

Kant's way toward perpetual peace in the 21st century

Hiroo Nakamura (Nagano, Japan)

“May Nagasaki be the last city which has been nuclear-bombed!” – Reasonable people in Japan are ashamed that their country which is famous for being a world technological power had caused the Fukushima nuclear disaster in spite of atomic bomb victims’ hard experiences and innermost wishes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This disaster has showed that there had been mistakes in former economic and energy policies. It reflects political weak points not only in Japan but in the whole world. Today, political, cultural and religious conflicts have become more and more complicated. At the beginning of the 21st century, we must now ask over again whether human beings are really on the way to making a steady progress toward the better.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, Immanuel Kant, and Salomo Friedlaender, a forgotten philosopher of the 20th century who called himself “Old-Kantian” and has begun to be rediscovered today; these philosophers, in their own manner, have warned their contemporaries to end their self-destruction by war, to make every effort toward continual peace, and for that purpose to realize clearly and exactly the morality which, as *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, belongs intrinsically to humanity. – Referring to these classical and modern texts and basing on fundamental principles of *The Constitution of Japan*¹, I defended in my book *Für den Frieden*² that humanity, in spite of negative evidences in history, has without doubt hope for the future and that the perpetual peace is left entirely up to humanity itself, so that it is education toward becoming a personality that should come into question in the end, because it is the personality that is in reality the subject of freedom as *ratio essendi* of morality and because this

¹ Cf. Hiroo Nakamura, “The Constitution of Japan — The significance today of Kantian pacifism identified in the introduction of the Constitution of Japan —”, *Actes du Colloque international. Kant, les lumières et nous*, Maison Arabe du Livre, Tunis 2008, pp.301-315. Cf. Hiroo Nakamura, « Le pacifisme de la Constitution japonaise : un pur optimisme ou une lumière au XXI^e siècle? » *Revue « Cités »* n° 27, PUF, Paris 2006, pp. 21-32.

² Hiroo Nakamura, *Für den Frieden*, libri nigri 16, Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz 2012.

freedom is, for people who wish for peace from their hearts, exactly the “keystone”³ of the grand conceptions for perpetual peace, though this concept of freedom is the “stumbling block”⁴ for all empiricists. Here, in this lecture, I would like to present you my book above *Für den Frieden* in outline.

1

At the beginning of his book *Peace Protests (Querela pacis)* published in 1517, Erasmus said:

“THUS SPEAKS PEACE: If, in spite of my innocence and regardless of the advantages which I offer them, men hate me, drive me away, and discredit me, nothing remains for me but to deplore the affront they offer me and their iniquity.”⁵

If Erasmus had seen the utterly destroyed Germany and ruined Europe directly after the Second World War, how hard would he have grieved over the misery again? The German translation of his *Querela pacis (Peace Protests)*⁶ has been quite timely published anew in 1945. The translator, Arthur von Arx, wrote at the end of his epilogue as follows:

“«Perpetual peace» might continue to be an ideal. Ideals, however, can’t and should not be judged by visible results. Ideals retain at any rate their lively influence and their moral force, even if only more or less successful realizations testify of their ex-

³ KpV, p. 139 [AA 05, p. 3]. In relation to the English translations of Kant’s writings, *Practical Philosophy* (the Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant, trans. and ed. by Mary J. Gregor, 1999), *Anthropology, History, and Education* (the Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant, trans. and ed. by Mary Gregor, Paul Guyer, Robert B. Louden, Holly Wilson, Allen W. Wood, Günter Zöllner, and Arnulf Zweig, 2007), *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978), *Critique of Judgment* (trans. by Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (trans. and ed. by Allen Wood & George di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, 1998) were used. The pages quoted hereafter are from these translations and the pages in parenthesis are those of *Akademie-Ausgabe* (AA). KpV stands for *Critique of practical reason* (1788), KrV for *Critique of pure reason* (1781, 1787), KU for *Critique of judgement* (1790), MS for *The metaphysics of morals* (1797), Päd for *Lectures on pedagogy* (1803), TP for *On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice* (1793), and ZF for *Toward perpetual peace* (1795).

⁴ KpV, p. 143 [AA 05, p. 7].

⁵ Jesé Chapiro, *Erasmus and Our Struggle for Peace*, Part I “*Herald of a United World*”, Part II “*Peace Protests*” by Erasmus of Rotterdam, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1950, p. 133.

⁶ Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Klage des Friedens*, Übertragung u. Nachwort von Arthur von Arx, Klosterberg, Basel 1945.

istence.”⁷

Perpetual peace is always an actual task for humanity, which has been formulated by Saint-Pierre and Rousseau as well as by Kant. Maybe it is no exaggeration to say that human beings, since the Enlightenment, especially after the Second World War, have earnestly made efforts to undertake the task and to accomplish it, and that they really made and are making now more remarkable progress in pacifism than before, especially more than in the first half of the 20th century. If Erasmus, who had 500 years before grieved hard over war's havoc in Europe, had seen the result of the EU today, he would regard its actual situation as a miracle. Politics not only in Europe but in the whole world today is on the whole in a more desirable situation than before. Compared with the rapidity of technical innovation, the progress of humanity toward perpetual peace is indeed so slow that it looks as if it were stopping or, on the contrary, retrogressing. We can, however, give reasons to the effect that human beings have made or are making steps forward. – First of all, the proposals for perpetual peace made by Saint-Pierre and Rousseau as well as Kant's philosophical project in the 18th century may be considered as certain examples for that. What Kant called “unwritten code”⁸, today has become, so to speak, a “written code”. For we can make sure of the actual steps toward perpetual peace concretely in various declarations, agreements or constitutions of democratic states in the world: e. g. the United Nations Charter (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (1997), the Convention on Cluster Ammunitions (2008). We should regard these facts as a historical sign of progress humanity has made. I would like to give a few more good examples: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by a vote of 48 in favor, 0 against, though with 8 abstentions; the Ottawa-Convention which was initially proposed by the Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) gained the signatures of 122 countries when it opened for signing on 3 December 1997 in Ottawa. 159 States have ratified the Treaty as of December 2011. Currently, 111 states have joined the Convention on Cluster Ammunitions, 77 having ratified it, while another 34 have signed but not yet ratified it. We can say now like von Arx in 1945 that ideals retain “their lively influence and their moral force”; rather, human beings are evolving them.

⁷ *Klage des Friedens*, ibid., p. 103.

⁸ “Since the (narrow or wider) community of the nations of the earth has now gone so far that a violation of right on *one* place of the earth is felt in *all*, the idea of a cosmopolitan right is no fantastic and exaggerated way of representing right; it is, instead, a supplement to the unwritten code of the right of a state and the right of nations necessary for the sake of any public rights of human beings and so for perpetual peace; only under this condition can we flatter ourselves that we are constantly approaching perpetual peace.” (ZF, p. 330 [AA08, p. 360])

It is difficult to ascertain if Erasmus had some influence on Rousseau and Kant, for we don't find in their works any quotations from his *Peace Protests*. When we, however, read it now over again, we find phrases full of suggestions: what is peace in the world and what is necessary for us to be able to come steadily closer to the goal of perpetual peace? Erasmus' humanistic thought led into the Enlightenment and evolved into modern pacifism. Erasmus, Rousseau, and Kant: three different characters: Erasmus is distinguished by faith and rhetorics, while Rousseau is characterized by political thought and Kant by critical philosophy. There is, however, a common point; all of them have realized the freedom of the human being and the moral-teleological substance of reason as well as of internal and external relations among human societies. What Erasmus convinced us of is that there must be no war and that humanity consists in good will and harmony. Rousseau shed light upon the question of the ideal political system for perpetual peace, whereas it is Kant who played a decisive part regarding this subject as the first and only philosopher who had laid the *philosophical* foundation for the question of perpetual peace. He gave, so to speak, Archimedes' fulcrum to move, i.e. to solve metaphysical problems to philosophers in a position to counsel politicians to realize the truth of politics that "true politics can therefore not take a step without having already paid homage to morals."⁹ Salomo Friedlaender expresses in a decisive ton:

"Since 1781¹⁰, humanity is urged not only in politics to make a decision on an alternative discovered just by Kant which rests upon freedom: that is, either human reason, the essence of which is the Law, is ruled by nature (or its creator); or, according to Kant's revolution of thinking, Reason, which has not only theoretical but also creatively practical force, rules nature."¹¹

3

The greatest contribution Kant made to modern philosophy consists in his *critical* philosophy which opened the way to overcome the difficulties for *metaphysics* which had troubled

⁹ Kant continued: "and although politics by itself is a difficult art, its union with morals is no art at all; for as soon as the two conflict with each other, morals cuts the knot that politics cannot untie." (ZF, p.347 [AA 08, p.380])

¹⁰ The year the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* published.

¹¹ Friedlaender says this phrase at the beginning of his paper *Kant als Politiker* (1937?). The text will be published in vol. 22 of his complete works *Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona. Gesammelte Schriften* (Waitawhile, Herrsching 2005-) edited by Hartmut Geerken and Detlef Thiel.

humanity so long. Kant says at the beginning of the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*: “Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.”¹² Kant’s *Critique* was the first one that, having elucidated the essence of metaphysics, had given the solution for its hard problems. According to Kant, the metaphysicians’ mistakes until then consisted in their understanding of the distinction between analytic (explicative) and synthetic (ampliative) judgements peculiar to human knowledge. Treating the question of peace only analytically, they had to fall into the problem of antinomy between realism and idealism. In fact, metaphysical questions belong essentially to synthetic judgements and it should be necessary for them to “add to the concept of the subject a predicate which has not been in any wise thought in it, and which no analysis could possibly extract from it”¹³, i.e. to adopt a priori concept and to use them basing upon “principles other than the principle of contradiction”¹⁴.

According to Kant’s *The Metaphysics of Morals*, perpetual peace constitutes the entire final end of the doctrine of right belonging essentially to *metaphysics*.¹⁵ Therefore, in order to avoid blind alleys like scepticism as well as dogmatism or like fruitless idealism as well as warlike realism, in the discussion on the questions of perpetual peace, it is necessary to add a priori concepts to it and to be based on a principle other than the law of contradiction. A priori concepts which should be added to the metaphysical judgement of perpetual peace are “freedom”, “final purpose”, “human dignity” and “human right”, strictly speaking, “the right to live in peace”¹⁶. Principles other than the law of contradiction are the moral law and moral teleology. The core of four a priori concepts above is freedom, because it is freedom that is called “innate right”¹⁷ and human dignity and human right as well as final end are possible only under condition that people, i.e. citizens, have realized the morality as *ratio cognoscendi*

¹² KrV, p. 7 [AA 04, p. vii].

¹³ KrV, p. 48 [AA 04, p. 7].

¹⁴ Cf. KU, p. 38 note [AA 05, p. 197 note].

¹⁵ Cf. MA, p. 491 [AA 06, p. 355].

¹⁶ The fundamental principle of *The Constitution of Japan* consists in the “right to live in peace”. Its Preamble says: “We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.” Yoichi Higuchi, a constitutionalist in Japan, says: “Si l’on peut qualifier les libertés classiques de « droits style 18^e et 19^e siècle » et les droits économiques et sociaux de « droits style 20^e siècle », puisqu’ils correspondent respectivement, quant à leur naissance, à l’ère du laissez-faire et à l’époque du dirigisme de l’Etat, on pourrait sans doute dire que notre Constitution fait une reconnaissance anticipée du droit de l’homme « style 21^e siècle », en constitutionnalisant ce « droit de vivre dans la paix » ” (Tadakazu Fukase & Yoichi Higuchi, *Le constitutionnalisme et ses problèmes au Japon : Une approche comparative*, Paris 1984, p. 27). Cf. Hiroo Nakamura, *Für den Frieden*, § 30, pp. 116-117.

¹⁷ MS, p. 393 [AA 06, p. 237].

of freedom and its moral-teleological nature. Accordingly I designated freedom as *ratio essendi* of perpetual peace and perpetual peace as *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For human beings' future should depend on their freedom, i.e. on their free will to make themselves better, to cultivate themselves, and to moralize themselves. It is freedom with which a human being can become *human*. To deny the reality of freedom means to block the possibility of the future which will open up before the human being and entrust his future to himself. The Future of the human being toward perpetual peace depends entirely on his freedom, whereas it depends on his efforts toward perpetual peace whether he is really a free being. Because of freedom, a human being can regard the task toward perpetual peace as his own vocation and undertake his own future for himself. He has already experienced these facts in historical signs above. Today, we can say now in Kant's phrase, "a good ideal of evidence can be put forward to show that in our age, as compared with all previous ages, the human race as a whole has actually made considerable moral progress."¹⁸ The actual question is: how we step forward? The key to answering this question is *education*.

At the beginning of his *Lectures on Pedagogy*, Kant says: "The human being is the only creature that must be educated."¹⁹ For, "the human being can only become human through education."²⁰ – "Practical education is education towards personality, the education of a freely acting being who can support itself and be a member of society, but who can have an inner value for itself."²¹ According to Kant, the "inner value" is what a human being gives with his freedom to himself. That is, because of freedom, he can make efforts to respect the right of life in peace, to make an approach to perpetual peace as his final purpose, and to be worthy of human dignity. Upon a conviction of this moral teleology, Kant based his pedagogy which would answer the fundamental question: how is it possible for humanity to come steadily closer toward perpetual peace which is essentially no empty idea? It resolves into the question of *education toward personality*. Friedlaender emphasized the importance of Kantian moral philosophy as follows:

¹⁸ "A good ideal of evidence can be put forward to show that in our age, as compared with all previous ages, the human race as a whole has actually made considerable moral progress (short-term checks can prove nothing to the contrary), and that the outcry about its incessantly increasing depravity comes from the very fact when it reaches a higher level of morality it sees farther ahead, and its judgment about what one is as compared with what one ought to be, hence our self-reproach, becomes all the more severe the more levels of morality we have already climbed during the whole of the course of the world that we have become acquainted with." (ZF, p. 307 [AA 08, p. 310]).

¹⁹ Päd, p.437 [AA 09, p. 441].

²⁰ Päd, p. 439 [AA 09, p. 443].

²¹ Päd, p. 448 [AA 09, p. 455].

“If people had 150 years ago began to initiate children into the categorical imperative, world wars could thereby probably have been prevented.”²²

4

People say that perpetual peace is just an empty or chimerical idea like the “stone of Sisyphus”²³. Is that right? – In a sense, yes, but on the other hand, no. For human history seems to have been full of vain efforts toward perpetual peace, whereas, from the end of the 20th century downward, we can see clear indications that human beings are making progress toward the better. I would like to say with Kant that human beings’ effort toward perpetual peace never is a Sisyphean labour and that humanity will and can accomplish its own task to approach step by step steadily toward perpetual peace, taking genuine pleasure in realizing that it is really making an effort to be worth of a human being. Maybe it is not an exaggeration to venture to say again in Kant’s phrase very persuasively: – Because “he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it and cognize freedom within him, which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him.”²⁴ – Because, in view of their situation becoming more serious today, human beings must have realized that the human race is really in a critical situation as: “if a gallows were erected in front of the house where he finds this opportunity and he would be hanged on it immediately after gratifying his lust, he would not then control his inclination.”²⁵

In a note in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant asked us: “why was our nature given a propensity toward desires of whose futility we are aware?” His answer is very thought-provoking in order that we might realize over again that we are free beings of possibility, so that our future depends completely on ourselves.

“But why our nature was given a propensity toward desires of whose futility we are aware is an anthropological-teleological question. It seems that if we had to assure ourselves that we can in fact produce the object, before we could be determined [by the presentation] to apply our forces, then our forces would remain largely unused. For usually we do not come to know what forces we have in the first place except

²² S. Friedlaender, *Moral und Politik*. This text will be published in vol. 22 of his complete works *Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona. Gesammelte Schriften* (ibid.).

²³ TP, p. 305 [AA 08, p. 307]. Cf. Goyard-Fabre, Simone, *La construction de la paix ou le travail de Sisyphe*, Paris 1994, p. 262.

²⁴ KpV, pp. 163-164 [AA 0 5, p. 30].

²⁵ KpV, p. 163 [AA 0 5, p. 30].

by trying them out. Hence the deception contained in vain wishes is only the result of a beneficent arrangement in our nature.”²⁶

My book *Für den Frieden* is, so to speak, an actual proposal to open the way for Kant’s philosophical project toward perpetual peace in the 21st century. At the beginning of this book, I wrote: “I would like to dedicate this book to Erasmus as well as human beings” and in its end: “Erasmus’ peace which men hated, drove away, and discredited, and for which remains but to deplore the affront and the iniquity, may he find by this book a place where he can turn! – By this book, too, may people come to their senses and be awakened to their own vocation for themselves as humanity!”

Now, with the mottos of my book, I would like to close this lecture:

“Finally, *peace rests largely in the fact of desiring it with all the force of our soul*. Indeed, those who desire it grasp every occasion which is favourable to it. They disregard certain justified claims, smooth over difficulties which oppose it, even endure disagreeable things in order to save that great good which is peace.”²⁷

(Erasmus of Rotterdam)

“The fates lead the willing, drive the unwilling.”²⁸ (Seneca)

²⁶ KU, p. 17 note [AA 05, p. 178 note].

²⁷ *Peace Protests!*, p. 171.

²⁸ TP, p. 309 [AA 08, p. 312].