14th and fifteenth centuries, these institutions provided opportunities for even the peasantry to pursue their class interests more effectively. The local assemblies are also important with regard to the more pluralistic character of the political structure in German feudalism, where the power was shared amongst mostly local nobilities and, for some periods, even with serfdom. In the *Gutsherrschaft*, the peasantry benefited from the demographic and geopolitical advantages and was able to enjoy more rights and freedoms until the mid-sixteenth century, unlike in the southwestern parts of Germany, under *Grundherrschaft*, where the peasantry had to struggle with the landowning classes.

However, the demographic change in the South and West caused prices to rise and decreased the consumption of grain, the primarily produced goods (Wunder, 1985, p. 53). These new prices immediately changed the economic and political power balances between the East and the South-West. The first solution for eastern landlords was to restrict the relative autonomy of the peasantry and dispossess them of their holdings and their legal protections[22] (Harnisch, 2016).

It is vital to problematise why there was no significant resistance against this deterioration, unlike in the southern provinces, where the conditions of the peasantry were even worse. One of the reasons was the unity of jurisdictional control, unlike the fragmented structure in the southern provinces whose peasantry had found a chance to 'manoeuvre' for their interests. Secondly, the absence of effective *Gemeinde* in the East limited the options for the eastern peasantry to organise under an agency.[23]

As this lordly self-organisation in Eastern Elbe was established, the consolidation of political power in the hands of the *Junkers* continued. However, the decline came gradually but was costlier. Even though the *Junkers* did not encounter significant resistance in the East, their resources gradually diminished, and their organisation for sustaining control was weakened.

Despite the ultimate victory of the *Junker* aristocracy, the *Peasants War* dealt a severe blow to the established order. The aristocracy was forced to grapple with the fact that they could no longer rely on their traditional sources of power and authority and had to consider new strategies for maintaining their position. The aftermath of the conflict thus led to a period of political and social flux, as the ruling class sought to redefine their relationship with the peasantry and consolidate their power in the face of changing circumstances.

1.3.1.2 Towards the Thirty Years' War and the Decline of the Junker Aristocracy

The Thirty Years' War of 1618-1648 stands as one of the most significant events in the history of European warfare, marking a turning point in the political and social landscape of German-speaking Europe. At its core, the conflict was rooted in the ongoing feudal crisis that had been unfolding across the region for centuries. The feudal system had long been characterised by intense competition between dynasties seeking to expand their territorial control, a competition that had far-reaching implications for economic and political power.

[22] In 1540, peasant inheritance rights were severely curtailed, and lords reserved the right to have their tenants' children serve as menials. Overall, the legal status of the peasantry rapidly deteriorated (Mooers, 1991, p. 109).

[23] The reason for this absence was the advanced starting point of colonisation in the Eastern Elbe that allowed peasants to be given the relative autonomy they enjoyed until the gradual deterioration. Brenner's argumentation here supports the organisation of the peasantry from above: "These conditions were granted by the lords (for their own reasons) … the peasants received them from the lords. This was a very different process from that which occurred in the west, where peasants often extracted their gains from the lords by means of successful resistance requiring the self-organisation of the community over the very long run" (Brenner, 1985, p. 273).

However, the *Thirty Years' War* was not just another chapter in this ongoing feudal conflict. Rather, it represented a second stage of the crisis, one that saw the escalation of its impact on questions regarding the relationship between the peasantry, feudal lords, and rising absolutist powers both inside and outside of the Holy Roman Empire.

The war brought about a catastrophe not only for the ruling classes but for everyone else as well. It brought with it significant social and economic upheaval, leading to the destabilisation of German-speaking Europe and the wider European community. The conflict's origins lay in the complex web of alliances and rivalries that had emerged between various dynasties, each vying for supremacy in the region. However, it soon became clear that the war was about much more than just territorial control. It was a battle for the very soul of German-speaking Europe, pitting traditional feudal structures against emerging absolutist powers and the aspirations of a rising peasantry.

Throughout the course of the conflict, the balance of power shifted repeatedly, with various factions gaining and losing ground as the fighting dragged on. At the heart of the conflict was the tension between those who sought to maintain the status quo and those who sought to usher in a new era of political and social change.

The attempt by the landowners to re-establish their authority with dispossession and the gradual increase of legal control, in other words exercising advanced types of extra-economic coercion, also failed (Hagen, 1985, 2002, 2005, 2011). Although the *Gemeinde* declined, the landed classes' increasing oppression resulted in no further profitability since they could not recover completely. A crucial example comes from the statistics regarding the incorporation of land to the nobility. Hagen's analysis (1985) shows that some regions remained at seven per cent peasant farms (*Hufen*) until the seventeenth century. As a result, the long-run decline of the *Junkers* in these regions weakened their power against the West and Prussia, as the northern principality gradually expanded its territories and colonised the northeast[24].

From the accounts that focus on the *Junkers*, it is likely that although the *Junker's* held and exercised increasing levels of extra-economic coercion for dispossessing and depriving peasantry and their organisations of *Gemeinde*, they failed to sustain their reign. This gradually caused them to lose their wealth and power. The failure of the *Junkers* to retake what they had provided for peasantry returned to them only with resistance or crisis. Even in the more stable regions of Eastern Elbe, *Junkers* failed to protect their profitable dominance. Eventually, *the Junkers'* vulnerable position was not sustainable, and they had to rely on a foreseeable source of power to survive the increasing threat of another rebellion. This situation established the ground for emerging Hohenzollern Absolutism to become more active in the region[25].

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[24] As Colin Mooers mentioned, Hagen's analysis on this point advocates for a solid link between the condition of the *Junker*s and the emergence of Prussian absolutism from a different angle:
"[…] the great expansion of noble demesne farming in central and eastern Europe during the sixteenth century cannot bear the weight of the fateful significance the historical literature assigns it. By throwing themselves into manorial production, the landed nobility rescued and even greatly magnified their fortunes. But this required neither the economic subversion of the peasantry nor the rise of an absolutist state guaranteeing by the force of princely arms the landlords fleecing of their peasant subjects… to exaggerate the *Junker*s' dominance is to diminish without warrant the peasantry's powers of resistance. The *Junker*s' success in the sixteenth century did not predominate the rise of Prussian absolutism, nor did it cause the social structure of Brandenburg to diverge ominously from the western Europe pattern, in which the powers and income of noble landlords also loomed exceedingly large" (Hagen, 1985, p. 115).

[25] "In one sense, the *Junker*s needed the absolutist state much more than the state needed *Junker*s… this indicates the absolutist state itself grew up on a much more autonomous footing as a class-like competitor of aristocracy than most accounts which stress the *Junker* dominance of the state would lead us to expect" (Mooers, 1991, p. 112).

Therefore, the *Junker*s' desire to restore the feudal order by increasing their extra-economic coercion was an attempt to respond to the crisis of feudalism in feudal terms. This attempt failed due to its internal contradictions. Firstly, loading the crisis on the shoulders of the peasantry depleted their productive capacity. Secondly, the *Junker*'s required new legislation to legalise their control, and since the power was largely shared at the local level, it was difficult to pass the necessary regulations. Due to this inability to increase their control of the peasantry, the lordly classes of the feudal structure were forced to expand their territories to ensure more political and economic power. However, this attempt also meant that they expanded to each other's territories which led to warfare. In political-economic terms, the *Thirty Years' War* represented the contradictions of the lordly classes, which contained religious, cultural, and ethnic rivalries. Only in the period after the *Thirty Years' War* is it observable that the *Junkers* found a chance to collaborate with the Hohenzollern Absolutism to introduce new agrarian reforms. However, this uneasy alliance did not continue to offer long-term benefits for the feudal aristocracies[26].

There are significant outcomes of the *Thirty Years War* for Prussia as well as other principalities in the conflict regions. The war's impact was so significant that it depopulated large parts of Prussia, with some estimates suggesting a loss of up to two-thirds of the population in certain areas. The aftermath of the war saw the Elector of Brandenburg (Prussia) embark on a significant restructuring of the state.

As Prussia had become a battlefield for many European nations, including Sweden, France, and Spain, the Prussian Crown developed plans for a massive build-up of its army to defend against future attacks from hostile powers. To achieve this, the army officers were exclusively recruited from the landed gentry or *Junkers*, giving them a dominant position within the Prussian state well into the 19th century. This link between the militarised *Junkers* and the Prussian Crown is central to understanding the political and socio-economic landscape of the post-war years[27].

Overall, *The Thirty Years' War* in the 17th century emerged on top of the feudal crisis, dividing the German territories with warfare. Although feudal warfare was mainly rooted in the fierce competition of various dynasties to expand their territorial control, also meaning economic and political power, it brought a catastrophe for the ruling classes as it did for everyone else[28].

The *Thirty Years' War* destabilised German feudalism and caused a fragmentation of the political order due to territorial disputes. After the *Treaty of Westphalia* (1648), the number of new principalities brought the total number of territorial estates to nearly three hundred. Yet the war did not help any of these dynasties to assert enough influence to dominate the others. Rather, it caused principalities to territorially downsize and fragment and become even more vulnerable to external influences. Therefore, the *Thirty Years' War* ended the harmony of the

[26] It seems, therefore, that however effective the extra-economic powers of the *Junker*s might have been when compared to the western European landlords in the sixteenth century, they were still insufficient to break the back of the Elbian peasant resistance (Harnisch, 2016).

[27] Elector Friedrich Wilhelm, also known as 'der Große Kurfürst', played a crucial role in the development of the Prussian state during this period. His emphasis on the importance of a strong army, a powerful monarchy, and centralised power allowed the *Junkers* to maintain their relative economic and political power, while the position of the bourgeoisie remained generally weak, even in the few urban centres of Prussia. The legacy of this period would have far-reaching implications for the future of Germany, setting the stage for a system of government that emphasised military power and centralised authority.

[28] The combination of the war deaths and epidemics related to the devastation caused by war is estimated to have claimed forty per cent of the rural population and thirty-three per cent of the urban population (Mooers, 1991, p.113).

Holy Roman Empire and the German-speaking Europe and loosened the stable and self-organised federalist structure.

1.3.2. The Response of the Traditional Feudal Polity to the Crisis of Feudalism

Due to the catastrophic 17th century conditions, the landowner classes grounded their political projects on the main strategy of maintaining the balance of power in the remaining feudal polity, which was highly locally organised. Moreover, they prioritised preserving their autonomy against the centralising absolutist powers around Europe. This defensive strategic positioning of the lordly classes was reflected in the political theory of German feudalism.

The main philosophical source of feudal politics was legal philosophy (Thornhill, 2007). Everywhere around Europe, the crisis of feudalism revived the philosophical and legal debates on the origins of natural law. Natural law was the specific field of attention due to the increasing tensions and rivalries amongst different social classes regarding controlling social property relations. In natural law, the main debate was over how to legitimise the origins of power as legal codes. On the contrary, those with a critical approach to the established power bloc consulted natural law to question the origins of their power. The rise of absolutism in Europe was another important factor that led to natural law becoming the primary source of political debate.

Absolutism posed a threat to the feudal polity in many respects. Firstly, it threatened how the feudal polity constituted power with the aristocracy. Instead, absolutism as a political theory advocated the concentration of power under a single sovereign. A second principle was the centralisation of the state, which could develop and dominate the legislative institutions. The rise of absolutism mainly occurred with the emergence of French absolutism under the Bourbons and significantly impacted the neighbouring countries.

As France became increasingly centralised and feudalism became increasingly consolidated under absolutism in the seventeenth century, the Holy Roman Empire remained the only context in Western Europe to preserve typical feudalism. Especially after the *Thirty Years' War*, the influence of the absolutists spread, and the new debates on natural law began to question the origins of aristocratic power in German territories. At this point, international law became one of the main topics of political theory. It was a response to the need to theorise both for an expansionist absolutist state and its claims and the sovereign rights of the feudal polity at the local and regional levels.

In the seventeenth century, the German context experienced two major historical events: the *Reformation* and the *Thirty Years' War*. In the former, new popular religious and political movements challenged traditional establishments, while in the latter, social and political conflicts in German territories were transformed into a deadly war. Due to the destruction caused by the *Thirty Years' War*, the region's feudal crisis worsened. While the peasantry, which constituted the working force, was heavily depleted, the *Thirty Years' War* complicated the territorial, political, and economic relationships between princely powers, threatening imperial stability. Two major developments occurred simultaneously in the seventeenth century in Germany, resulting in a search for a new social and political order.

In post-*Reformation* Germany, political theory again became very important to provide this search for new answers. Political theory's main focus in this period was legal philosophy, specifically theories of natural law, due to the complications of the *Thirty Years' War*.

1.3.2.1 The Making of Mini-Absolutisms with Mixed Constitution

The war, on top of the feudal crisis, indeed complicated the territorial, political, religious, economic, and cultural codes of the Holy Roman Empire, causing conflicts between princely powers. Therefore, natural law theories sought answers for how to re-establish the social and political order with new constitutional arrangements in the German context while strengthening the aristocratic order against the absolutist states surrounding the princely powers.

At this time, the first constitutional debates in natural law mostly focused on clarifying the relationships between the early territorial states and the empire. As a result of these debates, participants generally advocated for the detachment of certain powers from the empire and their cession to territorial states, with the main objective of defining the empire as a constitutionally obligated polity. Consequently, early German constitutional and legal discourse was not primarily focused on the organisation of sovereign states but on limiting the influence of external sources of legal power on emerging territorial states. Due to this, the territorial states tended to produce externalised constitutional orders that were less concerned with the constitutional balance within states.

A primary challenge of early modern constitutionalism in other, more integrated polities was to reduce state power, intensify law, and enshrine liberties against the state. At least in many cases, in Germany, the primary challenge was to consolidate state power and exclude elements that would disrupt it. Therefore, German constitutional debates in the early modern period were dominated by more limited legal restrictions on the application of power within territorial states, which resulted in more concentrated conceptions of territorial power (Thornhill, 2007). The feudal polity responded to a long-term crisis in feudalism by forming 'mini-absolutisms' (Brenner, 1985).

It is important to note that other thinkers, intellectuals, and legal-political theorists developed alternative views. A common conception among early constitutionalists was that territorial sovereignty was determined by a harmonious relationship between the quasi-sovereign powers of princes and regents and the customary rights, liberties, and privileges of territorial assemblies.

Many early German political and legal thinkers formulated theories on consolidating the feudal polity through mini-absolutisms. Although the approaches were different, the common purpose was to strengthen the princely powers against the absolutist threats and the long-term impacts of the feudal crisis on the producer classes.

The *Reformation* supplied German political thought with some new ideas that reconceptualised the state in constitutional terms and opposed the promotion of a concentration of territorial power. It is worth noting that Johannes Althaus (1563 – 1638), or Althusius, strongly influenced by Calvinism in Northwest Germany, offered an account of a legitimate government that was proto-constitutional or early republican.

There was a strong claim in this account that natural rights principles must govern the laws of a legitimate polity. According to him, 'universal law' is the form and substance of sovereignty (*majestatis*) binding all members of the society, including the prince. For Althusius, there is no deducible law from the personal characteristics of princes because the state is emphatically a public body (Althusius, 1614, § 4). The state is owned by the people, and its sovereignty is determined by consensus among members of the various associations in which it originated. A state that is organically constructed requires specific administrative protection against tyranny. It appoints representatives, known as 'ephors' or 'defenders of the republic'. A republic's highest court is appointed by these representatives and must adhere to the republic's laws or agreements.

The central principle of Althusius' doctrine is a radical-constitutional view of natural rights, which asserts the state's constitutional independence from its ministers. No state is without law, which exists as an unbreakable and inviolable order above all personal representations.

The state has, therefore, an express obligation to integrate the church, and the magistrate should preside over the ecclesiastical courts, the presbyteries, and the church consistories. While the state may integrate the church, the action cannot be justified as a part of public law or princely authority. In contrast, the state's control of the church imposes a second constitutive contract upon it: in addition to the contract, it forms with its constituents, the state has a natural-legal obligation to God as well, which is a contract that the state is bound by along with its constituents (Althusius, 1614, § 7*)*.

Therefore, the ecclesiastical regime is necessary for establishing a contractual state, and the ecclesiastical regime binds the order of the state to precise legal duties. According to Althusius, in both civil and ecclesiastical politics, the state is constituted by law, which overrides the state's personal structure, and sovereignty comes from laws, not individuals (Althusius, 1614, § 37-41).

The early constitutionalist attempt of Althusius is an example of the new interpretations of the state in the post-*Reformation* period. His natural law theory inspired post-Westphalian thinkers like Pufendorf, who carried the debate to the next level with a political theory of a 'mixed constitution' to preserve the feudal polity.

These arguments for a mixed constitution prepared the ground for the main lines of constitutional theory after 1648, which insisted more confidently on territorial independence and integrity[29].

The constitutional debates in the seventeenth century, especially after the 1648 Restoration, revolved around the hierarchy between princely and imperial power. The main efforts of legal and political thinkers like Reinhard König (1583–1658), Matthias Stephani (1570-1646), Christophorus Besoldus (1577-1638), Dominicus Arumaeus (1579-1637), and Johannes Limnaeus (1592 -1665) were aimed at defining the relationship between the imperial authority (emperor) and the sovereignty of princely powers. They did this by theorising a ground that subjects the emperor to a constitution, or a covenant made between the emperor and territorial princes (Thornhill, 2007). By promoting a mixed constitution, the German legal and political theorists attempted to secure the position of the feudal polity in the Holy Roman Empire against the rising absolutist threats. In arguing for mixed constitutions, these arguments laid the foundation for more confident territorial independence and integrity claims after 1648.

A notable example of this is Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff's (1673-1773) influential and widely read works. According to Seckendorff, the *Peace of Westphalia* settlements provided a patriarchal expansion of princely power and full legislative sovereignty for the prince: "the power to establish good laws and orders in his land" (Thornhill, 2007, p. 64). Seckendorff did not support full sovereignty in the territories. As such, he said that, despite the prince's loyalty to the emperor, he was still bound to obey the "orders and laws of the empire" and ensure that his own law did not contradict those "prescribed by Imperial Majesty and all German Estates" (Seckendorff, 1656, 0108:64). In fact, he believed the emperor's majesty was due to the fact that he had no superior in this world. Additionally, he emphasized that the emperor must adhere

[29] "The science of public law was marked by an entrenched division between the lawyers and theorists who saw the empire as a monarchical constitutional form, over which the emperor had personal dominion, and those who saw the empire as a publicly constituted and obligated state: that is, as a body politic possessing a binding legal order, and a constitution that balanced power between Emperor and territorial princes" (Thornhill, 2007, p.63).

to some constitutional 'conditions' and that the empire's authority must be used within a territorial balance.

Historically, promoting princely authority as the only source of power in a particular jurisdiction was a defensive reflex of feudal governments against absolutist threats. The second point is that, especially after the *Thirty Years' War*, the princely powers realised that their extra-economic coercion and legal and political control inside their jurisdiction could not be sustained without gaining more authority. In spite of the long downturn of feudalism, the feudal ruling classes were still concerned about their own survival. As a result, political theory returned to the same question of legitimising the growth and expansion of the feudal ruling classes by transforming the feudal regime into a 'mini-absolutisms''. Therefore, the ideas of a mixed constitution were autonomist and liberal in the light of the territorial expansions of absolutist empires. Nevertheless, at the same time, a mixed constitution became a theory of re-legitimising and consolidating the authority of the feudal landowner classes against the peasantry inside the territorial estates as they aimed to increase the legal and political powers of the ruling classes.

Hermann Conring (1606-1681), a leader in the ascendancy of the Protestant *Reformation*, also championed a strong theory of the constitution, combining a variety of historical interpretations, legal deductions, and legal theories to demonstrate that a constitutional form was necessary for the empire. According to Conring, the Emperor was obligated by pacts formed with the princes, and these pacts were constitutionally binding: even direct resistance to the emperor was legitimate if he contravened its provisions. The claim of unlimited territorial sovereignty came closest to being fully discredited by Conring[30].

The discussion in this context illustrates the fact that there was not an underpinning impulse aimed at the development of balanced laws in the first place but rather a strong call for the development of laws that would be consistently applied throughout the entire German state, and which were built on the foundation of state security. This search for state security existed primarily because of the necessity to defend the feudal polity of the German principalities against the rising absolutist powers and, secondly, because of the need to protect the feudal ruling classes against the mass unrest popping up in relation to the crisis of feudalism. Therefore, the political theory of the German feudal polity instrumentalised legal philosophy to re-legitimise their judicial power by grounding it in, or linking it to, the state security concept, which was valid for the princely powers in the Holy Roman Empire. So, the imperial state apparatus of the Holy Roman Empire was used as a source legal harmony for preserving the privileges of the princely powers. This is why it is common to observe the political thinkers of this period highly engaged with natural law theories by theorising on constitutions and the relationship between the territorial estates and the imperial state.

Both Seckendorff and Conring emphasized that although princely powers are not lawmakers, as natural law can only be made by the Holy Roman Empire's imperial state, they are the only implementers of the law as the jurisdictional authority rests only on the indigenous feudal

[30] "In their institutional implications, these constitutional doctrines sought to establish both a constitutional order, in which different sources of power countervailed and restricted each other, and an organic order, in which the empire was construed as an integrated order of the state, and in which particular institutions had clearly defined competence. More fundamentally, however, these doctrines also marked an endeavour to find alternatives to the externality of law in the Holy Roman Empire and to consolidate the sites of territorial power as cohesive centres of legislation and jurisdiction" (Thornhill, 2007, p.72).

polity[3132]. As Corning and Seckerdoff assert, the only way to preserve the feudal polity, referring to the Holy Roman Empire as a whole, rests on an effective system which consolidates the princely powers as the sole authority in their jurisdictions (mini-absolutism). Therefore, there is a requirement for a central authority for law-making and securing the statehood against foreign interventions (absolutist empires and the papacy), but at the same time, this central (imperial) authority only exists and acts according to the covenant/constitutional limits between the princely and imperial states.

The political theory of Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) is one of the most influential among German political thinkers as it most clearly shapes the response of the feudal polity to the crisis. Pufendorf's political theory represents the typical concerns that dominated the post-Westphalian context. Although most of Pufendorf's thought was centred around natural law, he conceptualised a new understanding of sovereignty theory, apart from theological doctrines, by locating peace, order, and security within political theory.

A central feature of Pufendorf's political philosophy is the integration of ethics with politics. Pufendorf defines the state as an entity that is continuous and identical to ethics. State theory rests on the foundations of natural law, "namely the sociality law which regulates not only pre-civil relations, institutions, and societies but also the civil condition needed to secure them" (Seidler, 2021). As social beings, humans organise and establish political authority to reflect their morality. According to Pufendorf, the political is defined by moral norms that reflect the demands of natural law and the complexity of human existence. Thus, politics has become a form of social ethics (Pufendorf, 1991).

It is clear that Pufendorf engages with sovereignty not just to give a holistic meaning to the state but to provide a suitable legal and philosophical ground for feudal entities to defend their sovereignty against the absolutist centrist foreign powers. Sovereignty being indivisible is an argument to prevent absolutist claims on smaller feudal entities. At the same time, indivisible sovereignty functions as a consolidator for the feudal entity's inner dynamics.

By implying the right to resist, Pufendorf confirms his political positioning was not favouring absolutism. Due to his circumstances, Pufendorf's credit for the right to resist is limited to an abstract theory. The possibility of a rebellion was denied and disregarded since Pufendorf prioritised the notion of people's welfare as a grounding process - there must be a sustainable order and a contractual relationship between people and the government (Pufendorf, 1990, 1991).

The general preference of Pufendorf was for regular forms of the state where the entire polity could be unified in a well-functioning organic structure. This preference indeed did not carry any similarities with an absolutist attempt since Pufendorf only considered the necessity of a unified state in terms of positive law. Pufendorf did not expect the Holy Roman Empire to achieve this stage without a full transformation. In order to correct the empire's most pressing structural weaknesses, the constitution's existing form needs to be clarified and accepted as irregular, with monarchical and estate-based elements and constructed as quasi-sovereign

[31] After 1648, for instance, Seckendorff emphasized the fact that 'highest judicial power' is an inalienable attribute of princely power, although he also accepted that princes were not permitted to pass laws contravening imperial statutes. This view was seconded by Samuel Pufendorf, who saw centralised 'judicial power' as a defining feature of a regular state constitution.

[32] Furthermore, Conring asserted that sovereignty is characterised by controlling the courts, and a state answering to foreign courts cannot be considered a 'free republic'. Moreover, in his argument, he argued that one of the main concerns of a free state is the regulation of 'the business of courts'. In this respect, Conring reflected critically on the universally accepted legal models and called into question the judicial order that the Empire had established on this subject.

confederate states. Statehood under shared sovereignty or federalism was not considered ideal by Pufendorf. Rather, he indicates that the empire actually prevented Germany from becoming a regular state: a state that enforces positive-legal principles upon all its subjects. He was committed to analysing legal applications positively, but he also ensured that imperial life was analysed realistically and that the imperial system as a legal system was stable (Seidler, 2021).

In light of these points, Pufendorf is crucial to understand the feudal polity's response to the feudal crisis. He represents one of the earliest theorists of feudal polity in many ways, offering a philosophical framework based on conjunctural concerns of the post-Westphalian order[33].

Only after the seventeenth century would German legal and political thought host discussions on the absolute judicial control of the princely powers due to the growing absolutist interventions. Political thinkers such as Pufendorf and Thomasius would carry the influence of the mixed constitution into the following period, presenting a more philosophically and politically sophisticated theory of natural law.

The traditional feudal polity's response to the social and political turmoil of feudalism was based on some central ideas combined into one approach. It was the main strategy of the feudal landed classes to improve their power and control within their own jurisdictions, as well as strengthen their political and legal position against interventionist absolutism. To do this, it was necessary to renegotiate the relationship between the princely powers and the Holy Roman Empire. During this stage of drafting the political doctrines to reform the empire, theories of natural law and legal philosophy became crucial. Early German thinkers like Althusius, Seckendorff, Conring, and Pufendorf favoured the traditional feudal polity by promoting new deals between imperial and princely powers through mixed constitutional systems.

Among the prominent ideas considered for this purpose was the mini-absolutism project. The realisation of mini-absolutism, however, required new legal and political arrangements that would strengthen princely powers against imperial authorities. During this stage, the mixed constitution theories became instrumentalised by German thinkers to create a new legal and political basis to greatly reduce imperial intervention and judicial power over princely states. Meanwhile, they considered that a mixed constitution would still maintain imperial power as a cohesive framework against foreign interference.

In general, the role of mixed constitution theories in shaping the development of a social contract for consolidating the German feudal order is a subject of great interest and importance in the field of political theory. The theories of a mixed constitution emerged as an alternative political framework that sought to address the persistent struggle between centralised and local powerholders in the feudal polity, and to provide a constitutional arrangement that would enable their coexistence.

The underlying principle of the theories of mixed constitution was to create a political system in which various political parties could coexist within the same framework. This was particularly relevant to the feudal polity, where princely powers were locked in a perpetual

[33] Kant mentions Pufendorf only (in his company of Grotius and Vattel) in a vague, dismissive way, referring to "wretched comforters" (*leidige Tröster*) who have been criticised – in the essay on *Perpetual Peace* (1795) – for treating the law of nations (*ius gentium*) in an overly flexible, empirical, and situational manner. Kant considered that approach (including sovereigns' use of prudence and the right of necessity) to be little more than a recipe for endless conflict, despite its previous reputation for strength. In other words, for Kant, Pufendorf's response to the feudal crisis was not revolutionary or radical; rather it still rested on feudal grounds. It was a feudal response to the crisis of feudalism. Instead, Kant substituted a universal, necessary, and absolute metaphysics of right – albeit in a transcendental vein – precisely that type of natural law theory that Hobbes and Pufendorf had originally sought to displace because of its pernicious social consequences.

struggle for dominance, and there was a need to address the structural issues that were impeding the consolidation of power. The theories of mixed constitution were able to offer a solution to this problem by presenting a functional political project that allowed for a balance between centralised and local power.

Moreover, the theories of mixed constitutions proved to be not only useful for the feudal polity, but also for local powers against centralising political entities in German-speaking Europe. This enabled the various factions to come together and form a cohesive political system that could withstand the pressures of external forces seeking to impose their will on the polity. This was particularly significant in the development of Kant's political philosophy, which drew inspiration from the theories of mixed constitutions and integrated them into a broader framework of universalism.

Kant's political philosophy was characterised by a focus on political and legal arrangements discussed in constitutional terms, which allowed for the coexistence of multiple political parties within the same framework. This was a direct reflection of the contributions of the theories of mixed constitutions to the political theory of the feudal polity. Kant's universalism was built upon these contributions and aimed to create a political system that was based on universal claims that allowed for the coexistence of different political parties.

1.3.3. Response of Absolutism to the Crisis: Hohenzollern Consolidation and Emergence of the Bureaucratic Absolutism

The second prominent response to the crisis of feudalism in the German context became visible with the emergence of the absolutist regime in Prussia. The establishment of the absolutist regime happened in two phases. Firstly, the Hohenzollern dynasty in Prussia turned the decline of the aristocratic order into an opportunity to increase its prestige and political power through its territorial expansions. In addition to this, the Hohenzollern consolidation managed to gradually counterbalance the hegemony of the local nobilities by following a systematic *Reformation* project. Secondly, the Hohenzollern's transformed their reign into an absolutist administration and promoted a bureaucracy against the aristocratic order (Sheehan, 1989; Shilliam, 2009). The Prussian system eventually generated a 'bureaucratic absolutism' that started a new class conflict among emerging bureaucratic classes and the traditional aristocracy (Mooers, 1991). This new class conflict over the control of state apparatus broke the resistance of the traditional aristocratic classes and caused absolutism to gain more control.

Therefore, the absolutist project of the Hohenzollerns became a response to the crisis of feudalism through the promotion of centralised power to replace the imperial structure of the Holy Roman Empire. The absolutist project required a political and legal ground to overcome the traditional feudal polity's hegemony. Cameralist science and paternalist doctrines became the political and philosophical face of the absolutist project and were employed by a generation of German political thinkers emerging inside a new bureaucratic class: the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Through cameralist-paternalist approaches, the new generation of German thinkers promoted various theories to reverse the previous centuries' trend of empowering princely powers. The main argument of the cameralist-paternalist tradition was to consolidate the power of a central state apparatus under a constitutional order. The idea of a mixed constitution was still influential at this stage and was interpreted and instrumentalised by the cameralist-paternalist thinkers.

1.3.3.1 The Hohenzollern Consolidation: 'Re-form' and Compromise

The Hohenzollern's attempt to reorganise the feudal polity in Prussia involved a gradual takeover of power by undermining the rural noble political power through a centralised

administration. However, it was not a strategy to be pursued in the short term; the Hohenzollerns planned to realise this through a series of reforms to restructure the feudal polity. In addition, the Hohenzollerns avoided the confrontation with the *Junker* aristocracy, approaching them with a power-sharing compromise. That is why Hohenzollern absolutism introduced itself as a reformist project to establish a compromise between the Hohenzollerns and the centres of rural noble political power in Prussia (Rosenberg, 1966). In exchange for this compromise, the Hohenzollern dynasty was responsible for providing order and security in the region for the *Junker* aristocracy. In this stage, the rise of Hohenzollern absolutism in the East of Elbe corresponded to this crisis of feudalism.

The literature (of German history) has extensively discussed the Hohenzollern 'compromise'. In mainstream German history, Hohenzollern absolutism is frequently described as a compromise between the centralising monarchy and the *Junker*s aristocracy (Anderson & Barkin, 1982; Dahrendorf, 1965; Hamerow, 1958; Moore, 1966; Rosenberg, 1966). The described compromise seems to provide a comprehensive answer to what constituted both central and local power and the resulting feudal character of Prussia, opening the gates for further interpretations of the bureaucratic and militaristic features of Prussia and later the German Empire with broad historical judgements. However, the decline of the *Junker*s and the crisis of feudalism necessitate reconsidering the description of a compromise since this was part of an intense century of class struggle over social property relations[34].

In the case of Brandenburg, the principality where the Hohenzollern dynasty originated, the conditions were more or less the same. The crisis of feudalism in the sixteenth century had weakened Brandenburg as it had other principalities as the *Thirty Years' War* did a century later. The fundamental reason the principality weakened was its local nobility (Hagen, 1985; Henning, 1991, 1994; Koch, 1978). Brandenburg's local nobility had lost its hegemony over the territory and against the other power groups in the principality, creating a chance for Frederick William (the Great Elector) to exploit this opportunity. Therefore, he orchestrated the gradual removal of rights and laws that had enabled this local nobility to exercise extra-economic coercion by taxes[35].

Frederick was careful to avoid panicking the local aristocracy by ensuring their political power would not interfere with the local domain. However, with the standing army's reorganisation gradually, Frederick managed to control and intervene when necessary[36]. In these processes, local estates benefited since they lacked the consolidated political power to establish their

[34] An important point about this compromise is that it is being organised against the peasantry. Due to the agrarian roots of feudalism, the ruling class compromise primarily sought to consolidate power relations against popular movements challenging them. Furthermore, it is undeniable that these two factions of the ruling class (the *Junker*s and the Hohenzollern monarchy) struggled to control social property relations. Further, bringing in what constituted the class struggles for the period of Immanuel Kant is a question that essentially contributes to, while recasting, his political reality. Kant's political reality never became purified from the sensitive intra-ruling class conflicts.

[35] "The estates were stripped of their independent powers to set taxes and even their rights to organised opposition through the *Lantage* – the local Diet. Frederick William's decisive achievements involved securing the control over foreign policy without the consent of the estates, and maintenance of a permanent standing army" (Mooers, 1991, p. 113).

[36] The gradual takeover of Frederick is exemplified by some crucial periods of reforms as Colin Mooers summarises (Mooers, 1991, p. 114): "At the famous Recess of 1653, the estates conceded a subsidy of a half million thalers only after receiving confirmation of their seigneurial jurisdictions and immunity from taxation. In addition, the system of *Leibengenschaft* was to remain in force wherever it was customary; peasants were assumed to be *Leibeigen* serfs unless they could prove otherwise" (Anderson, 1982, p.243: Carsten, 1947, pp. 186-7). Again, in the 1660s and 1670s, concessions were made to nobility especially in areas of taxation. In 1680, the excise tax was imposed on the electoral towns while both the eastern and western nobility remained exempt" (Anderson, 1982, p.243: Carsten, 1947, p. 197: Koch, 1978, p.57).

authority. However, the reforms also undermined their territorial control in the long run, limiting their surplus extraction and triggering a micro-fiscal crisis. Since the source of revenue depended on land, although the nobility seized its chance for survival, they failed to regain their former power[37] (Anderson, 1982; Carsten, 1947; Koch, 1978).

At this point, the military's role appears to be one of the most critical determinants of extra-economic exploitation of landed property in this transformation (Mooers, 1991). As territorial warfare was the primary mechanism of feudal surplus accumulation, territorial expansion and maintenance became essential for local authorities (Anderson, 1982, Braun, 1975). However, due to the costs of military mobilisation, it was only waged by a limited number of autonomous principalities. Especially with Frederick, it is observable that the emergence of the standing army of the imperial office sat the scene for a service nobility to be born. The emergence of the standing military resulted from the attempt to merge the agenda of the local nobility and the absolutist state. Through this attempt, Frederick gradually took control of the military affairs that had been processed with agreements between local nobilities and the imperial office and established his authority over the nobility, pacifying them[38].

The birth of the service nobility was one of the most significant consequences of the state-building process in Prussia[39]. Frederick William's initial plan was to link the material interests of the nobility with the absolutist state so that the nobility would have to consider the absolutist state as inalienable. Therefore, Frederick's reforms attempted to organically link the nobility with the organs of the absolutist state. The military was the most prominent organ of the state, which could contain the nobility and, at the same time, offer the nobility a chance to be influential in territorial control and access more revenues through the newly conquered territories (Braun, 1975).

The emergence of the venal offices in Prussia integrated the local nobilities more into the centralising state since, as in the case of the standing army, the growing bureaucracy offered preferable positions for the nobles to preserve their power and influence without entering into legal and political conflicts[40].

By diversifying political power, Prussian development took a different path than France. Unlike the other states in Europe, the Prussian state carefully circulated the tax revenues from its territories[41]. Additionally, this bureaucratic efficiency prevented surplus extraction from

[37] "It is true that these measures were achieved through a series of compromises with the aristocracy, which ensured that the powers of the absolutist state stopped short outside the private estates" (Wunder, 1985, p.53)

[38] Rather than opening channels for the distribution of offices, the Prussian state promoted the military elite as the centre of privileged positions. Frederick's strategy became successful for some time since it provided the absolutist state with new revenue sources and pleased the nobility by giving them 'cuts', which granted them new privileged status in the army.

[39] The development of a service nobility, as a means of merging the material interest of the landed nobility with those of the absolutist state, was, in important respects, "the Eastern correlate of sales of office in the West" (Mooers, 1991, p.114).

[40] Promoting and distributing the venal offices was a typical feature or strategy of the absolutist state. Especially in the case of France, where the absolutist state grew nationwide, the venal offices became both the tools to integrate local aristocracy into the system and also to increase state revenues since the sale of the offices was also filling the treasury, which was nearly always in deficit due to the constant warfare of the absolutist state. In France, the venal offices were binding the private interests of the nobility and the bourgeoisie to the 'public sphere' of the state and preventing them from positioning themselves directly against the absolutist regime. In the case of Prussia, there was no large-scale sale of the venal offices in the growing bureaucracy. However, in addition to the 'compromise' between Frederick and the local nobility, venal offices still provided some additional revenue to the local nobility and served to integrate them into the absolutist state.

[41] As in the other examples in Europe, tax revenue was collected directly by people holding privileged positions. However, feudal lords did the tax collection in the Prussian state first. Later, the professionals were tasked to collect taxes so that the circulation did not benefit certain privileged groups.

becoming congested and creating indebtedness. As a result, it relieved the state and did not exert pressure on landed nobility while increasing its power against them (Braun, 1975, p.312-13).

The changing control over social property characterised the power shift that transformed the state structure. In that respect, the reign of Frederick William the Great Elector was the primary era of this transformation through political and institutional reforms[42]. Concentrating on how and why the political redefinition of control over social property relations happened is vital. While tracing the answer to these questions, the reign of Frederick needs to be examined more closely since it was the period during which state mechanisms were developed to reorganise social property relations.

Another essential process in this transformation was the Great Elector's attempt to undermine the local nobility and centralise power while reorganising the bureaucracy. His successor Frederick the I (1657-1713), continued his father's way of reforming the state in the same direction[43].

The administrative reforms also allowed Frederick to manage appointment processes to restrict and curtail the local nobility's ability to reach the state's offices[44]. During these reforms to 'professionalise' the bureaucracy, *Rekrutenkasse*, a financial contribution for prospective officeholders, was introduced to increase recruitment levels in the army[45] (Mooers, 1991, p. 117). Professionalisation in this context also meant the privatisation of the offices to decrease the remaining influence of the nobler rank and privilege. Mooers refers to these 'career paths' as Frederick's administration's attempt to reformulate the requirements of holding property and surplus extracting mechanisms.

> Centralisation of extra-economic power and the opening-up of bureaucratic office to wider layers of society were two sides of the same coin; as the state secured for itself the undisputed right to extract surplus from the direct producers, it also sanctioned on an ever-widening scale, the private

[42] Frederick William's last period can be considered the period when most institutional rearrangements were organised. Besides the standing army's new position and the military elite's promotion, the General War Commissariat (*General Krieg Kommissariat*) introduced itself as a new council to organise state-society relations with new military imperatives (Mooers, 1991, p. 116). As the surplus extraction still relied on territorial control of tax revenues, *Krieg Kommissariat* was naturally involved in maintaining taxation. It eventually became the institution that planned and controlled the production strategy and immigration policies. Although it was a military council, *General Krieg Kommissariat* "took control of the guild system, set up naval and colonial enterprises and supervised trade and manufactures" (Mooers, 1991, p. 116). For Carsten, *General Krieg Kommissariat* gradually gained a new position of becoming "the central authority directly under the ruler" (Carsten, 1947, p. 263). By becoming one of the foundational institutions of absolutism, the *Kommissariat* was also given the task of safeguarding the state and the reforms against any attempts from below.

[43] During this process, the Huguenot refugees provided a qualified officer reserve for both bureaucracy and the military, and Frederick substituted them for the local aristocracies while designing the offices. This process also included a period of title creation since the original Huguenot elite needed to be legitimised. By counterbalancing their authority inside the bureaucracy and military, Frederick the I targeted the institutions of the local nobilities. The *Regierungen* (supreme law courts) mainly exercised regional jurisdictional powers, which were also considered the stronghold of the *Junkers*' remaining power that constituted *Ständestaat* (noble estates power). The operation required the challenge of the existing system of exercising jurisdictional powers, so Frederick the I introduced supreme appeal courts that took the cases from local courts.

[44] Although it happened mainly in the legal dimension, this transition to the emerging public law meant a new constitution of legal control over the surplus extracting mechanisms in accordance with the absolutist restructuring of the political regime. Moreover, these administrative reforms guided economic activities under new institutions, with agendas to develop 'economic statism' and 'fiscal centralism' (Mooers, 1991, p. 117).

[45] The continuing battle for dominance between the system of private law so dear to the nobility and the rise of public law under the tutelage of the absolutist state was an indication of the growing competition between two rival centres of political power. (Rosenberg, 1966, p. 47)

> appropriation of these surpluses albeit through the exercise of 'public office'. (Mooers, 1991, p. 118)

The rising absolutist administration relied on the development of the bureaucracy and military to counterbalance the established hegemony of local nobilities. Using the weakened status of local authorities, Frederick's administration[46] introduced waves of administrative and economic reforms to reorganise the Prussian state and gradually curtail local nobilities' privileges. Frederick was trying to avoid the over-promotion of bureaucracy that could make this class influential in the Crown. Since bureaucracy was reformed to counterbalance nobility, the Frederick administration protected bureaucracy's influence by legally linking the recruitment of bureaucratic elites to the aristocracy and educated middle classes[47]. This ensured there would be a rivalry between the nobility and middle-class professionals inside the bureaucracy. Although planned as a security tactic, this rivalry became crucial in determining the fate of Prussian absolutism. At the same time, the bureaucracy became the class-like part of the state structure controlling social property relations.

To decode the social context of Immanuel Kant, the conflict inside the bureaucracy is a vital issue regarding Kant's original position as a public servant. The following section discusses how such rivalry prevailed in the state-building process of Prussia. There is no doubt that this rivalry resulted in an intellectual output that formed the basis of the German liberal reformism that emerged during the time of Kant, and which was able to problematise global issues such as the spread of the Enlightenment and the early years of the French Revolution in 1789.

1.3.3.2 Professionalism & Reform in the Emergence of Bureaucratic Absolutism

The Hohenzollern Consolidation established a ground for Prussian state-building against the traditional feudal polity. Rather than direct conformation, the Hohenzollern's strategy was to introduce reforms and compromises with the *Junker* aristocracy. Parallel to this strategy, the Hohenzollern's managed to institutionalise their absolutist state through a series of reforms and the creation of a bureaucracy. This structure later became visible as an absolutist bureaucracy which gradually disassociated itself from the influence of local nobilities.

The reign of Frederick the II, the last reformist Frederickian president of the four, represents the period when the 'compromise' between the monarchy and local nobility began to shift in favour of the absolutist state. Frederick the II (or Great)'s administration was largely aware of the necessity for the absolutist state to continue its centralisation project with territorial expansion. The feudal powers that provided the absolutist state with financial and political advantages, or power, rested mainly on expanding the 'compromise'. Especially after Frederick William's reforms, local nobilities were completely integrated into the absolutist state and were supplying the state with service in the military and the bureaucracy. However, they were still highly organised locally and had legal and political power over the producer classes. Frederick the II's main strategy evolved towards undermining and eliminating the control of the local

[46] Frederick William (Great Elector), Frederick the I, Frederick William the I, and Frederick the II (Great) are four reformist administrations in the 17th and 18th centuries Prussia.

[47] The middle classes in this historical context refer to the emerging professionals who were subjected to the modernised technique-based education in academies and courts, usually located in the towns and cities, largely in relation to being, or coming from, the ex-low ranked imperial or local public servants. By taking the name *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle/bureaucratic class) from the mid-eighteenth century, the middle classes expanded and diversified into several groups in the military and bureaucracy, pioneering the Prussian Enlightenment in later periods. In this transformation, the reforms in administrative structure, namely the establishment of modern universities, academies and public schools, the relative freedom of the press, and the expanding intellectual circulation of knowledge, played an essential role, and characterise the foundational properties of the Prussian Enlightenment.

nobilities over the producer peasantry so that the absolutist state could establish full control at the local levels.

Due to the local nobility's legal and political power, the absolutist state could not enforce this. Consequently, the absolutist government strengthened the peasantry to pressure the local nobilities from below and strengthened the bureaucracy to replace the local nobilities in the venal offices to pressure them from above. Frederick II accomplished this by introducing agrarian, legal, and administrative reforms that substantially reduced local power and centralised, professionalised, and impersonalised the state apparatus by the end of his reign. Frederick II's reforms to undermine the local nobilities can be categorised under three main areas: agrarian reforms to strengthen the peasantry, legal reforms to restrict the local nobilities, and administrative reforms to increase the reach of the absolutist state (Johnson, 1975).

Frederick II's reforms targeted four main goals. Firstly, to legally limit the control of local nobilities on their estates; secondly, to cut their financial revenues; thirdly, to revoke their privileges; and, independent from these three, to introduce the agrarian capitalist model to reform the productive capacity of the agricultural sector. The Frederickian administration began by reintroducing the *General Hufenschoss* (Land Tax) to subject the local nobility to taxes as were the peasantry. This way, the legal protection on the local nobilities was removed if they did not pay their taxes.

Frederick the II's reforms first targeted the local nobility's privileges in the rising bureaucracy. By adopting the approach of professionalisation, the administrative reforms aimed to reduce the titles given to the privileged from birth and promote merit. This gave the non-noble bureaucrats a chance to rise to the ranks they deserved[48] (Rosenberg, 1966).

Due to the administrative reforms brought into the bureaucracy, the distinction between nobles and the *Bürgertum* began to blur. In an era when the nobility was increasingly impoverished, state service was a useful means of surviving economically. There was no doubt that it was the *Bürgertum*[49] that was able to achieve economic and social advancement through this system (Behrens, 1985, p.64).

The *Bürgertum*, which was traditionally composed of civilians in the urban parts of German-speaking Europe, found, with these administrative reforms in the professionalising bureaucracy, a chance to pursue its material interests without significant discrimination based on their non-noble origins[50].

[48] "Bureaucrats were selected from the highest bourgeois and noble groups but not often from the penurious aristocracy or the petty bourgeoisie. Peasants found their way into the civil service at the lowest level through intermediate service in the army" (Johnson, 1975, p. 256).

[49] *Bürgertum* status needs to be clarified here. *Bürgertum* corresponds to the class of bourgeoisie in normative terms. This is due to the mainstream literature expanding on the bourgeoisie as the founding class of the modern political order (Modernisation Theory) (Moore, 1967). Unlike in other historical contexts like England, the *Bürgertum* in the German-speaking world did not find a suitable ground to manage purely economic activities to accumulate capital. As there was no agrarian capitalism, or industrialisation yet, the bourgeoisie in the German context refers more to the urban classes than the traders, merchants or agrarian capitalists in France and England.

[50] "By the virtue of their offices, they had become, along with their noble associates, part of an apparatus which repaid their services and revenues gained by increasing independent forms of surplus extraction and plunder. In short, it was not so much the social origins of the civil servants which determined the nature of the state; rather, it was the role played by the state in the relations of production which determined the character of state bureaucracy" (Mooers, 1991, p.122)

To reduce the number of nobles in the legal service, the reforms preconditioned recruiting members of the legal bureaucracy to professional competence[51]. Therefore, the legal bureaucracy got opened to non-nobles as well. The reforms in the legal bureaucracy were finalised only at the end of Frederick the II's reign in 1791 with the *Allgemeine Landrecht* (General Common Law).

These Frederickian reforms successfully promoted a new bureaucracy that balanced the nobility-dominated civil servants. However, the Frederickian administration was cautious while introducing these reforms and always felt some reservations about bureaucracy becoming too powerful to influence the centralised exercise of power. Therefore, some other reforms were implemented in favour of the local nobilities to counterweight the growing bureaucracy[52]. Through these administrative reforms, Frederick the II ensured that the compromise between the absolutist state and the local nobilities continued. By introducing legal and administrative reforms, Frederick the II ensured that the absolutist state undermined the remaining power of the local nobilities without creating an internal conflict. His reforms aimed to replace the privileged nobility in the bureaucracy to create pressure from the above, and by strengthening the peasantry, the agrarian reforms aimed to pressure the local nobilities from below.

By the end of Frederick the II's reign, Prussian absolutism was more successfully centralised than in earlier periods, with a strong bureaucratic system, a powerful military, and no fiscal deficits. However, the long downturn of feudalism was still going on in the last period of the eighteenth century, generating social and political disunity and destabilisation. In Prussia, these conflicts progressed through the conflict between the local aristocracy and the centralising absolutist state. Frederick the II's success was due to establishing a significant dominance in the local estates with legal, agrarian, and administrative reforms. Meanwhile, these reforms were reinforced by a series of educational, cultural, linguistic, and literary reforms that allowed the flourishment of the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). At the same time, Frederick the II tried to ensure these new influences would not infiltrate the state bureaucracy and corrupt the bureaucratic class converting them to republican revolutionaries (like in France). In this last goal, Frederick could not completely ensure the bureaucratic classes remained loyal.

The growing bureaucracy in Prussia became a powerful class after Frederick's reforms. This bureaucratic class, however, did not remain united for long. The tension between local and absolutist poles within the Prussian context also reflected itself in the bureaucracy. Given the service nobility still present in the bureaucracy, it is no surprise that the *Bildungsbürgertum* became politicised and divided into three major camps. Those who appreciated the absolutist state and its centralisation doctrines devoted themselves to absolutism-paternalism. Against the absolutist project, the defenders of the princely powers and local autonomous pluralism camped with the traditional feudal polity. Those who opposed the full control of absolutism adopted a more pluralistic view, composing the German Liberals, who prioritised reforming the state with the Enlightenment ideals and ensuring the pluralist political structure in Prussia was preserved.

It is important in this stage to examine what these reforms accomplished to establish the Prussian bureaucratic absolutism by the end of the century. In this way, it would be feasible to

[51] The administrative reforms in the bureaucracy were further supported with new recruitment criteria based on compulsory examinations (Hubatsch, 1915). Therefore, the attempts to infiltrate the absolutist state through clientelism were prevented.

[52] Firstly, the *Landrat* (local assembly) and the *Steurrat* (city councils), which became ineffective with the earlier reforms, were recapitalised, and strengthened with a legal reform allowing local notables to elect their candidates. Secondly, the absolutist office established *Regie* as a counterweight fiscal authority to check and balance the central state, mainly the bureaucracy. *Regie* was a consortium of French tax officials who audited the central government financially (Hubatsch, 1915).

analyse the social and material conditions that shaped the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the class of which Immanuel Kant was the unique intellectual.

1.3.3.3 Cameralism and Paternalism

The emergence of the absolutist project under the Hohenzollern Consolidation in Prussia required a legal and political foundation to establish its legitimacy and undermine the hegemony of the traditional order. To achieve this, a new approach was required that could justify the central bureaucratic structure of the Hohenzollerns. This is where cameralist and paternalist doctrines came into play, serving as the philosophical and legal foundation for the absolutist project and the central state administration that underpinned it.

The cameralist-paternalist doctrines ushered in an eclectic political philosophy that defied conventional idealism, instead amalgamating rationalism, and German idealism. This fusion of ideas served to legitimise the central state administration and the bureaucratic structures that flourished during the era of absolutism. Simultaneously, these doctrines became a contentious focal point within the intellectual debates of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The paternalist state doctrines underscored the state's responsibility for providing welfare and happiness, portraying it as an active participant in ensuring the security of its populace. Furthermore, by advocating for an impersonal state concept while concealing the absolutist administration, these doctrines challenged the aristocratic standing of the traditional nobility within the state. Consequently, they ignited vigorous intellectual debates, pitting defenders of the traditional feudal order against the emerging bureaucratic classes. For instance, Immanuel Kant regarded these doctrines as impediments hindering German philosophy's ability to address the profound philosophical questions posed by the Enlightenment, republicanism, bureaucratic reform, and the structure of the Prussian *Ständestaat*. To fully understand the constitution of these doctrines and their significance, it is important to unpack their proposals and analyse the main arguments and thinkers behind them.

After the *Thirty Years' War*, Cameralism emerged as "a science of organising the body politic to restore the agricultural base in the wake of massive depopulation and physical destruction" (Shilliam, 2009, p. 65). By many of the disseminators of this thought, Cameralism was considered "a rational science of public administration, which shared much with earlier police regulation, as well as western European mercantilism including a strong dose of Christian

morality”[53][54](Wilson, 2004, p. 268). Cameralism is a vital element of the Prussian Enlightenment both because of the role of the disseminators of this thought in the application and realisation of the Enlightenment principles and because of its unique role inside state affairs, especially in the processes of agricultural reforms and bureaucratic management according to rationalist ideas[55][56]. Cameralism also shaped the thought of many participants in

[53] Another significant reason for the birth of Cameralism as a predominant mode of thought were new conceptions of market relations. Under the rising capitalism in Britain, the French physiocrats first examined the British economic model of development closely. However, physiocrats failed to understand capitalist relations' central dynamics and only focused on technological developments in agriculture and revenue extraction. Physiocrats mainly considered capitalism as a product of technological reforms and innovations. On the contrary, the technological developments and innovations to increase productivity were outputs or products of the developing capitalist relations, which had started much earlier than they traced. It was uniquely “the separation of the economic and the political” that shaped the image of the successful development under these new economic relations (Wood, 1991). Institutionalised corporations, entrepreneurs, and firms in this regard were products of the new dimensions within which market relations were developed. Moreover, this new managerial superstructure of market relations was established around new conceptions of revenue that involved a new understanding of commodification. Commodification in the new market relations transformed the traditional reality of goods and services and re-conceptualised them to market relations. Cameralism aimed to carry the advanced managerial techniques and practices of early capitalist market relations to the German context with a more comprehensive understanding. Cameralists tried to organise these techniques and practices inside the state’s fiscal and administrative bodies to bring in modern methods of revenue extraction. Politically, the Cameralist attempt corresponded with the new era in which princely control over revenues was replaced with control by the bureaucratic-military elite of this consolidated agrarian-military complex. However, due to their relatively advanced effort to modernise the state apparatus, Cameralism could not reset capitalist market relations to the German context. Instead, it remained successful in bringing in a more developed understanding to manage fiscal control of the state on its revenues while impersonalising the administrative bodies from their traditional noble structure.

[54] Roscher’s interpretation considers Cameralism as a German version of mercantilism while attracting attention to the managerial techniques that the Cameralists adopted from the study of the British political economy. The literature on Cameralism after Roscher’s argumentation continues to be dynamic. Some considered Cameralists as political scientists rather than economists (Small, 1909), refuting the argumentation of Roscher. Some evaluated the origins of their academic backgrounds and their offices in the state apparatus (with a definite distinction of Cameralists from simple ordinary bureaucrats), emphasising that their emergence had happened during the “scientific revolution of the Enlightenment” (Zielenziger, 1914). The later works support the arguments on their distinctness from economists and ordinary bureaucrats and draw attention to the precise role of their expertise and how their expertise was a part of the attempt to professionalise the bureaucracy (Gagliardo, 1991, p. 117-118).
“Cameralism was also somewhat different from mercantilism elsewhere because it was less a policy than an increasingly organised and refined body of specialised knowledge – at once “a learned and practical science” (Gagliardo, 1991, pp, 117).

[55] The origins of this thought are rooted earlier in the transformation of ‘traditional police regulation’ (*Polizeiwissenschaft*) to a new cameral science (*Kameralwissenschaft*). Police regulation or police science was “largely restricted to the principles and practices of maintaining law and social order” (Gagliardo, 1991, pp. 114-5). Its primary purpose was to secure the order and social discipline of the modernising society. From infrastructural investments to the preservation of public health, police science played an essential role in the 17th century. Therefore, the transformation of police science to Cameral Science was related to the emerging absolutism, which intended to centralise and increase social discipline. Secondly, since the rise of absolutism and the arrival of Enlightenment principles in German lands overlapped, the new thought formed a practical doctrine composed of economic theories, administrative practices, expertise in various public roles, and resource management. As Gagliardo defines: “Cameral science, while continuing to incorporate aspects of both old and new police theory, added to it both economic theory and a great deal of expertise in administrative practice and resource management, which eventuated in an enormous corpus of suggestions and recommendations designed to increase the overall wealth and prosperity of princely territory” (Gagliardo, 1991, p. 115).

[56] Although its name is rooted in the earlier institution of the *Kammer* (Chamber), which organised the princely administration of the local authority, the role Cameralism played in the 18th century was significant, and it distinguished the mentality of management and administration for the households (Gagliardo, 1991, p. 115). The transformation of the understanding of revenue in the Prussian state-building process significantly impacted the development of Cameralist thought. The emergence of absolutism and the reconstruction of the state apparatus in German lands mostly prevailed in the Prussian state-building processes, mainly promoting a bureaucratic class to counterweight the diminishing hegemony of the local and upper nobilities. These processes were based on the

the Prussian Enlightenment due to the natural relationship intellectuals had with the state apparatus.

Paternalism emerged as another doctrine that intended to formulate the response of the absolutist project to the crisis of feudalism. Historically, Paternalism was defined as the principle of the ruler being responsible for the welfare, religion, and morality of the rest of his people and that he, and not the people, make decisions about the proper way to promote such welfare, religion, and morality (Thornhill, 2007; Walker, 1978). In accordance with the paternalist tradition, the right of the prince to rule does not have supremacy in the sense that he will always have to obey the laws of nature, which are God's purpose in placing him on the throne in the first place. A more interesting aspect is that, despite the fact that Paternalism was originally developed to consolidate the state under a rightful ruler (by establishing absolutism based on certain lawful principles) and became associated with the idea of mini-absolutism of princely powers, it became an important inspiration for absolutist thinkers in the late eighteenth century who reinterpreted it to justify a state of absolutism in Prussia against princely powers (Blanning, 1990; Melton, 1985; Zurbuchen, 2007).

This doctrine was legitimized by V L von Seckendorff in his *Teutscher Fürstenstat* (1656), providing a great deal of inspiration to princely state rulers. In later generations, it was incorporated into the writings of the Wolffian school, the political tracts of Friedrich II, and the works of the Vienna cameralists Johann Justi and Josef Sonnenfels. In their view, the state exists solely to ensure the greatest happiness for all its subjects in every station. Besides the material well-being of the people, the state is also responsible for their spiritual well-being. Besides regulating industry and trade, regulating prices, and increasing population, it also should have the authority to provide public education, censor the press, and punish atheists and immoralists.

Paternalism, from the very start, absorbed the humanitarian and philanthropist tendencies in the development of absolutist rule in Frederick's era (Zurbuchen, 2007). Centring the welfare of the people at the top of their agenda, the paternalists pursued the happiness of the community without getting too radical to limit their own interests in the fiscal structure of the state: "after all, they were salaried servants of the state, whether as officials and administrators or as professors… The ability of paternalism to provide fiscal and human resources to power the *Ständestaat* in a hostile geopolitical milieu was tested in *the Seven Years War"* (Shilliam, 2009, p. 65). As the achievements of the *Seven Years' War* for Prussia did not ease the geo-political tensions, primary requirements for the strategic management of state affairs gained importance, resulting in the need to improve the qualities of the Cameralist-paternalist bureaucratic elite[57].

modernisation and impersonalisation of the surplus extraction mechanism that regulates revenues (Gerstenberger, 2007). Based on agriculture, the economy of German lands was regulated by taxation. As the Prussian development project included increasing state revenues and defining them under state control, a reconceptualisation of the legitimate sovereignty of the revenue needed to be inserted. This constructive process was the primary determinant in making Cameralism a science and an approach.

[57] The official establishment of the Cameralist offices inside the bureaucracy happened during the reign of Frederick William I. It was in the universities of Halle and Frankfurt in 1727 where chairs of Cameralist studies were first appointed. After this, in almost every university in German lands, Cameralism became a field of study under the coordination of an academic chair. There were Cameralists (like J. B. von Rohr, J. C. Dithmar, G. h. Zincke and J. H. H. von Justi) who travelled across German lands and played essential roles in introducing this discipline to other regions such as Austria, Mansfeld, Saxony, Hanover, and even to Scandinavian regions like Denmark. Their influence was crucial since it presented German lands as more or less a standardised form of discipline. It is no coincidence that Cameralism was later adopted in the modern state-building processes of Sweden (Zurbuchen, 2007).

The first generation of thinkers, such as Johann Joachim Becher (1625-82) and Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626-92), considered the state in terms of its traditional unity; as a body of political, social, and economic dimensions. The conjuncture of the *Thirty Years' War* period was essentially determining these approaches to define the state. In this regard, primarily, the first generation was oriented from classical police science and took the Old Testament to shape the moral discourse of their operating principles (Gagliardo, 1991, p.116).

In works the *German Princely State* (1655) and the *Christian State* (1685), Seckendorff refers to the insights of the prince's dependence on Old Testament precepts and how he "should conduct his government as a firm but loving patriarch to whom power had been entrusted by God for the welfare of his people" (Gagliardo, 1991, p. 116). The paternal origins of the traditional understanding of the state are also mentioned in the works of early Cameralists-paternalists, which especially refer to *Landesvater* (father of the country). This gives a clue about how influential and definitive paternalism is in the political discourse of state theory. Seckerdoff's ambition to promote the princely powers did not reflect the main purpose of the Cameralist-paternalists in the following generation, as the eighteenth-century Cameralist-paternalists supported the absolutist project instead of the princely powers (Wakefield, 2005). Nevertheless, Seckerdoff's attempts grounded a state theory that Cameralist-paternalists who sided with the absolutist project used very effectively[5859].

The political theory of Cameralism-paternalism with regard to absolutism was not suggesting the transfer of unrestricted power; rather, it was trying to conceptualise power with certain limitations so that the absolutist attempt could gain a legitimate ground in the eyes of princely powers and become distinct from pure despotism. To put it philosophically, Cameralist-paternalist thinkers like Justi and Schlözer concentrated on the idea of a mixed constitution once again, but this time by focusing on the positive law.

The political theory of absolutist Prussia was strongly provided by Cameralist thinking and paternalism, which presented together a new state theory. However, it was only through the

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Cameralism represents a new stage in a long, if somewhat erratic, attempt on the part of the more serious-minded princes to inject more competence into the administration of their territories. (Gagliardo, 1991, p. 118).
In general, the emergence of Cameralism professionalised and impersonalised the administrative bodies with new institutional arrangements and a change of administrative mentalities. The perpetual legacy of Cameralism in the Prussian-state building process was about the limitations it provided to balance the absolutist state. Because of the state-oriented welfare mentality of Cameralism, the rising absolutism in Prussia never found an utterly legitimate ground to exercise its rule despotically.

[58] Before the official establishment inside the state, Cameralism had been influential for some authors on state theory from different fields of science. It included about a dozen authors, and centred around a small group of classic texts, which always included such mainstays as Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff's '*Teutscher Fursten Stat*', Johann Joachim Becher's '*Politische Discurs'*, Wilhelm von Schröder's '*Furstliche Schatz- und Rent- ¨Kammer',* Johann von Justi's '*Staatswirthschaft and Grundsatze der Policeywissenschaft'*, and Joseph von Sonnenfels' '*Grundsatze der Policey, Handlung und Finanz'*. (Wakefield, 2005, p.315)

[59] As one of the most definitive works on Cameralism, Andre Wakefield's *Books, Bureaus, and the Historiography of Cameralism* (2005) locates the significant characteristics of this thought in its historical context. According to Wakefield, what made Cameralism so crucial was its spread towards the administrative class for the Prussian Enlightenment and state-building. It became the central concept that defined the mindset of German bureaucracy. Wakefield mentions Wilhelm Roscher's *Geschicte der National-Oekonomik in Deutschland* (1874) as one of the major works that influenced later studies of Cameralism. Roscher explains the transformation of Cameralism and the administrative classes on the emergence of mercantilist thinking. Drawing on Adam Smith, he outlined a series of "over-valuations (*Uberschatzungen*)" held by mercantilists. These included over-valuations of population, population density, quantity of money, foreign trade, manufacture, and state activity (Roscher, 1874). Roscher's narrative, a triumphal account of German economics for an age of proud nationalism, showed how the "police cameralist age of German national economics" had made way for the "scientific age of German *Nationalokonomie*. (Wakefield, 2005, p. 313).

continuing philosophical discussions on natural law that the new state theory was grounded. There was a continual debate about natural law during the absolutist state-building process of Prussia, which served to inspire absolutist theories. As absolutist theories emerged, there was a vigorous philosophical debate about the universal legal sources of government. As a continuation and extension of Leibniz's rational metaphysics of the legal state (Leibniz, 1969) and his partial revival of Thomism, Christian Wolff's (1679-1754) political works advanced and elaborated some of these elements.

Wolff contextualised natural law principles by relating them to universal harmony. According to him, the upholding of common security and welfare constitutes the most basic ethical principle of human action (Wolff, 1720, *VRW*, 632). He argued that every human action could be measured according to the degree to which it maintains the welfare of the people. For Wolff, authority "cannot command" actions that violate natural law. Therefore, political order requires compliance with natural law[60].

Although Wolff mainly remained close to Leibniz's account, his political theory also contained voluntaristic state theories. In Wolff's view, the legitimate state is a state of the law with a will that is committed to fostering social perfection as an overarching goal. Nevertheless, he believed a state compliant with natural law has authority over every area of law; like Pufendorf, he described specific laws as orders by a superior and attributed great power to the princely powers. The sovereign legislator, who is uniquely empowered to interpret and apply laws within the constraints of natural law, can only deduce and enforce valid law by a positive "will of a rational being", and this will only exist when the law is valid.

Unlike Leibniz (Leibniz, 1969), Wolff accepted the concept of absolute political majesty; that the princes possessed unrestricted powers for promoting the public good and security. While Wolff was enthusiastic about absolutism, he also saw non-compliance with the law as acceptable when princes promulgate laws that are contrary to natural law because of the universal nature of his concept of the legal order (*VRW*, 420, 427, 430). Furthermore, he asserted that princes themselves are bound by fundamental laws of the state, which are derived from covenants which define governmental forms[61].

After his *German Metaphysics*, he developed this effort in his *German Politics*[62] (1721). To formulate the rightful universal exercise of civil sovereignty, Wolff developed two main arguments. Firstly, he argued that the state reflects transcendent concepts and only with metaphysics could they be understood and perceived (*VRW*, 529–41). Secondly, the ruler must be rational and purified from his interests and desires so that the 'metaphysical sage' could guide him in his political reign (*VRW*, 633–43).

[60] In addition, he followed Leibniz's viewpoint that God's reason is more important than God's freedom, and he claimed natural law best represents God's own law and does not originate from God's will. By repeating this claim, Wolff replicated Leibnizian claims that all wills, including God's, are performed, and determined by a juridical order in the world. It is, therefore, necessary for the most virtuous states to be orderly, Wolff concluded, because natural laws reflect the universe's underlying order and perfection. It is essential that they are states in which subjects' interests are balanced against those of the regents' interests and in which power and obedience form a legally cohesive and orderly whole, with each having its own grounds and justifications.

[61] Wolff also conceded that rationally necessary law always predominates over positive law. Nevertheless, the ideal and legitimate state is a state rooted in the pursuit of order and perfectibility, combining positive and natural law. Subjects have no liberty outside the state in the case where the state acquires this property, and they have no claim to any liberty that would transgress positive law. By adhering to the law, they are able to express their freedom.

[62] *Vernünftige Gedanken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen und insonderheit dem gemeinen Wesen* (*Rational Thoughts on the Social Life of Man and in particular the Republic*, 1720).

Throughout his political theory, Christian Wolff pioneered a transition from the *Früh Aufklärung* (Early Enlightenment) to *Hoch Aufklärung* (High Enlightenment). Wolff's political thought presented a mixed political order where princely powers are sourced through covenants with the central authorities, they are balanced, and this prevented the establishment of mini-absolutisms for princely powers. As Wolff employed both voluntarist and anti-voluntarist approaches, his thought offered a state theory in which the state is projected as an instrument to serve the people. Its main mission is to provide happiness and welfare to society, but this is predicated upon people's full devotion to the state and society.

Wolff presented a paternal state which is compatible with Frederick the II's absolutist project, but it is important to distinguish Wolff from other thinkers since he is not fully committed to absolutism (Thornhill, 2007). With his state theory, Christian Wolff became a figure who inspired Cameralists-paternalists like Justi and Schlözer and can be considered an eclectic political thinker. Although he presents a paternalistic state theory for society, he locates absolute power inside certain limits, sourced by universal rational principles. Hence, his ideas were useful for both the absolutist political theory of Prussia, especially Cameralists-paternalists who reinterpreted French absolutism with the mixed constitution concept, and for liberal thinkers of *Bildungsbürgertum* because the mixed constitution can be interpreted as a means of limiting absolute authority[63].

Final contributions to the making of the Cameralist-paternalists' response to the crisis of feudalism came in the late 1780s and 1790s. A revival of Epicurean ideas of governance was achieved by J. Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717-1771), who argued that the 'final purpose' of government is to ensure 'common happiness' within society. According to Justi, laws should reflect and promote this goal to the greatest degree possible. It was Justi's belief that the constitution should be based on a mixed theory of government centred around a royal executive (Justi, 1760, 17). In addition, he argued that the origin of states is not the will of a sovereign but rather the 'unity of many wills', and the underlying unity of wills expresses itself in the 'basic laws' that form the customary form of states. These laws bind the regent of the state, who may not place his own personal will ahead of the laws which represent and transmit the 'will of the state'.

During his political writings, Justi stressed the importance of a moderate government that recognised private property's inviolability if a country was to succeed economically and commercially. Despotism, on the other hand, necessarily weakens military and economic power. Justi discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of government extensively and argued that the only political form that could coordinate and implement wide-ranging economic reforms was a modernised monarchical regime (Justi, 1760, 47).

He was followed by the anthropologist August Ludwig Schlözer (1735-1809), who offered a more literal explanation of government. According to this account, political absolutism is characterised by the abuse of privileges; it argues that legitimate government is based on the legal limits of power; and it asserts that states are responsible for respecting social rights from the natural or meta-political dispositions of individuals (Schlözer, 1793).

[63] Wolff influenced Kant directly in two ways. Firstly, his projection of the state as an instrument of power which cannot act without regard to rational-universal principles became ground-breaking for Kant. For Kant, Wolff's legal framework was highly useful in configuring the relationship between states. Also, Wolff's consideration of individuals as legal autonomous beings under a positive law is influential for Kant in his making of transcendental idealism. However, at the same time, Wolff's presentation of the state's mission to provide welfare and happiness is not acceptable for Kant as this property transforms the state into a paternal source of oppression.

It was Cameralist-paternalist thinkers who attempted to envision absolute power within a mixed constitution that included some early liberal elements in Europe in the Prussian state system. As a result of Enlightenment ideas spreading in Europe, this can be considered a reflection of their influence. Even though the Prussian absolutist project had never looked to restructure Germany through Enlightenment ideas, certain ideas were incorporated even within the absolutist political theory through the influence of the rising *Bildungsbürger* class. The *Bildungsbürgertum*, which is discussed in the following sections in detail, became the carriers of these ideas in the political stakes of the Prussian context.

Frederick the Great's last period can be characterised by the reorganisation of the state under a balanced equation, in which traditional landowner classes (*Junker*) were able to counter-balance upper nobility in the state apparatus through the control of revenue collection mechanisms to overcome the *Gutsherrschaf*t crisis (Richards, 1979). In parallel with that, the absolutist administration reorganised the fragmented jurisdictions to legitimise the control it had allowed these estates. Cameralism-paternalism played an important role here in managing these sensitive balances. However, the inescapable paradox of Prussia (which was it is still strongly dependent on the traditional economic activities of agriculture on land while restructuring the state along modern patterns) prevented Cameralists-paternalists from overcoming the feudal crisis with their policies and influence in decision-making. The limitations of the Cameralists-paternalists restricted their rational solutions[64][65].

The emergence of Cameralist and paternalist doctrines in the context of the long feudal crisis in German-speaking Europe represented a sophisticated response to some of the most pressing questions of the time. These doctrines aimed to provide a philosophical and legal foundation for the emerging central bureaucratic structures of the Hohenzollerns, which sought to consolidate German-speaking Europe and reconstitute the relationship between individual human subjects, society, and the state[66].In this regard, the Cameralist-paternalist response was the second response to the crisis; characterised by the paternalist state doctrine, which posited the absolutist state as a paternal provider of its citizens' needs. This paternalist approach served to legitimise the central state administration and bureaucratic structures that emerged under absolutism, providing a justification for the concentration of power and the suppression of aristocratic influence.

[64] Regarding these requirements, the Frederick administration found some relief in suspending the power of mediatory corporate bodies and re-personalising the cabinet in accordance with the king's personality.

[65] In his last period, the execution of political authority through the *Staatsrat* became a chaotic mix of regional and functional principles. Crucially, to compensate for this chaos, Frederick concentrated executive political authority more and more into his own person, assigning special tasks to ministers regardless of their regional status in the General Directory (Shilliam, 2009, p. 67).

[66] The relationship between the *Bildungsbürgertum*, *Cameralism*, and paternalism needs to be identified here. On the one hand, the *Bildungsbürgertum* represents the general name of the class of the rising educated *Bürger* class who usually located themselves in positions in the state apparatus. On the other hand, Cameralism-paternalism represents a certain tradition inside the bureaucracy of Prussia, which aimed to reform bodies of the state with scientific techniques and increase productivity, rationalise state structure, and professionalise the public service. Cameralists-paternalists usually have educated and professional backgrounds and became members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. However, it is hard to say that the Cameralist-paternalist tradition entirely dominated the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Rather, Cameralism-paternalism represented only one of the traditions in the *Bildungsbürgertum* and contributed to its vision of reforming the state and the bureaucracy. However, especially in the 1790s, the relationship between Cameralist thinkers and the ideas of paternalism transformed. 1790's Cameralist political thinkers of the *Bildungsbürgertum* were centring paternalist doctrines much more than before. Therefore, although it is observable that Cameralist participants of the *Bildungsbürgertum* still became influential, they did not define the entire class.

1.3.4. Response of Liberal Reformism to the Crisis of Feudalism: the *Bildungsbürgertum* & the Question of *Aufklärung*

The absolutist project's response to the crisis of feudalism in the German context was a pivotal moment in Prussian state-building. This transformative process ushered in a new institutional framework designed to centralise and consolidate all aspects of the feudal order under a single, powerful state apparatus. The bureaucratic absolutism of Prussia represented a departure from the traditional feudal system, which was largely predicated on preserving the power of the *Junker*s and local aristocracies. In order to build its strong central state, the Prussian administration needed to weaken these entrenched power structures.

The absolutist project had advanced considerably towards the establishment of a central state by the time of Frederick the II, but it still had a long way to go before it was fully dominant. The process of centralising the state apparatus required the creation of new institutions and the introduction of reforms that transferred power from the traditional elites to non-noble individuals. The new bureaucratic structure was composed of both *Bürgertum* and low-rank nobility and was identified as a central apparatus against local and noble institutions. Historically, *Bürgertum* had been largely excluded from political decision-making in Prussia and other German provinces. However, the invitation to join the civil service as non-noble public servants was a strategic move by the Prussian state to replace the traditional nobility, who held critical venal offices that provided material revenues and legal powers such as tax collection.

The emerging bureaucratic class was largely educated, and their appointment to professional positions set them apart from the aristocrats, who inherited their positions based on ancestral connections or feudal power relations. While the newly emerging bureaucratic absolutism offered many opportunities for *Bürgertum* to rise to top positions, the Prussian absolutist monarchy demanded their unwavering loyalty.

Frederick II's reign in Prussia was marked by the concept of 'Enlightenment absolutism" or "Enlightenment despotism', through which he implemented a series of progressive reforms that aimed to modernise Prussia, consolidate German-hood, and promote intellectual activity. One of his seminal initiatives was the introduction of Prussian Tolerance, a political project aimed at fostering religious and cultural diversity. This was a significant deviation from prevailing practices of the era, where religious differences frequently led to persecution and exclusion. Prussian Tolerance allowed for the safeguarding of the *Aufklärer* or enlightened thinkers from censorship and oppression by traditional institutions, creating an environment conducive to intellectual activity. It also helped to establish Reformation culture in Prussia, a significant cultural and political force at the time (Parente, 1991). By promoting religious and cultural diversity, Frederick fostered an environment where different ideas and beliefs could coexist and flourish, contributing to a sense of national identity and cultural unity vital to the consolidation of German-hood in Prussia. Prussian Tolerance was a defining feature of Frederick II's reign, shaping the political, cultural, and intellectual landscape of Prussia.

In conjunction with Frederickian reforms, the bureaucratic class was sharpened against the traditional aristocracy. The Frederickian administration empowered the bureaucracy to counterbalance the power of the aristocrats, who were hindering attempts to centralise power in Prussia. This empowerment was dependent on the rapid introduction of agrarian, administrative, and educational reforms, which eventually qualified the bureaucratic class with distinct education and appointments to critical venal offices that provided substantial financial revenues. This growing bureaucratic class gradually named itself the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

The *Bildungsbürgertum* became one of the most influential classes in Prussia due to their growing power and influence in the state-building process. Combined with Frederick the II's enlightenment reforms, the *Bildungsbürgertum* found an outlet to reflect their social and cultural capital in the shaping Prussia. As the state apparatus in Prussia became increasingly monopolistic, and as *Bildungsbürgertum* increased its influence, it gained more material returns through weakening local aristocracies and replacing them. Eventually, the focus of the *Bildungsbürgertum* became continuous reforms in Prussia to compensate for the disadvantages of centuries of backwardness compared with Enlightenment Europe.

The *Bildungsbürgertum*, a social class in 18th-century Germany that placed great emphasis on education and continuous reformation, was not a homogenous group with a singular approach to achieving their shared goals. Rather, it was a fragmented class composed of ideologically and politically distinct groups. With the reign of Frederick the II, Enlightenment reforms were introduced that brought new scientific developments, philosophical traditions, rational techniques for administration, and humanistic principles. This brought forth the question of whether an authentic German Enlightenment was possible.

Named *Aufklärung*, the German Enlightenment was defined as a specific movement that did not fundamentally challenge the German state and society. Instead, it aimed to gradually transform it through education and reformism. As the designer and implementer of reforms in Prussia, the various different groups within the *Bildungsbürgertum* defined themselves according to their position towards the *Aufklärung*. The *Aufklärung* became a political movement for many *Bildungsbürger*, who also referred to themselves as the *Aufklärer*.

Many *Aufklärer* were early proto-liberals who did not idealise Prussian absolutism, but they were not openly against it either, as this would have meant their isolation from financially and politically powerful positions within the state. It should be noted that the early liberalism of the *Aufklärer* was quite restrictive, and conservative compared to its contemporaries. Some *Bildungsbürger* were fundamentally against the *Aufklärung*, such as Herder, who saw the Enlightenment as a threat to the indigenous codes of authentic German traditions. Other *Bildungsbürger* had reservations about the *Aufklärung* because it contained ideas that strengthened civic powers against the rising absolutist-paternalist Prussian state.

Overall, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, like the other two polarizing groups in the political crisis of German-speaking Europe (absolutist-paternalist and traditional feudals), was politicised by the central questions that the long crisis of feudalism had defined: how to consolidate Prussia and how to reconstitute the tripartite relationship between state, society, and the individual subject? The newly emerging class was very fragmented and had many different responses to these questions.

Before the rise of Immanuel Kant as the most prominent political thinker of the *Aufklärung*, the *Bildungsbürgertum* presented the third response to overcoming the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism in German-speaking Europe. This response promoted liberal reformism based primarily on reforming Prussia in light of early liberal ideas of individualism, civil society, and property relations. This liberal reformism was against the paternalistic absolutist state and aimed to introduce an individualistic society in which the state had very little say in the lives of its citizens.

Immanuel Kant, born in a remote but crucial part of Prussia, became a *Bildungsbürger* through his journey to becoming a public servant. As he became involved in the class politics of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, he centralised the main questions of his class on how to reform Prussia to overcome the backwardness of the long crisis and present an alternative progressive framework based on the class perspective and progressive ideals of the *Aufklärung*. Kant managed to respond to the fundamental questions that the *Bildungsbürgertum* tasked itself with overcoming

and presented a universalist critical political philosophy that created an epistemological break. Moreover, Kantian philosophy eventually became the official philosophy of the *Aufklärung* and managed to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* under one ideological and political framework. However, the French Revolution in 1789 changed this ongoing development, with its global promotion of republican and liberal ideas that posed an existential threat to Prussian absolutism. At the same time, the Revolution extensively politicised the *Bildungsbürgertum* and caused it to break down into three main groups: those who were loyal to the absolutist project (Cameralist-paternalist), those who defended the traditional feudalism, and those who pursued a way to radically defend progressive ideals with or without the *Aufklärung* project.

The relationship between the *Bildungsbürgertum*, *Aufklärung*, and the reformist liberal movement has to be clarified at this point before discussing how Kant became the intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

1.3.4.1 The Emergence of the Bildungsbürgertum: Socio-Economic Orientation

Traditionally, the *Bildungsbürgertum* has been defined as a substratum of the *Bürgertum* that emerged in the German context in the mid-18th century as the educated social class of the bourgeoisie. It is considered as a group of people who have been educated on the basis of the metaphysical values of Idealism and a Classical background (the Greek–Roman world of Antiquity) and who espouse Protestant codes of solidarity (Conze & Kocka, 1985; Hunter, 2004, 2012, Leicht, 2002). In sociological contrast to the *Kleinbürgertum*, the petite bourgeoisie of Germany, the *Bildungsbürgertum* were the intelligentsia and the upper economic-stratum of the German bourgeoisie. Because of its role in the reformation process of Prussia and the broader German context, the *Bildungsbürgertum* can therefore also be considered a cultural bourgeoisie (Leicht, 2002, p.59).

These affiliations emanate from scholarly narratives delineating the trajectory of modernisation and the Enlightenment, concomitantly considering the agency of the modern bourgeoisie (Gall, 2000; Hartmann, 2002; Lepsius, 1992; Vondung, 1976; Gray, 1994; Salewski, 2007). These accounts predominantly underscore the progressive contributions of the bourgeoisie to the historical evolution of their respective milieu. Central to their narrative are the promotion of erudition, scientific inquiry, secularism, Enlightenment ideals, democratic governance principles, civil authority, the advent of market-oriented societies, and the cultivation of liberal property relations (Conze & Kocka, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1992; Köhler, 1985; Schmid, 1984). As these narratives tether the ascent of the bourgeoisie to the dissolution of feudal structures, the growth of commercial market dynamics, urbanisation, secularisation, and Enlightenment thought, they sometimes manifest in an oversimplified framework that inadvertently obscures the nuanced realities intrinsic to historically specific processes. These complications are crucial to establishing substantive material and social linkages for comprehending the tangible dimensions of social reality.

Within the purview of a historical materialist perspective, the discourses surrounding the *Bildungsbürgertum*, extensively prevalent within the German context, give rise to contentious suppositions concerning the attributes of the *Bürgertum* and its role within the broader social fabric. These encompass the intricate political and economic paradigms inherent to the German context. These suppositions also tend to cast shadows upon the distinctive role played by the *Bildungsbürgertum* as a singular social class in the state-building enterprise of Prussia.

Rather than merely occupying a subordinate or intelligentsia role, this research contends that the *Bildungsbürgertum* should be regarded as an idiosyncratic social class intrinsically tied to the historical contours of the Prussian state-building process. This unique class exhibits historical material relations that are concretely enmeshed within the intricate fabric of Prussian

state development. Adhering to a Marxist class theory perspective, it is imperative to examine a social class within the framework of production relations—referred to in Political Marxist discourse as social property relations (Brenner, 1985, 2007; Lafrance, 2019; Wood, 1998). This means assessing its position and function within production and/or appropriation processes (Marx, 1993, 2009). In essence, the historical materialist approach, when delineating a class, does not disregard its soft power, intellectual contributions, and philosophical influence; rather, it contextualises these impacts as endeavours to shape the production or appropriation processes (Thompson, 2013; Wright, 1989, 1997, 2009). The emergence of a class necessitates the emergence of novel social relations within the sphere of social property relations, which, in turn, reshape the modes through which production relations are perpetuated.

Through this dialectical lens, the *Bildungsbürgertum* emerges as a distinctly historical social class owing to two principal factors. Firstly, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, while stemming from the *Bürger* class through the prism of Prussian state-building under bureaucratic absolutism, forged entirely distinct material relations within its contextual milieu. Whereas the *Bürger* class was largely marginalised from primary production processes in the German context, primarily engaging in the circulation processes of production, the *Bildungsbürgertum* assumed a pivotal role within the bureaucratic framework of Prussian state-building. It secured venal offices and bureaucratic positions that endowed it with the capacity to appropriate revenues derived from production processes. In other words, whereas the *Bürger* class was predominantly involved in modest economic undertakings and exercised limited control over these activities, the *Bildungsbürgertum* evolved into a bureaucratic class that centred itself within the state apparatus, thereby gaining access to the appropriation processes that fundamentally redefined its class characteristics (Mooers, 1991; Shilliam, 2009). Unlike the capitalist classes, as exemplified in the English context, German intellectuals carved out their distinctive niche as educated professionals[67] (Hunter, 2012). Consequently, the *Bildungsbürgertum* transmuted into an entirely distinct social class compared to its *Bürger* origins.

Secondly, it is paramount to acknowledge that the concept of bourgeoisie carried an entirely different connotation within the German context. Originating from the bureaucratic absolutism of Prussia, the *Bildungsbürgertum* embodied certain class attributes. While a significant portion of the *Bildungsbürgertum* originated from the *Bürger* class, it did not typify the capitalised bourgeoisie, nor did it exclusively encompass the petty bourgeoisie, such as merchants and shopkeepers, as was the case in England or France[68] (Comninel, 2000, 2018; Wood, 1998). As

[67] Ian Hunter defines the *Bildungsbürgertum* as concerning more the intellectual circles in the north German principalities. Hunter argues that the *Bildungsbürgertum* is the "stratum of Protestant university-educated theologians, pastors, bureaucrats, jurists, and professors – who communicated via journalism, sermonizing, and academic disputations, and through interlinking memberships of university faculties, Protestant congregations, Masonic lodges, and private clubs, and debating societies" (2012, p. 170).

[68] It is important to note here that *Bürgertum* had other factions that were defined as socio-economically privileged such as *Großbürger,* and *Kleinbürger.* Grand Burghers (*Großbürger)*, distinguished by their illustrious historical and cultural roles, cultivated, and expanded over the course of decades, exhibited a distinctive proclivity for alliances with kindred families of similar eminence and branches of nobility. These eminent individuals, characterised by their extraordinary wealth and profound economic significance, oftentimes surpassed the affluence and influence of even the most exalted members of the aristocracy (Albers & Zottmann, 1988, p. 681; Venema, 2003, p. 107; Thorn, 1995). Consequently, the nobility frequently pursued matrimonial connections with the esteemed Grand Burgher families to sustain their privileged lifestyles. The identities of these individuals and their respective lineages typically enjoyed widespread recognition within the urban or town setting they inhabited, and, in many instances, their forebears had made notable contributions to the annals of regional history. The ennoblement of Grand Burghers, in the majority of cases, conferred a hereditary status upon both their male and female progeny, with their inherited titles or ranks explicitly denoting their occupational roles in official records. *Kleinbürger* on the other hand, represented the petty burgher who were mostly involved in small scale business, shopkeeping, and service activities in the free imperial cities. Both of these factions were part of Bürgertum, but

a class, the *Bürger* class in the German context did not possess the characteristics inherently associated with capital accumulation. Instead, within the German/Prussian context, the *Bürger* class represented urban civil classes, which predominantly constituted the working classes[69].

Members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* shared certain educational qualifications that allowed them to be professionally placed in the state apparatus. The emergence of this class resulted from two hundred years of projects of the absolutist regime to centralise the state by counterbalancing the power of the traditional nobilities with a modern bureaucratic structure. This attempt of absolutist Prussia also defined one of the two significant features that link the members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* were organised under the state apparatus and had different roles in developing their reform projects to modernise the state. Their main concern was reforming the Prussian *Ständestaat* (state structure), which also defined them as public intellectuals. The second feature that links them is their concentration on promoting a Protestant intellectual culture "mostly transmitted in North-German universities and churches" (Hunter, 2012, p. 171).

In light of these characteristics, the *Bildungsbürgertum* appears primarily as a singular social class that emerged in the course of the Prussian state-building process and developed historically specific social relations becoming a key component of the state apparatus controlling the government's fiscal revenues, most important venal offices, and bureaucratic positions.

Building on top of this material analysis, the *Bildungsbürgertum* had a significant soft power that was constituted on its ability to shape public opinion. Mostly visible as public servants and intellectuals, members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* became important figures in Prussia, shaping public opinion. Especially in academia, the *Bildungsbürgertum* integrated enlightenment ideas into the traditional establishment. However, this attempt was challenged by the traditionalist groups in academia, as in the example of *Halle Debates*. The *Bildungsbürgertum*'s effort

never characterised German *Bürgertum* as similar to its peers, as a commercial or entrepreneur class which in the other European contexts.

[69] The debate on the absence of a capitalist or merchant bourgeoisie in 18th century Germany/Prussia is closely linked to the debate surrounding the *Frühbürgerliche Revolution* in the 16th century. According to this debate, the absence of a strong capitalist class in Germany can be attributed to the early militarisation and monopolisation of power by the *Junker* elite. This elite group, which was made up of the landed aristocracy, sought to suppress peasant revolts and maintain their grip on power. This had the effect of undermining the development of productive activities, causing Germany to lag behind the technological and commercial advancements being made in other parts of Europe.

This debate highlights the importance of understanding the historical context in which the German economy developed (Laube, Laufer & Werner, 1975; Stalnaker & Ginsburg, 1975; Stamm, 1973). The early militarisation and monopolisation of power by the *Junker* elite had a significant impact on the development of the German economy, and this legacy was felt well into the 18th century. The lack of a strong capitalist or merchant bourgeoisie meant that there was little investment in industry or trade, which further hindered economic growth.

Moreover, the emergence of a new class of public servants in Germany can also be seen as a product of this historical context. With the *Junker* elite monopolising power, the state emerged as the primary economic actor in Germany (Carsten, 1947). The urban classes that emerged were primarily focused on serving the state, and their economic interests were closely tied to the success of the Prussian monarchy (Mooers, 1991). This had the effect of further limiting the development of a strong capitalist or merchant bourgeoisie in Germany.

The debate surrounding the absence of a capitalist or merchant bourgeoisie in 18th century Germany/Prussia is closely linked to the debate surrounding the *Frühbürgerliche Revolution* in the 16th century. The early militarisation and monopolisation of power by the *Junker* elite had a significant impact on the development of the German economy, and this legacy was felt well into the 18th century. The emergence of a new class of public servants further limited the development of a strong capitalist or merchant bourgeoisie, and this had the effect of hindering economic growth in Germany.

transformed the main debates in philosophy, theology, and metaphysics in the eighteenth century (Gagliardo, 1991; Hunter, 2004).

From the perspective of the social history of political theory, the *Bildungsbürgertum* in Prussia represented a solid social class that shaped the political, social, and economic state doctrines and entered into material rivalries and theoretical conflicts with the traditional classes, challenging their hegemony over social property relations. Therefore, rather than understanding the bourgeois classes as the pioneers of democratisation and enlightenment, in the Prussian context the *Bildungsbürgertum* became the essential class that influenced progress and change. Like every class that has a material and social ground, the *Bildungsbürgertum* class shaped its ideology at various stages. The *Bildungsbürgertum*, which determined its main purpose as reforming the state, overcoming the crisis of the feudal system, and catching up with the rival states, expressed its class ideology by interpreting the idea of enlightenment in the Prussian environment.

In the eighteenth century, Prussia was a context where feudalism was still in crisis, and state-building was still incomplete (until the late nineteenth century). The first responders to the feudal crisis were the defenders of feudalism, who promoted mini-absolutism and consolidated princely authority. Second, absolutism emerged as a political project to consolidate the fragmented feudal structure in Germany and respond to the crisis. The third response developed directly within the *Bildungsbürgertum* and pursued state reform in light of enlightenment principles, liberal practices, and ideas.

Prussia's political and intellectual context was shaped by political polarisation between the absolutist-cameralists, the supporters of the feudal system and the reformist liberals influenced by classical liberal ideals in the second half of the eighteenth century. In addition, this led to polarisation and splits in the *Bildungsbürgertum* class, which played a critical role in the state bureaucracy, directed public opinion, and interpreted enlightenment thought philosophically. These were three main axes of tendencies among the *Bildungsbürgertum* class: absolutist paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism.

To politically contextualise the *Bildungsbürgertum* as a fragmenting class, it is key to identify what German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) and early liberalism represented in Prussia. Especially in the 1790s, when the fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* began, *Aufklärung* represented a political movement and a *Reformation* project, regarding which the social and political thinkers of *Bildungsbürgertum* had reached a consensus. Thinkers believed that they could speak impartially and with a single voice about their common humanity, the law of nature, and the public good. This belief emerged mostly due to the influence of Enlightenment ideas, emphasising the potential power of human reason and the human role as an active political actor. In this regard, the 1789 French Revolution appeared as one of the scenes; the human will first time created a change activating its potential. *Aufklärung*, then, became a *Reformation* project that contained the idea of a radical rupture. However, the reflection of the French Revolution on German intellectual circles was transformative. In the 1790's German political debates were, compared to the 1780s, radical, controversial, and ideological. As politicisation increased among the *Bildungsbürgertum*, political thinkers found themselves debating important questions from opposing points, advocating for absolutist-paternalist, traditionalist, or liberal reformist ideas.

1.3.4.2 Aufklärung as a Political Movement & Reformation Project

Following a comprehensive redefinition and meticulous consideration of the *Bildungsbürgertum* as an historically specific singular social class integral to the state-building endeavours of Prussia, it becomes imperative to embark upon a nuanced historical

contextualisation and substantive examination of the discourses encompassing the *Aufklärung*, and its pivotal role within the multifaceted tapestry of the Prussian state-building process.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the German intellectuals inside the *Bildungsbürgertum*, preferred to appeal to the authority of reason to justify social and political reforms. Moral and political principles were assumed to be justified by reason, and institutions, laws, and government policies could be evaluated on the strength of their moral and political principles. In addition, they believed that reason could provide sufficient motivation for human action. For someone to accept and follow a principle or policy, they believed, it is only necessary to demonstrate that it is rational. German thinkers reflected this understanding in their political theory. Even though there were clear fractions within *Bildungsbürgertum* by the late 1780s, both absolutist-paternalists and liberals centred their *Reformation* project on reason.

The focus on human reason also referred to the ideas of Enlightenment, which, in the humanist line, promoted a human-centric approach to reconstructing the legal and political codes of society. The Cameralist-paternalist tradition approached reason as a constituent of the political order and an essential element of the state and bureaucracy. Their focus was to rationalise the state and its instruments to provide people with a consistent, rational state that promotes their welfare and happiness. On the other hand, liberals understood reason in humanitarian terms and focused on the individual's emancipation from the external determinants. For liberals it was individuals, rather than the state, that carried the essential codes for a civil society. Therefore, the emancipation of the individual from the interventionist state (or, in political terms, the absolutist state) could be achieved by centring human reason in the political sphere (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Sheehan, 1973, 1978, 2011; Shilliam, 2009).

These political conceptions, originating from the emergent political exigencies of a burgeoning bureaucratic strata, underwent a transformative evolution, coalescing into an ideological movement dedicated to a perpetual reformist agenda. In this envisioned social order, civilian classes would enjoy an augmented and more unequivocal status, coupled with heightened political influence. In concert with the tenets of the European Enlightenment, replete with its associated values, methodologies, and philosophical paradigms, which received encouragement during the reign of Frederick II's enlightened absolutism, this ideological movement self-identified as the German Enlightenment. Unlike its more radical counterparts, the German Enlightenment envisioned a trajectory of continuous reform rather than radical transformation, with the ultimate objective of forging a progressive civil society. The *Aufklärung*, particularly in the 1780s, assumed a dominant role within the milieu of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, primarily bolstered by the contributions of Kantian critical philosophy. It subsequently emerged as the overarching ideological framework to which a significant proportion of the *Bildungsbürger* ascribed themselves.

By no means impractical or apolitical, the *Aufklärung* was an essentially practical movement that reflected the values and beliefs of most of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In general, the *Aufklärung* aimed to inform and educate the general public about the fundamental principles of morality, religion, and state, as well as civil rights and responsibilities. Liberating the public from traditionalism was a key objective. In terms of its purpose, the *Aufklärung* was a practical movement since it was intended to bring rationality into everyday life rather than discover the first principles of reason. The goal was to bridge the gap between theory and practice, speculation, and action, and between reason and life. Although the *Aufklärung* did not describe a specific form of government, it was opposed implacably to any form of arbitrary authority and any attempt by the state to restrict liberty in a manner that was not in compliance with the law in its negative sense.

A great number of thinkers in the late eighteenth century saw themselves as *Aufklärer*, and they considered themselves both philosophers and educators. These philosophers and writers believed that philosophy and literature were not ends in themselves but instruments that could be used to teach and enlighten the public. They did everything they could to close the gap between theory and practice (Beiser, 1992). Professors, tutors, clerics, and writers believed they could best close this gap through education. The *Aufklärer*, however, argued that fundamental constitutional change must precede enlightenment.

Aufklärung, or the German Enlightenment was defined by many thinkers as the rationalisation and de-theologisation of the political sphere (Thornhill, 2007). This growing attention to human reason had a long history beginning with the *Früh-Aufklärung* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; however, the period of Frederick the II's enlightened absolutism revived this interest and played a huge role in the politicisation of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Starting from the *Früh-Aufklärung*, German thinkers sought to find common ground so that they could realize the potential of reason. While doing that, they pursued highly political careers[70].

Due to the French Revolution, the 1790s became a period where this excitement of realizing reason in the political reformation process of Prussia got extremely complicated. Revolution in France was surprisingly successful, putting reason on top of the political order and eliminating the traditional classes who opposed it. The French revolutionaries did this by promoting an Enlightenment ideology based on the supremacy of human reason. However, this happened only through the revolutionary overthrow of absolutism and the aristocracy. The reflection of the French Revolution left mixed reactions in Prussia and provoked a further politicisation of the *Bildungsbürgertum*[71].

Through the *Aufklärung*, according to the liberal interpretations, individuals were urged to think for themselves and accept beliefs only when they agreed with their own critical reason. This hallowed principle began to be questioned by conservative critics in the 1790s. Conservative critics arose mostly among absolutist-paternalist *Bildungsbürger*, who considered the French Revolution a threat to the absolutist regime in Prussia. Until the 1790s absolutist-paternalist fraction of *Bildungsbürger* mainly adopted the mission of rationalising the state and bureaucracy through reason. Their approach was primarily focused on the institutions, not individuals, but until the Revolution, their objection to human reason's potential was not conservative. However, the Revolution's *Reign of Terror* caused a conservative critique of the *Aufklärung* to emerge and clash with the early liberal principles. According to the new conservative *Bildungsbürger*, it was impossible for the common people to determine which

[70] The political order of their time was either a friend or an enemy of theirs, and they worked both for and against the order of their time, whether in their writings or in their actions. It was not uncommon for some of them to play a prominent role in local government. Moser, for example, was the central administrator of the tiny principality of Osnabrück; Rehberg and Brandes played significant roles in Hannover; Jacobi served on the privy council for Jülich and Berg duchies; Wieland served as the chief secretary of the government of Biberach for several years; and Herder was active in the civic affairs of Riga and Weimar. In addition, there were several thinkers who played historical roles: Gentz was the advisor to Metternich; Humboldt was the Prussian minister responsible for educational reform after 1806; and Forster was the vice president of the revolutionary Mainz government. Even Kant and Schiller, who had no political experience, had passionate political convictions that are central to their works (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2014).

[71] By 1790's the common aim of introducing rationalised political reform (through state or through liberal principles) got divided. German philosophy was not new to the question of the authority of reason, but it had transformed, taking on a more political aspect during the 1790s. "First, does pure reason by itself have the power to determine the general principles of our conduct, or must we rely on experience? Second, if we assume that reason does have this power, does it also have the capacity to determine the specific principles of the state? And third, does pure reason by itself have the power to make the will act according to reason's ideals?" (Beiser, 1992)

laws, institutions, or policies are right or wrong. The argument was that one must have extensive government experience and professional knowledge to accomplish this.

In sum, *Aufklärung* represented a political movement and an ideological reference point for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. *Aufklärung* was influenced by the European Enlightenment, yet it largely rejected radical revolutionary ideals, especially after the *Reign of Terror* in France. The revolutionary overthrow of absolutism and aristocracy was not included in the German Enlightenment due to the very reasons that the state was the apparatus that *Bildungsbürger* were completely dependent on to preserve their privileges and revenues in their historical context. It is these historically specific qualities of the *Aufklärung* that separate it from its European peers and define it as a movement and a reformation project with a specific agency - the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Due to the French Revolution, the *Aufklärung* project was mainly abandoned by German political thinkers (discussed in Chapter IV in detail). However, there were still *Aufklärer* who did not give up. Immanuel Kant was one of them, and by the 1790s, when he got relatively older, he tried to revive the main objectives of the *Aufklärung* once again against the politicised *Bildungsbürgertum*. German Liberals of the 1790s, as well as conservatives and traditionalists, entered a sophisticated philosophical and political debate with Kantian philosophy, which had established its hegemony in the *Bildungsbürgertum* prior to Revolution (Beiser, 1992; Sheehan, 2011).

1.3.4.3 Rethinking the Limits of the State: The Birth of German Liberalism

To comprehensively delineate the third response to the repercussions stemming from the protracted crisis of feudalism within the German context, it becomes imperative to describe the evolutionary trajectory of early German liberalism. This intellectual and political movement emerged organically from the crucible of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, offering a substantive alternative to address the prevailing social and political ambiguities precipitated by the enduring crisis.

Early German liberalism, as an ideological current, was a product of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, which had been undergoing a transformative process in response to the exigencies of the prolonged feudal crisis. This intellectual and socio-political movement represented a departure from established norms and advocated for a departure from traditional systems of governance and social structures. It provided a compelling alternative vision for navigating the tumultuous landscape shaped by the protracted crisis.

By elucidating the origins and evolution of early German liberalism within the context of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a more nuanced understanding emerges of how it became a significant response to the multifaceted challenges posed by the prolonged crisis of feudalism in Germany.

While in the 1780's Prussia was marked by the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s project to rationally reform the state, and centre reason to define the political sphere, the 1790s, with the impact of the French Revolution, became the decade of radical politicisation. Although the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s politicisation began earlier, German political life in the 1790s was not divided into political parties and interest groups in the modern sense. Rather, members of the *Bildungsbürgertum* positioned themselves interchangeably through the political events happening in Prussia and France. Consequently, the thinkers of the 1790s are often exceptions to the generalisations sometimes made about them because they had no party affiliation or organisation. Although there is an obvious difficulty in grouping these thinkers under ideological affiliations, there are some general characteristics about the traditions that they are mostly associated with. The absolutist-paternalist approach was to pursue the rationalisation of the bureaucracy and provide welfare through the state apparatus. For the traditional feudalists,

what politicised them was their resistance to the growing absolutist project. For the early German liberals, the 1790s became the decade of further politicisation.

In this regard, early German liberalism, which had philosophical roots that could be traced back to the natural law debates of the earlier centuries, became mostly prominent in the 1790s, as one of the responses to both the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism, and also the historical development and the politics of the French Revolution. Rather than being a broad class on their own, as some scholarly accounts stressed (Beck, 1969, 1999; Beiser, 1987, 1992; Thornhill, 2007), early German liberals represented one of the ideological fractions of the *Bildungsbürgertum* that gained traction and popularity. Inspired by the English classical liberals, early German liberals focused on reforming Prussia with liberal ideals to promote an individualistic market society, full property rights, separation of powers and limited state control. However, as they originated from within the *Bildungsbürgertum*, their stance never became fully explicit when it came to discussions over state legitimacy.

It was primarily a view about the purpose of the state that characterised liberalism in the 1790s. The liberal view was that the state should provide its citizens with greater freedom rather than greater happiness. The main objective of government should be to protect rights, not to promote welfare (Beiser, 1992). Regarding religion, morality, and economics, liberalism denied the state's role in being a force for good. Instead, it should only prevent institutions and individuals from violating the freedom of citizens. Many *Bildungsbürger*, either liberal or not, had common points with German liberals. Kant, Schiller, Humboldt, Forster, and Jacobi all express a similar anti-paternalist view about the purpose of the state.

Liberal theories in the 1790s were more concerned with the proper ends and limits of government than with the proper form and constitution. Liberal states could be aristocracies, democracies, or monarchies, and the theories of mixed government were popular among intellectual circles. Although Kant, Forster, Jacobi, Humboldt, and Schiller all promoted the idea that the state's powers should be limited, they had differing views on what an ideal constitution should be[72]. For example, Jacobi, Humboldt, and Schiller disapproved of Forster's advocacy of radical democracy, inspired by England's mixed constitution.

German liberalism has also been widely assumed to have developed together with the *Aufklärung*. These movements do have some profound affinities: "liberty of conscience, freedom of speech and the press, separation of church and state, and equality of opportunity" (Beiser, 1992). Moreover, they oppose the arbitrary exercise of power and the enslaving forces of tradition. Even so, identifying these two movements based solely on their affinities would be wrong. It should be noted that many of the sharpest critics of the *Aufklärung* in the late eighteenth century also advocated some liberal ideals concerning the limitations of the state, including Hamann, Jacobi, and Herder (Beiser, 1992; Thornhill, 2007). The second reason is that many self-conscious *Bildungsbürger* were critical of the liberal view of the state and aligned with the older Cameralist-paternalistic tradition. Berlin *Aufklärer*, like C. G. Svarez,

[72] Liberalism and republicanism could be identified as two different ideas in this period. Republicanism in this era could be identified as the doctrine that there should be some popular participation in government, whether by all citizens or only some (Bielefeldt, 1997; Maliks, 2009, 2014, 2022; Sauter, 2009). However, liberalism was about the limits of the government and individual emancipation from political control. Humboldt and Jacobi, for example, argued that citizens' rights are better protected in monarchies than in republics, arguing that a monarchy is a better form of government. In addition, liberalism in the 1790s is not a specific economic doctrine. In a free society, everyone should have the right to do what they want as long as they do not interfere with other people's liberty. Any obligation to contribute to or participate in the community as a whole violates this liberty in unacceptable ways.

Moses Mendelssohn, E. F. Klein, J. A. Eberhard, and Christian Garve, emulated Friedrich II's enlightened absolutism.

It was in the late 1780s and 1790s that the liberal tradition in the *Bildungsbürgertum* reached its peak and fell short. To politically reform the Prussian state and rationally liberate the people, German liberals within the *Bildungsbürgertum* adopted certain enlightenment principles and philosophies. This purpose was reflected in political theory to some degree in the promotion of people's rule. Early German liberals were divided on which political regime to adopt, and they all viewed matters differently based on their own interests.

In response to the long crisis of feudalism in German-speaking Europe, three main responses emerged, including liberal reformism. This movement was composed mainly of the *Bildungsbürgertum* class, which sought to establish a constructive relationship with the *Aufklärung* Project. Liberal reformism advocated for an individualistic society with a minimized role for the state that was non-interventionist, promoting individual and civil rights against the prevailing absolutist-paternalist framework. The majority of liberal reformists advocated for the establishment of a new social and political framework based on individualism, despite some members shifting towards more conservative or romantic positions. Despite their differences, all three responses to the crisis of German feudalism shared a concern with how to consolidate Prussia and reconstitute the tripartite relationship between the state, society, and the individual subject[73].

The emergence of liberal reformism as the third response to the profound and enduring crisis was intricately connected to the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and its integration with the *Aufklärung*, movement. However, by the 1790s, this association began to unravel, leading German liberalism to disentangle itself from the pro-Kantian Enlightenment philosophy. Instead, it advocated for its unique conception of an individualistic market society, grounded in the ontological separation of the individual from both society and the state. This core tenet propagated the idea of a civil society rooted in the classical liberal ideals of the 18th century. Furthermore, it adopted a strategy centred on the incremental realisation of this idealised transition through ongoing reforms, eschewing radical departures.

In this light, the evolution of German liberalism paralleled the transformation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* during the 1780s and 1790s, evolving alongside the broader *Aufklärung* period. Over time, it developed into an independent response to the social and political

[73] The fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* is exactly what led Immanuel Kant to dissatisfy with the German liberals. As a reformer, Kant considered *Aufklärung* his most important accomplishment. Throughout the 1780s, Kant managed to unite the *Aufklärer* of the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the united goal of spreading *Aufklärung* to the Prussian people with his critical universalist philosophy (Kant, 1991b). Prussia's reaction to the revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution changed everything for Kantian philosophy's supremacy. In spite of the fact that Kant never advocated a revolutionary plan, his philosophy was heavily criticised by his contemporaries of the time after the Revolution. For some, Kant was a radical figure who sympathised with revolutionary ideas. For others, Kant's moderate position was not radical enough to promote the progressive principles of the Revolution (Fichte, 1967, 1996). The main reason behind this criticism was Kant's moderate political positioning which rejected the idea of a revolution categorically but at the same time pursued human freedom through an establishment of universal political principles that would limit the absolutist state and end the traditional feudal order, as well as universalise the progressive achievements of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. To address this issue, Immanuel Kant's universalist philosophy provided a comprehensive and consistent framework that addressed the entirety of the crisis. Kant sought to reconcile the dichotomy between subjective experience and objective reality, proposing a transcendental philosophy that could provide a foundation for objective knowledge. Additionally, Kant's idea of the categorical imperative, which sought to establish a universal moral law based on reason alone, went against the prevailing ideas of the time, which were based on tradition and authority. Kant's philosophy also contributed to the development of ideas surrounding the nature of freedom, autonomy, and human dignity, which have been influential in shaping modern political thought.

discourse revolving around the ramifications of the protracted feudal crisis. To fortify this connection, the third response to the crisis became intricately intertwined with the historical developments and societal transformations that accompanied Prussia's state-building endeavours.

The primary objective of this investigation is to illuminate the principal inquiries in political philosophy that Immanuel Kant would confront. Before delving into Kant's distinctive response, which united the class interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* with the *Aufklärung*, it is imperative to formulate the fundamental questions that emerged within the political and philosophical debates in the Prussian milieu.

On one hand, this analysis contends that, to a large extent, the three principal responses to the crisis remained confined to particularistic propositions that often conflicted with one another. On the other hand, Kant's universalist critical philosophy is posited as a comprehensive alternative capable of addressing the crisis of feudalism in the German-speaking regions of Europe. In this context, Kant's universalist philosophy played a pivotal role in furnishing a scholarly foundation for addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the protracted feudal crisis.

1.4 IMPACT OF THE CRISIS IN PRUSSIA ON THE EMERGENCE OF IMMANUEL KANT AS THE INTELLECTUAL OF THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

The protracted crisis of feudalism in Germany engendered a confluence of social and political instabilities, resulting in disunity and undermining the hegemony of the traditional aristocratic landowner classes (Brenner, 1990; Ganshof & Grierson & Stenton, 1952; Strayer, 1965). Peasant movements and foreign interventions from the surrounding absolutist empires further compounded the crisis, leading to heightened tensions between princely powers and undermining the cohesion of the Holy Roman Empire/German-speaking Europe (Carsten, 1989; Hagen, 1985, 2002; Melton, 1994, 1995)

Amidst a multifaceted crisis in Germany, three distinct responses unfolded. The first, termed the traditional feudals' ‘mini-absolutism project’, aimed to fortify the autonomy of feudal classes within the Holy Roman Empire. Legal and political thinkers advocated a constitutional reorganisation to empower princely authorities. The second response, epitomised by the Hohenzollern consolidation in the late 17th century, centred on establishing German absolutism, starting in Prussia. This involved centralisation, compromises with the *Junker* aristocracy, and bureaucratic reforms. The third response, emerging from the *Bildungsbürgertum*, can be defined as "liberal reformism." This response was characterised by a desire to reform the Prussian state and society based on liberal principles and *Aufklärung* ideals. To overcome the diverse impacts of the long crisis in German-speaking Europe, liberal *Bildungsbürgertum* members sought to introduce political and social reforms emphasising individual rights. A social order that promotes individualism was integral to this attempt. As a result of the tumultuous period of the French Revolution, the *Bildungsbürgertum* fragmented into various factions, making it difficult for a unified vision of change to survive. The *Aufklärung* project, once unifying, lost popularity in the 1790s due to political fragmentation and its inability to oppose the state. Therefore, these three main responses failed to present a viable alternative to resolve the historical and philosophical problems.

These three responses to the crisis of feudalism in Germany primarily defined the social and political context of Immanuel Kant. The three responses this research has grouped together here also represented a body of theoretical debates that reflected the interests of three different groups through the restructuring of the political ground in the German/Prussian context (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Gagliardo, 1991; Thornhill, 2007). Inside these responses to the crisis of feudalism, German thinkers located the main problem responsible for the social and political instability in the constitutional foundations of the German-speaking Europe. Therefore, defining a new political sphere that could be stable and legitimate for every class and group in the German context became the main concern of German political philosophy.

In essence, the resolution of the prolonged crisis of feudalism hinged upon the implementation of a political agenda tailored to solidify the German milieu. This endeavour would aspire to establish a sustainable social and political order capable of averting the exacerbation of social and political discord, exemplified by events like the *Peasants' War* (1525) and the *Thirty Years War* (1618-1648). While treaties like the *Westphalia Treaty* (1648) succeeded in deescalating tensions among various German feudal powers, they did not entirely eradicate these tensions (Teschke, 2014). Subsequently, the post-Westphalia era was marked by power struggles between local and regional aristocracies, alongside centralisation efforts by various houses. In this context, efforts at consolidation aligned with endeavours to monopolise power, whether due to absolutist aspirations or princely authorities (Bener, 2022; Hubatsch, 1915; Melton, 1985).

These three responses to the feudalism crisis all proposed particular solutions centred on dominance, the elimination of competing interests, and the concentration of power. However, during the incomplete stages of Prussian state-building, genuine authority and influence were lacking, rendering these particular responses incapable of realising any meaningful consolidation. Consequently, they encountered conventional limitations and failed to offer a sustainable alternative for the reconstitution of the tripartite relations between the state, society, and individuals within the German context.

Upon pinpointing the historically distinctive period of social and political turmoil, contextualising the burgeoning political theories as responses to this context, and systematically identifying the unique features of these political theories, the method of examining political theory through the lens of historical materialism becomes indispensable in decoding the central questions arising from these theoretical debates. This approach is vital in order to historically situate Immanuel Kant in relation to the crisis of feudalism. Several inquiries stemming from his historical milieu can be categorised as the core issues that Kant grappled with.

1.4.1. Main Political & Philosophical Questions

1.4.1.1 How to establish a universal ground for philosophical inquiry?

The primary challenge during this era was the absence of a shared philosophical framework capable of formulating a comprehensive response to the profound and prolonged crisis of feudalism within the German-speaking world. This predicament arose from the multitude of rivalries in the region and the intricate, fragmented political landscape. Numerous political entities vied for supremacy, each advancing its distinctive strategy for political and philosophical legitimation. This intricate scenario engendered a complex backdrop for philosophical rivalries, as there existed no common epistemological or methodological foundation for those aspiring to propose an alternative philosophical framework to comprehend, interpret, and use to reshape the social reality (Behrens, 1985; Brunschwig, 1974; Hunter, 2004, 2006; Lestition, 1993; Maliks, 2018). As discussed in the sections dedicated to the formulation

of political theories within the three principal traditions, no consensus existed regarding the origins of natural law, the genesis of supra-princely authority, or the means by which states validated their existence.

Moreover, there was no unified definition of the crisis, or even of the concept of 'society' in the German context. The challenge of defining the 'social' arose from the discordant nature of feudal disunity. Various configurations of the social structure emerged, influenced by different manifestations of *Grundherrschaft* and *Gutsherrschaft*, further complicating the understanding of how society evolved (Melton, 1988, 1994, 1997; Mooers, 1991; Richard, 1979; Wilson, 2004).

In seeking to establish harmony and order, the Holy Roman Empire played a pivotal role by acting as a unifying entity that employed religious identity to bind together the German-speaking societies (Whaley, 2011; Wilson 2004). However, the protracted crisis of feudalism, the *Reformation* movements, and the devastating *Thirty Years' War* significantly eroded this function (Gagliardo, 1991). Religious identification, which had served as the adhesive holding the Empire together, lost its potency in consolidating the feudal society. In summary, the imperial codes that underpinned the political, legal, and philosophical foundations of feudalism had ceased to function effectively, and this void manifested itself in the contemporary political theory as a quest for new political and legal underpinnings to attain political harmony.

From Kant's perspective, two primary factors contributed to the absence of political harmony in Prussia and the broader German context. Firstly, as previously elucidated, Kant recognised the absence of a shared basis for philosophically reconstituting the tripartite relations between the state, society, and the individual within the German context. Neither metaphysics nor science could furnish the necessary epistemological and methodological framework to reconstruct these foundations (Schönfeld, 2000). Initially, Kant aimed to amalgamate these domains into a single philosophical methodology capable of addressing the fundamental epistemological challenge of defining social reality comprehensively for all (Beck, 1969, 1999). However, this initial endeavour proved insufficient. Kant's early project, often referred to as the pre-critical project[74] (Ameriks, 1982; Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Broad, 1978; Friedman, 1992; Gardner, 1999; Guyer, 2008; Schönfeld, 2000), failed to establish a firm footing for defining metaphysics as science or science as metaphysics.

From this point of intellectual stagnation, a profound shift in paradigm emerged with the ascent of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the enlightened absolutist reign of Frederick II (Blanning, 1990; Saine, 1997; Sauter, 2007, 2009). This shift played a significant role in catalysing Kant's transformative philosophical exploration, and his new philosophical inquiry evolved in tandem with his epistemological and methodological departure. This conceptualised the human subject as possessing an active rational capacity to comprehend, interpret, and reshape one's reality guided by universal moral principles[75]. This epistemological shift was influenced by the broader

[74] For a more comprehensive account of Kant's precritical project see *Appendix II: Overview Of Pre-Critical Years: Involvement In Philosophy And Class Politics Of the Bildungsbürgertum*

[75] In spite of Kant's early attempts to bridge the gap between metaphysics and science, he became discouraged in the 1770s when he realized that traditional philosophical approaches could not provide a fully universal theoretical framework (Schönfeld, 2000). Over the course of the 1770s, he engaged in a series of discourses that challenged the possibility of human reason and its ability to define freedom in both the moral and political realms. The inspiration for this came from two foreign political thinkers: David Hume and J. J. Rosseau. As well as those, Kant inherited the work of Achenwall, who had already formulated a universal state theory (Achenwall & Kleingeld & Vermeulen, 2020). Kant developed his critical approach through the synthesis of these three influences and more. Through a critical examination of their theories, Kant was able to formulate a critical approach that synthesises the ideas of both rationalists and empiricists, which was able to formulate human reason as an analytical framework. Nevertheless, Kant's project of priming human reason for the definition of social reality was not

historical developments of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and the *Aufklärung* principles promoted during Frederick II's enlightened absolutism. Kant recognized that, to surpass the limitations of the prevailing philosophical rivalries in his milieu, an independent philosophy needed to be rooted in an independent agency. In this context, the burgeoning influence and prominence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* served as a wellspring of inspiration for Kant and profoundly shaped his conception of human agency. Kant drew from the specific evolution of the *Bildungsbürgertum,* a class that exhibited the potential to extricate itself from the rivalries of the ongoing crisis and dominate the future paradigm.

Hence, for Kant, the foremost question that demanded attention was: *How could a universal foundation for philosophical inquiry be established?* Building upon his significant epistemological departure and the burgeoning critical philosophy he was developing, Kant endeavoured to discover a political and philosophical framework that would enable the extension of his philosophical insights into the realm of politics.

1.4.1.2 How to restore the Aufklärung Project to the centre of political theory?

Kant's intellectual journey initiated a transformative shift away from prevailing empiricist and rationalist perspectives that had relegated human agency to a passive role in the interpretation of social reality. Initial criticisms of Kant's work, particularly his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), often labelled him as an empiricist imitator (Kuehn, 2001). However, subsequent critiques aimed to demonstrate that his evolving critical philosophy held practical significance for a new paradigm. Kant's objective during this phase was to broaden the reach and influence of his critical philosophy, necessitating a robust justification of its practical applicability.

Drawing inspiration from Rousseau's explorations in sociology and anthropology (Rousseau, 1979; 1997), Kant embarked on formulating a historical and anthropological foundation for his novel conception of human agency. By assimilating key insights from Rousseau concerning human development and socialization into his overarching notion of universal human agency, Kant proposed a teleological framework to elucidate the progression of humanity towards the establishment of a civil society grounded in universal moral principles (Ellis, 2005, 2008; Kleingeld, 2014; Hüseyinzadeğan, 2019). This teleological framework departed from Rousseau's philosophy of history, shifting from a natural-to-cultural trajectory to a theory of socially-mediated self-development (Cassirer, 1981; Wood, 1972). In line with these conceptual innovations, Kantian teleology idealized a form of socially conditioned individualism imbued with the concept of *unsocial sociability* (Wood, 1991, 2009). Kant was cautious in avoiding the conceptualisation of society as an external determinant, instead advancing a social epistemology that extended his epistemological break to encompass the conceptualisation of a social order. This social epistemology articulated a vision of a rational society where individual human subjects attain freedom through the collective exercise of reason and *Aufklärung*.

In essence, *Aufklärung* offered Kant the political groundwork to reconfigure the triadic dynamics of state, society, and individual, breaking away from conventional political theories. It enabled him to present a philosophically independent and coherent theory centered around the emerging class of *Bildungsbürgertum*. If Kant succeeded in positioning the *Aufklärung* movement at the core of political theory, he would provide a universal means of uniting the

complete (Habermas, 1989). The purpose of Kant's future work was to expand on this capacity and produce a social epistemology that could be firmly anchored in universal moral principles.

Bildungsbürgertum under a shared ideal while averting the divisive pitfalls of particularistic approaches within the German context.

Kant's interpretation of *Aufklärung* in 1784 garnered significant attention and temporarily coalesced the *Bildungsbürgertum* under his philosophical influence. The issue of *Aufklärung* assumed paramount importance, as it aimed to serve as a platform for disseminating freedom and enlightenment to the masses by nurturing a public sphere. By the 1780s, Kant had fashioned a critical philosophy that introduced methodological and epistemological ruptures within his contemporary intellectual landscape, effectively shaping and defining the *Aufklärung* movement. He succeeded in consolidating the *Bildungsbürgertum* around a moderate, non-radical reformist endeavor with his distinctive method and epistemological framework.

The *Bildungsbürgertum* played a pivotal role in disseminating *Aufklärung* ideas within the Prussian context during the reign of Frederick the II. As a result of this transformation, the *Aufklärung* movement assumed a dominant role in influencing Prussia's state-building processes. These developments held profound significance for Kant, as the successful realization of the *Aufklärung* project united the *Bildungsbürgertum* in a collective effort to reform Prussia and reestablish its foundations.

However, with the politicization triggered by the French Revolution in the 1790s, the *Bildungsbürgertum* underwent fragmentation and largely withdrew its support from the *Aufklärung* project (Maliks, 2014, 2022). This abandonment of the project dealt a blow to Kant's philosophical underpinnings, as he had anchored his entire practical political philosophy in the *Aufklärung*. The extent of enlightenment and freedom that it generated within the context of Prussian absolutism was foundational to Kant's vision. He believed that *Aufklärung* offered the closest approximation to constructing a universal philosophical foundation capable of transcending divisions and unifying German and Prussian cultures. For Kant, the question of "how to overcome the philosophical and political impacts of the long downturn of German context" became intricately intertwined with the question of "how to restore the *Aufklärung* Project" to its central position within political theory.

1.4.1.3 How to reconstitute state-society-individual tripartite relations without remaining within the conventional limits of the political conflicts?

The prolonged crisis of feudalism had profound effects on the German context, not only manifesting in philosophical rivalries but also influencing discussions on the political landscape of the 18th century. Particularly after the French Revolution, a new conceptual framework emerged, as the political theories of French intellectuals exerted a significant influence on the German *Bildungsbürgertum*. The revolutionary paradigm redefined governance by toppling absolutism, its institutions, and the traditional aristocratic classes (Mathiez, 1964; Nyagaard, 2007; Soboul, 1975; Taylor, 1967) This marked the end of an era dominated by absolute rule and ignited debates on republicanism, freedom, equality, the rule of law, citizenship, and democracy (Beiser, 1992; Hunter, 2009; Kleingeld, 2012; Mertens, 1996; Thornhill, 2007). These discussions fundamentally reshaped the relationship between the state, society, and the individual.

Inspired by the politics of the Revolution, German thinkers were primarily concerned with reconstructing state-society relations in novel terms (Gagliardo, 1991; Shilliam, 2009; Thornhill, 2007). This imperative arose due to the instability generated by the feudal crisis, affecting both the producer classes below and the traditional aristocratic classes above.

For Immanuel Kant, the central question became: "*How can state-society-individual tripartite relations be reconstituted without adhering to the conventional boundaries of political conflicts?*"

During his era, Kant engaged in various debates within the realm of political theory (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2013, 2014). His responses aimed to critically challenge three distinct responses to the feudal crisis: absolutist paternalism, feudal traditionalism, and liberal reformism. In the public discourse of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Kant directly addressed these conservative, radical republican, and liberal ideas, which were being reinterpreted in light of the French Revolution.

At the heart of these discussions lay the question of state theory. The *Bildungsbürgertum* was divided over how to define the state's role in society. While absolutists advocated for bolstering the paternal state to reshape the relationship between the state and society, liberal reformists focused on limiting the state in favour of individual liberties. In contrast, traditional feudals championed a discourse rejecting centralised power, arguing in favour of the local, indigenous, and pluralistic nature of German feudalism.

Kant, however, did not align with any of these viewpoints. Instead, he responded to debates surrounding state theory by formulating a universal ideal political order rooted in principles of freedom and democratic popular sovereignty (Kant, 2006, *MM*, 6:313). In doing so, Kant addressed his primary critics and also contributed to a political literature that reinterpreted the conceptual framework that emerged with the politics of the French Revolution. Kant's responses to absolutist paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism revolved around several key themes, shaping the discourse of his time.

By centring the doctrines of freedom within his conception of the state, Kant's anti-absolutist stance firmly relies on the foundation of universalism as a pivotal concept in characterizing political regimes (Kant, 2006, *TP*, 8:295–296). By championing the republican ideal, he advocates for a governance system that diligently safeguards the universal conditions that shape the political landscape, effectively avoiding both despotic and aristocratic inclinations (*PP* 8:352-353, *MM*, 6:341). Simultaneously, Kant's portrayal of the human subject within a republican order endows individuals with the dual capacity to pursue their interests while actively participating in the legislative process of political authority, thereby aligning with his core doctrines of freedom, encompassing autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation.

From the early political writings of Kant in the *Reflexionen*, it was evident that he held political opposition to the traditional feudal society of the German context (Kant, & Erdmann, 1882, Kant & Holger, 1902, *Ak*. 27: 1317–94). This opposition resurfaced in Kant's political writings in the 1790s, where he universally defined freedom as self-legislation and pointed towards the establishment of a post-feudal society where inheritable privileges would be abolished, and popular sovereignty would be based on equality and freedom (Kant, 1991, p.175, *MM*, 6:370-371). Kant's vision of a post-feudal society did not align with the description of modern society, as many scholarly interpretations attempted to find connections (Flikschuh, 2000; Saine, 1997). Instead, it represented a post-feudal society that had resolved the structural contradictions of the political regimes of that era. While departing from the traditional feudal society's hereditary privileges, hierarchical structure, and culturally, indigenous, and locally particularistic elements, Kant's post-feudal vision did not encompass themes associated with liberal capitalist society. Rather, Kant's post-feudal society portrayed a landscape where the *Bildungsbürgertum* could most comfortably thrive.

In defining the new relationship between the individual and the state, Kant established his first significant departure from the classical liberals of the period. Kant primarily considered the individual in terms of their rational capacity and did not separate or isolate the individual from the concept of the public sphere. Individuals could only attain freedom by activating their

capacity through reason within the conditions provided by the public sphere (Kant, 2006, pp. 18-22, *Was*, 8:37-42). Therefore, Kant invoked his political universalism to define the requisite conditions for establishing civil society, which would facilitate a public sphere for individuals to engage their reasoning.

The impact of the French Revolution also introduced new debates on the political rights of the individual, the legal definition of private property ownership outside the state, and the discussions on progressing towards civil society (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). In the Prussian context, neither the individual nor civil society was defined in isolation from the state. Since absolutism was predicated on the unity and control of both the economic and political domains by a centralised state, there was no fertile ground for novel political concepts such as citizenship, property rights, or civic duties. Responses from liberals and traditional feudals to these debates typically framed the individual and their rights in opposition to the state. For liberal reformists, civil society was conceptualised as an evolution from traditional society to a commercial bourgeois society (Beiser, 1992; Sheehan, 1989). In contrast, for traditional feudals, civil society represented a return to the local, indigenous, and pluralistic nature of German feudalism. Kant, rather than adhering to the classical liberal framework, conceptualised individual human agency, which, through the process of human socialization, defined the foundations of society and, consequently, the state (Kant, 1998, *CPR*, A50-1/B74-5). Through his teleological framework, Kant interlinked the relationship between the individual, society, and the state, presenting a universal theory of progression.

Another major debate in the 1790s centered around the idea of the republic as a political regime, the right of revolution, or resistance to political authority. Even before Kant, these topics had been discussed by proponents of princely powers against the absolutist project. Therefore, the introduction of the idea of a republic or a popular democracy challenged absolutist administration by questioning the foundations of sovereignty, much as princely powers had done earlier by employing the mixed constitution as a shield for their critical response to centralised authorities. Republican theories assumed a new dimension with the French Revolution and were promoted as progressive regimes by sympathizers of the revolution. Republicanism and the right to revolution became closely associated due to the revolutionary overthrow of absolutism in France. Kant, in fundamental disagreement with classical liberal ideals, opposed the right of revolution under any circumstances and maintained an agnostic stance regarding the best political regime for Prussia (Kant, 2006, p. 53, *TP*, 8:299). Rather than emphasising the characteristics of the regime, Kant focused on a regime grounded in universal principles. Republics were theoretically highly compatible with this perspective as they were less prone to initiate warfare and conflicts, they were non-despotic, and had separation of the powers (which refers to Kant's distinction between form of sovereignty and form of government). Kant needed to formulate his response to the debates on republicanism and the right to revolution in order to differentiate himself from liberal and revolutionary thinkers challenging the existing regime. He accomplished this by defining his ideal regime, emphasising universalism once again (*PP* 8:352-353, *MM*, 6:341). Therefore, Kant's concept of a republic primarily referred to a regime characterised by popular rule, separation of powers, and the supremacy of the rule of law. Conversely, the right of revolution could not be a universally applicable right, as it would undermine the relationship between the individual, society, and the state.

Kant's political writings should be understood primarily as responses to the political and ideological conflicts within the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Works such as *Theory and Practice* (1793), *Perpetual Peace* (1795), or *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) are political treatises that aimed to address the public debates that emerged in the wake of the French Revolution. Furthermore, these texts gained substantial influence in global politics because they laid the groundwork for

universally applicable principles, prioritizing them over the delineation of political regime characteristics. For Kant, the promotion of universalism was crucial, as it offered a philosophically consistent way to abstract the heavily politicized structural problems and define social reality by asserting eternally valid rational norms that could create stability and provide a foundation for sustainable coexistence based on universal principles.

1.4.2. Considering Kant as the Intellectual of *Bildungsbürgertum*

In the preceding analysis of Immanuel Kant's significance within the intellectual and political landscape of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the research has shed light upon the profound ways in which Kant's philosophical framework transcended the confines of the particularistic and politicized debates of his era. The elucidation provided through this inquiry has revealed Kant's pivotal role in guiding the autonomizing *Bildungsbürgertum* within the intricate milieu of Prussian state-building.

Kant's distinctiveness, notably discernible in his differentiation among the prevalent intellectual traditions that grappled with the challenges arising from the prolonged crisis of feudalism in Germany, is noteworthy. His intellectual trajectory extended beyond the immediate political concerns of his time. His objective was the formulation of a systematic philosophy capable of addressing the historical exigencies of his context through a universalist lens. In consequence, Kant's contribution elevated the discourse and provided a philosophical and political theory that illuminated a pathway for the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

The depth of Kant's engagement with his social stratum and the multifaceted nature of his interaction therein bestowed upon him a unique vantage point. He was not confined to mere theoretical articulation but, instead, meticulously delineated the historical course of the *Bildungsbürgertum* within the Prussian terrain. Furthermore, he strategically orchestrated the realignment of this class and delineated its practical objectives. Consequently, Kant emerged as the preeminent political philosopher for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, rightfully designated as the intellectual of his class. His contributions extended beyond mere conceptualisation, encompassing the translation of the material interests of his class into a complex, universalist philosophy that transcended the parochial traditions ingrained in the German intellectual milieu.

The present inquiry, which aligns Kant's responses with the politically and philosophically charged questions of his era, offers novel avenues for understanding his political thought within the broader context of his class. This approach facilitates a deeper comprehension of his material and social interests, thereby accentuating the practical ramifications of his political engagement. Furthermore, an inclusive examination of Kant, encompassing his relationship with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, unveils the material and sociological underpinnings that delineate the contemporary limitations of Kantian universalism (Bernasconi, 2003; Elden & Mendieta, 2011; Marwah, 2012, 2013; Muthu, 2000, 2009). These limitations are inextricably linked to the concrete realities inherent to Kant's class context, wherein the political theory underpinning his universalism inadvertently promotes historically specific potentials as universal foundations.

Hence, the perspective adopted in considering Kant as an intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, contextualizing his political thought within the material social reality of his class, ought not to be misconstrued as diminishing the enduring value of his contributions to our understanding of the world in universal terms. Rather, it serves to elucidate the material underpinnings of his political and philosophical engagements, shedding light on the intricate relationship between thought and social context.

In the subsequent chapters, the research will delve into Kant's class origins, the pivotal epistemological paradigm shift he effected (Chapter II), his promotion of the *Aufklärung* as a class project for *Bildungsbürgertum* (Chapter III), and his interventions in the public debates that characterised 1790s Prussia (Chapter IV). Through an exhaustive analysis of his universalist approach, this study aims to illuminate the factors that positioned Kant as the quintessential intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This expanded inquiry promises a more nuanced and intricate comprehension of Kant's enduring impact on both philosophical thought and the political landscape of his era.

CHAPTER II - KANT'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL BREAK AND THE CHALLENGES OF CRISIS: NAVIGATING A PHILOSOPHICAL CROSSROADS

What we need in order to indicate the divisions, boundaries, and the whole content of that field, according to secure principles, and to lay the road marks so that in the future one can know for sure whether one stands on the ground of reason or on that sophistry - for this, we need a Critique, a discipline, a canon, and an architectonic of pure reason, a formal science, therefore, that can require nothing of those sciences already at hand, and that needs for its foundations an entirely unique technical vocabulary.[76]

Immanuel Kant, Letter to Marcus Herz, November 24, 1776

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that Immanuel Kant made significant contributions to the development of modern political theory, but his place in the canonical writings on the history of political thought is not as prominent as that of other political thinkers. This is due, in part, to his late presentation of his political philosophy and his departure from the dominant approaches of the time regarding both methodological and epistemological dimensions. Consequently, Kant's philosophical break was evaluated within the realm of mainstream philosophy rather than political theory, as the basis for his break was shaped by his rejection of dominant philosophical traditions. Taking a historical materialist view of Kant's political thought would prove to be very difficult if he were to be considered independent of the epistemological and methodological breaks, he made in his philosophy in order to develop his political thought. However, from a historical materialist perspective, the contributions of political thinkers are always interlinked with the main questions they encounter in their social and political contexts[77].

The first chapter of the thesis provides an explanation of the critical changes in social property relations during the turbulent times of the long feudal crisis in German history, as well as the three main responses to the crisis' impact on German political thought. These responses - absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal, and liberal reformist - each offered a political theory and a proposal for reconstituting power through either centralisation or decentralisation, reform, or preservation of the state. These three responses added new political and legal philosophical perspectives to social reality and the relationship between political power and people.

Regarding social property relations, the main conflict occurred in the Prussian *Ständestaat* between the absolutist administration, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and the traditional local nobilities. When these classes presented their legal and political philosophical views and political theories, they did not consider overthrowing political power in a radical or revolutionary manner, as the state apparatus had become the main source of revenue and preserving power there was of utmost importance. This explains the ambiguity of German political thought, as philosophical rivalries could only call for change intrinsically or indirectly.

[76] Kant, 1999, p.198, *Cor*, 10:198-9

[77] Onora O'Neill's seminal work, "Construction of Reason" (1989), lends itself to a parallel examination with the arguments presented in the current chapter. O'Neill adeptly navigates the symbols and references within Kant's three Critiques, seamlessly integrating them with the central philosophical inquiries of Kant's intellectual milieu.

The fact that Prussian absolutism was still in the process of establishing and centralising its hegemony at the time of Immanuel Kant is another factor contributing to this ambiguity. Political theory thus flourished in a pluralistic intellectual climate as a result of the incomplete state-building process, in contrast to absolutist France[78].

The nature of German political thought at the time of Kant was heavily fragmented, and there was no common ground for philosophical arguments that addressed the entire German context. Furthermore, Kant's predecessors had left behind sophisticated and challenging questions. It was, therefore, necessary for Kant to start anew in order to provide his unique perspective on philosophy.

The 'Kantian revolution' emerged with his critical philosophy. The main purpose for Kant was to formulate a new philosophical ground and establish new foundations for defining social reality and its relationship with human reason. Throughout the three *Critique*s and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant was able to present a new methodological inquiry to consider human reason as an active agent in interpreting social reality. Unlike the traditional epistemologies, which considered human beings as passive recipients of the historically given conditions, Kant's critical philosophy emancipated human reason from determinism and offered a possibility of human reason being active. Kant's epistemological and methodological break redefined the relationship between social reality and human beings and integrated the influential accounts of Hume and Rousseau into a novel approach. Through his critical philosophy, Kant's influence on the *Bildungsbürgertum* significantly increased, and by the end of the 1780s, Kant had become the most influential thinker in the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Building on this influence, Kant also developed a significant universal common ground for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Kant was aware that the only way for this class to be more influential in the Prussian *Ständestaat* was for it to be united and loyal to a continuous reformation project. When politicised and fragmented into different camps, the *Bildungsbürgertum* did not function as a progressive class but reproduced the traditional structure, which carried on the main impacts and the polarised (particularistic) conflicts of the long crisis of feudalism. To overcome these impacts, Kant considered the *Aufklärung* movement to be crucial. The *Aufklärung* movement consisted mainly of *Bildungsbürger*, who had internalised the main principles and ideas of the Enlightenment processes all around Europe but were hesitant to be involved in direct political change. Kant observed that *Aufklärung Project*[79] could become a significant movement where the *Bildungsbürgertum* could be consolidated.

Kant established links between his epistemological break and the *Aufklärung Project*. In short texts such as *What is Enlightenment?* (1784), or *Idea for a Universal History* (1784), Kant argued for the potential capacity of human reason to be free and enlightened, to allow for the public exercise of reason. The social conditioning of Kant was unique, as he integrated some

[78] The political pressure on public servants in Prussia was significant, with the absolutist administration imposing strict constraints on their actions and expressions. This pressure was also felt by Kant in his later works, as he was forced to self-censor himself in order to avoid ideological disputes. Despite the censorship that existed in Prussia, the political context of the state-building process allowed for the presence of multiple sources of political ideas. This was because the process of state-building was still ongoing, meaning that the state did not have full control over political discussions. As a result, while censorship did exist in Prussia, it was not all-encompassing and there was still some room for political ideas to circulate (Epstein, 2016; Beiser, 1992, pp .48-56).

[79] Kant's epistemological framework did not overtly articulate the *Aufklärung* as a defined project. Instead, this was viewed as a process that required realisation, attainable only through the public exercise of reason and the domination of the public sphere in its relevant historical context. In this research, the *Aufklärung Project* refers to Kant's intention to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* under a consistent philosophical and political framework. Kant's principal aim was to focus the attention of the *Bildungsbürgertum* on political theory, enabling the class to acquire a historical mission in his teleological framework toward the establishment of a universalist cosmopolitan republic.

of the important political frameworks of Hume, Rosseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu into his critical philosophy[80]. As human reason became active and free through the public exercise of this very reason, the political order needed to provide the citizens with suitable grounds to realise the principles and goals of the progressive enlightenment. For Kant, this ground could be the public sphere. By establishing organic links between his critical philosophy and a universalist political theory, Kant took steps towards making a "social epistemology"[81][82]. Especially in the 1780s, integrating the *Aufklärung* movement with his universalist critical philosophy was the main goal of Kant. This was in order to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* under one roof and contribute to his class project of increasing the control and influence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the Prussian *Ständestaat*.

In the context of this part of the research (Chapters II-III), to complete the analysis of Kant's revolution in philosophy it is critical to review his class origins and positioning with regard to his promotion of the *Aufklärung Project*. Kant's relationship with the *Bildungsbürgertum* becomes very apparent through his development of his critical philosophy. There are organic links between Kant's promotion of a universalist critical philosophy and *Aufklärung*. From a

[80] Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of the community and the *General Will* had a significant impact on Kant's critical philosophy and his approach to the *Aufklärung*. Kant was deeply influenced by Rousseau's ideas about the role of the state in enforcing and protecting the *General Will*, and he incorporated these ideas into his own concept of the 'kingdom of ends'. According to Kant, the kingdom of ends was a hypothetical state in which all individuals were treated as ends in themselves, rather than means to an end. This idea was closely related to Rousseau's concept of the *General Will*, as it emphasised the importance of the community and the need for individuals to act in the best interests of the whole. Kant's approach to the *Aufklärung* was also influenced by Rousseau's ideas about the importance of the community and the role of the state. Kant saw the *Aufklärung* as a process of individual and collective enlightenment, in which individuals were able to use their reason and critical thinking skills to improve their own lives and the lives of those around them. He believed that the *Aufklärung* could only be successful if it was grounded in a sense of community and a shared commitment to the common good. Thus, Rousseau's communitarian ideas about the *General Will* and the role of the state played a significant role in shaping Kant's views on the *Aufklärung* and the role of the individual in society.

[81] Social epistemology is a burgeoning field of study that pertains to the social dimensions of knowledge and the evaluation thereof. It encompasses a wide-ranging set of approaches that may be employed in epistemology, the philosophical discipline concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge. The central tenet of social epistemology is the notion that knowledge is not solely the product of individual thinkers, but rather, it is fundamentally a collective achievement. In other words, social epistemology concerns itself with questions about knowledge and information in social contexts. This entails an analysis of the social and contextual factors that shape our understanding of knowledge and how it is produced, shared, and evaluated. Such factors include social institutions, cultural norms, and the epistemic practices of communities, as well as the broader political and economic structures that condition knowledge production and dissemination. The study of social epistemology thus entails a critical examination of the ways in which knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and transmitted within and across social groups. This requires an analysis of the dynamics of knowledge exchange and the various forms of social influence that shape our beliefs and epistemic attitudes. Such an approach is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the nature and limits of knowledge, as well as for the development of more nuanced and effective strategies for promoting social progress and enhancing human welfare (Goldman & Whitcomb, 2010).

[82] The term 'social epistemology' was not explicitly articulated by Immanuel Kant. However, his contributions to the development of an epistemology that considers the role of the human subject in understanding and shaping social reality cannot be underestimated. In particular, Kant's anthropological and historical development of self-consciousness through engagement with others lays the foundation for a novel approach to defining the individual human subject within its social context. Kant's development of this framework is noteworthy in that it preconditions for the public exercise of reason. In other words, the proper use of reason requires a socially shared environment that encourages open dialogue and deliberation, thereby promoting a collective pursuit of knowledge. This notion is particularly relevant in contemporary debates regarding the relationship between knowledge and society. By emphasising the importance of social engagement in shaping human subjectivity, Kant's work has significant implications for contemporary discussions on the nature of knowledge and its relationship to social realities. Moreover, his recognition of the interdependence between the individual and the social context offers a promising basis for further inquiry into the complexities of knowledge production in the modern era.

historical materialist standpoint, it is impossible to leave out these factors when examining Kant's epistemological and methodological break in philosophy, which led to the development of his universalist political philosophy. Therefore, Chapter II and Chapter III examine Kant's method in light of the main questions that the three dominant traditions left behind for him.

In Chapter II, the connection is made between the long crisis in the feudal context of Germany and Kant's philosophy. This chapter presents a historical materialist analysis of Kant's epistemological and methodological break in the context of the major philosophical questions in German political thought. It also contextualises Kant's method within the political environment and ideological disputes of the time, as well as the central problematics of German philosophy. For the social history of political theory, Chapter II is significant because it bridges the gap between Kant's context and the development of his universalist political theory.

Chapter II also attempts to answer several important research questions in this study. Firstly, it seeks to understand how Kant was able to achieve an epistemological and methodological break that led to the development of a universalist critical philosophy that considered human reason to be an active factor in interpreting social reality. Following this, Chapter III looks at how Kant's ideological engagement and politicisation within the *Bildungsbürgertum* can be defined, as well as the role of philosophical debates in this social group in addressing the crisis of feudalism. Lastly, Chapter II and Chapter III together explore the relationship between the *Aufklärung Project* and Kant's promotion of a critical universalist philosophy grounded in social epistemology. They also examine the significance of the *Aufklärung Project* to Kant and how he was able to consolidate support from most of the *Bildungsbürgertum* under this project.

Finally, Chapter II and Chapter III highlight Kant as a unique intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum* who was able to establish organic links between the interests of his class and the *Aufklärung Project* through the promotion of a universalist critical philosophy.

2.2 KANT'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL BREAK

The long feudal crisis in Germany had a significant impact on the development of political thought in the region, as it led to social and political conflicts that eroded the traditional power and control of the ruling aristocracy. These transformations resulted in a readjustment of power relations and sparked debates about the best direction for political reform in the Holy Roman Empire. In an attempt to address these issues, various responses were put forward, including the absolutist-paternalist model, which favoured centralisation and a strong central government; the traditional feudalist model, which supported the power of princely authorities; and the liberal reformist model, which advocated for a classical liberal re-conception of Prussia. The decline of the power of the *Junker*s and the rise of absolutist monarchy in Prussia further complicated the structural issues surrounding political stability in Germany. The political theory became a means of presenting new proposals for reorganising the political context of the German-speaking Europe.

The rise of rationalism and empiricism in the 18th century had a significant impact on the philosophical debates surrounding the role of the human subject in history and politics. Rationalism, characterised by its emphasis on reason and the use of logic to arrive at truth, was represented by philosophers such as René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Leibniz, who believed that reason was the primary source of knowledge and that it could be used to understand the world and shape society (Hampsher & Monk ,1992; Phemister, 2006). Empiricism, on the other hand, which focused on the importance of experience and observation in the acquisition of knowledge, was represented by philosophers such as John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume, who challenged traditional approaches to understanding the world

and argued that knowledge was gained through sensory experience rather than reason alone (Sellars, 1997). The influence of these philosophical approaches was evident in the development of various intellectual and cultural movements, including the *Aufklärung* movement, as well as political movements and ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism.

Both epistemological approaches were based on the separation of the subject from the object, with the subject corresponding to the individual or self and the object corresponding to objective social reality. These epistemological approaches influenced the way in which political philosophers thought about the role of the human subject in history and politics and played a significant role in shaping the direction of political thought in Germany.

Epistemological inquiry in the 18th-century German context was closely tied to the pressing socio-political issues of the time, as the long-standing feudal crisis had called into question the very foundations of social and political organisation (Wilson, 2022; Woolhouse, 1988; Thornhill, 2007). In this context, epistemological theories emerged as a means of addressing the challenges posed by these foundational disruptions, aiming to uncover the processes by which individuals acquire knowledge and the various biases and limitations that may distort their understanding of the world. These theories, therefore, played a crucial role in shaping the moral and political discourse of the time, as they sought to provide a framework for understanding and addressing the complex issues facing German society. In this sense, epistemological theories can be understood as a form of practical wisdom, offering a means of navigating the tumultuous socio-political landscape of 18th-century Germany and finding ways to address its many challenges.

As a philosopher, Kant was deeply concerned with the nature of knowledge and the ways in which it is acquired. He believed that epistemology had the potential to fundamentally shape our understanding of social reality and he therefore set out to develop a new critical epistemology that would address the foundational problems of his time. In doing so, Kant sought to transcend the traditional epistemological traditions of his day and present a novel method for understanding the nature of knowledge and the ways in which it is acquired. By formulating a new critical epistemology, Kant aimed to provide a philosophical foundation for reinterpreting and re-evaluating the prevailing epistemological assumptions of his time and to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the world and our place within it. For Kant, epistemology also served his purpose as a method.

Kant's critical philosophy developed out of a recognition that the traditional metaphysical and epistemological approaches of the time were inadequate for addressing the complex questions facing the political philosophers of the German context. His emphasis on the active role of human reason in the interpretation of social reality represented a shift away from the traditional view of the mind as a passive recipient of external stimuli and paved the way for a new understanding of the individual's role in history and politics. However, Kant's approach to the self-realisation of the individual was significantly different than his classical liberal precursors and contemporaries[83].

[83] The classical liberal perspective (mostly identified by the contributions of Hobbes, and Locke in this point) posited the individual as the subject within an empiricist epistemology that identified the subject with rational faculties perceiving external conditions through the use of senses. Nevertheless, the classical liberal conception of individuality also underscored the fact that the individual is extrinsic to social reality, and thus lacking the agency to shape the social and material conditions that they inhabit. Furthermore, the social dimension, in the absence of a political arrangement in the form of a covenant or social contract, also undermines the very existence of the individual. Kant's conceptualisation of individuality diverges from both the classical liberal approach and the empiricist epistemology by prioritising the definition of individuality through social relations without compromising the individual's autonomy. In Kantian critical philosophy, the human subject develops their individuality through social engagement. In other words, the individual gains actualisation and self-conscious

Immanuel Kant's contributions to epistemology and methodology are often characterised by their ground-breaking re-evaluation of the relationship between the subject and object and the subject's role in interpreting historically constructed and objectified reality. Kant's approach has been viewed as a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism, the dominant epistemological paradigms in Enlightenment Europe. A closer examination of Kant's "revolution" in epistemology and methodology, however, reveals that it is intended to present a critical reinterpretation of existing epistemological traditions. Kant's philosophy, therefore, can be understood as a "critique" that seeks to problematise and deepen our understanding of knowledge and its acquisition.

While developing his epistemological and methodological break, Kant passed through a few stages.

Immanuel Kant's pre-critical philosophy corresponds to the period preceding the development of his critical philosophy, encompassing his early life, early career, and the time leading up to the emergence of his critical thought[84]. During this period, Kant was significantly influenced by the intellectual milieu of his historical context, including Prussian academia and the Rival Enlightenments, which represented contrasting traditions of political thought (Hunter, 2006). Kant's original objective was to mediate between metaphysics and science, two pivotal domains that had been the focus of traditional philosophical approaches in the German context. However, upon examining the works of influential figures such as Newton, Descartes, and the early rationalists, as well as later classical and reformist empiricists like Hume (Phemister, 2006; Schönfeld, 2000), Kant came to the realisation that there was no common ground upon which to establish connections between metaphysics and science. Consequently, Kant resolved to form a new philosophical foundation by critically engaging with Hume's empiricist inquiries and assimilating Rousseau's approach to the self and the individual in the construction of subject-object relationships. Through this process, Kant aimed to develop a novel philosophical approach that could overcome the limitations of traditional epistemologies and provide a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge and reality.

Kant's critique of empiricism sought to reinvigorate the epistemological tradition by expanding upon the deterministic logic of cause-and-effect deductions put forth by Hume. In doing so, Kant aimed to fundamentally alter the empiricist understanding of the 'universally necessary' and challenge the solipsistic, individualised conception of self that had been central to classical empiricism. By prioritising the role of reason in the construction of basic knowledge constituents, Kant sought to reposition human reason as a primary source of understanding rather than as a passive recipient of objectified reality. This critical investigation was motivated by a desire to provide a universal philosophical foundation for addressing the highly polarised philosophical and political debates of the time and to offer a constructive means of

individuality by utilising their rational faculties to engage with universally applicable imperatives and socialise through their public exercise of reason. Kant's anthropological and historical justification of his teleological framework delineates the role of the individual and differentiates his conception of individuality from the classical liberal approach. Kant's involvement in the philosophical debates of his time corresponded to the need to find a new approach to understanding the role of the individual in history and politics, and his ideas would come to shape the direction of political thought for centuries to come.

[84] To focus essentially on the development of Kant's universalist philosophy, this research covers the examination of the precritical period of Kant in Appendix II. To this end, Appendix II provides a comprehensive examination of the historical context in which Kant developed his philosophical ideas. Specifically, the appendix contextualises Kant's biographical and social background within the Königsberg circles and evaluates his involvement in the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a social class of educated and cultured citizens. Moreover, the appendix offers a critical analysis of Kant's perception of the class politics of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

reinterpreting the seemingly intractable conflicts that had hindered the development of a cohesive German philosophy.

While Kant was developing his critical method of challenging empiricism as a means by which to understand truth, he made some of the most important contributions to epistemology which became definitive in his epistemological, and methodological break. It was through his critical engagement with empiricism that Kant came to realise the fundamental importance of the distinctions between analytic and synthetic judgments in understanding the nature of knowledge and reality (Guyer, 1987; Quine, 1953, p. 44; Sellars, 1997, p. 123; Strawson, 1950, p. 345). According to Kant, analytic judgments are true by virtue of the meanings of the terms involved, while synthetic judgments require additional information beyond the definitions of the terms involved (Kant, 1998, *CPR*, A19/B33). This distinction was significant because it challenged the traditional view that all knowledge is derived from experience, and it highlighted the role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge.

In addition to the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, Kant also placed great emphasis on the role of the categories and the forms of intuition in understanding the world (*CPR*, A69/B94, A80/B106). The categories are concepts that are necessary for the understanding of any object, and they include concepts such as quantity, quality, relation, and modality. The forms of intuition are the way in which we perceive the world, and they include space and time. By emphasising the role of the categories and the forms of intuition in understanding the world, Kant sought to provide a more comprehensive and objective account of knowledge and reality (A676/B704). Overall, Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments and his focus on the categories and forms of intuition represented a radical departure from the epistemological positions of his contemporaries and marked the beginning of what has subsequently come to be known as his 'epistemological break'.

In his critique of empiricism, Kant advanced a unique perspective on the ideas of space and time, positing them as forms of intuition that the mind imposes on sensory experience rather than as features of the external world that can be directly perceived through the senses. According to Kant, the mind is equipped with *a priori* forms of intuition that facilitate the organisation and interpretation of sensory data, and space and time are the most fundamental of these forms (A20/B34). As such, Kant argued that space and time are necessary conditions for the possibility of experience and cannot be derived from or explained in terms of empirical observations (A24/B38). Rather, they are subjective and depend on the constitution of the human mind (A179/B222 & A432/B460). This innovative perspective on space and time represented a significant departure from traditional empiricist views and played a crucial role in the development of Kant's broader philosophical project.

Kant's critique of empiricism serves to reaffirm the distinction between perception and experience. According to Kant, it is the human mind that constructs experience through the application of *a priori* synthetic judgments to empirically given sensory information. As a result, the subject becomes actively involved in the formation of knowledge, and objectivity is seen as a product of the subject's activity. Kant's restructuring of traditional concepts of empiricism introduces a dialectical relationship between the subject and the object in epistemology, which is a key element in his epistemological break. This dialectical empiricism, which emphasises the active role of the subject in constructing experience and the limitations of pure sensory information, becomes central to Kant's broader philosophical project of establishing a more comprehensive and coherent account of the human experience of the world.

Immanuel Kant's philosophical framework concerning self-determining subjecthood and its relationship to determinism significantly influenced the use of epistemology as a means of comprehending the social and political principles of liberty. In order to present his approach as

a ‘social epistemology’, Kant recognised the necessity of delving into an anthropological justification of the nature of human sociality. This investigation, influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, centred on issues such as the social origins of human existence, the social conditions that enable the emergence of individual consciousness, and the potential of the *General Will* as a social force for actualising human reason and freedom. The incorporation of these themes allowed Kant to present a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between individual agency and social conditioning in the pursuit of human flourishing and autonomy.

In his philosophical inquiry, Kant sought to determine whether *Pure Reason* is practical or purely normative in nature. From the outset, his investigation sought to extend the implications of his epistemological break into the practical realm of social life. In order to universalise this break, Kant recognized the need for a practical foundation upon which to ground his philosophy[85]. In conjunction with his findings on the nature of human sociality, Kant arrived at the conclusion that the Enlightenment Project, or *Aufklärung*, in Prussia represented the most auspicious opportunity to situate his critical universalist philosophy within his specific context[86]. The *Aufklärung* not only provided a means for Kant to universalise his critical philosophy but also afforded an opportunity to universalise the interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the class that largely spearheaded the movement. In this way, Kant was able to align his epistemological break with the world vision and interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* within the framework of the *Aufklärung Project*. Consequently, the *Aufklärung Project* must be central to political theory in order to achieve the practical goals of Kant’s critical philosophy.

Kant’s philosophy of self-determining subjecthood and its relationship to determinism significantly influenced the use of epistemology as a means of comprehending social and political concepts of freedom. Through his investigation of the nature of human sociality, influenced by Rousseau, Kant sought to present a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the interplay between individual agency and social conditioning in the pursuit of human flourishing and autonomy. The *Aufklärung Project* in Enlightenment Prussia provided a key opportunity for Kant to situate his critical universalist philosophy within his specific context and to align it with the interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

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[85] While developing his philosophical method to respond to the main questions of his context, Kant had two main questions in mind. The first question was how to position the *Aufklärung Project* at the centre of political theory. Kant saw the *Aufklärung Project* as a key tool for promoting the class interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and for addressing the complex issues facing the German political context. The second question that Kant grappled with was the role that political universalism could play in the future of Prussia. Kant believed that universalism provided a framework for addressing the needs of all members of the community and saw it as an essential component of any political theory that aimed to overcome the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism. By addressing these questions, Kant was able to develop a philosophical method that would shape the direction of political thought for centuries to come.

[86] Kant’s main goal was to find a practical reflection of his epistemological discovery, and he saw the *Aufklärung* movement as particularly well-suited for achieving this goal. Comprised largely of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the *Aufklärung* movement was based on progressive reform through the promotion of a communitarian understanding that merged individual self-realisation with social progress. Influenced by Rousseau’s concept of the *General Will*, Kant saw the *Aufklärung* movement as essential for realising the achievements of his epistemological discoveries. Through his involvement in the *Aufklärung* movement, Kant managed to promote a universalist philosophy that legitimised his philosophical introductions in the eyes of the community in the Prussian *Ständestaat*. Universalism became the key feature of his critical philosophy, as it provided a suitable philosophical ground for addressing everyone and proposing a new political theory to overcome the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism.

The forthcoming section will undertake a comprehensive examination of Kant's critique of empiricism. This scrutiny is essential as it elucidates Kant's profound departure from conventional empiricist thought and underscores the significance of his redefinition of space, time, and human knowledge, which in turn forms the cornerstone of his broader philosophical framework.

2.2.1. Critique of Empiricism

Immanuel Kant's precritical period marks a significant moment of intellectual inquiry and philosophical exploration, as he endeavoured to reconcile the disparate fields of science and metaphysics. During this period, Kant's dissatisfaction with the then-existing philosophical frameworks impelled him to establish a more comprehensive and unified philosophical system, which, in turn, led him to engage with some of the most pressing philosophical issues of his time such as the growing gap between science and metaphysics. His initial attempts, however, proved to be insufficient, and it was only upon revisiting his original project of reconciling science and metaphysics that Kant's critical philosophy took root[87] (Beck, 1969, 1999; Schönfeld, 2000).

Kant's precritical philosophy aimed to harmonise the rationalist and empiricist approaches to knowledge. Drawing inspiration from such prominent thinkers as Leibniz, Wolff, and Rousseau, Kant sought to explore fundamental philosophical issues, including the nature of morality, free will, and the foundations of mathematics. Although his precritical philosophy was limited in scope and depth, it set the stage for his later critical philosophy, which revolutionised the field of philosophy and has continued to influence contemporary thought in various disciplines.

Kant's critical philosophy, which evolved from his precritical philosophy, involved an examination of the limitations and possibilities of human knowledge. This critical philosophy led him to offer a critique of empiricism, in which he introduced the concept of *transcendental idealism*, a theory that redefined our understanding of space, time, and the human experience of the world.

After realising that his precritical attempts had failed, Immanuel Kant returned to his original project of bringing metaphysics and science together during the ‘silent decade’ between 1770 and 1780 (Schönfeld, 2000). While being cognizant of the increasing prevalence of empiricism, particularly the ideas of Locke and Hume, Kant engaged with empiricism and sought to scrutinise its fundamental principles, including its definitions of the subject and object, time and space, and forms of intuition. This process ultimately resulted in the establishment of a universal foundation for addressing central philosophical issues within his contemporary context.

Kant's critique of empiricism is a central aspect of his philosophical project, and his innovative perspective on the concepts of space and time is particularly noteworthy. Kant posits that space and time are not features of the external world that can be directly perceived through the senses but rather forms of intuition that the mind imposes on sensory experience. This view represents a significant departure from traditional empiricist ideas and plays a crucial role in the development of Kant's broader philosophical project. Furthermore, Kant's critique of empiricism serves to reaffirm the distinction between perception and experience, arguing that it is the human mind that constructs experience through the application of *a priori synthetic*

[87] This research explores Kant's precritical period in great detail in Appendix II of this dissertation. The purpose of this chapter is to identify Kant's epistemological break and dialectical empiricism, therefore, the precritical period is dealt with in Appendix II.

judgments to empirically given sensory information. This restructuring of traditional concepts of empiricism introduces a dialectical relationship between the subject and the object in epistemology, which becomes central to Kant's broader project of establishing a more comprehensive and coherent account of the human experience of the world. The enduring relevance of Kant's ideas can be better understood by situating his critique of empiricism within the context of his philosophical development.

2.2.1.1 The Discontent with Classical Empiricism

Empiricism, a philosophical approach characterised by a focus on sensory experience as the primary source of knowledge, arrived in the German context relatively late due to its gradual development in England and the numerous contentious debates that arose during the English Revolution. This epistemology introduced a number of novel arguments concerning the examination of social phenomena. One of the key tenets of empiricism is the strict separation of the subject and object in philosophy, which allows the subject to perceive knowledge about the object. Additionally, empiricism posits that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sensory experience, viewing the mind as a passive recipient of sensory information and reasoning as primarily a means of processing this sensory input. This leads to a clear demarcation between the perceiving subject and the external world, with perception understood as being mediated by the senses.

Empiricism took its classical outlook through the contributions of Hobbesian, Lockean and Humean approaches to epistemology.

Through Thomas Hobbes's (1651) findings in *Leviathan*, a fundamental contribution was made to the development of empiricist epistemology. According to Hobbes, the human mind has the capacity to receive objective knowledge and is passive in its reception of objectified reality, which is perceived through the senses. It is based on the belief that the mind is a blank slate at birth, and experiences and perceptions contribute to the construction and acquisition of knowledge as the mind grows. Hobbes maintains that the senses are the only reliable source of information about the external world, as they give the mind direct access to objective reality and that the mind can generate new knowledge and concepts without sensory input that provides a direct connection with the external world (Hobbes, 1969, *Leviathan*, Part I, Chapter II, III, IV; Part II, Chapter I, II).

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding by John Locke (1689) further elaborates upon Hobbes's ideas by positing that the individual, as the subject, possesses a rational capacity which is primarily used to deal with the sensations that are the result of material conditions as they are experienced by the senses. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke's understanding of empiricist epistemology focuses on the relationship between the subject and the object, with knowledge of social reality being derived from the subject's perception and experience of the external world.

According to Locke, the ideas of time and space are embodied in experience and can only be perceived through the senses. It seems that in accordance with this view, which is portrayed in the book, the concept of the nature of experience and the role of the subject within it become static and dependent upon external influences in order to be considered legitimate:

> I have showed above that we get the idea of space both by our sight and touch, which, I think is so evident that it would be as needless to go to prove that men perceive, by their sight, a distance between bodies of different colours or

> between the parts of the same body, as that they see colours themselves" (Locke, Book II, Chapter xiii. art. 2).

Furthermore, it implies that the human mind, or reason, is merely an instrument for processing sensory information and that the mind itself holds no inherent meaning a concept often referred to as the 'tabula rasa' or blank slate.

Moreover, especially starting with Locke, the description of the subject identified as the individual was characterised by a conception of liberty in which human freedom is incompatible with subjection to objective external forces. In other words, the subject, to be considered free, needs to be emancipated from the determination of external forces. While the freedom of the individual from the external forces (here it refers mainly to the state) was primary to the understanding of individuality in empiricist epistemology, the individual was also conceptualised as a passive recipient of its objective reality and only through reason and senses would be able to process reality. In this regard, the individual was only able to process the reflection of the objectified reality on itself. When contextualised in social terms, individuals were identified as separate from the social constructions, but at the same time, they were only able to reflect the objectified truth through perceiving the sensory experience sourced from these social constructions.

Overall, the contributions of Hobbes and Locke to empiricist epistemology played a crucial role in shaping the classical outlook of the tradition, with a focus on the role of sensory experience in the acquisition of knowledge and the importance of the subject-object relationship in understanding objective reality. Furthermore, the codification of experience as the given and the perceived characterised the relationship between the subject and object in very static terms, giving no essential role for the subject to use its reason actively. Classical empiricist epistemology could be identified through its approach to the social phenomenon with the subject-object relationship, its approach to the ideas of time and space and its understanding of the role of the subject in the use of reason.

For Kant, classical empiricism was very problematic. Kant considered classical empiricist position as contradictory to human nature regarding the potential capacity of human reason. For him, in the distinction between perception and experience, the human mind cannot remain passive, as it would conceptualise the relationship between the subject and object as directly deterministic. For Kant, the conceptualisation of the experience is critical in the empiricist epistemology. Later in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Kant would outline this objection:

> We must consequently analyse experience in order to see what is contained in this product of the senses and of the understanding, and how the judgment of experience itself is possible. The foundation is the intuition of which I become conscious, i.e., perception (*perceptio*), which pertains merely to the senses. But in the next place, there are acts of judging (which belong only to the understanding). But this judging may be twofold—first, I may merely compare perceptions and connect them in a particular state of my consciousness; or, secondly, I may connect them in consciousness generally. The former judgment is merely a judgment of perception, and of subjective validity only: it is merely a connexion of perceptions in my mental state, without reference to the object. Hence it is not, as is commonly imagined, enough for experience to compare perceptions and to connect them in consciousness through judgment; there arises

> no universality and necessity, for which alone judgments can become objectively valid and be called experience (Kant, 2016, *Pro*, § 20).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant also mentions that:

> Experience is an empirical cognition[88], i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions. It is therefore a synthesis of perceptions, which is not itself contained in perception but contains the synthetic unity of the manifold of perception in one consciousness, which constitutes what is essential in a cognition of objects of the senses, i.e., of experience (not merely of the intuition or sensation of the senses) (Kant, 1998, *CPR*, A177/B219)

In light of these factors, Kant was critical of the classical empiricist categorisation of subject-object relationships because, when subjects become passive in such relationships, the experience is simply defined by the external reality that exists outside the subject which does not have an active role in this relationship. A problem for Kant in this situation was the fact that if empiricism offers a new perspective on the social reality, then why is empiricism still relying on the subject's capacity the same way traditional philosophies did, and why is the social reality still determining a subject's knowledge in a one-sided way? Therefore, why should there be a distinction between the subject and the object, between perception and experience, and between individual and society?

Kantian objections to the classical empiricist epistemology continued to be developed with regard to the contributions of David Hume's sceptical approach to the cause-effect dynamic in empiricism, which for Kant introduced a discussion on the universality of the ideas.

2.2.1.2 Hume's Scepticism

Building on the early premises of classical empiricism, David Hume brought in a new take on empiricist epistemology which activated Kant to develop a critical approach to empiricism. David Hume's scepticism focuses on the distinction between 'a relation of ideas' and 'matters of fact'. For Hume, a relation of ideas "refers to something whose denial is inconceivable or self-contradictory" (Hume, 1748/2000, Section IV of Part I). Relations of ideas are universal facts, which must be true. In other words, they are necessary truths, and they are independently valid in each and every condition. Mathematical equations, geometrical shapes are a relation of ideas since they are true in every condition. A relation of ideas does not require any proof if it contains the truth itself.

Hume also conceptualised 'matters of fact' in contrast to 'a relation of ideas. They are polar opposites. Matters of fact are conceivable truths; however, they must be proven with empirical observation. So, scepticism emerges about understanding the social reality either with regard to its universally unchangeable condition or its conceivable existence with empirical observation (Hume, 1748/2000, Section IV of Part I, 20-27).

Hume thinks that as human beings, we project from observed regularities to unobserved phenomena. It is the conclusion of an individual from a certain observation used to define a similar phenomenon. In other words, assumptions for not yet observed phenomena are made depending on the similar phenomenon already observed. The "induction" of Hume determines

[88] In the older editions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the term cognition is referred as 'knowledge' which corresponds to a better meaning in this context.

the new and undefined social reality; however, even Hume argues, induction does not always successfully explain everything (Morris & Brown, 2021).

The ideas of Hume around understanding the phenomenal reality influenced Kant to develop his concepts of *a priori* (referring to a relation of ideas) and *a posteriori* (matters of fact). Moreover, Kant agreed with Hume about the distinction between universal ideas and conceivable ideas. However, Kant further argued that "it was eminently possible to produce secure knowledge of the noumenal world if one accepted the claim that experience was made sensible through universally held mental categories" (Shilliam, 2009, p. 72).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant was building his framework while adopting Humean distinctions based on his scepticism. Kant agreed with Hume's concept of the impersonalised individual who carried the universal values of humanity within them. Kant's claim also offered an autonomous dimension for the individual from his experiences. In other words, Hume's subject was universal and autonomous concurrently.

For Kant, Hume's scepticism of classical empiricism definitely brought in a new perspective about the universality of objective conditions (identified with causality); however the subject's role was still ambiguous in many respects. This was problematic for Kant regarding the possibility of the capacity of human reason to allow emancipation from external stimuli. Although the subject, according to Hume, might perceive through experience a potential subjectification, Kant needed more to carry the discussion where he could reveal the potential of human reason. The potential for Kant embodied with the possibility of interpreting the social reality through reason. In other words, the human subject must have a capacity to use his reason not only to process experience but also to interpret the social reality. The free use of reason in that sense was internal to the subject rather than imported from external experience.

Having proposed human reason as an active category, Kant reconsidered the will as independent from the senses, asserting that "ultimately an act is not free simply because it is the result of a rational impulse rather than a blind instinct or an immediate response to external stimuli" (Wood, 1972, p. 25). In his *Critique*s, Kant refined this argument by defining proper freedom as transcendental freedom[89] [90]. (Kant, 2002, *CPrR*, 5:96-98). To put it another way, Kant's

[89] Kant here distinguished the transcendental freedom: "That is to say, in the question about that freedom which must be put at the basis of all moral laws and the imputation appropriate to them, it does not matter whether the causality determined in accordance with a natural law is necessary through determining grounds lying within the subject or outside him, or in the first case whether these determining grounds are instinctive or thought by reason; if, as is admitted by these men themselves, these determining representations have the ground of their existence in time and indeed in the antecedent state, and this in turn in a preceding state, and so forth, so that these determinations may be internal and they may have psychological instead of mechanical causality, that is, produce actions by means of representations and not by bodily movements: they are always determining grounds of the causality of a being insofar as its existence is determinable in time and therefore under the necessitating conditions of past time, which are thus, when the subject is to act, no longer within his control and which may therefore bring with them psychological freedom (if one wants to use this term for a merely internal chain of representations in the soul) but nevertheless natural necessity; and they therefore leave no transcendental freedom, which must be thought as independence from everything empirical and so from nature generally, whether it is regarded as an object of inner sense in time only or also of outer sense in both space and time; without this freedom (in the latter and proper sense), which alone is practical a priori, no moral law is possible and no imputation in accordance with it" (*CPR*R, 5:97)

[90] In this quote from Kant, he argued that for moral laws to be possible, there must be a concept of transcendental freedom, which refers to a type of freedom that is independent of empirical nature and time. This transcendental freedom is what allows for moral laws to be universal and applicable to all rational beings, as it provides the basis for moral responsibility and the ability to act in accordance with moral principles. According to Kant, the concept of transcendental freedom would be crucial for the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s moral agency because it would provide the basis for their ability to act in accordance with their own moral principles, rather than being determined by

attempt to reformulate freedom in relation to Hume's objectified causality can be thought of as an attempt to reconcile freedom and causality in order to grant humans their sense of self-consciousness and capability that is unique to humans.

Kant re-conceptualised the 'impersonalised individual' with the help of his conception of *Pure Reason*[91]. To establish the human capacity to be universal and autonomous at the same time, Kant put forward an abstracted concept of a *Pure Reason*, carrying the universal values without experiences so that the impersonalised individual would reach this reason by his own experiences.

At the end of his criticism of classical empiricism and later David Hume's causality, Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* concluded:

> The famous Locke, from neglect of this consideration, and because he encountered pure concepts of the understanding in experience, also derived them from this experience, and thus proceeded so inconsistently that he thereby dared to make attempts at cognitions that go far beyond the boundary of all experience. [B127] David Hume recognised that in order to be able to do the latter it is necessary that these concepts would have to have their origin *a priori.* But since he could not explain at all how it is possible for the understanding to think of concepts that in themselves are not combined in the understanding as still necessarily combined in the object, and it never occurred to him that perhaps the understanding itself, by means of these concepts, could be the originator of the experience in which its objects are encountered, he thus, driven by necessity, derived them from experience (namely from a subjective necessity arisen from frequent association in experience, which is subsequently falsely held to be objective, i.e., custom); however he subsequently proceeded quite consistently in declaring it to be impossible to go beyond the boundary of experience with these concepts and the principles that they occasion. The empirical derivation, however, to which both of them resorted, **cannot be reconciled** with the reality of the scientific cognition *a priori* that we possess, that namely of pure mathematics and general natural science, and is therefore refuted by the fact. [B128]

This reflection was original, not only because of the emergence of a new conception of *Pure Reason*. Kant intentionally created a model in which subjects must conceive the social reality with universal standards. The invention of *Pure Reason*, in this regard, was an attempt to theorise a praxis that allowed human beings to be their own agent of interpreting and changing the world by establishing and following universal moral principles.

The phase in which Kant reached these conclusions is characterised by the presence of Jean Jacques Rousseau's theories on the origins of human capabilities which inspired him. It is important to emphasise that before Hume and Rousseau, Achenwall had already made a significant contribution to the topic of the universal dimension of concepts in epistemology. Kant used Achenwall's materials during the process of formulating his own teaching method,

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external factors or circumstances. This would allow them to take responsibility for their actions and to cultivate their own character and moral values, in line with the ideal of self-cultivation that was so important to the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

[91] This ground-breaking unique conceptualisation is explained in context in the following sections.

which constituted the main framework of his teaching experience at the Albertina during his time there[92].

It appears that Kant developed his own interpretation in response to problems associated with classical empiricism in three dimensions: the knowledge of predetermined objective-subjective knowledge (based on analytic-synthetic distinctions), the idea of time and space, and the forms of intuition. As a result of these three-fold responses in his first *Critique*, Kant was able to reconstruct empiricist epistemologies' innovative understanding of the subject and object, perception, and experience, and individual and society. The purpose of Kant's reconstruction was to recode the relationship between subject and object through dialectic and name his novel interpretation as 'dialectical empiricism' (Wood, 1972, pp.19-47).

2.2.2. Dialectical Empiricism

In his first *Critique*, Kant employed a critical method to arrive at a reconstruction of empiricist epistemology's understanding of the subject-object relationship. Through this process, he aimed to reformulate human reason in a way that establishes connections with concepts such as freedom and transcendental universal principles. In his reworking of the subject-object dynamic, Kant posits that the subject possesses agency and the ability to interpret its own social reality through a dialectical lens. In response to the deficiencies of classical empiricism, Kant sought to reframe the relationship between the subject and object through his novel interpretation of ‘dialectical empiricism’, which addresses the problematic aspects of predetermined objective-subjective knowledge, the concept of time and space, and the forms of intuition.

Dialectical empiricism, as posited by Kant in his first *Critique*, offers a revised conception of human reason, free will, and transcendental universal principles, dynamically reconfiguring the subject-object relationship. This approach diverges from traditional empiricist epistemologies, which often prioritise the objective over the subjective and depict the subject as passive in the construction of knowledge. In contrast, Kant's dialectical empiricism advances the subject's capacity for agency and the interpretation of its own reality through the employment of reason and free will. Thus, this perspective has significant implications for our comprehension of the subject's relationship to the objective world and its ability to comprehend and interact with it in a meaningful manner.

In his critique of empiricist epistemology, Immanuel Kant attempted to reconstruct the relationship between subject and object using dialectical means. To do so, he made significant revisions to the three main dimensions of empiricism that formed the foundation of its epistemology. First, he addressed the pre-given conditions that defined the relationship between the subject and object by distinguishing between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge and contextualising them as either analytic or synthetic. Later, he further contextualised these

[92] The relevance of Achenwall for this research is twofold. Firstly, Achenwall represents one of the final political and legal thinkers preceding Kant, who constructed a natural law theory with a focus on the legacy of Thomasius and Wolff and presented a universalistic theory of natural laws. As such, Achenwall's approach to natural law theory served as a source of inspiration for Prussian academia and dominated the period immediately prior to Kant's emergence as an academic and public servant. Following Achenwall's departure, Kant inherited his lecture notes and studies on natural law, utilising them to develop his own lectures. Given that Kant employed Achenwall's course materials for over two decades of pedagogy, there exist distinct continuities that Kant integrated into his universalistic philosophy. By contextualising the legal and political theories of Gottfried Achenwall, we can obtain greater insight into the trajectory towards universalistic concepts within the *Bildungsbürgertum* during the period antedating Kant. Further elaboration on the impact of Achenwall's natural law theory on the formation of Kant's universalism can be found in Appendix I.

concepts in terms of time and introduced a transcendental logic that liberated the conditioning of experience and perception from mere sensory knowledge.

Through this dialectical reconstruction of empiricism, Kant achieved two significant outcomes that marked a methodological and epistemological shift. Firstly, by interpreting the relationship between the subject and object as dialectical rather than deterministic, Kant emphasised the subject's ability to interpret objectified social reality. He linked the subject's use of reason with free will and posited that the objectified reality is shaped by the use of reason. This dialectical reconstruction also provided a more 'humanised' justification for socially constructed knowledge. Additionally, the process of understanding experience was connected to transcendental conditions, which allowed the experience to transcend mere sensory perception and be conditioned by universal *a priori* conditions that can be conceptualised. As a result of these achievements, Kant's epistemological reconstruction enabled the development of an 'individual-moral agency' for comprehending and conceptualising the world. His conception of the "self-active subject becoming free" represents a critical epistemological break (Wood, 1972, p.32). It is important for the purposes of this research to delve into Kant's critical approach to empiricist epistemology and his dialectical revision of it.

2.2.2.1 Kant's Notion of the 'a priori'

Kant begins his *Critique of Pure Reason* by examining the notion of the *a priori*. His epistemological investigation begins with two fundamental distinctions on the sources of knowledge. The first one for Kant is the distinction between *a priori* knowledge and empirical (*a posteriori*) knowledge. Kant agrees with Hume and accepts that all our knowledge 'begins with' experience (Kant, 1998, *CPR* A1, B1). But this does not mean that all of our knowledge rises directly out of the experience. While this argument allows Kant to speculate on *a priori* knowledge (obtained without experience), it shows Kant's method to overcome this complicated discussion.

As R. Lainer Anderson argues, Kant follows three steps in his examination of the notion of *a priori* knowledge. First, he puts forward a distinction between *a priori* knowledge and empirical knowledge. Secondly, he establishes a criterion for recognizing *a priori* claims. Lastly, he conceptualizes metaphysics under *a priori* knowledge and raises initial doubts about its claims (Anderson, 2010).

If we come back to the criterion he establishes after his first distinction, to determine whether we have an *a priori* knowledge (or not), Kant suggests this criterion: "a judgment is *a priori* when it is necessary, or when it has strict universality" (*CPR* B3-4) (Gardner, 1999, p.53). Universality here is the criterion and refers to the absence of exceptions. Generalisation for Kant has relative or comparative universality rather than strict universality. Mathematical judgments for Kant are necessary and have a strict universality because they cannot be denied.

> We will understand by *a priori* cognitions not those that occur independently of this or that experience, but rather those that occur absolutely independently of all experience. *(CPR B 2-3)*

Departing from the distinction of Leibniz and Hume on knowledge being *a priori* or *a posteriori*, Kant establishes his second fundamental distinction on knowledge being analytic or synthetic. This distinction is an innovation by Kant and appeared first in his *Critique* (*CPR* A6-7/B10-11).

> In all judgments in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is thought…. this relation is possible in two ways. Either the predicate B

> belongs to the subject A as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept A; or B lies entirely outside the concept A, though to be sure it stands in connection with it. In the first case, I call the judgment analytic, in the second synthetic. Analytic judgments are thus those in which the connection is thought without thought through identity, but those in which this connection is thought without identity are called synthetic judgments. (Kant, *A 6-7/B10*)

Kant's new distinction assumes a judgment is analytic "if the predicate is (covertly) contained in and thought in the concept of the subject. An analytic judgement is representing a constituent of the concept of the subject", and "it is true by virtue of the principle of contradiction"[93] (Gardner, 1999, p.54). A good and typical example for this is the statement: "a triangle has three sides" because this statement includes the knowledge in itself by using "triangle", a reference to a tri-sided geometrical shape. "Analytic judgments do not extend our knowledge, but merely 'explicate' our concepts". "Synthetic judgements, on the other hand, refer to the thought without any identity. In other words, it is the knowledge that does not contain its predicate"[94] (*CPR* B11-12). "The judgment must be true by virtue of something other than the principle of contradiction" (Gardner, 1999, pp. 54-55). For Kant, synthetic judgments are tasked to extend our knowledge because they are designed to categorize, define, conceptualize, compare. For Kant, all judgments arising out of the experience are synthetic.

2.2.2.2 The Synthetic a priori

After bringing in these two distinctions on the sources of knowledge, Kant develops his interpretation of an alternative category. Here, Kant identifies the problem as the impossibility of metaphysics being constituted with mere empirical knowledge and how the objects do not find expression in merely analytic judgments. Here Kant develops a denial both to Hume and to empiricists like Locke, who accepted the idea of '*tabula rasa'* for the human mind. Rather, Kant assumes the human mind is not a passive recipient of the categories *a priori* and synthetic. Mind for Kant plays an active role in conceptualizing the knowledge of such synthetic content.

Regarding this conception of the mind, Kant considers metaphysical judgments are *a priori* and synthetic at the same time. This consideration means these judgments cannot be derived from either a logic (unlike rationalists such as Leibniz would argue) or experience (unlike empiricists such as Hume would argue). Kant here formulates his famous question: How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? This question sets his further tasks of conceptualizing *synthetic a priori* judgments (Kant, 1998, pp. 127-134, A2).

As mentioned, Kant begins his speculation by accepting either logic or experience as a requirement to know things (unlike Hume, who excluded metaphysics because he did not consider it to be experienced). Kant considers mathematical judgments necessary and a priori

[93] Kant says that the principle of contradiction is the 'highest principle of all analytic judgements' and that it explains how they are possible (A150-3/B189-93) (Gardner, 1999, p.54).
[94] Kant uses here the example of the assumptions: "All bodies are heavy". It is a synthetic assumption because the concept of weight is not contained in the body; rather, it is added through experience.

simultaneously, rejecting that they are synthetic[95,96,97]. The famous example he uses is the judgment: "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points" (CPR B16-17). Kant argues this is a synthetic assumption "because the concept of straightness does not contain any information about the relative lengths of different lines joining two points" (Gardner, 1999, p. 57).

	Analytic	Synthetic
A priori	Logical	Transcendental
A posteriori	Hypothetical	Empirical

Table 2: Kant's response to the debate on the sources of knowledge

However, with these assumptions and the new notion of *synthetic a priori,* Kant successfully undermines the approaches of Leibniz and Hume. While speculating on the notion of *a priori*, the two distinctions carry Kant to frame his new question, which also formulates his challenge.

> The real problem of Pure Reason is now contained in the question: How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?
>
> That metaphysics has until now remained in such a vacillating state of uncertainty and contradictions is to be ascribed solely to the cause that no one has previously thought of this problem and perhaps even of the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. On the solution of this problem, or on a satisfactory proof that the possibility that it demands to have explained does, in fact, exists at all, metaphysics now stands or falls. *(*Kant, *CPR, B 19).*

When Kant reaches this conclusion in the first part of Critique, he understands that he needs to progress through a new set of frameworks with certain concepts that apply to the previously established, controversial fields. "Thus, Kant proposes to replace traditional metaphysics with the new science of 'transcendental philosophy'" (*CPR* A 12/B 25) (Anderson, 2010, p.92). Therefore, in the following parts of the *Critique,* he conceptualises certain *synthetic a priori* judgments that ground the further arguments of his transcendental philosophy.

[95] Kant here refers to the famous equation 7+5=12. This equation for Kant is not synthetic because it does not provide anything to extend our knowledge. However, if we formulate this equation as: "7+5 = 4+8", then it becomes synthetic since it establishes a connection between the subjects (5 or 7) with the outcome (12). So, Leibniz for Kant is wrong since he supposes this outcome is possible with logical principles (*CPR* B16-17).

[96] Kant is undermining Leibniz, who taught that mathematical judgments are the mere truth and can be derived using logical principles.

[97] Sebastian Gardner (1999) attracts attention to the distinction Kant makes between mathematics and geometry and emphasises that he had considered geometry differently. Gardner mentions Kant's interpretation of pure geometry made him distinguish geometry from mathematics:

> One set of issues is raised by Kant's treatment of mathematics and geometry. Kant's claim that mathematics is synthetic is defensible, and it accords with some later schools of thought about mathematics. The claim that geometry is *a priori*, however, has been rendered hard to defend by subsequent developments in the subject: geometry is now divided into pure geometry, which consists of formal systems based on axioms for which truth is not claimed, and which are consequently not synthetic, and applied geometry, a branch of physics, the truth of which is determined empirically, and which is therefore not *a priori.* (pp.57-58).

2.2.2.3 Conception of Space and Time

Kant's empirical investigation continues with his transcendental philosophy that requires a new conceptualisation of the relationship between objects and judgments. Kant searches for an answer to the question "How can judgments relate to objects?" (*CPR*, A23/B37). For Kant, knowledge cannot be derived from concepts alone (rationalism) or experience (empiricism) alone. The category of *synthetic a priori* knowledge offers an alternative to view the relationship between the object and knowledge. However, this assumption cannot remain only as an abstraction; rather it needs to be applied/realised in certain dimensions like space and time, which would conceptualise the cornerstones of this argumentation.

After defining *synthetic a priori* knowledge, Kant argues that "space and time are *a priori* to our knowledge" (*CPR*, A7/B11). Kant's claim here relates to the conflicting approaches of Leibniz and Newton to the conceptions of space and time (Beck, 1969). While Newton adopts an absolutist view of space and time, Leibniz advocates a relational view. For Newton, space and time are absolutely real, a "self-subsistent 'container' which would exist even if no physical objects were contained in it". Leibniz, on the contrary, views space "as a logical construction out of relations between objects" (Gardner, 1999, p. 70). Compared to Leibniz, Kant offers a third way saying that space and time are 'real' and 'only determinations of things'.

As mentioned earlier, Kant argues that mathematical assumptions are *synthetic a priori* because they are necessary, and they are not gained by experience (*CPR*, A23/B38). Therefore, what conceptualises space and time, which is geometry, is *synthetic a priori* as well. Kant asks the question at this point: "What is the nature of space, and what would it take for *synthetic a priori* knowledge of space to be possible?" To answer these questions, Kant proposes a strategy, putting forward two premises to reach his formulation of space and time.

First, Kant argues that geometrical knowledge is *synthetic a priori* since it is necessary and universal. Moreover, it is not knowable with experience, and it is not empirical. Kant adds that it is also ampliative knowledge, which expands our knowledge about conceptualising things. Geometrical knowledge imposes our mind's spatial structures on our representations of the world. "If the representation of space were not *a priori*, then it would be empirical; but if it were formed empirically, then it would be obtained from the experience of outer objects. But this is impossible since outer experience is impossible without the representation of space" (Gardner, 1999, p. 76).

Secondly, Kant argues that *synthetic a priori* is possible only if space is merely a form of our intuition and space is not a property of *things-in-themselves*. Kant can think of space containing nothing. "Space 'must, therefore, be regarded as the condition of the possibility of appearances, and not as a determination dependent on them'"[98] (*CPR*, A24/B38).

With these two premises, Kant establishes an alternative explanation of the conception of space and time. His approach does not follow the argumentation of rationalists or empiricists. Rather, he continues from the path he opens with his transcendental presuppositions. Transcendental presuppositions here refer to the active role of the mind, which for Kant pre-structures things with experiences. Therefore, this pre-structuring allows us to imagine things with their appearances. However, when Kant returns to the first question about space and time, he meets with the issue of representation again.

[98] Gardner explains this phase of Kant as being: "Jointly the two arguments establish an asymmetrical relation of dependence between the representation of space and that of a world of outer objects: the former is presupposed for the latter, but the reverse is not the case" (Gardner, 1999, p.77).

Kant claims space and time are *a priori* categories that pre-exist and allow us to know about the appearances we are experiencing in life by imposing spatial structures on our minds. However, they are not determining the inner dimension of these structures. In other words, space and time are not determining how things appear to themselves. Kant focuses on a very important dimension of the problem here to carry him to the next level.

When Kant focuses on the relationship between objects and their *a priori* representations in our minds, he asks how pure concepts can apply to appearances. In the *Critique* in the later stages, he offers twelve categories to process knowledge and make it useable as a representation. Before examining this stage, it is necessary to say more about the significance of Kant's starting point.

While conceptualising the *a priori-a posteriori* distinction and the relationship between space and time, Kant's starting point is that the distinction reflects another distinction between noumenon (*things-in-themselves*) and phenomenon (things as appearances). In this meta-distinction of knowledge, Kant focuses on only the phenomenon since he considers it the only realm to be explained. The noumenal realm is impossible to explain since *synthetic a priori* cannot determine it or explain it. Kant thus mystifies `things-in-themselves `.

Kant is making this distinction to purify three important realms (science, God, freedom) from the influence of other epistemologies. By conceptualising realms as not to be explained in themselves, Kant implies here that science, God, or freedom cannot be used to respond to questions in metaphysics. Unlike the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition and empiricism, Kant secularises and materialises his approach by giving such conceptions autonomy which opens a path for his logic to progress.

Kant's attempt secularises and materialises these realms because it conceptualises them as autonomous and does not allow any rationalist (abstract), materialist (reductionist) or empiricist (idealistic) attempt to be definitive about them. According to Kant, materialist attempts explain these realms with deterministic laws and principles, while rationalists conceptualise them only in abstract dimensions. In addition, empiricist approaches tend to be agnostic about them and inconsistent. Therefore, Kant needs to secure these realms away from these influences and their arguments. These realms in Kantian theory become secular since they are used to explain knowledge, and they become materialised since they are considered to be comprehended by reason.

After his introduction, Kant is ready to present his *transcendental idealism*, which confronts German traditional philosophy while allowing him to expand his critical approach towards moral and political philosophy in the following *Critique*s. His transcendental philosophy will be named by his contemporaries (such as Garve, Mendelssohn and Tetens) as *der Alleszermalmer* (All-Crushing Destroyer of Metaphysics) due to the scepticism he develops with the assumptions regarding the 'things-in-themselves ' (Kuehn, 2001).

2.2.2.4 Transcendental Logic

After conceptualising *synthetic a priori*, space and time, Kant proceeds into the next part; *Transcendental Logic*. In this long part, after defining the tasks of transcendental logic, Kant divides his discussion into two parts: *Analytic of Concepts* (Book I) and *Analytic of Principles* (Book II). In *Analytic of Concepts* (Book I), he develops the conception of metaphysical deduction and transcendental deduction. After these sections, Kant steps into the conceptions of *Transcendental Judgment* and its application to pure Reason in the second division of *Transcendental Dialectic*.

The main reason Kant introduces *Transcendental Logic* is to formulate another distinction in his conception of knowledge. Kant considers knowledge to be of two different types: empirical (sensibility) and understanding. Kant investigates the empirical type under *Transcendental Aesthetic* with his innovations on *synthetic a priori*, space and time. In the second type, understanding, Kant develops his inquiry on thinking via the judgements with the approach he introduces in the previous sections. Named *Transcendental Analytic*, *Kant* focuses on the origins of thinking and investigates the question: "How will we find out what are the *a priori* concepts which necessarily are built into the mind and govern our thinking?" (Kant, 1998, pp.193-4, *CPR*, A50-1/B74-5).

2.2.2.4.1 Metaphysical Deduction

After formulating his approach to conceptualise space and time, Kant focuses on the question, "What makes thinking possible?" According to Kant, concepts are notions that allow us to make propositions and formulate our judgments. In parallel to the Aristotelian tradition, for Kant, every judgment has two dimensions: matter and form.

While examining these judgments, Kant asserts that although the subjects of these kinds of propositions are different, the relationship they establish between the subject and object is the same.[99] Kant defines these types of judgments as 'formal'. Formal here will later be conceptualised as 'formal logic', which will restructure the field of logic in philosophy[100]. For Kant, in these formal judgments, the subject and object come from experience, making them *a posteriori*. But if they contribute to extending understanding, then they must be considered as *synthetic a priori*. Then, it must not be a matter of judgments *per se* but rather the form of judgments that contribute to understanding independent from experience. By developing this argument, Kant discovers what 'the understanding' gives us *a priori* to put together subjects and predicates to make judgments.

Here, Kant formulates another question: "Are there any basic types of judgments that our minds have to use whenever they think?" (Kant & Guyer, 1999). This question reminds Kant of Aristotle's categorisation, which he knows very closely from his former education. Aristotle, millennia ago, had formulated a list of the forms of judgments. Kant follows Aristotle in this point but reaches beyond him in conceptualising four types of judgments with three sets, making the total of twelve judgment types[101].

[99] Kant mentions here that the format of the relationship is the same.

[100] It is observable that the Aristotelian influence on Kant shows itself in his making of the formal logic. For the Aristotelian influence on Kant, Sgarbi's *Kant, and Aristotle* (2016) offers a detailed examination on the influence of Aristotle on the development of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

[101] Kant's transcendental investigation of judgments starts with the 'quantity of the judgment', which Kant classifies judgments as universal, particular, and singular. Here, Kant argues that universal judgments (e.g., All 'S' is 'P') are possible because we have a concept of 'unity'. Therefore, particular judgments (Some 'S' are 'P') are possible because we have a concept of 'plurality' and singular judgments (This 'S' is 'P') because we have a concept of totality. The second type of judgment is the 'quality of judgments', which for Kant is the type that makes it possible for us to tell that something is so. Here, Kant classifies the judgments as affirmative, negative, and infinite. Affirmative judgments are showing the reality ('S' is 'P'), negative ones ('S' is not 'P') show negation and infinite ones ('S' is non- 'P') show limitation. For Kant, more than one category can imply these judgments. The third type is about relational judgments. In this type, Kant classifies judgments as categorical ('S' is 'P') (also named as the category of inherence and subsistence), hypothetical (if 'S' is 'P' then…) (also named as the category of causality and dependence), and disjunctive (Either 'S' and/or 'P' is …) (also named as the category of the community). These categories help us to construct the relations between different situations and judgments. The last type of Kant is the modality of judgments. Kant here classifies judgments as problematic ('S' may be 'P'),

Kant assumes these categories of judgments as *a priori* analytical tools to construct our judgments while thinking. For Kant, these categories are necessary to make judgments, and transcendental logic starts with this formulation.

2.2.2.4.2 Transcendental Deduction

After justifying the metaphysical deduction, Kant turns his attention to the process in which concepts apply to empirical reason. Kant explicitly announces his aims in this section as "to discover how the subjective conditions of thought can have objective validity"[102] (Kant, 1998, pp. 219-220, *CPR*, A84-85/B117-118) and to show "all sensuous intuitions are subjective categories"[103]. In the light of major Kantian scholars[104] and Kant himself, it is conceivable to define the aim of this section; to show the dialectical relationship between empirical intuitions (which are subject to/applicable to the subjective categories) and the subjective categories (appliable to empirical intuitions).

Kant remarks in this section that there is a 'need' for the transcendental deduction. This need confirms his purpose again as focusing on the relationship between, and the process of, thinking and knowing. For Kant, objects correspond to the conditions, and the understanding requires synthetic unity of thought. Therefore, that we have concepts does not justify their application to the phenomenon. Kant's opening statements here can be considered revolutionary again since he is the first one who focuses on the relations between categories and knowing.

Kant states that the outcome of this deduction is that "…consequently, no *a priori* cognition is possible for us except objects of possible experiences"[105] (Kant, 1998, p.264, *CPR*, B166).

As one of the most important parts of the *Critique*, *B Deduction* is composed of a chain of thought in which Kant formulates his propositions. Composed of two main premises, two inferences and a conclusion, this body of writing is interpreted by Kantian scholars differently and thought to be originally composed of one step[106]:

> The Transcendental Deduction of *a priori* concepts has thus a principle according to which the whole inquiry must be directed, namely, that they must be recognized as *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience,

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assertoric ('S' is 'P', emphasising the existence/non-existence), and apodeictic ('S' must be 'P', also named as the category of necessity).

[102] Although Kant is in favour of subjective interpretations of morality, he is not a relativist. On the contrary, Kant is interested in finding/developing universal moral principles by exercising human reason. According to Kant, the moral principles/moral law would have objective validity if they were universally applicable.

[103] According to Kant's approach, the categories defined by mere senses can only be subjective. A category or a proposition or an action needs to be universally applicable to be considered objective.

[104] Henry Allison (2004) describes Kant's aim as "to establish the applicability of the categories to whatever is given under the conditions of human sensibility" (Allison, 2004, p. 162), while Paul Guyer (2010) makes a similar remark: "the goal of the argument is to establish …that these pure concepts necessarily apply to any and all experience that we might have" (Guyer, 2010, p. 121). Bryan Hall also brings an explanation of Kant's purpose in this section: "to show 'the (subjective) categories' have a legitimate application to their objects" (Hall, 2010). Kuehn also adds, "It is a task of Transcendental Deduction to show that the (subjective) categories are necessary for experimental knowledge but insufficient for knowledge of objects independent of space and time" (Kuehn, 2001, p. 244).

[105] It is important to consider that the section of 'transcendental deduction' is different in two different editions in the time of Kant because Kant had reached a more concrete understanding of his interpretation after he received critical reviews on his masterpiece. Therefore, he revised this section in the second edition, which made Kantians rename this section 'B Deduction', referring to the second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1787.

[106] Some other accounts considered are structured by two steps of establishing that categories apply (Allison, 2004, pp. 160-161; Henrich, 1969, p.67).

> whether of the intuitions which are to be met in it or of the thought. Concepts which yield the objective ground of the possibility of experience are for this Reason necessary. (*CPR, A94/B126)*

In one of the most difficult passages in the first *Critique*, Kant restricts categories without the necessary experience. If the use of categories goes beyond experience, this use will become mere words. The use of categories can be justified only if they relate to experience.

Kant's first premise is that "All sensuous intuitions are subject to the categories, as conditions under which alone the manifold content of them can be united in one consciousness" (Kant, 1998, p.246, *CPR*, B132/A97). He is focusing on the manifold and the apperception that the manifold is related to. "The manifold content given in a sensuous intuition comes necessarily under the original synthetical unity of apperception" (Kant, 1998, p.246, *CPR*, B132/A97). Apperception will be an important concept in the following parts of the argumentation, especially as it represents self-awareness.

The second premise is "But the act of understanding by the content of given representations (whether intuitions or conceptions) is brought under one apperception, is the logical function of judgments" (Kant, 1998, p.252, *CPR*, B143-4/A107-108). Here Kant argues that judgment brings empirical intuitions under the unity of apperception. Therefore, there is a common ground of judgments[107].

Kant's first inference concerns the forms of judgment. He claims: "All the manifold, therefore, in so far as it is given in one empirical intuition, is determined in relation to one of the logical functions of judgment, by means of which it is brought into the union in one consciousness" (Kant & Guyer, 1998, *CPR*, B143/A107). After the first inference, Kant formulates his third premise, indicating a clear conclusion for the transcendental deduction. "Now the categories are nothing else than these functions of judgment so far as the manifold in a given intuition is determined in relation to them" (Kant, 1998, p.252, *CPR*, B143/A107). The premise about categories here brings the conclusion:

> Consequently, the manifold in an intuition is necessarily subject to categories of understanding. (Kant, 1998, p.252, *CPR*, B143/A107)

Therefore, Kant concludes by claiming that categories of the Understanding legitimately apply to empirical intuition. Judgments are syntheses. The subject synthesises empirical perception into a unity. This unity is the next target of Kant to define.

The section on *Transcendental Deduction* is one of the first attempts at constructing a systematic logic for the relationship between the *Reason* and *Understanding* (Kant, 1998, p. 245). This investigation is a step towards identifying the mechanisms of reason. Kant will carry his argumentation to the next sections where he tries to identify the form of reason, making him reach certain conclusions about idealism.

Kant's transcendental deduction is one of the most important parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and represents one of the key sections that comprise the skeleton for his critical approach. Kant's interpretation of the relationship between the Knowledge and the

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[107] The conception of 'Judgment' (*Urteil*) in Kantian philosophy refers to the third faculty and act that bridges the Reason and the Understanding. Kant considered that all thinking is in the form of judging. He separated two different meanings of judgment. Firstly, the faculty of judgment (*Urteilskraft*) refers to the power or capacity of judging. The second meaning is the act of judging (*Urteil) (CPR, A68-69/B93-94*). Kant considers the faculty of judgment (power of judgment) as the higher faculty of the mind (Holzhey & Mudroch, 2005).

Understanding is crucial to understanding the origins, in the *Critique*, of his purpose of undermining the static conception and separation between Knowledge and Reason. The *Transcendental Deduction* is a section where Kant identifies how the relationship between Knowledge and Reason functions, and he reconceptualises this relationship with a material ground (by showing how object and subject are related to each other, unlike how the traditional idealist presumptions explain it). Kant theorises a dynamic relationship that later will be seen to be related to his political philosophy. His *praxis* will identify the possibilities of a universal conception of world order.

Throughout the following section of *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant refers back to the examples he provided in his first two parts (*Schematism of Pure Concepts of Understanding* and *System of All Principles*). He does this to emphasise his argument that traditional justifications about the "nature of the soul, about the world as a whole, and God must be unsound" (Kuehn, 2001, p.246). As they are not justifiable, since we cannot know and understand them in themselves, they are in their realms and rationalist assumptions that determine the other phenomena must be wrong. Rationalist assumptions depart from purely theoretical assumptions to explain phenomena. They are doomed to fail since the assumptions used to explain the phenomena are not usable for this process. Therefore, rationalist philosophy, rationalist psychology, and rationalist theology fail as an epistemological and methodological approach. Kant's argument here is very sharp and destructive for rationalism and brought him the reputation of *Alleszermalmer* (all-crushing/the Great Destroyer), a name given to him by Mendelssohn (Kuehn, 2001).

Mendelssohn is not the only one thinking about Kant; rather, he joins many others in the traditional academic/intellectual circles (Guyer, 2018). For them, Kant planted a scepticism into epistemology, and this also reminds them of David Hume. Although it can be argued that David Hume's scepticism influenced Kant in a way that allowed Kant to realise the distinction, he is making in the *Critique of Pure Reason* about noumena and phenomena, Kant goes far beyond Hume and undermines his scepticism.

Kant's dialectical empiricism offers a revolutionary approach to the study of epistemology, challenging traditional empiricist views that prioritise sensory experience as the sole source of knowledge. At its core, dialectical empiricism recognises the dialectical relationship between subject and object. Unlike traditional empiricist views, which portray the subject as a passive recipient of sense data, dialectical empiricism emphasises the active role of the subject in shaping the object and vice versa. This recognition of the active interdependence between subject and object constitutes a crucial feature of Kant's epistemological break.

Moreover, Kant's dialectical empiricism is grounded in his theory of transcendental idealism, which posits that the mind structures the objects of experience according to its own innate categories. Transcendental idealism underscores the importance of the subject's active role in shaping the object. By recognising that the mind structures sensory information in a way that is intelligible to us, it emphasises that knowledge is not solely derived from sensory experience. Instead, knowledge is also influenced by the mind's innate structures. Therefore, the mind plays an active role in shaping the objects of experience, which are then further shaped by the subject's active engagement with them.

In sum, Kant's philosophical system offers a sophisticated and nuanced view of the relationship between subject and object. The recognition of their mutual interdependence in the process of knowledge creation marks a revolutionary change in our understanding of the nature of knowledge. The active role of the subject in shaping the object, and vice versa, challenges traditional views of epistemology and continues to shape contemporary philosophy. The theory

of transcendental idealism further emphasises the importance of the subject's active role in shaping sensory information and underscores the complex interplay between subject and object.

Kant's philosophical system aligns with the values and ideals of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as it emphasises the importance of individual autonomy and the active role of the subject in shaping knowledge. Furthermore, the theory of transcendental idealism, which underpins Kant's dialectical empiricism, contributes to the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s vision of self-cultivation and intellectual development by highlighting the importance of the mind's innate structures in shaping sensory information.

By contextualising Kant's epistemological break and dialectical empiricism in relation to the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s philosophical and ideological vision, this chapter seeks to offer a more comprehensive understanding of Kant's philosophical system. It underscores the significance of Kant's philosophical contributions in the broader cultural and social context of his time and highlights the continued relevance of his ideas in contemporary philosophical discourse.

2.3 POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF KANT'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL BREAK FOR THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

The long-standing crisis of feudalism has become the subject of extensive academic research, particularly with regard to the prevailing social and political unity across German-speaking Europe (Beiser, 1987, 1992; Mooers, 1991; Sheehan, 1989; Thornhill, 2007). The erosion of aristocratic power, a consequential outcome of the crisis, brought about a fragmented political landscape susceptible to social and political conflicts. As such, the foremost question in political theory for this period was how to consolidate power amidst a declining aristocratic class.

In response, three distinct approaches have emerged. The first is to consolidate power by fortifying traditional feudal princely powers and establishing mini-absolutisms (the traditional feudal response). The second approach proposes the centralisation of the political structure, similar to France's unification of feudalism with absolutism throughout German-speaking Europe (absolutist-paternalist). The third approach advocates consolidating power through a reformation of the existing political structure, utilising the state structure of the Prussian *Ständestaat*, as posited by the early liberals of the emerging bureaucratic classes in the rising bureaucratic absolutism (the Prussian Absolutism) – the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Despite developing mainly under the bureaucratic absolutism of the Prussian state-building process, the *Bildungsbürgertum* had a pluralistic structure, with different factions influenced by the three responses outlined above.

The late eighteenth-century debates in German political philosophy focused primarily on natural law and the legitimacy of the state regarding the social and political instabilities of feudalism (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2014; Mooers, 1991; Shilliam, 2009; Thornhill, 2007). The concentration on these topics was not a coincidence, as discussed in the previous chapter. It was shaped by the Prussian state-building processes and the reorganisation of social property relations, which dispensed with the traditional estate system of the military-agrarian complex of Prussia. In a similar vein, the different philosophical responses in this context projected their own paths toward social and political change. Various methodological and epistemological approaches also entered into rivalries, with rationalism, empiricism, and traditional idealism being the primary contenders (Thornhill, 2007). Consequently, there was no universal common ground to address the impacts of the crisis in one comprehensive philosophical approach, exacerbating the fragmentation and backwardness of German-speaking Europe and causing difficulties in consolidating and overcoming its tumultuous crisis.

Neither rationalist pro-absolutists nor conservative critics, nor the advocates of liberal society, were dominant in the debates surrounding state legitimacy due to the reality that the Prussian state was not consolidated until the very last period of Frederick II. Hence, although the state-building processes of Prussia involved a fast development, Prussia as a context was still coming from behind in terms of institutionalisation and state-building compared to its contemporaries in Western Europe. This backwardness caused an asymmetry between the theories projected and the actual development of the state to promote a reformation project which could have realised the premises of the *Aufklärung*.

The lack of a philosophical agency to define, interpret, and shape the social reality and present a pathway towards development and reformation was a formidable challenge. Thus, undertaking a critical analysis of the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism and its effects on social and political unity across German-speaking Europe was of paramount importance in discerning how these challenges could be surmounted, and a new era of political stability could be achieved.

Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy emerged in response to the crisis of his time, which was characterised by a lack of a universal epistemological and methodological approach to defining social phenomena and developing philosophical responses. This crisis was exacerbated by the particularistic-localist approaches to philosophy that complicated the development of an effective response (Thornhill, 2007; Wood, 1972). Kant sought to bridge the gap between metaphysics and science under a universal philosophy to address this crisis. He aimed to establish a philosophical agency that could address the impacts of the crisis from a universal objective standpoint with reason and the secular capacity of the human subject (Cassirer, 1981; Hunter, 2006; Maliks, 2014).

However, the existing philosophical traditions in German-speaking Europe did not provide a suitable guide to develop an individual moral agency. Absolutist-paternalists argued for the state as the agency; traditional feudalists favoured princely powers; and classical early liberals of the *Bildungsbürgertum* focused on the liberal conception of the individual as the agency (Beiser, 1992; Wood, 1972). Thus, Kant was influenced by his intellectual context and sought to carry the new ideas into his own philosophical context and redefine a philosophical agency that could address the crisis from a universal objective standpoint (Maliks, 2014).

To achieve this, Kant had to devote his entire life to this project and establish links with the *Bildungsbürgertum*. He involved himself in their class politics, which was about increasing their power and influence in the growing Prussian *Ständestaat* and attempted to transform it from the inside. However, Kant could only fully establish links with *Bildungsbürgertum* once his popularity grew; after long and difficult efforts in a mature time of his life (Cassirer, 1981; Kuehn, 2001; Schönfeld, 2000).

Immanuel Kant's development of critical philosophy represented a significant break from traditional epistemological frameworks. He recognised the limitations of previous attempts to promote metaphysics as science and instead focused on creating a new critical philosophy that redefined the relationship between the subject and object. Central to this redefinition was the idea that the subject is an active participant in the knowledge acquisition process, with the capacity for rational thought and interpretation (Wood, 1972).

To achieve this, Kant studied empiricist constructions of epistemology and developed a critical approach to their interpretation. He sought to reconstruct classical empiricism by redefining the relationship between subject and object, ultimately creating a new conceptual framework for the categories of knowledge and how the subject engages with the object (Cassirer, 1981).

Rather than being a passive recipient of sensory input, Kant conceptualised the human subject as an autonomous entity capable of interpreting the external world (Wood, 1972).

Kant's distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* (*CPR*, A1, B1), as well as synthetic and analytic categories (*CPR*, A 6-7/B10), served to highlight the human subject's capacity to understand and interpret the social reality around them (Gardner, 1999; Kant, 1998; van der Linden, 1988; Vörlander, 1977, Williams, 1983; Wood, 1972). By conceptualising space and time in a dialectical dimension, Kant liberated them from being fixed categories of the knowing process, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the world around us (Beck, 1969). Finally, through his transcendental logic, Kant created a new dialectical empiricism that was free from the mechanistic, one-sided classical empiricist assumptions (Wood, 1972).

Overall, Kant's epistemological break served to promote the human subject as an autonomous entity capable of understanding, interpreting, and shaping the social reality. By reconstructing the relationship between the subject and object in philosophy and conceptualising a transcendental realm, Kant created a universally applicable framework for understanding the world around us, free from particularistic standpoints (Kant, 1998, *CPR*, A50-1/B74-5). His transcendental idealism defined a new dialectical epistemology that promoted a universal philosophical ground for the human subject to play an active role in the creation of social reality.

In this context, the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared as a ground-breaking study that challenged the debates surrounding epistemology and methodology in philosophy and metaphysics. It is observable that the groundwork in which Kant planted the seeds for his political projection, which would later appear as an attempt to supply the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a metaphysical foundation for their reform aspirations (Maliks, 2014; Wood, 1972).

The *Critique of Pure Reason* is a seminal work within the realm of philosophy that did not directly address the debates concerning political philosophy prevalent at the time of its publication. However, it can be posited that this extensive examination served as the basis for the increasing interest among the *Bürgertum* in the discipline of political philosophy, as it presented a novel and alternative conceptual framework that emphasised the importance of independent reasoning. This relationship between Kant and the *Bildungsbürgertum* is analysed in great detail in the next chapter, illuminating the crucial role that Kant's contributions played in the development of political philosophy.

Kant's transcendental theory, presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, constitutes a ground-breaking achievement with regard to the influence of the *Bürgertum* on various approaches to political philosophy. This theory presented a pathway for the formulation of a new conception of the relationships between the individual, state, and society. However, it must be noted that this pathway was narrow and did not align with the contemporary understanding of liberal society in the late 18th century. Instead, it is suggested that Kant's transcendental theory be viewed as a precursor to ideas regarding morality and freedom, which could serve to enhance the relationships between the individual, state, and society.

2.3.1. Re-Philosophising Universalism

Kant's critical philosophy is widely recognised as an epoch-making achievement in modern thought, owing to its multifarious insights into the intricate relationship between the subject and the object in epistemology. In particular, Kant's *Transcendental Idealism* represents a revolutionary shift in the traditional philosophical paradigm, as it foregrounds the constructive capacity of the human subject in devising universally applicable principles that guide moral values and interpretations of social reality. By emphasising the constitutive role of the subject

in the creation of such principles, Kant's idealism fundamentally alters our understanding of universalism and the subject-object relationship, providing an innovative and compelling view that marks a departure from the dogmatic and speculative approaches of his predecessors.

In contrast to traditional Platonic idealism, Kant's universalism posits the human subject as the preeminent locus of agency in constructing universal principles, rather than relying on theological impositions or determinations that foreclose the subject's creative and intellectual capacities (Baum, 2019, p.114-118; White, 1993). Plato's universalism, which dominated the philosophical discourse for an extended period, was based on the conception of a collective imposition on the individual subject. According to Plato, everyone had a compulsory devotion to the universally constructed Republic, which he categorised as a transcendental entity that had a unique correspondence with the social structure. For Plato, the individual had no autonomy, and must serve and unite with the Republic (Plato & Lee, 1974). In contrast, Kant's approach to universalism represents a radical departure from this traditional view, as he presents a totally different understanding that elevates the human subject's agency and creativity.

For Kant, although the conception of individuality is different from the classical liberal approach, which centres the individual as a definitive concept for the construction of the social reality (Hobbes, 1969; Locke, 1948), the individual still has the capacity to be autonomous from external determination and has the potential to understand, interpret and shape the social reality through the human reason. Kant's transcendental idealism thus becomes the setting in which this capacity is actualised through the guidance of universally applicable principles. Kant's understanding of universalism, unlike Plato's, is not based on an imposition, nor a top-down relationship between the human subject and the social reality. Rather, Kant conceptualises universalism as a transcendental category created and shaped by the rational actions of the autonomous individual (Kant, 2002a, *CPrR*, 2002b, *G*).

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that Kant's notion of the autonomous individual encompasses crucial phases of evolution, during which the individual acquires self-awareness and individuality by engaging with their inherent human sociability (Cassirer, 1981; Wood, 1972). However, this conceptualisation, expounded upon in Chapter III, significantly diverges from Plato's insofar as it preserves the capacity of the human subject and does not solely regard them as a subordinate of the collective social and political agency.

In light of these insights, with his epistemological break, Kant manages to present an alternative understanding of universalism that is created and shaped by human agency, thereby heralding a new era in philosophy. This epistemological shift undermines the Platonic influence on German philosophy, which had hitherto dominated philosophical discourse and established a paradigm of universalism based mostly on theological and top-down justifications. Kant's approach, on the other hand, represents a radical recasting of universalism that foregrounds the role of the human subject and redefines the relationship between the subject and the object in a way that highlights the constructive and constitutive agency of the former.

2.3.2. Promotion of the Individual Agency

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* likewise marks a radical break with the traditional philosophical paradigm by redefining the agency of the subject in interpreting and reconceptualising social reality in its full complexity. In the midst of a longstanding political and social crisis, Kant's redefinition of individual moral agency offers a fresh approach to understanding the individual as an agent of change within society. Unlike the classical liberal conception of the autonomous individual, Kant's vision of the individual as a transcendentally dependent agency, informed by

universal principles, reframes our understanding of morality, codes, and pathways (Wood, 1972).

Kant's magnum opus, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, represented a major departure from both empiricist scepticism and rationalist dogmatism. Instead, he proposed a transcendental theory of knowledge that placed great emphasis on the active role of human beings in constructing the reality they perceive. According to Kant, institutions cannot be deemed legitimate simply because they reflect longstanding practices but must be subjected to the scrutiny of reason (Maliks, 2014, pp. 16-38). Likewise, moral concepts cannot be derived from experience alone, but must originate from the pure ideas of reason, which are then used to evaluate the concepts of virtue and justice that are discovered in experience. Although Kant did not directly engage in contemporary political debates, his theory of freedom of the will, which he developed in works such as *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, served as a foundation for his ethical thought.

Kant's philosophical tenets, specifically his opus *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, served as an intellectual oasis for *Bildungsbürgertum* during the *Aufklärung*. Kant's analytical approach towards conventional morality and his emphasis on individual freedom as the inherent denouement of human existence were viewed as lending credence to the anti-paternalist cause. The notion of individuals as eminent members of a 'kingdom of ends' further evinced an unwavering commitment to Rousseau's principles, which became a rallying point for those with democratic sympathies.

Furthermore, Kant's emphasis on the universal standard of law as the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong appeared to extend the rule of law to the innermost sanctum of moral agency. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these ideas were developed in a theoretical framework that abstracted moral agency from the societal and constitutional milieu (Maliks, 2014, pp. 16-38). Kant posited that individuals could exercise free will regardless of whether they lived in a monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, and even under despotism, one could still enjoy freedom, as the freedom of autonomy was a matter of individual conscience over which the individual alone had control (Beiser, 1992; Wood, 1972).

Notably, while Kant emphasised the treatment of persons as ends in themselves, a stance that contradicted the practices of most absolutist states during his time, he abstained from engaging in the discourse surrounding rights or legal obligations. Furthermore, he refrained from justifying the coercive authority of the state, which holds a monopoly on violence. His focus was on the exercise of rational self-restraint in ethics, with practical reason serving as the font of law, not public authority. Consequently, his ideas bypassed the typical concerns of natural law theories regarding the regulation of interactions and the avoidance of private coercion (Maliks, 2014; Thornhill, 2007). Kant approached political issues from the perspective of individual morality, without any intention of legitimising the state. His focus was on the realisation of moral virtue, emphasising the importance of *Aufklärung* as the key precondition for moral agency.

Immanuel Kant's epistemological break marks a pivotal point in the history of Western philosophy, as it redefined the role of individual moral agency in relation to a universal moral framework, which he conceptualised in his philosophy of transcendental idealism. One of the most significant aspects of Kant's conceptualisation of individual moral agency is his emphasis on the doctrine of freedom as a central feature of the agency-structure debate.

Kant's philosophical project sought to ground morality in a rational and objective framework that is universally applicable, transcending particular cultural, historical, or individual contexts.

To achieve this, Kant argued that moral laws should be grounded in pure reason, rather than on empirical or subjective factors. He proposed that reason, as a faculty of the mind, possesses innate categories and principles that shape our perception of the world, including the moral realm.

According to Kant, individuals possess the capacity for moral agency, which allows them to act autonomously based on their own rational judgment, rather than being determined by external factors such as social norms, cultural values, or biological impulses. The exercise of moral agency is guided by the categorical imperative, a universal principle that mandates treating people as ends in themselves, rather than as means to an end. In other words, individuals must respect the dignity and autonomy of others, regardless of their own interests or desires.

However, Kant's account of moral agency is not limited to the mere capacity to act autonomously. He placed great emphasis on the doctrine of freedom, which he saw as a necessary condition for moral agency. For Kant, freedom is not only a negative concept, meaning the absence of external constraints or coercion, but also a positive one, meaning the ability to act in accordance with the moral law. Thus, moral freedom entails the ability to choose and act on principles that are universal and in accordance with the categorical imperative.

Kant's emphasis on the doctrine of freedom in the agency-structure debate highlights the role of the individual's will in shaping moral action. According to Kant, the will is the faculty that directs our actions, and it is through the exercise of our will that we become moral agents. The will is free in the sense that it is not determined by external factors, but it is also rational, in that it is guided by the moral law. Thus, moral agency is not merely the ability to choose between alternative courses of action, but also the ability to choose based on rational and universal principles.

Kant's conceptualisation of individual moral agency emphasises the doctrine of freedom as a central feature of the agency-structure debate. The doctrine of freedom highlights the role of the individual's will in shaping moral action and underscores the importance of rational and universal principles in guiding moral decision-making. Through his philosophy of transcendental idealism, Kant sought to provide a universal and objective framework for morality that could ground individual moral agency in a way that is independent of particular contexts and cultural values.

The study at hand explores the intricate relationship between Kant's critical philosophy and its impact on the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a social class that emerged during the turbulent period of feudalism in German-speaking Europe. This era witnessed the emergence of three distinct responses to the crisis, each promoting specific agencies to achieve their respective political projects. However, what these responses had in common was that they regarded human agency as external to the crisis, considering it a passive recipient. In contrast, Kant's critical philosophy provided the *Bildungsbürgertum* with an alternative agency grounded in universal moral principles, which prevented conflicting clashes of interests while simultaneously preserving individual autonomy.

Kant's transcendental idealism equipped the *Bildungsbürgertum* with an alternative human agency and a transcendental ground to pursue their abstracted and universalised values. The relationship between the human subject and the world was now conceptualised in a way that centred on the main component of the *Bildungsbürgertum*: an individual with consciousness of the authentic community to which they belong. Kant's profound insights offered a philosophical foundation for the *Bildungsbürgertum* to reconcile its interests with those of society and the

state, thereby affecting the political and philosophical developments of German-speaking Europe.

Kant's anthropological and historical justifications of individual moral agency are examined in Chapter III of this thesis, where he presents a detailed examination of the individual's role in society. Kant argued that individuals are inherently moral beings who possess the ability to act according to the moral law, which is grounded in reason and not on external circumstances. According to Kant, the moral law is universal, and every person possesses a sense of duty that stems from the moral law (Kant, 2002a, pp. 32-33, G, *4:415*).

Kant's concept of the moral law and the role of the individual in society allowed the *Bildungsbürgertum* to promote their class interests while still maintaining a sense of morality and duty. This was a significant departure from the traditional feudals and liberal reformists, who regarded human agency as passive recipients of the social order. As a result, Kant's critical philosophy provided the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a renewed agency that allowed them to remain unalienated from the Prussian *Ständestaat* while still realising their reformist goals of augmenting their power and class interests in the state apparatus.

In conclusion, this thesis provides a rigorous examination of Kant's achievements and their impact on the *Bildungsbürgertum*. It highlights the complex interplay between Kant's critical philosophy and the political and philosophical milieu of German-speaking Europe. Kant's concept of the moral law and the role of the individual in society provided the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a renewed agency that allowed them to reconcile their interests with those of society and the state, thereby affecting the political and philosophical developments of German-speaking Europe.

CHAPTER III - KANT'S *AUFKLÄRUNG*: A SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

3.1 INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Immanuel Kant's epistemological break, as manifested in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, marked a significant shift in the trajectory of German philosophy. By positing the subject as the locus of knowledge and examining the capacity of human reason to comprehend the world, Kant established a new foundation for epistemology that provided a rich vein of theoretical insight for the development of a political theory that could address the pressing social and political issues of his time.

At the heart of Kant's critical philosophy was the question of the practicality of *Pure Reason*. While the first *Critique* had established the normative power of reason to formulate universal principles, it remained unclear whether this power was merely theoretical or if it had any practical implications for the organisation of society. Kant argued that the question of the practicality of Pure Reason was central to his entire philosophical and political investigation, and that it could only be fully understood by situating it within the context of human nature.

In order to fully explore the potential of his critical philosophy to inform political theory, Kant turned to the examination of the nature of the subject and the role of free will in the development of moral principles. He argued that human beings possess an inherent moral sense that allows them to recognise and uphold universal principles of justice and fairness. This moral sense, combined with the capacity of human reason to comprehend the world and make decisions based on rational considerations, forms the foundation of Kant's political theory.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, much of the philosophical discourse surrounding the concept of human nature revolved around debates on the ideal social order. Thomas Hobbes' concept of the state of nature (1651) served as a starting point for many of these discussions, as he posited that human beings were vulnerable to the inherently chaotic structure of the natural social order. In order to ensure their survival and self-fulfilment, individuals were forced to enter into political arrangements that protected their independence from this state of nature (Hobbes, 1969).

Locke revised Hobbes' conception of the state of nature, arguing that it was possible for individuals to enter into a consensual political order rather than being subjected to an absolute political authority. He proposed a more pluralistic and consensual *Social Contract* in which individuals rationally entered into political arrangements for both security and the realisation of their freedom (Locke, 1948). This liberal understanding of freedom argued for the individual's emancipation from external political determination.

Empiricist epistemology provided a suitable framework for this political theory, as it posited the subject as externally positioned to the objectified reality of political power. Both Hobbes and Locke conceptualised human nature as a pre-political stage for the social individual, implying that the nature of humans is essentially alien to itself. However, while they arrived at vastly different conclusions, both philosophers viewed the state of nature as a problematic conception that individuals sought to transcend through political arrangements.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's (1979, 1997) interpretation of human sociality represented a significant departure from the views of Hobbes and Locke. While they viewed the state of nature as a chaotic and problematic pre-political stage that individuals sought to transcend

through political arrangements, Rousseau argued that human beings are born free but become enslaved by social and political coercion. He focused on the alienation and suffering of the individual in the process of becoming individuated and argued that the only way to overcome this alienation was to establish a political order based on the will of the majority, or the *General Will*.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's political philosophy stands in stark contrast to that of his contemporary, John Locke. While Locke posits the individual as the primary agent of political change, Rousseau conceptualises freedom as subjectivity, a combination of self-activity and self-imposed law (Rousseau, 1997). This subjectivity is the foundation of his conception of the autonomous political society, comprising self-active individuals who engage in all activities in accordance with self-imposed laws and the self-generated will. It is this self-generated will that serves as the origin of the concept of the *General Will*, a means of emancipating the individual from exploitation and alienation under the rule of a single individual or group.

Rousseau seeks to universalise and legitimise his arguments about the positive, social nature of humanity through the incorporation of the historical and anthropological dimensions of human development into his political theory. He posits the self as the source of objectivity and universality, emphasising the importance of the individual and the role that self-activity and self-imposed law play in achieving freedom and autonomy. Thus, Rousseau's political philosophy diverges significantly from Locke's, with the former prioritising the promotion of the social good as a prerequisite for individual self-actualisation and the latter prioritising the agency of the individual in the political sphere.

Rousseau's ideas had a significant impact on Kant, who was in the process of formulating a new critique of empiricist epistemology. Kant believed that empiricism was inadequate for understanding the relationship between the individual and the social and political order, and he drew on Rousseau's ideas in his own political theory.

One of the main questions that Kant's revolutionary theoretical conclusions posed was whether *Pure Reason* was practical or merely normative. In order to argue that his theoretical conclusions about the self-actualised, free human subject could be applied in practical contexts, Kant adopted a similar strategy to Rousseau by seeking to provide an anthropological and historical justification for why human sociality is inherent to human nature and why the self-actualised human subject is key to human progress and freedom. Through this strategy, Kant sought to bring the conclusions of his epistemological break to a practical level, where they could be used to offer social and political responses to the long crisis of feudalism and promote the *Bildungsbürgertum* as the driving force for progress and reform.

Kant's approach to anthropology and history did not represent a complete shift from philosophy to politics and the social sciences, but rather a natural extension of his epistemological break into a social and political theory. This approach can be seen in his philosophical writings of the 1780s on topics such as the possibility of universal history, critical judgment, the practical dimensions of reason, teleology, and, most importantly, the *Aufklärung* movement. These writings allowed Kant to connect his main philosophical inquiries with debates on the social theory of the human subject and opened new avenues for political theorisation. At the same time, they served as a means of responding to his contemporaries who were speculating on the political implications of the Enlightenment in Europe.

Throughout these writings, Kant's conception of human nature tended to locate the *Aufklärung* as a stage at which the capacity of the human subject is actualised and it becomes free in accordance with universal moral principles. This conception of the *Aufklärung* was compatible with both his epistemological reconstruction of the human subject and his view of human sociality, and it promoted a social order in which the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s vision of reforming

Prussia could be realised through the establishment of a legitimate regime, a civil society, and enlightenment principles. As such, the *Aufklärung Project* became a key political arrangement under which the *Bildungsbürgertum* could be consolidated in the Prussian *Ständestaat*, increasing its power and influence, and contributing to the development of class politics.

After establishing his epistemological break, Kant's second task was to address the social and political crisis of his time. He did so by using his epistemological break as a method for developing a social and political theory for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This theory, which will be referred as a 'social epistemology', placed a strong emphasis on universalised moral principles, the importance of human sociality, and the role of the human subject in the advancement of humanity.

Despite its strong focus on class politics and the centrality of the *Aufklärung Project*, Kant's social and political theory maintained a commitment to these universalised principles and the prioritisation of human sociality. This chapter of the research is based on exploring the reflections of Kant's critical philosophy on social and political theory. The approach of Kant to anthropology and history will be examined as a means of bridging the gap between his epistemological break and the development of his initial political theory. Specifically, the attempt of Kant to place the *Aufklärung Project* at the centre of his political theory will be analysed as a response to the debates surrounding the impact of the long crisis of feudalism and the class politics of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The social epistemology of Kant will also be explored in the context of the events leading up to the French Revolution.

3.2 EMANCIPATION OF HUMAN REASON

> [(hu)Man] who is also conscious of himself as a *thing-in-itself*, also considers his existence insofar as it does not fall under conditions of time and considers himself as determinable only by laws that he on his own gives to himself through reason; and in this existence of his there is for him nothing antecedent to the determination of his will, but every action—and in general every determination of his existence varying in conformity with inner sense, even the entire sequence of his existence as a being of sense—is in the consciousness of his intelligible existence nothing but a consequence, and is never to be viewed as a determining basis of his causality as a noumenon (Kant, 2002, p.124, *CPrR*, 97-98)

In his re-examinations of the subject-object dynamic in epistemology, Kant posited that the human subject possesses a rational faculty and the ability to exercise free will. This conceptualisation of the human subject as autonomous from the external social reality aligns with the notion of the subject as a "thing-in-itself". However, Kant also acknowledged that the subject exists within a natural causal order and therefore maintains a dialectical relationship with the object, which is itself situated within the same causal framework. This duality of the human subject as both autonomous and situated within a causally determined reality is a key aspect of Kant's reconceptualisation of the subject-object dynamic.

Kant's re-examination of the subject-object relationship within the context of a causal order of nature aimed to illustrate the principle of causality as a constitutive element of human experience rather than as an inherent attribute of external objects. As Wood (1972) explains, this perspective shifts the focus from the determination of events by deterministic "laws of nature" to the subjective organisation of contiguous events into a coherent experience through the imposition of the concept of causality. Therefore, rather than being understood as a property of the "nature of things," the "laws of nature" are seen as a product of the cognitive processes through which we interpret and make sense of our surroundings. In this sense, the principles of

causality and natural laws serve as necessary frameworks for organising and comprehending our experiences rather than as objective truths about the external world. Kant mentioned his conception in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only one from which all the appearances of the world can be derived. It is also necessary to assume another causality through freedom to explain them. (*CPR*, A 444/B 472, A 448/B476)

In his philosophical endeavours, Kant aimed to thoroughly explore and establish the nature of the human subject and its relationship to the external world. As such, he engaged in the process of epistemological reconstruction, seeking to redefine the subject-object relationship in a way that solidifies the self-consciousness and autonomy of the human subject. Drawing upon the work of Rousseau, who posited the existence of an actualised individual governed by the *General Will*, Kant sought to further develop this concept by situating it within a broader theory of mind. He saw self-consciousness as a self-repeating process through which the human subject verifies his own existence and autonomy; a process that is contextualised within a dynamic, dialectical relationship with the social reality. This active conception of self-consciousness was integral to Kant's theory of freedom, as he asserted that autonomous and capable human reason is the foundation upon which this doctrine of freedom is based. In order to fully understand and justify human nature as a developmental, self-governed entity, Kant endeavoured to formulate a theory of how the verification of self-consciousness can be achieved. This process of verification (or self-legislation) serves as a crucial step in the reunification of the subject and object, allowing for a deeper understanding of their dynamic, interconnected approach to human nature.

In his philosophical endeavours, Kant sought to address and overcome the limitations of Humean scepticism, particularly as it pertains to the justification of causality within the epistemological framework. As an empiricist precursor, Hume posited that all knowledge is derived from experience and that the concept of causality is merely a habit or custom. Kant, however, aimed to provide a more thorough and systematic justification for causality by proposing a new conception of the human subject that takes into account its inherent sociality.

To do this, Kant built upon the work of Rousseau, who argued for the existence of an autonomous subject governed by self-imposed laws, as influenced by the *General Will*. Kant sought to further develop this concept by formulating how human reason can verify its own self-consciousness through these laws. In order to structure this relationship and provide a foundation for his theory of freedom, Kant introduced the concept of the *Categorical Imperative*, which serves as a moral guide for the actions of the autonomous subject.

By situating the human subject within this social and moral framework, Kant sought to reunite the individual with its human nature and sociality. In doing so, he opened the door for an examination of the origins of human nature through the fields of anthropology and history, allowing for a more systematic analysis and justification of the human sociality as the foundation of human nature. In this way, Kant's critique of Humean scepticism represents a significant step forward in the development of a comprehensive and coherent philosophical system.

Furthermore, Kant's categorical imperative laid the foundation for a self-legislating human subject.

3.2.1. The Categorical Imperative

> Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law (Kant, 2002b, *The Formula of Universal Law (FUL) G*, 4:421).

The *Categorical Imperative* is designed to differentiate the "acts motivated by respect for the law" and "acts motivated by self-interest or other agendas". The ultimate purpose of the *Categorical Imperative* is to reach a supreme principle of morality.

The formulation of the *Categorical Imperative* starts with a distinction between hypothetical imperatives and *Categorical Imperative*s. The use of imperative refers here to "a practical rule that tells us that we rationally ought to act in some way or another" (Frick, 2020). Hypothetical imperatives function through a conditional (e.g., If you want A, do B). On the other hand, *Categorical Imperatives* are statements that order for an action to be performed (Do/or do not do A!). The actions ordered are necessary and universally doable. After distinguishing these imperatives, Kant investigates moral imperatives and tries to analyse whether they are hypothetical or categorical.

Starting from the *Lying Promise* part (*G*, 4:422), Kant gives a few examples to detail the conditions of certain maxims constituting the universal law of nature[108,109]. Kant clarifies how sometimes the very specific details cannot be universalised (e.g., someone is buying something on a certain date and time)[110]. After outlining these conditions to define the universal law of nature (*G*, 4:421), Kant returns to explaining how the supreme moral principle can be possible.

For Kant, all imperatives have an end. As an imperative, the *Categorical Imperative* has an end too. Since the *Categorical Imperative* is necessary and universal, its end would have to be "something the existence of which in itself" has an absolute worth, "something which has an end itself" (*G*, 4:428).

> So, act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means. (*G*, 4:429)

As can be seen from this famous quotation, for Kant, what defines a supreme moral principle is acting in accordance with the notion of humanity. This principle constitutes Kant's famous *Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself* (*G*, 4:429).

Kant's formulation of the *Categorical Imperative* in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* has generated much discussion and debate within the realm of political philosophy due to its differing definitions in Section I and Section II. In Section I of the text, the *Categorical Imperative* is presented as a requirement for individuals to "act only on universalizable maxims" (*G*, 4:421) and to possess "goodwill." However, in Section II, the *Categorical Imperative* is defined as a mutual act of respect between parties involving the application of universal maxims for humanity. These differing definitions have led to varied interpretations of the role of the *Categorical Imperative* in Kant's political philosophy.

On the one hand, some scholars argue that the *Categorical Imperative* serves as a test for free will, highlighting the potential for individuals to violate universally accepted moral laws. In

[108] *The Formula of the Law of Nature* (FLN, *G* 4:421) refers to the first formula of Kant's moral law.
[109] The *Lying Promise* is an example of certain actions which cannot be universalised. It is impossible for lying, for example, to be universalised because if everyone lies, the realities will be contradicting each other.
[110] An example can be given of a seller not selling anything and preventing anything being bought. So not selling cannot be universalisable.

order to be considered moral, Kant asserts that laws must be rationally designed and universally applicable. When applied to the realm of politics, this means that "proposed policies are rational only if they can be universally approved as law, without contradiction" (Maliks, 2014, pp.16-38). In this sense, the *Categorical Imperative* serves as the foundation for the logical design of Kant's political order and is crucial to understanding his political philosophy.

On the other hand, others have pointed to the mutual act of respect described in Section II of the *Groundwork* as being indicative of the central role of interpersonal relationships in Kant's political philosophy. This interpretation suggests that the *Categorical Imperative* is not just a test for the rationality of proposed policies but also a call for individuals to consider the impact of their actions on others and to act in a way that promotes the dignity and autonomy of all parties involved. Ultimately, the multifaceted nature of Kant's formulation of the *Categorical Imperative* highlights the complexity and nuance of his political thought.

In his *Groundwork*, Kant gives an overview of how he views humanity, freedom, and autonomy in relation to the *Categorical Imperative*. Kant, with his formulations in the *Groundwork*, asserted that his philosophy is applicable in practical dimensions. The *Categorical Imperative* is both a theoretical design and a practical test, which preconditions rationality and universalisability to consistently act morally. In addition to this, the formulation of the *Categorical Imperative* conditions human beings to act with empathy, by thinking about each other's needs. If a society is acting through acknowledgement of the *Categorical Imperative*, then for Kant this allows that society to act in principle with the conception of humanity.

Being 'self-legislating' ensures the autonomy of individuals, and when it is generalised to society, society comes to consist of autonomous individuals transforming society into an autonomous one.

> Act only so that the will could regard itself as at the same time giving universal law through its maxim. (*G*, 4:434)

Kant highlighted those self-legislating actions which through universally applicable forms change the conception of laws implemented by 'external' actors such as the state or other authorities. Rather than spreading the notion of obedience and coercion, the positive law turns into something that individuals, through self-legislation, can feel a belonging to[111].

So, autonomy is created by setting up a principled *Practical Reason* through the *Categorical Imperative*. Kant continued to unpack the reflections of acting with the *Categorical Imperative* to human freedom and autonomy in his second *Critique*.

The findings of these formulations were, and are, influential in the field of political philosophy. Kant was aware of this, especially for the growing conflicts in and around his historical context. He was aware of how these findings would influence his contemporaries and followers. Hence, what Kant did next was to expand the discussions under a systematic doctrine. The *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) appeared as a work in which Kant systematised a doctrine of (*Pure) Practical Reason* to unpack his reflections on human freedom and autonomy. These

[111] Reidar Maliks (2014, p.25) attracts attention to an important point of Kant's attempt at recognising self-legislation for everyone:

> For example, the positive laws of a state are always paired with sanctions, which force recalcitrant subjects to obey. But a person acting from the *Categorical Imperative* acts out of respect for the law, not out of fear of punishment or in the interest of a happy outcome. Such a person can see himself as a co-legislator since it is the authority of *Practical Reason* itself that imposes the law on him. Kant describes this in terms of the capacity of persons to be members of a kingdom of ends *(Reich der Zwecke)*, where those who are autonomous are at once sovereigns and subjects.

conceptions were combined with Kant's transcendental doctrine and projected a political philosophy that defined Kantian thought, especially in his late works.

Kant's introduction of the categorical imperative as a guiding principle for ethical reasoning not only served as a powerful analytical tool but also allows for the establishment of a universalist teleological framework. This framework centred on the human subject as a moral agent capable of using reason to determine the ethical validity of actions. By emphasising the importance of rationality in ethical decision-making, Kant provided a means for individuals to transcend their subjective desires and instead pursue universal principles of morality. Moreover, by contextualising selfhood as a form of moral agency, Kant empowered individuals to actively shape their own ethical outlook and thus pursue a vision of progress that was grounded in a commitment to universal moral principles. This perspective aligned with the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s aspiration for social and intellectual advancement and offers a compelling vision for personal and collective moral development.

3.2.2. The Constitution of the Selfhood as Moral Agency

Through his formulation of the *Categorical Imperative*, Kant laid the foundations for the self-active human subject to follow self-imposed laws. The significance of the *Categorical Imperative* lies not only in its justification of how the self-active human subject enters into a dialectical relationship with social reality, but also in its conceptualisation of self-consciousness as an outcome of self-activity within these laws. In other words, Kant's self-active human subject is realised through its activity in the dialectical union of the subject and object, rejecting the empiricist epistemology's characterisation of the subject as a passive recipient of social reality.

To further conceptualise this 'dynamic selfhood', Kant differentiated between different types of awareness in relation to perception. These include 'implicit perception' and 'distinctive perception', the latter of which refers to consciousness in the form of experience, characterised as more active and autonomous. As Kant explained in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, distinctive perception represents "the continuous experience of the self-involved in true self-consciousness" (Wood, 1972, p. 52). In this way, Kant conceptualised the nature of perception and experience as 'developmental and dynamic', clarifying the relationship between self-consciousness and perception. Kant referred to the kinds of perception in the first *Critique*, defining the nature of the perception and experience as "developmental and dynamic" and clarifying the relationship between self-consciousness and perception:

> Namely, this thoroughgoing identity of the apperception of a manifold given in intuition contains a synthesis of the representations and is possible only through the consciousness of this synthesis. For the empirical consciousness that accompanies different representations is by itself dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject. The latter relation therefore does not yet come about by my accompanying each representation with consciousness, but rather by my adding one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis. Therefore, it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness that it is possible for me to represent the identity of the consciousness in these representations itself.
>
> The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein, and although it is itself not yet the consciousness of the synthesis of the representations, it still presupposes the possibility of the

> latter, i.e., only because I can comprehend their manifold in a consciousness do I call them all together my representations; for otherwise I would have as multi-coloured, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious (Kant, 1998, pp. 247-48, *CPR*, B134-135).

The constitution of selfhood, then, relies on the developmental relationship between perception and experience, which is achieved through the evolution from perception to the capacity for experience (*Entwicklung zur Menschheit* or "development toward humanity") (Kant, 2006, p.16, *Antr*, 1:128). This process of attaining selfhood and advancing the perception to the capacity for experience is facilitated through confrontation with the external world.

Building upon his critique of Humean empiricism, Kant distinguished between two types of selfhoods: one that is reliant on sensation as the source of perceiving experience passively, and another that gains consciousness through mental processes. The constitution of the self involves the synthesis of discrete, passive sensations of the rudimentary 'self' into unity, and it is precisely the consciousness of this power of combination, this "act of spontaneity," that produces the human experience of oneself as intelligent and free, a central aspect of Kant's doctrine of freedom (Wood, 1972, p. 53).

The consideration of the other in the dialectical relationship between the subject and object while formulating the self-consciousness of the subject highlights the ontological necessity of the other for the human subject. The human subject must engage with and interact with 'others' in order to attain consciousness of their own self-activity, indicating the inherent social nature of the human subject. This stands in contrast to the empiricist epistemology's understanding of individuality as a fundamental aspect of human nature, as Kant argued that individuality is not inherent but rather an achievement gained through dialectical relationships with others. This aligns with Rousseau's belief that the ontological meaning of the individual is derived from their sociality, making human sociality definitive for the human subject.

In this way, Kantian epistemology conceived of the origins of human nature as social, seeking to dialectically unite individuality with communality in the inseparable relationship between the human subject and others, the individual and society, and the subject and object. This understanding of the human subject's relationship to others and the social world has significant implications for Kant's political philosophy, as it emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships and the need for individuals to consider the impact of their actions on others. In order to practicalise and justify this conception of the human nature, Kant turned to the fields of anthropology and history, using them as a means to examine and understand the development of the human subject and to lay the foundation for the development of political theory.

3.3 KANT'S TELEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HUMAN PROGRESS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL JUSTIFICATION

3.3.1. Discovering the Universal Human Sociality

The foundation of Kant's moral agency was just the beginning of his philosophical endeavours, as he subsequently turned his attention towards historical and sociological contextualisation of his epistemological breakthrough for the general perspective of humanity. His early attempts to present his views in anthropology and history took place during the 1760s and 1770s (Church, 2022, pp.29-35). Throughout the late 1780s, Kant focused on incorporating anthropological and historical explanations for human nature as a social entity. In this endeavour, Jean Jacques Rousseau's conception of human progress from nature to culture greatly influenced Kant's thinking. Building on Rousseau's conception of progress, Kant emphasised the importance of

a sense of community as a prerequisite for society and anchored this concept in the notion of consciousness. As consciousness became a defining feature that renders social life intelligible and human, Kant continued to expand his investigation into constructing a teleological framework that would justify his propositions about human moral agency in a historical dimension. One of the most seminal concepts in Kant's political philosophy was the idea of 'unsocial sociability', which identified his approach to the nature of individual moral agency. His 1780s writings, *Idea for a Universal History* (1784) and *Conjectural Beginning* (1786), represented early attempts to formulate a teleological framework for human progress. These works also laid the groundwork for Kant's formulation of the 'end of nature' as a teleological system in the third *Critique of the Power of the Judgment* (1790). By the end of the 1790s, Kant had established a comprehensive teleological framework to contextualise his epistemological breakthrough for the human subject. In order to fully understand Kant's conception of the origins of human sociality as a foundation for his teleological framework, it is crucial to examine and explain his focus on anthropological and historical explanations, the influence of Rousseau's theory of progress, and the centrality of concepts such as consciousness and community.

3.3.1.1 The Rousseauan Conception of Human Progress from Nature to Culture

Rousseau's conception of human progress from nature to culture places a significant emphasis on the role of compassion as a driving force for forming a conscious human community. According to Rousseau, the development of compassion serves as the foundation for the transition from an unconscious universal community, present in the state of nature, to a conscious human community. Compassion, as an unconscious identification with other human creatures, enables individuals to become aware of their shared humanity and develop a sense of communal responsibility towards each other.

This idea of compassion as a key element for forming society is central to Rousseau's political philosophy. He argued that the emergence of compassion marks a pivotal point in the progression from nature to culture as it leads to the formation of social bonds, ultimately resulting in the creation of society. This development is not a process of separation and isolation but rather a process of unification with others.

In addition, Rousseau's theory of progress highlights that the development of compassion is a necessary step towards forming the 'human community', which he believed existed before society in the state of nature. Furthermore, the development of compassion allows individuals to move beyond self-interest and consider the interest of the collective, and therefore it serves as a foundation for morals and ethics. This, in turn, provides a basis for political organisation and governance. Therefore, Rousseau's theory of progress through compassion offers a unique perspective on the origins of human sociality and how it is fundamental for establishing and advancing society.

In *Discourses on the Origins of Inequality* (1754), Rousseau's anthropological account presents a narrative of the unconscious stage of human subjectivity, wherein the individual's alienation towards his uniqueness and individuality, as well as his relationship with others, is described. This is also the stage where the human subject differentiates himself from other living creatures. From childhood to adulthood, the biological development of the human being serves as a solid material basis for supporting Rousseau's argument.

> This repeated relevance of various beings to himself, and one to another, would naturally give rise in the human mind to the perceptions of certain relations between them. Thus the relations which we denote by the terms great, small, strong, weak, swift, slow, fearful, bold, and the like, almost insensibly compared

> at need, must have at length produced in him a kind of reflection, or rather mechanical prudence, which would indicate to him the precautions most necessary to his security [5].
>
> The new intelligence resulting from this development increased his superiority over other animals, making him sensible of it. He would now endeavour, therefore, to ensnare them, would play them a thousand tricks, and though many of them might surpass him in swiftness or in strength, would in time become the master of some and the scourge of others. Thus, the first time he looked into himself, he felt the first emotion of pride; and, at a time when he scarce knew how to distinguish the different orders of beings, by looking upon his species as of the highest order, he prepared the way for assuming pre-eminence as an individual [6].
>
> Other men, it is true, were not then to him what they now are to us, and he had no greater intercourse with them than with other animals; yet they were not neglected in his observations. The conformities, which he would in time discover between them, and between himself and his female, led him to judge of others which were not then perceptible; and finding that they all behaved as he himself would have done in like circumstances, he naturally inferred that their manner of thinking and acting was altogether in conformity with his own. This important truth, once deeply impressed on his mind, must have induced him, from an intuitive feeling more certain and much more rapid than any kind of reasoning, to pursue the rules of conduct, which he had best observe towards them, for his own security and advantage [7] (Rousseau, 1997, p.162, *DOI*, II: 5-6-7).

According to Rousseau, the biological development of the human being is accompanied by process of sensitivity towards others and an awareness of the human subject's nature and that of others. This serves as the foundation for the differentiation of community for the process of individuation. From their unconscious stage, human beings possess a universal *a priori* understanding of the notion of community, derived from their natural development, and they evolve into a conscious human community. What Rousseau emphasised is that there is a notion of the human community prior to civil society, which exists as *a priori* and universal, distinct from the establishment of a contractual society. This understanding of community is derived from the internal needs of human beings, both for their biological and social development.

For Rousseau, the human community and civil society corresponded to two distinct understandings of social organisation, with the latter being historically instituted and undermining the natural sense of community by replacing it. Therefore, Rousseau posited the need to establish a new *Social Contract* that is organic to the understanding of the notion of human community, to preserve the sense of community derived from the natural development of human beings.

Rousseau's anthropological account, as articulated in his seminal work *Discourses on the Origins of Inequality* (1754) and *Emile* (IV), posited that the self-realisation of the necessity of the *General Will* emerges through the institutionalisation of compassion as the foundational principle of social development. This is because compassion lays the groundwork for the emergence of the *General Will* and, subsequently, the attainment of self-consciousness, or conscience. For Rousseau, conscience referred to the human subject's ability to internalise the *General Will* within themselves, thereby revealing their capacity to freely think, act, and consider themselves in relation to others (Rosseau, 1979, Emile, IV).

This understanding is reflected in the social and political foundations of society as the *Social Contract*. Human subjects, imbued with self-consciousness, conform to their natural consciousness, and join the *Social Contract* in accordance with the *General Will*. Rousseau critiqued the *Social Contracts* proposed by Hobbes and Locke, as he believed they were predicated on coercion and failed to take into account the true nature of human beings. In contrast, Rousseau's *Social Contract* was organic and represented a reunification of human subjects with their true nature, as he elaborated in "*Social Contract*" (Rousseau, 1997, *Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter VIII).

Rousseau saw the transition from nature to culture as a moral achievement for the human subject. His anthropological transition went beyond a broad theory of a transition to civil society, as it incorporated moral and evolutionary dimensions, which he utilised to establish the foundations of his political theory. The primary aim of Rousseau's theoretical construction was to revitalise human sociality as the primary development from human nature. The institutionalisation of compassion and sense of community become inherent to human nature through the establishment of the *Social Contract*. Consciousness renders sociality as intelligible and distinctly human and naturalises human progress during the transition from nature to culture. Through these arguments, Rousseau presented a theoretical framework that was justified through the anthropological and historical transition of human progress. His construction proved to be highly influential for Kant, who was already contemplating the development of an explanation of the anthropological and historical dimensions of his own epistemological break.

Kant's understanding of social and political theory was intimately connected to his conception of community and consciousness. Influenced by Rosseau’s holistic explanation of the transition from nature to culture, Kant posited that the sense of community is a *sine qua non* for the existence of society, as it serves as the foundation upon which social life is grounded. Furthermore, he contended that consciousness serves as the means through which society becomes intelligible and distinctively human.

Ernest Cassirer, an early Neo-Kantian philosopher, discussed the impact of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Immanuel Kant's philosophy in his work. According to Cassirer (2020, pp. 175-198), Kant was deeply influenced by Rousseau's political theory and its holistic construction of human consciousness and progress. Specifically, Cassirer argues that Kant was drawn to Rousseau's ideas on the transition from nature to culture and sought to theorise this process in his own work. In this way, Cassirer suggests that Kant's search for a universal self-consciousness is closely tied to Rousseau's ideas on the development of human society. Kant revealed more of his approach to anthropology and history in his 1780s works in relation to his purpose of contextualising his epistemological break for the *Bildungsbürgertum*’s conception of social and political reformation of the Prussian order.

3.3.1.2 Conceptualising Selfhood: Unsocial Sociability

In his seminal work, *Idea for a Universal History* (1784), Kant delved into the intricacies of his analysis of the idea of human progress, specifically in relation to the *Bildungsbürgertum*. He asserted that the achievement of civil society is intricately linked to the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s strategic objectives of reforming the Prussian state through the implementation of a constitution. Kant posited that the constitution serves as the highest goal of nature, and that the teleological system is designed to promote the will of nature as the foundation for a universal history.

It is worth noting that Kant's conception of human progress was predicated on the universalisable cosmopolitan conditions of the Enlightenment. In this sense, he contended that

a civic union is essential in achieving wholeness in the Aristotelian sense, as it serves as the means through which individuals transcend their particularity and become part of a cohesive community. Furthermore, the constitution that Kant envisioned was not just a set of laws but a societal and moral principle, that will shape the collective will of the people in line with nature's will and will guide them towards the highest goal of nature which is the achievement of a civilised society.

Kant also believed that this civic union will be the foundation of a universal history. He believed that by studying the historical development of humankind, one can come to understand the laws of nature that govern human society and use this understanding to guide the future development of humankind towards a more civilised state.

Furthermore, Kant's understanding of human progress was not limited to just material and economic advancements, but it encompassed a holistic view of human development that included moral, intellectual, and cultural advancements. He believed that the ultimate goal of human progress was not just to achieve a materially prosperous society, but to create a society where individuals are able to fully realise their potential and lead a good and fulfilling life.

As Kant began his short text, he differentiated between the world-in-itself and the world-as-it-appears-to-us by stating that *Erscheinung* (Appearance) is provided by historical narrative (Kant, 2006, *Idea*, 8:17). Historical narratives are the only means by which the world appears, and Kant's purpose was to identify what motivates historical progress for the human subject. In his work, Kant identified the human subject as an agent who not only follows instincts, but also is capable of rational planning and action (8:18). History can be understood by human subjects through this powerful ability. According to Kant, to understand history, one must find the 'end of nature' that is in other words, the ultimate point to which the historical progression has the potential of arriving.

Kant continued by emphasising that all living things have a purpose with a fully developed pre-dispositions following the early Aristotelian claim (8:18). Moreover, human beings, as the only rational beings in the world, use reason to realise these pre-dispositions. Kant underlined that the human subject's purpose is not his individual development but the development of his species as a whole (8:19). In this regard reason is defined as the "ability of a creature to extend the rules & ends of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instincts" (8:19-20).

After distinguishing the human subject from other living things due to its rational capacity and the free will that is internal to it, Kant's purpose was to specifically characterise the human subject for the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s conception of a citizen. This citizen is not very traditional; rather it is social, enlightened, sophisticated, and ideological. In the fourth proposition of this text, Kant aimed to conceptualise these specific features with a new definition: unsocial sociability (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*). It refers to the antinomy between the social nature of human beings and their conscious isolation from each other. Kant described this notion in the *Idea for a Universal History:*

> The human being inclines to become socialized, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e., feels the development of his natural predispositions. However, he also has a great propensity to individualize (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way, and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others. Now it is this resistance that awakens all the powers of the human being, brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and, driven by ambition, tyranny, and

> greed to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot stand, but also cannot leave alone. *(Idea,* 8: 20-21)

In his teleological framework, Kant drew attention to the paradoxical phenomenon of *unsocial sociability* and its role in the anthropological realisation of the human species. Specifically, he posited that this innate characteristic, which is a natural consequence of being human, presents both a purpose and a challenge in the pursuit of creating a civil society (8:22). As such, Kant regarded unsocial sociability as a crucial aspect of the 'greatest problem' facing the human species.

> The greatest problem for the human species to which nature compels it to seek a solution is the achievement of a civil society which administers right universally…Thus a society in which freedom under external laws is connected to the highest possible degree with the irresistible power, that is, a perfectly civil constitution, must be the highest goal of nature for human species, since it is only by solving and completing this task that nature can attain its other goals for humankind (Kant, 2006, p. 8, *Idea*, 8:22).

Kant's understanding of the human species in anthropological terms was rooted in his belief that the evolution of self-consciousness is a critical process for achieving human freedom. This position was exemplified in his analysis of Rousseau, in which he drew a correlation between the development of self-consciousness and true (unalienated) individuality in relation to human sociality. Kant argued that pure individualism, as posited in liberal conceptions, would result in the abuse of one's own free will (8:23). He contended that as human beings, we are inherently unsociable and possess a natural inclination towards self-preservation, which can lead to conflicts and clashes with others. Therefore, he emphasised the significance of a supreme authority to prevent individualism from existing in isolation from sociality.

One of Kant's earliest conceptions of a supreme authority appeared in the context of a social order built on a "just and civil constitution" (8:24). He posited that the establishment of such a constitution is not achievable unless there is a solution for establishing "law-governed external relations between states" (8:24). In this regard, Kant proposed the idea of a commonwealth as a solution for this purpose. He contended that the unsocial sociability that compels the human subject towards a higher goal within this commonwealth also has implications for relations between states.

Kant argued that the human subject's evolution from unsocial sociability towards self-conscious human sociality, lays the foundation for a just and civil society, and ultimately for the "abandoning the lawless state of savagery and entering into federation of peoples" (8:24). He maintained that human beings are naturally inclined towards self-preservation, and that this inclination can lead to conflicts and clashes with others. However, by establishing a just and civil constitution, and a commonwealth that governs the law-governed external relations between states, human subjects can be guided towards a higher goal that transcends their self-preservation instincts.

Moreover, Kant asserted that this higher goal is not just limited to the individual's self-preservation but also includes the preservation of the community as a whole. He posited that this is the only way to ensure that individualism does not lead to the abuse of one's own free will, and that the human subject's unsocial sociability is channelled towards the greater good of the community. In this way, Kant's understanding of the human species in anthropological terms was closely linked to his teleological framework, and his ideas about the evolution of self-consciousness and the role of a supreme authority in achieving human freedom.

In this federation of peoples composed of commonwealths:

> every state could expect its security and its rights not by virtue of its own power or as a consequence of its own legal judgment, but rather solely by virtue of this great federation of peoples from a united power and from the decision based on laws of the united will (Kant, 2006, p. 10, *Idea*, 8:24)

According to Kant, the supreme authority in the context of a just and civil society is a united will that satisfies the interests of all its components, while preserving equality and the rule of the united will. Rather than a deterministic relationship, Kant described this supreme authority as an organic reflection of the state and society of individuals with self-conscious human sociality. Therefore, for Kant, "a society in which freedom is under external laws connected to the highest possible degree of irresistible powers" has the capacity to represent and exercise the interests of all its components (8:22).

Kant's reflections on the highest stage of society continued with references to the Epicurean conception of a world cosmology (8:25). In order to reach the stage of common agreement and legislation or automatic management, Kant drew attention to two possibilities. On the one hand, it is possible for states to experiment with different formations until they reach a sustainable Epicurean universal condition, which provides for the organic organisation of civil society. On the other hand, it is possible that "nature pursues a regular course and gradually leads our species from the low level of animal nature to the highest level of humanity by its own art" (8:25). Kant's main point here was to question the purposiveness of nature: "Is nature purposive in parts and purposeless as a whole?"

Kant's presentation of the cosmopolitan condition appeared here as a condition of public security (8:26). He argued that in order to achieve this condition, society needs to establish a united will that satisfies the interests of all its components, while preserving equality and the rule of the united will. Furthermore, this process can be achieved through experimentation with different formations or by nature's gradual progression towards the highest level of humanity. Ultimately, Kant's ideas about the supreme authority and cosmopolitan condition were closely linked to his understanding of the human species in anthropological terms, and his teleological framework for achieving human freedom. According to Kant:

> cosmopolitan condition of public security introduces that human beings are not completely free of danger so that humankinds' powers do not fall into slumber, but also not without a principle of the equality of their mutual actions and reactions, so that they do not destroy one another (8:26).

In the final two propositions, Kant's main aim was to translate the design he presented concerning the unsocial sociability of the human subject to the level of an international order or world cosmology. Therefore, he further defined the nature of the civil liberties pursued by human subjects. For Kant, not all contexts in which civil liberties are pursued will have positive effects on human freedom. He posited that the condition for identifying a struggle for civil liberty as positive is dependent on its consistency with the freedom of others. In this context, Kant identified *Aufklärung* as a distinctive category for identifying the 'greater good' (8:28).

In light of this principle, structural revolutions can lead to a universal cosmopolitan condition only if they are consistent with the "original predispositions of the human species being developed" (8:28). Kant argued that it is necessary to consider the context in which civil liberties are pursued and their potential effects on human freedom. He posited that civil liberties can only be considered positive if they are consistent with the freedom of others, and if they contribute to the "greater good" as defined by the principle of *Aufklärung*.

Kant finalised his proposals with the following description of his philosophical project as:

> A philosophical attempt to describe the universal history of the world according to a plan of nature that aims the perfect "civic union" of the human species must be considered to be possible and even to promote the intention of the nature" (Kant, 2006, p. 15, *Idea,* 8:30).

In relating the 'will of nature' to the 'idea of a universal history', Kant presented his conception of the ideal social and political order for human subjects, organically linked to human sociality. According to Kant, human subjects only achieve self-consciousness and reach the highest stage of development through consistently evolving in accordance with their nature. His conception of human nature, together with the framework of unsocial sociability and cosmopolitan condition, serves as an anthropological and historical justification for his epistemological break. This break considers the human subject's development in relation to their ability to become self-conscious through their sociality.

For the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Kant's anthropological and historical justification of his epistemological break held significant implications for the conception of human progress. Kant not only highlighted an organic path towards progress which was consistent with human nature or human sociality, but also discussed Rousseau's concept of a pro-social individual who evolves from an unconscious communitarian stage to a self-conscious communitarian stage. Unlike Rousseau, Kant's perception of the self-conscious and pro-social stage was not fully dependent on the determination of the majority. In other words, Kant did not consider the *General Will* as the domination and determination of the majority, as Rousseau did, but rather as a cosmology where every component's autonomy is preserved under a common agreement, without the possibility of individual abuse of free will.

In the *Idea for a Universal History*, Kant presented one of his first conceptions of a universal cosmopolitan condition, identifying human progress with the development of the human subject through self-realisation and human sociality. This conception, anthropologically and historically justified in a teleological framework, provided the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a powerful and comprehensive theory of human progress, which was also practically and strategically linked with *Aufklärung*. Kant would continue to expand the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s horizons with his short texts in the late 1780s.

3.3.1.3 The Ultimate End of Nature as a Teleological System

In his attempt to contextualise his epistemological breakthrough within the framework of teleology, Immanuel Kant was faced with the formidable task of defining the dynamics of historical progress and the cosmopolitan condition as the ultimate end. In order to fully elaborate upon the purposiveness of nature, Kant sought to explicate the underlying mechanisms that drive historical progress towards the end of nature. To this end, he examined the role of the faculty of judgment in guiding this historical process and established a connection between his epistemological break regarding the human subject and his teleological framework. Thus, Kant's endeavour to detail the ultimate end of nature within his teleological system necessitated a thorough examination of the dynamics of historical progress and their relationship to the faculty of judgment. Through his late 1780s writings, *Conjectural Beginning* (1786) and the *Critique of the Power of the Judgment* (1790), Kant managed to fulfil this task.

In his 1786 short essay, *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, Kant delved into the intricacies of historical progress, describing the driving forces behind the evolution of human beings. According to Kant, human beings, driven by their instincts, utilise reason to satisfy their desires (Kant, 1991c, *CBHH,* 8, p. 222). He posited that this progress occurs in four distinct stages.

In the first stage, human beings are confronted with the development of new desires that are in opposition to their pure needs. This creates a conflict that forces individuals to make decisions, thus marking the second step in the progression. It is at this stage that human beings become aware of the concept of choice, as they are faced with the task of selecting between conflicting wants. This awareness is what Kant referred to as 'negative' freedom, or the absence of mechanical coercion by instinct (Kant, 1998, *CPR*, A564/B562; 2002, *G* 445; Wood, 1991, p.331).

The third step in this historical progression is the development of expectations for the future. This is a crucial step as it allows individuals to consider the consequences of their choices and make decisions accordingly. Finally, the fourth and final step is the use of the rational capacity to recognise and understand the concept of an end-in-itself. This final step is essential as it allows individuals to comprehend the ultimate purpose of their actions and understand the significance of their choices.

Kant's analysis of historical progress in *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* highlighted the interconnectedness between human instincts, reason, and the concept of choice. Through his examination of the four stages of progression, he emphasised the significance of the development of expectations for the future and the rational understanding of an end-in-itself as key elements in the evolution of human beings.

The *Critique of the Power of the Judgment* (1790), a seminal text in the field of political theory, is widely acknowledged by scholars as the work in which Kant explicitly presented and reaffirmed his early political conceptions pertaining to cosmopolitan conditions, ultimate end, and the purposiveness of nature (Kant, 2006, pp.37-43, *CPJ*, §83-84). In two short sections, Kant effectively bridged his previously defined 'faculty of judgment' with his teleological system, thereby providing his epistemological break with a systematic grounding through its contextualisation within a teleological framework.

Moreover, in these sections, Kant unequivocally instrumentalised the faculty of judgment as a feature that belongs solely to the human subject. This unique belonging, which is central to Kant's doctrine of freedom, serves to differentiate the human subject from other creatures in relation to the purposiveness of nature. The significance of the reconceptualisation and detailing of the ‘ultimate end of nature’ in the *Critique of Power of the Judgment* completed Kant's efforts to provide a solid and historical foundation for his critical philosophy.

Kant first revisited the idea he presented early in the *Idea for Universal History*; the idea that human beings are regarded as organisms that provide the principle of the teleological organisation of nature (5:429). In these sections, he employed his predefined faculty of judgment to identify the distinct forms of faculties of judgment. On the one hand, the reflective faculty of judgment is defined as the faculty that finds the rule or concept under which a given particular falls. On the other hand, Kant identified another faculty of judgment, the determining faculty of judgment, which refers to the faculty of applying a given rule or concept to particulars.

In his efforts to redefine the ‘end of nature’, Kant identified two distinct forms of understanding this concept in relation to the faculties of judgment previously defined. Specifically, he posited that the end of nature could be either for human happiness or human culture.

When the end of nature is understood as the pursuit of human happiness, it refers to the mere idea of a state (which is impossible under empirical conditions), and thus becomes the sum of all human ends. According to Kant, this understanding of the end of nature pertains to the individual's self-interpretation of nature, where the human subject regards his or her personal take on the natural world. This understanding of the end of nature is intimately tied to the

reflective faculty of judgment, as it is through this faculty that individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences within the natural world.

In contrast, when the end of nature is understood as human culture, it refers to the collective understanding of the natural world and the ways in which human beings interact with and shape it. This understanding of the end of nature is intimately tied to the determining faculty of judgment, as it is through this faculty that individuals apply concepts and rules to particular instances within the natural world.

> The concept of happiness is not one that human being abstracts from his instincts and thereby derives from the animal nature within him; rather it is a mere idea of a state, an idea to which he wishes to make his condition adequate, under merely empirical conditions (which is impossible) (Kant, 2006, p. 37, *CPJ*, 5:430).

This understanding the end of nature for Kant was particularistic and referred to the asocial individuality of the liberal conception of history.

In addition to understanding the end of nature as the pursuit of human happiness, Kant also posited that it could refer to human culture. The rearticulation of the notion of culture within the teleological framework of Kant promotes the Rousseauan conception of ‘nature to culture’ as a theory of historical progress. For Kant, culture was a concept "making a rational being fit to pursue any ends whatsoever (and consequently also to pursue ends that are chosen freely)" (5:431). He contended that only culture can reasonably be attributed as the ultimate end of nature. In this context, culture becomes the organic conclusion of historical progress in Kant's teleological system.

A crucial aspect of this presentation was Kant's categorisation of culture as not being a singular entity. He posited that not every culture is sufficient in attaining the ultimate end (5:432). In this regard, Kant drew attention to the notion of skilfulness to emphasise culture as a stage of cultivation and development. Skilfulness develops primarily under conditions of inequality and functions as a force of motivation to evolve into the stage of culture. In accordance with this, when defining the social conditions for the achievement of culture, Kant presented his holistic teleological conceptions.

Kant's understanding of the end of nature as human culture, highlights the role of culture as an organic conclusion of historical progress and the significance of skilfulness in its cultivation and development. Furthermore, it emphasises the need for social conditions that enable culture to be achieved and the importance of understanding culture as a multifaceted and dynamic concept in his holistic teleological framework.

> The formal condition , that must be satisfied in order that nature can attain his end, its final aim, is a constitution that governs the relations of human beings among one another and in which the damage to freedom that results from the mutually conflicting exercise of freedom is opposed by a lawful force embodied in a whole, which is called “civil society” for only in such a society can the greatest development of natural predispositions occur (Kant, 2006, p.40, *CPJ*, 5:432)

For Kant, a civil society was an integral component of the "cosmopolitan whole" (5:433), which he defined as "a system of all those states which would otherwise be in a position to act to the detriment of each other" (5:433). He posited that in the absence of the cosmopolitan whole, war becomes an inevitable factor, and interestingly, this inevitability serves as a motivating force for the development of all the talents that serve culture.

Furthermore, Kant's investigation into the purposiveness of nature led him to conceptualise purposiveness as an ontological determination. This means that he viewed the purposiveness of nature as an inherent characteristic that determines the nature of being or existence. This understanding of purposiveness as an ontological determination is closely tied to his teleological framework and his understanding of the ultimate end of nature as the attainment of culture. In other words:

> We have only one kind of being in the world of which causality is teleological, that is, oriented towards ends, and yet simultaneously is made up in such a way that the law, according to which it is to see ends for itself, is conceived by such beings themselves as unconditioned and independent from natural conditions, yet as necessary itself. The human being is this kind of being, but only when considered noumenon. It is the only natural being in which we can cognize, on the basis of its own make-up, a super sensible ability (freedom) and even the law of causality, together with the object of the latter that it can set as its highest end (Kant, 2006, p.42, *CPJ*, 5:435).

Kant’s philosophy was fundamentally concerned with the question of what constitutes humanity, specifically with regard to defining and explicating the nature of human nature and progress in history. In this vein, Kant’s anthropological inquiry played a crucial role in understanding the origins and characteristics of human nature, social behaviour, and the concept of universal history.

His teleological framework was also grounded in the purposiveness of nature, which promotes human historical progress towards the attainment of culture. This framework is inherently collective, as Kant emphasises that individuals are not asked ontological questions (5:435). Furthermore, his conception of teleological purposiveness is closely tied to the collective evolution of the human species as a whole.

In the late 1780s, Kant completed his efforts to bring an anthropological and historical justification to his critical philosophy by contextualising the potential and capacity of the human subject within a teleological framework, and by presenting a social and historical conception of human beings. His abstract epistemological break had a profound epistemological consistency and presented a serious critique of particularistic and traditionalist epistemologies that projected the human subject as a passive recipient of historical development. However, in order to increase the explanatory capacity of his philosophical project for the practical dimension, Kant needed to expand his epistemological break to include a historical and social justification of the human subject within a teleological system.

Kant's contributions in these works provided the framework for conceptualising the new human subject in a consistent, systematic, and historical standpoint for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. His consideration of the human subject as a moral constituent of historical progress became influential for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as this conceptualised the capacity of the human subject beyond the limits of absolutism, traditional feudalism, and classical liberalism. Rather, Kant's human subject as a moral agency only becomes an active constituent of the historical process when he meets with his own collectivist human sociality.

In summary, Immanuel Kant's philosophy was fundamentally concerned with the question of what constitutes humanity, specifically with regard to defining and explicating the origins of human nature and progress in history. In this vein, Kant's anthropological inquiry has played a crucial role in understanding the origins and characteristics of human nature, social behaviour, and the concept of universal history.

Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy attempted to establish a comprehensive framework that could accommodate various aspects of human thought and action. Among his efforts to expand the influence of his critical philosophy, Kant presented a universal human history that was grounded in a teleological framework, where human moral agency played a central role. This historical narrative served as a foundation for Kant's claim that human nature is inherently social, thus providing a suitable ground for his epistemological break. This break, which is based on the dialectical relationship between human subject and social reality, is inextricably linked to social selfhood, as Kant believed that the individual's identity is shaped and defined by their interaction with others.

Kant's integration of this new human agency into a universal history represents a significant advancement towards the establishment of a civil society, introducing and spreading the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). This philosophical movement aimed to liberate individuals from the shackles of ignorance and superstition, and to promote the use of reason as a means to achieve social progress. According to Kant, the *Aufklärung* was the final destination of human history, where reason and freedom were fully realised, and human beings could live in a society based on mutual respect and cooperation.

3.4 THE *AUFKLÄRUNG* PROJECT

The German *Aufklärung*, which was primarily a philosophical and intellectual movement in the German context, underwent a significant transformation during the reign of Frederick the II, evolving into a political project for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The movement sought to appeal to the authority of reason as a means of justifying social and political reforms. Influenced by Kantian philosophy, the German intellectuals within the *Bildungsbürgertum* held the belief that moral and political principles could be derived from reason. Consequently, institutions, laws, and government policies were evaluated in accordance with their moral and political principles. Furthermore, the *Aufklärer* (pro-enlightenment intellectuals of the *Bildungsbürgertum*) believed that reason possessed the capability to motivate human behaviour in an adequate manner. Political theory in Germany reflected this understanding, as evidenced by the emergence of two distinct factions within the *Aufklärung* movement[112] - the absolutist-paternalists and the liberals. Both factions, by the late 1780s, had adopted reason as their primary 'reformation project', despite the clear differences in their ideologies. It is important to note that the *Aufklärung* movement was not limited to the realm of philosophy and intellectualism, but also crossed into the realm of politics and societal reform. The *Bildungsbürgertum,* as the primary driving force behind the *Aufklärung*, sought to use reason as a tool for effecting positive change within the society, and this sentiment was reflected in their political ideologies and actions.

As the Prussian state-building process was still ongoing, and mainly incomplete, with the rising Prussian absolutist regime in a state of struggle with the traditional feudal classes to establish its hegemony, and with the newly formed educated bureaucratic classes gradually becoming more influential, and pursuing an alternative political project, it is observable that the impacts of the long-crisis of feudalism in the German context were still present during this period (Beiser, 1992; Thornhill, 2007; Shilliam, 2009). This period was marked by ongoing uncertainties regarding the re-organisation and re-consolidation of the German context to make it sustainable.

[112] The faction that sided with the main approach of the traditional feudalism did not consider *Aufklärung* to be a movement that could lead the way to reform.

The impacts of the long-crisis of feudalism in the German context on political and philosophical debates were still highly prominent during this period. Firstly, there was a lack of agreement on how German-speaking Europe should re-organise to respond to the social and political instabilities caused by the crisis. Secondly, there was a lack of a common ground to address the changing relationship between the state, society, and the individual. While the Enlightenment movement in Europe, following the period of *Renaissance* and *Reformation*, had managed to re-conceptualise these relations in response to the new circumstances, traditional European empires such as Spain, Portugal, and the Holy Roman Empire were met with radical developments that led to their weakening and eventual disappearance from the newly forming international system. Lastly, there was a lack of a common epistemological or philosophical ground to address the various political, legal, and social problems that had arisen.

Divided into three main responses to the long-crisis (absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal and liberal reformist), German-speaking Europe was in search of a consistent philosophical and political theory to understand and authentically integrate the rising Enlightenment ideas and reformations on German terms. The *Aufklärung* movement, in order to be comprehensive, consistent, and effective in addressing the German particulars, needed to have a universal ground. This required a deep understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of the long-crisis of feudalism, and its ongoing impacts on the German context.

The impact of Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, and his further contributions to contextualise his epistemological break within the anthropological and historical dimensions of human nature, provided the original framework that the rising *Bildungsbürgertum* required to conceptualise the 'new individual' in authentic terms, without conforming to the absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudal or classical liberal understandings. Prior to the emergence of Kant's critical philosophy, the *Bildungsbürgertum* was primarily an emerging class in Prussia. However, with the widespread influence and dominance of Kant's philosophy in German thought, the philosophical and political perspectives of the *Bildungsbürgertum* underwent a transformation, acquiring a universal dimension that extended beyond the boundaries of Prussia and aligned it with the broader European intellectual milieu. Through receiving this philosophical and political framework, the *Bildungsbürgertum* became highly influential in the Prussian 1780s-90s, becoming the leading class to implement reforms and contributing to the philosophical and intellectual development and modernisation of Prussia.

Unlike its contemporaries in Prussia, the *Bildungsbürgertum* aimed to articulate its vision through the *Aufklärung* movement, transforming this movement into a political project to reform Prussia. This change was made feasible thanks to Kant's decades of hard work to reach beyond the theoretical dimensions of politics and philosophy and find a ground for pure reason to be practical. The purpose of analysing Kant as the original intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum* is to explain how Kant envisioned the *Aufklärung* as an umbrella project under which to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Kant not only identified the *Aufklärung* as an ideological framework for the *Bildungsbürgertum* but also presented the analytical way to centre the *Aufklärung* within the political theory of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Kant's achievement of uniting the *Aufklärung* and the *Bildungsbürgertum* comprise his original contribution to his class context, while composing the essential grounds for his universalist political theory to flourish during the 'enlightened absolutism' of Prussia. His critical philosophy became a crucial element for the German *Bildungsbürgertum*, providing them a framework to understand and reform their society in terms of politics and philosophy.

3.4.1. Redefining the Enlightenment

In his seminal 1784 essay, Immanuel Kant presented a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the concept of enlightenment and its relation to the political and social spheres. Through his formulation of enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity," Kant highlighted the crucial role that the self-actualisation of reason plays in the individual's ability to navigate and understand their place within society.

Kant's use of the term ‘immaturity’ in this context is particularly noteworthy, as it refers to the "inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another" (Kant, 2006, p.17, *Was*, 8:35). In other words, it is a state of dependence on external forces that hinders an individual's ability to fully engage with and understand the world around them. Through his emphasis on the social dimension of the human condition, Kant highlighted the importance of individual autonomy in the pursuit of enlightenment.

Furthermore, Kant's famous call to "*Sapere Aude!* Have the courage to use your intellect!" served as a powerful exhortation to individuals to actively engage with and question the world around them (Kant, 2006, p.17, *Was*, 8:35). It was a call to action for individuals to take ownership of their own intellectual development, rather than relying on external guidance. In this way, Kant's interpretation of enlightenment as man's progress from immaturity can be understood as a dynamic reflection on the theory of historical stages.

It is important to note that Kant's view of freedom was unique and reflected his specific historical context. He qualified freedom in a non-radical and limited way, emphasising the necessary conditions for achieving such freedom within the context of the *Aufklärung*. This nuance was indicative of Kant's broader project of enlightenment, which sought to balance the individual's need for autonomy with the societal need for stability and order:

> Hence a public can only slowly arrive at enlightenment. A revolution is perhaps capable of breaking away from personal despotism and from avaricious or power-hungry oppression, but it can never bring about a genuine reform in thinking; instead, new prejudices will serve as a guiding rein for the thoughtless masses (Kant, 2006, p. 18, *Was*, 8:36).
>
> Yet nothing but freedom is required for this enlightenment. And indeed it is the most harmless sort of freedom that may be properly called freedom, namely; to make public use of one's reason in all manners (Kant, 2006, p.18, *Was*, 8:37)

Kant continued by explaining how the public use of reason could happen. His description was of freedom of expression and unconditional obedience to public responsibilities.

> By 'public use of one's reason', I mean the kind of use one makes there of as a scholar before the reading the world. I understand the private use of one’s reason to be the them use that one may make it in a civil post or office with which one entrusted…It would be thus be very harmful if an officer who receives orders from his superiors were to publicly question the expediency or usefulness of his orders; he must obey (Kant, 2006, p. 19, *Was*, 8:37).

Kant pointed to a specific class that had manifested itself as the public servants acting for the benefit of the state. In the classic understanding of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the public use of

reason indicates an internalised separation of the understanding of 'public' and 'private'[113]. Kant here drew attention to the discourse that the *Aufklärer* had established earlier: "the political duty and right to reform the state in a public sphere" (Shilliam, 2009, p. 75). So, the enlightenment for Kant here was a 'corporate arena' in which the *Bildungsbürgertum* exercise their specific rights and duties to debate, as free individuals, to reform the state (ibid, p.75).

3.4.2. The Public Sphere: Kant's Road to Enlightenment

Kant's short text, *What is Enlightenment*? (1784), holds great significance not only due to its positioning of individual moral agency within a political framework, but also because of its innovative introduction of the concept of 'publicity' to the political theory of the *Aufklärung*. To begin with, the practice of public reason necessitates a context in which public reason has a tangible and societal foundation, which is primarily a result of a political establishment. Although Kant acknowledged Frederick II's efforts to propagate the principles and values of the enlightenment, by emphasising the notion of public exercise of reason within the public sphere, he underscored the essential role of republican elements in the dissemination of the *Aufklärung*. In other words, by linking the doctrine of freedom with the public utilisation of reason within a setting where a public sphere is established, Kant's primary objective was to promote the understanding that publicity is a prerequisite for the advancement of enlightenment freedom and a progressive set of values. In this regard, the public sphere emerges as a product of a political arrangement, in which a republican understanding of politics is promoted.

It is noteworthy that there are several republican interpretations of Kant even prior to the 1780s, as the influence of Rousseau and Sieyès enabled him to theorise on human nature, the limitations of the state, and the ideal civil society in relation to the concept of 'community' rather than the concept of the "individual'. In light of these contributions, Kant's introduction of the public sphere and public utilisation of reason in relation to the *Aufklärung* promoted a novel republican understanding of publicity within a political regime characterised by absolutist-paternalist tendencies in state-building. As such, by promoting publicity in the Prussian context, Kant presented a republican understanding of *Aufklärung* without strictly defining a political regime. While this approach allowed Kant to avoid direct confrontation with the structure of the regime in which he resided, it also presented a path for the internal reconstruction of politics through the collective use of reason.

The republican redefinition of publicity for Kant was not only a conception that was imported from the French political thought. As discussed in the Chapter I, the political diversity of the German context had already contained a tradition for approaching the question of political restructuring of the Holy Roman Empire and the German-speaking Europe through a constitutional basis, by reformulating the problem of the sovereignty on the people. In the early German political thought the question of redefining the sovereignty of the people, and also particular political bodies, had been discussed in Johannes Althusius' influential contributions. As an early political thinker, Althusius propounded a theory of confederations as a viable and efficacious form of cooperative constitutional order. He described society as a community of communities, wherein each level of political community pertains to the common interests. He contends that the purpose of politics is the 'science of living together' and that federations are the optimal means to implement this purpose in practice. Althusiusian federalism does not entail

[113] During the essay, Kant never specifically mentioned the *Bildungsbürgertum* because of the continuing ambiguity about the role of the Prussian Enlightenment. However, he emphasised that the public use of reason leads to certain 'duties' that need to be taken on by a specific class. It may be considered a 'call' that invites the *Aufklärer* to act for their class interests in parallel with the enlightenment and reform.

the surrender of power, but rather the judicious sharing of power among autonomous political communities (Althusius, 1997). In the context of religious wars and absolutist monarchies, Althusius identified the German Holy Roman Empire as a commonwealth where the majority could decide matters for all. He drew upon the neo-Platonic idea of universal brotherhood and amalgamated it with the principle of subsidiarity, thus proffering an alternative to contemporary theories on sovereignty. According to Althusius, natural law endows citizens with the right to resist tyrannical governments, and sovereignty pertains to the community, not the ruler. He thus maintains that legitimate political authority is founded on smaller communities. Althusius presented an alternative theory of sovereignty resting with the community rather than the ruler. In this way, he managed to inspire German political thought to adopt an alternative perspective to Jean Bodin's theory of sovereignty. It is evident that the contributions made by Althusius had a significant impact in the development of a theoretical framework that opposes absolutism, while not fully relying on the traditional feudal system. This is because his reinterpretation of the concept of sovereignty offered a communitarian and republican perspective on the sharing of political power, which allows for a localised restructuring of the empire without the implementation of the model of 'mini-absolutism'.

In reiterating the legacy of Althusius' understanding of sovereignty, Immanuel Kant rephrased the concept of publicity as a natural consequence of a society based on the principles of the *Aufklärung*. Kant's republican conception was not solely derived from the anti-absolutist French thinkers, but also from authentic early German political and legal thought, where the impacts of the long-crisis of feudalism on the question of sovereignty had been discussed. Therefore, unlike scholarly accounts that consider republicanism as a political concept that traverses through time and visits certain European thinkers such as Kant; an analysis constructed with the social history of political theory method aims to locate the meaning of political frameworks within the historical contexts of political thinkers.

Kant's concept of republicanism went beyond his engagement with French political thinkers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emmanuel Sieyes. While he certainly drew inspiration from these figures, Kant's understanding of republican sovereignty had a more direct connection to the early debates in German legal and political thought. When examining republicanism in the German context, Kant's notion of 'publicity' aligned more closely with the republican redefinition of sovereignty in relation to the restructuring of the German political landscape.

In Kant's perspective, while the influence of Rousseau and Sieyes was evident in his work, his primary concern was not merely the specific type of government but rather the establishment of a clear separation between sovereignty and the form of government. In his writings of the 1790s, Kant delved deeper into this focus by delineating various forms of sovereignty and forms of government (Kant, 2001, p. 123, *MM*, §43, 6: 311). According to Kant, there exist two forms of sovereignty: popular and despotic. The non-despotic form of sovereignty entails the concentration of political authority within the citizenry. Kant placed greater emphasis on the nature of sovereignty rather than the particular governmental structure it may assume. In Kant's view, a republic represents a non-despotic form of popular sovereignty[114].

In his seminal work *What is Enlightenment*? (1784), Kant presented a discourse on the concept of the public sphere and its significance in the 'enlightened absolutist' regime of Prussia. It is evident that Kant's depiction of the public sphere bore a striking resemblance to the intellectual milieu of his hometown of Königsberg, where the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or educated bourgeoisie, engaged in stimulating theoretical and intellectual debates that served as a catalyst for the generation of novel ideas within the framework of the *Aufklärung*. Furthermore, in late 18th century Königsberg, these venues, such as dinner parties and café culture, were tangible spaces

[114] In Chapter IV, Kant's republicanism is described in detail.

that played a crucial role in fostering the dynamism of intellectual activities. Thus, it can be argued that Kant's social and material circumstances played a crucial role in shaping his conception of the public sphere and the manner in which it should be cultivated.

It is of paramount importance to acknowledge the distinct manner in which Immanuel Kant defines the public sphere, as opposed to the framework presented by Jürgen Habermas in his concept of the "bourgeois public sphere" (Habermas, 1991). This distinction is crucial in order to differentiate the element of "bourgeois" from that of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as the latter represents a class which had not developed in the same way as its counterparts in Europe.

As previously discussed in Chapter I, the German context lacked a capitalist agrarian bourgeoisie, akin to that in England, or an urban merchant bourgeoisie as in France. Instead, the *Bürger* in the German context acquired its class characteristics through its engagement with the Prussian *Ständestaat*, through its integration with the emerging bureaucratic absolutism. Consequently, the German *Bildungsbürgertum* did not possess any capitalistic or commercial characteristics. In this regard, their politicisation mostly developed through the pursuit of their material interests within the Prussian state.

This overlooked, but unique feature of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, makes it historically inaccurate to consider that they reflected a commercial bourgeois project in the making of the public sphere in the German context. On the contrary, the public sphere in the German context developed primarily through discussions on the limits and the nature of the state. In other words, the question of how to reconstitute the relationship between the state and society, society and the individual, and the state and the individual, became more predominant than the promotion of a capitalist bourgeois society.

It is therefore apparent that Jürgen Habermas's (1991) association of the *bourgeois public sphere* with Kant's conception of the public sphere, understood in the light of this, was historically inaccurate and simplistic. Habermas's explanation of the social and intellectual conditions in the German context is valid, especially if one considers German small-town-city culture. However, rather than the impact of the traditional town-city culture of the German context on the development of bourgeois publicity; the public sphere in the German context emerged primarily as a response to the questions that the long crisis of feudalism on the reconsolidation of the German *Ständestaat*.

3.4.3. *Aufklärung* as a Class Project

In *What is Enlightenment?* (1784), Immanuel Kant presented a comprehensive ideological and political framework for the *Bildungsbürgertum* in Prussia, with the ultimate aim of achieving the *Aufklärung*, or the ideal social and political order. This text served as a manifestation of Kant's understanding of the *Aufklärung* as a class project for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and is rooted in his doctrine of freedom, his epistemological break, and his reconsideration of this break within an anthropological and historical framework.

Kant introduced a relationship between his doctrine of freedom, the epistemological break for the human subject, and the emergence of the public sphere. He posited that the attainment of enlightenment is characterised by the emergence of the public sphere, in which individuals are able to engage in a free and open exchange of ideas, free from the constraints of traditional authority. This concept of the public sphere is closely linked to Kant's doctrine of freedom, which holds that individuals are capable of and entitled to govern themselves, and that this self-governance is essential for the attainment of enlightenment.

Furthermore, Kant's epistemological break is central to his understanding of the *Aufklärung*. This break refers to the moment at which the individual realises that they are capable of using

their own reason and understanding to arrive at knowledge and understanding, rather than relying solely on the authority of tradition or authority figures. This realisation is key to the attainment of enlightenment, as it allows individuals to question and critique traditional beliefs and institutions, and to engage in the free and open exchange of ideas that is characteristic of the public sphere.

Additionally, Kant situated his understanding of the *Aufklärung* within an anthropological and historical framework, by acknowledging the social and political context of his time. The *Bildungsbürgertum*, is identified as the driving force behind the *Aufklärung*, and its progressive features are seen as essential for the reform of Prussia. This class is seen as having the necessary resources, education, and social standing to lead the way towards the *Aufklärung*. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate this short text as a manifestation of Kant's understanding of the *Aufklärung* as a class project for the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Prior to the philosophical contributions of Immanuel Kant, the relationship between the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the *Aufklärung* movement was characterised by a degree of heterogeneity, as the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as a newly forming class, exhibited a lack of consensus regarding the path towards reform within the Prussian *Ständestaat*. This diversity in perspective was largely a result of the absence of a unifying philosophical foundation that could serve as a basis for understanding the human subject as a constitutive element of social reality.

The *Bildungsbürgertum*, primarily derived from the non-noble classes of *Bürger*'s and low-ranking notables, required a characterisation of agency that was consistent with the promotion of rational civil authority in the enlightenment movements occurring throughout Europe. Additionally, prior to Kant, the *Bildungsbürgertum* was primarily engaged in domestic philosophical and political debates and lacked a cohesive epistemological and ideological framework to unite the class under a common project.

Kant's critical philosophy, through the reconfiguration of a civil, rational epistemological break, provided a means for re-understanding the human subject and the role it plays in the construction of social reality. This served as a foundation for the *Bildungsbürgertum* to adopt the *Aufklärung* as a political project for the reform of Prussia without the need for radical revolution. Furthermore, the *Aufklärung* presented an opportunity for the *Bildungsbürgertum* to increase its prestige and image as educated and progressive agents working ultimately towards a constitutional cosmopolitan republic. Additionally, the *Aufklärung* could be instrumentalised and widely disseminated through the support of state capacity.

In this regard, Kant's primary objective, as reflected in his text *What is Enlightenment?* (1784), was to unite the *Aufklärung* and the class interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This represented the final project of Kant's social and political thought in the 1780s, which would require revision in the 1790s in light of the radical impact of the French Revolution.

3.5 KANT AS AN INTELLECTUAL OF *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

In the final analysis, the ramifications of the long-enduring feudal crisis in the German landscape left an indelible mark on the prevailing political thought of the era. The challenge of reconfiguring the interplay between the state, society, and the individual was a paramount concern, eliciting a diverse array of responses. Three predominant reactions to this crisis emerged, including the absolutist-paternalist, traditional feudalist, and liberal reformist movements, with each proposing its own distinct political framework to unify the German context under a variety of models. However, the persistent political and social strife in the German context precluded the establishment of a philosophical foundation under the sway of

any of these proposals, thereby precluding the formation of a response that would effectively mitigate the impacts of the crisis.

In the midst of this milieu, the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the context of the Prussian state-building process, characterised by bureaucratic-absolutism, constituted a novel development. This civil class was different from its European bourgeois counterparts and rose as a distinct entity. Although motivated by a desire to reform the state, the *Bildungsbürgertum* was unable to unify its efforts to further the *Aufklärung* movement due to a lack of both focus and a consistent philosophical grounding that would have enabled the identification of the human subject as an integral component of social reality.

The French Revolution of 1789 had a profound impact on the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a class of intellectuals in Prussia. The revolution, while exciting, also scared the *Bildungsbürgertum* as it threatened a radical transformation of the Prussian *Ständestaat*. The new political ideas that emerged from the revolution, such as republicanism, the overthrow of absolutism and feudalism, parliamentary politics, equality, and fraternity, politicised the *Bildungsbürgertum*, undermining the hegemony of Kantian philosophy within this class. The *Bildungsbürgertum* started to see the *Aufklärung* as a particular movement rather than a universal one. In turn, they became politically divided, for and against the absolutist response to the new wave of politics. As a result, Kant, as an intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, had to delve deeper into political theory and respond to his politically active contemporaries in the public debates of the 1790s.

Kant's critical philosophy constituted a seminal contribution to the philosophical and political debates of the late 18th century. Through his reconstitution of a civil and rational epistemological break, Kant aimed to recast the human subject and its role in shaping social reality. This represented a decisive departure from the traditional approaches to the feudal crisis in German political thought and furnished the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a consistent, universal philosophy that served as the foundation for the *Aufklärung* movement. Kant's objective in theorising the anthropological and historical dimensions of the human subject was to create a social epistemology that would provide a framework for comprehending the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. He envisaged a teleological framework that would align the progression of human history with the formation of a civil society of *Bildungsbürgertum* in an ideal universal cosmopolitan republic. This vision was rooted in moral principles and reflected Kant's class consciousness as a sophisticated, intellectual, productive, and constructive member of his class.

By the late 1780s, Kant had become the foremost thinker of the *Aufklärung* and the European Enlightenment, projecting a universalist conception of an ideal social and political order that responded to the specific context of Prussia and the broader challenges of the transitional period towards modern politics. Therefore, Kant's critical philosophy represented a landmark in the development of a new paradigm for comprehending the relationship between the individual, society, and government. It offered a sophisticated and intellectually rigorous framework for conceptualising the human subject and its role in shaping social reality. Through the reconstitution of a civil, rational epistemological break, Kant provided the *Bildungsbürgertum* with the foundational framework for its *Aufklärung Project* and played a pivotal role in shaping the philosophical and political debates of the late 18th century. Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy had a transformative impact on the *Bildungsbürgertum*, an educated and influential class of individuals in late 18th century Germany. As a prominent member of this class, Kant aimed to establish a social epistemology that reconciled the individual, society, and state.

It is imperative to note that Kant's critical philosophy not only represented a major departure from the traditional approaches to the crisis of feudalism, but also provided a new framework for conceptualising the human subject and its role in shaping social reality. This framework

emphasised the importance of reason, morality, and freedom as key components in the reconstitution of the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. Moreover, by reconstituting a civil, rational epistemological break, Kant's critical philosophy served as a catalyst for the *Aufklärung* movement, which aimed to advance intellectual and social progress and establish a civil society guided by moral principles and a teleological framework.

In summary, Kant's critical philosophy represents a seminal contribution to the political thought of late 18th century Germany. His legacy remains an important reference point in the study of the history of political thought and continues to inform contemporary debates on the relationship between the individual, society, and the state.

From the perspective of social history of political theory, Kant's relationship with his class is seen as organic and constructive. This means that Kant's political theory is seen as having grown out of the social and political context of his time, and that his ideas were shaped by the experiences and aspirations of his class. In turn, Kant's political theory advances the social and political conception of his class, offering a more advanced model of a universal political order that transcends the narrow interests of any particular social group.

Kant's political philosophy was mainly influenced by the long-standing crisis of feudalism in the German context. At the time, Prussia and other territories lacked a universal basis for reform and progress. This inspired Kant to develop a philosophical and political project that aimed to overcome these obstacles. He sought to create a new, more advanced model of a universal political order that could provide a solid foundation for the reforms necessary to bring about a better future. The social and political theories that he developed were a response to the pressing need for change and growth in the German-speaking world. By constructing a model of an organic and constructive relationship between the individual and society, Kant was able to offer a new vision of how people could live together in a way that respected their rights and dignity while also promoting the common good.

In this view, Kant's political theory is seen as a response to the historical moment in which he lived, as well as an expression of the aspirations of his class. He was a product of the *Aufklärung*, and his political theory reflected the values and ideas of that movement. At the same time, Kant's political theory was also influenced by his own personal experiences and observations, as well as his own moral and philosophical convictions.

Despite these influences, Kant's political theory is seen as offering a model of a universal political order that is grounded in universal principles of reason and morality. In this sense, his political theory is seen as transcending the narrow interests of any particular social class, offering a vision of a just and equitable political order that is applicable to all people, regardless of their social background or station in life.

The following chapter of the thesis aims to contextualise the responses given by Kant to the public debates in the 1790s in order to identify the political orientation of his universalist philosophy. This task is considered to be a crucial component of the analysis as it provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between Kant's ideas and the contemporary political discourse. Through a thorough examination of the relevant materials, it is expected that the chapter will shed light on the nuances and complexities of Kant's political philosophy and its role in shaping the broader debates of the time.

CHAPTER IV - KANT'S UNIVERSALISM IN CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant's political theory, appearing primarily in the 1790s[115], engaged with its audience through a novel conceptual framework that is characteristic of modern political theory, as it delved into topics such as republicanism, democracy, constitutionalism, political rights, citizenship, universal moral principles, and the international system of world order (Achenwall, 2020, Book III- IV, pp.135-202; Kant, 2001, 2002a, 2006, pp.67-164, 2020, pp.728-755; Kant & Erdmann, 1882, pp.65-132). One plausible interpretation of Immanuel Kant's political theory is that it seeks to identify innovative tenets within political theory, while simultaneously striving to comprehend the modern world via innovative conceptual frameworks that accurately delineate the intricate social reality. Undoubtedly, this perspective acknowledges the distinctiveness of Immanuel Kant's historical milieu, characterised by a tumultuous period of transition marked by the Prussian state-building process, and the American and French Revolutions, among other significant events (Behrens, 1985; Comninel, 1987; Mooers, 1991; Sheehan, 1989; Shilliam, 2009; Zmolek, 2013). Kant's theoretical framework can thus be considered to embody the visionary insights of a thinker endeavouring to define the nascent reality that lay ahead of him. However, while this perspective offers a plausible explanation of the extent to which Kant's political theory can account for the transition to our contemporary modern politics, it is equally pertinent to explore the degree to which his theoretical framework sheds light on his specific historical milieu. Stated differently, a comprehensive account of Immanuel Kant's political theory remains incomplete without a rigorous analysis of how it illuminates the specific material and historical conditions, the internal dynamics, of his own time.

The political theory of Kant has been studied primarily through the lens of various themes to explain what his political theory meant in the context of 18th-century Prussia or German-speaking Europe. Scholarship on Kant has sought to understand and categorise him according to the meaning and impact his political theory had on the Enlightenment, modernisation, international relations, ethics, and moral philosophy[116]. Despite the success of these back-readings in providing some context for understanding Kant, most of these accounts have depicted him as more connected with the foundations of modern politics than he was to his own time and place. The fact that Kant cannot be considered a conventional political thinker who emerged from the largely feudal social and historical milieu of his era is self-evident. However, as the preceding chapters of this research have attempted to elucidate, the material conditions prevalent in 18th-century Prussia do not furnish sufficient historically justifiable evidence to posit that Kant lived in a society that was unequivocally poised for modernisation and progressive political transformation (Mooers, 1991; Shilliam, 2009). Rather, as can be observed from the impact of the long crisis of feudalism or the French Revolution on the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the Prussian context is a multifaceted one that oscillated between the establishment of a modern state, the restoration of traditional German society, and the consolidation of an absolutist empire capable of unifying German-speaking Europe. The

[115] Although Kant's main ideas started to appear in his 1760s lectures & *Reflexionen*, it took almost thirty years for Kantian political philosophy to appear in the public debates.

[116] For some examples of the scholarships that were mentioned see Beck, 1969; Beck, 1999; Beitz, 1999, 2005; Beiser, 1987, 1992; Bohman & Lutz-Bachmann, 1997; Booth, 1986; Browning, 2011; Doyle, 1983a, 1993, 1996; Fine & Cohen, 2002; Flikschuh, 2000; Franke, 2001; Gallie, 1978; Hunter, 2004, 2006, 2012; Habermas & MacCarthy, 1984; Hinsley, 1963: Hutchings, 2013; Ion, 2012; Israel, 2001; Jahn, 2005; Lestition, 1993; Pogge, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2008, 2008; Rawls, 1993; Shell, 1978, 1980; Williams, 2001.

prevailing view that Kant's intellectual contributions were limited to his ground-breaking political theory for modern politics is historically questionable, as his capacity to address the pertinent practical issues of his time in a nuanced manner underscores the breadth of his scholarship.

Kant's universalism imbues political concepts with varying meanings and expectations across multiple domains, setting him apart from his contemporaries and establishing him as the preeminent *Aufklärer* of the 1780s. In the aftermath of his epistemological break, Kant promulgates a universalist approach to conceptualising social reality by introducing transcendental idealism, the categorical imperative, and the conditions of human reason that enable self-legislation according to universally applicable principles (Kant, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). As Kant seeks to integrate his conclusions in his *Critique*s into his evolving teleological framework, he develops a political theory that manifests within a universalist paradigm, surpassing the prevailing responses to the fundamental questions of German political thought (Kant, 2006, pp. 3-16, 17-24, 110-150; Kant & Erdmann, 1882). Thus, the primary focus of Kant's universalism ought not to be solely on the transferability of his political theory but rather on the internal dynamics that impelled Kant to advance a universalist theory that distinguishes him from his contemporaries[117]. To comprehend why Kant endures as a timeless political thinker, whose influence extends to the modern era, it is essential to grasp why and how he felt compelled to champion a universal political theory that sets him apart from his contemporaries.

To address this inquiry, a comprehensive analysis that combines both historical and political perspectives is required to elucidate Kant's argument for universalism as a fundamental principle of his political theory. It is vital to investigate the influence of the historical context, particularly the class politics of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as a significant factor that may have motivated Kant's construction of an 'abstract', universalist political theory.

Numerous studies have approached Kant's political thought within a contextual framework, enabling a historical understanding of his work by situating it within his intellectual and ideological milieu[118] (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992, pp. 27-56; Cassirer, 1981; Hunter, 2004, 2006, 2012; Kuehn, 2001; Maliks, 2014, 2022). However, the existing literature on Kant's political theory falls short of a comprehensive analysis that situates his work within the wider historical and social context of Prussian-German history. Specifically, the long-term impacts of the feudal crisis, the state-building processes of Prussia, and fierce class conflicts have all had significant political and philosophical repercussions that resonated in political theory. To address this gap, a more sophisticated and nuanced approach is necessary, one that recognises the interplay between Kant's ideas and the broader social, economic, and political forces at play in his time.

This research posits that Kantian scholarship can benefit from an organic historical materialist approach, specifically, the social history of political theory (Comninel, 1987, 2018; Wood, 1995, 2008, 2012; Wood & Wood, 1997; Wood, 1978). This approach can shed light on the social and material bases of Kant's universalist political theory, as well as the structural impacts of the feudal crisis, changing social property relations in Prussian state-building, and the influence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the *Aufklärung* Project in political theory.

[117] The scholarly discourse on Kant's political theory is rich with nuanced and multifaceted considerations that stem from his universalism (Allison, 2004; Beck, 2008; Bielefeldt, 1997; Findlay, 1981; Laywine, 2020; Lilla, 1998; Pereboom, 2006; Pitts, 2012; Riedel, 1981; Rölli & Hertz-Ohmes, 2016; Walsh, 1903; Westphal, 2016).

[118] By uncovering the connections between Kant and other authors of his time on specific themes that were central to public debates, these investigations have shed light on the intellectual climate of the late 1790s, a period that has been the focus of much Kantian political theory scholarship.

The *social history of political theory* offers a novel and nuanced way of re-examining Kant's engagement in public debates following the French Revolution. By situating Kant's political theory in its sociohistorical context, this approach illuminates not only the modernity of his views but also his response to the growing political disputes in the fragmenting *Bildungsbürgertum* and its abandonment of the *Aufklärung* Project. By analysing Kant's universalist political theory through a historical materialist lens, one can identify the internal dynamics of his efforts to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the banner of the *Aufklärung* once again after its disunity. This approach can also uncover the limitations of inclusiveness in Kant's universalism when translated to modern politics.

Chapter IV of this study underscores Kant's revolutionary universalist political theory, which provided a novel framework transcending the feudalism, absolutism, and liberalism which were prevalent in 18th-century political debates. Kant's fresh perspectives on human agency, teleology, and the *Aufklärung* Project contributed significantly to the political discourse of the time. His response to the political climate, rooted in the 1790s *Aufklärung* commitment, aimed to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* and control the Prussian *Ständestaat*, all without a revolution or undermining civilian politics (Kant, 2006, pp.17-24, 110-150).

Chapter IV constitutes the culminating section of this thesis, which endeavours to bring the main arguments of the preceding chapters to a head by framing Kant's responses to the public debates of the tumultuous 1790s within the context of his universalist political theory[119]. The chapter aims to examine Kant's universalist political theory in the context of the public debates of the 1790s, where Kant and his contemporaries engaged in extended discussions on the emergent conceptual frameworks stemming from the French Revolution, such as the notions of republicanism, individual rights of resistance, property ownership, and the formation of civil society.

Chapter IV delves into the examination of the impact of the French Revolution on the *Bildungsbürgertum*, focusing on the politically polarising implications of the revolution on this social class (Beiser, 1992). It will argue that this polarising effect compelled the *Bildungsbürger* to revert to previously existing polarities across the political spectrum and to abandon the *Aufklärung* Project, which was perceived during the 1790s as a potential threat by the successors of the enlightened despot, Frederick the II. As this occurred, Kant's hegemonic position in philosophy experienced a decline. Subsequently, Kant's universalist political theory will be analysed as a response to the public debates of the 1790s with the ultimate aim of reconsolidating the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the banner of the *Aufklärung* Project. Kant's political theory produces three main responses that correspond to the three polarities of the public debates regarding the new conceptual framework of the French Revolution. Each of these responses is interconnected, and their underlying material grounds will be exposed. Kant's universalism will be identified as a key feature of his political theory, as it transcends the particularistic positions that the three polarities of the public debates present.

[119] As discussed in Chapter I, the German-speaking regions of Europe had been plunged into a profound political and ideological crisis, characterised by the clash between absolutism, feudalism, and liberalism, each advocating different proposals to overcome the longstanding feudal crisis that had plagued the region. In Chapter II, Kant's epistemological break was identified as a critical juncture in moving beyond these three responses and introducing a new conception of human agency. This break was further explored in Chapter III, where Kant's endeavour to apply his epistemological break to the practical realm was examined, with the central conclusions of his *Critique of Pure Reason* being situated within his teleological framework, which sought to expand his epistemological break by justifying it in historical and anthropological dimensions.

4.2 IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: FRAGMENTATION OF THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

The French Revolution emerged as a game changer, not only for the French but for the whole of Europe. It introduced a new political and philosophical framework, with new conceptions of republicanism, popular sovereignty, citizenship, secularism, political rights, the right to resist, freedom and equality. The impact of the Revolution spread quickly to the countries surrounding the new French republic, firstly exciting the intellectuals of the Enlightenment and later creating fear for their political survival as the new political framework ontologically threatened the absolutist regimes.

To provide historical consistency and clarity to the method of examination, it is central to examine the French Revolution and its impact on the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*. The first main issue which needs to be considered when evaluating the impacts of the Revolution is the question of historiography and periodisation[120]. Considering the historical development of French absolutism, and its specific characteristic in the making of social property relations, it is crucial to note that French absolutism became a predominant regime much earlier than elsewhere in Europe and was much more centralised. While this allowed social property relations to form under centralised feudalism, it weakened the traditional classes much earlier than in other parts of Europe (Comninel, 1987; Mooers, 1991; Wood, 2008). The establishment of the centralised administration is important as it makes France a unique example of absolutism[121] (Melton, 1985). The other feudal regimes in Europe did not manage to present established examples of absolutism to the same extent as France.[122]

The French Revolution boasted a protracted narrative that surpasses the scope typically attributed to it by scholarly discourse. This oversight explains the Revolution's assimilation with the dissolution of unparalleled regimes throughout Europe. *Bildungsbürgertum* in Prussia viewed the waning fortunes of the French Kingdom concurrently with the reforms that culminated with the *Grand Assembly* (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2022). By ceding a substantial share of his political authority over taxation to the assembly and fostering the ascent of the *Third Estate*, the monarch symbolised the dismantling of absolutist power in the eyes of the

[120] In terms of the impacts of the French Revolution, there is a vast amount of scholarship (Amariglio & Norton, 1991; Censer, 2019; Cobban & Lewis, 1999; Furet, 1981; Heller, 2010; Hobsbawm, 1990; Hunt, 1992; Lefebvre, n.d.; Mathiez, 1964; Nygaard, 2007; Rude, 1967; Soboul, 1969, 1975; Taylor, 1967). It covers nearly every aspect of this crucial historical period, both social and material. There is a large degree of agreement in the scholarly works on the Revolution that considers the Revolution to be a historical rupture. The rupture, however, is defined differently by different authors.

[121] Unlike England in the 16th century, the French Kingdom responded the long crisis of feudalism through consolidating the traditional feudal estate system under an absolutist monarchy (Parker, 1971, 1989, 1990; Ranum, 1980; Smith, 1993). Absolutism was established in France by the end of 16th century and the destabilising impacts of the long crisis got delayed, while the absolutist monarchy undermined the local corporatist entities and transformed the traditional feudality into a centralised absolutist system (Fox, 1960; Lachmann, 1989; Lafrance, 2019, pp. 11-44). The absolutist monarchy weakened the aristocracy politically by distributing venal offices to non-nobles as well as granting them aristocratic titles (Mooers, 1991). By the end of the 17th century, France became the strongest political, military, and economic power in Europe due to the centralised absolutist system which delayed the impacts of the long crisis for itself (Wood, 2008). However, the 18th century for France gradually became a period of destabilisation as the other powers overcame the long crisis as well, posing threats and becoming rivals France (Rude, 1967).

[122] In the other parts of Europe: the Spanish and Portuguese Kingdoms had a political crisis; the Holy Roman Empire remained pluralistic and fragmented until late 18th to mid-19th century; the Eastern European kingdoms such as Poland did not remain stable; and the Austrian Habsburgs could not centralise their monarchy due to their rivalry with the Ottoman Empire and Prussia. It was only the French who had managed to have a stable feudal regime with the establishment of their centralised absolutist kingdom (Breen, 2011; Lachmann, 1989; Parker, 1990).

Bildungsbürgertum. Hence, well before 1789, the *Bildungsbürgertum* had already confronted the risk of radical transformations, prompting their politicisation and active engagement in the realm of public discourse.

The politicisation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* can be traced to the profound deliberations within French political theory. These grand debates encompassed such weighty themes as sovereign power (exemplified in the writings of Bodin and Rousseau)[123], the separation of powers and the rule of law (espoused by Montesquieu)[124], and the noble ideals of freedom and equality (embraced by intellectual luminaries like Voltaire, Sieyes, and Rousseau)[125]. These enduring discourses provided the conceptual scaffolding for the revolutionaries themselves, as well as their intellectual progenitors throughout Europe. Prior to the eruption of the Revolution, both the French revolutionaries who spearheaded the transformative movement and the Enlightenment thinkers across the continent had imbibed the corpus of French political theory. It is within this compendium that the metamorphosis of the prevailing regime, facilitated by the transfer of sovereign authority from the absolutist monarch to the assembly, assumes paramount importance[126].

The issue of periodisation in understanding the French Revolution is multifaceted[127], as the pivotal stages of 1789 and 1792 yield distinct outcomes that defy generalisations and universalisations of the Revolution's impact on other historical contexts (Maliks, 2022, p.10). While 1789 signifies a significant step towards dismantling the absolutist centralist regime, its actors, and institutions, 1792 assumes paramount importance by imposing a long-debated political framework that necessitates the complete elimination of the monarchy and the establishment of a post-feudal order.

In light of these overarching issues, a nuanced understanding of the impact of the French Revolution on other parts of Europe, as well as its influence on Enlightenment thinkers and the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*, necessitates underscoring the fact that the Revolution began to be understood through the insights derived from French political theory and the transitional processes of the regime's final stages. The Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*, affected by the Revolution's impact, perceived it through these channels and underwent a process of politicisation (Beiser, 1992).

To delve deeper, the rupture instigated by the Revolution extends beyond a mere transition to modernity and the assertion of popular sovereignty[128]. It fundamentally entails the dismantling of the *Ancien Régime*, which was philosophically conceptualised as an alien order for France (by Sieyes, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau). The emergence of a novel conceptual

[123] Bodin, 1992, pp. 1-45; Rousseau, 1979, 1997
[124] Montesquieu, 1989
[125] Sieyes in Lembcke & Weber, 2014, pp. 118-134; Voltaire, 1994, pp. 31-84
[126] For the erudite philosopher Kant, animated by his early republican musings as enshrined in his seminal work, *Reflexionen*, the inclusion of the *Third Estate* marked an epochal rupture, representing the authentic dissolution of the absolutist state that transcended the temporal confines of the watershed events of 1789 (Kant & Erdmann, 1882, pp.65-132).
[127] A second crucial consideration revolves around the agency promoted by the Revolution. The impact of the Revolution has been extensively explored in terms of its elevation of bourgeois agency, its projection as a precursor to modern politics, and its conceptualisation as the definitive end of feudalism (Furet, 1981; Hobsbawm, 1990; Lefebvre, n.d.; Rude, 1967; Soboul, 1969). While a comprehensive critical assessment of these perspectives is warranted, it is imperative to confine our critique to highlighting the significance of clarifications within this chapter. Such an approach is vital to purge the argumentation of broad historical assumptions that tend to oversimplify the impact of the French Revolution into universally applicable outcomes. Consequently, when examining the impact of this transformative period within another historical context, it is crucial to scrutinize how these broad assumptions are perceived in light of the associated historical circumstances.
[128] For a more comprehensive examination on the political theories of the French Revolution, see Appendix III: Politics of the French Revolution.

framework, engendered through the tumultuous and intellectually rich debates of this transformative period, had a mixed impact on Enlightenment intellectuals across Europe.

4.2.1. Fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum*

The transformative impact of the French Revolution on Prussian intellectual circles, particularly those associated with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, engendered a complex and multifaceted process of politicisation. This process, fraught with ideological divergences and fragmentations, severed the bonds that once united these intellectuals in their collective pursuit of the *Aufklärung* Project. An ambitious endeavour, the *Aufklärung* Project sought to instigate continuous reforms in Prussia, aligning them with the vested interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. However, the ideological reverberations of the French Revolution, characterised by the emergence of novel conceptualisations such as popular sovereignty, republicanism, the rule of law, human freedom, equality, and citizenship, precipitated profound debates concerning the role of the state, political rights, the formation of civil society, and the intricate tripartite relationship existing between these notions.

A fundamental predicament central to Prussia's political polarisation stemmed from the centralisation of the state apparatus as a revenue-generating mechanism catering to the needs of the ruling classes (Behrens, 1985; Braun, 1975; Hagen, 2005; Wilson, 2004). In the midst of an ongoing state-building process, Prussia found itself traversing a labyrinth populated by three distinct factions vying for power. Consequently, the acquisition and preservation of influential positions within the state bureaucracy became pivotal for the advancement and preservation of class interests (Anderson, 1974; Mooers, 1991; Muller, 1990; Walker, 1978). It was within this context that in-depth comprehension of the prevailing state theory emerged as indispensable. Ranging from Cameralist-paternalism to liberal reformism, these divergent approaches embodied the ideological orientations of different class positions[129] (Thornhill, 2007). The injection of novel conceptions into public discourse, emanating from the transformative furnace of the Revolution, further exacerbated the pre-existing political polarisation.

The fragmentation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* unfolded through a series of stages, intimately entwined with the historical developments transpiring during the tumultuous 1790s, an era ensnared by the throes of the French Revolution. Each stage bore witness to the erosion of the intellectual unity that had hitherto characterised the Prussian intellectual landscape, ultimately yielding a splintered tapestry of ideological perspectives and dissenting voices. During the 1780s, the intellectual milieu of Prussia comprised two pivotal constituents: Kant's critical philosophy, which harmonised the *Bildungsbürgertum* with Enlightenment principles, and Frederick the II's enlightened absolutism, fostering a platform for the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s engagement in reformative endeavours. These dual facets of Prussia's philosophical and political panorama bore the repercussions of the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s fragmentation.

It was Kant's critical philosophy that garnered favour among the *Bildungsbürgertum*, establishing his philosophical predominance. Kant's intellectual ascendancy over the preceding decade was predicated upon the construction of a hegemony that reverberated with the ground-

[129] Concurrently, the political landscape of Prussia underwent a significant transition with the ascent of Frederick Wilhelm the II to the absolutist throne (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992). This transition heralded a departure from the leniency demonstrated by his father towards Enlightenment ideals, as the new ruler sought to curtail their influence. The French Revolution, as a symbol of the dethronement of absolutist regimes, posed an ontological threat to Prussia's nascent absolutist state-building project. Moreover, the *Aufklärung*, with its progressive vision aimed at the realisation of a normative dimension undergirding the revolutionary conceptions, assumed an additional dimension of peril within the Prussian context.

breaking tenets of his critical philosophy, the intricate elucidation of human freedom encapsulated in his teleological works, and the resurfacing of his early political writings, which mirrored Achenwall's universal natural law theory (Achenwall, 2020). The manifestation of Kant's political ideas gained heightened prominence through a succinct composition he authored in the 1780s, aimed at substantiating and contextualising his epistemological paradigm shift within the confines of his *Critique*s. Consequently, Kant's unyielding pursuit of a concrete material and historical grounding for his epistemological divergence also found philosophical underpinnings.

In his historically situate his epistemological rupture, Kant engendered rudimentary political ideals, predominantly manifesting in his *Reflexionen*, and *Naturrecht Feyerabend* derived from the intellectual residue left by Achenwall's lectures (Kant & Holger, 1902, *Ak.* 27: 1317–94). Until the 1790s, these incipient writings, both in *Reflexionen* and his terse expositions from the 1780s, merely proffered an abridged and abstract notion of the plausible establishment of an ideal political order. Within these skeletal frameworks, Kant unveiled his affinity for freedom, commercial enterprise, meritocracy, legal parity, the abolition of hereditary privilege, popular sovereignty, constitutional monarchy, and the meticulous separation of powers (Kant & Holger, 1902, no. 1446, p. 631, no. 1453, p.634, no. 7542, XIX, p. 451, no.7638, XIX, p. 475, no. 7749, XIX, pp. 506-507, no. 7895, XIX, p. 554; Maliks, 2022). Evidently, many of these conceptualisations bore the imprint of Kant's assimilation of the ideas put forth by Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Achenwall, who endeavoured to redefine cardinal political concepts to supplant or offset prevailing absolutist regimes (Kant & Holger, 1902, no.1453, P. 634). Moreover, akin to numerous other luminaries of the *Aufklärung*, Kant exhibited reservations concerning the entrenched feudal society, thereby enabling him to evince sympathy for republicanism (Beiser, 1992, p. 34). Nevertheless, while he fleetingly endorsed the promotion of republicanism, Kant did not espouse Rousseau's radical tenets of popular sovereignty[130]; instead, he circumscribed his ideal republic within a constitutional framework, wherein the monarch could continue as the legislator. Rather than propagating a singular republic, Kant's conceptualisation of the ideal republic assumed a universal purview, contending that republican systems were less inclined to engender conflict and were more adept at preserving the interests of their citizens in a refined manner. Furthermore, Kant's attempts to historically situate his epistemological rift in relation to human agency, as presented through a teleological framework aimed at engendering a civil society for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, encompassed a universal republican conception facilitated by a constitution forged through the agency of popular sovereignty.

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned blueprints delineated in Kant's early political writings, a rudimentary outline began to crystallise, one that advocated for the propagation of a universal republican order throughout the world, with the *Bildungsbürgertum* occupying a pivotal position within the social fabric. Kant's projection of *Aufklärung* ideals for the *Bildungsbürgertum* furnished the social and political construct with an ideological framework, whereby the reformist objectives of the *Bildungsbürgertum* were consistently embraced, the doctrine of freedom was categorised as central to human agency, and universal moral principles perpetually guided the teleological progression of humankind[131].

[130] As Beiser points out in this article, Kant's early writings are influenced by Rousseau and imply a democratic form of government (Kant & Erdmann, 1882, no. 688-89, pp.217-214). From the 1780s onward, Kant's ideal form of government switches to a more classical form of republic in which at least some citizens are able to rule (Kant, 2006).

[131] Besides advocating his ideal political order, Kant also emphasised the ideal social duties of the state from an economic perspective. Kant defined the state in his early writings as an institution that is not necessarily responsible for the economic standing of society (Kant & Holger, 1902, no. 8000, XIX, p. 578). While Kant's understanding of politics is not necessarily entwined with his economic viewpoint, these views demonstrate the

Although it mainly emerged during the 1780's and got organically connected with the enlightened absolutism of that time, Kant's critical philosophy did not align itself with the Cameralist-paternalist doctrines espoused by the regime. Rather, Kant's conception of the ideal political order centred around public reason, the internalisation of universal moral principles and freedom, continuous reformist progress (he was opposed to radical ruptures), and the establishment of a civil society dominated by the *Bildungsbürgertum*. In contrast, the Cameralist-paternalist doctrines posited the state apparatus as the primary provider of welfare and happiness; a perspective which Kant rejected.

Kantian philosophy also diverged from the political doctrines espoused by traditional feudal resistance movements, which advocated for autonomy and the reconsolidation of local and regional political bodies in opposition to absolutist regimes (Kant & Holger, 1902, XIX no. 7638, p.475, no. 7895, p.554; Wood, 2007). Additionally, Kantian critical philosophy differed from classical liberal tendencies that emphasised pure individuality within society (Kant, 2006, *Anthr*, 1:128, p. 16, *Idea*, 8:22-8:30 p. 8-15). Instead, Kant's teleological approach outlined a path towards an enlightened society guided by universal moral principles, the doctrine of freedom, and a social conception of individuality (Kant, 2006, p. 15, *Idea*, 8:30). This perspective ensured the protection of individual rights against the state while recognising the role of human agency in the socialisation process towards the formation of a rational society (Cassirer, 2020; Wood, 1972). Given these aspects, it is unsurprising that the influence of the French Revolution, which politicised the *Bildungsbürgertum*, prompted a collective re-evaluation of Kant's philosophical, historical, social, and political theories[132].

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influence of early market ideology developed through the works of the Scottish philosophers (Smith and Hume). A broad approach to economics was taken by Kant, as he supported the idea that a commercial market society could be developed in the Prussian context by the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

[132] The initial reception of Kant regarding the French Revolution and the early consequence of the Revolution holds significance in comprehending the reasons behind the initial criticisms directed towards Kant. In May 1789, shortly before the Revolution, Louis XVI's relinquishment of certain absolutist powers through the convocation of the *Estate General* marked a significant shift in French politics (Censer, 2019; Cobban, & Lewis, 1999; Comninel, 1987; Hobsbawm, 1990). The transfer of legitimate powers from the absolutist ruler to the *Third Estate* effectively designated the latter as the new legislative authority. For Kant, this juncture represented a critical moment necessitating cautious consideration of the July Revolution. Kant's perspective on the French Revolution unveils Louis XVI's fallacious notion that sovereignty could be partitioned and commodified as a tradable asset, comparable to private property (Maliks, 2022). This epochal metamorphosis engendered a novel state of affairs, wherein the nation ardently wielded its constituent power. Crucially, this transformative process eschewed coercion against the monarch and a regression to a primordial state of nature. Rather, the commoners, astutely seizing the opportune moment extended by the head of state, maneuvered themselves into the foreground. Kant's interpretive framework, fortified by nuanced reasoning, served to both legitimise the salient events unfolding within the hallowed halls of Versailles in 1789 and safeguard the sanctity of the revolution against encroaching Bourbon dynasty assertions of legitimacy. In spite of his strong affinity for the liberal ideals that sparked the revolution, Kant struggled acutely with the ethical dilemma of using violence to overthrow the monarchy (Maliks, 2022). Resourceful in his intellectual discernment, Kant adroitly resolved this tension by ingeniously asserting the event's non-revolutionary nature. A triumphant defence of this claim lies in the categorical denial of the inherently violent nature of the power transfer, buttressed by the audacious contention that a sovereign, inadvertently, might cede the mantle of sovereignty[132] (van Linden, 1988; Williams, 1983). Delving further into the heart of Louis XVI's governance, Kant ventures to deem it despotic, by virtue of the confluence of legislative and executive powers within a singular entity. Paradoxically, this very regime, despite its despotic nature, attained legitimacy on account of adherence to established laws, the institutional edifice of courts, and the undeniable presence of an authoritative sovereign, thereby establishing the monarch's rightful claim to rule and engendering an immutable duty of obedience upon the subjects. The French Revolution's early reception by Kant and the subsequent outcomes played a pivotal role in prompting critical appraisals of Kant's position[132]. The pivotal moment of Louis XVI's surrender of absolutist powers to the *Estate General*, the subsequent July Revolution targeting the assembly rather than the ruler directly, and the execution of the monarch while still holding sovereign powers all contributed to Kant's reservations and divergence from supporting the Revolution. This complexity in the Revolution's trajectory engendered a nuanced perspective wherein the progressive ideals initially advocated became entangled and

In the process of scrutinising the philosophical disintegration of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, it becomes equally imperative to delve more profoundly into the waning phases of enlightened absolutism during the reign of Frederick the II. In the late 1780s and early 1790s, the Prussian regime found itself in the twilight of Frederick the II's 'absolutist Enlightenment', a period marked by the embrace of intellectual and artistic contributions from the *Aufklärer*, which were subsequently harnessed for educational and cultural reforms (Beiser, 1985; Blanning, 1990; Hagen, 1985; Hunter, 2012; Johnson, 1975). However, the primary concern of Frederick the II's administration lay in preserving the untouchable status of the absolutist ruler, in order to pre-empt any political criticism that could pose a threat to the nascent legitimisation of the absolutist regime (Beiser, 1992, pp.48-56). Furthermore, the Prussian absolutist regime had not yet achieved complete dominance over the traditional feudal aristocracy, leading to a protracted power struggle between the absolutist and traditional feudal factions (Hagen, 2005; Mooers, 1991; Sheehan, 1989). Consequently, Frederick adopted a protective stance, prioritising the preservation of his own reputation. As a result, the censorship machinery within the Prussian absolutist regime primarily targeted political criticism and content that directly challenged the regime (Beck, 1969; Kuehn, 2001).

Additionally, due to the imperative of avoiding direct confrontation, political discourse predominantly unfolded within the realms of philosophy and theology. Within the milieu of Prussian Enlightenment, political thought materialised through public debates centring on the bedrock of welfare and happiness, social order, enlightenment ideas, the rationalisation of bureaucracy, and the delineation of the legal and political boundaries of constitutions (Maliks, 2014; Thornhill, 2007).

The relaxation of censorship under Frederick II's rule (until his death) proved pivotal, unleashing a surge of public discourse on political matters, and fostering the proliferation of journals and newspapers (Kuehn, 2001; Maliks, 2014). This newfound space for open debate thrust the question of the people's role in politics to the forefront of discussions concerning the intricate relationship between enlightenment principles and the prospects of revolution or reform (Beiser, 1992; Maliks, 2022). The public debates became the arena for the new conceptual framework that the French Revolution had initiated, causing the *Bildungsbürgertum* to become politically polarised.

The fragmentation within the *Bildungsbürgertum* during the 1790s transpired in conjunction with these foundational elements. The *Bildungsbürgertum* underwent a schism, giving rise to distinct factions, and this polarisation catalysed a fresh surge of public discourse concerning the conceptual underpinnings of the French Revolution

On one hand, as the Revolution generated political turbulence, a conservative interpretation of Kant's philosophy emerged, redefining freedom as the release from duties and obligations. The conservative fraction was divided mainly into two groups. On the one side, there were the defenders of Cameralist-paternalist doctrines. Blended with Wolffian doctrines and the

undermined. Kant's stance against the potential for radical transformation, and his original categorisation of 1789 as a reform rather than revolution, juxtaposed with the novel ideals ushered in by the French Revolution, ignited considerable controversy within the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This controversy not only engendered widespread public debates but also induced a significant ideological politicisation among the *Bildungsbürger*. While rumours were spread about Kant's sympathy with the Revolution, his former students gave insight about his reception of the overthrow of absolutism (Beiser, 1992, p.38). The comments of the former students or *Bildungsbürger* from Kant's close circles reported and emphasised that Kant was positive about the overthrowal. The promotion of this side of Kant's perspective on the Revolution attracted the attention of Prussian authorities who were carefully watching everyone who was sympathetic to the radical politics of the French Revolution. But Kant's real position was much less radical, and he opposed abolishing monarchy altogether.

teachings of von Rohr, Dithmar, Zincke, von Justi, Schlözer, and Sonnenfels about paternalism, this conservative fraction of the *Bildungsbürgertum* argued that the state required enhanced authority and control to ensure the well-being and contentment of its subjects (Justi, 1760; Schlözer, 1793; Wakefield, 2005; Zurbuchen, 2007). The state was the rational agent to provide welfare and happiness to its citizens and define freedom for them (Thornhill, 2007).

On the other side of the conservative critique, there was the authentic traditionalists who were fundamentally siding neither with Cameralist-paternalist thought, or the early Kantian universalist philosophy. Among this conservative fraction, Edmund Burke's influential intellectual critique served as a source of inspiration. Burke's critique was based on the rejection of the notions of rationality and progress provided by the Revolution through the exercise of radical change (Burke, 2003, pp.3-210, Wittiche, 1904). Figures of intellectual prominence such as Friedrich von Gentz (1764-1832), August Wilhelm Rehberg (1757-1836), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Justus Möser (1720-1794) stood against the idea of principles dictating political practice, advocating instead for a traditional, particularistic approach to Prussian politics (Maliks, 2014, pp.17-20). This particularistic approach was indeed presented against the state-building process of Prussia, highlighting the fact that, the newly forming Prussian regime could not be the only source of power to provide order. Advocating a more traditional indigenous order for Germanism, specifically Möser (Möser, 1943, 1965) and Herder challenged the Cameralist-paternalist and Kantian universalistic interpretations while defending the values and the pluralistic and participatory framework of the traditional estate society. For them, the centralising Prussian regime was a threat to the traditional structure of the German world and undermined its pluralistic, participatory, and also aristocratic and traditional hierarchical order (Brunschwig, 1974; Göttsching, 1983; Knudsen, 1986). They were also sceptical of the Kantian promotion of the universalistic critical philosophy of the *Aufklärung* (Piirimäe, 2023; pp. 230-275; Spencer, 2012; Zammito, 2002). Herder especially, as a former student of Kant, presented a structured critique way before (the 1760s) Revolution which Kant needed to critically consider in his letters (Kant, 1999, p.94-99, *Cor*, 10:74-78). By attempting to circumscribe the egalitarian notions of freedom embedded within Rousseauan philosophy as it intersected with Kantian thought, these critics sought to reinstate the traditional structure of the Prussian *Ständestaat,* the estate-based system of governance (Piirimäe, 2023, pp. 63-96).

The interesting thing about this traditionalist conservative wave was its intersection with Romanticism (Beiser, 1992, pp. 48-56). Although the political theory concerning the framework and traditions of the traditional estate system in the German context existed much earlier than the 1780-90s, the French Revolution triggered the emergence of a Romanticist critique which revived the political, philosophical, cultural, and literary roots of the political theory of the traditional feudalism. Distinct from the preceding tradition, some of the conservative-romantic critiques among *Bildungsbürgertum* (such as Herder) advocated for a teleological conception of history that is based on cultural relativism, *Volkgeist*, cosmopolitanism, and classical republicanism to promote the indigenous patterns of the German political context (Spencer, 2012, pp. 158-184, 185-214). The particularistic elements of this thought amongst the conservative-romanticist traditional faction of *Bildungsbürgertum* enhanced a romantic-hermeneutic pathway towards understanding, conceptualising, and constituting the German context against the absolutist-paternalist or Kantian universalist political framework. The 'renaissance' of the political theory of traditional feudalism became a very crucial challenge for Kant to overcome in his 1790s political writings (Pirc, 2018; Westphal, 2017, pp. 84-89).

In addition to the staunchly conservative factions typified by absolutist-paternalist or traditional feudalist orientations, the *Bildungsbürgertum* encompassed a cadre of early liberal thinkers,

among whom Karl Friedrich von Moser, Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi stood prominent (Maliks, 2014, p. 20-21). Departing from the uncompromising stance of the conservatives, these early liberals adopted a more nuanced and discerning approach toward the tumultuous backdrop of the French Revolution, their intentions honed toward effecting reform within the Prussian political regime[133] (Beiser, 1992). Their avowed objective was to institute an individualistic political framework; one that would not only emancipate individuals from the shackles of external impositions imposed by the state but also espouse a resolute commitment to active political participation. Though the liberals of the *Bildungsbürgertum* evinced an acute awareness of the perils of direct confrontation with the prevailing absolutist regime, their clarion call for political engagement was unmistakable[134].

Foremost among these early liberals, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi issued forth a vociferous denunciation of the capricious and arbitrary power wielded by princes, which, in its unabashed violation of the legal safeguards that had hitherto underpinned the citizenry's freedoms, proved an affront to the very essence of their liberty (Maliks, 2014, p. 20). Alongside this, Jacobi posited that while the exercise of state authority was rendered indispensable by the inherent frailties of human nature, its scope must be circumscribed to the vital task of securing individual freedom, with any ambitious venture aimed at coercively fashioning moral perfection deemed anathema.

The intellectual climate of the 1780s and 1790s witnessed a growing demand among writers for both civil and political freedom. Scholars such as Hans Erich Bödeker shed light on this shift, highlighting the desire for an active citizenry to shape political decision-making processes (Maliks, 2014, p. 20). Johan Michael Afsprung provided a compelling definition of political freedom as the inviolable right "to exert a commanding influence on the legislative process" (Maliks, 2014, p. 20). This perspective emphasized the insufficiency of mere adherence to principles of legality and rule-bound conduct by the government. Instead, citizens should have the sacred prerogative to hold those in power accountable and actively participate in the formulation of legislation. This passionate defence of political rights did not necessarily advocate for the complete abolition of monarchy but rather sought to dismantle absolutism and establish a constitutional monarchy.

These early liberal thinkers, in a marked departure from their conservative counterparts, ardently championed the introduction of an individualistic political framework that exalted the primacy of personal liberties and vigorously advocated for robust political participation. Rooted in the unshakeable conviction that the safeguarding of civil liberties and the attainment of constitutional rectitude were intrinsically intertwined with the enjoyment of political rights, these advocates argued that a cohesive synthesis of these vital elements held the key to a transformative and enlightened societal order.

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[133] Apart from their political differences, liberals in the 1790s were divided by their philosophical perspectives on moral foundations. Liberalism in the *Bildungsbürgertum* encompassed both rationalist and humanist branches. Rationalists emphasised the justification of moral principles through pure reason alone, while humanists stressed the importance of grounding moral ideals in human experience, including human characteristics. These divisions in philosophical outlook also extended to basic moral ideals, with rationalists advocating a duty ethic centred on fulfilling moral obligations, while humanists supported a perfection ethic that aimed to realise individual capacities.

[134] Liberals in the 1790s exhibited a range of perspectives and philosophical viewpoints that shaped their stance on participation in the state. They can be categorised into right-wing, left-wing, and moderate liberals, with each group offering distinct ideas on the role of the population in governance (Beiser, 1992).

The final group within the *Bildungsbürgertum* was distinguished by their profound engagement in developing a radical critique of Kantian philosophy. These thinkers, inspired by the Enlightenment's spirit and fuelled by Kant's initial sympathies toward the Revolution, embarked on a transformative intellectual journey. Among the prominent figures in this movement were Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Johann Benjamin Erhard, and Ludwig Heinrich Jakob, who shared a common vision rooted in Kant's perspective on the purpose of the state. However, they sought to transcend and challenge Kant's ideas, pushing for a more robust constitutional framework and an enlightened political order.

In their pursuit of a reimagined political landscape, these radicals drew inspiration from the principles espoused by Rousseau and Sieyès, leveraging the ideals of the French Revolution to shape their vision. Their commitment to radicalising the principles of the Revolution was unwavering, as they recognised its potential for advancing the cause of equality, progress, and enlightenment. Embracing the universal nature of these principles, they sought to apply them not only within the context of France but also to the Prussian society they inhabited (James, 2011).

At the heart of their agenda was the politicisation of the public sphere. They firmly believed that a truly enlightened society could only be realised through active citizen participation in political affairs. In their view, the public sphere should serve as a vibrant forum for deliberation and collective decision-making, where citizens could exercise their agency in shaping the direction of the state (Fichte & Willms, 1967; Fichte, J.G., 1996). This commitment to a politically engaged public sphere reflected their understanding that the principles of the Revolution needed to be imbued with a living, revolutionary spirit, transcending the confines of theoretical discourse[135] (Erhard & Gabler, 1795; Fichte, 1996; Jakob, 1794).

In essence, these radical thinkers within the *Bildungsbürgertum* ardently pursued a progressive, egalitarian, and constitutional republican political order. Their commitment to radicalising the principles of the Revolution, universalising these principles, politicising the public sphere, and offering a revolutionary interpretation of the French Revolution for Prussia showcased their unwavering dedication to reshaping the socio-political landscape in pursuit of a more enlightened and just society.

The political polarisation within the *Bildungsbürgertum* not only led to intellectuals adopting divergent ideological positions but also resulted in a departure from Kantian critical philosophy, which had originally advocated for the *Aufklärung* as the political project for this social class. This fragmentation of intellectual positions reflects the wider societal divisions prevalent during that time. As intellectuals embraced a range of diverse ideologies, their commitment to Kantian critical philosophy gradually waned. The emergence of distinct political traditions within the *Bildungsbürgertum* became starkly evident, further undermining the hegemony of Kant's philosophical framework. In response to the criticisms levelled against him, Kant was compelled to engage directly in political theory, leading to the production of his major political writings. This marked a significant shift in Kant's intellectual pursuits as he sought to address the challenges posed by the ideological divisions within the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

[135] Furthermore, this group put forward a revolutionary interpretation of the French Revolution specifically tailored to the Prussian context (Shilliam, 2009). They recognised the need to adapt and contextualise the revolutionary ideals, drawing upon the unique socio-political circumstances of Prussia. By doing so, they aimed to inspire and mobilise their fellow citizens, galvanising them to embrace a transformative political order. This interpretation emphasised the principles of equality, liberty, and popular sovereignty, while also considering the cultural, historical, and institutional dynamics of Prussian society.

4.2.2. The Fall of the *Aufklärung* Project

Until the 1790s, the *Aufklärung* Project retained its predominant influence over the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum*, thanks to Immanuel Kant's profound contributions to philosophy. Kant skilfully merged the historical class interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* with the progressive reformist ideals of the Enlightenment. While there were conservative factions that opposed the rationalist, top-down reformation associated with the *Aufklärung*, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, particularly in *Königsberg*, held an overall optimistic outlook. Kant's inspiring teleological framework, drawing upon the political philosophies of Achenwall, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, exerted a significant influence on the *Bildungsbürger*.

The *Aufklärung* Project sought to reform the process of state-building in Prussia by embracing Enlightenment principles and promoting *Bildung* as a means for the *Bildungsbürgertum* to enhance its soft power within the *Standestaat*. Kant's early political writings, such as the *Reflexionen* from the 1780s, provided invaluable insights into the blueprint of his ideal political order. According to these blueprints, Kant envisioned a social and political order in which the *Bildungsbürgertum* played a decisive role. This ideal order took the form of a constitutional republic, where individual political rights were firmly rooted in the sovereignty of civil society (Kant & Erdmann, 1882, no. 688-89, pp.217-214). Kant believed that this political order possessed universal validity as it safeguarded the autonomy of both the individual and the sovereign state[136] (Kant, 2006, pp.24-37). Kant's moderate perspective fostered a harmonious relationship with the state, disallowing the right of resistance and radical actions against political authority. Furthermore, it presented a post-feudal approach to comprehending the tripartite relationship between the individual, society, and the state (Cassirer, 1981, 2020; Wood, 1972).

Against this backdrop, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, to a great extent, relinquished its ardent advocacy of the *Aufklärung* Project. The ideological landscape underwent a profound transformation, beset by factionalism and wavering commitment. Yet, it is vital to acknowledge that the erosion of support for the *Aufklärung* cannot be solely attributed to the political polarisation catalysed by the French Revolution. Equally influential were the intricate political factors intertwined with the Prussian monarchy, characterised by the controversial appointments it made and their subsequent critical stance towards the *Aufklärung*, and by extension, Kant himself. Thus, it was not exclusively the repercussions of the French Revolution's political divisions that compelled the *Bildungsbürgertum* to relinquish their allegiance to the *Aufklärung*. Concurrently, mounting censorship and intensifying political pressures in Prussia further propelled this gradual disengagement from Enlightenment ideals (Epstein, 2016, pp. 358-372; Hunter, 2005; Sauter, 2007, 2009).

Following the demise of Frederick II and the ascension of the conservative monarch Frederick William II, the era of Enlightenment in Prussia was abruptly extinguished. While the political and ideological framework of the French Revolution posed an existential threat to absolutist regimes throughout Europe, the process of state-building in Prussia remained incomplete, primarily revolving around the absolutist regime's drive for centralisation and the unification of Germany. Inheriting a state embroiled in this arduous and contentious endeavour, Frederick

[136] Kant's stance stood in opposition to paternalism, rejecting external impositions by the state upon individuals. However, Kant's conceptualisation of the individual differed from classical liberalism; he emphasized the significance of the socialization process in shaping individuals, which he described as the public exercise of reason or as an end in itself (Kant, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2016). Consequently, Kant's ideas remained distinct from the rebellious human subject articulated during the tumultuous era of the French Revolution.

William II staunchly embraced a conservative approach to stifle the burgeoning political demands (Mooers, 1991).

This conservative strategy necessitated strategic interventions in two crucial domains. First and foremost, a comprehensive bureaucratic restructuring was imperative, entailing the appointment of loyal individuals to key bureaucratic positions, ensuring their unwavering allegiance to the absolutist regime (Hunter, 2005; Mooers, 1991; Schleunes, 1979; Sheehan, 1989, pp. 292–94). Secondly, an effective mechanism had to be established to discipline the fiercely autonomous *Bildungsbürgertum*. Under Frederick II's lenient rule, the *Bildungsbürgertum* had enjoyed the freedom to closely engage in and shape the reform movements, thus attaining significant ideological consolidation, material influence, and indirect sway over politics. However, as the reverberations of the Revolution began to polarise this class, William II's strategy aimed to exert heightened political pressure upon them, fostering their fragmentation and fuelling internal conflicts within their ranks.

In a decisive move, Frederick William II appointed J.C. Wöllner as one of his primary advisors, bestowing upon him the authority to orchestrate appointments within the church bureaucracy and wield control over the censorship apparatus (Epstein, 2016, pp. 114-147). Just prior to the eruption of the Revolution in 1789, Wöllner published a series of religious edicts in 1788, strategically formulating the process of the 'counter-enlightenment' that sought to counterbalance the preceding era (Sauter, 2007, pp. 229-232, 2009; Sheehan, 1989, pp. 292-94). Wöllner's edicts pertained to the orthodoxy of fundamental principles encompassing religion, the state, and civil order (Zensuredikt 1788 in Beiser, 1992, p. 49). Subsequently, William II's reign witnessed the continuation of Wöllner's measures throughout the 1790s[137].

Amidst this oppressive climate, the 1790s did not bode well for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. As Wöllner's censorship apparatus expanded its reach, the impacts of the Revolution began to polarise this class. Conservative critiques emerged, challenging the dominance of Kantian-influenced *Aufklärung*, leading many *Aufklärer* to align themselves with the regime (Haasis, 1988, pp. 258-263; Preuss, 1865, pp. 577–604; Kapp, 1879, pp. 151-154; Saine 1997, p. 309). Notably, influential figures such as Gentz and Rehberg published critical writings on Kant and the French Revolution, while the growing influence of Edmund Burke among conservatives gathered formidable strength. One recurring argument put forth by these conservative critics was the fear that revolutionaries would dismantle existing political frameworks, traditions, and institutions, replacing them with newly devised French systems, including a liberal constitution safeguarding individual rights (Beiser, 1992, p. 49). The *Aufklärung* became a prime target of these conservative critics, entangled in the controversial discourse surrounding reformist ideas.

The targeting of the *Aufklärung* project by the absolutist regime stemmed not only from its progressive, rationalist, and reformist ideals but also from two strategic considerations. Firstly, the regime recognized the interconnectedness of French political thought, traditions, and literature with the *Aufklärung* movement. Consequently, they sought to sever this connection, preventing revolutionary ideas from permeating the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Secondly, the *Aufklärung* served as an overarching ideology, a unifying force for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. By directing their efforts against the *Aufklärung*, the absolutist regime aimed to undermine and weaken the growing influence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the process of state-building. Thus, the *Aufklärung* was accused of harbouring atheism and immorality, with the regime warning that it would lead to anarchy and insurrection (Beiser, 1992, p. 49). The regime issued new edicts specifically designed to undermine the *Aufklärung* and its influence, causing the

[137] In 1791, the King called for even stricter control over political ideas, aiming to mold public opinion in support of the French Revolution. Furthermore, in 1792, the absolutist cabinet was entrusted with the task of monitoring all publications (Beiser, 1992, p. 49).

Bildungsbürgertum to become hesitant to engage in discussions associated with it (Epstein, 2016). Furthermore, openly advocating for the *Aufklärung* now carried the risk of being flagged and subjected to censorship by the regime, prompting most *Bildungsbürger* to withdraw their support from the movement.

These developments were particularly worrisome for Kant, as he was a key figure in the *Aufklärung* movement. Moreover, Kant's moderate stance on the Revolution had recently become a subject of public debate. As early as 1789, reports surfaced indicating that Kant had been teaching that the decrees of kings are not necessarily binding. Furthermore, he came under close surveillance due to his alleged support for the Jacobins (Beiser, 1992, p. 50). In 1791, Kant received notification that the Wöllner administration was taking measures to censor his writings (Kant, 1999b, pp. 467-468, *Cor*, 11:456-457). The year 1792 marked a significant turning point as the Wöllner administration took definitive steps to censor Kant. His essay titled *Von dem Kampf des guten Prinzips* in *Berlinische Monatschrift* was subjected to censorship (Beiser, 1992, p. 49; Epstein, 2016, pp. 358-372; Fromm, 1894, pp. 34-37).

In light of these circumstances, the fall of the *Aufklärung* in the Prussian context seemed imminent. The *Aufklärung* had served as the sole rallying point for the consolidation of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, enabling them to safeguard their class interests within the state-building process of Prussia. Kant's pivotal role in bridging the material interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum* with its reformist ideological aspirations added to the significance of these developments. However, with the advent of a reactionary climate in Prussia, the *Aufklärung* project became an unpopular cause under which the *Bildungsbürgertum* could organise themselves. For Kant, at this advanced stage of his life, the only remaining task was to respond to the criticisms levelled against his universalist philosophy in public debates[138].

4.3 KANT'S UNIVERSALIST POLITICAL THEORY: AN INTERVENTION TO 1790S PUBLIC DEBATES

The aftermath of the French Revolution had a profound and indelible influence on the intellectual development of Immanuel Kant's universal political philosophy, subsequently permeating the public deliberations within Prussia. Although Kant commenced his foray into political writings during the 1760s and 1770s, it was in the 1790s that he produced his most seminal works, notably *Theory and Practice* (1793), *Religion* (1793), *Perpetual Peace* (1795), *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), and *Anthropology* (1798). These works delved into the intricate underpinnings and guiding principles that Kant sought to champion, particularly concerning the exercise of state power, individual political rights, the concept of citizenship, civil society, republicanism, and the rights of resistance.

However, the formidable influence exerted by the politically polarising and factionalising *Bildungsbürgertum* assumed a pivotal role in shaping the discourses that Kant felt compelled to engage with. Thus, in light of these complex factors, Kant's active participation in the public debates of Prussia was driven by a dual objective: to elucidate and refine his own ideological perspective while asserting the universalistic nature of his political theory.

Grasping the essence of Kant's universalist approach is a prerequisite for comprehending the remarkable resilience of his political ideas. This research endeavours to undertake a systematic and comprehensive analysis of Kant's responses to the public debates, situating them within the rich tapestry of the social history of political theory. Rather than offering a conventional,

[138] In 1793, Kant commenced his efforts by publishing his essay *Theorie-Praxis*, clarifying his core political ideals, and seeking to once again consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* under the banner of his universalist philosophy.

chronologically structured narrative, this study employs a thematic approach, organising Kant's interventions in relation to the diverse and often conflicting political and ideological dispositions prevailing within the *Bildungsbürgertum*. By undertaking a careful exploration of Kant's ideas vis-à-vis the prevailing ideologies of absolutist-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism, this research endeavours to shed insights into Kant's presentation of universalism during the transformative and tumultuous 1790s.

4.3.1. Casting Off Absolutist-Paternalism: Kant's 1790s Discourses on Freedom & Republicanism

Kant's political philosophy, which predominantly emerged in his 1790s political writings, serves as a profound reaction to the prevailing absolutist-paternalist tradition that promoted an interventionist approach to the state, society, and individuals. While the absolutist-paternalist tradition predated Kant's ascent in the 1780s, his influential critical philosophy wielded enough power to steer the *Bildungsbürgertum*, towards the *Aufklärung* ideals for almost a decade. However, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, absolutist-paternalism experienced a resurgence, reshaping itself as a conservative critique of Kant's understanding of the Enlightenment (Beiser, 1992; Thornhill, 2007).

The absolutist-paternalist doctrines relied heavily on redefining the state's role as the bestower of welfare and happiness upon its citizens (Gagliardo, 1991). This interventionist approach positioned the state as the ultimate arbiter responsible for ensuring the welfare, order, and happiness of the populace, thereby concentrating power within its realms to avert any major disruptions that might undermine social order. Characterised by external determination, absolutist-paternalism represented a tendency that Kant vehemently repudiated, with the exception of Frederick the II's 'enlightened absolutism' (Blanning, 1990; Sauter, 2009) Riding the wave of growing discontent triggered by the repercussions of the French Revolution, absolutist-paternalism garnered popularity among the *Bildungsbürgertum*, resulting in a fragmentation of the class. Many *Bildungsbürger* adopted a more distant stance towards Kant and *Aufklärung* ideals, adopting a defensive political position (Beiser, 1992). In the 1790s, public discourse almost invariably encompassed critiques aimed at Kant's conception of freedom and the Enlightenment (Noller & Walsh, 2022).

Kant's response to the recurring absolutist-paternalist approach in political theory became more discernible during the 1790s, as evidenced by his seminal political treatises such as *Theory and Practice* (1793), *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Kant's repudiation of the absolutist-paternalist framework derived its essence from two fundamental tenets of his political philosophy: (i) his doctrines of freedom, which encapsulated his philosophical conceptualisation of freedom and its interplay with the historical development of human agency, and (ii) his understanding of republicanism and the legitimacy of the state. Viewing the conservative critique against him as a parochial standpoint, Kant responded by embracing a universalist framework, asserting that paternalism constituted an inept framework for the process of state-building. Additionally, Kant exemplified his universal theory of the state by emphasising the aspirations of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, advocating for an ideal world order anchored in the establishment of *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft,* universal moral principles, and the rule of law.

To holistically explore Kant's anti-absolutist characteristics in his 1790s political writings, it becomes imperative to briefly elucidate his doctrines of freedom and his nuanced understanding of republicanism.

4.3.1.1 Universalising Doctrines of Freedom

> *Freedom* is independence of the compulsory will of another, and in so far as it can coexist with the freedom of all according to a universal law: it is the one sole original inborn right belonging to every man in virtue of his humanity (Kant, 1991, p.63 *MM*, 8:238)

Kant's doctrines of freedom are central to his critical philosophy, as they function as constitutive elements of the human subject. There is a vast literature on Kant's doctrine of freedom, considering his understanding of freedom from liberal, socialist, and conservative approaches, associating it with the modern forms of state, international law, theories of justice, and contemporary definitions of the political subject. Scholars from diverse disciplines have made substantial contributions to the extensive literature on Kant's doctrines of freedom, yielding a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives and interpretations[139].

However, in the pursuit of a historical materialist examination, it is imperative to acknowledge that despite the richness and diversity of the existing literature, there is still a compelling need for a thorough examination of what Kant's doctrine of freedom meant within the specific historical and societal context of his time[140].

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[139] Kant's doctrine of freedom has been considered primarily in the context of free will and autonomy by the scholars in philosophy (Abaci, 2022; Allison, 1990, 2020; Bielefeldt, 1997; Guyer, 2016). While this doctrine of freedom was considered to be central to Kant's main philosophical project, the philosophical examination focused on how Kant epistemologically distinguished human capacity through freedom (Allison, 1990, 2020). Christine M. Korsgaard's seminal work, *The Sources of Normativity* (1996), delves into the foundational aspects of moral agency, exploring how practical reason grounds the concept of autonomy. Similarly, Karl Ameriks' study *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (2000), examines the intricate interplay between autonomy and rationality in Kant's philosophy, shedding light on the complex dynamics at play (Korsgaard, 2009; Ameriks, 1982, 2000). More recent works, such as Paul Guyer's *Kant's System of Nature, and Freedom* (2006), also shed light on the relationship between Kant's autonomy and how it fits his presentation of the human subject in his teleological system (pp. 113-275). Shifting focus to the realm of external freedom, Allen W. Wood's comprehensive examination, *Kantian Ethics* (1999), investigates the profound implications of Kant's concept of external freedom for moral responsibility and the social contract, offering thought-provoking insights into the relationship between individual agency and societal structures. On the political front, Paul Guyer's meticulous analysis, *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (2000), explores the intricate relationship between individual freedom and the role of law within society, uncovering the nuanced connections between legal frameworks and personal autonomy (Wood, 2007, Guyer, 2012, pp. 96-129, 235-262). More recent studies on Kant's doctrine of freedom continue to examine the impact of Kant's account on freedom in terms of independence and democracy (Rostboll, 2016; Ware, 2023). Additionally, Otfried Höffe's comprehensive study (2005), Thomas E. Hill Jr.'s insightful work, *Human Welfare and Moral Worth: Kantian Perspectives* (2003), and Artur Ripstein's notable contribution, *Force and Freedom* (2009), illuminate Kant's ethical theories, shedding light on the intricate relationship between autonomy, moral worth, and human well-being. Ripstein's work delves into the intricate dynamics of force, freedom, and the principles of legal and political philosophy in Kant's thought and reconsiders and defines Kant's main project is to centre his doctrine of freedom in morality (Höffe, 2005; Hill, 2003; Ripstein, 2009). While Ripstein's experimental interpretation was examined further (Valentini, 2012), the impact of Kant's philosophical presentation of doctrine of freedom was considered to be influential for shaping the political self-legislation (Pereboom, 2006; Westphal, 2017)

[140] In the light of this need, Reidar Maliks' article, *Prussian Polis* (2009), adds a valuable and distinct contribution to the literature on Kant's doctrines of freedom. Maliks' analysis explores how to consider Kant's doctrines of freedom through the lenses of three fundamental concepts: autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation. By delving into the intricate nuances of each concept, Maliks offers fresh perspectives and insights into Kant's understanding of freedom and its various dimensions. His examination illuminates the complex character of Kant's different definitions of doctrine of freedom, associating their reference points in his other distinctions about state, republicanism, and political integration. Building on Maliks' examination, at the core of Kant's moral and political doctrine lies a precise exploration of freedom, wherein he expounds upon the concepts of autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation (Maliks, 2009, pp. 429-431). Kant's doctrines of freedom shed light on the inherent worth of human autonomy—the capacity to govern oneself in accordance with rational principles—while astutely delineating between external freedom, denoting liberation from external constraints, and internal freedom, which

From a historical perspective, Kant's critical examination of the paternalistic conception of the state emerged prominently in his early political writings, where he expounded on his ideal political order, advocating for republicanism, popular sovereignty, and constitutional frameworks. However, for a comprehensive understanding of Kant's anti-paternalist stance, it is crucial to bridge these ideals found in his early political works with his epistemological breakthrough, which gave rise to his interpretation of the doctrine of freedom. In other words, when approached systematically, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* can be regarded as a project that seeks to philosophically conceptualise human freedom, rejecting deterministic theories that portray the human subject as a passive recipient of social reality (Allison, 2020, pp. 234-298; Cassirer, 1981; Wood, 1972). Naturally, Kant engaged with rationalist, paternalist, and classical empiricist perspectives in order to define the human subject.

Kant's doctrine of freedom assumed a prominent role in the conceptualisation of *Pure Reason*, which characterises the human subject as possessing the capacity to comprehend and interpret social reality without being subjected to external influences. As an active participant in social reality, the human subject exercises freedom through their rationality, acting according to their own volition while adhering to universal moral principles that delineate the boundaries of individual freedom. Kant's doctrine of freedom not only defines the human subject as autonomous but also asserts that universal moral principles are determined through the free will of human beings. By safeguarding the human subject from the determinations imposed by others, Kant's doctrine of freedom establishes a philosophical framework in which human freedom remains unassailed[141].

In Kant's writings of the 1780s, he intricately woven together the developmental pattern with the ideological and political landscape of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Here, Kant suggested that the ultimate and highest purpose of the human subject lies in their development in the light of the *Aufklärung*, wherein the social and political order aligns with the establishment of the *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. Kant's notion of individual autonomy, or autonomous will, took on a new dimension as he expanded his doctrine of freedom to encompass a historical and anthropological teleological framework. This externalised freedom defines the universal foundation for the ideal political and social order, laying the groundwork for universal moral principles.

A distinguishing feature of Kant's externalised freedom is its association with non-intervention. Here, freedom assumes a direct political connotation as it stands in opposition to the paternalistic framework that ascribes political authority to the duty of preserving happiness and providing welfare for its subjects. Furthermore, Kant's doctrine of freedom possesses a third dimension wherein he associates freedom with the capacity for self-legislation. This feature firstly references the developmental pattern of human subjects, whereby they attain freedom through the public exercise of reason, the establishment of civil society, and the internalisation of the *Aufklärung*. Secondly, it serves as a response to the core ideals promoted by traditional

encompasses the ability to act in harmonious accord with self-imposed rational laws. Furthermore, Kant emphasises the profound significance of self-legislation, whereby moral actions emanate from the deliberate application of universal moral laws.

[141] To differentiate his doctrine of freedom from the classical liberal conception of the individual, Kant situates the human subject within a teleological framework that encompasses the historical and anthropological dimensions of the human subject's development. This framework imbues the human subject with a specific purpose in their ontological dimension. Accordingly, the human subject achieves self-consciousness through the process of human socialisation, requiring a systematic pattern of socialisation to activate their philosophical capacity and actualise their freedom.

feudalistic tendencies, advocating for self-legislating principalities against the absolutist-paternalist tradition.

From a more analytical take, it is possible to categorise Kant's doctrines of freedom into three types. The first and initial conception created the autonomous individual. While conceptualising the subject as autonomous from the direct determination of the external conditions, Kant loaded the human subject with a capacity to understand and interpret social reality. Secondly, Kant considered the human subject as a part of a historical-social process and described the human subject's freedom through his socialisation. This refers to the human subject's reaching beyond its existing social and material conditions. The third category pointed out that it is necessary to conceptualise freedom as an action to legislate the universal principles that govern social reality.

Kant's doctrine of freedom gains a more overtly political footing when examined in conjunction with the universal conditions that constitute the ideal social and political order. For Kant, this teleological framework could only be fully realised through the establishment of a popular republic, wherein popular sovereignty facilitates the human socialisation necessary for the human subject to break free from determinism and dogma.

In the intellectual landscape of the 1790s, Kant embarked on a profound exploration of the human subject's intrinsic purposiveness within the philosophical masterpiece, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). In this opus, Kant eloquently posited the human essence as an organism intricately interwoven with the teleological underpinnings of nature. Significantly, human beings, bestowed with the mantle of self-actualisation, emerged as the quintessence of autonomous agents, inexorably shaping the course of historical progress and, in so doing, defining the very essence of their own ontology (Kant, 2001, *CPJ*, §84).

Kant's contemplations did not rest there; rather, they also turned to the unique cognitive faculties inherent to humanity. Of paramount import to Kant was the capacity to apprehend the transcendent realm of freedom, ensconced within the very fabric of existence. Aligned with this cognitive prowess, Kant extolled the comprehension of the causality that governs the universe, all the while empowering the human mind to elevate freedom to the echelons of a 'highest end' - a supreme pinnacle of human aspiration (Kant, 2001, *CPJ*, 5:435).

> Human being is only being who is able to cognize a supersensible ability (freedom) and even the law of causality, together with the object of the latter that it can set as its "highest end" (Kant, 2006, p. 42, *CPJ*, 5:435).

In the crucible of Kant's profound ruminations, freedom emerged as the lodestar, a determinant that forges the very social ontology of the human species. This philosophical crucible found its apotheosis in *Theory and Practice* (1793), where Kant fashioned a profound tapestry of human existence. Human beings, the architects of a civil union (*pactum union civilis*), stand resplendent as the bearers of purpose, their essence intrinsically enmeshed with the tenets of socially organising freedom.

Within this profound essay, Kant unveiled the tapestry of the external right, birthed from freedom's intimate entanglements in the external domain. Far from mere hedonistic pursuits, this right finds its roots in the resolute purposiveness of humans as autonomous ends, self-legislators of their own existence. Notably, the concept of right assumes the mantle of a guardian that curbs the potential conflicts of freedom and orchestrates a symphony of harmony among divergent liberties. In this alchemical matrix, the essence of public law emerges as an embodiment of wisdom, encompassing the comprehensive array of external laws that together harmonising the grand fugue of universal concord.

Deep-seated within the very fabric of Kant's philosophical edifice lie three cardinals *a priori* principles, emblematic of the human endeavour to ascend to the realm of moral agency.

Freedom, equality, and independence resound as the quintessence of this civil condition, a sacred triumvirate shaping the moral architecture of society (*PP*, 8:289-290). Reverberating with the harmonious cadence of autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation, these principles stand as the very pillars anchoring the civil order.

Drawing from this wellspring of philosophical profundity Kant described the establishment of a state, an exalted vision crafted on the hallowed anvil of pure rational principles of external human rights. A political order emerges, adorned with the imprimatur of universality, embodying the very apotheosis of humanity's pursuit of virtue and harmonious coexistence.

In relation to these remarks, Kant considered a paternalistic civil constitution as despotism, as this form conceptualises social progress as a pursuit of happiness and necessitates the state as an interventionist organiser of social formation. Rather, Kant argued for a civil constitution, which he would promote as 'patriotic', that would be based on empathic thinking to preserve public interest (Kant, 2006, p. 45, *PP*, 8:290-291). With these definitions Kant cleared the ground for an ideal civil constitution and a path to a freedom-oriented universalist political order, in the form of a republic.

Kant's doctrine of freedom presented a sophisticated and intricate philosophical matrix that called on the *Bildungsbürgertum* to internalise and champion its class interests within the state-building process of Prussia. Kant's conception of the self-conscious human subject conferred upon individuals the capacity for autonomous agency, empowering the *Aufklärer* to pursue their self-development with fervour. However, this individual moral agency was not confined to mere self-advancement; rather, it became intertwined with a more elaborate social endeavour, wherein the establishment of external freedom and freedom as self-legislation assumed paramount importance in advancing the human race.

Kant's doctrines of freedom bestowed upon the *Bildungsbürgertum* a momentous historical task: to propel human progress by assuming a position of dominance in shaping the establishment of *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* and pursuing the lofty ideals of the *Aufklärung* movement. Thus, the doctrines of freedom offered the *Bildungsbürgertum* an all-encompassing and universal trajectory to pursue in realising their class interests. By centralising Kant's doctrines of freedom within their class philosophy, the *Bildungsbürgertum* could assume the mantle of a progressive class, forging the path of Prussian state-building towards the pinnacle of the *Aufklärung* project's aspirations.

It is crucial to note that Kant's universalist response to the absolutist-paternalist tradition transcended the confines of his doctrines of freedom. Deriving inspiration from his earlier writings, Kant breathed life into his normative doctrines by conceptualising an ideal republican political order, one that embraced and internalised the doctrines of freedom as universal codes. In essence, this order evolved into a universal construct upon which the foundations of an ideal world order could be established.

4.3.1.2 Blueprints for Democratic Republicanism: Reflections on Popular Sovereignty

Kant's engagement with the concepts of freedom, universal moral principles, and the establishment of a civil constitution, culminated in his conceptualisation of an ideal republican regime during the late 1790s[142]. At the heart of this vision lay the integration of his doctrines of freedom and the human subject, coupled with the pursuit of universal moral principles. This teleological framework served as a guiding force in shaping the political structure of civil society. Kant perceived a republican regime as the most suitable vessel for embodying these

[142] Although traces of his republicanism can be traced back to the 1760s *Reflexionen*, it is in the late 1790s that Kant elaborated on this vision and emphasised its crucial role as the second component of his anti-absolutist stance.

universal moral principles and ensuring a just and harmonious society. By endorsing republicanism, he sought to align the political order with the ethical imperatives intrinsic to his philosophical framework. However, his choice of a republican regime was not merely an ideological preference; it was a means to an essential end. Kant aspired to cultivate the *Bildungsbürgertum*, which actively participated in the governance and decision-making processes. Through this direct involvement, the republican political order fostered a convenient social formation that nurtured the intellectual and moral development of its members.

In order to comprehend the composition of Kant's republicanism, which, together with his doctrines of freedom, underpinned his anti-absolutist stance, it is necessary to first examine how Kant defined political regimes in comparison with absolutist and classical liberal perspectives. The absolutists viewed the state as the active constituent of the political order, while classical liberals emphasised the individual as the primary political agency, with both perspectives maintaining a rigid distinction between the state and society (Beiser, 1992; Shilliam, 2009; Thornhill, 2007). However, Kant took a different approach, conceptualising the political process as one that transformed the people 'into' the state. This perspective "aligns with the organic theory of the state, where the people act collectively as a people only through the public powers established by a constitution" (Joerden, 2008; Maliks, 2009). Kant perceived a dynamic political process in which the political will of human subjects actively legislated itself through the formation of a political regime that reflected this will.

Kant's republicanism stood apart from classical republican traditions, which defined republics as restrictive social formations centred on civic virtues. Instead, Kant reconceptualised republics as political regimes based on popular sovereignty. His approach distinguished itself from classical liberal traditions by conceptualising the political demands of the people not as selective categories but rather as an organic consequence of the political process toward establishing a civil constitution based on universal moral principles. In contrast to classical liberals who emphasised the necessity for individuals to remain ontologically independent from the state (most visibly in Locke and later Mill), Kant viewed a republican order as the political process toward creating a civil constitution grounded in the popular will. This civil constitution could be defined through the notion of public right, referring to:

> a system of laws for a multitude of peoples, that, because they affect one another, need a rightful condition under a will uniting them, a constitution (*constitutio*), so that they may enjoy what is laid down as right. This condition of the individuals within a people in relation to one another is called a civil condition (*status civilis*), and the whole of individuals in a rightful condition, in relation to its own members is called a state (civitas). Because of its form, by which all are united through their common interest in being in a rightful condition, a state is called a commonwealth (*respublica latius sic dicta*) (Kant, 2001, p. 123, *MM*, §43, 6: 311).

Kant articulated this political process by distinguishing and defining the patriotic constitution from the paternal constitution (Kant, 2006, *PP* 8: 291, 8:350). In light of Kant's visionary perspective on republicanism, a patriotic constitution pointed to a political regime that could be characterised as a democratic (popular) republic. Parallel to this, republican principles aligned with universal moral principles, serving as active principles that defined, created, and perpetuated the essence of a community (*PP* 8:361-364). A key distinction that highlights Kant's divergence from classical liberals and absolutists was his assertion that a political order not based on the popular will lacks legitimacy. In the absence of republican democratic procedures, the people can only act 'as a mob,' which renders popular resistance within a state illegitimate (Joerden, 2008). This perspective is more definitive than that of Kant's

predecessors, such as Hobbes or Locke, who also introduced certain conditions to distinguish people in the absence of political authority (Hobbes, 1969; Locke, 1948). Thus, the legitimacy of a political regime, according to Kant, is grounded in the political process that transforms the popular will into universal principles, which are then implemented to define, create, and perpetuate a republican political order (*PP* 8:382-384).

To situate these perspectives within Kant's work, a closer examination of his political writings from the 1790s is warranted, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how he described republicanism through popular sovereignty, the legitimacy of the state, and the patriotic constitution (*RL* 6: 311, 315, 340).

Kant's doctrine of freedom intricately intersected with his vision of an ideal political order, which he eloquently advocates through the lens of a 'patriotic constitution' (Kant, 2006, p.45, *PP*, 8:291). The multifaceted significance of patriotism within Kant's philosophical framework has garnered substantial scholarly attention, leading to a resounding consensus that his conception of patriotism transcended narrow nationalism or parochial protectionism. Rather, it embodied a deep-seated commitment to active citizenship and robust political participation. In the vibrant tapestry of 18th-century political and legal discourse, patriotism became inextricably interwoven with the tapestry of republicanism. Notably, within the Rousseauan interpretation of republicanism, the collective will, fuelled by the communal values forged through the intricate process of socialisation, assumed an influential role in shaping citizens' perspectives (Rousseau, 1979, 1997). Hence, patriotism acquired the status of an indispensable element of republicanism (Maliks, 2009).

At its core, this sentiment of communal dedication, often referred to as public spirit or *Gemeinsinn*, possessed an extraordinary transformative power, transcending the mere status of subjects and exalting individuals to the esteemed rank of active citizens (Maliks, 2009). Over the course of time, the notions of republican governance and fervent patriotism became intricately interlaced, creating a harmony and synergy. Patriotism, in its true essence, surpassed mere fealty or loyalty; it encompassed a profound comprehension of the innate interconnectedness between public and private interests (Maliks, 2009). Consequently, the role of citizens within the state transcended a mere exercise of influence, assuming a deeply profound sense of identification and belonging.

Indeed, Kant's unequivocal expression of his resolute opposition to paternalistic ideologies emerged as an organic outgrowth of his overarching doctrine of freedom, firmly rooted in the principles of republicanism, individual autonomy, and popular sovereignty. Patriotism, therefore, emerged as one of Kant's primary points of reference within this broader philosophical framework, elegantly manifested through his advocacy for a patriotic constitution that could harmoniously coexist even within the confines of an absolutist regime.

However, it is of paramount importance to elucidate the reasons behind Kant's nuanced stance towards Frederick II's reign in his seminal work, *What is Enlightenment?* (1784) and other political writings from the 1780s. Amidst Kant's intellectual pursuits, practical considerations inevitably intertwined, necessitating a delicate balancing act in his alignment with the prevailing political regime. Moreover, the ostensibly favourable remarks within these texts regarding Frederick II's enlightened absolutist model stemmed from its unique capacity to embrace and foster the Enlightenment project, unleashing its transformative potential through comprehensive state reforms (Blanning, 1990; Gagliardo, 1991; Zurbuchen, 2007). The enlightened absolutist model epitomised a concerted response to the emergent challenges confronted by Prussian absolutism, deftly addressing the imperative of self-legitimisation while spearheading a visionary political endeavour rooted in centralisation to surmount the enduring ramifications of a protracted feudal crisis (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Thornhill, 2007). Under

this paradigm, Frederick II spearheaded a series of sweeping reforms, instituting new frameworks, erecting novel institutions, and enacting progressive legal and political codes.

In his paramount discourse, *What is Enlightenment?* (1784) Kant intricately delineated his understanding of an ideal political order through specific frameworks. Focusing on the concept of *Aufklärung*, Kant accentuated the internalisation of the doctrine of freedom within society, actualised by the creation of a public sphere wherein reason is publicly exercised. This notion entails the establishment of a civil society that operates autonomously, independent of absolutist governance, thereby enabling individuals to exercise their freedom and engage in social organisation.

Kant's text highlighted a multitude of crucial points. Firstly, he posited that the ultimate pursuit of attaining *Aufklärung* becomes feasible by forging a public sphere where individuals are not only empowered by their own capacities but also engage in collective efforts (Kant, 2006, pp. 18-22, *Was*, 8:37-42). The organisation of this public sphere is a direct consequence of the public exercise of reason and signifies the emergence of a civil society that functions independently of absolutist rule (*Was*, 8:36). Secondly, Kant underscored the inseparable link between the principles of freedom and *Aufklärung* (*Was*, 8:35-38). The attainment of a state devoid of intervention corresponded to the phase of establishing a universal foundation for *Aufklärung*. In essence, a society emancipated from undue external influence was better poised to embrace and progress towards the ideals of *Aufklärung*. The third and paramount conclusion Kant drew in his discourse was the acknowledgement of the state's capacity to act as a disseminator of *Aufklärung* to its citizens *(Was*, 8:41-42). According to Kant, enlightened absolutism transcended conventional absolutist-paternalist doctrines by affording an opportunity to employ an enlightened ruler, exemplified by Frederick II, as a catalyst for fostering the establishment of the public sphere, the internalisation of the doctrine of freedom within society, and the advancement towards *Aufklärung* (Beiser, 1992). Thus, the functioning of enlightened absolutism, while not inherently republican, served as an instrument to effectuate transformative societal progress in line with enlightened ideals. Kant, in the discourse of the 1780s, did not abandon his early republican ideals, but rather exhibited a tolerance towards the model of enlightened absolutism, while simultaneously critiquing the overarching absolutist-paternalist tradition.

A detailed examination of Kant's evaluation of various different political regimes was undertaken in the 1790s, where he categorised them according to their engagement with freedom and compared their standing in the dimensions of freedom, law, and power (Joerden, 2008, p. 169). Kant's philosophy of politics was manifested in three fundamental texts, *Perpetual Peace* (1795), *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), and *Anthropology* (1798), in which we are able to observe his approach to analysing and comparing different types of political regimes and promoting republican regimes as the most suitable/ideal form of government. Kant's first prominent distinction followed his earlier distinction between patriotic and paternal constitutions and was embodied in the *Perpetual Peace* text as a distinction between constitutions according to their form (*forma regiminis*). Here, Kant examined the use of a state's plenary power and categorised states as republican or despotic. In his *Anthropologiei n pragmatischer Hinsicht*, which appeared three years later, Kant considerably extended his conceptual system in this respect (Kant, 2006, p. 173, *Antr* 7:331):

A. Law and freedom without power (anarchy)

B. Law and power without freedom (despotism)

C. Power without freedom and law (barbarism)

D. Power with freedom and law (republic)

The four categories correspond to Kant's distinction between political regimes based on three notions: *freedom*, *power*, and *law* (Joerden, 2008, p. 166). In referring to power, Kant meant the coercive power of the state (*Gewalt*); by law, he draws a distinction between the different stages of human social organisation (a distinction between *status naturalis* and *status civilis*, in later the rule of law is achieved). It is evident that his conceptualisation of human teleology played an important role in categorising political regimes. Finally, Kant referred to freedom in terms of his doctrines of freedom, which allow him to categorise a civil constitution as patriotic or as paternal in nature.

Kant described the civil constitution as a republican constitution based on the principles of freedom, the establishment of common law for all, and the principle of equality (Kant, 2006, *PP* 8:350). As well as providing an ontology of separation, the republican/civil/patriotic constitution provided the original contract that acknowledges that the head of the state does not own but governs the state and society. According to this definition, republican government implies a form of government that separates the executive power of the state from the legislative power. As a result, the absence of this separation can be considered despotism. For Kant, a popular democracy could also mean that these two branches unite. In other words, without certain principles that separate these branches, a popular democracy could form itself in despotism. It is for this reason that Kant advocated that the popular will must be represented rather than directly forming the executive branch (*PP* 8:352). For republicanism to remain essentially republican, the representative group of the popular will must be a small group (*PP* 8:352-353, *MM*, 6:341).

In his seminal work *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Kant laid the foundation for a republican regime by utilising a series of interconnected associations that served to offer a more comprehensive and systematic presentation of his key ideas. In *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant associated the civil constitution with the public right, which is one of the forms that would be considered together with international rights and cosmopolitan rights (*MM*, 6:311-312). In parallel with this, Kant defined three distinct powers: sovereign, executive, and judicial, identifying the composition of this civil constitution which would universally define his ideal political order (*MM*, 6:313). The separation of these powers identified his understanding of a republican order, as he considered this separation as unique to republics. While his borrowing from Montesquieu's *Separation of Powers* was crucial here, Kant underlined the fact that legislative (sovereign) authority in his ideal political regime, resides in the united will of people (*MM* 6:314). The executive authority on the other hand resides in the regent of state, a person who acts as a directorate (*MM* 6:316-317). Moreover, Kant distinguished these two authorities from each other, rejecting the main argumentation of the paternalist doctrine which prioritised welfare and happiness in a society.

> The well-being of the state is rather the condition of greatest harmony of the constitution with principles of right, a condition which reason dictates, through a categorical imperative, that we strive to attain (*MM*, 6:318)

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he endeavoured to establish a coherent framework for a republican regime by skilfully interweaving a series of interconnected concepts. Central to his endeavour was the application of universal principles to define and categorise the original condition of a state. Kant predicated the ontology of the state on these universal conditions, which he elucidated through the categorical imperative. While the sovereign authority remains impervious to questioning regarding its fundamental components, the executive authority, embodied by the regent, is held accountable for its actions (*MM*, 6:318-319). This highlighted Kant's nuanced approach, where while the sovereign authority is grounded in universalistic conditions beyond scrutiny, he emphasised the primacy of adherence to these universal

conditions. In essence, the sovereign authority, shaped by universal principles, serves as an impregnable bulwark against resistance to the state, even if the regent's actions were to deviate from the established political order.

Furthermore, Kant sternly repudiated the right of rebellion, thereby safeguarding political power from being fundamentally challenged. By viewing the regent as a mere organ of the sovereign authority, Kant closed any avenues for their removal from power. This stance was arguably a deliberate response to the context of the French Revolution, as Kant sought to address the contentious issue of overthrowing absolutism. As previously mentioned, Kant perceived the French Revolution as a transformative event, instigated by the transfer of powers from absolutist rulers to the French assembly.

Kant's conceptualisation of a republican regime revolved around granting private citizens the liberty to pursue their interests within the framework of universal moral principles that undergird the sovereign authority. His anti-absolutist stance finds its firmest footing within this republican form of governance, as it effectively circumvents both aristocratic rules, where nobility assumes sovereignty, and direct democracy, which may undermine the sovereign authority through the direct will of the populace (*MM*, 6:339). Instead, Kant established a nuanced taxonomy of political regimes based on the nature of the ruling authority: autocratic when the head of state wields absolute command; aristocratic when specific groups exert partial control; and democratic when the entire populace collectively shapes the regime. Remarkably, Kant designated the true republican regime as one that operates through a representative system (*MM*, 6:341). He emphasised the critical role of representatives in ensuring that the popular will is deliberated independently from the executive authority, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the sovereign authority rooted in universal principles from potential degeneration.

Kant's anti-absolutist stance relied heavily on the bedrock of universalism as a key notion in characterising political regimes. By championing the republican ideal, he advocated for a regime that diligently safeguarded the universal conditions that shape the political landscape, effectively circumventing both despotic and aristocratic tendencies. Simultaneously, Kant's conception of the human subject within a republican order endowed individuals with the dual capacity to pursue their interests while actively participating in the legislative process of political power. Thus he harmonised his core doctrines of freedom, encompassing autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation.

Visiting one of the most important contemporary interpretations of Kant is crucial in understanding how self-legislation an inalienable right is. Arthur Ripstein's interpretation in the *Force and Freedom* (2009) observes that Kant's political philosophy revolves around the concept of "right" and its relationship with external practical relations between individuals. According to Ripstein, Kant asserts that the concept of "right" is concerned exclusively with the practical interactions among people in the external world. These principles of "right" govern individuals in their spatial and temporal relations (Ripstein, 2009, p.12).

Ripstein is particularly attentive to the connections between Kant's legal and political philosophy and his ethical framework. He rejects the notion that Kant's political philosophy can be reduced to a mere application of the *Categorical Imperative* to political scenarios. Instead, Ripstein argues that Kant's *Doctrine of Right* is an elaboration of the concept of "right," which is primarily concerned with regulating the external practical relations among free individuals.

In Kant's *Doctrine of Right*, he posits the existence of "only one original right," which every person possesses by virtue of their humanity (Kant, *MM*, 6:237). This right does not entail being respected or treated as an end in oneself, as that falls under the realm of ethics. Rather, it guarantees independence, allowing individuals to be their "own master" (*MM*, 6:238). Violations of this right amount to coercion. Importantly, Kant stipulates that actual laws must

meet the criterion of being an a priori possible legislation, something that people can agree upon (*MM*, 6:232). This condition ensures that the omnilateral will authorizes these laws.

Kant defines a "right" as an "authorization to use coercion" (*MM*, 6:232), and as such, it justifies the use of coercion in defense of this right. The fundamental right, therefore, is the right not to be coerced that justifies coercion in defense of this right.

Kant argues that a civil condition is necessary to determine when one individual subject another to their private purposes, since that will depend, as Ripstein also emphasizes, on their respective property relations, and that cannot be specified in the state of nature. Property cannot be acquired with a merely "unilateral will," but only if it is authorized by the "omnilateral will" or "united will" that is necessary for a civil condition. Moreover, Ripstein maintains that Kant holds that it is the need for a united will that requires the state, among other things, to alleviate poverty, since poverty can create a kind of dependence on others that is inimical to the forming of a united will (*MM*, 6:273-284).

Ripstein emphasizes that an individual's entitlement to be their own master is only violated if another person compels them to pursue an end, they have not chosen by using their powers [including your means] without their authorization, or restricts their ability to use their powers, either by physically constraining them or by depriving them of the ability to use them. Your self-mastery is not compromised if others decline to accommodate you, because the idea of self-mastery is explicitly contrastive. The person who declines to exercise his own self-mastery in aid of your wishes or needs does not thereby become your master (Ripstein, 2009, p. 45).

In terms of Kant's universalist political theory, Ripstein draws parallels with the Rawlsian interpretation of the theory of justice. Both Kant and Rawls require that actual laws meet the criteria of being an a priori possible legislation, something that people can agree to, and thus that the omnilateral will authorizes. While there may be some semantic differences, the fundamental principle aligns in their respective formal approaches to political theory.

Furthermore, Ripstein highlights Kant's departure from the traditional natural law approach to justice, instead transforming it into an a priori metaphysics of "right." Kant's ideas can be seen as a critique of the natural law tradition, and Ripstein presents a strong defense of Kantian doctrine in this context.

Ripstein articulates a nuanced connection between Kant's endeavor to construct a universally applicable practical philosophy through the *Categorical Imperative* and his later conceptualization of the *Doctrine of Right*, which represents a comprehensive reevaluation of the interplay between individual freedom and the state. Ripstein's interpretation in this regard resonates deeply with Kant's perspective.

In the light of this, Kant's brand of republicanism stood in stark contrast to the prevailing classical liberal ideologies of his contemporaries, not just within the *Bildungsbürgertum* but across Europe. Where classical liberals tended to ontologically segregate the state and society/individual, Kant proposed a teleological framework wherein the human subject, through the process of socialisation, became synonymous with society, thus constituting the very foundation for the state. In this organicist schema, Kant envisioned a new social individual that could only fully flourish within a republican political order, impervious to the pitfalls of despotism and resistant to erosion under aristocratic authority. Significantly, Kant's writings from the 1790s served to elucidate his anti-absolutist stance while granting the *Bildungsbürgertum* an autonomous political position, enabling this class to cultivate an original vision, insulated from the prevailing influences of absolutism, traditional feudalism, or liberal reformism.

4.3.2. Resisting Tradition: Kant's Universalist Approach against the Revival of Feudalism

The traditional feudal worldview found its place in the conservative critique against Kantian critical philosophy after the fragmentation of *Bildungsbürgertum* and its departure from the *Aufklärung* project. A number of political theories were proposed to revive the indigenous elements of Germanism in the consolidation process of Prussia in the late 18th century, as discussed in previous sections, together with the Romanticist reaction to the French Revolution. A significant localist reconsolidation was proposed in the traditional feudal tradition against absolutist state-building, based on the reorganisation of regional power mechanisms under princely control or through establishing aristocratic republics.

The debates over self-legislation occupied a central place in the feudal tradition's political theory. Denying Prussian absolutism, traditional conservatives opposed the Enlightenment as a universal roof for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. The conventional view that politics should be guided solely by principles (referring to 1780s Kantian hegemony) was challenged by influential political thinkers like Friedrich von Gentz, August Wilhelm Rehberg, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Justus Möser. Rather than centralising, they advocated a traditional, particularistic approach that subverted the newly forming Prussian regime's tendencies. In defending the traditional estate society's pluralistic and participatory framework, they defended the cherished Germanic values against the process of state-building (Maliks, 2014, p.17-20). Theories of self-legislation as political autonomy played a pivotal role in their approach. Their scepticism towards Kantian universalist interpretations had a profound impact on the philosopher himself (Kant, 1999, p.94-99, *Cor*, 10:74-78). The conservative-romantic wave revived traditional feudalism's political theory, igniting a renewed discussion about German politics' indigenous patterns (Beiser, 1992, p. 48-56). As a result of their promotion of cultural relativism, *Volkgeist*, and classical republicanism, the thinkers provided a nuanced understanding of the German milieu, challenging both absolutist-paternalist and Kantian universalist frameworks (Spencer, 2012, pp. 158-184, 185-214).

In consideration of this political purpose, they discussed theories of self-legislation in the context of preserving the unique aristocratic and hierarchical order of the German context (Brunschwig, 1974; Göttsching, 1983; Knudsen, 1986). The renaissance of the political theory of traditional feudalism, with its romantic-hermeneutic pathway, shaped intellectual discourse profoundly, challenging prevailing notions (Pirc, 2018; Westphal, 2017, pp. 84-89).

The response of Kant to the revival of the feudal tradition was to propose a reinterpretation of self-legislation as a dimension of the individual's freedom. To counter the traditional feudal critique, Kant once again uses his universalism to justify republicanism, abolishing inheritable privileges, and self-legislation as a doctrine of freedom.

Rooted in Kant's doctrines of freedom, a grand and universalist pattern unfolded, charting the course of self-legislation for rational actors. At its core, this framework extolled the inherent agency of human beings, empowering them to shape their destinies through reason and moral imperative. In sharp contrast, traditional feudalism, entrenched in localised, aristocratic, and conservative traditions, emerges as a formidable hindrance to the teleological development of these human subjects. Kant discerned that the feudal estate system, deeply anchored in the past, was failing to grapple with the complex interplay between the state, society, and the individual, rendering it utterly inadequate to address the profound feudal crisis. Incapable of embracing the winds of change, this archaic system offered no viable solution to the challenges of its time, obstructing the very progress Kant envisioned.

The roots of Kant's antipathy towards traditional feudalism can be traced back to his *Reflexionen*, reverberating through his political treatises in the 1790s. Echoes of his convictions resound in his seminal works, such as *Metaphysics of Morals* and *Theory and Practice*, where he meticulously dissected the shortcomings of traditional feudal traditions in confronting Prussia's pressing political challenges, while simultaneously highlighting their inherent incapacity to contribute to the establishment of a world republic. Kant championed the clarion call for universal self-legislation, urging a transformative departure from conventional approaches.

Kant's divergence from the traditional feudal tradition of the 1790s becomes apparent when contextualising his writings and delving into his perspectives on self-legislation as a fundamental doctrine of freedom, his theories on republicanism as a dynamic force propelling society towards a universal political order, and his resolute rejection of aristocratic privileges. By thoroughly examining these elements, one can discern Kant's inclination towards universalism as a compelling alternative to the prevalent particularism inherent in the traditional feudal system of that era.

4.3.2.1 Universalising Self-Legislation

To contextualise Kant's response to the theories of self-legislation of the traditional feudal tradition, it is necessary to unpack how Kant considered self-legislation. Kant refers to self-legislation as *Selbstbeherrschung*, which could be translated as 'self-domination' or 'self-mastery' (*MM* 6:383). Kant's *Selbstbeherrschung* provides a theoretical/normative description of a distinctive form of self-control. However, many discussions of Kant translate self-legislation as 'autocracy' (Allison, 1990; Baxley, 2003, 2010; Guyer, 2005), and as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the term 'autocracy' is a reference to a certain form of state, which would have a tendency to become potentially transitional to despotism (*MM*, 6:339). Therefore, it is important to clarify *Selbstherrschung*'s theoretical and practical references to understand if it refers to a certain political form or a normative description[143].

Discerning between autonomy and two distinct senses of self-legislation proves indispensable. Although commonly denoted as a 'capacity for autonomy,' this formulation falls somewhat short of accuracy. Autonomy emerges as an inherent property of the will, endowing it with the unique ability to self-legislate, unshackled by external influences (*G* 4:440; *CPR* 5:33).

[143] There are different approaches amongst the scholars who have defined *Selbstherrschung*. For example, Paul Guyer espouses a scholarly proposition that an individual acquires self-command through the implementation and embodiment of the profound ideal of autonomy (Guyer, 2005, p. 143). On the other intellectual frontier, Henry Allison maintains that self-command transpires as the sublime and self-possessed exercise of autonomy (Allison, 1990, p. 164). In this nuanced philosophical landscape, Baxley elucidates that the abstract notions of autonomy and self-command stand apart as two distinct and sophisticated capacities within the intricate tapestry of the human will – one capacitates the faculty for legislation, while the other orchestrates the capacity for enforcement (Baxley, 2003, p. 18; Baxley, 2010, p. 59). Allison's interpretation offers an alternative, delving into the intricate interplay between autonomy and self-command, aptly termed 'autocracy' (Allison, 1990, p. 164). He distinguishes the essence of autonomy as the capacity (*Vermögen*) for self-control exhibited when suppressing inclinations contrary to moral law. In this scholarly paradigm, self-command emerges as the embodiment and realisation of autonomy's remarkable power – a profound connection akin to understanding and individual judgment. This view underscores that autonomy, being the wellspring of self-command, stands as the very capacity for self-control par excellence. Baxley presents self-command as an additional faculty of the will – one for legislating laws and another for their meticulous execution[143] (Baxley, 2003, p. 18; 2010, p. 59). This avoids the fallacy of autonomy being a mere capacity for self-control. However, we must refrain from ascribing self-command as a capacity within the will, for the will itself stands as a capacity, rendering such attribution problematic in Kantian thought.

Delving into Kant's work, a second dimension of self-legislation unfolds, revealing that individual agents possess the remarkable ability to create practical laws for themselves (Wilson, 2015). This capacity, inherent in an autonomous will, holds the power to forge personal moral principles. Kant's critique of past ethical systems uncovered a vital omission – the oversight that the human being is subject to laws given not from external sources but from within, resonating universally (*G* 4:432). As such, the individual agent assumes the role of legislator, shaping their moral framework. Moreover, Kant's exploration of human dignity reinforced the significance of self-legislation. The intrinsic worth of a rational being lies in their allegiance to laws self-imposed, unconditionally defining their dignity (*G* 4:434). In these profound passages, the individual agent emerges as the architect of their moral destiny, weaving the tapestry of autonomy and universal significance.

> Obligatory laws for which there can be an external lawgiving are called external laws (*leges externae*) in general. Those among them that can be recognized as obligatory a priori by reason even without external lawgiving are indeed external but natural laws, whereas those that do not bind without actual external lawgiving (and so without it would not be laws) are called positive laws (Kant, 1991, p.51, *MM* 6: 224).
>
> A (morally practical) law is a proposition that contains a categorical imperative (a command). One who commands (*imperans*) through a law Is the lawgiver (legislator). He is the author of the obligation in accordance with the law, but not always the author of the law. In the latter case the law would be a positive (contingent) and chosen [*willkürlich*]19 law (Kant, 1991, p. 53, *MM*, 6:227).

For Kant, only ‘positive' laws could have an author (*MM,* 6: 224; 6:227). Kant's inquiry into ethical self-legislation reveals an interplay between theoretical acumen and the motivating impulse, critical for autonomous ethical decision-making. The agent's theoretical prowess in evaluating maxims as law based on form and matter sets the groundwork for self-governance, driving morally sound choices (*MM,* 6:218). Yet, mere rationality falls short; the motivating impulse, a powerful force, binds choices with moral law, and calls for principled action. Ethical self-legislation transcends theory, becoming a moral mandate.

At its core, ethical self-legislation hinges on respect for the law, setting it apart from external governance (*MM*, 6:219). It is no mere external enforcer, but an internal reverence for moral principles. Rooted in the sanctity of human autonomy, self-legislation finds its strength in the intrinsic embrace of universal moral laws. Kant's perspective unveils the transformative potential of this intrinsic respect, transcending external constraints and solidifying one's moral conscience. In the nexus of theoretical aptitude, the motivating impulse, and unwavering respect lies the bedrock of ethical autonomy—a path to profound moral agency.

The capacity for ethical self-legislation is contingent on two vital aspects: the ability to discern whether a given maxim aligns with moral law and the susceptibility to feeling respect. Through the former, an agent can ascertain if a course of action is morally imperative, representing a 'practically necessary' choice. Simultaneously, the latter engenders a sense of constraint, compelling the agent to act in accordance with ethical demands. These twin capacities are not only indispensable but also jointly sufficient for ethical self-legislation. When an agent possesses both, he bestows upon himself what Kant referred to as a morally practical law, empowering him to impose ethical obligations upon himself. Kant contended that these capacities are inherent in all normal individual agents, making them capable of ethical self-legislation. Consequently, rational beings, endowed with both discernment and respect, can be

perceived as lawgiving beings, distinguished by a profound dignity that eludes non-rational entities.

This account of self-legislation (*Selbstgesetzgebung*) provides a lens through which we can grasp the concept of Kantian self-command (*Selbstbeherrschung*) and explore the intricate relationship between the two. Kantian self-command emerges as a morally distinctive form of self-control, embodying the adeptness to adhere unwaveringly to the outcomes of self-legislation (*Selbstgesetzgebung*). Consequently, the capacity for self-legislation is deemed essential for self-command (*MM*, 6:409). Without this capacity, the agent remains devoid of activity and devoid of activity, there exist no outcomes to uphold. Nonetheless, it is crucial to distinguish self-command from the exercise or actualisation of autonomy. Autonomy, as Kant postulated, is an inherent characteristic of the will (*Wille*) and cannot be construed as a practical exercise or realization, Agents indeed possess the capacity for self-legislation (*Selbstgesetzgebung*), yet they manifest this capacity through the imposition of ethical obligations upon themselves – electing to embrace or reject maxims based on their qualification as moral law (MM, 6:409). However, adherence to these self-imposed decisions remains an open question, highlighting the insufficiency of self-legislation alone in guaranteeing self-command.

The process of self-command entails a 'considered and firm resolution to put the law of virtue into practice' (*Entschließung*) according to Kant's formulation (*MM*, 6:409). Although Kant refrained from providing a precise definition of resolve or resolution (*Entschließung*), the notion seems to encompass a form of higher-order volitional activity (*MM*, 6:409). When an agent engages in the act of self-legislation (*Selbstgesetzgebung*), he exercises positive freedom (positive *Freiheit*). This exercise of choice occurs when the agent submits his maxim to the indispensable conditions that render it eligible as practical law (*MM*, 6:409). As elucidated, self-command extends the ramifications of self-legislation across time, emphasising the continuity and unwavering commitment required to uphold the moral principles enacted through autonomous choice.

By universally redefining self-legislation, Kant aimed to imbue it with a doctrinal status of freedom, positioning it at the heart of political theory. In doing so, he staunchly rejected the narrow confines of particularistic, localist, and culturally-bound interpretations prevalent in traditional feudal approaches to self-legislation. Instead, Kant advocated for a theory that transcends the constraints of locality and culture, firmly anchored in universal laws and principles.

Kant's motivation for this redefinition was clear—to prevent self-legislation from being construed in exclusive, parochial terms, which would limit its applicability and hinder the attainment of political autonomy for all agents. Rather, he insisted that authentic political autonomy could only be achieved when self-legislation aligns harmoniously with positive law that emanates from universal moral principles, categorical imperatives, and universally applicable maxims. This profound universality underscored Kant's resolute commitment to establishing a moral framework that transcends individual contexts and embraces a broader domain of ethical principles.

4.3.2.2 Towards a Post-Feudal Society

> *The greatest problem for the human species to which nature compels it to seek a solution is the achievement of a civil society which administers right universally. (Kant, 2006, p. 8, Idea, 8:22)*

In the pursuit of an all-encompassing ideal political order, Immanuel Kant forged normative distinctions that set his theories apart from the traditional feudal particularistic endeavours prevalent during turbulent times. Kant aspired to construct a post-feudal society[144] tailored specifically for the *Bildungsbürgertum*. This segment delves into Kant's universalist political theory, illuminating the revolutionary implications of his normative distinctions in forging a society governed by reason, autonomy, and a collective commitment to self-legislation. Through the universalisation of self-legislation, Kant sought to emancipate human subjects from the shackles of traditional feudal systems and to cultivate an era of enlightened governance where the pillars of freedom and self-determination would form the very foundation of a just and equitable society. Furthermore, Kant firmly rejected aristocratic forms of government as inadequate for a universally ideal political order, as they concentrate power in the hands of the few, stifling the purposiveness and potential of the broader populace.

In comprehending Kant's departure from traditional feudal stances within the realm of political theory, an exploration of his development of the normative theory of self-legislation emerges as an indispensable cornerstone of his proposition for a universal political order. This examination not only illuminates Kant's profound dissatisfaction with conventional feudal approaches but also lays bare his philosophical underpinnings for a post-feudal society. The crucible of the 1790s stands as a pivotal decade when Kant revisited and refined his earlier reflections on the entrenched Prussian/German order, as found in his 1760s *Reflexionen*. It was during this period that Kant brought his visionary theory of self-legislation, novel conceptions of sovereignty, radical advocacy for the abolition of privileges, and unyielding anti-aristocratic stance to full fruition.

In *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant introduced a crucial distinction between the 'forms of government' (*Regierung*) and the 'forms of sovereignty' (*Beherrschung*) to elucidate his stance on state structures. According to Kant, states can be classified based on the number of individuals holding supreme authority (sovereignty) and how they constitute and wield power (government) (Kant, 1991, p.125, *MM*, 6:313, 6:339, *PP*, 8:352). This classification comprises three forms of sovereignty: autocracy, where power rests in the hands of a single ruler; aristocracy, where power is vested in a select group; and democracy, where power is derived from the people. Importantly, these categories represent the nature of the regime rather than the governing process itself. Kant further identified two original forms of government: despotism and republicanism.

While these distinctions may seem straightforward and broad, Kant's framework suggested that certain types of sovereignty can also lead to despotic rule (*PP*, 8:352, *MM*, 6:339). For instance, in situations of direct participation in legislative and executive procedures akin to the governance of Ancient Greek *poleis*, the government may also manifest despotic tendencies when controlled by the same individual or group[145] (Williams, 1983, p. 173). Consequently, Kant expressed his opposition to direct popular involvement in politics and instead advocated for a representative government. Even a republican regime, which traditionally upholds principles of equality and public participation, can diverge from true democracy if it establishes a government structure that separates executive and legislative powers through a system of representatives.

[144] The term post-feudal society here refers to a political framework in which there is no rigid hierarchical social structure or property relations, rather than suggesting Kant or any other political thinker in the German context had a profound vision for a capitalistic society.

[145] Rather than the Ancient Greek *poleis*, Kant prefers representative democracy as more convenient to avoid despotism. Representative democracy as a concept started to become more prominent with the American Revolution in the late 1770's and left an impact on the Enlightenment thinkers (Beck, 1971, pp.411-12).

> Any true republic is and can only be the system of representing people order to protect its rights in its name, by all the citizens united and acting through their delegates (deputies). But as soon as a person who is head of state (whether it be a king, nobility, or the whole of the population, the democratic union) also lets itself be represented, then the united people do not merely represent the sovereign: It is the sovereign itself. For in it (the people) is originally found the supreme authority from which all rights of individuals as mere subjects (and in any event as officials of the state) must be derived; and a republic, once established, no longer has to let the reins of government out of its hands and give them over again to those who previously held them and could again nullify all new institutions by their absolute choice (Kant, 1991, p. 149, *MM*, 6:341).

Central to Kant's sophisticated political theory was the indispensable prerequisite that any manifestation of sovereignty, intrinsic to a republican construct grounded in the popular will, must be intricately woven into the fabric of a meticulously defined constitutional order. Within this intricate framework, the precision of articulating well-defined duties and responsibilities assumes an overarching significance. This imperative resonates universally, regardless of the paradigm of governance pursued, unless tethered to despotism. Thus, the imperative arises to methodically demarcate the boundaries demarcating the legislative and executive domains, thereby unveiling the wellspring of authority inexorably linked to the collective voice of the people.

Intrinsic to the tenets of a republican government is the imperative to substantiate the conferment of political privileges. Within this nuanced backdrop, the enigma of the aristocratic structure surfaces, prompting Kant to astutely observe that hereditary entitlements gain cogency solely within the confines of a constitutionally fortified framework. The absence of such a foundational scaffold inevitably relegates the political landscape to a state of nature, wherein devoid of constitutional anchoring cannot be legitimate:

> A nobility is a temporary fraternity authorized by the state, which must go along with the circumstances of the time and not infringe upon the universal Right of men, which has been suspended for so long. For the rank of nobleman in a state is not only dependent upon the constitution itself; it is only an accident of the constitution, which can exist only by inherence in a state (a nobleman as such is conceivable only in a state, not in the state of nature) (Kant, 1991, p.175, *MM*, 6:370-371).

In Kant's view, aristocratic sovereignty as a social form was the source of discontent. According to Kant, there were two relations in the aristocratic form of state, which distinguishes it from the monarchical (absolutist-paternalist) one:

> The aristocratic form of the state is already composed of two relations: the relation of the nobility (as legislator) to one another, to constitute the sovereign, and then the relation of this sovereign to the people (Kant, 1991, p.147, *MM*, 6:339).

> The nobility of a country that is not under an aristocratic, but a monarchical constitution is an institution that may be permitted for a certain period of time and may even be necessary by circumstances. But it cannot be asserted that this Estate can be established in perpetuity, and that the head of a state should not be authorized to annul this pre-eminence of Estate entirely, or that if he does this, he has deprived his (noble) subjects of what was theirs, of what belonged to them by inheritance (Kant, 1991, p.175, *MM*, 6:370-371).

Kant's real reason for finding nobility for running political power was explained in a closer and more detailed manner when he revealed that it is impossible for an absolutist form of government to be run perpetually since it would contain aristocracy within its monarchical structure.

Kant's analysis illuminated the inherent discord between aristocratic sovereignty and the republican paradigm. This disjunction arises from the aristocracy's dual role as both wielders and overseers of power, a dynamic derived from their ownership of hereditary land and property. The intricate interplay of power regulation and execution within the aristocracy introduces a complex nexus of interests and responsibilities, constituting a fundamental tension within the overarching framework.

> Finally, as regards the foundation of entailed estates, in which someone possessed of goods arranges his inheritance so that the next of kin in the series of successive heirs should always be lord of the estate (by analogy with a state having a hereditary monarchy, where the lord of the land is determined in this way): not only can such a foundation be annulled at any time with the consent of all male relatives and need not last in perpetuity — as if the right of inheritance were attached to the land — and it cannot be said that letting an entailment terminate violates the foundation and the will of the original lord who established it, its founder; but a state also has a right and indeed a duty in this matter: as reasons for reforming itself gradually become apparent, not to let such a federative system of its subjects, as if they were viceroys (analogous to dynasties and satrapies), revive when it has once become extinct (Kant, 1991, p.175, *MM*, 6:371).

Within the pages of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant's scrutiny of aristocratic sovereignty revealed a discernible interplay with cross-references directed against the absolutist regime. This dynamic correlation emerged within the historical context of the 1790s, a period marked by the development of French absolutism—a governance structure predicated upon the premise of the absolute ruler's legitimate entitlement to treat the nation as personal property. Consequently, Kant's rationale underpinning the inherent incongruity between the aristocratic order and the volition of the populace drew upon historical precedent, notably the illustrative case of French absolutism, to accentuate the incompatibility of the former with the latter's popular will[146][147].

[146] Unlike the French case, in the German context, the aristocratic order served as the backbone of traditional feudal society (not yet completely consumed by the absolutist state-building), operating on hierarchical power distribution between the naturally privileged ruling class, the aristocracy, and the local producer classes, who are represented through various institutions based on their roles in the division of labour. This traditional structure defined the political realm through the aristocracy's manipulation of coercion, supported by the ideological influence of the clergy, and the participation and consent of the producer classes (primarily the peasantry).

[147] Unlike absolutism, traditional feudalism is deeply rooted in social reproduction within a specific territorial context, encompassing localist, cultural, indigenous, and popular elements. Considering this definition, the resurgence of traditional feudalism during the 1790s, coinciding with the rise of romanticism against the backdrop of the French Revolution, can be interpreted as an effort to unite the German context against centralist, absolutist, and paternalistic forces, striving to revive the localist, participatory, indigenous, and cultural aspects of German-speaking Europe. Naturally, this traditional feudal revival entails a redefinition and reinstatement of aristocratic privileges, values, and customs at the core of political theory, advocating for consolidation under the naturally privileged, virtuous, and traditional elements, which are believed to be inherently representative and organic to the German context.

Behind the romanticist critique of Kant's critical philosophy lies a discernible concern regarding the inherent incongruity between social and political organisation based on universal principles. The traditional feudal approaches, or conservative romantics of the 1790s, raised objections to Kantian philosophy not only due to its universalist nature but also because it advocated for the *Aufklärung* as a political endeavour aimed at restructuring society into a *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. This transformation, in their view, would inevitably lead to the elimination of inheritable privileges and the establishment of political equality among all members of society. In light of these considerations, it is pertinent to explore Kant's response to the traditional feudal critique. He endeavoured to redefine the theory of self-legislation through the tenets of freedom, while concurrently advocating for the establishment of a *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as a societal structure that would engender a post-feudal era characterised by the elimination of hereditary privileges and the attainment of equality.

Kant's foundational conception of the human subject as an agent hinged upon the premise that individuals possess normative equality through their utilisation of rationality and their capacity to apprehend the noumenal realm, representing a sphere of universal *a priori* principles. Elaborating on this framework, Kant's portrayal of the human subject encompassed a purposeful teleological structure rooted in human socialisation and the establishment of civil conditions. These conditions are reflective of the creation of non-despotic political frameworks, ideally aligned with republican ideals. Kant placed greater emphasis not merely on the state's formal structure, but on the intricate process by which the political framework internalised universal moral principles systematically. This perspective underscored how the civil conditions serve as a conduit for translating the popular will into the configuration of the state. As a result, Kant's trajectory led to a juncture where the civil conditions surmounted the contradictions inherent in traditional aristocratic arrangements characterised by hierarchical social relations, hereditary privileges, and resistance to universal or centralised laws. This transformative process was achieved through the constitutionalisation of the popular will.

> The formal condition that must be satisfied in order that nature can attain this end, its final aim, is a constitution that governs the relations of human beings among one another, and in which the damage to freedom that results from the mutually conflicting exercise of freedom is opposed by a lawful force embodied in a whole, which is called civil society; for only in such a society can the greatest development of the natural predispositions occur (Kant, 2006, p. 40, *CPJ*, 5:433, p. 40).

Kant’s vision described this ideal setting with the establishment of civil society (*Bürgerliche Gesselschaft*). Rather than a description of modern society (as many scholarly accounts tried to find links), Kant’s *Bürgerliche Gesselschaft* is a representation of a post-feudal society that has eliminated the structural contradictions of the political regimes of the related period. While leaving the traditional feudal society’s inheritable privileges, hierarchical structure, and culturally, indigenously, and locally particularistic elements behind, Kant’s post-feudal vision did not contain any themes that would be affiliated with the liberal capitalist society. Rather, Kant’s post-feudal society was a description of where and how the *Bildungsbürgertum* would most conveniently rise.

> For civil society to become a whole, it is also necessary that all individual human beings together want this condition (the collective unity of the general will), that they all want this solution of a difficult task. And since a unifying cause needs to be added to the differences among the particular wills of all in order to bring into being a common will, something of which no single individual, however, is capable, the implementation of this idea 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. One can expect that such public right will thus admittedly deviate vastly in lived experience from the (theoretical) idea of the juridical condition, since we cannot assume that the moral convictions of the legislator will move him to leave it up to the people that was newly created out of the disorderly masses to bring into being a juridical constitution through a common will (Kant, 2006, p. 95, *PP*, 8:371).

In this regard, it is presentable that Kant's promotion of *Bürgerliche Gesselschaft* as a societal form is a project of eliminating privileges, providing equality, and promoting *Bildungsbürgertum*.

In conclusion, Kant's intricate construction of self-legislation served a dual, significant purpose within the context of his exploration of post-feudal society. It stood not only as a staunch assertion against absolutist-paternalist ideologies but also as a decisive repudiation of the conventional feudal approaches that championed insular and parochial notions of political consolidation, particularly within the German landscape. The political treatises authored by Kant during the 1790s undertook a profound decoding of the latent contradictions inherent in the specific reactions to the evolving post-French Revolution era. This dialectical engagement showcased Kant's profound concern with transcending the limitations of the past while envisioning a more encompassing socio-political landscape.

Consequently, Kant's categorical rejection of the confines of traditional feudal particularism underscored his call for a paradigm shift—an imperative to construct a universalisable civil condition as the bedrock upon which the edifice of self-legislation could be built. This conceptual architecture, based on principles that traversed the boundaries of the local and particular, was important to afford both individuals and society the fertile ground necessary for genuine and holistic self-determination, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and harmonious human community.

4.3.3. Kant's Universal Lens: A Thoughtful Rejection of Liberal Reformism

Situated within the intricate social and political fabric of Prussia, Kant's engagement with the classical liberalism of his contemporaneous era comes to the fore upon closer examination. This movement encompasses the rejection of state coercion, wherein fervent advocacy is made for individual rights, including property rights, and personal freedom. As elucidated earlier, the German version of liberalism diverged significantly from its English and French counterparts due to its close connection with the state apparatus[148]. However, beneath this contextual divergence, underlying thematic similarities persist.

The pivotal juncture of the 1790s brought to light a noticeable divergence between Kant's approach and the prevailing trends of liberal reformism. This divergence became particularly apparent in discussions revolving around the right to resist state oppression, the intricacies of citizenship, the idea of a cosmopolitan global order, and the nuances of individualism. Kant's response to the prevailing liberal reformism of the 1790s was characterised by a strong defence of a universal reinterpretation of republican principles, the dynamics of civil society, the

[148] Preceding Kant's era, the path of German liberalism was marked by a sequence of intellectual currents that sought to reconfigure the prevailing state structure in favour of empowering the individual. These discourses also championed the creation of constitutional frameworks meant to shield individuals from state coercion. Influenced by legal intricacies, the early stages of German liberal reformism were nurtured through debates on property laws, territorial complexities, constitutional adjustments, and religious diversity. Unlike the Anglo-Franco model that focused on economic transformations through contracts, wages, and tenure systems, the German version stressed the need to recalibrate the intricate relationship between individual agency and state authority.

opposition to the right to stand against infringements on personal liberties, the understanding of citizenship, and the categorical rejection of the right to revolution. Through this intellectual interaction, Kant's lasting influence on Prussian political thought can be seen as a testament to the interwoven nature of individualism and collective well-being.

Building on his critical philosophy in the 1790s, Kant proposed not only a universalisable vision for the individual. Instead his universalist political theory identified the individual as a human subject that would go through a process of human sociality, establish a public sphere, establish a civil society, and exist in an ideal universalist republican political order guided by the maxims of the categorical imperative. Therefore, Kant's ideal political construction was very different from that of a classical liberal reformist, who would centre her or his approach on the individual's ontological separation from society and state.

4.3.3.1 Co-existence of Political Rights with Universal Law

Classical liberalism, which in the 18th-century context was intricately shaped by the ideas of John Locke, is grounded in an elemental ontological distinction: the separation of the individual from both the coercive reach of the state and the societal currents. Locke's seminal work articulated how society becomes the crucible for foundational agreements, forging a consensus that lays the bedrock for a constitutional framework[149] (Locke, 1948, §§ 95—99). This ontological separation hinges on rights and freedoms conferred upon individuals in material and legal dimensions. Property ownership, a pivotal element, materialises as an extension of personal liberty (Locke, 1948, §§ 25--51, 123—26). These rights, emblematic of classical liberalism, transcend the personal to embody the political, their significance underscored by a meticulously designed process—a process that considers them as not merely personal privileges, but as the cornerstones of a political edifice.

Central to this construct was the constitutional framework, a bulwark guarding individual autonomy against potential state coercion and societal pressures. Political equality, a core classical liberal tenet, resonated within this architecture. It served as a counterbalance to the concentration of power, preserving individual rights from erosion. This parity underscored the seamless integration of individual and political rights, reinforcing their indivisibility in the framework of classical liberalism. In conclusion, classical liberalism, epitomised by Locke's insights, narrated a tale of individual autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state and society. This ontology of separation hinged on the cornerstone principle of consent, epitomising the sanctity of property rights, the inviolability of legal norms, and the pivotal role of political equality. Thus, the political construct of classical liberalism emerged as an anthem to the individual, harmonising the political rights through the consent-driven constitutional compact.

Immanuel Kant's conception of the individual, society, and the state diverged starkly from contemporary liberal reformism due to three pivotal reasons. Firstly, Kant's view of freedom demanded its alignment with universal law, emphasising a harmonious coexistence between individual liberty and universally applicable principles. Secondly, he envisioned individuals as inherently social beings within a purposeful teleological framework, challenging the prevailing liberal notion of isolated individuals. Thirdly, Kant's perspective on the formation of an individual's freedom, crucial for political rights, centred on rational autonomy and moral agency. Unlike his liberal counterparts, Kant's philosophy thus uniquely underscored the coalescence of freedom with universal principles, the intrinsic interplay of individuals and society, and the ethical foundation of political entitlements.

[149] Locke's assertion, "Men being...by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent" distinctly encapsulates the essence of classical liberalism—a paradigm that underscores individual autonomy fortified by the scaffold of consent.

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant asserted that the universal principle of right constitutes a means for determining how freedom can coexist with universal law (*MM*, 6: 230). In this configuration, the freedom of choice of each and every person must coexist by universal law. Kant's definition of right as "the sum of the conditions under which the choice [*die Willkür*] of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom" (*MM*, 6: 230) supported this configuration (James, 2016, pp. 302-303). Kant expanded this configuration in the Doctrine of Right as follows:

> *Freedom* (independence from being constrained by another's choice), insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law, is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity. This principle of innate freedom already involves the following authorizations, which are not really distinct from it (as if they were members of the division of some higher concept of a right): innate equality, that is, independence from being bound by others to more than one can in turn bind them; hence a man's quality of being his own master (*sui iuris*), as well as being a man beyond reproach (*iusti*), since before he performs any act affecting rights he has done no wrong to anyone; and finally, his being authorized to do to others anything that does not in itself diminish what is theirs, so long as they do not want to accept it — such things as merely communicating his thoughts to them, telling or promising them something, whether what he says is true and sincere or untrue and insincere (*veriloquium autfalsiloquium*)-, for it is entirely up to them whether they want to believe him or not (Kant, 1991, p. 63, *MM*, 6: 237-238).

From Kant's description, it is observable that the original right of people and freedom both are interlinked with the universal law. Hence, the essence of the freedom safeguarded by the concept of right resides inherently in the capacity to evade subjugation by another entity, wherein the actions undertaken are dictated by the volitional agency of said external entity, rather than one's own autonomous will (Ripstein, 2009, p.14, Wood, 2014).

Consequently, the assurance of rights does not merely encompass the provision or advancement of a specific outcome, namely independence. This prevents the reduction of rights to a mere instrumental pursuit detached from its intrinsic essence (James, 2016, pp. 304). Instead, the objective of attaining and preserving independence inherently shapes the very fabric of the concept of rights. This conception of freedom as independence is intricately linked with the notion of self-legislation or self-command, signifying emancipation from the arbitrary will of another individual with whom one is asymmetrically entwined.

As discussed extensively in Chapters II and III, Kant's intricate conceptualisation of the human subject within a teleological framework laid the foundation for defining political rights alongside a universal law that profoundly shapes the trajectory of historical human progress. Within the context of forming a civil constitution, Kant's ideas resonated with Rousseau's framework, which depicts human agency as an evolutionary journey from natural to cultural conditions. While Rousseau's narrative culminated in the establishment of the General Will through a Social Contract, Kant's approach similarly guided the human subject through a comparable endeavour, leading to the emergence of civil society and subsequently the civil constitution, both rooted in universal moral principles. Evidently, Kant regarded the *Social Contract* as a pivotal text that elucidates the harmonisation of human freedom with the evolution of legal and political relations. Kant's portrayal of the criterion of independence, framed as not "being bound by others to more than one can in turn bind them," (Kant, 1991, p. 63, *MM*, 6:237) resonated with Rousseau's assertion that a legitimate social contract mandates complete renunciation of individual natural freedom (Rousseau, 1979, p.50). This renunciation

fosters an "equal for all" condition, devoid of any vested interest in burdening others, thus underscoring the essence of a just social compact.

Building on this conception, Kant rested the legislative authority exclusively upon the unanimous and collective will of all individuals, wherein each individual's choice aligns with the collective decision, underscoring the paramount role of the people's unified general will (*MM*, 6: 313f). Kant's most fundamental distinction from classical liberal individualism is evident here, outlining the foundations for social and political community.

Kant's perspective on individual political rights, harmonised solely within the framework of universal law, challenges the notion of an exclusively individual-focused political arrangement. It employs universalism as a guiding principle to mitigate potential disparities. However, the seamless coherence of this systematic stance became intricate when Kant delved into the theoretical underpinnings of individuals' material circumstances.

This situation gained a profound significance in the context of Kant's acknowledgement of certain property rights and the ensuing social dynamics, wherein one person becomes subject to another's discretionary authority within a justly established legal and political community. Consequently, a complex question arises: How did Kant reconcile his endorsement of property rights, which can curtail the complete autonomy of certain citizens, with his fundamental assertion that inherent human dignity entails independence from the arbitrary will? (James, 2016, p.305). This inherent tension between Kant's championing of personal independence as immunity from another's arbitrary freedom of choice and his embrace of asymmetrical dependencies based on property rights underscores the pivotal role of his property rights theory in assessing the coherence of his *Rechtslehre*.

4.3.3.2 Universal Groundworks for Political Participation: Citizenship & Property

The 18th century witnessed the emergence of the classical liberal conception of political community membership, subject to multifaceted criteria shaped by various political interpretations of liberalism. Particularly noteworthy are the instances of early liberal governance in England, wherein the delineation of political community membership was legally framed around male citizenship, a category itself constrained by age, and the possession of property, specifically land. The French Revolution, initially following a similar trajectory, underwent a significant constitutional transformation with the ascent of the Jacobin faction in 1793, leading to the granting of universal suffrage to those above the age of 21.

In the complex landscape of Prussian political thought during the late 18th century, the question of citizenship was a subject of intense debate, revealing contrasting viewpoints that reflected broader social and political tensions of the era. One crucial distinction emerged between those who saw citizenship as a special status with political rights and those who envisioned it as a more inclusive, general membership status. Justus Möser, a prominent figure in this discourse, aligned with the defenders of traditional feudalism, advocating for citizenship as a distinctive privilege (Maliks, 2014, p.83). For Möser, citizenship was intricately linked to property ownership, creating a hierarchical structure in which landowners held the primary political rights, while those without property, such as servants or tenants, were excluded from participating in governance. He vehemently opposed the universalist notions of citizenship prevalent in the wake of the French Revolution, perceiving them as an extension of absolutist views that threatened the power of established estates. In this view, citizenship was a specialised membership, granted by territorial rulers, and distinct from the broader population.

In sharp contrast to Möser's perspective, the Wolffian supporters of absolutist-paternalism championed the idea of citizenship as a general membership status, not limited by property

ownership or other social hierarchies. This approach aimed to extend citizenship rights to all male heads of households, irrespective of their social or economic background. This inclusive vision of citizenship aimed to establish a broader sense of political participation, challenging the traditional privileges associated with landownership and social hierarchy. This viewpoint, while advocating for equality among citizens, also aligned with the efforts of rulers in the Prussian context to simplify status divisions and consolidate authority under the banner of the sovereign.

Drawing from these historical contexts, German liberal reformists faced critical considerations regarding citizenship and property rights, pivotal elements in defining political participation. While the classical liberal paradigms of citizenship and property rights have been primarily discussed within the context of state-individual relations, Immanuel Kant introduced a novel dimension to these debates, reframing the notions of active and passive citizenship. Kant's seminal works, such as *Theory and Practice* and *Doctrine of Right*, conjoined doctrines of freedom with citizenship and property rights, transcending mere legalistic interpretations (Kant, 1991, *MM*, 6: 314).

> The free member of society as a human being [*Mensch*].
> His equality with every other as a subject [*Unterthan*].
> The independence [*Selbstständigkeit*] of every member of a commonwealth as a citizen [*Bürger*]
>
> Kant, 2006, *TP*, 8:290

In *Theory and Practice*, Kant introduced a definition aimed at delineating the criteria for voting rights within the legislative process, which aligned with his goal of defining full citizenship. This concept, further developed in *Rechtslehre*, emphasised that active citizens must embody freedom, equality, and independence, ultimately leading to what Kant terms the 'civil personality' (Ellis, 2006, p. 548). Eligibility for voting hinged on citizenship, involving the assertion of self-autonomy and the possession of tangible assets like property, arts, crafts, or sciences, enabling sustenance without reliance on external sources, reflecting the ideal citizen's commitment to collective welfare (Kant, *TP*, 8:295–296). While every individual possessed the potential for citizenship (*Staatsbürger*) by birth, actualising this status necessitated a certain capital, whether from income or inheritance (Maliks, 2014).

Kant's re-evaluated the concepts of active and passive citizenship, most notably in his magnum opus *Rechtslehre* (1797). According to Kant, the absence of complete independence emanated from the manner in which one's subsistence is contingent upon the volition of another, driven by prevailing property relations and ownership dynamics. This form of dependence was aptly exemplified by the relationship between a wage labourer and their employer, wherein the latter temporarily exercised dominion over the labour of the former. Additionally, this dependence was evident in the context of tenant farmers, whose agricultural activities hinged upon leasing agreements with landowners (*MM*, 6:314f). Such dependence emerged from the lack of property beyond one's labour on one side and the possession of productive means or the ability to procure labour power on the other. Kant cogently argued that this form of dependence, despite contributing to political inequality, did not inherently contradict the freedom and equality experienced by passive citizens, who possess common human characteristics and equal legal status, albeit without voting rights (James, 2016; Maliks, 2014). This perspective is rooted in his belief that those deprived of voting privileges were still entitled to the protective mantle of living under the rule of law, thereby safeguarding their civil rights. Kant's perspective elevated the privilege of voting to an exclusive domain, reserved for a particular demographic—independent male property owners.

Kant's divergence from universalism, where property ownership rights became a precondition for full citizenship, sparked discontent among his more radical followers. This group, including thinkers like Fichte, Bergk, Pörschke, and Tieftrunk, critiqued Kant's ideals, emphasising the inherent contradiction between his advocacy for equal freedom and the exclusions inherent in his citizenship framework. Rather than tethering citizenship to a civil constitution, Kant's criteria revolved around material property ownership (Maliks, 2014, pp.106-107).

Kant, however, viewed citizenship as an autonomous institution, extending beyond mere individuality. His perspective allowed him to ground the concept of autonomy in self-sustainability and self-legislation. For example, Kant suggested that the household could serve as a categorical basis for defining the right to vote. Within this context, the dominant male (master) figure in the household held the ability to deliberate and internalise the universal law, forming impartial judgments consistent with it. In contrast, those lacking the property associated with the household—such as women, domestic servants, and children—were excluded from this capacity for impartial judgment (Maliks, 2014, pp.108-109). Maliks points out that Kant's focus on household-based political rights, where the household owner was the sole figure capable of guided reasoning under the universal law, reflects his personal class background. His experience as a private tutor and later as a civil servant led him to observe a hierarchy within the domestic sphere, where women, children, and servants primarily served the household owner, while civil servants, though technically serving the state, were recognised as fully active citizens. This perspective aligns with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a group integrated into the state, which would have been considered capable of active citizenship due to their contribution to the *Prussian Standestaat*.

> Civil servants answer to one master only, the state. There is no conflict of loyalties. It follows that military personnel must also be active citizens, not, as Heydenreich thought, because their sacrifice had earned them the right, but because they serve only one master: the state. In practice, a soldier owes obedience to his general and only indirectly to the abstract entity of the state, but unlike the general's private servant he is in principle not subject to his superior's personal whims and desires (Maliks, 2014, p.109).

As well, Kant's conception of market society is important here, as it explained why he thought material independence and property rights constituted grounds for citizenship.

Kant's political philosophy, intricately woven with the historical context of Prussia, displayed a nuanced interaction with the burgeoning capitalist market economy, setting it apart from the mature market systems seen in Britain. Kant's vision aligned with elements of classical liberalism, yet it stemmed from a distinct perspective deeply rooted in Prussia's social landscape. His emphasis on active citizenship and property ownership reflected his belief in material independence as a defence against subjugation. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that the nascent market economy in Prussia remained more aspirational than practical during his time, diverging from the robust system in Britain.

Kant's attraction to the market economy was rooted in its compatibility with his vision of a civil society, where private citizens could pursue their interests, challenging the traditional absolutist and feudal norms. This inclination, however, differed from the fervent endorsement of capitalism seen in his contemporary Adam Smith. Prussian thinkers, including Kant, envisioned the market economy as a promising post-feudal alternative that could thrive under the rule of law, universal moral principles, and public freedom. The *Bildungsbürgertum*, influenced by Kant's ideas, and recognising the market economy's potential as a transformative force, aimed to facilitate its development through the creation of necessary political and legal frameworks.

Kant's conceptualisation of citizenship, notably the distinction between active and passive citizenship, was rooted in the quest for material independence and freedom from servitude. While it appears progressive compared to his feudal contemporaries, there are inherent limitations that manifested in his views on citizenship and property rights. Kant's universalism, while a step forward, had exclusions, such as women, children, domestic servants, and economically vulnerable workers. His introduction of provisional rights reflected his awareness of these limitations, attempting to address potential contradictions within his theoretical framework. The complexities that emerged in the democratisation of Prussian society, partly influenced by the French Revolution and radical followers of Kant, further highlighted the need for adaptive measures to align his ideals with the realities of his time.

Kant's conception of active and passive citizenship emerged as a pivotal tenet within his comprehensive contract theory, which grappled with the intricate challenge of harmonising contractarian demands on citizen capacity with the pragmatic realities of human interdependence and the extant social hierarchies. Kant's construct of citizenship, as meticulously explicated in his works, stipulated that full citizens must embody attributes of freedom, equality, and independence, thus culminating in what he termed the 'civil personality' (Ellis, 2006, p. 548). This dichotomy between active and passive citizenship, an extension of Kant's exploration of provisional rights (Kant, *MM*, 6:257), arose from the contention that citizens, serving as legislators within an ideal republic, should be treated as though they were autonomous civil entities, despite the formidable challenges facing the realisation of these attributes in their purest form within the complexities of the tangible world.

Kant, perceptive to the intricacies of existing social structures, recognised that citizens are enmeshed in intricate interdependencies, some of which encompass dependencies on women, apprentices, domestic servants, and day labourers (Ellis, 2006, p. 548). While Kant's distinction between active and passive citizenship may be susceptible to criticism, and perceived as illiberal and undemocratic, it can be construed as a pragmatic response to bridge the chasm between the ideal of citizen capacity and the practical constraints of the real world. Noteworthy scholars (Beiner, 2011; Durğun, 2020; Mertens, 1996; O'Neill, 2011; Storey, 2012; Thorpe, 2011) have elaborated on this aspect, suggesting that Kant's approach sought to preserve the legitimacy and stability of a just political system by acknowledging that while the complete realisation of liberty, equality, and independence might remain elusive among citizens, the pursuit of these ideals is a quintessential endeavour (Rosen, 1993). This notion of provisional contractarianism underscores the importance of adaptable and evolving institutional responses capable of bridging the gulf between the theoretical constructs of autonomous citizenship and their pragmatic instantiation in the realm of practice (Kant, *MM*, 6:314-15; Ellis, 2006, p. 545; 548).

In conclusion, Immanuel Kant's complex relationship with the prevailing liberal reformism of the late 18th century in Prussia was marked by a distinctive departure that emerged from his universalist perspective on citizenship, property, and the role of the universal law. While the broader currents of the era championed individual rights, personal freedom, and the reconfiguration of the state structure, Kant's response transcended these conventional boundaries. His philosophy, rooted in the harmonious coexistence of individual autonomy with universally applicable principles, introduced a nuanced view of freedom that demanded alignment with a higher moral framework.

Kant's insistence on the control of the universal law, a transcendent moral guide, was a key differentiator that set him apart from his liberal reformist contemporaries. This concept, central to his political theory, underscored the ethical foundation of political entitlements, weaving a robust connection between individual autonomy and collective well-being. Kant's vision emphasised that true freedom encompassed not just individual separation from society and the state but a process of human sociality that embraced a public sphere, a civil society, and the

establishment of an ideal universalist republican political order guided by the maxims of the categorical imperative. This unique political construction, distinctive from classical liberal reformism, recognised the intricate interplay between freedom, universal principles, and the imperative for lasting global peace.

In the context of citizenship, Kant's distinction between active and passive citizenship, based on property ownership and the capacity for self-sufficiency, navigated the complexities of his time. While his criteria might appear exclusionary, they were grounded in the belief that citizens should embody the attributes of freedom, equality, and independence, enshrining the essence of the 'civil personality'. Kant's recognition of provisional rights and his acknowledgement of existing social hierarchies underscored a pragmatic response to the ideal of citizen capacity, bridging the gap between theory and reality while preserving the legitimacy of a just political system.

4.3.3.3 Right to Resist: A Non-Universalisable Paradox

Kant's distinct perspective on the right to resist gained clarity in his 1790s works, amidst accusations of promoting radical revolution and his pursuit of a universally consistent philosophy. This context prompted Kant to refine his stance, as advocating resistance as a universal principle clashed with his overarching philosophical aims. He sought a nuanced framework that balanced the need to prevent reckless rebellion with the principles of moral and political prudence. Simultaneously, his drive for a systematic philosophy, universally applicable to rational agents, intensified his motivation. Kant's refined perspective showcased his commitment to aligning political thought with his wider philosophical foundations, and his clarifications on the right to resist-rebel-revolution also provided a non-radical path for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, allowing this emerging class to pursue their class interests within a rational and structured framework.

A pivotal aspect demarcating Kant's political theory from classical liberal reformism lay in his distinctive stance concerning the prerogative of resistance against the state. The classical liberal political theory hinges upon an ontological demarcation that cleaves the individual from the state and external elements such as society.

John Locke's political theory, which is considered by many to be the foundation for liberal thought, introduced a transformative process that encompassed the shift from the state of nature to the rule of law; a transition that served as the foundation for establishing a political order aimed at safeguarding individual political rights. This progression stood in contrast to Hobbesian ideals, as Locke's influential political theory diverged from the concept of an absolute sovereign akin to a *Leviathan*. Instead, Locke's framework delineated a consensus-based political order, within which individuals actively participated. This participation occurs within the framework of a rule of law that not only guarantees specific rights but also exerts a regulatory and scrutinising influence over the governing authorities. The tenets of classical liberal political theory thus encapsulated both the emphasis on the individualistic nature of the political structure and the imposition of substantial constraints on the conduct of the ruling government.

John Locke's perspective on the structure of legislative power is nuanced, as he posited the significance of including elected representatives within it while acknowledging the potential amalgamation of monarchical and aristocratic elements. Locke contended that the formation of 'mixed' constitutions, incorporating these diverse elements, is permissible, thus refraining from advocating for a singular constitutional type or excluding the involvement of unelected officials in the legislative process. His primary concern revolved around ensuring that representatives possess ample authority to safeguard against encroachments on individual liberties and

unwarranted taxation. This precept is underpinned by Locke's affirmation of the ultimate supremacy of the community, which retains the intrinsic right to 'remove or alter' the legislative power as circumstances dictates (Locke, 1949, *Two Treatises,* 2.149). This prerogative is necessary in situations where the rule of law is disregarded, representative assemblies are obstructed, electoral mechanisms are unilaterally modified, or foreign dominion is established, justifying the populace's resumption of their original authority to effectuate governmental upheaval (2.212–17). Similarly, resistance becomes justifiable when the government endeavours to curtail fundamental rights (2.222). Locke's rationale for justifiable rebellion emanated from the notion that oppressed individuals are predisposed to rebel regardless, while those unaffected by oppression are disinclined to revolt. Furthermore, the mere potential for rebellion acts as a deterrent against the emergence of tyranny (2.224–6). In light of these intricacies, while a spectrum of legitimate constitutional configurations exists, the delegation of power within any framework was seen by Locke to be inherently contingent upon these circumstances.

The crux of classical liberal political thought on government justification and legitimacy is the foundational concept of a social contract, through which responsibilities and duties bind both citizens and the government. Any breach of the rule of law or infringement upon the rights of individual citizens constituted justification for the right to resist the authority of the state.

In the context of the French Revolution, the liberal concepts of the social contract and the individual's entitlement to resist the violation of the rule of law, as well as political and property rights, underwent renewed examination. French political thought had already amassed a substantial body of literature on this subject, primarily owing to the contributions of notable thinkers like Rousseau and Sieyès, who intricately linked the right to resist with the collective expression of popular will. The idea that the natural and intrinsic rights of individuals encompassed the right to counter oppression found articulation within the second paragraph of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (Maliks, 2014, p.112). Subsequent evolution of these ideals, notably discernible in the preface to the constitution of 1793, served to underscore that in instances in which governmental authority transgressed against the foundational rights of the populace, the recourse to insurrection not only assumed the status of a profoundly venerated prerogative but also becomes an obligatory duty for all segments of the people (Maliks, 2014, p.112).

The evolution of theories concerning the right to resist gained tangible significance through the pragmatic ramifications of the French Revolution. These theories, originating as abstract concepts, matured into potent praxis, particularly for absolutist regimes grounded solely in a paternalistic conception of state-individual dynamics[150]. Classical liberal ideology had initially posited fundamental human rights as counterbalances to state authority, but with the catalytic influence of the French Revolution, the notion of the right to resist underwent a metamorphosis into a driving force of revolutionary politics. Kant's early writings on the Revolution displayed affinity towards political processes advocating equality, liberty, and fraternity, juxtaposed within a republican framework allowing dissent against despotism (Maliks, 2014, p. 121). However, as the post-revolutionary climate linked the right to resist with revolutionary uprisings against absolutist regimes, Kant's stance shifted noticeably within the public discourse of the 1790s.

[150] The Prussian rulers found themselves perturbed by the *Declaration*'s endorsement of resistance grounded in the rights of man. This unease stemmed from their adherence to absolutist tenets propagated by Hobbes, Wolff, and Pufendorf. These doctrines asserted the ruler's embodiment of the state's *persona moralis* and emphasised that the populace's agency was channelled exclusively through the king's authority (Maliks, 2014, p.119)

Kant's evolution from initially endorsing the legitimacy of the right to resist to unequivocally rejecting revolutionary concepts found its basis in three pivotal determinants. Firstly, his adoption of a teleological framework accentuated the cultivation of a harmonious societal structure through the process of human socialisation, wherein individuals were absorbed into the state organism. Secondly, his unwavering commitment to a universalist philosophical posture accentuated the imperative to situate political ideals within universally applicable principles, a stance incongruent with the inherently disruptive nature of revolution. Lastly, Kant's shift can also be driven by the intention to pre-empt allegations of revolutionary sympathies[151].

The first determinant was about Kant's philosophy of history which is an extension of his critical philosophy. Kant's conceptualisation of a human subject and its development in his teleological framework described processes of human socialisation where the human subject establishes a civil society which grounds the political order based on universal moral principles. In this process, the foundation of the political order is based on popular sovereignty which becomes together with the executive power, constituting the state. While the sovereign power and the executive power are distinct, the legislator, who is the head of state, is still representing the popular will of the people. Therefore the popular will in Kant's system was internalised in the political order of the universal law, which symbolised a transformation of people to constitute their state. In this regard, disobedience to the legislator/ruler, or sovereign power was inconsistent with the public legal authority.

> Yet if a public law meets with such agreement, and consequently is irreprehensible with respect to right, then this is bound up with the authority to coerce on the one hand and the prohibition of actively resisting the will of the legislators on the other. That is to say that the power of the state which makes the law effective is also *irresistible*, and there is no lawfully constituted commonwealth without such power to put down all internal resistance, since such resistance would occur according to a maxim which, if made general, would obliterate all civil constitution and destroy the condition in which human beings can be in possession of rights in general (Kant, 2006, p. 53, *TP*, 8:299).

The contention for a right to resist is in inherent contradiction with the imperative of unfettered sovereign authority within a legal framework. Kant, upon revisiting this subject, accentuated the prohibition of collective resistance against established public legal dominion. The collective populace assumed a politically enshrined identity, legitimised solely by the voice of public authority within the state. This stance derived from the realisation that within an extant civil constitution, the populace's determination of constitutional administration loses its potency. Echoing Hobbes, Kant underscored the imperative of vesting ultimate authority in the head of state, highlighting the peril of permitting resistance which could precipitate lawlessness, reminiscent of a primal societal state (state of nature)[152].

The crux of Kant's argument, mirroring Rousseau, resided in the non-contractual nature of the relationship between the citizenry and the head of state (Maliks, 2014). Such contracts pertained

[151] For an in-depth examination of the influence of Achenwall on Kant's articulation of innate right, as well as Kant's unequivocal repudiation of the right of resistance to authority, see Appendix I. This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical context and Achenwall's impact on Kant's development of these crucial philosophical concepts within the framework of Kantian political philosophy.

[152] It is important to remember here that the first section of Kant's *Theory and Pratice*, is subtitled as "Against Hobbes" which shows a more direct motivation of Kant to counter argue Hobbes' well-known proposals of surrendering political will to a sovereign (Kant, 2006, p. 44, *TP*, 8:289)

to antiquated feudal systems where centralised sovereignty was absent, enabling multiple entities to assert autonomous authority (*TP*, 8:300).

In *Perpetual Peace* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant solidified these perspectives. Kant's perspective on the relationship between violence, rights, and equality was underlined by his rejection of any unilateral resort to violence in defence of rights (Maliks, 2014, p.131). He contended that true equality necessitates the legitimisation of coercion through an inclusive procedural framework. Kant argued that rights can only be firmly established within the confines of a state, as this entailed a reciprocal relationship among individuals bound by equal legal status (*PP*, 8:382). Kant's philosophy did not endorse a moral right of resistance against governmental authority. However, he recognised that a population subjected to lawless coercion resides in a state of nature and possesses the entitlement to institute a new constitution. Kant solidified this perspective through his examination of the formation of a political community with popular sovereignty (*MM*, 6: 313f).

Kant's repudiation of the right of resistance found its secondary basis within his overarching universalist principles. Drawing upon the trajectory of human socio-cultural development and spanning from the individuated human subject to the formation of a cohesive civil society, Kant delineated the constituent mechanisms underpinning his political paradigm. These mechanisms, according to Kant, must possess inherent applicability across all contexts. Within this context, the concepts of revolution or the entitlement to resist are contradictory; firstly by subverting the foundational establishment of a political collective (through acts of sabotage) or undermining the teleological progression. Secondly, in relation to the first aspect, the right of resistance or revolution are not universalisable. Once the right to resist or revolt becomes a universally applicable notion, then they ontologically undermine the very teleological process that Kant describes.

Finally, Kant's categorical rejection of the notion of revolution was also about safeguarding himself against allegations of endorsing revolutionary ideals. This contention arises from the context wherein Kant faced accusations that his political philosophy was advocating for revolution, particularly from conservative detractors aligned with the recently established Wöllner administration. Following Frederick II's demise, the Wöllner regime introduced censorship measures to curb the proliferation of revolutionary concepts within Prussia. Kant, known for his association with progressive reformist notions, came under scrutiny as his critical philosophy and endorsement of the Enlightenment Project became targets of such suppression (Beiser, 1992, pp. 49-53). Consequently, Kant found it necessary to disavow any sympathy for radical governmental transformation and took part in public discourses to elucidate his stance to both his followers and the Prussian authorities.

Kant's political writings during the 1790s advanced a moderate stance concerning the French Revolution. However, he emphatically opposed the idea of revolution and the right to resist, driven by three principal rationales. This positioning also served as a message to the *Bildungsbürgertum*, advocating a non-radical reformist path. This standpoint distinguished Kant's approach from classical liberal conceptions of the interplay among the state, the individual, and society. Kant's primary target was Achenwall and like-minded thinkers who posited the right to resist as an organic facet of the social contract. Kant disputed these radical and liberal critiques.

Present-day critics of Kant echo concerns articulated by his radical adherents, who were disheartened by his rejection of the right of resistance and revolution. Their inquiry uncovered a broader quandary for Kant, who upheld the notion that rights achieve conclusive validity exclusively within the legal framework of a public state. This state-centric view precluded legitimate resistance against the state, a contention that led some to believe it forced individuals

into either obeying despotic rulers or resorting to civil disobedience and bearing its consequences (Maliks, 2014, p. 143). Notwithstanding Kant's commitment to this stance on rights, his radical detractors argued that it remains reconcilable with a theory delimiting state legitimacy when it devolves into arbitrary rule by sheer volition.

4.4 FORGING A UNIVERSALIST POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In the wake of the French Revolution, Immanuel Kant's philosophical legacy found itself at a crossroads, confronting the seismic shifts brought about by the revolutionary fervour. The impacts of this transformative era were felt keenly within the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a class that not only ideologically fragmented under the weight of these political challenges but also relinquished the once cherished ideals of the *Aufklärung* Project.

This chapter delved deep into the challenges that Kant's universalist political theory faced, as it encountered both conservative and radical critiques in the *Bildungsbürgertum*. These critiques emerged from distinct traditions, each offering their own perspective on the reshaping of society and the role of governance. The absolutist paternalists, clinging to notions of centralised authority, questioned the feasibility of Kant's emphasis on individual freedoms and universal principles. The traditional feudalists, grounded in age-old hierarchies, resisted Kant's vision of a post-feudal society, raising concerns about the upheaval of established structures. Meanwhile, the liberal reformists, focused on state-individual relations, argued for a political approach that promoted an individualistic society which conflicted with Kant’s universalist system.

In the intellectual ferment of the 1790s, Immanuel Kant engaged in a pivotal intervention within the discursive tapestry of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. His contributions aimed to both redefine and vindicate the bedrock tenets under scrutiny; encompassing republicanism, citizenship, the rule of law, the intricate doctrines of freedom, and the contours of democracy. In this period, Kant embarked on a deliberate course to distinguish his philosophical stance from the critical currents, aiming to propagate his political philosophy as a universalist framework and thereby reassert a dominant position that could reconstitute and galvanise the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

A notable facet of Kant's intellectual resurgence lay in his resolute opposition to absolutist paternalism, effectively revitalising his earlier articulations on popular sovereignty and republicanism. Central to this rejuvenation was Kant's exposition of a paradigm of freedom, which enabled him to reconcile the cherished ideal of popular will with a vigilant avoidance of despotic inclinations. The crux of this shift lay in his delineation of an ideal political order, which clearly demarcated the sovereign and executive branches of the state. This astute separation, was remarkably compatible with the tenets of a constitutional monarchy, adroitly constraining the executive authority while simultaneously buttressing the edifice of sovereign power through universal moral principles enmeshed with the popular will. Notably, Kant exhibited a discerning detachment from the origins of sovereignty, eschewing any undue emphasis on an archaic aristocratic order. Thus he was able to erect an unassailable bulwark against the Machiavellian endeavours of Prussian absolutist-paternalism, which sought to assert its unique dominion over German-speaking Europe, under a singular state and regime. Kant's resounding universalism served as a formidable impediment to the allure of this particularistic endeavour, preserving the sanctity of diverse regional identities within the broader canvas of a unified yet morally-guided socio-political landscape.

In opposition to the traditional feudal critiques that contained the Romanticist attempt to promote the traditional estate society, *Reich*, and the cultural, local, and indigenous elements of Germanhood against the absolutist-paternalist attempt to centralise the Prussian *Standestaat* in German-speaking Europe, Kant had to reevaluate his doctrines of freedom in order to explain

his understanding of self-legislation in universal terms. Self-legislation extended Kant's understanding of freedom against particularistic revisions of traditional feudal doctrines, and the supremacy of the universal law became a fundamental characteristic of a political system founded on self-legislation. Furthermore, Kant updated his view of civil society (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) in conjunction with this description, conditioning the establishment of a civil constitution with universal equality that would eliminate inheritable privileges among citizens. Kant developed these approaches into a definition of self-legislation that applied to a post-feudal society.

There was more to Kant's insightful responses to public debates than the considerations of a post-feudal society. Abolition of the traditional feudal order, without radical actions, was favoured by the majority of German liberals in the 18th century. While the impact of the French Revolution revitalised the significance of the establishment of a bourgeois society, and a constitutional framework that would shield the individual from the state and the traditional aristocratic order, the question was how to respond to the turbulent times by redefining the relationship between the individual, the society, and the state. The German liberals conceived a civil society based on individualistic liberal principles, promoting individualised property rights, political rights, and equality before the law. Kant's universalistic response to the public debates of the 1790s accepted many dimensions of the classical liberal approach concerning the possession of property and the rule of law. but differed in its individualistic conception of the state and its conditions for participation in politics. Kant's conception of the tripartite relationship between individual-society-state was based on a systematised philosophical design that established a social and political order within which the universal principles would determine the nature and spirit of government.

Kant's main concern was with a representative form of political participation. Rather than being concerned with populism influencing politics through the formation of despotic governments, Kant was actually concerned about citizens' independence from each other. Citizenship, according to Kant, is an autonomous institution that can only be obtained and used by self-legislative individuals. It was through this conception that he was able to establish public servants as an ideal class that would prioritise service to the state as serving the public good. Moreover, Kant distinguished himself from the post-revolutionary liberal critics by clarifying his stance against the right to resist or the idea of a revolution. As Kant categorically rejected both, he argued that a right to resist political authority contradicted his theory of the formation of a political community, as well as not being universalisable. Kant's arguments on citizenship and property rights and his categorical rejection of the right to resist enabled him to counter-argue the three main traditions in public debates.

In his texts from the 1790s, including *Theory and Practice* (1793), *Religion* (1793), *Perpetual Peace* (1795), *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), and *Anthropology* (1798), Kant responded to the criticisms of his once hegemonic philosophy and sought to consolidate the *Bildungsbürgertum* with the *Aufklärung* Project. He claimed it was the only convenient roof under which the *Bildungsbürgertum* could pursue its class interests. Universalism, which Kant emphasised in his answers, was founded on his doctrine of freedom, his commitment to republicanism and popular will, and his approach to historical human agency. A universalist philosophy was Kant's attempt to distinguish himself from absolutism-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism by providing a position independent of the Prussian state that had legitimised, philosophised, and universalised the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the building of the Prussian *Standestaat*.

A key aspect of Kant's political philosophy was his perception of the *Bildungsbürgertum* as a unique agency for the advancement of both *Aufklärung* and the universalist political order. In addressing the long crisis of feudalism in German-speaking Europe, the three main traditions

remained particularistic attempts, whereas Kant's universalist political thought became a part of the autonomising *Bildungsbürgertum* class, considering its compatibility with the non-radical reformism. Kant's recognition of the *Bildungsbürgertum* as an autonomous class guided him toward his universalist political theory based on *Aufklärung* and civic participation. By taking a unique stance, Kant opposed all main traditions in Prussia and instead advocated for the *Bildungsbürgertum*, *Aufklärung*, and the creation of a universal political order. In the Prussian context, Kant was the premier intellectual of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, mainly because other political thinkers were either polarised under the three main traditions or heavily influenced by the French Revolution, taking radical conservative and radical revolutionary positions, without subjectifying *Bildungsbürgertum* as an individual entity.

The profound significance of Kant's intervention in the 1790s debates was the impact and legacy of Kant for the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the broader context. During the 1790s, Kant universally redefined core conceptual frameworks of public debates concerning state power, individual political rights, citizenship, civil society, republicanism, and resistance rights. The stance Kant took towards these ideals led him to call for a post-feudal order in the future. He was categorically against absolutist paternalism, traditional feudalism, and classical liberal reformism.

Kant's legacy has assumed a seminal role in shaping the contours of modern political thought during the ensuing century. Embedded within his intellectual framework were profound universal dimensions, offering nuanced insights into the intricate tapestry of philosophical, political, and legal principles required for the establishment of a robust rule of law. Kant's *oeuvre* has further provided a conceptual scaffold for the cultivation of democratic political participation, the safeguarding of individual and collective freedoms, and the judicious delineation of the boundaries restraining state coercion. This multifaceted legacy resonates with enduring relevance, constituting a cornerstone in the evolution of political theory.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF KANT'S UNIVERSALISM FOR THE CLASS POLITICS OF THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM* & THE BROADER CONTEXT

Acknowledging the vast expanse of academic literature spanning nearly three centuries that encompasses Immanuel Kant and his philosophical contributions, it is prudent to recognise the inherent limitations within which this doctoral thesis operates. While it is evident that the present work cannot aspire to encapsulate the entirety of Kant's discourse or comprehensively illuminate every facet of his philosophical inquiries, with its unique methodological approach, the *social history of political theory*, introduces a novel vantage point. This conclusion chapter, therefore, distils the discussion of two pivotal subjects elucidated by the methodology of social history of political theory. Through an examination of Kant's political thought within the tapestry of its historical context, this study has endeavoured to forge a path that augments the existing literature. Consequently, this discourse culminates in a contemplative exploration of the insights unearthed, as well as the potential contributions engendered by this thesis, thereby contemplating how it might bestow a fresh dimension upon the extensive Kantian scholarship.

This concluding chapter is dedicated to providing a comprehensive overview of the thesis, with a focus on three pivotal discussions: the relevance Kant's universalism within historical and contemporary contexts, and a critical examination of its limitations. Furthermore, it introduces the key findings and contributions generated by this research, accompanied by an overview of the thesis with the employed methodology—the *social history of political theory*.

I. KANT'S UNIVERSALISM, THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM* & THE FUTURE VISION FOR PRUSSIA

The intricate interplay between Immanuel Kant's philosophical universalism and its implications for the evolution of Prussia emerges as a focal point that captivates our inquiry into Kant's political thought. The societal and political tumult that beset 18th-century German-speaking Europe was not a mere isolated phenomenon but an outgrowth of the protracted feudal disarray that had gripped the region since the early 16th century (Brenner, 1990; Mooers, 1991; Strayer, 1965). The very foundations of feudalism, as a socio-political structure, were strained, setting the stage for protracted instability (Carsten, 1947, 1989; Sreenivasan, 2001; 2004; 2013). It is essential, within a historical materialist framework, to discern the historical responses to this crisis and their subsequent resonance in the socio-political and philosophical fabric of the German context.

This brings us to the first pivotal subject of this exploration: Kant's visionary projection for the future of Prussia, intricately interwoven with his universalistic perspective. Kant's unparalleled contribution lay in his ability to harness universalism as a potent tool, forging novel avenues for the realisation of freedom and critical rationality within the contours of an ideal political framework for Prussia and the broader German-speaking Europe. Centrally, Kant's interface with this historical maelstrom and his role in Prussia's socio-political transformation was contingent upon his symbiotic relationship with the emergent class of *Bildungsbürgertum*. This class, progressively emancipating itself from bureaucratic absolutism, coalesced around Kant's thought, turning to *Aufklärung* as the lodestar under which to unite (Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Gagliardo, 1991; Hunter, 2012; Mooers, 1991).

Notably, Kant's vision for Prussia was focussed on the empowerment of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Foremost, he offered this class a systematic and universalist individual

agency; a revolutionary departure from the confines of absolutism-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and classical liberal reformism. Kant's approach presented a profound epistemological and methodological challenge to the extant paradigms that had long vied for supremacy. This gift of philosophical agency to the *Bildungsbürgertum* was not the zenith of Kant's contribution; it marked the inception of a transformative journey.

Kant's gift extended to the conceptual realm, as he embarked on a quest to devise a teleological framework that could furnish a historical and anthropological grounding for individual agency (Kant, 1998, 2006; Kant, I., & Wood, A, 1996). The meticulous exploration of universally applicable practical laws, coupled with the conceptualisation of a teleological underpinning, facilitated the understanding of why this new agency necessitated a process of socialisation (Kant, 2001, 2002b, 2006). This journey would culminate in the establishment of a socio-political order founded on universal moral principles. Kant thus endowed the *Bildungsbürgertum* with a path to self-identification that transcended the conventional German paradigms.

Crucially, Kant's advocacy of the *Aufklärung* was synergistic with this trajectory. Beyond mere advocacy, Kant's emphasis lay in cultivating an *Aufklärung* harmonious with Frederick the II's enlightened absolutism, ingeniously employing the dominant political milieu to legitimise *Aufklärung* for the *Bildungsbürgertum* (Beiser, 1992; Blanning, 1990; Johnson, 1975; Sauter, 2009). This strategic alignment facilitated the unification of the *Bildungsbürgertum* under a common goal, and thereby positioning Kant as a vanguard of the European Enlightenment.

Concurrently, Kant's incisive engagement in public discourse introduced coherent philosophical patterns and political theories that navigated the labyrinth of post-French Revolution politics (Maliks, 2022). The hallmark of these responses was Kant's universalist framework, underpinned by doctrines of freedom, democratic republicanism, the rule of law, and the separation of powers (Kant, 2006; Kant & Erdmann, 1882). Notable also were his views that interwove citizenship with property rights, while renouncing the right to resist authority. The synthesis of these concepts within a web of universal principles constituted Kant's blueprint for an ideal political order. Yet, this design grappled with the practical exigencies inherent in the complex real world, leading Kant to introduce provisional or perpetual distinctions that addressed its practical inconsistencies (Bohman & Lutz-Bachmann, 1997; Doyle, 1996; Ellis, 2005, 2008, 2012; Flikschuh, 2000; Williams, 2001; Wood, 2006).

Kant's universalism—while emblematic of the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s class politics—inevitably confronted Prussian reality and its constraints. His profound contribution emerged from this interplay, as he synthesised the tenets of universalism with the sociopolitical complexities. Kant's legacy for the *Bildungsbürgertum* rests not solely on the agency he instilled (Cassirer, 1981; Wood, 1972) but on his strategic approach to navigate the intricacies of class polarisation and fragmentation. In crafting a path that shielded the *Bildungsbürgertum* from divisive traditions, Kant both consolidated his class and promulgated a political discourse rooted in universal principles.

Thus, the implications of Kant's universalism for the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s class politics prove pivotal to comprehending both his engagement with Prussia's context and the intrinsic limitations of his universalist framework. Kant's inclination to propose provisional solutions—however intellectually sophisticated—highlight the enduring challenge of reconciling his universalism with the diverse realities he sought to transform. In fostering an enlightened society through the prism of state-building, Kant envisioned a realm where universal moral principles would guide a reinvigorated political framework, with the *Bildungsbürgertum* at the forefront of this evolution.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS OF KANT'S UNIVERSALISM FOR BROADER POLITICAL TRADITIONS

Kant's universalist political theory, a nuanced interplay of departure and engagement, reverberated within both the intricate tapestry of Prussian society's prevailing political traditions and the broader context of philosophical discourse. The resonance between Kant's ideas and the dominant political traditions of his time—namely, absolutist-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism—comprises a dynamic subject of inquiry. This exploration delved into the intricate web of influences, departures, and reinterpretations that underpinned Kant's universalism.

In deciphering Kant's universalism against the backdrop of the three prevailing political traditions of Prussian society, a compelling question arose: *How did Kant's political theory establish connections and distinctions amidst the paradigms of absolutist-paternalism, traditional feudalism, and liberal reformism?* Kant's trajectory reveals a multifaceted response—simultaneously discordant and harmonious.

Kant's stance against absolutist-paternalism materialised through an anti-absolutist perspective, in stark contrast to the prevailing conservative disposition. His advocacy for doctrines of freedom - comprising autonomy, external freedom, and self-legislation - acted as the bedrock of a republican political order (Kant & Erdmann, 1882, no. 688-89, pp.217-214; Kant, 2001, *CPJ*, §84, 2006, p. 45, *PP*, 8:290-29, pp.24-37). Notably, this order derived its legitimacy from the deliberation of the popular will guided by universal moral principles (*MM*, §43, 6: 311, 6:341; *PP* 8:352-353, 8:382-384). Kant's anti-absolutist stance gained potency against the backdrop of Frederick the II's enlightened absolutism, culminating in a resolute advocacy for a civil constitution *(MM*, 6:318). The 1790s marked a period of heightened theoretical and political assertion, as Kant distinguished his position from the absolutist doctrines vehemently opposing the French Revolution. This epoch witnessed Kant's robust non-traditional and independent posture, coalescing the *Bildungsbürgertum* as the harbinger of a novel civil constitution.

Amidst Kant's departure from absolutist-paternalism, a tension between his universalism and the reinvigorated conservative traditions crystallised. As Kant's political theory gained ascendancy, a new generation of traditionalists emerged, manifesting as Romantic opponents to the implications of the French Revolution (Beiser, 1992, pp. 48-56). These Romantic-traditionalist currents adopted a particularistic, cultural, and indigenous stance—eschewing both absolutist-paternalist tenets and Kant's universalist framework (Pirc, 2018; pp. 84-89; Spencer, 2012, pp. 158-184, 185-214; Westphal, 2017). Kant's responses, steeped in the 1790s' context, reoriented the debates on self-legislation, positioning it as an extension of freedom (Ripstein, 2009). His conception of a post-feudal society rested on the dismantling of inheritable privileges, challenging the aristocratic foundations intrinsic to traditional approaches (Williams, 1977, 1983).

At the same time, and distinct from the classical liberal reformist tradition, Kant's universalism reconceptualised the relationship between the individual, society, and state. While echosing the liberal reformists in shielding the individual from external determinations, Kant's philosophy diverged in its rejection of an ontological separation between the individual and state (Cassirer, 1981). Kant's departure from liberal individualism was underscored by his teleological framework (Wood, 1972). He envisioned a society where the pursuit of freedom through rational capacity triggered a process of human socialisation. This process engendered an active agency, propelling the individual to contribute to the shaping of the popular will and, consequently, the establishment of society and state (James, 2016).

Crucially, Kant's reinterpretation of citizenship - delineated as active and passive and contingent on material independence - further distinguished him from liberal reformism (Church, 2022; Kleingeld, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2019; Maliks, 2009, 2014; Pogge, 2002). Kant's categorizing underscores a socio-political organisation founded on universalism rather than majority rule. Kant's formulation safeguarded against the peril of despotism by emphasising the necessity of universal principles that prevent the popular will from lapsing into a tyranny of the majority. His contention fostered a distinct post-feudal order, an arena where traditional hierarchical structures yielded to potent democratic, constitutional, and republican regimes. Universal principles, rather than a prevailing majority, would guide the deliberations of the civil popular will.

The implications of Kant's universalist framework reverberated across epochs, extending into the public debates of the 1790s. This legacy shaped the trajectory of future generations of political thinkers aspiring to establish a civil society. Kant's framework proffered an avenue for the establishment of a powerful, democratic, and constitutionally-grounded regime - a testament to his unyielding commitment to universal principles and enshrining his role as an ardent advocate of the Enlightenment and a pioneer of modern political thought.

Kant's universalism transcended the realm of philosophical abstraction, morphing into a strategic cornerstone that empowered his attempt to forge an autonomous political community, liberated from the shackles of prevailing political polarisation. This strategic facet of Kant's universalism can be seen as a fertile landscape where a myriad of divergent ideas converged and engaged within the public sphere. Within this dynamic context, universalism became the bedrock upon which divergent ideological traditions and polar perspectives not only coexisted but harmoniously interacted. Contextualising this within Kant's class politics reveals the strategic significance of his universalism—a paradigm that encapsulated, nurtured, and secured the burgeoning *Bildungsbürgertum*, all without being fettered to the conventions of the prevalent traditions.

The strategic essence of Kant's universalism had implications for the broader historical panorama. At the intersection of his macro-political and international relations analyses lay Kant's universalism—a force that didn't merely shape discourse but functioned as a key to resolve the entrenched impacts of the lingering feudal crisis. The architecture of Kant's envisioned political order, buttressed by the scaffolding of universal moral principles and epitomised in the seminal *Perpetual Peace* (1795), unfurled a comprehensive system that fundamentally rested on the pillars of freedom. This resolute foundation transcended the bounds of his temporal setting, bequeathing a legacy that extended far beyond, permeating, and enriching both ongoing philosophical discourses and modern political thought.

III. THE LIMITS OF KANT'S UNIVERSALISM: THE PRUSSIAN PREDICAMENT

Expanding upon the ramifications of Kant's universalism, it is necessary to acknowledge its constraints in order to fully comprehend his approach. While Kant's universalist framework played a pivotal role in influencing the trajectory of both his historical context and also modern political philosophy, its faced inherent limitations when confronted with the nuanced complexities of his milieu.

Kant's response to the 1790s debates introduced a universalist political theory meticulously tailored for the *Bildungsbürgertum* to dominate the Prussian state-building process. This theory envisioned a civil society and political regime framed by universal laws. Kant's universalism, deeply embedded in the social and political foundations of his ideal order, was rooted in his

concepts of freedom, rule of law, popular sovereignty (accompanied by a separation of powers), and citizenship defined through property rights and independence.

The crux of Kant's universalism lay in his vision of a civil society that elevated the *Bildungsbürgertum* as the focal point, with *Aufklarung* guaranteeing intellectual, philosophical, and cultural prosperity for all. While active citizenship, according to Kant was reserved for the property-owning independent class, he also acknowledged public servants who, through their permanent commitment to serving the public will, essentially served the people. However, this universal citizenship delineated by Kant excluded those dependent on others, including the working class, women, and children (Denis, 2002; Hoff, 1983; Kain, 2010; Mikkola, 2011a; Sandford, 2018). Building on the implications of these political theories it is necessary to consider the limits of Kant's universalism in two dimensions: the Prussian context, and the contemporary broader context.

Within the Prussian context of the 18th century, Kant's universalism faced limitations. Primarily, Kant's political order hinged on universal principles and laws that aimed to foster political equality among citizens, mitigate conflicts between states, establish the rule of law, and eventually transform this context into a cosmopolitan republican political structure capable of accommodating diverse social realities. Kant's proposal went beyond his time, offering a solution to the enduring feudal crisis that had engulfed German-speaking Europe and its broader context. Furthermore, this proposition was in response to Prussia's specific conditions, where political units of varying degrees of control coexisted (Mooers, 1991; Shilliam, 2009). Even as Prussian state-building progressed, it had not yet achieved unquestionable dominance. Kant's philosophical thought, while systematic and sophisticated, was also a reaction to the uncertainties of his time, interacting with emerging political ideas.

Kant's articulation of a post-feudal socio-political order through philosophical polemics, systematic approaches, and multi-layered political theories underscored the limits of the conventional Prussian/German context. Kant's focus on the *Aufklärung* as a catalyst for the *Bildungsbürgertum* represented a strategic pathway for this class and simultaneously offered a transcendent theory to overcome the constraints of his social reality. Kant navigated his philosophical response skilfully, engaging with new ideas while not openly opposing the absolutist regime. 'Enlightened absolutism" became a compromise that harmonised with his philosophical ideals (Johnston, 1975). In essence, the limitations of Kant's universalism in the Prussian context arose from the limitations inherent in his own socio-political environment.

The intellectual legacy of Kant engendered a profound impact on the philosophical landscape, particularly through the lens of his radical adherents who fervently embraced and extended his reinterpreted doctrines during the 1790s. These disciples adeptly interwove select facets of Kant's tenets with the revolutionary ideals that burgeoned within the milieu of the French Revolution. Concurrently, Kant's conservative critical evaluations engendered the formulation of diverse counter-philosophies, strategically fashioned to forestall the encroachment of the progressive precepts inherent in Kantian political theory upon the bastions of Prussian absolutism.

In the aftermath of Kant's intellectual prominence, Prussia traversed a reactionary epoch, subsequently termed the *Counter-Enlightenment* (Beiser, 1992; Lestition, 1993). Within this epoch, the absolutist regime orchestrated a systematic erosion of the progressive elements that had hitherto characterised the enlightened absolutism pioneered by Frederick the II (Epstein, 2016). In parallel, the authorities expedited the intensification of censorship and control directed towards the *Bildungsbürgertum*. As a consequence, the forward-looking enlightenment ideologies found themselves stifled, relegated to the periphery of the discourse, until a fresh wave of intellectual movements surfaced at the threshold of the 19th century.

Subsequently, a critical analysis of Kant's universalism within the contemporary broader context reveals a conspicuous disparity between his conceptual boundaries and the evolving socio-political dynamics. Particularly noteworthy is the modern comprehension of universalism, notably in its intersections with cosmopolitanism, democracy, inclusivity, and equality, which have collectively transcended the confines of Kant's initial framework. Kant's universalism significantly influenced the 20th century liberal and Marxist traditions in shaping international politics. However, as contemporary notions of universalism have evolved to embrace greater inclusivity and equal representation, Kant's universalism has found itself lagging behind.

There is no doubt that Kant was a major influence on the massive body of intellectual, philosophical[153], academic[154], political[155] and ideological theory in the 20th century, but Kant's universalism is still in question regarding the contemporary parameters of universalism in this century. This disconnects between Kant's universalism and the contemporary understanding of universalism resonates along several themes.

[153] Kant's philosophical tenets left an indelible imprint on 20th-century political traditions, notably liberalism and socialism, fostering a dynamic interplay between his ideas and the evolution of these ideologies. In the modern liberal tradition, Kant's emphasis on individual autonomy, moral agency, and the categorical imperative resonated strongly. This influence is palpable in the works of John Rawls, who revitalised Kantian notions of justice and fairness in his seminal theory of justice as fairness (Rawls, 1971). Rawls' conception of the original position and his focus on ensuring equal opportunities for all directly emanate from Kant's foundational principles. Similarly, Jürgen Habermas, a prominent figure in contemporary political theory, harnessed Kant's ideas of rational discourse and communicative action to articulate his theory of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1984). Habermas' vision of an inclusive public sphere and the importance of rational discourse as a means to just political outcomes are firmly rooted in Kantian thought.
Turning to the socialist tradition and critical theory, Kant's influence intermingled with the critiques of capitalism and class struggle central to socialism. Hannah Arendt, though not a socialist per se, drew upon Kantian notions of political freedom and human dignity to underscore the necessity of participatory politics and the public realm in her writings on totalitarianism and the human condition (Arendt, 1951). Meanwhile, within the realm of socialist philosophy, the Frankfurt School and critical theory took up Kant's legacy to dissect the socio-cultural dimensions of power and domination. Thinkers like Georg Lukács explored the nexus between Kantian subjectivity and Marxist critique, weaving together a complex synthesis that considered the transformative potential of both individual consciousness and collective action (Lukács, 1972). Even figures less directly aligned with socialism, such as Gilles Deleuze, engaged with Kant's ideas on autonomy and transcendentalism, contributing to the intricate tapestry of 20th-century political thought where Kant's influence remains palpable yet multifaceted (Deleuze, 1995).

[154] Beyond philosophical traditions, Kant's influence has reverberated through the modern social sciences in the 20th century. In the realm of international relations and political science, his ideas found resonance in the works of scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. Morgenthau's realist paradigm, emphasising power politics and the balance of power, bears traces of Kant's realism, while also critiquing Kantian universalism (Morgenthau, 1948). Waltz, on the other hand, engaged with Kantian insights in formulating his structural realist theory, introducing concepts like anarchy and the distribution of power that shaped the understanding of international systems (Waltz, 1979). Kant's intellectual heritage has thus manifested in multifaceted ways, permeating not only philosophical and ideological dimensions but also influencing the analytical tools of modern social sciences.

[155] Beyond academic and philosophical impacts, Kant's universalism reached further, influencing the post-war liberal international order. Kant's ideas became a main philosophical source for the United Nations and its foundations of international law. His concepts of universal rights, peaceful coexistence, and the imperative to transcend national boundaries resonated with the ideals underlying the formation of global institutions after World War II. As the United Nations endeavoured to establish a framework for international cooperation and the prevention of conflicts, Kant's universal principles infused the organisation's charter and its subsequent policies. This infusion of Kantian thought facilitated the development of international norms, treaties, and diplomatic efforts aimed at upholding human rights and fostering global harmony. Consequently, Kant's impact has extended beyond theoretical discourse, becoming an integral component of the pragmatic frameworks that shape modern international relations.

The concept of citizenship, originally formulated by Kant as a protective mechanism against state encroachments, has limitations when evaluated in the context of contemporary society. Kant's theory of citizenship, rooted in the property relationship, was designed for early post-feudal regimes and a nascent market economy (Kleingeld, 2007, 2012, 2019; Pogge, 1992, 2002) and his model fails to adequately address the complexities and structural disparities inherent in today's socio-political landscape. Particularly, the contemporary understanding of cosmopolitanism extends beyond historical structural issues to encompass intricate intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, and religion[156] (Bernasconi, 2003; Elden & Mendieta, 2011; Marwah, 2012, 2013; Muthu, 2000, 2009). Kant's cosmopolitan vision sought a single universal order within each political framework; a premise that, in the contemporary context, reveals the inherent systemic inequalities embedded in the capitalist system (Beitz, 1999, 2005; Pogge, 2008). Consequently, while Kant's universalism played an instrumental role in shaping modern political rights and equalities, it has struggled to accommodate the intricate social realities of late capitalism.

In its interaction with a liberal order, Kant's political thought, underpinned by universalism, largely found itself integrated into the realm of international law, giving rise to universal human rights, the rule of law, and liberal democracy. The aftermath of World War II, with its emphasis on preventing further conflict through a universal system, witnessed Kantian ideals regaining prominence. Notably, these ideals aligned with the imperatives of the liberal tradition, serving as a moderate alternative to radical democratisation or socialist transformations. This symbiosis between Kant's universalism and liberal thought reached its zenith during the Cold War era (Beitz, 1999; Doyle, 1993; Gallie, 1978; Ion, 2012, Molloy, 2017).

However, the efficacy of Kant's principles in fostering perpetual peace and international cooperation has been eroded by the dynamics of globalisation (Browning, 2011; Corradetti, 2020). While globalisation initially promised the diffusion of universal values, including law, democracy, and freedoms, its unfurling was marked by the unchecked expansion of the capitalist market (Wood, 2003). This expansion harnessed the asymmetrical conditions of development to amplify the power differentials, undermining the establishment of genuine universal cooperation.

Attempts to adapt Kant's universalist political philosophy to contemporary contexts face significant challenges. The prevailing critique, which examines Kant's universalism critically, apparently assumes that it emerged devoid of the structural contradictions inherent in the modern political order (Denis, 2002; Hoff, 1983; Kain, 2010; Kleingeld, 1999; Marwah, 2012, 2013, 2022; Mikkola, 2011a; Sandford, 2018; Schmidt, 2005). However, it becomes evident that Kant's historical class context-imposed limitations on his early formulation of universalism, rendering it ill-equipped to address the multifaceted complexities and contradictions of today's globalised world.

Consequently, Kant's universalism, while contributing seminal concepts to modern political thought, has faced limitations when subjected to the intricate realities of the contemporary

[156] A substantial body of scholarly literature has emerged, critically examining Kant's notions of universalism and cosmopolitanism. This body of work has shed light on what is perceived as a unidimensional Eurocentric interpretation of Kant's ideas, particularly with regard to issues of race, ethnicity, and proposals that may disenfranchise certain groups (Bernasconi, 2003; Elden & Mendieta, 2011; Muthu, 2000, 2009). Within the broader context of the Enlightenment, Kant's *Aufklärung* Project is often seen as a deliberate effort to advance a form of universalism tailored to the specific socio-political dynamics of the Prussian/German milieu, especially in relation to issues of dependency (Elden & Mendieta, 2011). Nonetheless, Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism has not escaped critique for its perceived one-dimensionality, as it has been accused of neglecting the nuances of social formations in non-imperial contexts (Marwah, 2012, 2013).

landscape. Citizenship, cosmopolitanism, and international cooperation must be reconsidered in light of the structural complexities that Kant's early formulation may not have fully anticipated, underscoring the evolving nature of political theory and the need for nuanced adaptations in the pursuit of a just and equitable global order (Kleingeld, 1999; Marwah, 2022).

IV. UNIVERSALISM REASSESSED: A HISTORICAL MATERIALIST LENS

Evaluating the ramifications of Immanuel Kant's universalist political thought within the framework of his contemporary historical milieu and its relevance to contemporary political theory necessitates a critical examination of the inherent limitations of this universalist perspective. However, restricting the appraisal of these limitations solely to philosophical, theoretical, and ideological domains results in a compartmentalisation of Kant's universalist tenets. Such an approach divorces Kant's political theorisations from their concrete political landscape. In essence, the crux of the predicament associated with Kant's universalist philosophy emerges from a theoretical and philosophical scrutiny of Kant's societal actuality, and how it is constrained by the contemporary epoch. This prevailing approach within mainstream Kantian scholarship, while endeavouring to engage with Kant's relevance in a constructive manner, inadvertently does so within the confines of the prevailing contemporary understanding of universalism.

Within this context, the primary lacuna in the expanding literature concerning Kant's political universalism lies in Kant's treatment of his own political thought as an inherent facet of the modern political paradigm. While undoubtedly a luminary who steered political universalism towards modern political thought, Kant's conceptual evolution in the realm of politics coincided with a period of resolution amid the protracted crisis of feudalism that had gripped German-speaking Europe since the 16th century. This historical juncture defies a unilateral categorisation as strictly ‘modern’, exhibiting complexities, contradictions, and uncertainties. The absence of an unequivocal sovereign further complicates this landscape. Consequently, a comprehensive examination of Kant's universalism and his political reflections demands a re-evaluation that situates Kant within his historical context, thereby imbuing his philosophy with historical and political depth. In this regard, a historical materialist interpretation of Kant emerges as a potent avenue for unearthing Kant's scholarly contribution beyond other paradigms. By elucidating Kant through the lens of historical materialism, the opportunity to expound upon his contributions within the intricate political milieu of his era becomes salient. This approach facilitates an enriched understanding of Kant, his historical context, and the interplay of political forces that shaped his ideologies.

With these considerations in mind, this study aimed to address the above-mentioned gap in Kantian scholarship in response to the following question: *How can Kant's universalist philosophy be re-politicised through the social and material grounds that formed Kant’s historical context?*

To respond this inquiry, this research employed the methodology of *social history of political theory* (Wood,1978; Woodi 2008, 2012). This approach aims to transcend the central methodological challenges of historical materialism by centring on the "dialectical interplay between the material and the social" (Ollman, 2003; Sayer, 1987). This vital interplay was intrinsic to the original development of this methodology. The social history of political theory asserts its lineage from the historical materialist approach, seeking to elucidate the underpinnings of social reality through material foundations. It also endeavours to uncover the evolution of political thought in conjunction with the intricate web of relationships it engages

with; all through a materialist lens (Comninel, 2018; Koçak, 2017; Patriquin, 2012; Wood, 2008).

Within this paradigm, the *social history of political theory* directs its attention to various aspects, such as the formations of political thought, historical shifts in social property relations, power struggles among classes shaping these relations, and contextual inquiries that confront political thinkers. This marks a departure from the broad generalisations and fixed conceptual frameworks of classical historical materialism, offering a more contextually informed and nuanced perspective (Wood, 1978).

From this vantage point, the present research sought to uncover the substantive relationship between Kant's political thought and the broader transformation unfolding within his historical context. This investigation is centred on a meticulous examination of the prolonged crisis of feudalism in the German context, the evolving dynamics of social property relationships, power struggles, as well as the philosophical, political, and ideological responses that emanated from established and emergent social classes in response to this crisis. Simultaneously, this study has delved into Kant's philosophical and political responses to the ambiguous developments that characterised his contemporary setting.

Within this analytical framework, a number of pivotal findings have come to the fore, thereby offering noteworthy contributions to the existing scholarly discourse concerning the genesis and attributes of Kant's universalism. Furthermore, these findings shed light on its intrinsic connection with his social context, particularly with the *Bildungsbürgertum.*

The primary objective of this study has been to undertake a historical materialist analysis of Kant's political universalism, employing the social history of political theory approach. Grounded in the principles of this methodology, a crucial scholarly advancement lies in the comprehensive exploration of Immanuel Kant's political theory within the broader social and political context of Germany's prolonged feudal crisis. Notably, this marks the first instance in Kantian scholarship where an examination of Kant has been approached from a historical materialist standpoint, intertwined with the context of the feudal crisis and class dynamics in Germany/Prussia. Through the contextualisation of Kant and his critical philosophy within the context of the extended feudal crisis, the study has established meaningful connections between political theories that grapple with the repercussions of this crisis within the German landscape. Thus, the historical materialist lens has uncovered the intrinsic ties between political theory and the societal and material circumstances prevailing in the German historical backdrop.

Exploring the ramifications of the protracted crisis of German feudalism, this research has identified three primary responses that are inherently linked to the key social classes engaged in conflicts over social property relations. These disputes played a defining role in shaping social property relations and the historical specificity of politically established property in the German/Prussian context. The research discerns three core responses to the crisis: (i) the conventional feudal response, which sought to surmount the societal and political turmoil by reconfiguring the Holy Roman Empire/German-speaking Europe through the consolidation of power within princely authorities; (ii) the absolutist-paternalist response, which endeavoured to centralise power under an absolutist state; and (iii) the reformist liberal response, which stemmed from the emergence of bureaucratic absolutism (embodied in the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum*), and aimed to revamp the Prussian state with individualist reforms. Notably, each of these responses formulated its respective political theories based on the historically specific features of its contextual backdrop. Central to these revelations is the key insight that Immanuel Kant set himself apart from these responses as he addressed the

repercussions of the societal and political crisis, establishing his distinct intellectual standing within the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Secondly, diverging from the aforementioned intricate interconnections, this investigation has enriched the scholarly body of work by characterising Kant as an exponent of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. What sets this contribution apart is its groundbreaking redefinition of the *Bildungsbürgertum* as a social class, transcending its conventional classification as a stratum or an intellectual elite (Bollenbeck, 1996; Conze & Kocka, 1985, 1990, 1992, 1989; Schmid, 1984; Gall, 2000; Hartmann, 2002; Herwig, 2005; Köhler, 1985; Lepsius, 1992; Vondung, 1976; Gregory, 1989; Bollenbeck, 2000; Haltern, 1993; Gray, 1994; Schlich, 1990; Salewski, 2007; La Vopa, 1990; Benes, 2022; Schleunes, 1979). In contrast to exclusively scrutinising the intellectual and philosophical products of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, this study has delved into the underlying material class interests that permeate this group within the confines of the Prussian *Ständestaat*. Consequently, by designating Kant as a representative of the *Bildungsbürgertum* it has encompassed both his ideological-material and philosophical-intellectual contributions to his social class.

Through an analysis situated within its contextual and methodological framework, this investigation has presented a historical materialist exploration of Kant's interaction with his class context. While preceding studies have illuminated Kant's ideological context to some extent, this research distinctly endeavoured to unravel Kant's political theory in the context of his class involvements and the prevailing crisis. Particularly noteworthy is Kant's distinct relationship with the *Bildungsbürgertum*, which reached a pinnacle during the 1790s, a period when the *Bildungsbürgertum* largely distanced itself from the once-compatible *Aufklärung* project due to its evolving material objective of reforming Prussia without dismantling the state machinery. Hence, the second pivotal revelation centered on Kant's exceptional rapport with his social class, positioning him as a preeminent public intellectual of his era and a primary architect shaping the original agenda of his class-related interests.

A further significant stride in this research has emerged from the historical materialist exploration that endeavoured to delineate Kant's epistemological rupture. Subsequent to a comprehensive examination of Kant's class background, this study set out to dissect Kant's methodology within the overarching framework social epistemology (Cassirer, 1981, 2020; Wood, 1972). Within the purview of this investigation, the term 'social epistemology' has encapsulated Kant's endeavour to forge a connection between the activation of human reason and a process of socialisation explicitly situated within the public sphere. Kant's conception of social epistemology represented a concerted effort to imbue the human condition with societal engagement, liberating individuals from the role of passive observers of social actuality.

The research's third pivotal revelation has involved Kant's methodological approach. Faced with the imperative of mitigating the impacts of the prolonged crisis on both social and political thought, Kant's starting point involved the development of a methodological and epistemological transformation. This transformation served as a unifying bedrock for his philosophical milieu, facilitating the construction of comprehensive and universally applicable political theories. These theories, in turn, offered a means to reconcile and harmonise the enduring political and philosophical debates that had persisted over time. Informed by the evolving political landscape of his era, Kant anchored his critical philosophy in the realm of human reason, inviting its active engagement within the process of socialisation unfolding within the public sphere; a characteristic feature of the enlightened absolutism prevalent in Prussia.

Kant's distinctive epistemological framework rested upon universal conditions that possessed the potential to infuse the contextual dynamics with social significance. Notably, his social

epistemology was a deliberate effort to foster a sense of socialisation in humanity, extricating individuals from their passive role as mere recipients of social realities. This conceptualisation of Kant's social epistemology stands as a central discovery, capable of underpinning the very foundations of his political theory.

The fourth and final principal contribution of this research pertains to Kant's political universalism. In this context, political universalism refers to Kant's propagation of universalist political theories, which he prominently presented during the 1790s as a response to the prevailing public discussions centred around the novel conceptual paradigms introduced by the French Revolution of 1789. This study has sought to elucidate Kant's reactions to these discussions by situating them within the framework of his association with the *Bildungsbürgertum,* his commitment to the *Aufklärung* Project, and his contemplations of the future trajectory of the Prussian governance structure. The aim has been to undertake a historical materialist analysis of Kant's later political theories, with a specific focus on unearthing the confines of his universalism rooted in class dynamics, which retrospectively contribute to the defining constraints within Kantian thought.

The final pivotal revelation of this investigation is that Kant's political universalism was intricately intertwined with his interpretation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and was predominantly marked by the limitations inherent in this context, notwithstanding Kant's contributions in expanding its scope. While Kant's universalist political philosophy stands as an original and theoretical construct, it remains deeply attuned to pragmatic considerations. These considerations encompassed the consolidation of the *Bildungsbürgertum* through the *Aufklärung* Project, the formulation of a political theory centred around a mixed system that steers clear of revolutionary inclinations, and the establishment of a political framework that internalised the universal moral tenets of its society.

In an effort to quell the internal political polarisation and fragmentation within the *Bildungsbürgertum*, Kant devised a remarkably innovative universalist approach. This approach refrained from categorically rejecting any faction involved in the conflict, instead aiming to alleviate tensions by advocating principles that actively involved every participant. As a result, this ultimate revelation has underscored how Kant's political writings must primarily be viewed as undertakings to resolve the crises specific to his historical milieu, driven by material concerns and class commitments.

V. EPILOGUE: A SCHOLARLY ENDEAVOR REIMAGINED

When Fukuyama (1992) proclaimed the global triumph of Enlightenment universalism, his main purpose was to underscore the victory of Western liberal democracies over the vestiges of late Stalinist socialist regimes. Derived from the assumption that the principles of human rights, the rule of law, and peaceful conflict resolution were universally accepted, Fukuyama's vision seemed fulfilled with the fall of the Berlin Wall, marking a definitive moment in global history. However, as we have traversed the intellectual landscape from Fukuyama's assertions to the underpinnings of Immanuel Kant's philosophy, the reality has proven to be more complex.

Upon contemplation of the various strands interwoven within this elaborate tapestry, it has become evident that Fukuyama's prognostications concerning the universally embraced liberal democracy have encountered the complexities inherent within reality. The assurances proffered by Western liberalism have encountered impediments and challenges across the global spectrum, thereby necessitating a reassessment of the applicability and universality of these ideals. This scrutiny has directed us back to the philosophical foundations underpinning modern discourse on universalism—chiefly, the works of Immanuel Kant.

Kant's conceptualisation of universalism, predicated upon a dedication to reason and moral principles, has wielded a pivotal influence in shaping dialogues on human rights, liberty, and governance. Nevertheless, as expounded, his abstract universalism faced censure for its detachment from the material circumstances and power structures that inform societies. Kant's conceptions, emerging from the tumultuous milieu of late 18th-century Prussia, grappled with the exigencies of his epoch. Nonetheless, their universality was both an asset and a limitation, underscoring the necessity of grounding theoretical constructs in the actualities of human experience.

The failures of liberal universalism across sundry historical and cultural domains have underscored the imperative of comprehending the socio-political dimensions that influence the application of philosophical ideals. Engaging with Kant, the thinker hailing from the fringes of Europe, prompted a revaluation of his class positionality and the socio-economic milieu that constituted the backdrop to his cogitations. By embracing a methodological approach that excavated the historical-materialist underpinnings of Kant's ideas, layers of context heretofore obscured have been revealed.

In extending the legacy of scholars such as Ellen Meiksins Wood, and Political Marxism, this scholarly inquiry has advocated for a re-politicisation of Kant's universalism (Comninel, 1987, 2018; Lafrance & Post, 2019; Mooers, 1991; Patriquin, 2012; Teschke, 2014; Wood, 1972, 1991, 1998, 2008, 2012; Wood & Wood, 1997; Wood, 1978, Zmolek, 2013). By situating his philosophy within the contours of his era—marked by the waning of feudalism, the ascent of the bureaucratic class, and the emergence of an incipient *Bildungsbürger* class—a bridge has been erected between abstract ideals and material circumstances. The legacy of Kantian thought, refracted through the lens of historical materialism, has unveiled its own tensions and ambiguities, illuminating the intricate interplay of ideology, power, and class.

As this exploration concludes, it remains evident that Kant's legacy has endured within the contemporary realm. The perpetual relevance of his ideas invites contemplation of the interwoven fabric of theory and praxis, philosophy and politics, and universalism and the localism. The exigencies and prospects of the 21st century impel a renewed engagement with these inquiries, weaving a fabric of thought that encapsulates both the overarching narratives of universalism and the nuanced textures of human experience.

In a world characterised by shifting power dynamics, evolving political landscapes, and intricate cultural negotiations, our interaction with the legacy of Kant and Enlightenment universalism is far from its culmination. The fissures and constraints unveiled through this academic pursuit illuminate avenues for further exploration and introspection. Through the prism of historical materialism, not only is homage paid to the intellectual legacy of thinkers who have moulded our comprehension of universalism, but also an acknowledgment given of our responsibility to critically scrutinise and adapt these ideas for a world that is concurrently recognisable and profoundly transformed.

Within a doctoral thesis, exploring Kant's political ideas and his universalism's impact on forming an ideal political system has its limits. Hence, upcoming research should think about the global implications of Kant's universalism on moulding societies after feudalism. It should concentrate on how Kant's universalism affected German-speaking Europe and, more specifically, Prussia. Also, there's a need for more research to understand the class constraints within Kant's universalism and how it shaped his thoughts on cosmopolitanism. Looking closely at Kant's connections within his class context could clarify why he made distinctions regarding colonialism, racial, sexual, and ethnic hierarchies. Furthermore, digging into the rise of the *Bildungsbürgertum* class - significant in politics and intellectual thought - before

Germany's 19th-century unification could offer insight into its special traits and its role in moulding German society.

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APPENDIX I: THE INFLUENCE OF ACHENWALL'S THEORY OF NATURAL LAW ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF KANT'S UNIVERSALISM

Following Pütter, Gottfried Achenwall (1719-1772) presented a new approach to not only natural law and politics but also the social sciences. His interests guided him to develop an interdisciplinary approach, and on this path, he became seriously engaged with the science of statistics[157]. Through his contributions, Achenwall pursued a comparative empirical approach to elaborate on the different forms of government and types of political regimes. His analytic and empirical methods provided him with much material to ground his arguments for an ideal political system.

The significance of Achenwall for this research is twofold. Firstly, Achenwall was one of the last political and legal thinkers before Kant who developed a natural law theory focusing on Thomasius and Wolff's legacy and presented a universalistic theory of natural laws. Therefore, Achenwall's approach to natural law theory became an inspirational source in Prussian academia and prevailed in the period just before Kant emerged as an academic and public servant. Replacing Achenwall, Kant inherited the lecture notes and studies of Achenwall on natural law and used them to form his own lectures. As Kant used Achenwall's course materials for more than twenty years of teaching, there are obvious continuities which Kant integrated into his universalist philosophy. In this regard, contextualising the legal and political theories of Gottfied Achenwall sheds light on understanding the pathway to the universalistic ideas inside the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the period before Kant.

As mentioned, Achenwall based his legal and political philosophy on the Thomasius-Wolff tradition and presented a series of theories on natural law, state/political science, and international law. Among his works, *Ius naturae* emerged as one of the most influential texts on both the other *Bildungsbürger* and also Immanuel Kant. In this co-authored work of Achenwall and Pütter, published in 1750, these thinkers focussed on the legal, social, and political composition of the Holy Roman Empire and presented a new perspective considering the positive law of the Empire with modern categorisations and periodisation. The legal framework of Achenwall emerged under four distinct categories: 'purely natural law', 'family law', 'public law', and the 'law of nations' (Achenwall, 2020, I, §1). After categorising law under these four branches, Achenwall identified the sources of natural law and linked it to the laws people bring with themselves with birth (or as articulated laws that come independently of any sort of groups or societies) or acquire from the social and legal conditions (by obtaining property, transferring authority etc.). Those laws, which came from birth, established the basis for defining universal human rights, and acquired rights composed the liberal rights gained against others and the state in a modern political order.

As Achenwall explained, 'pure natural law" referred to laws that govern human interactions independent of any kind of group or society in which they may belong, or 'rights and

[157] Achenwall was born in the Polish region of Prussia. He studied in the Jena, Halle, and Leipzig. Having studied philosophy at Leipzig for four years, he earned his master's degree in 1746. As an extraordinary professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen, he was appointed to the position of professor of law in 1753. After gaining a doctorate in both law and natural law in 1762, he changed fields again, becoming a professor of natural law and politics. In 1765, Achenwall became court counsellor of the Royal Court of the British and the Electoral court of Hanover. With financial support from King George III, he travelled to Switzerland and France in 1751 and to Holland and England in 1759. With his travels, Achenwall had a chance to develop comparative approaches to the political and legal systems in these different contexts.

obligations' which are posited when a man has been considered natural and which are therefore of the kind that can be conceived of without establishing any particular society (I, §61). 'Natural' in this was defined as pre-social. His 'Pure natural law' contained two parts. In the first place, there was the concept of 'innate' or 'absolute natural law', which encompassed the rights that "fall to a man regarding his being a man, and therefore by his nature" (I, §64) independent of any "juridical act being given" (I, §63). The second type of natural law was 'conditional natural law', which involved rights that have been acquired through an 'authentic' or 'legal' act (I, 110), such as the purchase of a legitimate property or entering into a voluntary contract.

Human beings are entitled to innate rights by virtue of being human. As part of acquired rights, there were various rights that arose from the acquisition of property that was not wrongful, such as the right to the fruit of rightfully acquired property and the right to transfer or otherwise dispose of the property that had been acquired legally. A distinction between innate rights and acquired rights can be traced back at least as far as Thomasius (Book I, §104, p. 77).

In relation to family law, Achenwall described the rights and obligations of individuals living within sub-state societies, including marital rights, parental rights, child rights, and rights in the household, as well as modernising the rights of employers and employees.

Under public law, Achenwall discusseed the rights of rulers and their subjects at the level of states. At this level, the relationship between the Prussian absolutist structure and local and regional princely powers was defined. As Achenwall worked under both structures, his examples were mostly from the imperial estates or the electorate of Hannover.

Under the law of nations, Achenwall discussed the rights and obligations of international relations. There were three areas of natural law in which ambassadorial rights, just war conditions, and the proper conduct of just wars were considered.

Achenwall's quaternary categorisation of natural law provided important clues as to how he defined the political sphere. The distinction of what was first defined under the name of purely natural law as transmitted to everyone from a universal source and acquired later indicated that the latter was permissible and natural on social grounds. In this sense, while showing that the political ground should include principles such as property, transfer of rights, equality before the legal ground, and the rule of law, which are the main elements of liberal thought, Achenwall also defined all dimensions of the political sphere with its other categories such as family law, public law, and the law of nations.

In this sense, Achenwall contributed to the development of the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s approach towards liberal principles through their integration with the political structure. Based on the distinctions made by Achenwall on the legal ground, Kant discussed the freedom provided by the active subject through reason, the fact that public law was actually subject to universal principles and should come to the fore as a universal right, international relations and the universal ground of the legal field that defined its subjects (states).

One of Kant's very late works, *Metaphysics of Morals*, became essentially important with regard to Kant's political theory since it had a section that clearly defined his understanding of rights. Although there were some by no means trivial variations among Kant's categories of the *Doctrine of Right*, the division was clearly based on Achenwall's categories. The most fundamental division of Kant's version was that between innate and acquired rights. Kant's works focussed primarily on acquired rights, which he divided into private and public rights (*MM*, DR, 6:237–8).

The difference between his scheme and Achenwall's was that he emphasised that public rights are acquired rights, including sub-state social rights such as marriage, family, and employment,

as well as property and contract rights as private rights. Moreover, ‘cosmopolitan rights’, like national rights, included both private and public law. Despite the fact that the cosmopolitan right asserted the right of individuals from one nation to introduce themselves to other nations for commerce or other agreements, the visiting nations were strictly limited to listening to visitors without hostility and by no means were forced to accept their offers: Kant critiqued European colonialism through this category. As a result, Kant's cosmopolitan right was his most obvious departure from Achenwall (*MM*, DR, §62, 6:352–3).

In *Doctrine of Right,* Kant's second departure point from Achenwall appeared as his distinction between ‘provisional’ and ‘peremptory’ or conclusive rights (*MM*, DR, §9, 6:257). Consequently, Kant believed that private rights and obligations that can be fully enforced without government did not really have full force and only had provisional effects until the government was established. The distinction between provisional and conclusive could also be applied to innate rights. Equality before the law was another aspect of the innate right to freedom, which must be ensured by public laws and institutions, such as courts.

Another critical issue that Achenwall made Kant discuss is how the practice of coercion and the situations of resistance to coercion should be justified on a legal basis as a right. These were important because, as absolutism strengthens, the traditional feudal and liberal fronts, which oppose it, would explain on what legal grounds they would resist the advancing political attack.

Considering self-preservation to be an ‘absolute’, ‘innate’ right, Achenwall argued that anyone could preserve their own freedom of action in any way that did not conflict with others' preservation:

> A man has a natural right to the preservation of his body and life; hence he also has the natural (in any case external) right to do anything that does not go against another person’s preservation, and the right to do whatever is not wrongful naturally (externally), i.e., by which no one else is wronged (§64).

This right, Achenwall continued, falls to anyone “in as far as he is a man” (§64). So, it was independent of any society and of any particular legal act, such as buying a house, getting married, or signing an employment contract. It included the right to perform such juridical acts, which then led to the acquisition of additional acts or acquiring “the right to acquire” (I, §81).

According to Achenwall, innate rights were defined as "our individual natural rights in regard to ourselves, to our bodies and souls, to our faculties, and to any part of our bodies." Thus, by nature, everyone had the right to exist and to function, and everyone had the right to live his life harmlessly (non-wrongfully) (I, §65–6). ‘Natural equality’ described this right as having the same rights and the same responsibilities for everyone as long as they stayed within their natural condition, i.e., they did not agree to a departure from their natural equality.

This implied, first, that "there are no prerogatives (special rights) in nature; that is, there is no priority among those who otherwise obey the same law," and "what nature permits to one man is also permitted to another" (I, §72). In line with this, "liberty should be regarded as a fundamental right possessed by everyone" (I, §77).

Kant differed from Achenwall's interpretation in two critical ways. Achenwall began his discussion of the right to express oneself by explaining that we were generally not obligated to share our thoughts honestly with anyone else. The author continued by stating that one had no right to lie, defined as speaking falsely with malicious intent, or to withhold the truth from another with malicious intent. He stated that "lies and reticence are simply forbidden by nature"

(I, §92). In general, both authors agreed that the law did not care about underlying motives, only the effects of action. However, Achenwall risked loosening this distinction by allowing one's right to lie to be determined by one's moral quality rather than the specific content of one's intent, while Kant emphasised the importance of the effect of one's actions; namely whether they left the addressee free or not, or whether they manipulated the other into doing something they would not otherwise do. Whenever one person's action compromised the freedom of another, Kant saw that as a problem of right.

In his lectures on Achenwall, Kant first presented this argument, thus clearly viewing it as a necessary supplement to Achenwall's work. Therefore, for Kant, “an action that opposes any action that itself opposes universal freedom is right” because “opposition to a wrong action is a hindrance to the action that opposes universal freedom; thus, it is an advancement of freedom and of the agreement of private freedom with universal freedom.” In addition, because coercion was defined as opposing the right to freedom of another, coercion was a possible and indeed necessary means of ensuring "universal freedom is in agreement with private freedom". While more discussion would be needed, Kant seemed to acknowledge that coercion had some legitimate uses, but Achenwall gave little argument in support of them.

In light of these perspectives, Gottfried Achenwall became one of the most important *Bildungsbürger* to integrate early liberal principles inside the natural law theory of his context. Although his organic connection with the princely powers did not transform into an open alignment like Pütter, Achenwall positioned himself against the absolutist authority by adopting a universalistic approach to natural law. While collaborating with the local and regional authorities, as he found a chance to travel and develop a comparative approach, his natural law theory contained many elements from other law systems.

Before Kant, Achenwall’s political thought was one of the last contributions to the *Bildungsbürgertum*’s early liberalism. The liberal reformist wing of the *Bildungsbürgertum* mainly developed from Achenwall’s approaches in the 1790s and included critical responses to Kant’s political philosophy as well. Until the 1790s, Achenwall remained one of the main influences on early German liberalism in the *Bildungsbürgertum*. For Kant, Achenwall’s legacy was crucial since it gifted him a strong canon of natural law theories. Kant used Achenwall’s main discussion and from it developed his concepts on natural rights.

APPENDIX II: OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-CRITICAL YEARS: INVOLVEMENT IN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CLASS POLITICS OF THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

The pre-critical years of Kant, a period spanning from his early life until the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, are often overlooked in Kantian scholarship. However, examining this period is crucial for understanding the influences and debates that shaped Kant's thoughts and how he engaged with them. This period also provides valuable insight into Kant's personal background, including his class and involvement with the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the *Aufklärung Project*.

It is worth noting that it took Kant nearly thirty-five years to complete his first *Critique*, during which time he produced a significant volume of philosophical writings. These early engagements with his contemporaries eventually turned into intellectual polemics in which Kant demonstrated his promising skills as a scholar and thinker. Many accounts of Kant's thought place his early engagements with philosophy within the context of debates on metaphysics (Ameriks, 1982; Beck, 1969; Beiser, 1992; Broad, 1978; Friedman, 1992; Gardner, 1999; Guyer, 2008, 2014; Hunter, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2013; Laywine, 1993; Watkins, 1995; Schneewind, 1997; Schönfeld, 2000; Shell, 1996; Zammito, 2002). At this time, metaphysics was a central sphere of philosophical debate, and traditional approaches to philosophy were closely tied to idealist assumptions about the sources of knowledge and understanding of social phenomena. It is important to note that rationalism and empiricism were also influential external forces on the development of German philosophy.

In the context of metaphysics, Kant's dimensions cannot be analysed fully within the scope of this research, but it is important to consider some key turning points that shaped Kant's thought and corresponded to significant moments in his scholarship. These turning points can be understood as markers of Kant's intellectual evolution as he grappled with the dominant philosophical debates of his time and sought to establish his own unique philosophical perspective.

Kant's initial idea was to address the main structural problems of his historical context, which was still experiencing the aftermath of the long crisis of feudalism and the resulting theoretical disputes between conflicting new and traditional classes. This crisis had a significant impact on German political thought, which was marked by legal and philosophical discussions on consolidating the declining political order.

Unlike France or England, the German context had a pluralistic intellectual atmosphere in which multiple political theories were presented in an attempt to respond to the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism. There were absolutists, traditional feudalists, and liberals debating on how to form a new political order to reorganise Prussia. These proposals sought to adapt their theories to the particularities of the German context by grounding them on specific philosophical grounds. Establishing these grounds became a matter of epistemology.

When involved in these debates, Kant identified the main problem in philosophy as the conflict between metaphysics and science. He believed that reconciling these two fields would produce a common ground on which to universally address the problems arising from the impacts of the long crisis of feudalism. This attempt to find a philosophical path through various influences and intellectual debates corresponded to the pre-critical years, during which Kant sought to

develop his own unique perspective and contribute to the *Aufklärung* Project. By examining Kant's involvement in these debates, we can better understand the context in which he developed his critical approach and how he sought to establish his own unique perspective.

Overall, the pre-critical years of Kant were a crucial period in the development of his thought, as he sought to establish his own philosophical perspective and contribute to the *Aufklärung Project*. In the context of this research, Kant's pre-critical years are examined under two sections which focus on his early life and involvement in philosophy through the main questions his context plagued him with. The pre-critical years are dominated by Kant's pre-critical project, which was an attempt to reconcile science with metaphysics and provide a solid universal ground to address the major philosophical problems of the time.

KANT'S INVOLVEMENT IN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CLASS POLITICS OF THE *BILDUNGSBÜRGERTUM*

The most significant elements of Kant's early life were his class origins and his involvement in the class politics of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Although he became the most prominent thinker in the European Enlightenment, Kant was not born a noble or wealthy. Rather, he lost most of his material well-being due to the loss of family members and had to regain his financial independence.

Born on April 22, 1724, in the town of Königsberg, East Prussia, Kant was the fourth of nine children of Johann Georg and Anna Regina Kant. His father was a harness maker, and even though Johann and Immanuel's grandfathers were competent businessmen and initially well-respected, they lived a humble life.

Kant's early childhood appears to have been relatively idyllic, with his parents getting along well and loving him. His mother, Anna, who handled the family's paperwork, was a strong influence on him (Cassirer, 1981, p.13). Königsberg, where Kant grew up, enjoyed a cool and gentle climate with a flat Baltic terrain that was not particularly diverse or hostile.

During Kant's early years, the town of Königsberg was also influenced by the Pietist movement, a Christian movement that emphasised literal exegesis, humility, and charitable deeds. Founded by Jakob Spener and promoted by August Hermann Francke, the Pietist movement had spread north from Dresden, Leipzig, and Halle and reached Königsberg at the turn of the 18th century. It made inroads in the region through the creation of schools and orphanages and stressed a spirituality of mystical intensity.

Kant excelled in his studies and eventually went on to become one of the most influential philosophers in modern history. However, before he could achieve such notable success, Kant faced a number of challenges and setbacks in his early life. After the death of his maternal grandfather in 1729, the Kant family experienced a series of hardships that eventually led to their financial ruin (Kuehn, 2001; Schönfeld, 2019). Despite these challenges, Kant was able to continue his education at the *Collegium Fridericianum*, a school that was only open to male pupils and focused on subjects such as Latin and religion.

As a child of working-class parents, Kant was already at a significant social disadvantage, and the strict and conservative nature of the *Collegium Fridericianum* did little to alleviate this disadvantage. The curriculum was heavily influenced by Pietist views, which tended to be hostile to science and viewed education primarily as a means of practical management rather than as an intrinsically valuable pursuit (Cassirer, 1981, p.15). Mathematics, for example, was considered useful for bookkeeping but worthless for describing reality, and physics was acceptable as long as its findings did not undermine the Bible. As a result, Kant's education

was largely focused on theology, catechism memorisation, and biblical stories, with little emphasis on science or mathematics.

Despite these limitations, Kant excelled in his studies and eventually went on to study at the University of Königsberg, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1746 and his master's degree in 1748. It was during his time at the University that Kant began to develop his philosophical ideas and interests, and he would eventually go on to publish a number of influential works, including the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Critique of Judgment*.

One of Kant's former classmates, David Ruhnken, wrote a letter to Kant in 1771 in which he criticised the "discipline of the fanatics" (letter to Kant, 10 Mar. 1771; 10:117.15), indicating that the young Kant may have been surrounded by a fervent and dogmatic academic environment. Another classmate and lifelong friend, Theodor Hippel, spoke of Kant's "terror and fear" whenever Kant would later recall the "slavery of his youth" (Malter, 1992, p. 95; tr. Kuehn, 2001, p. 45), suggesting that Kant may have experienced a difficult or oppressive upbringing.

These early experiences may have contributed to Kant's negative association with "morality under the guidance of feeling" following the death of his mother, Anna, in 1737 (Schönfeld, 2019). The loss of his mother at such a young age would have been a significant blow for the sensitive teenager, and it is likely that this tragedy shaped his worldview and his later philosophical ideas.

In 1740, at the age of sixteen, Kant began his studies at the University of Königsberg. Despite his family's financial difficulties, with his widowed father filing his taxes as a pauper (Borowski, 1804, p. 46), Kant received support from his maternal uncle, shoemaker Richter, who helped finance his studies. In addition, Kant supplemented his income by working as a tutor to fellow students, sometimes accepting luxuries in exchange for his services.

Pastor Schulz had hoped that Kant would pursue a career in the church, but instead, he chose to study a range of subjects, including logic, ethics, metaphysics, natural law, and mathematics. His advisor, Martin Knutzen, introduced him to the works of Sir Isaac Newton, likely influencing Kant's interest in natural philosophy (Lasswitz, 1902, p. 521).

Four years into his university education, the Kant family suffered another setback when Kant's father suffered a stroke in 1744. At the age of twenty, Kant became the head of the family and took on the responsibility of caring for his father's health. He stopped attending classes the following year and began writing on natural philosophy, focusing on the properties of force.

In 1746, Kant published his first known work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*, after burying his father and settling the family's affairs. He also found homes for his younger brother and three sisters and moved in with another student. This work, which focused on the technical aspect of determining the properties of force, was Kant's first publication and his first book.

Despite the publication of this significant work, Kant withdrew from the university in 1748 without earning a degree. He left town to work as a tutor for a noble family in the countryside. It is tempting to attribute Kant's academic failure to financial considerations, as his parents were deceased, and the children had no savings. However, it is worth noting that the Kant family did have a benefactor in their uncle Richter, who paid for Kant's course fees when he was enrolled (Borowski, 1804, p. 46) and financed the publication of his first book after he had left the university (Lasswitz, 1902, p. 521). Poverty may not have been the primary factor in Kant's decision to withdraw. It is also worth considering that Kant may have had other reasons for

leaving the university, such as a lack of interest in pursuing a degree or a desire to focus on his writing.

It appears that Immanuel Kant did not originally intend to submit his work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*, as his master's thesis. The contents of the work suggest that Kant's primary goal was to criticise the philosophical views of Leibniz and Wolff. In the text, Kant rejects the doctrine of pre-established harmony, which holds that substances do not interact, and instead argues that substances do change each other's states through mutual actions (Kant, 1749/1999, #4, 1:19; Schönfeld, 2019). He also disputes Wolff's concept of a 'moving force,' arguing that force and motion are not necessarily related and that a 'moving force' is a misnomer (Kant, 1749/1999, #3, 1:18). Instead, Kant proposes that living forces should be understood as the dynamic source of nature, or a 'vis activa' or 'active force'.

Despite the fact that criticising the views of Leibniz and Wolff was a popular and even righteous pursuit in the Pietist atmosphere of Kant's university, it appears that his efforts did not help his chances of graduating. Kant's advisor, Martin Knutzen, did not recommend him for graduation, and Kant is not mentioned in Knutzen's letters to Leonard Euler as one of his excellent students (Waschkies, 1987, p. 20). Instead, Knutzen favoured other students, such as Johann Weitenkampf and Friedrich Buck, who eventually succeeded him as chair of the department (Pozzo, 1993, pp. 283-322; Kuehn, 2001, p. 23).

In response to being passed over for graduation, Kant resorted to irony in his work (Kant, 1749, #4; 1:21.3-8) and later sought revenge by securing the professorship he desired without even consulting Buck, who had been Knutzen's favoured student (Kuehn, 2001, p. 23). After Knutzen's death and the public recognition of his own work, Kant was able to strike a deal with the administration to take over Knutzen's chair and push Buck to another position.

For the next seven years, Kant's life was relatively quiet as he worked as a private tutor, or Hofmeister, in the Baltic countryside. He first taught the sons of Pastor Andersch in the French settlement of Judtschen from 1748 to 1751 and then moved on to tutor the sons of Knight von Hülsen at his Arnsberg estate until around 1753. Finally, Kant worked as a tutor for Count Keyserlingk until 1754. During this time, Kant enjoyed a more social and convivial lifestyle, and his financial situation improved, allowing him to devote more time to his tutoring and his own research.

During this period, Kant came to realise that his debut work, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*, had not been successful, despite its originality. His attempt to synthesise the ideas of Leibniz and Descartes had gone largely ignored. In response, Kant began to reconsider his earlier criticisms of Newtonian physics and developed a greater admiration for Newton's work. This conversion is evident in Kant's second publication, the *Spin-Cycle essay* (1754), in which he engages more fully with Newtonian ideas and makes no mention of any other natural philosophers.

It is observable that Kant's rural surroundings contributed to his more holistic engagement with Newton's work. Rural life provided a more daylight-oriented lifestyle, and Kant likely had more leisure time in the evenings or early mornings to read and engage with the *Principia*. As a result, Kant's conversion to a more Newtonian perspective may have been influenced by his more immersive experience with Newton's work.

When Immanuel Kant returned to the University of Königsberg in the autumn of 1754, he did so with the intention of completing his studies and beginning his academic career. His prospects had improved due to the liberal policies of King Friedrich II, who had instituted reforms in Prussia that were beginning to be felt at the university. Additionally, the passing of Martin Knutzen, Kant's former advisor, created a more open atmosphere at the university. It is worth

noting that Kant had not been idle during the seven years he spent working as a tutor in the Baltic countryside. He saved some money and engaged in self-study in order to supplement his formal education (Schönfeld, 2019).

Kant's next publication, the *Universal Natural History*, was published anonymously in the spring of 1755 and dedicated to King Frederick the Great. In this work, Kant espouses a naturalistic teleology and supports Newtonian mechanics and cosmology. However, his work also challenges biblical creation stories and advocates for a non-anthropocentric perspective. This may have been the reason for his decision to publish anonymously, as such ideas could potentially have resulted in religious opposition.

After being awarded his master's degree, Kant wrote his dissertation, the *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition* (1755). This work deals with the principles of ontology and the conceptual tools necessary for metaphysical investigation. While it may seem unrelated to his earlier research on topics such as force, cosmos, and fire, it can be seen as building upon Kant's broader philosophical interests and helping to establish him as a major figure in the field of metaphysics.

In 1761, the Prussian Academy posed a question for the public competition of 1763, asking whether metaphysical principles, specifically the principles of natural theology and morals, could be proven with the same clarity and precision as the truths of geometry. The competition, which was intended to put pressure on German metaphysicians, attracted the attention of intellectuals and scientists from abroad, such as Maupertuis, d'Alembert, La Mettrie, Voltaire, Lagrange, and Euler. Kant participated in the competition with his inquiry *Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morals,* also known as the *Prize Essay,* in which he examined the feasibility of pursuing metaphysical questions. Despite receiving second prize in the competition, behind Mendelssohn, the *Prize Essay* marked a significant step in Kant's exploration of the possibility of metaphysics as a system of *a priori*, synthetic judgments.

In the *Prize Essay*, Kant proposed that conceptual analysis should be the starting point of metaphysics, as synthetic reasoning is premature without first clarifying ambiguous concepts. However, he also maintained that, eventually, metaphysics should become a synthetic discipline. This emphasis on the importance of conceptual analysis would later become a central theme in Kant's philosophy, particularly in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The disappointment of not winning first prize in the competition prompted Kant to overreact and write another thesis in order to secure a position as a professor at the University of Königsberg. This thesis, the *Inaugural Dissertation, On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*, proposed a divorce between the sensible and intelligible worlds in order to address the problem of the dynamic unity of jointly sensible and intelligible reality.

In 1770, Kant was finally appointed to the chair in logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg after having worked as an unsalaried lecturer and sub-librarian for several years. In order to inaugurate his new position, he also wrote the Latin *dissertation Concerning the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World,* also known as the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

Immanuel Kant's path to professional stability was a circuitous one, marked by a number of impediments, both external and self-imposed. Firstly, Kant faced financial difficulties that disrupted his education, hindering his ability to fully develop his intellectual capabilities. Furthermore, as a member of the lower class in Prussia, it was extremely difficult for Kant to attain a position as a public servant, a requirement for membership in the esteemed *Bildungsbürgertum*. Despite these challenges, Kant was able to secure part-time work as a tutor and lecturer, which allowed him to stay connected to the philosophical and political discussions

of the time. This exposure to the major philosophical controversies of the day enabled Kant to become proficient in a range of disciplines, and he became a highly sought-after intellectual in Prussian academia.

Moreover, Kant's experiences in the 'cutthroat' world of Prussian intellectual rivalries informed his strategic approach to positioning himself within the various philosophical traditions. For instance, he chose to align himself with Newton over Wolff at a time when the latter was anathema in Prussian academia (Schönfeld, 2000, 2019). These actions demonstrate that Kant was both pragmatic and visionary, seeking stability and financial security while also remaining engaged with the major philosophical debates of the time.

While Kant's later writings are often viewed as the primary source for understanding his political views, it is important to recognise that his engagement with class politics predated his explicit expressions of these views. In Marxist literature, class politics refers to the "politicization of the main relationship of exploitation in the class structure under discussion" (Brenner & Riley, 2022, p.9). In the case of Prussia during Kant's lifetime, the primary source of economic activity was the state bureaucracy of the *Ständestaat*. The rising *Bildungsbürgertum* class sought to increase its influence and control within this bureaucracy by taking on critical positions that generated revenue from the Prussian hinterland. In this sense, class politics for the *Bildungsbürgertum* entailed the historical task of reforming Prussian absolutism's class compromise with traditional classes in order to increase the influence of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Given his ambition to become a member of the *Bildungsbürgertum* by securing a stable academic position and serving as a public servant, Kant's involvement in class politics was almost inevitable. In order to advance his career, Kant actively participated in the major philosophical debates of the time, often introducing the progressive and innovative ideas of the *Aufklärung* movement. He worked tirelessly for three decades to attain a stable position in academia, and once he finally achieved this goal, he used his platform to promote the interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*.

It is worth noting that Kant's class allegiances did not necessarily align with his personal political views. While he may have supported certain positions that served the interests of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, his philosophy was not solely motivated by class interests. Rather, Kant's engagement with class politics should be understood as a realist pragmatic response to the constraints of the time and as a means of advancing his own career and intellectual pursuits.

THE RISE AND FALL OF A PRE-CRITICAL PROJECT

> "The theme running through Kant's early philosophy was the thick cable of his pre-critical project, the reconciliation of natural science and metaphysics" (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 10) [158].

Until his first *Critique* in 1781, Kant had spent almost thirty-five years building his methodological approach. From 1746 to 1780, Kant completed writing thirty pre-critical texts, and twenty-three of them belonged to the phase of the making of his pre-critical project. The years between 1754 and 1766 can be considered when Kant wrote the most important pieces, outlining his pre-critical project. He published two books: The *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755) and *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration*

[158] Martin Schönfeld, in his study on precritical 'young' Kant, mentions the *Kant-Studien*, a journal published on Kant from 1937 to 1996. Schönfeld draws attention because to the fact that only twenty out of 868 papers were published on Kant's precritical philosophy (Schönfeld, 2000, p.248).

of the Existence of God (1763), and six major treatises: The *New Elucidation* (1755), the *Physical Monadology* (1756), the *Negative Quantities* (1763), the *Observations* (1764), the *Prize Essay* (1764), and the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766) (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 4). Until his first *Critique*, only two more pieces appeared in the aftermath of these works, which finalised his investigation for his pre-critical project: *Directions in Space* (1768) and the important *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770). From 1770 to 1780, Kant had a 'silent decade' where he did not produce any major works and only concentrated on finalising his critical approach.

The literature on pre-critical Kant accounts for these years variously. The neo-Kantian accounts, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, consider this period not important to understanding Kant since Kant, according to them, was under the influence of the previous period and did not come up with something as original as his masterpieces: his *Critique*s [159] (Beck, 1969).

On the other hand, there are more recent works on pre-critical Kant that do not disregard the influences, continuities, and connections between Kant's early and later works (Ameriks, 1982; Beiser, 1987, 1992; Friedman, 1992; Laywine, 1991, 1993; Watkins, 1995; Shell, 1996). There are two major sides to these recent works. The earlier approaches of Ameriks and Beiser categorised the pre-critical phase into four periods (although their categorisations are remarkably different from each other). While Ameriks concentrated on the transitions of Kant's methodology (from empiricism to rationalism and scepticism and finally criticism), Beiser focused on Kant's changing relationship with metaphysics. Beiser argued that Kant returned to metaphysics in 1766, and in 1772, he divorced himself completely from 'metaphysical concerns' (Ameriks, 1982; Beiser, 1992; Schönfeld, 2000). The second wing of the recent accounts on pre-critical Kant has focused on the transitions by tracing their continuities with Kant's later philosophy (Friedman, 1992; Laywine, 1991, 1993; Watkins, 1995, 1995; Shell, 1996). In these interpretations, Kant is considered a committed Newtonian (Friedman, 1992); and his approach is identified with a notion of *physical influx* (Laywine, 1993; Watkins, 1995). Also, his concerns were problematised with the relationship between mind and body (Shell, 1996).

Schönfeld accurately identified Kant's early purpose as "an attempt at bridging the growing rift between science and metaphysics" (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 7). In addition to being historically explanatory and consistent with this study's approach, this argument acknowledged Kant's dilemma when he entered philosophy and metaphysics, and it supported Kant's claim that he developed a unique approach rather than combining a number of them. Schönfeld summarised pre-critical Kant's uniqueness here with two important remarks.

For Schönfeld, rather than combining the Leibnizian-Wolffian approach and Newtonianism, Kant positioned himself against them. He did this first while finding a ground to assimilate these philosophies (Schönfeld, 2000). Secondly, in his pre-critical period, Kant did not manage to systematise his ideas consistently. Rather, he had setbacks, and he restarted his investigation by returning to the premises of metaphysics. So, Kant still attempted to systematise his ideas, but this does not define Kant's pre-critical philosophy as systematic. This is why he returned to metaphysics and restarts his investigation.

[159] Schönfeld described the literature on early Kant as claiming: "…that the early philosophy lacked originality (for those accounts) because the early views were just eclectic blends of Leibnizian-Wolffian and Newtonian ideas; that it lacked continuity because of a clean break between the precritical and the critical periods; that it lacked relevance to the subsequent development of philosophy because it dealt with obsolete issues; and worst of all, that it lacked coherence because Kant underwent an erratic development characterized by sudden reversals of opinion" (Schönfeld, 2000, p.4)

Kant's pre-critical project took off in the 1750s. After working on physics and mechanics throughout the 1740s, Kant had a chance to shift his attention towards metaphysics and cosmology, giving him a ground to test his findings in mechanics and physics in these areas. One of the other reasons he got interested in this field was the career requirements to become a full professor. To qualify as a full professor, Kant needed to prove himself in two different fields: mathematics and metaphysics. To achieve this, Kant wrote a new thesis, *On Fire* and *New Elucidation* (1755/6). Although Kant successfully fulfilled the requirements[160], the Prussian government, which had strict determinative control over the university positions, decided to close the remaining vacancies in Albertina.

It is also important to note that, throughout his early writings, Kant never stepped back from being influenced by Newtonian physics. This dedication is also visible in his *Critique*s. Kant, of course, did not take Newtonian physics directly into his theorising. Instead, he tried to develop new responses to revise Newtonian physics to create a universal account of physical nature. "Kant's goal was to complete what Newton had begun—to generalise the *Principia* into an explanatory model of all inanimate nature and to support this model with a systematic and plausible metaphysical framework" (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 89). The main issue he dealt with here was the mechanism of Newtonian physics and its possible explanations of the ontology of beings, their freedom, and God's existence. "He had to construct new theories because he realised that the demonstrations furnished by the rationalists, the Wolffians, and the pietists were at best a hodgepodge of plausible and implausible ideas" (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 79). Therefore, it is feasible to claim that most of Kant's arguments in this period relied on the conceptual *Groundwork* prepared by the different traditions like Leibnizian-Wolffians, the Pietists, and rationalists. However, it was Kant who essentially organised, revised, and reformulated them.

The second area that Kant concentrated on during the 1750s was metaphysics. As metaphysics was the arena of intellectual debates, philosophical theorising and the emergence of new methodologies, Kant was also developing his approach in this field. During the 1750s, Kant wanted to carry his interpretation of Newtonian physics to metaphysics which became the attempt that also defined his pre-critical project. As mentioned earlier, Kant was not in favour of directly applying Newtonian principles to explain problems in metaphysics. However, he wanted to use Newtonian principles to find more comprehensive and consistent explanations that could bring progressive solutions to the problems of metaphysics about freedom, God, and epistemology[161].

Kant's interest in this threshold issue continues in his later works; he advocated Newtonianism to bring metaphysics a new impetus to reach beyond its then current impasse. In this period, Newtonian science was considered by Kant as a superior discipline to pure mathematics to explain metaphysics.

According to Beck (1969), Kant's problematisations evolved in four dimensions. Firstly, Kant problematised the scope and method in metaphysics that had been debated since Leibniz. From Leibniz and Wolffianism, in metaphysics, an attempt to reconstruct the principles and guidelines in philosophy mathematically emerged. This attempt coincided with Kant's early

[160] Kant's following years passed while he waited for new vacancies and responded to the catastrophic impact of the Lisbon earthquake. Kant wrote three articles in response to the impact of the Lisbon earthquake since he was directly inside the debates over mechanics, physics, and mathematics. These responses with the other works in the 1750s are clear examples of Kant closely following Newtonian conventions and the conceptual framework generated by the new understandings in physics.

[161] Inside his work *Early German Philosophy Kant and His Predecessors* (1969), Lewis White Beck brings a more detailed reading of Kant's problematizations in metaphysics.

dissatisfaction with metaphysics at the end of the 1740s, and that continued to influence his theorising throughout his precritical project. In his 1750s research, Kant concluded that the content and premises of metaphysics and mathematics were different[162][163].

Even though Kant considered metaphysics less and less suitable to ground the explanations of science, he did not completely reject the field[164]. In developing his pre-critical project, Kant tried to use revised Newtonian science to solve the problems of metaphysics. According to Beck, Kant's pre-critical years between 1747-1766 can be defined by a movement from a "moderate rationalism in metaphysics without extravagant claims to mathematical certainty, through a moderate empiricism of the Newtonian, not Humean, variety, to a scepticism of metaphysics as knowledge of reality and a new conception, epistemological and pro-phylactic, of the task of metaphysics" (Beck, 1969, p.446).

The second problematic dimension for Kant was the nature of space. Beck here drew attention to the conflicting explanations of Newtonian science and metaphysics of Leibniz-Wolffian traditions for Kant. During the development of his pre-critical project, Kant's approach to metaphysics was largely influenced by the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition that conflicted with the findings of Newtonian science[165].

Beck claims that the Kantian interpretation transformed two times (Table 3), reaching its final position in 1770. In 1747, Kant adopted neither of these camps and developed his approach by getting closer to not Leibnizian but Wolffian explanation. The Wolffian explanation was close to that of Leibniz, but it was different in that it saw space as a representation more than a relation. In the 1760s, Kant used a Leibnizian explanation of space against the Newtonian explanation and later returned to employing the Newtonian explanation against the Leibnizian

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[162] Especially in his works during the 1760s, according to Beck, it is observable that metaphysics lost ground for Kant to be considered as a starting point of his inquires. Beck attracted attention to two important works of Kant in which he clearly stated that; due to the inconsistency between the content and elements of mathematics and metaphysics, it was not possible to consider metaphysics as a suitable ground for science.

> Metaphysics has no formal or material basis of certainty of any other kind than geometry. In both, the formal element of judgment occurs in accordance with the laws of identity and contradiction. In both, there are indemonstrable propositions that are the foundations of inferences. But since the definitions of mathematics are the primary indemonstrable concepts of the defined things, in their stead various indemonstrable propositions must furnish the primary data [for metaphysics]. They can be just as certain, however. (Kant, 1949, p.217)

[163] In his 1750s research, Kant concluded that the content and premises of metaphysics and mathematics are different. Beck also drew attention to the *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces* (1749). He argued that for Kant:

> Metaphysics was in trouble; he said because it had striven to expand knowledge when it should have concerned itself with laying foundations: Men desired a comprehensive philosophy (*grosse Weltweisheit*) whereas they ought also to have demanded that it be a firmly established (gründliche) philosophy. The lesson to be learned from the conflict between the physical and the metaphysical estimate of forces was that the tasks of the two sciences ought to be sharply distinguished; and when this was done (as Kant thought he had done it), metaphysics was brought to the threshold of truly fundamental knowledge—but "God knows when we shall see it cross the threshold! (Beck, 1969)

[164] During the 1770's Kant returned to the attempt to close the rift between metaphysics and science. But this time Kant followed a different strategy and used metaphysics as a ground for developing transcendental idealism. Transcendental idealism as a doctrine is for reconceptualising how human beings process knowledge and how they can have universal categories before experience. Through transcendental idealism Kant overcame the impossibility of defining science in itself and concentrated on the functions of science. This attempt became the cornerstone that enlightened his critical philosophy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

[165] As Beck summarised, the Newtonian approach proposed an "infinite, absolute, uniform, isotropic space in which bodies were placed by God" (Beck, 1969, p.446). Leibniz had a different conception which considered space a "relation holding between simultaneously compossible states of the monads; there was no absolute space which would have existed had there been no substances" (Beck, 1969, p. 446).

explanation. In 1768, *On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space* came out as another publication summarising this composition. The final position of Kant came out two years later when Kant finally brought in written conclusions.

	Objective or Subjective	Ontologically Primitive or Derivative	Absolute or Relational
Newton	objective	Primitive	Absolute
Leibniz	objective	derivative	Relational
Kant (1747)	objective	derivative	Relational
Kant (1768)	objective	primitive	Absolute
Kant (1770)	subjective	Primitive, at least epistemologically	Absolute

Table 3: Comparison of Kant's three theories of space with those of Newton and Leibniz, from (White 1969, p.450)

The third dimension of problematisation for Kant in metaphysics was the issue of causality. The conception of causality was controversial in German philosophy due to the debate between the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition and one of their major opponents, *Christian August Crusius* (1715 – 1775). The objection of Crusius was that the Wolffian definition of causal relations was circular. Immanuel Kant's involvement in this debate appeared in *Nova dilucidatio* (1755), where he acknowledged that the Wolffian theory was circular[166].

In 1763, in the *Negative Grössen*, Kant departed from his position in 1755. While noting Crusius' point, Kant also tried to define his own way of seeing causality (Beck, 1969, p. 452). The Kantian interpretation of causality argued that causal relations and logical relations were not the same. This divergence influenced Kant later on in his composition of the relationships between theoretical and Practical Reason (Beck, 1969, p.252).

According to Beck, the fourth and last problematisation of Kant in metaphysics was about ontology. The concept of existence, in particular, became one of the topics that Kant was interested in. In 1755, like in the discussion about causality, Kant's position was similar to Crusius's. Rather than the Leibnizian-Wolffian approach, which argued for the existence of possibilities to conceptualise social phenomena, Kant took a more conservative stance, claiming God sourced the possibilities so that if there were no God, nothing would exist since there would not be any possibilities. However, in the following decades, Kant reached the view that existence cannot emerge before its real effect (Beck, 1969, p. 455).

As Schönfeld reminds us, the pre-critical project of Kant "was an attempt to save the worsening relationship of the natural science and metaphysics", and because of this, it was a unique effort in the philosophy of nature. "Natural science supplies us with knowledge of the physical world;

[166] Although Kant praised Crusius in *Nova dilucidatio*, he also did not adopt his view completely.

metaphysics provides us with answers to our questions about the intelligible framework of the physical world" (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 11).

Kant's purpose in integrating Newtonian science with metaphysical assumptions to bring in universal explanations for the questions of metaphysics (such as the purpose of the world and the possibility of freedom) caused Kant to remain involved in the ongoing discussions in the natural sciences. This involvement provided Kant with a better and deeper understanding of philosophical debates, allowing him to be introduced to many fields of natural sciences. In the end, Kant reached certain conclusions that signalled the failure of his pre-critical project.

> The marriage of metaphysics and science had not worked out, and their divorce was in order. In the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, Kant drew the consequence, slashed through the gordian knot of the pre-critical project, and sliced its model of reality into two halves: the mundus intelligibilis of metaphysics and the mundus sensibilis of science. The bifurcation of reality into a phenomenal and a noumenal world amounted to the antithesis of the pre-critical project and was a first tentative step toward the critical philosophy. (Schönfeld, 2000, p. 246)

Although Kant realised that he could not achieve his purpose of responding to the questions in metaphysics with the revision of Newtonian science, his pre-critical inquiry triggered many philosophical investigations that influenced the post-Kantian period besides opening a new path for Kant to develop his critical philosophy. At the end of his philosophical investigation, Kant was aware that it was impossible to close the rift between metaphysics and science by employing the existing traditional approaches of rationalism or empiricism because the scientific assumptions did not answer the questions in metaphysics. Scientific assumptions were abstract and were based on *a priori* conceptions. Kant wanted to show how these *a priori* assumptions can be universal and experienced at the same time. To overcome this problem, Kant needed a new approach to defining the relationship between experience and senses. Before Kant, no other thinker focused on the cognitive processes of knowledge about social reality. Kant attempted to explain "how human beings know things" and solve the problematic aspects of the growing rift between science and metaphysics by developing his transcendental idealism. In this regard, the pre-critical years of Kant taught him the impossibility of explaining metaphysics with scientific assumptions. They directed him to develop his transcendental approach, which would be revolutionary for 18th-century philosophy.

The pre-critical phase of Immanuel Kant's philosophical development constituted a significant period of his intellectual trajectory, as it marked the inception of his engagement with the philosophical milieu of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. During this time, Kant sought to reconcile natural science and metaphysics, an endeavour which was spurred by the intellectual influences of Newtonianism and the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition. Moreover, this reconciliation was motivated by Kant's desire to address the long-standing crisis of feudalism in German philosophy and political thought, with the aim of establishing a universal common ground for addressing the pressing social and political issues of the time. In the process of synthesising these disparate domains, Kant formulated a new conception of the dialectic between subject and object in epistemology, which found expression in his reflections on the nature of time-space, forms of intuition, and categories. It is, therefore, evident that the pre-critical phase holds a central place in the evolution of Kant's thought, and its examination is crucial for a nuanced understanding of his motivations, ideological commitments, and engagement with the class politics of his era.

APPENDIX III: POLITICS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The political landscape of the French Revolution gave rise to a transformative surge of philosophical concepts that exerted a profound impact on the public discourse surrounding the revolutionary principles of popular sovereignty, republicanism, political rights, freedom, and equality. These ideas, stemming from influential intellectuals such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Sieyès, resonated deeply within the French milieu, characterised by an absolutist regime. The French Revolution effectively challenged prevailing power structures and conventional notions of governance, presenting an inherent ontological threat to the established Prussian absolutist regime due to the propagation of the new political framework it embraced. The philosophical underpinnings of these fundamental ideas and their sway in shaping public debates swiftly became evident within Prussian society, particularly among the *Bildungsbürgertum*, leading to its politicisation and the consequent polarisation of the it along divergent fronts.

Simultaneously, the politics of the Revolution undermined the absolutist-paternalistic framework adopted by the Prussian regime, further accentuating the challenges it faced in response to these transformative developments. It also posed a threat to the liberal reformism developed amongst Prussian *Bildungsbürger* and which was already fundamentally against the traditional feudal framework which was still influential in the German political thought. By examining the revolutionary ideas that emerged during this era and their significance within the French context, a deeper comprehension can be gained regarding the profound obstacles encountered by the Prussian absolutist regime in grappling with these revolutionary currents, and how the impact of the Revolution posed a threat to the unity of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and their commitment to the *Aufklärung* Project.

The philosophical underpinnings of the French Revolution can be traced back to the characteristics of the absolutist regime that prevailed in France. Key concepts such as sovereignty, separation of powers, rights of resistance, and republicanism were shaped through extensive debates within the realm of French political theory. These debates were fuelled by the need to address the feudal crisis and the resistance it generated. As France endured severe economic and demographic repercussions stemming from the prolonged feudal crisis, the existing feudal system underwent significant changes aimed at consolidating aristocratic rule under the Bourbon monarchy in a centralised feudal overlordship (Armstrong, 2009; Franklin, 1973, pp.41-54; Holt, 1995, pp. 76-97; van Tol, 2018, pp.88-124). This transformative process undermined the traditional corporate entities within French feudalism, which consisted of local and regional feudal governing bodies that fostered a resistance against centralisation.

Jean Bodin played a pivotal role in advocating for the establishment of the absolutist regime as a necessary means to solidify the decaying feudal order (Nichols, 2021, pp. 167-184). Through an in-depth exploration of the theory of sovereignty, Bodin argued in favour of a sovereign entity with absolute authority and representation. His ideas closely resembled those put forth by the renowned English thinker, Thomas Hobbes, who later gained more popularity. Bodin sought to centralise power and authority within a single state apparatus that would serve as the representative of all feudal constituents (Bodin, 1992, pp.46-112, Book I, Chapter 9-10, Book IV, Chapter 6-7). Consequently, Bodin's efforts to undermine the traditional corporate entities within the French political context proved successful, thereby paving the way for the emergence of a new regime. This shift in power dynamics presented novel challenges for popular resistance against the establishment of absolutism.

The consolidation of the feudal aristocracy under a monarchic regime marked a period of relative stability in France during the emergence of the absolutist system (Lachmann, 1989;

Ranum, 1980). However, the subsequent century witnessed the re-emergence of long-standing feudal crises, leading to destabilisation within France (Mooers, 1991; Wood, 2012). Challenging the absolutist political hegemony and its underlying theory of sovereignty, Baron de Montesquieu's influential work, *The Spirit of Laws*, introduced a political theory of resistance. Montesquieu's main strategy was to advocate for a mixed constitution that would incorporate a plurality within the monopolistic political sphere associated with the absolutist regime. His concept revolved around the separation of legislative and executive powers at both regional and central levels (Montesquieu, 1989, pp.21-31, 96-112, 154-187, 308-337, Book III, VII, XI, XIX). Emphasising the significance of representation derived from the people, Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers promoted a system of checks and balances through a representative political body. By providing an alternative to the absolutist theory of sovereignty, Montesquieu's approach laid the groundwork for subsequent generations to construct a framework for resistance against the absolutist regime, although he did not endorse a fully participatory democratic republic.

Montesquieu's impact extended beyond the French political context, inspiring political thinkers worldwide, most notably influencing the American Revolution (Cohler, 2021, pp. 98-199; Lamberti, 1991; Lutz, 1984). His ideas played a crucial role in shaping the concept of representative sovereignty within a dualistic framework, specifically in the context of a presidential federal system (Cohler, 2021, pp. 120-147). Montesquieu's key contribution to political theory was his attempt to establish a mixed system wherein local and central powers in the feudal framework coexisted in a balanced manner. While the absolutist regime persisted, it was constitutionally limited, and the representation of popular will gained significance, being structured from the bottom-up (Montesquieu, 1989, Books IV, V, VI, pp.31-96). Montesquieu's design offered an alternative political theory within the absolutist context, deviating from the traditional interpretation of a republican regime. The impact of his *Spirit of Laws* also became visible in the Prussian context through the cameralist reforms, which aimed to systematise the state-building process on a paternalist framework (Gerlings, 2019, pp. 229-230).

Building upon Montesquieu's ideas, subsequent French political thinkers interpreted his contributions more explicitly in opposition to the absolutist regime. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in particular, played a pivotal role in shaping the theory of resistance against absolutism. Rousseau's conceptualisation of the human subject and the *General Will* provided a ground-breaking framework for reimagining political theory. Departing from the historical socialisation of individuals within society, Rousseau's philosophical inquiry aimed to unveil the notion of the *General Will* as a teleological endpoint (Rousseau, 1997b, pp.134-160, 161- 189). By identifying the absolutist regime as a source of alienation and usurpation, where the entire political framework was regarded as the property of an individual, Rousseau presented a fundamental critique and promoted the theory of popular sovereignty in opposition to absolutist sovereignty (Rousseau, 1979, 1997, pp.3-39). His work became instrumental in providing a theoretical foundation for the resistance against absolutism, both within the French political theory leading to the Revolution and throughout Europe as a whole.

Rousseau's conceptualisation of the *General Will* and his formulation of the *Social Contract* emerged as profound and transformative inspirations within the Enlightenment intellectual milieu, specifically in the realm of popular sovereignty discourse (Rousseau, 1997, pp. 39-153, Book I, II, III, IV). The notion of the *General Will* revolutionised the understanding of the political domain, as it redefined the role of the self-conscious and self-legislating social individual, intricately intertwined with the collective entity. Rousseau's conception of popular sovereignty assumes a paramount significance in elucidating his perspectives on political rights and the right of resistance. By ascribing exclusive authority to the *General Will*, Rousseau contended that political rights can only be legitimately established through the collective will

of the people (Cassirer, 1981, Wood, 1972). Consequently, the absolutist regime was deprived of its ontological legitimacy, being construed as a usurpation of the genuine popular will (Wood, 2012).

Furthermore, Rousseau's approach to popular sovereignty encompassed a profound constitutional dimension within the framework of the *Social Contract*, where the human subject was recognised as an equal citizen among others (Rousseau, 1997, pp. 41-82, Book II-III) Through a deliberative process, the *General Will* facilitated the transformative journey of the individual, enabling the transition from passive subject to active participant in the realm of citizenship. In essence, Rousseau's ground-breaking perspective and incisive critique of the absolutist regime engendered a paradigm shift, giving rise to a novel political framework that rekindled discussions on sovereignty, republicanism, and the inherent rights and resistance of individuals. While Rousseau's profound impact on the political landscape of the French Revolution is widely acknowledged, it is noteworthy that his teachings resonated deeply with the Prussian intellectual elite, particularly the *Bildungsbürgertum*, even before the Revolution took place (Cassirer, 1981, Wood, 1972). The resonance of Rousseau's ideas can be discerned in the works of Immanuel Kant, who, incorporating Rousseau's emphasis on the emancipation of the human subject through social interaction, infused these concepts into his *Critique*s and early political writings, thereby amplifying the dissemination of Rousseau's profound insights.

Kant's reservations regarding Rousseau's political theory distinguished his perspective from that of his French counterpart. However, a fundamental idea that emerged from the French political thinkers was the notion that the *Ancien Régime* symbolised an alienating process in the establishment of the absolutist regime. In other words, through the philosophical works of French political thinkers, the absolutist regime lost its legitimate grounds long before 1789. The French Revolution, propelled by these dynamic philosophical debates, further radicalised the prevailing concept by politically instituting a new republican regime (Beiser, 1992). Although the transition phase towards a republican regime was tumultuous, the removal of the absolutist regime had a profound impact on addressing the enduring effects of the protracted feudal crisis and instability in Europe, which had stifled the expression of popular will from below. What completed the conceptual framework of the politics of the French Revolution was the contributions made by the revolutionaries themselves, which transformed it into an immensely politicising nucleus within European intellectual circles. Consequently, the reception of this radicalising event jolted the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum* and disrupted Kant's hegemonic position within the intellectual landscape.

The radicalisation of the philosophical foundations of the politics of the French Revolution occurred through the implementation of republicanism within the anti-absolutist movement. This reinterpretation of republicanism, both driven by the practical need to solidify the Revolution's commitment to abolishing the absolutist regime and the necessity of establishing a regime grounded in popular sovereignty, was spearheaded by Emmanuel Sieyès. His approach to republicanism laid the groundwork for the revolutionary understanding of a constitutional democratic republic (Sieyes, 2003, pp. 92-162, 68-91). While his contributions became more evident in the constitutional texts that followed the Revolution, republicanism underwent a distinct redefinition, deviating from its classical connotations of aristocratic governance. The ancient aristocratic republics such as the Roman Republic and the Italian city-republics exemplified the classical form of republicanism, which had been extensively discussed in Greek and Roman political thought (Skinner, 1978a, 1978b). However, these republics were primarily designed to safeguard the class interests of the aristocracy, and their sovereignty did not stem from the popular will (Wood, 2012).

Drawing on the direct democracy tradition of ancient Athens, Rousseau and Sieyès developed a conception of popular democratic rule that formed the basis of their republicanism. This

understanding of republicanism heavily influenced the French revolutionaries, who sought to establish a constitutional democratic republic founded on the principles of popular sovereignty. The radicalisation of the philosophical foundations of French political theory had a profound and direct impact on European intellectuals and thinkers, as it introduced a new political paradigm centred around popular sovereignty, republicanism, political rights encompassing the freedoms and equality of citizens, the rule of law, and the right to resist. In response to these transformative ideas, the Prussian *Bildungsbürgertum* quickly became divided, with some supporting the absolutist-paternalist framework and others opposing it (Beiser, 1992, Mooers, 1991). Although it was practically and politically challenging for them to openly object to the regime, when politicised, the *Bildungsbürgertum* relinquished their commitment to the universalist framework of the *Aufklärung* Project that had been carefully constructed by Immanuel Kant.

The hegemonic influence of Kant's critical philosophy and the promotion of the *Aufklärung* Project among the *Bildungsbürgertum* came to an abrupt halt with the eruption of the French Revolution. The political landscape that unfolded during the French Revolution was deeply rooted in the extensive debates held by French political thinkers, including Bodin, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Sieyès, on topics such as popular sovereignty, republicanism, and political rights. These profound discussions challenged the *Bildungsbürgertum*'s unwavering commitment to the ideals of the *Aufklärung* Project, causing a notable shift in their perspective. This abandonment of the *Aufklärung* Project was further reinforced by the unfolding events of the French Revolution itself. As the Revolution entered a tumultuous phase characterised by widespread violence and political upheaval, the anti-absolutist sentiments propagated by the Revolution posed a significant existential threat to the Prussian regime. Consequently, the *Bildungsbürgertum* found themselves reverting back to their pre-Kantian positions, becoming divided into three distinct factions: those defending absolutism, proponents of liberal reformism, and adherents of traditional feudalism. Faced with these internal divisions, the *Bildungsbürgertum* gradually lost its initial enthusiasm for the revolutionary cause (Maliks, 2014, 2022).