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Kant on the Political Obligation of Philosophers: Reading the Secret Article in *Toward Perpetual Peace*

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This paper offers an interpretive framework for understanding Kant's "secret article" in *Toward Perpetual Peace* as contributing to a three-step transition toward a republican constitution. First, rulers permit philosophers to speak freely and publicly and learn from them in secret. Second, rulers extend this freedom of public reason to all citizens, reflecting Kant's enlightenment ideal in "What Is Enlightenment?" Third, rulers relinquish legislative power, allowing the public to become the de facto legislator—thus separating executive and legislative powers, which is essential to republican government. This reading reveals that Kant's view of the relationship between philosophy and politics differs significantly from those of Plato and Machiavelli. He rejects both the Platonic philosopher-king and Machiavelli's secret advisor model. Instead, Kant sees philosophers as agents of enlightenment whose influence lies not in ruling or advising rulers, but in preparing conditions necessary for perpetual peace.

Keywords: Kant – *Toward Perpetual Peace* – "secret article" – republicanism – enlightenment

Introduction

Should philosophers be directly involved in politics? Is their work beneficial, harmful, or irrelevant to the state? Since Socrates, the relationship between philosophy and politics has been much debated. In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that philosophers must return to the "cave" and rule the Kallipolis (471c – 502c). He also warns that philosophical truths may harm politics if openly proclaimed, suggesting the public should be guided by a "noble lie" (414b-c).

Many later thinkers reject this union of philosophy and power. In a fragment from his lost *On Kingship*, Aristotle dismisses the philosopher-king as reckless (Chroust 1968; Gerhardt 1996, 181). Yet some adopt a middle ground: philosophers should not rule but advise rulers. Machiavelli, for instance, dedicates *The Prince* to a Medici and appears content as a secretary to rulers (Machiavelli 1998, 92 – 93). This model proposes a limited coupling between philosophy and power—neither full union nor separation.

How does Kant view the relationship between philosophy and politics? This paper explores this question by focusing on *Toward Perpetual Peace*, particularly its enigmatic "Second Supplement: Secret Article for Perpetual Peace," added in the 1796 reprint. Scholars generally agree that the secret article is marked by irony (Laursen 1996, 261 – 262; Kuijlen 1995). Kant argues that the state needs the guidance of philosophers and should therefore "*allow* them to *speak* freely and publicly about universal maxims of waging war and establishing peace" (Kant 1996, 8:369).[1] Yet, he insists this invitation must remain secret—the state should not publicly solicit their advice. This tension raises questions about the sincerity and function of the article. Earlier in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant stresses that "no treaty of peace shall be held to be such if it is made with a secret reservation of material for a future war" (Kant 1996, 8:343), for such a reservation would reduce peace to a mere truce. If secrecy undermines peace, why then advocate a secret article? The paradox becomes sharper when the secret article is published, thus rendering it no longer secret and seemingly self-defeating.

Kant admits there are ironies and contradictions in the article. At the beginning of the article, he acknowledges that "a secret article in negotiations of public rights is objectively, that is, considered in terms of its content, a contradiction" (Kant 1996, 8:368). Having noticed the ironic tone and apparent contradictions, scholars hold different views over whether Kant intends to convey serious intentions behind such ironies. Gulyga believes that, as "all the stipulations of the article are ironic and mocking," the article is "only a jest" (Gulyga 1987, 222). Arendt goes even further, arguing that the "ironical tone of *Perpetual Peace*" shows that Kant doesn't take this work seriously (Arendt 1979, 7).

[1] All citations of *Toward Perpetual Peace* and "What Is Enlightenment?" are drawn from the Cambridge edition (Kant 1996). The numbers in parentheses refer to the numbers in the margins.

Others reject the idea that the secret article should be dismissed due to its ironic tone. They argue that Kant reiterates in this passage principles central to his broader philosophy. For instance, Derrida observes that the call for the state to "listen to" philosophers aligns with the logic of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (Derrida 1993, 84 – 86). Banham (2002, 54) and Davis (1992, 176 – 177) emphasize that Kant defends the freedom of speech and publication without censorship in this text. As Davis puts it, the article "must have been serious intent while being ironic in presentation" (Davis 1992, 177). Van der Kuijlen argues that the "impression of irony is only prima facie," and the article should be read with Kant's theoretical philosophy, particularly the transcendental doctrine of method in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Van der Kuijlen 1995, 71). Among these scholars, Gerhardt's reading speaks directly to the theme of this paper: the relationship between philosophy and politics. According to him, "no philosopher before Kant had expressed so clearly the basic undesirability of philosophers occupying prominent state office" (Gerhardt 1996, 181). Kant thus rejects the philosopher-king. Gerhardt attributes this break to Kant's "stricter sense of practical knowledge," which severs the classical correspondence between theory and practice. Thus, Kant redefines the role of philosophy, suggesting not union with power, but a withdrawal from politics (Gerhardt 1996, 181 – 182 and 188).

Gerhardt rightly argues that Kant envisions a more distant relationship between philosophy and politics than Plato does. However, he overlooks the role of the article within *Toward Perpetual Peace* and its contribution to the broader philosophical project. This paper contends that the secret article must be interpreted within the overall structure of *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Taking the secret article seriously raises a few questions: Why does Kant include it if he doesn't view the tension between secret advice and public reason as problematic? What specific role do philosophers play in promoting perpetual peace? In addressing these issues, this paper advances a new interpretation: while Banham and Davis emphasize Kant's intent to protect the freedom of speech for philosophers, I argue that this freedom is not an end in itself, but a means to promote conditions for a republican constitution. Moreover, contrary to Gerhardt's claim that Kant seeks to distance philosophy from power, I argue that Kant envisions a transformation of politics through philosophy – one that anticipates what we now call deliberative democracy.

This interpretation unfolds in three steps. First, Kant defends philosophers' freedom to make public use of reason. As rulers' limited judgment requires input from independent thinkers, philosophical freedom benefits political

decision-making, especially in matters of war and peace. Unlike Plato, however, Kant doesn't reserve this freedom for a select few. The second step expands this freedom of public reason to all citizens, reflecting the core of Kant's enlightenment project as articulated in "What Is Enlightenment?" Public reasoning becomes a civic right, rather than a philosophical privilege. The final step lies in promoting the *de facto* separation between executive and legislative powers. These steps assume that rulers recognize the imperfection of their own reason and are willing to fulfill their imperfect duties, whether toward themselves or others.

In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant views the separation of executive power from legislative power as the golden criterion that distinguishes a republican state from a despotic one. The secret article contributes to perpetual peace not only by urging rulers to listen to philosophical advice on war and peace, but also by contributing to establishing a republican constitution essential to that peace. Based on this reading, I will explore Kant's view of the relationship between philosophers and the state at the end of the paper. He disagrees with a full union or separation of philosophy and power. But he doesn't support Machiavelli's treatment, either. For Kant, philosophers are pioneers of the enlightenment project, capable of exerting influence on legislative authority. But, ultimately, this privilege will be eliminated, or rather, extended to anyone capable of public reason. Thus, Kant anticipates a democratized view of political engagement, in which reasonable individuals influence politics through public discourse rather than by holding office or advising rulers in private.

I. Freedom of Philosophers

In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant lists two supplementary articles for perpetual peace. The hero in the first one is nature (Kant 1996, 8:360), while the one in the second is philosophers. For Kant, the essential role of philosophers results from their "free judgment of reason" (Kant 1996, 8:369), which those in possession of power lack. Philosophers by their nature are "incapable of forming seditious factions or clubs" and shouldn't "be suspected of spreading propaganda" (Kant 1996, 8:369). Propaganda, which aims at power instead of wisdom, violates people's free judgment of reason. Therefore, those who spread or follow propaganda cease to be philosophers, and their speeches to the public cannot pass the test of their own free judgment. Exploring with free judgment instead of following propaganda, philosophers are closer to wisdom than everyone else, especially rulers.

However, philosophers' status as subjects of the state prohibits the state from publicly treating them as instructors. According to Kant, since the legislative authority is presumed to possess the greatest wisdom, publicly seeking advice from philosophers would appear humiliating and thus undermine its authority (Kant 1996, 8:368). This discloses a dilemma inherent in the legislative authority: it is presumed to possess great wisdom, yet in fact, it ought to listen to philosophers. This dilemma also reveals the broader tension between power and wisdom. Rulers need the guidance of wisdom to govern well, yet the possession of power "unavoidably corrupts the free judgment of reason" (Kant 1996, 8:369). Moreover, they are regarded as already possessing wisdom, making it politically difficult to seek advice openly. As a result, the state must listen to philosophers in a tacit way. It is obliged to allow philosophers to speak freely and publicly, as if it doesn't care at all about what they say.

One may ask: What is the ruler's motivation for granting this freedom to make public use of reason? What if the ruler doesn't do so? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to clarify what Kant means by the "public use of reason" and how it differs from "private use of reason." In "What Is Enlightenment?," Kant famously defines the former as "that use which someone makes of it *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*," while the latter refers to what "one may make of it in a certain *civil* post or office" (Kant 1996, 8:37). In articulating the latter, Kant gives three examples: officers must obey orders of their superiors, citizens must pay taxes, and clergymen must teach prescribed doctrines to their pupils and congregation (Kant 1996, 8:37 – 38). As Taylor (2012, 137) puts it, this is the reason we employ as "members of social hierarchies," serving to "maintain social order and to achieve important public ends." On the other hand, when making public use of reason, one "regards himself as a member of a whole commonwealth, even of the society of citizens of the world" (Kant 1996, 8:37). He can argue and "communicate to the public all his carefully examined and well-intentioned thoughts" (Kant 1996, 8:38). As Laursen (1996, 254) and Cronin (2003, 52) have pointed out, Kant's understanding of "public" and "private" is the reverse of our ordinary usage: engaging in military service as a soldier or handling public affairs as a civil servant would typically be regarded by us as part of public life, whereas activities that Kant considers the public use of reason, such as writing books, are usually viewed as private matters.

In an ideal scenario, the ruler might believe the freedom to make public use of reason is inherently desirable. However, as Kant admits, it seems

unlikely to persuade the ruler from interfering with anyone's freedom if we simply appeal to normative values. Rulers might not care about the intrinsic value of such freedom but rather be concerned with the benefits that granting it could bring. In such a case, Kant argues that rulers should still grant philosophers such freedom. Rulers should permit philosophers to speak freely and publicly about universal maxims of war and peace, because it is beneficial in two ways. First, with such permission, the state can learn from philosophers on matters of war and peace, which are the most important matters for its survival. As philosophers have greater wisdom than the legislative authority, listening to their instruction helps the state make better decisions. Even if rulers only cared about their own interests, granting philosophers freedom to make public use of reason, and thus getting better advice on war and peace, would be perfectly in line with their self-interest. Second, such permission also protects the authority of the state. Since the state invites philosophers' instruction tacitly, people won't doubt the wisdom of the legislative authority. Therefore, if rulers are reasonable enough, they would be happy to grant philosophers the freedom to speak publicly, which paves the way for the second step.

II. Kant's Enlightenment Project

In this section, I will argue that Kant's project in the secret article is consistent with the enlightenment project in "What Is Enlightenment?" and can be read as envisioning everyone's freedom to use reason publicly. As scholars note, when Kant speaks of "philosophers," he doesn't mean university philosophy professors. Instead, he means anyone "who speaks from no position of authority" (Krasnoff 1995, 66; see also Gerhardt 1996, 176 – 177). In the article, philosophers are those who have the free judgment of reason and are capable of publicly speaking about universal maxims of war and peace. In other words, they can make public use of reason, while the state should allow them to do so.

Yet, when rulers allow philosophers to speak freely and publicly, they can't limit this right to a certain group of people and exclude others. Otherwise, this right would be viewed as a privilege granted to philosophers, and other people would be aware that the state gives them this privilege because the state doesn't have enough wisdom and needs to look for instruction. This violates the ruler's self-interest and is not prudent. Therefore, as Gerhardt argues, if rulers want to receive help from philosophers without losing authority, the most prudent course is to allow every citizen to speak freely and publicly (Gerhardt 1996, 177). In so doing, they would not be noticed when they

eavesdrop on the philosophers' speeches. When everyone is permitted to speak freely and publicly, the freedom to make public use of reason is no longer confined to a small group of philosophers but extended to everyone. In the second step, the defense of freedom and publicity can be seen once again as aligned with the ruler's self-interest. It follows that every citizen is free to make public use of reason and may become what Kant calls a "scholar" in "What Is Enlightenment?," even if not everyone chooses to exercise this freedom.

In the opening paragraph of "What Is Enlightenment?," Kant emphasizes that enlightenment "is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority" and asks for courage to make use of one's own understanding (Kant 1996, 8:35). According to him, enlightenment requires nothing but the freedom to make public use of reason. If a public is "left its freedom", its self-enlightenment is not only "possible", but also "almost inevitable" (Kant 1996, 8:36). The secret article reinforces this ideal by showing that rulers have good reason to permit such freedom, thereby opening the way to enlightenment for everyone. It echoes and slightly modifies the enlightenment project in "What Is Enlightenment?". In "What Is Enlightenment?," Kant resorts to the future honor of the ruler. He calls his time the "age of enlightenment" and regards this age as "the century of Frederick" (Kant 1996, 8:40). Besides, he praises Frederick as a "shining example" which we should honor (Kant 1996, 8:41). Kant certainly hopes that subsequent rulers will follow this exemplar for the sake of future honor. Rather, in the secret article, Kant turns to a more realist approach and resorts to the survival of the state on matters of war and peace and the authority of rulers among subjects. For most rulers, these imminent dangers and interests are stronger motives than future honor.

Nevertheless, one may put forward a further challenge when the self-interested mindset of rulers and their cautious attitude towards danger are involved. Will extending the freedom originally granted to philosophers to the public pose the risk of revolution? Although Kant argues that philosophers are "by nature incapable of forming seditious factions or clubs" (Kant 1996, 8:369), it might not be safe if such freedom is granted to everyone. To address this concern, it is necessary to draw upon arguments from "What Is Enlightenment?". Towards the end of it, Kant famously praises Frederick by claiming that only he "dare to say: *Argue as much as you will and about what you will; only obey!*" (Kant 1996, 8:41) In so stating, Kant tries to convince rulers that granting such freedom to the public won't threaten the state. In case there is a possibility of revolution, the ruler who "has a well-disciplined and numerous army" can still easily guarantee public peace (Kant 1996, 8:41). In exploring the secret

article, we can also borrow this line of reasoning: permitting the public to "argue as much as they will and about what they will" in public won't lead to revolution, as long as everyone is willing to "obey." Instead, this allows the ruler, whose free judgment is corrupted by power, to be informed of anyone who can speak freely and publicly and make better decisions.

III. The Republican Constitution

We have shown that the secret article can be read as implying the desirability of granting everyone the freedom to make public use of reason, thereby echoing Kant's earlier enlightenment project. Nevertheless, how the article contributes to Kant's overall project of perpetual peace remains unclear.

As long as citizens are using their free judgment of reason, they are approaching wisdom and may have a better understanding of war and peace than the legislative authority. Thus, when the legislative authority eavesdrops on public teachings, it is advisable to expand the scope and listen to all citizens who are willing to speak publicly, instead of listening to a small group of people. In other words, Kant suggests the legislative authority should invite instruction from the public. Under such circumstances, when rulers want to make a decision and carry it out, they are following the collective will of the public, rather than their own will or several philosophers' advice. In this model, the public can be seen as gradually becoming the source of decisions of the legislative authority and assuming the role of the *de facto* legislator, while rulers tend to carry out conclusions reached in public discussions.

Before proceeding with the argument, one point needs to be addressed: whether rulers are morally obliged to follow conclusions derived from public discussions. It is quite possible that rulers, even after listening to public discussions, may still decide arbitrarily. However, if rulers want to make decisions in their own best interest, they ought to heed the voices of those whose judgment remains uncorrupted, i.e., those who freely participate in public discourse. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant distinguishes between perfect duties, which are strict and enforceable (such as the duty not to lie), and imperfect duties, which are duties of moral aspiration (such as the duty to cultivate one's talents) (Kant 1996, 4: 421 – 423). For rulers, once they recognize where their true interests lie, acting in accordance with those interests is what is expected of them as an imperfect duty. Thus, in the context of the secret article, following public opinion is the imperfect duty of rulers. This is not strictly enforceable but morally binding if rulers acknowledge the limits of their judgment. As Williams notes, the secret article cannot guarantee

that rulers make the right decision, but it sets expectations: rulers should recognize their epistemic limitations and act accordingly, out of moral duties to themselves and to others (Williams 1983, 18).

With this clarification, I turn to how the secret article supports the establishment of the republican constitution. The first definitive article for perpetual peace requires that "the civil constitution in every state shall be republican" (Kant 1996, 8:349). Kant emphasizes that the republican constitution should not be confused with the democratic constitution. According to Kant, democracy is a form of sovereignty (*forma imperii*) and indicates that "*all* those together who constitute the civil society possess sovereign power" (Kant 1996, 8:352).[2] The republican government is a form of government (*forma regiminis*) as opposed to the despotic one and relates to "the way a state, on the basis of its civil constitution (the act of the general will by which a multitude becomes a people), makes use of its plenary power" (Kant 1996, 8:352). Its golden criterion lies in separating executive power from legislative power. Thus, Kant argues that "democracy in the strict sense of the word is necessarily a despotism" (Kant 1996, 8:352). If both powers are controlled by rulers, then they don't need to care what subjects think and hence suspend the public will. Instead, relinquishing the legislative power to the public makes the state a republican one. As rulers need to follow instructions reached in public discussions, now the public, instead of rulers, is the *de facto* legislator. It leads to the separation of executive power (controlled by the ruler) from legislative power (effectively guided by the public) and consequently contributes to a republican constitution.

Therefore, the secret article can be interpreted as contributing to building a republican constitution, which Kant considers essential to perpetual peace. In each step, this project doesn't violate the interests of rulers. After three steps, rulers relinquish the absolute power. Republicanism is a *fait accompli*. Does this ending indicate that the project harms rulers' long-term interests and lures them into a sophisticated trap? How does this project, as Kant promises at the end of the article, throw light on both rulers' and philosophers' businesses (Kant 1996, 8:369)? It is true that rulers relinquish their exclusive control over legislative power, but Kant doesn't violate the categorical imperative of not lying. Moreover, even though the legislative power is effectively guided by the public, rulers still have a firm grip on the executive power. They no longer need to worry

[2] As Hanisch (2016, 64) notes, Kant uses the term "democracy" in a pre-modern sense, referring to what we today call direct democracy, which is very different from deliberative democracy.

about being accused of being a despot and risking being overturned. Thus, when rulers cede part of their power, their rule becomes even more secure.

IV. Philosophers and the State

In the last paragraph of the article, Kant suggests that we should neither expect nor wish that kings ever philosophize, or philosophers become kings (Kant 1996, 8:369). Here Kant distinguishes between "expect" (*zu erwarten*) and "wish for" (*zu wünschen*): "expect" means anticipating something will come; "wish for" means believing something is good and hoping it will happen, regardless of whether it may happen. Although Kant doesn't name Plato, he is attacking the philosopher-king project in the *Republic*. As Kant asserts that power and wisdom are mutually exclusive, we are invited to ask: What is the relationship between philosophers and the state? What is Kant's teaching to anyone who is in pursuit of wisdom?

To explore these issues, we might as well start from Kant's statement quoted above. It is not surprising that Kant argues we should not expect a philosopher-king, as Socrates also says so. Nevertheless, it is perplexing that Kant asserts we should not wish for a philosopher-king. In the *Republic*, Socrates doesn't expect a philosopher-king, but he wishes for one. Gerhardt argues that this indicates the separation of philosophy (theory) from politics (practice) in modern philosophy (Gerhardt 1996, 188). This reading bears some truth, but it is irrelevant to Kant's project in the article. As argued above, the goal in including the secret article in *Toward Perpetual Peace* can be read as providing support for building a republican constitution and preparing for perpetual peace. If the king should philosophize or the philosopher becomes the king, then the legislative authority has no need to invite instructions from those who can make public use of reason and allow them to speak freely and publicly. Instead, the legislative authority simply needs to ask the ruler for instructions and then follow them. As a result, the ruler, who has controlled the executive power, also serves as the legislator. Consequently, the legislative power will never be separated from the executive power, and the state will never become a republican one. Therefore, a philosopher-king would not only undermine freedom of speech but also bring fatal damage to the project of perpetual peace, because such an arrangement rules out the possibility of establishing the republican constitution. Whether or not the philosopher-king may appear, we should not wish for it. Indeed, Kant doesn't believe such a philosopher-king will ever appear. One who wields power necessarily loses free judgment of reason and can no longer philosophize.

Kant's assertion at the close of the secret article thus serves as a warning to philosophers: they should neither expect nor wish to gain political power, for doing so would undermine their intellectual integrity. Kant thus distances himself from Plato's philosopher-king project, but he still acknowledges the dilemma between power and philosophy that Plato recognized. In the *Republic*, Socrates famously argues that philosophers are reluctant to rule because he wishes only to "mind his own business" (Plato 1991, 497d), i.e., to pursue wisdom. But ironically, Socrates also states that the best-governed city is one that is ruled by those "least eager to rule" (Plato 1991, 520d). Plato seeks to resolve this tension through an ideal Kallipolis in which philosophers are compelled to rule.[3] Kant, by contrast, treats the tension as irreconcilable and draws the opposite conclusion: philosophers should maintain a distance from power to preserve their capacity for free and uncorrupted reason.

Meanwhile, Kant rejects Machiavelli's model of the secret advisor in *The Prince* as well. Rulers wouldn't be happy to invite philosophers to be the "teacher of the prince", as it could be "humiliating" to their authority (Kant 1996, 8:368). Indeed, in *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli presents a more complex and republican vision, advocating for citizens to participate actively in politics. He argues that revolution is necessary to periodically draw the republic back "towards its beginning", thus purging the corrupted old order (Machiavelli 1996, 209; Lucchese 2017). Kant arguably inherits this republican spirit and universalizes the role of political advisor by shifting it from the court to the public sphere. Instead of a privileged few who whisper in the ear of rulers, Kant envisions a political order in which citizens, through public use of reason, can influence legislation. Philosophers, in this framework, act not as counselors to the prince but as forerunners of a broader enlightenment project that gradually dissolves their own special status. Political influence is no longer the exclusive domain of the wise, but the shared potential of all who can make public use of reason. However, as Zöller (2020, 11 and 32 – 35) and Alberg (2017, 338) note, while Kant supports republicanism, he denies the right to revolution, which marks a significant divergence from Machiavelli's more radical stance.

Kant's project appears more modest than those of Plato or Machiavelli. He opposes the philosopher-king and argues that such a combination is

[3] Many scholars have focused on the issue of "compulsion to rule" in the *Republic*, such as Strauss (1978), Phillips (2011), and Buckels (2013). Due to limitations of space, this paper doesn't delve into the academic debates on this topic in detail.

practically impossible. He even argues that philosophers cannot hide behind rulers and monopolize political influence over them forever. However, Kant's project is also more ambitious. He believes that as long as one can freely make public use of reason, s/he is enlightened and becomes an independent thinker, i.e., "a *scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*" (Kant 1996, 8:37). There is no boundary between philosophers and non-philosophers in *an enlightened age*. Even in *an age of enlightenment*, everyone has the potential to become an independent thinker. This suggests that Kant's project is indeed fundamentally a modern project, though this is not necessarily due to the separation of philosophy (theory) from politics (practice), but rather to its democratizing character.[4] It presupposes that everyone can become an independent thinker as long as one wants. This vision foreshadows certain forms of deliberative democracy, in which reasonable individuals can provide advice and engage in deliberation on public affairs after careful consideration (O'Neill 2002, 252). At this point, Kant's view bears an originality that previous philosophers like Plato and Machiavelli did not have.

V. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the secret article can be read as contributing to the transition toward a republican constitution and reconstructed such efforts into three steps. First, the ruler should permit philosophers to speak freely and publicly. Second, this permission should be granted to everyone. Third, rulers should follow the conclusions reached in public discussions and make the public the *de facto* legislator, which indicates effective relinquishment of legislative power. The legislative power is hence separated from the executive power, which contributes to building the republican constitution required for perpetual peace.

Kant doesn't promise all rulers will follow his suggestions. But he does promise that this project will be beneficial to rulers in enabling them to make better decisions on war and peace, consolidating people's belief in the wisdom of legislative authority, and getting rid of the stigma of being a despot and thus securing their rule. This project presupposes that rulers recognize the imperfection of their own judgment and are willing to fulfill imperfect duties.

Kant's project in the secret article indicates that he has different understandings of the relationship between philosophers and the state from

[4] By "democratizing," I mean every citizen is potentially able to think independently and participate in public debates, rather than direct democracy in the pre-modern sense.

those of Plato and Machiavelli. First, Kant doesn't advocate a complete separation of philosophy and politics. In the second supplement, he suggests that the ruler should listen to philosophers. Philosophers are obliged to convey their teachings to the public. Second, Kant denies both the possibility and the desirability of the union of philosophy and power, which can be found in the Platonic philosopher-king project. According to Kant, when combining philosopher and king in one, the philosopher will no longer be a true philosopher, and more importantly, the way to the republican constitution will be closed, which is fatal to perpetual peace. Third, Kant opposes Machiavelli's vision of the teacher of the prince. According to Kant, this project is unacceptable to rulers. Kant, instead, suggests an enlightenment project. If philosophers want to gain political influence, the best option is to be pioneers in enlightenment and help establish a republican constitution. In the long run, their political influence is not exclusive and will be shared by the enlightened public. In this sense, Kant's project in the second supplement of *Toward Perpetual Peace* is strongly democratizing. It is a modern project and foreshadows certain forms of deliberative democracy, which today we might find more plausible and desirable than what Plato or Machiavelli envisioned.

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