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# Kant's Ideal of the University as a Model for World Peace

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## 1. Conflict and Peace in Kant's Critical Philosophy

*Conflict* is such a crucial concept in Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy that its role can hardly be overstated. Without conflict, the human mind could not function. Knowledge would be impossible if sensibility and understanding did not stand in stark opposition to each other, "preaching different gospels," as it were. Reason itself does not free us from conflict but only raises the stakes: in our attempts to think about objects that go beyond the bounds of sensibility, we find ourselves giving two opposite yet equally reasonable answers to the most meaningful questions human beings can ask themselves. Does God exist? Am I free? Will I somehow continue to exist after my body dies? But the conflict does not stop there: our faculty of cognition (the source of our ability to know) opposes our faculty of desire (the source of our ability to act intentionally) in such a fundamental way that once again different perspectives arise. Questions that seem unanswerable by reason through theoretical cognition claim clear and distinct answers for themselves when raised by practical reason. Yet even practical reason has its inner conflicts, for it tells us we are radically free, yet it asks us to confine the range of our choices to the narrow realm of self-legislated moral law. The list of fundamental conflicts in Kant's philosophy could go on and on.

What is striking about each instance of conflict in Kant's philosophy is that its purpose is to *create peace*, not by destroying the opposition, but by recognizing and preserving its integrity, then working with the opposition to create a new reality. Sensibility and understanding form a partnership that alone makes *judgment* possible. Without intuitions, concepts would be empty; and without concepts, intuitions would be blind. Even speculative reason with its eternally irresolvable conflicts can be used, Kant tells us, as a "weapon of war"<sup>1</sup>—*not* as an offensive weapon that can eliminate the opposition, but only as a defensive weapon that can protect us against an

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enemy who does not understand the wisdom of preserving creative opposition (and who therefore wants to obliterate us, or our perspective). Theoretical and practical reason win a kind of peace in the third *Critique*, through the recognition that reflective judgments of beauty, sublimity, and natural purposiveness arise like a flower growing out of the turbulent ground of theory, when it allows itself to be tilled and fertilized by the noumenal insights of practice.

In Kant's *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, the peaceful purpose of all critical conflict becomes fully apparent as a struggle between the radical evil that infects our nature and the potential goodness for whose perfection we were made. Note that the peace Kant envisions in that oft-misunderstood book is also *not* the mono-perspectival peace of what might be called "realized perfection". Through our own agency, we can never fully *become* what we believe God wants us to be; we can never entirely overcome the evil within us; but in the struggle, in learning to live with the enduring conflict and to hope for divine assistance, we find true and lasting peace on the moral or spiritual side of our nature.

Near the end of his life, having established the context of a philosophical system that shows over and over how lasting peace is achieved only through the acceptance of creative conflict in a context of mutual respect, Kant wrote two works that carried this lifelong conviction of his into new and culturally significant areas of application: *Perpetual Peace* (1795) applied this reasoning to the relation between state governments; and *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798) applied it to the structure of a university's "faculties". As far as I know, the complementary nature of the theme and message of these two books has never been fully acknowledged. Yet the message of each can be heightened and deepened by seeing its relation to the message of the other. The purpose of this essay is to explore that relation by examining how Kant portrayed the ideal university not only as a model, but as a key player in establishing the very world peace that he elsewhere hoped—some would say naively—the whole world could enjoy.

## **2. Public Philosophical Conflict as the Transcendental Condition for Perpetual Peace**

In what may be his single most widely read writing, *Perpetual Peace*, Kant proposes a detailed set of guidelines for transforming the natural tendency of nations to engage in hostilities and war into a world where all clashes between civilizations are resolved peacefully. Introducing the concept of *international law* as enforced by a free "federation of states," he lays out a framework of principles for cooperation between nations of vastly different cultures. His plan was a major inspiration behind the United Nations as it now stands, though the current body only partially implements

the policies Kant recommends. The book consists of two main sections, followed by two "Supplements" and two Appendices. Let us look briefly at the proposals Kant raises in each of these six parts.

After starting his book with a bit of ironic humor, about "perpetual peace" being achievable only in the grave, Kant advances in Section I six "preliminary" requirements for achieving peaceful resolution of clashes between different cultures or nations:<sup>2</sup> (1) the only valid peace treaties shall be those that do not provide a justification for some future war; (2) nations must not be treated as objects that can be bought, inherited, exchanged, or otherwise manipulated by larger nations; (3) armies must gradually be abolished; (4) a nation must not use credit to pay for any military conflict; (5) no nation shall use force to interfere with the internal governance of another nation; and (6) if or when a war is unavoidable, no nation shall engage in dishonorable strategies in carrying out their hostile acts. While the United Nations has made significant progress in establishing international laws that put some of these requirements in place, such as (1), (5), and especially (6), the other three are sometimes grossly violated by member states even to this day.

Section II of *Perpetual Peace* is devoted to an explanation of the three "definitive articles" that would need to hold in order for any union between nations to be able to establish and sustain a peaceful world. First, "The Civil Constitution of Every State Should Be Republican."<sup>3</sup> The three characteristics common to any republican constitution are the freedom of the citizens, the dependence of everyone on "a single common legislation", and the equality of all citizens before the law.<sup>4</sup> Kant goes on to clarify that "republican" here refers to "the way in which the state makes use of its power," not to the actual form of the state itself.<sup>5</sup> The latter can be either autocratic, aristocratic, or democratic, depending on whether one person, a small class of people, or all the people *possess* the power. A republican constitution is one that guarantees the *mode of administration* will be based on a "separation of the executive power (the administration) from the legislative;" any government that allows the ones who make the laws also to administer them is *necessarily* despotic, even if the despotism is hidden under the cloak of a popular, democratic vote.<sup>6</sup> And the only way this can happen is through a system of representation. Kant argues that such a system will discourage wars because in a republican state, the people must give their explicit consent before the state can go to war, and they will be unlikely to do so, since they are the ones who must pay the cost, both materially and with their lives.<sup>7</sup>

The second article requires that "The Law of Nations Shall be Founded



on a Federation of Free States.”<sup>8</sup> Here Kant compares the relations between different states in his day to the condition of uncivilized “savages”, who prefer to live in “lawless freedom” rather than to submit themselves to constraints in deference to their fellow human beings, so that everyone may live in a condition of “rational freedom.”<sup>9</sup> In the same way, sovereign states paradoxically foster a condition of rational freedom for the citizens within their boundaries, yet tend to treat *other* states in barbaric ways. The problem is that, whereas citizens who disagree can appeal to a tribunal, such as the court system, to assist them in resolving their differences in a civilized way, *states* cannot appeal to any such tribunal. The federation of states Kant has in mind would give all the member states precisely such an avenue of appeal. Since “reason, from its throne of supreme moral legislating authority, absolutely condemns war,” this federation will function as “a league of peace.”<sup>10</sup> At first, such a federation is likely to be quite small, and the “international law” it creates for itself will bind only the member states; but when its benefits are seen by other states, it will gradually increase until it includes all the world’s governments. For most fundamental among the principles of international law must be that the federation’s purpose *cannot* be that of establishing “a law of nations as a right to make war”.<sup>11</sup>

The third and final article is “The Law of Universal Citizenship Shall Be Limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality.”<sup>12</sup> Here Kant briefly points out that, as world travel and communication between states grows, so that “a violation of rights in one place is felt throughout the world, the idea of a law of world citizenship is no high-flown or exaggerated notion.”<sup>13</sup> To protect the citizens of all states from such a threat, a basic principle of all international law must be “a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate” shared by peoples of *all* nations.<sup>14</sup> This right, Kant explains, does not guarantee that a person must be allowed to become “a permanent visitor,” but merely establishes “the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another.”<sup>15</sup>

In the “First Supplement” Kant goes on to argue that the “great artist, nature” has “a built-in mechanism” that “guarantees” the slow progress of the human race toward the goal of international peace, as set out in the main part of the book. This mechanism operates in four stages:<sup>16</sup> hostility between different groups is necessary in the initial stage of human history in order to encourage people to spread throughout the whole earth; as the earth begins to fill up, groups living together must establish laws, thus creating different civilizations, so they can wage war on other groups hostile to them; the differences that naturally develop during this process (especially differences

in language and religion) prevent all people from being united in one civilization and therefore require a federation of separate nations to keep the peace amidst the continued tendency to clash; finally, as the idea of "world citizenship" becomes more and more prominent, different civilizations will come to recognize that peace is in everyone's best interests. That is, human self-interest, while constituting the very aspect of our nature that causes hostility and war in the first place, is also the key mechanism leading to peace.

The "Second Supplement" briefly states a so-called "Secret Article" that Kant believes must be present "subjectively" in any legislation leading the nations of the world along the road to perpetual peace. By this he means that the lawyers who draft the legislation must have this article in mind, and employ it in practice, even though it is not "objectively" part of any state constitution or body of international law.<sup>17</sup> It states: "The opinions of philosophers on the conditions of the possibility of public peace shall be consulted by those states armed for war."<sup>18</sup> Although few take Kant very seriously at this point, I believe this is an *absolutely crucial* part of his plan for enduring world peace. It is essential because if those who draft legislation depend solely on the *objective* articles, the path to peace will be devoid of what we might call the *transcendental conflict* that Kant views as a necessary condition of real peace. That is, legislators must be *open* to have their professional opinions challenged, analyzed, and subjected to the judgment of dispassionate reason by those with expertise in the latter, otherwise their legislation, drafted in a context devoid of creative conflict, will fail to establish the desired goal of peace.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Plato, Kant does not expect "[t]hat kings should philosophize or philosophers become kings;" rather, he only asks that those who belong to the "Faculty of Law" be willing to give those in the "Faculty of Philosophy" a fair hearing. Here Kant is clearly hinting at the central point of this paper: that the ideal of peaceful conflict within the university is the most effective model we can employ in order to realize world peace between nations.

Appendix I expounds further on the necessary opposition, or *conflict*, that exists between "politics" and "morality," at least as regards their different functions on the path to peace. Politicians, Kant argues, are typically immoral because of the inevitable relationship they have to those holding power: "they flatter the power which is then ruling so as not to be remiss in their private advantage, and they sacrifice the nation and, possibly, the whole world."<sup>20</sup> In direct contrast to philosophers, politicians "make a great show of understanding *men* ... without understanding *man* and what can be made of him, for they lack the higher point of view of anthropological observation



which is needed for this."<sup>21</sup> He concludes that, although "objectively ... there is no conflict between morals and politics," the reality of selfishness and evil in human nature necessitates that "[s]ubjectively ... this conflict will always remain."<sup>22</sup>

*Perpetual Peace* concludes in Appendix II with an explanation of how "the transcendental concept of public right" can be used to establish *harmony* "between morality and politics"—the necessary condition for lasting peace. Here Kant proposes a "transcendental condition of public law: 'All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity.'"<sup>23</sup> After discussing several examples of this merely "negative" principle, Kant warns that "we cannot infer conversely that the maxims which bear publicity are therefore just," because those who wield sufficient levels of power have little need to conceal their plans, whether they are good or not.<sup>24</sup> The affirmative version of this basic transcendental principle is: "'All maxims which *stand in need* of publicity in order not to fail their end, agree with politics and right [i.e., morality] combined."<sup>25</sup> Careful attention to Kant's arguments in the apparently incidental Supplements and Appendices reveals that, if Kant's plan for perpetual peace between nations is *ever* to become a reality on earth, then a context *must exist* wherein philosophers are not only "allowed" but *encouraged* to engage in *open conflict* with legal professionals, through peaceful public discussion of universal principles relevant to actual legislation. In the remainder of this paper I shall argue that Kant believed such a context already exists, in the form of the *university*.

### 3. Conflict between University Faculties as the Empirical Expression of Perpetual Peace

Having briefly reviewed the content of Kant's masterpiece on peace, we should hardly be surprised to find that the last book Kant penned with his own hand—published just three years after *Perpetual Peace*—expounded on the very issue his earlier work had alluded to as the context where the transcendental condition for peace can be empirically realized: the empirical reality of academic debate between university faculties.<sup>26</sup> In his 1798 book, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant offers a philosophical interpretation of the actual structure of the Prussian university system, portraying it as a vehicle for promoting just the sort of open public *conflict* between philosophers and various types of "professionals" that his previous work had treated as a transcendental condition for peace. The universities of Kant's day had a far simpler structure than our contemporary universities typically



do. Instead of a seemingly endless array of departments grouped into a smaller but still indeterminate number of faculties, the whole system consisted of four faculties divided into two types. The three "higher" faculties of law, medicine, and theology, were charged with the task of training the professionals (i.e., lawyers, doctors, and priests) whose task was to assist the public in solving problems relating to their property, their health, and their moral/spiritual well-being, respectively. The fourth faculty, philosophy, was called the "lower" faculty because its job was not to train professionals but to educate, examine, and if necessary, *chasten* all the other faculties in matters pertaining to reason. Kant's book is divided into three parts, devoted (at least in theory)<sup>27</sup> to an explanation of how the philosophy faculty engages in creative conflict with each of the three higher faculties.

Kant's assumption was that this ideal of peaceful yet creative conflict in an academic setting can *make a difference* to the general public, while causing them no harm, because the arguments of the philosophers can and should change the way lawyers, doctors, and priests deal with the public. An important difference between the lower and higher faculties, however, concerns the role of government regulation—an issue Kant deals with only incidentally throughout *Conflict*. (The book, of course, was published soon after the edict preventing Kant from publishing anything on religion had been lifted, so the issue was clearly at the forefront of Kant's mind.) Because the content taught and published by members of the higher faculties has a direct influence on those professionals who deal immediately with the public, the government has a responsibility to regulate what is taught by these faculties; the philosophy faculty, by contrast, does not train professionals and therefore should not have to answer to any authority other than reason. In this way, it fulfills a crucial role in any republican state, by providing a "checks and balances" system from within the state-sponsored educational system itself. When the potential of this system is fully realized, academic debate can not only exemplify the kind of healthy "conflict" that has the potential to make society a wiser and safer place to live; it can also actually *bring about* the goal of peace through its indirect effect on the general public.

Unfortunately, Kant's stated plan for this book was more of an idealized hope than an accurate account of what is actually written therein. For the only part that is treated in full accordance with his stated goal (namely, to show how the philosophy faculty, through its emphasis on rational self-criticism, can deepen and further the insights of the other faculties, while chastening their improprieties) is Part I, on the theology faculty. The other two parts, being essays Kant had written for previous publication elsewhere, only tangentially touched on the specific issue of *conflict* between philosophers and the relevant professionals (i.e., lawyers or doctors). As a

result of this defect in the composition of Kant's book—perhaps excusable due to his old age at the time of publication—the only detailed explanation of how empirical conflict in an academic setting can pave the way for peace is to be found in his account of the relationship between philosophers and theologians.

The theology faculty, according to Kant, adopts a wholly different standpoint from the philosophy faculty. Members of the two faculties are, in many respects, enemies—or perhaps “warring neighbors” would be an appropriate metaphor.<sup>28</sup> This is because the fundamental basis of the theology faculty's authority is its appeal to divine revelation. The Word of God (i.e., the Holy Scripture of whatever religious tradition is being taught), and the Spirit of God (i.e., the presence of God's voice in the interpreter's heart, leading him or her to formulate the right interpretation) are the fundamental basis for all consideration, both theoretical and practical. By contrast, the philosophy faculty's authority is grounded in reason alone. Because theologians must inevitably *make use* of reason whenever they interpret or apply the statements they find in Scripture, they are necessarily subject to the philosopher's critical analysis. Conversely, philosophers may offer interpretations and applications of Scriptural statements *without* subjecting themselves to the doctrinal restrictions of orthodoxy, because they (the philosophers) never step outside of their role as messengers of reason. If this paper were about religion and the conflicts between different religions, we would need to examine this part of Kant's book in great detail. But it is not; our concern is rather with politics and the conflicts between different states. I shall therefore resist the temptation to make further observations about Kant's views on the philosopher's conflict with the theologian.<sup>29</sup>

In applying the same principle of free and open (i.e., unregulated) conflict in a university-based setting to the faculty of law, Kant's intention would obviously be to suggest that the philosopher's role is to provide a universal, rational standpoint for assessing and improving our actual empirical legislation. Unfortunately, the essay that actually appears as Part 2 of *Conflict* deals only with the far more limited issue of whether “the human race [is] constantly progressing”.<sup>30</sup> A few of Kant's arguments can be applied fairly easily to the university setting; for example, when he explains how the future of human history can be known a priori by noting such knowledge is possible “if the diviner himself *makes* and contrives the events which he announces in advance,”<sup>31</sup> we can surmise that this would be one of the key differences between the way the faculty of law and the faculty of philosophy deal with legal issues. Members of the faculty of law, strictly speaking, would have the sole task of teaching and interpreting the *given body of law*, as handed down by whatever body holds sovereign power in the



state (i.e., the monarch, the aristocracy, or the people as a whole). Members of the faculty of philosophy, by contrast, would have the task of determining *in advance* what law reason determines as best, and then comparing the existing body of law with this ideal in order to assess its validity.<sup>32</sup> Beyond this, we can surmise that Kant's underlying intention was to suggest that perpetual peace between nations will become a reality only when philosophers are given the right (at least "subjectively"—i.e., unofficially, or "in secret") to participate fully in the dialogue over matters of policy as well as in the character development of politicians—e.g., through moral and philosophical education.

Although Part 2 of *Conflict* does not deal directly with the conflict between philosophers and lawyers in the university, we may glean some important insights by looking further into what Kant does say there about the issue of world peace and its relation to different approaches to conflict. After making the above point about foreknowledge being a form of self-fulfilling prophecy, Kant goes on to compare politicians who institute laws aimed at preventing revolt (but who thereby *create* the very conditions for revolt) with preachers who "prophesy the complete destruction of religion and the imminent appearance of the Antichrist; and in doing so they are performing precisely what is requisite to call him up."<sup>33</sup> Next, Kant proposes three possible scenarios that would make prediction possible: the human race must either be "in continual *retrogression* toward wickedness, or in perpetual *progression* toward improvement ..., or in eternal *stagnation* in its present stage of moral worth ..."<sup>34</sup> He refers to the first option as "moral *terrorism*," but points out problems with all three options that make them equally untenable. Experience can never be a sufficient basis for solving "the problem of progress" because human beings are *free* and can at any point in time act in accordance with either a good or an evil disposition: what people "ought to do may be *dictated* in advance, but ... it may not be *predicted* what they will do ..."<sup>35</sup> To assume otherwise would be to adopt "the standpoint of Providence which is situated beyond all human wisdom;" for only God can experience the future before it happens.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, Kant suggests that, if a "prophetic history" is to be advanced in a philosophical manner, "some experience" must be cited as an empirical grounding for one's reasoning.<sup>37</sup> A good example of such an experience, he claims, is the reaction of the general public in France to the revolution that had begun in 1789; he interprets this reaction as a clear sign of two moral causes operating in the society:

first, that of the *right*, that a nation must not be hindered in providing itself with a civil constitution, which appears good to the people themselves;



and second, that of the *end* . . . , that that same national constitution alone be *just* and morally good in itself, created in such a way as to avoid, by its very nature, principles permitting offensive war.<sup>38</sup>

What reason can discern as the “pure” (a priori) lesson to be drawn from this experience is that people are inclined, as a matter of their inner moral nature, “to striv[e] after . . . a republican constitution.”<sup>39</sup> This memorable experience “has revealed a *faculty* in human nature for improvement such that no politician . . . might have conjured out of the course of things hitherto existing . . . .”<sup>40</sup> On this basis, Kant advances a “philosophical prophecy”: “the human race has always been in progress toward the better and will continue to be so henceforth.”<sup>41</sup>

Although the bulk of this part of Kant’s book does not deal very explicitly with the actual conflict between the university faculties of philosophy and law, he does emphasize at one point (§8) that “public instruction of the people in its duties and rights vis-à-vis the state to which they belong” constitutes nothing less than “*Enlightenment*” itself.<sup>42</sup> He then argues that the “free professors of law” who are “the natural heralds and expositors of these” duties and rights must *not* be the ones “officially appointed by the state” (i.e., members of the higher faculty of law, and all the professionals—lawyers and judges—who are taught by them); rather, they are “philosophers who, precisely because this freedom is allowed to them, are objectionable to the state, which always desires to rule alone . . . .”<sup>43</sup> Only philosophers are able to teach “the eternal norm” (or “Platonic *ideal*”) of “a constitution in harmony with the natural right of human beings,” a norm “for all civil organization in general” that “averts all war.”<sup>44</sup> For “the duty of the monarchs”—and in a democratic system, the *people themselves* are the monarch—is “to treat people according to principles which are commensurate with the spirit of laws of freedom (as a nation with mature understanding would prescribe them for itself),” and philosophers, unlike the members of the faculty of law, are able to convey this insight to the public, for they appeal to reason as their sole authority.

Had Kant paid more attention to the stated theme of his book here in Part 2, he surely would have said more about the conflict that will inevitably arise between philosophers who attempt to take up this duty (i.e., to educate the public in the true nature of law) and the legal professionals and teachers who teach merely the *status quo*. Instead, the remainder of Part 2 in *Conflict* merely clarifies two concluding points. First, the successful implementation of Kant’s plan—starting, we may presume, with an openness in university law faculties to input from philosophers—will give rise only to a *legally*

better society, where people's external actions conform to principles of civility, without necessarily requiring any change in the moral corruption of human nature; as such, his plan must be distinguished from all *utopian* visions, whereby a *religious* revolution based on "a kind of new creation (supernatural influence) would be necessary."<sup>45</sup> Second, the plan can be expected to succeed only if it is implemented "*from top to bottom*"—i.e., according to "a well-weighed plan of the sovereign power"—for the simple reason that if the state is *not* supporting the plan, then it will have "no money left ... for the salaries of its teachers who are capable and zealously devoted to their spheres of duty, since it uses all the money for war."<sup>46</sup> Thus, even with all its imperfections and awkwardness, the existing Part 2 of *The Conflict of the Faculties* provides ample evidence to enable us to conclude that for Kant the university was to be the *primary context* wherein, through the education of the public in an approach to law that is grounded in reason, the drama of the evolution of the human race from a random collection of warring nations to a single, peacefully coexisting partnership of nations with radically conflicting ideas, would evolve.

#### 4. The Role of the Contemporary University in Promoting Perpetual Peace

In this year that marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kant's death, the foregoing review of these two relatively short essays, both written near the end of his life and clearly conveying one of their author's deepest and most urgent concerns, should leave us more convinced than ever of Kant's greatness. For the plan he sketched so long ago has, in fact, been a major influence on the thinking of politicians and political philosophers in the shaping of public policy during the intervening two centuries. Yet at the same time, the review may leave us somewhat discouraged at how far we still have to go. Far from eliminating war, the century that saw the creation of the United Nations and the institution of a whole body of international law aimed at protecting universal human rights *also* witnessed the most horrifying atrocities ever committed by human beings against other human beings throughout the whole history of humanity's time on earth. As technology advances, governments have become *more* adept at killing off their perceived enemies and *less* willing to sit down with them and dialogue until they reach the point where they can find a way to live in peace in spite of their conflicting perspectives.

Although he acknowledges a natural purpose for war in the early stages of human civilization—namely, it encourages people to spread themselves throughout the entire earth, in order to get away from their enemies—Kant argues that this initial purpose has been fulfilled, inasmuch as people now



inhabit the vast majority of the earth's land, and that this renders war no longer necessary in the modern era. Cultural differences, including "differences of language and of religion," should now be viewed in an altogether different light: as shades and hues on the single tapestry of humanity itself. As we saw even more clearly from our review of Kant's *Conflict*, these differences are not to be abolished, but *highlighted*, if the beautiful image of one world at peace with itself is to become a reality. Here, as throughout his major critical writings, Kant sees conflict not as an evil to be abolished but as a preliminary step on the road to concord. Despite its idealistic overtones, Kant seemed to be quite serious in promoting his plan as a *realistic solution* to the greatest human social problem, *war*. Why, then, do the conflicts we have witnessed during the past centuries, and in recent years, so rarely lead to the creative concord Kant had in mind? That is, why is war an even greater problem today—especially in light of the threat from weapons of mass destruction—than it was in Kant's day?

Kant's answer, I suggest, would be that the world's universities in general, and their philosophy departments in particular, have largely failed to realize their calling as the *instruments of peace* in their respective societies. This may be due in part to a lack of receptiveness on the part of governments and/or the law schools and those trained by them to give ear to the rational arguments being put forward by philosophers. But in larger part the responsibility lies with philosophers themselves, who in a majority of cases are quite happy to live in the false peace of their ivory towers, talking *only with each other* about the problems and issues they should be promoting in the public square. Is it any wonder that few outside the discipline of philosophy have listened seriously to what we philosophers have been saying?

Some would say the rise of terrorism in the last quarter of the twentieth century, as well as its association with Islam in the first few years of this new century, casts a dark shadow of doubt over the validity of Kant's optimistic vision for a future when the nations of the world exist together in peace. But far from denying its validity, we could just as easily interpret the phenomenon of terrorism as a confirming expression of the reality of the natural mechanism Kant introduces in the First Supplement to *Perpetual Peace*, thus indicating that nature continues to challenge us when the political frameworks we construct lack viability. That is, terrorism could be regarded as the birth pangs of the human race's transition to the kind of *genuine* Federation of States Kant had in mind. Perhaps that is why terrorism came into being shortly after the United Nations was established, and reached a new crescendo when the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War left the USA as the world's only "superpower". World civilization cannot survive for long with only one dominant nation; nature



herself demands that a lone superpower be challenged; and since the United Nations cannot consistently do so, terrorism fills the gap. If we are to believe Kant's scenario, cooperation through an increased willingness on the part of *governments* to take seriously the reasoning of their philosophers—and a corresponding courage on the part of philosophers to make their reasoning known to the sovereign power, even when it may be unpopular—is the only promising way forward.

The fact that peaceful conflict can take place within the university setting, as exemplified by truly international conferences such as this one, suggests that terrorism (like war in general) is a direct result of an imbalance of power between nations or people groups, and is particularly serious when one country is the dominant force in world politics. To attempt to solve this problem by annihilating the persons engaged in terrorist activities is therefore a step backwards; it will only add fuel to the fire. A more forward-looking solution is to redress the imbalance between the world powers representing different cultures. As philosophers, we must take seriously our potential role as peacemakers by encouraging our governments to adopt policies of engagement that promote balance and mutual respect between different nations and people groups. Although our modern universities are structured differently from those in Kant's day, with the departments of philosophy no longer enjoying a privileged position—indeed, in some universities they no longer exist at all!—we should still aim to practice Kant's high ideal of peaceful, creative conflict. If Kant could send us any message from his resting place in the grave, I believe it would be to remind us philosophers that we really can help solve contemporary political problems, and that once we realize this fact, we shall find we are closer than we ever before realized to the day when all the nations on earth, despite their radically conflicting perspectives, may live together in lasting peace.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, B805. Kant uses the "weapon" metaphor throughout the section entitled "The Discipline of Pure Reason," for this is where he explains how we are to deal with the conflicts entailed by our rational nature.
- <sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, tr. Lewis White Beck in *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 343ff. Page numbers refer to the pagination of the German *Akademie* edition, provided in the margin of the translation.
- <sup>3</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 349.
- <sup>4</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 350.
- <sup>5</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 351-352.

- <sup>6</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 352. Democracy without separation of powers (i.e., non-republican democracy) is despotic because “ ‘all’ decide for or even against one who does not agree; that is, ‘all,’ who are not quite all, decide, and this is a contradiction of the general will with itself and with freedom.”
- <sup>7</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 356.
- <sup>8</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 354f.
- <sup>9</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 354.
- <sup>10</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 356.
- <sup>11</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 356. Kant goes on to say (357): “The only conceivable meaning of such a law of nations [i.e., conceived as a right to make war] might be that it serves men right who are so inclined that they should destroy each other and thus find perpetual peace in the vast grave that swallows both the atrocities and their perpetrators.”
- <sup>12</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 357.
- <sup>13</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 360.
- <sup>14</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 358.
- <sup>15</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 358.
- <sup>16</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 360f.
- <sup>17</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 368.
- <sup>18</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 368.
- <sup>19</sup> Objective legislation made *without* the controlling conflict of the philosopher’s voice echoing in the subjective background will never lead to world peace, because on their own, lawyers can be expected to do nothing other than look after their own self interest. As Kant puts it (*Perpetual Peace*, 369): “The lawyer, who has made not only the scales of right but also the sword of justice his symbol, generally uses the latter not merely to keep back all foreign influences from the former, but, if the scale does not sink the way he wishes, he also throws the sword into it..., a practice to which he often has the greatest temptation because he is not also a philosopher, even in morality.”
- <sup>20</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 373.
- <sup>21</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 374. Kant proceeds to explain three rather cynical (though all too often, penetratingly accurate!) “maxims” that guide the typical professional at law. He then challenges his reader to stand up and be courageous in fighting against this feature of modern culture (376): “Let us ... force the false representatives of power to confess that they do not plead in favor of the right but in favor of might.”

<sup>22</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 379.

<sup>23</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 381.

<sup>24</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 385.

<sup>25</sup> *Perpetual Peace*, 386.

<sup>26</sup> Actually, Kant wrote much of this book earlier, in the form of journal articles, and may have conceived of the idea of publishing it as a book right around the same time he wrote *Perpetual Peace*. Kant had to wait until the Prussian king died in 1798 to publish *The Conflict of the Faculties*, because it contained a section on his religious views, which he had been banned from publishing during the reign of that king.

<sup>27</sup> See note 26, and the further discussion of this issue in the main text, below.

<sup>28</sup> Kant uses a similar, territorial metaphor in the Preface to the first edition of his 1793 book, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. This was the book whose publication was regarded by the king's censor as a violation of the edict against publishing anything contrary to the church's traditional position on matters of religion. The Preface discusses the basic differences between what Kant there calls the "philosophical theologian" and the "biblical theologian," concluding that the two neighbors, despite their fundamental differences, have the potential to be "at one," if only they will respect each other's fundamental perspectives and work towards mutual self-understanding.

<sup>29</sup> I have, however, discussed this issue in significant depth in two other publications: first, in my book, *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), especially Chapter IX; and second, in my essay, "Philosophers in the Public Square: A Religious Resolution of Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*," Chapter 12 in *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Chris L. Firestone and Stephen R. Palmquist (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, tr. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79. Page numbers refer to the German pagination provided in the margin. Section numbers, where cited, refer to Kant's numbered sections in Part 2 of the book.

<sup>31</sup> *Conflict*, 80 (§2).

<sup>32</sup> This is precisely what Kant did in *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, only as applied to the faculty of theology. The Preface to the second edition of that work describes these two tasks (determining in advance what rational religion should be, then comparing one empirical religion with that ideal) as the two "experiments" being conducted in that work. Kant's decision *not* to address directly (in Part 2 of *Conflict*) the need for such a pair of experiments as applied to the faculty of law might suggest that Kant's own experience of a very real



threat of *legal* prosecution, as a result of his own violation of government censorship, was simply too fresh in his mind for him to address the issue explicitly, even after the censorship was lifted. Perhaps he was all too aware that his own *failure* to take up the role of a true philosopher in that situation would have been all-too-apparent, had he written Part 2 in the same direct way he wrote Part 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Conflict*, 80 (§2).

<sup>34</sup> *Conflict*, 81 (§3).

<sup>35</sup> *Conflict*, 83 (§4).

<sup>36</sup> *Conflict*, 84 (§4).

<sup>37</sup> *Conflict*, 84 (§5).

<sup>38</sup> *Conflict*, 89 (§8).

<sup>39</sup> *Conflict*, 87-88 (§7).

<sup>40</sup> *Conflict*, 88 (§7), emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> *Conflict*, 88-89 (§7). Kant qualifies this prophetic proposition in a way that must have impressed Nietzsche: "provided at least that there does not, by some chance, occur a second epoch of natural revolution which will push aside the human race to clear the stage for other creatures..." (89).

<sup>42</sup> *Conflict*, 89 (§8).

<sup>43</sup> *Conflict*, 89 (§8).

<sup>44</sup> *Conflict*, 90-91 (§8).

<sup>45</sup> *Conflict*, 91-92 (§9).

<sup>46</sup> *Conflict*, 92-93 (§10).