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“TOWARD PERPETUAL PEACE”. KANT’S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Lecturer: OTFRIED HÖFFE. Professor of Philosophy at Tübingen University

Discussant: JOAQUÍN ABELLÁN. Professor of Political Science at Complutense University of Madrid

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"Toward Perpetual Peace"
Kant’s Political Philosophy
I. The Comprehensive Theory of Peace

In the voluminous *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant emerges as an outstanding theoretical philosopher. His fame as a political philosopher, by contrast, is due to the sketch *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the length of which is equal to roughly 10 percent of the first *Critique*. Its terseness, however, belies its philosophical significance; acute brevity is rather a sign of its remarkable virtuosity.

The text is an eminently political treatise because it uses philosophical means to promote the political, or rather moral-political end of universal and unqualified peace among all states. Although Kant was probably prompted to write the treatise on political grounds by the Basel peace between Prussia and France (April 5, 1795), it is not an occasional essay [*Gelegenheitsschrift*]. It rather contains the main features, of a complete legal and state philosophy, along with the principles for putting it into political practice.

The confidence of Kant's line of thought in the treatise on peace attests to the fact that he had been dealing with the issues over a long period of time. A cursory reader will discover Kant as a political thinker only in his later works. But on closer inspection, the portentous concept of a republic is already found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 372ff.; on a political reading, see chapter 12). The first and most decisive publication for the theory on peace, the "Idea" (1784), was published even before the first critical work on moral philosophy the *Ground-work* (1785). Further occurrences of the concept of peace follow in the "conjectures" (1786), in the third part concerning the right of nations of the *Common Saying* (1793), and, following the treatise on peace, in the *Doctrine of Right* (1797, §§53-62 and *Conclusion*) and in the *Conflict of the Faculties* (Section 2).

Prior to the treatise on peace, perpetual peace is mentioned as a general goal in the *Proclamation . . . of a Treatise on Perpetual Peace in Philosophy* (1787). It is also pursued by theoretical philosophy in its attempt to overcome those endless controversies among theories on the battlefield of metaphysics familiar from the *Critique* (A viii). In addition, there are two texts that may come as a surprise to those well versed in Kant. The legal order responsible for establishing Peace, a "cosmopolitan whole, i.e., a system of all states," is also discussed in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) under the heading "On the Ultimate End of Nature as a Theological System" (§83). And the treatise on religion (1793) mentions in the first section a state of "perpetual peace based on a federation of nations united in a world republic" (VI 34). Whereas other modern philosophers are conspicuously silent about peace, it is a fundamental theme not only of Kant's political thought but of his entire philosophy.

As can be expected of Kant, his thoughts in the treatise on peace are not only finely nuanced in their concepts and well argued. They are also embedded in the context of historical experience and even inspired by previous debates on Peace. Kant's knowledge of social thought and the history of ideas does not cause him to sidetrack to other topics' He instead proceeds apace to the systematic crux of the matter.
The title of the treatise lends to the impression that it concerns a philosophically marginal topic, since peace was not a fundamental concept of philosophy prior to Kant. This is a surprising state of affairs, since from the beginning of time humankind has expressed the wish that men would tire of war and beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2, 4). Unquestionable Kant's concern for both comprehensive and abiding peace is an existential task of moral significance. But peace in philosophical debates has had to eke out the existence of a wallflower; it is seldom considered, let alone treated in a way commensurate with its importance. Reputable philosophers have produced ample literature on Peace in Western thought. But among the classical texts of philosophy, there are none that bear the term "peace" in their titles.

Only two reputable thinkers in the occident have accorded more peace than marginal treatment. Around the dawn of Christian theology, Augustine developed the most important theory of peace for centuries to come in Book XIX of De civitate dei. But he places moral-religious issues in the foreground. His focus is on inner peace, especially peace with God, along with cosmic peace. Earthly peace in the sphere of right and law is reduced to an imperfect image. Almost fourteen centuries later, Kant advanced the second pioneering theory of peace from the zenith of Enlightenment philosophy. And he succeeded in uniting the most decisive lines of thought that previously ran parallel to one another: the line of thinking about right and the state inherited from Plato and Aristotle, on the one hand, and Stoic cosmopolitanism, on the other. Kant, however, rejects the mostly apolitical character of the latter. He is familiar with the right of nations as it is discussed in early modernity. Nor is he ignorant of Augustine’s idea of perpetual peace, but he no longer reserves it for the hereafter, and instead construes it as a task in this life, or more precisely as a task of right in accordance with its moral concept. Therein lies Kant's first great innovation: peace becomes a fundamental concept of philosophy no longer of theology, and its central concern is legal and political philosophy.

Kant understands the word "perpetual" to mean a particular quality of this life that makes peace unconditional or unqualified. Kant develops an ideal on the basis of this concept of absolute peace that is of decisive importance to international politics: the ideal of a truly global peaceful order that rests on a global legal order.

Despite the existential significance of peace and Kant's exceptional achievements, it is surprising that peace first attained the status of a fundamental concept only in Kantian philosophy. His legal and political philosophy which is dedicated to peace, was initially discussed intensely over a period of several years. But in German idealism and ever since, it has been pushed to the background.

In the treatise on peace, Kant uses contemporary peace contracts as a methodological guide. Following their pattern, he presents a set of agreements that consists in six preliminary articles, three definitive articles, two supplements, and a two-part appendix. The second edition (1796) even contains a secret article, which plays on the subtle irony of requiring abstinence from all secrecy.
In its entirety, the treatise covers seven extensive and relatively independent issues: (1) Despite his general disparagement of war, Kant makes the effort to propose war reforms, so long as war remains a reality. War should not be "tamed," since it is absolutely illegitimate except as a defensive measure; but engagement in war should not exclude peace as a possible final goal. This idea of changing war for the sake of peace – or of war reform that plays a functional role in securing peace - has hardly any precursors. The six preliminary rules for carrying out this reform, the "preliminary articles," are directed at political protagonists: heads of state, governments, or parliaments. They point out violations of right that, for the purpose of establishing peace, in part must be stopped at once ("strict laws of prohibition"), in part "contain permissions, not to make exceptions to the rule of right, but to postpone putting these laws into effect, without however losing sight of the end" (Peace VIII 347). This "authorization to postponement" signals a theory of moderation and kairos that criticizes a policy of rash decision, but unfortunately no further efforts have been taken to develop a theory of this kind up to the present day.

Apart from the basic requirement of an unqualified peace (1st preliminary article), at least three further rules concerning war reform are still topical today. To begin with, standing armies shall in time be abolished altogether; a principle of disarmament should replace that of an arms race (3rd preliminary article). No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state because foreign states have the right to reform themselves (the prohibition of intervention: 5th preliminary article). Finally, since perpetual peace is possible only under the proviso of reciprocal trust, all hostility is to be prohibited "as would have to make mutual trust impossible during a future peace" (6th preliminary article).

(2) The final rules or "definitive articles" contain the core tenets of Kant's theory of peace: the moral and a priori conditions of peace. Kant does not turn to political protagonists right away, but instead considers "social systems," legal and state orders. He also indirectly refers to those who are responsible for them, namely the constituent assemblies, governments, and the people of the state that authorize them.

Kant sketches a theory of public right that is comprehensive from a legal-moral perspective: (2.1) The first legal-political article discusses the relations between individuals and groups, (2.2) the second article on the right of nations concerns relations among states, and (2.3) the third article on cosmopolitan law explicates the relations between private individuals and groups and foreign states, along with the relations among states that - unlike 2.2 - the states do not owe to one another. The first definitive article thus contains Kant's second major innovation in the ethics of peace. He links the idea of peace to the republic, a political novelty at the time that was first established in the United States and France. However, Kant had already spoken of a republic in the first Critique in relation to Plato: CPR B 372 ff. Kant's reflections on the republic thus were influenced not only by the political developments of his time, but also by a long-standing tradition in political philosophy. The second and third definitive articles together constitute the third innovation, the cosmopolitan view of the republic and of
peace that was foreign to Plato, on the one hand, and to France and the United States, on the other.

Incidentally, Kant had already spoken of "cosmopolitanism" in the "Idea" eleven years prior to the treatise on peace. The theory of public right it sketches, however, has only two parts. It deals with the civil society corresponding to state right (with the obligation to "the greatest freedom" that "can coexist with the freedom of others"; "Idea" VIII 22) and with the federation of peoples belonging to the right of nations (VIII 24-26), but leaves out cosmopolitan right.

The global peaceful community that is required at the intermediate level seeks not only to end one war but to "end all war forever" (Peace VIII 356). Following the model of the domestic securing of peace, a world republic according to its positive idea is requisite (VIII 357), but it would differ from a "universal monarchy" in which all states coalesce into a single state. In his plea for a federation of peoples that always expands as a "negative surrogate" or second-best option, Kant argues that states would otherwise not concede to renouncing their sovereignty.

(3) The termination and culmination of public right in cosmopolitan law does not supplant "national" civil law, but rather supplements it. Kant adheres to a complementary, not exclusive cosmopolitanism. Since this undermines Hegel's criticism in the Elements of the philosophy of Right (§ 209, remark), one might wonder why Hegel, who was younger, did not have a more discriminating position. Even Hegel's direct criticism of Kant's theory of peace (§§ 330-340, esp. § 333) lacks philosophical and political acumen.

Whereas the right of nations is based on the recognition of relations which states owe to one another, cosmopolitan law concerns relations that are not owed, namely, transactions in the wide sense of commercium: voluntary, not exclusively economical exchange. However, cosmopolitan law concerns not the positive relations themselves, but only the small section of relations that actually are owed, since they, like right in general, are linked to an authorization to use force. Kant's cosmopolitan law, namely consists in the authorization to offer engagement in commerce without eliciting hostile treatment. This kind of right – unlike philanthropy - depends on reciprocity. The legitimating basis of right is a theorem in Kant's theory of property. Since "all nations stand originally in a community of land, though not of rightful community of possession (communio)... or of property in it," they each have a prior subjective right: the authorization "of offering to engage in commerce with any other" (§ 62).

Kant is here emphasizing a qualified right of cooperation: The tradesman may offer his goods, just as the researcher may offer his knowledge or even the missionary his religion - but neither partner in the transaction may become violent. As long as the offer is made on foreign territory the person making the offer merely has visiting rights, not the right to hospitality. This is the case regardless of whether individuals, groups, firms, or an entire people or state are at issue, or whether economic, cultural, tourist, or political interests are being pursued. In all cases, one may knock on others' doors, but one does not have a right to enter. As in Bacon's New Atlantis, a community may
combine its generosity toward foreigners with a ban on immigration. Moreover, it may prohibit not only certain types of goods and services, but even trade altogether. Attempts to establish economical autarchy in a "closed commercial state," such as those proposed by Rousseau (Projet de constitution pour la Corse, 1764) and later by Fichte (1800) and Friedrich List (Das national System der politischen Ökonomie, 1840) are just as valid from a legal-moral standpoint as a system of customs and dues that protects the national economy from undesired competition.

Regardless of whether cooperation is successful, both parties should be protected. The murder, enslavement, or theft of newcomers and, conversely, the subjection, exploitation, or enslavement of locals are not permitted. Kant's harsh reckoning of the colonial politics at the time is politically relevant. According to Kant's criteria, virtually all of the colonies established in modernity, ranging from South, Central, and North America to Africa and Australia, are clear examples of injustice, since "they counted the inhabitants as nothing" (Peace VIII 358).

Kant's qualified rights of cooperation consist in more than the merely negative prohibition of unjust colonization, and in positive respects they are more than international private rights, notably, the right to commerce. Since rights of cooperation comprise research, culture, and tourism, they in fact amount to a demand that is particularly topical today in the age of globalization. All people have a modest right to a comprehensive community of cooperation, namely, universal visitor rights, but not the right to hospitality. This does not mean, however, that they must relinquish personal and collective particularities. Kant thus already combines a right to universal cooperation with a right to individual difference.

(4) According to Kant's politico-sociological claim in the first definitive article, primarily two motives promote the establishment of a global peaceful federation: the negative motive of experience with the terror of war, and the positive motive of republicanism. Republics – which approximate constitutional democracies or democratic juridical states [Rechtsstaaten], but not all states with a division of power – avowedly have little inclination to wars of aggression. And according to the principle of imitation, the republican constitution instituted in one state will soon be assimilated by other states. Kant does not trace the inclination to peace among democracies back to the heightened moral sensitivity of their civilians. Exemplary of his clear-headedness, he merely appeals to the capacity of democracies to allow their citizens more opportunity to pursue their self-interests (for criticism on this point, see chapter 10).

(5) The first supplement ("On the Guarantee of Perpetual Peace") supplements the moral theory of peace with a teleological theory of nature. By drawing on ideas from his philosophy of history, notably in the "Idea" and the Critique of Judgment, Kant outlines a social history of mankind that is determined solely by nature, in particular by the discord among human beings, but also by peace as a final end. He here turns to legal and state orders in the sense of social systems and their "naturally necessary" development, on the one hand, and to politicians and theoreticians of politics, on the other hand; for they can no longer excuse their disinterest in a global peace order by presuming that it is unfeasible.
Heraclitus's renowned fragment declares war (in the wider meaning of tension and conflict) to be the mother of all things, that is, of all nature, even of its subhuman Parts (Diels and Kranz, Fragment 22B80).

Kant limits his scope to human beings. He believes that discord is the decisive factor in the general development of culture ("idea," 7, proposition: antagonism; cf. chap. 9). Discord, namely, drives people to settle "even into the most inhospitable regions" (Peace VIII 363), advances culture (cf. CJ §83,V 388ff.), and even serves moral purposes, since it promotes altruism for the sake of the respective community and, in particular, prompts the transition from the state of nature to the rule of law and civil state: War compels people "to enter into more or less lawful relations" (Peace VIII 363).

War here manifests the cunning of (human) nature as a means to the final end of the abolition of war. But even if war is abolished, this does not mean we should fear social entropy, the slow stagnation of global society, for peace does not entail the dissolution of the multiplicity and rivalry between languages and religions or confessions, nor does it diminish commercial competition. The global rule of law and civil state is not solely responsible for global peace. Apart from political theie relations, are also social and, above all, economic relations. But one does not have a right to enter these relations—they instead arise from voluntary action. The impetus for entering them is called the spirit of commerce according to Kant's second, socioeconomic thesis on the development of a global society. And "since the power of money may well be the most reliable of all the powers (means) subordinate to that of a state" (Peace VIII 368), a driving force toward globalization lies in the spirit of commerce or, we may extrapolate, in the benefits afforded by any cooperation whatsoever. The spirit of commerce, however, leads to a world society and not to a federation of peoples, nor to a world republic.

The treatise on peace thus brings together four aspects of the securing of peace in a clear order of precedence: (a) The leading goal consists in the establishment of a federation of peoples or a world republic (see below, chapter 11). (b) The republican or democratic constitution of single states aids the establishment of a federation of peoples.

This principle of democratization (in the sense of a democratic jurisdical state) is accompanied (c) negatively by "all the hardships of war" (Peace VIII 350) and (d) positively by the spirit of commerce, for it "cannot coexist with war" and "sooner or later takes hold of every nation" (VIII 368). The "great artist nature" thus makes use of the natural discord between human beings in order to "let concord arise even against their will" (VIII 360). Human beings come together in single states from assuredly selfish motives, and these states, in turn, first wage war with one another. But then, after time, they learn to live together peacefully due to their interest in commerce and prosperity.

The interplay of all four aspects not only ensures that all war is outlawed without qualification or reservation. Since the spirit of commerce causes an increase in
prosperity, negative peace or the absence of war culminates in a positive peace. Peace of this sort is generally well known from diverse cultures, ranging from Greek *eirêné* to Hebrew *shalom* and, Roman *pax*, up to Germanic *fried*.

a. "Kingly People"

(6) In the second supplement, Kant engages in a theory-praxis discussion in order to underwrite a partial relationship between philosophy and political power. Under the heading "Secret Article for Perpetual Peace," he demands no less than the abolition of all secrecy and instead encourages free and public discussion "about universal maxims of waging war and establishing peace." In view of international political practice, this demand is revolutionary comparable to the Copernican turn effected by the epistemology and theory of objects in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant confronts secret diplomacy, which as a practice was not restricted to his epoch, with the principle of publicity. This principle applies the general demand for publicity, or in the *Critique*, the demand that "everything" must submit to "free and public examination" (A XI, footnote), to national and international right. Every maxim of state right and of the right of nations must be examined as to its inner probity. And every maxim that does not withstand this test because it can be successful only in secrecy is prohibited by legal morals.

(7) The continuation of the theory-praxis discussion in the two-Part appendix on "morals and politics" finally takes up a motif from the introduction: the conflict between philosophers “who dream a sweet dream” and statesmen proud of their worldly wisdom (*Peace* VIII 343). To the extent that Kant settles this conflict, he also bridges the gap between philosophy and politics.

The establishment of peace on this front is already discussed in the second supplement, where Kant responds to Plato's principle of the philosopher-king, according to which either philosophers must become kings or the so-called kings presently in power ought to engage in sincere and thorough study of philosophy, for otherwise there can be no end to the devastation of states. The core of Kant's response to Plato consists in a distinction. It corroborates both Plato's intention of promoting reason to its realization and his assumption of the compatibility between (moral) theory and (real) praxis (cf. Kant's *Common Saying* and *Conflict*). But it also separates the project of defining moral principles from their real application and entrusts philosophy only with the former task. In this way, Kant applies the division of labor that he espouses in general (cf. GMM IV 388f. and "Idea" VIII 21f.) to the political sphere. Political activity does not fall under the competence of philosophers, but its principles do; practical concretization and execution, in turn, are incumbent on the rulers.

By virtue of their moral character, the philosophical elements absolutely precede all other factors. As theoretical principles of peace, however, they do not provide instructions for political realization but rather depend on that power of judgment that is allegedly missing in Kant but here again is shown to be present (see chapter 3). Moral-political prudence is needed that passes judgment "as favorable circumstances arise" (*Peace* VIII 378) but that "takes the principles of political prudence in such a way that
they can coexist with morals” (372). Kant illustrates this by the moral politician (VIII 372 and 377) and opposes him sharply to the political moralist, “who frames a morals to suit the statesman’s advantage” (372). Kant calls “morals” that in this way have been subjected to self-interest the "twistings and turnings of an immoral doctrine of prudence" (375).

The fact that, for Kant, philosophers have a capacity to give counsel (VIII 368f.; cf. Conflict, I. Section.4: VII 35), recalls the well-advisedness [eubolia] of Platonic philosopher-kings (Republic IV 428b). But unlike in Plato, their capacity to advise extends not to the entire domain of political rule but to a small, albeit fundamental sector. And therein lies Kant's first, epistemological [wissenstheoretisch] argument for the division of labor between philosophy and politics: They must be divided because the cognitive competence of philosophers does not extend to concrete politics. Philosophy does not grasp the conditions of reality or train the experience and judgment belonging to this competence, but it does discriminate what is feasible or effective. For this, Kant does not recommend employing philosophers as political advisers. But he recommends close attention to the “maxims of philosophers about the conditions under which public peace is possible” (Peace VIII 368). As legal-moral principles of human coexistence, these maxims correspond to the principles of political justice. Thus, Kant's version of the principle of philosopher-kings is tantamount to the commitment of politics to elementary principles of justice.

According to Plato, recognition of the good is inherent in knowledge of the idea of the good (Republic X 618c-d); such recognition is actionguiding and all action is guided by recognizing a good. Kant’s second argument, which plays on corruptibility, takes aim at this assumed unison between the principium diudicationis and the principium executionis. Even if philosophers had unlimited competence in giving counsel, they should still be denied political rule, since otherwise their actual competence in the free judgment of reason would be corrupted.

Plato would repudiate this objection with the argument that “his” philosophers' reason is impervious to corruption, since it is what rules the soul (Republic VI 484aff.). Platonic philosophers have the distinctive feature of relating to themselves practically in such a way that they are invariably directed toward the good and just. They do not serve particular interests, nor are they constrained by them, and they defy all fame and power (cf. Republic I 347d. VI 499b-c, VII 521b, VIII 539e). Kant would reply that an absolutely assured rule of reason or complete eradication, instead of mere subduing, of power is conceivable but not realizable for finite rational beings such as human beings. He is here evidently indebted to Rousseau, who, in the Social Contract (chap. II, 7), speaks of a higher reason that perceives all passions of human beings and itself has none. Reason of this kind is reserved for the gods.

Kant's argument in response to plato is thus ultimately anthropological in nature and extends the anthropological component of moral philosophy, which Kant does nor subsume under (empirical) antropology (see section 5.2): Good rulers in a strict sense, that is, incorruptible rulers, do not exist, even if they are in Plato’s sense free from the immense dangers of corruption, such as personal property and the predilection for
supporting the well-being of one's own family over general well-being. Even in communities of women or children or in cooperatives, man is still made "from such warped wood" ("Idea" VIII 23; *Religion* VI 100) that he "will always misuse his freedom if he does, not have anyone above him" ("Idea," ibid.). By the same token, if the philosopher is granted power, he will be in danger of losing his intellectual independence. Plato, too, cautions against corruption through power (Republic VI 491 b-e) except in the case of the rule of philosophers. His ideal notion of the philosopher explains why he does not place any restrictions on their rule. Only in the Laws does he acknowledge that the rule of laws is a necessity due to the corruptibility of all human beings (IX 874e-875d; cf. III 631 cff., IV 713c-714a).

Kant parts with Plato on a further point. Whereas only few people are suitable for philosophical activity according to Plato's *Republic*, "universal... human reason" is sufficient for philosophical reflection in Kant's view (Peace VIII 369). A democracy of reason thus replaces Plato's aristocracy of spirit (acquired from schooling in mathematics and dialectics). Common human reason surely cannot manage without schooling. But this does not entail intellectual aristocracy for Kant; philosophers do not possess any special capacities or insights and thus have no special rights. Deprived of office and privileged insight, philosophers are no more than the champions of "universal reason itself, in which everyone has a voice" (CPR, "Doctrine of Method," Chap. I, Sec. II: B 780). The treatise on peace also attaches importance to "universal... human reason" (VIII 369). To ensure that everyone is heard, universal freedom of speech is mandated in the second supplement of *Perpetual Peace*. Whereas Plato attaches importance to philosophical friends - the supreme, unwritten doctrine is accessible only to a closed circle of the initiated - Kant adheres to the principle of publicity and even grants it a transcendental status (Peace VIII 381).

People who submit themselves to the reform and heed to the principles of legal morals are awarded an honorific title that most perfectly expresses the democratization of the principle of philosopher-kings. Kant calls them "kingly people" (Peace VIII 369), because they submit their coexistence to right and right to morals. Accordingly, the *Doctrine of Virtue* asserts that a person of true, intelligible virtue is not only "free," "healthy" and "rich," but also "a king" (VI 405). For Kant, kings are truly moral persons, which may be either natural persons ("human beings") or collective persons ("people").

In the treatise on peace, the people take the place of Plato's philosopher-kings - outstanding individuals are replaced by the entirety of those who are both affected by and responsible for the affairs of the state. Undoubtedly, a people may be conferred the honorary title of a "kingly people" only if it submits itself to the requirements of legal morals. Kant does not justify any democracy whatsoever, but a democracy committed to legal morals, which only by fulfilling this condition is a "kingly democracy." If it is to be legitimate, it must rule itself according to "laws of equality" (Peace VIII 369) and ensure that "no one can rightfully bind another to something without also being subject to a law by which he in turn can be bound in the same way by the other" (first definitive article, VIII 350).
A people is kingly if every citizen is equally a king, but not in the sense of absolutist rulers unbound by laws. The citizen also does not need to be a truly moral person. It suffices that, as a legislator (directly or mediated by representatives), he does his utmost to support laws that do not conflict with legal morals and, as a "subject," to obey these laws. These conditions are commands of legal morals. Thus, "kingly people" are primarily distinguished not by their uncommonly advanced education, as Plato's kings with respect to mathematics and dialectics, but by their justice, which Plato also considers ultimately decisive (although he defines justice differently).

Kant devised his fourth innovation, the democratic interpretation of the principle of philosopher-kings, long before the treatise of peace. Already in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the very passage in which he rehabilitates Plato's concept of the idea, Kant transforms the personal requirement "that a prince will never govern well unless, he participates in the ideas" into a criterion divested of all personal morals: A “constitution providing for the greatest human freedom according to laws that permit the freedom of each to exist together with that of others”, is a "necessary idea, which one must make the ground... of all the laws" (CPR B 373). Thus, already in the *Critique*, the just king is replaced by the just constitution of a people, now taken to be kingly.

3. Kingly Humanity

Since the human craving for peace is as old as humanity itself, it is not surprising that Kant's treatise on peace enjoys remarkable and in fact reputed precursors. What makes Kant exceptional is not the occurrence of the idea of Peace in his writings, but its distinct profile. This includes Kant's innovations with respect to previous proposals of peace plans, which are partly mentioned above: Kant does not pursue any political interests. Further, he develops a purely philosophical argument; he is just as remote from Erasmus's and Franck's appear to the New Testament as from Augustine's relegation of peace to the hereafter. Kant does not anywhere conceal religious motives; in the treatise on religion, the idea of peace is explicitly described as "philosophical" and opposed to a “theological” chiliasm (VI 34). Further, Kant refrains from all political zealotry and acknowledges conflict as a fundamental element of the political sphere. Peace does not rule where vain love and friendship hold sway, in an eternal never-never land of freedom from conflict, but where conflicts are treated according to legal-moral principles. This is bound to a clear restriction. The peace Kant discusses is, as a mere protection of life and freedom, a legal task.

Kant removes other restrictions with ease. What humanity until now had known of peace was like a small isle in the great ocean of violence and war: Peace was both temporally and spatially limited. Wherever there was domestic peace or even fortress peace, national peace was lacking; and whenever national peace reigned, there was no peace transgressing national borders; and even from an international perspective, “ecumenical” peace across all countries and cultures was inconceivable.
Kant rejects all of these restrictions and instead vindicates a moral universalism of right and peace, that is, a global, both temporally and spatially universal peace. It is no coincidence that Kant's treatise is the most renowned plan for peace. Its four innovations and, in particular, the connection between the republic as a political innovation at the time and a truly global perspective, give rise to a plan of great political courage. If humanity would recognize it by establishing a legal order according to moral principles not only within states, but also between them, then it would, as a whole, attain the status of kingliness.

Kant's treatise on peace contributes not only to political thought. It also contains a social utopia, or rather a (realistic) vision that is still compelling today for two reasons. First, it awakens latent utopian energy and overcomes that resigned loss of hope and vision that robs life of all magnificence and impoverishes the world. The experience that "human beings in general, or heads of state in particular,. .. can never get enough of war" (Peace VIII 343) is confronted by morally legislating reason, which "delivers an absolute condemnation of war as a procedure for determining rights" (VIII 356).

The treatise is also compelling because it allays the fears that "the idea of a perpetual peace cannot be realistic" Kant no doubt perceives this danger, and thus mentions "philosophers, who dream that sweet dream" (Peace VIII 343) and the possibility that the goal is "merely chimerical" or a delusion (VIII 368). In the treatise on peace he does not succumb to illusions of wishful thinking with respect to the good of human beings or the sagacity of their sovereigns. Instead, he expressly demonstrates that perpetual peace is not "an empty thought" (VIII 372) and "no empty idea" (VIII 386). Even those who find Kant's proof dubious cannot deny that the chances for realizing peace considerably increase under Kantian conditions.

A first condition amenable to realization rests on giving up the notion of a comprehensive utopia. In contrast with Augustine or with the first stage in the development of the Platonic polis (Republic II 369b-3 72c), Kant does not defend a comprehensive ideal of peace. In Plato's elementary polis, human beings live in peace not only with other human beings, but also with the gods, or even with nature. Kant does not consider most of these dimensions of peace. Whereas Plato binds social peace to inner or personal peace, Kant places peace in the domain of right, where reference to personal attitudes is immaterial. The following dimensions are left out of Kant's conception of peace: (1) the peace of man with himself, that is, inner or personal peace (2) its extension or deepening in religious peace in or with god, and further (3) peace in and with nature, ecological peace, and (4) that cosmic peace that has been so important since Augustine, in which all things attain a proper locus within a hierarchically constructed world order (De civitate Dei XIX 12f.). (5) only social peace remains to be considered.

Even this dimension is understood in a moderate way. In German, the expression "Friede' (peace) is related to "free" [frei],” to wed or woo" [freien] and "friend" [Freund]. A derivative of the Indo-Germanic root prî –to love or to care for- it “originally refers to a state of love and care, with greater emphasis placed on the aspect
of mutual help and support than on emotional attachment and affection". The meaning of *Friede* later was narrowed down to (6) a negative social peace and signified only the (usually temporally restricted and spatially limited) deterrence of violence. Kant’s (7) political and more precisely legal concept of peace leaves aside the first four dimensions and denotes something in between the comprehensive social concept and an extreme contraction of it: On the one hand, violence is deterred without any temporal restrictions or territorial limitation, while on the other hand, a moment of active help is added, but it is restricted to the single task of safeguarding right. In all three definitive articles in the treatise on peace, a negative concept of peace predominates: legal security.

The second aspect that is amenable to the realization of peace lies in the very concept of right: As mentioned above, Kant renounces the idyllic vision of the cessation of all conflict. The decisive anthropological fact of "unsocial sociability" is confirmed in the first supplement. Although passions such as "the desire for honor, power or property" are "far from admirable in themselves," they resist the human “tendency to laziness” and induce him to take the first steps “from barbarism to culture" ("Idea," Fourth Proposition). Kant thus does not only allow for conflicts but even welcomes them; but he condemns force as a means of resolving conflicts.

As a further aspect amenable to realization, the first supplement introduces the "great artist nature," which makes use of the natural discord between human beings in order to let “concord arise... even against their will" (*Peace* VIII 360): Human beings unite from assuredly selfish motives in single states that at first wage war, against one another, but after time, particularly due to interests in commerce, they learn to live in peace.

The fourth aspect amenable to realization is meant to contrast former with utopian visions such as Thomas More's *Utopia* and the vast array of political novels that emulate this model in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because they give free reign to social and political imagination, they are rightly called "voyages imaginable," or fictional voyages. Kant strongly opposes them by explicitly maintaining that the "sweet dream" is the dream of "philosophers," thus is, precisely those whose métier requires them to employ concepts and argumentation. In Kant, reason rather than the imagination travels far. It elevates perpetual peace to the status of an "immediate" legal moral duty (*Peace* VIII 356, I. 4; cf. 362, I. 9; 364/9; 378,II. 19-22). Apart from wars of self-defense (345) , "war" is absolutely condemned “as a procedure for determining rights" (356). This categorical imperative of peace establishes peace that is in a moral respect *eo ipso* perpetual. The motto adhered to by most states stems from the Roman military theorist Vegetius (A.D. fourth century): "If you want peace, prepare for war" [*si vis pacem, para bellum*]. Kant substantially counters this with the principle: , If you want peace, prepare for -political- justice [*si vis pacem, para iustitiam*]. In his own words: "[S]eek ye first the kingdom of pure practical reason and its justice, and your end (the blessing of perpetual peace) will come ro you of itself" (*Peace* VIII 378).
Joaquín Abellán (*)

Kommentar zum Vortrag von
Prof. Dr. Dr. Otfried Höffe
«Toward Perpetual Peace. Kant’s Political Philosophy»

(*) Professor für Politikwissenschaft. Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Vielen Dank, Herr Professor Höffe, für ihren anregenden Vortrag, der so präzise und klar wie alle ihre ausgeprochen interessanten Publikationen zu Kant war.

Es ist mir ein große Ehre und Freude ihre Ausführungen an dieser Stelle kommentieren zu dürfen. Dabei möchte ich mich auf einen von den vielen Aspekten beschränken, die Sie angesprochen haben.


Mein Kommentar bezieht sich nun auf einen Teilaspekt des zweiten Punktes, nämlich: auf die Frage nach dem Zusammenhang zwischen einem dauerhaften Frieden einerseits und der Errichtung einer republikanischen Staatsverfassung anderseits. Ich würde an diesem Punkt gerne ein paar Bemerkungen zu der von Ihnen angeführten Identifikation zwischen Republik und Demokratie machen. Und zwar geht es mir dabei um die doch recht deutliche Unterscheidung, die Kant zwischen der Staats-Form auf der einen Seite und Regierungs-Form auf der anderen Seite herstellt. Mit Hilfe dieser Differenzierung konnte Kant die Republik von einer konkreten Form des Staates lösen und zugleich die tatsächlich erheblichen Unterschiede zwischen der Demokratie und der Republik verdeutlichen bzw. die großen Schwierigkeiten bei Übergang von der Einen in die Andere thematisieren.

Wenn man diese Unterscheidung zwischen Demokratie und Republik aus den Augen verliert, läuft man Gefahr, den Sinn und Zweck dessen verflüchtigen, was Kant unter dem Begriff des »Republikanismus« als Transformation des Staates in einen Rechtsstaat versteht.

Kant führt nämlich im dritten Abschnitt des ersten Artikels seiner Studie Zum ewigen Frieden ein neues Kriterium zur Klassifizierung der Staaten ein, dass sich auf die Regierungs-Form bezieht. Dieses Kriterium erlaubt eine Unterscheidung zwischen »Despotismus« und »Republikanismus«. Bekanntermaßen handelt es sich beim »Despotismus« um jene Regierungsform, die den partikularen Willen der (oder des)
Regierenden an die Stelle des öffentlichen Willen setzt. Unter »Republikanismus« hingegen versteht man mit Kant diejenige Regierungsform, die durch Gewaltenteilung sowie die Anerkennung der Freiheit und Gleichheit der Staatsbürger charakterisiert ist (AA VIII: 352, AA XXIII: 166). Dieses Kriterium erschien Kant übrigens wesentlich wichtiger als die quantitative Unterteilung der Staatsformen nach der Anzahl der Machtbeteiligung, d.h. also Autokratie, Aristokratie oder Demokratie. Die Art und Weise des Regierens erschien Kant also das wichtigstes Interesse des Volkes zu sein (AA VIII: 353).


Kant versteht die Demokratie als Despotismus, „weil sie eine exekutive Gewalt gründet, da alle über und allenfalls auch wider Einen (der also nicht mit einstimmt), mitin Alle, die doch nicht Alle sind, beschliessen; welches ein Widerspruch des allgemeinen Willens mit sich selbst und mit der Freiheit ist“ (AA VIII: 352). Genau betrachtet, besteht der Despotismus der Demokratie also in der fehlenden Trennung der legislativen und der exekutiven Gewalt soweit der Gesetzgeber zugleich ausführender Wille ist. Diese Vermischung zwischen Legislative und Exekutive verhindert die politische Repräsentation, welche wiederum für Kant der eigentliche Sinn und Zweck aller Regierungsformen ist (AA VIII: 352). In der Demokratie fehlt eben die politische Repräsentation, „weil Alles da Herr sein will“ (AA VIII: 353). Kant schreibt auch in der Metaphysik der Sitten, dass die Abwesenheit eines repräsentativen Systems gleichbedeutend ist mit Despotismus (AA VI: 341).

Im Gegensatz zur Demokratie, ist die Republik eine durch Gewalten-Teilung geprägte politische Verfassung, in der die Gesetzgebung durch ein repräsentatives System geschützt ist und allein das Gesetz herrscht. Aus philosophiegeschichtlicher Sicht ist die Republik außerdem das Ziel eines jeden Staates, d.h. also der »Republikanismus« darüberhinaus der Antrieb, der auf dieses Ziel zusteuert. »Republikanismus« hat als entgegengesetzte Regierungsform zum Despotismus also die Funktion, alle traditionellen Staatsformen schrittweise in Republiken zu verwandeln. Jede dieser Staatsformen besitzt bei diesem Transformationsprozess unterschiedliche Schwierigkeiten. Monarchien und Aristokratien stehen vor der Wahl, despotisch zu
regieren oder einen republikanischen Geist anzunehmen und mit Hilfe von Reformen zu einer republikanischen Verfassung fortzuschreiten - wie etwa im Fall von Friedrich dem Großen, der sich als absoluter Herrscher dennoch aber als ersten Diener des Staates verstand. Aus der Sicht Kants ist den Demokratien hingegen dieser republikanische Wandel, d.h. die Transformation zu einer republikanischen Verfassung nicht möglich außer durch gewaltsame Revolution (AA VIII: 353).

Wenn nun die republikanische Verfassung allein im Rahmen einer Demokratie realisierbar wäre, dann hätte dies für die Friedensthematik zur Folge, dass eine demokratische Revolution notwendig wäre - zur Zeit Kants waren schließlich die Mehrzahl der europäischen Staaten Monarchien. Die Republik hingegen war für Kant in erster Linie eine Regierungs-Form, die im Schutz der Freiheit und Gleichheit der Bürger bestand und losgelöst war von der Staatsform. Der »Geist des Republikanismus« wurde damit zu einer Forderung gegenüber den Monarchien und Aristokratien auch und gerade weil er sich im Rahmen der Demokratie eben nicht realisieren ließ.


Ich danke Ihnen für die Aufmerksamkeit!
Comentario a la conferencia
“Toward Perpetual Peace. Kant’s Political Philosophy”
del Prof. Dr. Dr. Otfried Höffe

Joaquín Abellán (*)

(*) Catedrático de Ciencia Política. Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Muchas gracias, Profesor Höffe, por su conferencia, tan ilustrada y clara como sus otras publicaciones sobre Kant, que han sido siempre para mí del máximo interés. Es para mí, por ello, un gran honor poder hacer un breve comentario sobre su intervención, que voy a limitar a un solo aspecto entre tantos que Usted ha tratado.

Usted ha organizado su exposición en torno a los siete temas centrales de la Paz Perpetua y, a lo largo de su exposición, ha destacado simultáneamente cuatro innovaciones en el tratamiento que Kant hace de la paz. Ha destacado, como primera innovación, que el concepto kantiano de paz no tiene un trasfondo teológico sino que es un concepto de la filosofía (de la filosofía política y del derecho). Como segunda innovación ha señalado usted la vinculación que Kant establece entre la paz y el establecimiento de una constitución republicana. Como tercera innovación ha destacado la creación de una federación entre los Estados como un elemento necesario en el camino del logro de la paz y el desarrollo asimismo de un derecho cosmopolita que regule la relación de los individuos con los Estados de los que no son ciudadanos, y como cuarta innovación, dentro del amplio tema de la relación entre teoría y práctica (entre filosofía y política, y entre política y moral), ha destacado Usted las importantes diferencias entre Platón y Kant a este respecto.

Mi comentario se limita a un aspecto de la segunda innovación, es decir, la relativa a la vinculación entre la paz perpetua y el establecimiento de una constitución republicana en los Estados. Y se centra en la identificación que me parece ha hecho Usted entre constitución republicana y constitución democrática (pág. 7 del paper), sin mencionar en este punto, por cierto, otra innovación de Kant, consistente en establecer una diferenciación clara entre forma de Estado y forma de gobierno; importante diferenciación que le permite a Kant, por un lado, no identificar la república con ninguna forma de Estado concreta, pero que le lleva, por otro lado, sin embargo, a destacar las enormes diferencias existentes entre democracia y república y la consiguiente dificultad para que una democracia se transforme en una república.

La no diferenciación entre república y democracia no permite tampoco destacar el papel que Kant asigna al “republicanismo” como el espíritu que impulsa la transformación de los Estados existentes en Estados de derecho.

Es en la tercera parte del primer artículo definitivo de Zum ewigen Frieden donde Kant introduce un nuevo criterio para la clasificación de los Estados, un nuevo criterio basado en el modo de gobernar. Y según este nuevo criterio Kant distingue dos formas antitéticas de gobierno: el “despotismo” y el “republicanismo”. Como es sabido, el modo despótico de gobierno se caracteriza por la utilización de la voluntad pública como si fuera la voluntad particular del gobernante, mientras que el modo de gobierno republicano opera con la separación de poderes y con el reconocimiento de los principios de libertad e igualdad de los ciudadanos (AA VIII: 352, AA XXIII: 166). Este nuevo criterio le parece a Kant, dicho sea de paso, mucho más importante que clasificar las formas de Estado por el número de personas que ostenten el poder – autocracia, aristocracia, democracia–. El cómo se gobierna es, según él, lo que más le interesa al pueblo (AA VIII: 353).
Hay que señalar inmediatamente que estos dos modos de gobierno no se corresponden con una forma específica de Estado, y que el motivo que Kant aduce para introducir este nuevo criterio clasificatorio es precisamente porque quiere evitar que se confunda la constitución republicana con la democracia. Con este nuevo criterio de clasificación la democracia se presenta, mas bien, como despotismo, y para Kant será la democracia precisamente la forma de Estado a la que le resultará imposible su transformación en una constitución republicana, con lo que Kant rechaza de plano la identificación habitual entre constitución republicana y democracia. Es cierto que la identificación de ambas parecería que podría tener cierta lógica, pues si Kant fundamenta la constitución republicana en el “contrato originario” –como idea de la razón–, y si la libertad e igualdad de todos antes las leyes comunes están referidas a la voluntad general, a la que está atribuida la soberanía para hacer leyes, no parecería desencaminado, por tanto, que la constitución republicana implicara una forma democrática de Estado. Sin embargo, Kant establece una clara distinción entre constitución republicana y constitución democrática.

Kant considera la democracia como un despotismo “porque crea un poder ejecutivo en el que todos deciden sobre alguien y, en su caso, contra alguien (es decir, contra quien no esté de acuerdo con los demás), con lo que deciden todos, que no son realmente todos. Esto es una contradicción de la voluntad general consigo misma y con la libertad” (AA VIII: 352). El despotismo de la democracia, por tanto, consiste básicamente en la inexistencia de una separación de poderes entre el legislativo y el ejecutivo, porque en ella el legislador es al mismo tiempo el ejecutor de su voluntad. Esta confusión entre legislativo y ejecutivo impide la representación política y, para Kant, un modo de gobierno que no sea representativo no es propiamente una forma de gobierno (AA VIII: 352). Y en la democracia precisamente no se da un sistema representativo porque “es todo el conjunto el que quiere ser el gobernante (Herr)” (AA VIII: 353). También escribe en La Metafísica de las costumbres que la ausencia de sistema representativo equivale a despotismo: “toda república verdadera es y no puede ser más que un sistema representativo del pueblo para, formado por todos los ciudadanos y por medio de sus diputados, atender en nombre del pueblo a sus derechos. Pero así como el Jefe del Estado puede ser representado en cuanto a la persona (puede ser un rey, la nobleza o todo el pueblo entero), el pueblo unido no sólo representa al soberano, sino que el mismo es el soberano; pues en el pueblo se encuentra originariamente el poder supremo, del que hay que derivar todos los derechos de los individuos, como meros súbditos, y entonces la República ya establecida no tiene necesidad de soltar las riendas del gobierno y devolvérselas de nuevo a quienes la habían llevado anteriormente y que podrían de nuevo destruir todas las disposiciones nuevas con absoluta arbitrariedad” (AA VI: 341).

Frente a la democracia, la República es la constitución política con división de poderes, en la que la legislación está garantizada por un sistema representativo y donde gobierna la ley. Y, desde el punto de vista de la filosofía de la historia, la república es la meta hacia la que deben caminar los Estados, siendo entonces el republicanismo el principio motor que empuja hacia ella. El republicanismo –el modo de gobierno opuesto al despotismo– tiene la función de transformar progresivamente las formas tradicionales
de Estado en repúblicas. Pero cada una de ellas presenta dificultades de distinta gravedad para esa transformación. Las monarquías y la aristocracias tienen la posibilidad de gobernar despóticamente o de adoptar el espíritu republicano y avanzar mediante reformas hacia la constitución republicana, como había hecho Federico el Grande en Prusia, el cual, aun siendo un monarca absoluto, se entendía a sí mismo como el primer servidor del Estado. A la democracia, en cambio, le resulta imposible la adopción del republicanismo y su transformación en una constitución republicana, a no ser que lo hiciera mediante una revolución violenta (AA VIII: 353).

Si la constitución republicana sólo fuera factible con una constitución democrática, esto significaría que los efectos de tal constitución para la paz sólo se podrían lograr tras una revolución democrática, pues la mayoría de los Estados europeos de la época eran monarquías. Pero al entender Kant la constitución republicana ante todo como una forma de gobernar –consistente en respetar la libertad e igualdad de los ciudadanos–, la adopción del republicanismo no lo hace depender de la forma de Estado. De esta manera Kant abre la exigencia del republicanismo a las monarquías y a los sistemas aristocráticos, pues a las democracias, como acabamos de recordar, les resulta imposible incorporar el espíritu republicano. Para Kant, por tanto, no hay una sola forma de Estado legítima que se corresponda con el republicanismo. El espíritu del “contrato originario” puede ser efectivo con cualquiera forma de Estado, con la matización anterior respecto a la democracia, o puede igualmente ser burlado. Pero la obligación racional de establecer el “republicanismo” se extiende entonces a todos los gobernantes del mundo, exigiendo un ejercicio del poder que se someta a los principios de la libertad y la igualdad jurídicas.

Gracias por su atención.