

# The Bahá'í Writings and Kant's "Perpetual Peace"<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In 1795, Immanuel Kant published *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*<sup>2</sup> in which he outlined the practical steps necessary to end war among nation-states. This work is a part of the history<sup>3</sup> of utopian thought<sup>4</sup> in Europe, and was preceded by a long tradition of plans to improve individuals and the society that began most famously with Plato's *Republic*, continues through St. Thomas More's *Utopia*, and comes in the period before and after Kant to a number of proposals for eliminating war. Among those preceding Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" was Emeric Cruce's *Discourses on the Opportunities and Means for Establishing a General Peace and Freedom of Trade Throughout the World* (c.1623).<sup>5</sup> Among the root causes of war, Cruce listed "bigotry, profit, reparation and glory-seeking."<sup>6</sup> In his view, the best way to overcome these causes are closer trade and communication among the peoples of the world, a global currency and a political congress made of representatives from all of humankind. His solutions are still discussed today.<sup>7</sup> Another noteworthy work in the 'peace tradition' is William Penn's "*An Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe*" (1693). Penn proposes a European parliament with mandatory attendance by all European monarchs to settle all disputes that cannot be solved by direct negotiations by the affected parties. States refusing to submit their differences or refusing to abide by the European parliament's decisions shall be compelled to do so and be liable for all costs and damages resulting from their refusal. Two decades after Penn, the French philosopher Saint-Pierre published *A Project for Setting an Everlasting Peace in Europe* (1714) which

suggested that peace was best achieved by uniting all European states into a “representative federation based on population rather than power”<sup>8</sup> and by limiting the size of national armies. Difficult issues would be discussed and resolved by committees established to reconcile conflicting claims. In short, the relations among European states were to be based on the rule of law and not on the ambitions or advantages of kings. Jean-Jacque Rousseau suggested a European federation or confederation united by the rule of law in *A Lasting Peace Through the Federation of Europe* (1782). Rousseau saw four necessary requirements for a lasting European peace: first, all the important powers in Europe must be members of this federation; second, whatever laws these powers legislate must be binding on all; third, there must be a common military force able to compel obedience from every members state and fourth, once in, no state can withdraw from this federation.<sup>9</sup> Here, too, we observe a proposal for a trans-national parliament with dispute setting powers and the means for enforcing its judgments.

There were, of course, others who had contributed to this ‘peace tradition’ before Kant. Three of the most famous are Hugo Grotius who formulated the first code of international laws regarding war and peace (1625), Samuel Pufendorf, the first man to be a professor of international law (1674) and Christian Wolff who tried to organize the different types of laws among nations (1754) in order to clarify legal processes. Of course, these authors advocated plans to bring order to current diplomatic and military practices rather than the complete elimination of international conflict. War among sovereign nation-states might be limited in scope to combatants, made more humane and legally allowed only in certain circumstances but the practice of war would remain as a tragic but inevitable part of the human existence. However, what Cruce, Penn, Saint-Pierre, Kant and the Bahá’í Writings aim at is the eventual complete elimination of war itself.

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Because of Kant's incalculable influence on the development of virtually all aspects of modern philosophy and thought in general, our comparison study will focus on the Bahá'í Writings and "*To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*." We shall devote our efforts to answering one question: To what extent does Kant's essay directly anticipate and/or indirectly foreshadow the Bahá'í teachings about the elimination of war and the establishment of a workable peace? Answering this question requires a careful examination of their similarities and differences not only in what is or is not said explicitly but also in what is also left implicit or in the background.

Our examination will show that while there are numerous similarities between "*Perpetual Peace*" and the Bahá'í Writings, these similarities are not only superficial, but also accidental and not essential. In other words, as long as we confine ourselves to surface presentations, it appears that Kant's proposals and the Writings are much of a kind, but in-depth analysis shows such is not the case. Indeed, because these similarities are based on vastly different foundational principles, they are accidental or coincidental, rather than essential and necessary conclusions derived from common principles. Therefore, any claim that Kant anticipated Bahá'u'lláh is only tenable when our analysis remains superficial.

### 1: A Brief Overview of Kant's "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"

At the beginning of the first section, Kant outlines the six "preliminary articles for perpetual peace among nations." (Kant 1983, 107) The first of these is, "No treaty of peace that tacitly reserves issues for a future war shall be held valid." (ibid) In other words, no treaty may have secret clauses that legitimize future declarations of war. Obviously such clauses would change a peace treaty into a mere truce. Kant's second article states that "No independent nation, be

it large or small, may be acquired by another nation by inheritance, exchange, purchase or as a gift.” (ibid 108) Territories and especially human beings are not “mere objects to be manipulated at will.” (ibid) This principle stems from Kant’s famous dictum that human beings are never to be treated as objects or means disposable for others’ use.<sup>10</sup> The third article says that “Standing armies (*miles perpetuus*) shall gradually be abolished” (Kant 1983, 108) for the simple reason that maintaining them lays unduly burdensome expenditures on the people. Article four demands that “No national debt shall be contracted in connection with the foreign affairs of a nation.” (ibid 109) Kant believed that contracting foreign debt especially with regard to foreign affairs encouraged profligate spending and military adventures. In the fifth article, Kant asserts the principle of absolute national sovereignty: “No nation shall forcibly interfere with the constitution and government of another.” (ibid 109) Finally, the sixth article states, “No nation at war with another shall permit such acts of war as shall make mutual trust impossible during some future time of peace.” (ibid) In other words, countries must not make use of tactics like assassination, encouraging treason in the opposing nation, or other underhanded stratagems that erode the trust necessary to build a future peace.

Kant next adds three “definitive articles of perpetual peace” (ibid 112) the first of which is that “[t]he civil constitution of every nation should be republican,” (ibid) i.e. members of every nation-state should be free and in government, the executive and legislative powers should be separate. (ibid 114) The second “definitive article” states that “the right of nations shall be based on a federation of free states” (ibid 115) that would eventually include all nations. (ibid 117) The third and final article states that “Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.” (ibid 118) A visitor to a foreign country has a right to hospitality “as long as he behaves peaceably.” (ibid) In other words, citizenship is universal, or global, so long as a person does nothing to undermine the peace.

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In the first of the two supplements, Kant explains that

Perpetual peace is insured (guaranteed) by nothing less than that great artist *nature* (*natura daedala rerum*) whose mechanical process makes purposiveness [*Zweckmaessigkeit*] visibly manifest, *permitting harmony to emerge among men through their discord, even against their wills.* (ibid 120).

In this passage (remarkably prescient of Hegel's theory of history) Kant seems to be predicting that human unity will occur not just despite the fact of war but also because of the fact of human war. Conflict, he says has not just driven peoples to populate the world but also to "establish more or less legal relationships." (ibid 121) Like Toynbee after him, Kant noticed that peoples entangled in war inevitably draw closer even though this is not their intent. Kant's second supplement requires that while political leaders must rule, they should at least consult with philosophers who bring a wider perspective to the analysis of any subject. Obviously, the idea of Plato's philosopher king still has some life left in it according to Kant. The two appendices which follow the supplements are concerned with various issues related to the concept of individual, public and international "right" which Kant believes must underlie any perpetual peace.

### **2: The Baha'í Vision of International Order: An Overview**

Bahá'u'lláh's vision for the attainment of world peace is divided into two major phases, a Lesser Peace which will "be established through the efforts of the nations of the world"<sup>11</sup> and the Most Great Peace which is "the ultimate peace promised to all the peoples and nations."<sup>12</sup> The Most Great Peace will be the crowning stage of the current chapter of human development. According to Bahá'u'lláh, the process leading to these momentous and revolutionary changes has already begun:

*The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed. (GWB 136)*

In other words, Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation has initiated the process by which “[m]ankind's ordered life,” i.e. politics, culture, economics and spirituality will be “revolutionized” or radically transformed in ways unimaginable in pre-global phases of historical development. Now that all human activities are globally inter-connected, radically new ways of thinking and acting are necessary for individuals and collectives like national states, economies and religions. Bahá'u'lláh prophesies that this may happen more quickly than we think: “Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead” (GWB 313) These changes are unavoidable because it is no longer reasonable to believe that “the world will somehow be able to continue muddling its way through world-problems using nation-oriented solutions.”<sup>13</sup> The current order stands in the way of human progress, i.e. hinders the full realization of individual and collective potentials and must be replaced by something else. This immanent transformation will be ‘revolutionary’ not in the historical sense of fomenting a violent upheaval but in the sense of changing the fundamental principles by which individuals and societies view the world and function. Such changes will be far-reaching and deep because they extend beyond the superstructural phenomena of politics, culture and economics and “*revolutionized the soul of mankind.*” (PB 117) In other words, these changes touch the very foundations of human nature.

Before humankind can attain the Most Great Peace, it must first establish the Lesser Peace. Bahá'u'lláh writes,

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*We pray God—exalted be His glory—and cherish the hope that He may graciously assist the manifestations of affluence and power and the daysprings of sovereignty and glory, the kings of the earth—may God aid them through His strengthening grace—to establish the Lesser Peace. This, indeed, is the greatest means for insuring the tranquillity of the nations. It is incumbent upon the Sovereigns of the world—may God assist them—unitedly to hold fast unto this Peace, which is the chief instrument for the protection of all mankind... It is their duty to convene an all-inclusive assembly, which either they themselves or their ministers will attend, and to enforce whatever measures are required to establish unity and concord amongst men. They must put away the weapons of war, and turn to the instruments of universal reconstruction. Should one king rise up against another, all the other kings must arise to deter him. Arms and armaments will, then, be no more needed beyond that which is necessary to insure the internal security of their respective countries. (ESW 30)*

Although it has spiritual aspects, the Lesser Peace is chiefly a political process involving the nations of the world. It will come about not so much by virtue of spiritual enlightenment as by the quest for national survival and mutual economic benefit, i.e. by largely secular concerns. These concerns may be correlated with some spiritual developments, but spiritual matters are not of primary interest. According to Ali Nakhjavani, the Lesser Peace “is solely founded upon political considerations and requirements”<sup>14</sup> and will be viewed by political leaders “as the last and only remaining solution to their political ideals.”<sup>15</sup> He adds,

although its future constitution will—to some extent—be influenced by moral and ethical standards, it will undoubtedly be devoid of the bounty of the spiritual principles of the Cause of God.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the Lesser Peace is primarily political and not spiritual in nature. This means, among other things, that the Lesser and Most Great embody two different forms of consciousness, one grounded in purely human will and without any concern for the transcendent aspects of reality, and the other grounded in transcendent divine will as expressed in revelation. These forms of consciousness are manifested in differences in law, culture, philosophy, social organization and norms, leadership the arts as well as the life-expectations people have. But the differences go further. We might also say that the Lesser Peace is superstructural insofar as it is not based on humankind's spiritual nature, i.e. does not involve the whole human being. Given the frailty of human nature, this is not assuring.

If the Lesser Peace did not lead to the Most Great Peace, humankind would never evolve spiritually. Shoghi Effendi states,

*No machinery falling short of the standard inculcated by the Bahá'í Revelation, and at variance with the sublime pattern ordained in His teachings, which the collective efforts of mankind may yet devise can ever hope to achieve anything above or beyond that "Lesser Peace" to which the Author of our Faith has Himself alluded in His writings. (WOB 162)*

This statement clearly means that the Lesser Peace while necessary, is not sufficient for the fullest development of human potentials both in individuals and in collectives. It is not sufficient because, among other things, "religious strife and racial prejudice will not have entirely left the hearts and souls of the human race."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in the last analysis, how much can we rely on superstructural political, cultural, and economic changes that are not grounded in spiritual transformations that have "revolutionized the soul of mankind"? (PB 117) We need more than good intentions.

This intermediate stage is called Great Peace, a terminology used in the Bahá'í Writings in Persian, and as elaborated by Ali Nakhjavani, the historical nature of human development means there will be an intermediate, transition period between the Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace. In this transition period, we can observe the appearance of some of the key components of the Most Great Peace.<sup>18</sup> This intermediate phase is the "Great Peace," is the time when "the Bahá'í Teachings will have beyond any doubt penetrated the organs of the Lesser Peace"<sup>19</sup> and when religious and racial prejudice will be eliminated. Bahá'í institutions will become influential at all levels in the unfolding unification of humankind and the renewal of all aspects of human existence. However, even at this point, the crowning achievement of this development is missing, namely the Most Great Peace. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh,

*That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error. (SLH 91 emphasis added)*

'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race, and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself. (SAQ 64–65) Of course, this spiritual unity will reflect itself in the governance of the new world order and the establishment of a renewed cultural, scientific, economic and political existence.

Because the Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace are phases of a single historical process, we shall discuss them both in our study of the Writings and Kant's "Perpetual Peace."

### 3. A World Federation

The best known feature of Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" is his proposal for a "league of peace" (Kant 1983, 117) whose goal is to "end all wars forever." (ibid) In Kant's view, the most practical way to achieve this goal is by means of a "federation of free states" (ibid 115) that will eventually include all nations on earth. As members of this "league" or "federation," all nations give up the right of their "savage (lawless) freedom" (ibid 117) to make war just as individuals give up some of their 'lawless' freedoms in return for the benefits of living in a peaceful nation. Restraining the exercise of some of their freedoms is the only way for individuals and nations to gain greater advantages made possible by cooperation, especially in regards to collective security. Kant says, "For the sake of its own security, each nation can and should demand that the others enter a contract resembling the civil one and guaranteeing the rights of each." (ibid) Furthermore, for Kant, the guarantee of national rights was an absolute necessity in upholding peace:

This league does not seek any power of the sort possessed by nations but only maintenance and security for each nation's own freedom as well as that of other nations leagued with it **without their having thereby to subject themselves to civil laws and their constraints** (as men in a state of nature must do). It can be shown that this idea of federalism should eventually include all nations and lead to perpetual peace. (ibid 117 emphasis added)

In other words, Kant's vision limits the powers of the federation to external affairs, specifically in regards to waging war, and does not envisage any jurisdiction over a state's internal issues. Nations will not be subject to "civil laws" the way individuals are subject to "civil laws" within the state. This view harmonizes with his previously announced principle that "No nation shall forcibly interfere with the

constitution and government of another." (ibid 109) The principle of national sovereignty, i.e. non-interference in a state's internal affairs prevails in Kant's proposals.

This aspect of "*Perpetual Peace*" shows that Kant's thinking lies within the framework of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) which established the modern nation-state system on the principle of absolute national sovereignty. Consequently, he is at pains to point out that nations voluntarily join the "league of peace" "*without their having thereby to subject themselves to civil laws and their constraints.*" (ibid 117) They are only subjecting themselves to a voluntary agreement regarding external relationships, specifically about war and the capacity to go to war and not about their own internal affairs. There they retain absolute sovereign rights. According to Kant, nations give up the right to war only because it is irrational: it replaces reason with force and it serves only those "who are disposed to seek one another's destruction and thus to find perpetual peace in the grave." (ibid) In short, it serves only the blood-thirsty.

However, in one respect Kant's proposal leaves the Westphalian framework behind, viz. the recognition that purely nation-based solutions to the problem of war will not work. Simple bi-lateral agreements among individual nations are not enough to ensure peace. Consequently, some kind of 'supra-national' agency is needed, a "league of peace" which ensures that all members are committed to the same basic principles, i.e. have unity of vision, and act within the same basic limitations, i.e. have some unity of action. This unity of outlook and action lays the foundation for predictability in internationality and, thereby, for stability and peace. International action will thus be driven by law and not by personal will.

Nevertheless, Kant's move beyond the Westphalian model is rather limited, more a matter of improving than actually dealing with the fundamental short-comings of the model. As we shall observe

below, his proposals leave too much power in the hands of individual nations and rulers to be truly effective in preserving peace. In short, “*Perpetual Peace*” is too restricted in its scope to achieve its goal. There is, for example, no clear method for dealing with recalcitrant rulers and nations or even those who renege on their commitments, i.e. no way of dealing with “rogue states” which threaten the peace. It is also doubtful that by themselves Kant’s proposals are enough to lay a foundation for a lasting peace. For example, he is silent about the need for a unified world-view among the peoples of the world—as distinct from their governments—or the abolition of racial, religious and class prejudice. These are not just theoretical quibbles. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century humankind has had bitter experience with the ability of clashing world-views or ideologies and racial, religious and class prejudices to plunge the planet into mass warfare despite such international agreements as the Kellogg-Briand Pact (General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, 1928), which was signed by virtually every participant in WW II. Obviously, purely political or diplomatic agreements are not enough to ensure peace.

The Bahá’í teachings certainly agree with Kant as to the need for a global federation in preventing war and to establish a “world federal system” (WOB 204) in which humankind will be “liberated from the curse of war and its miseries.” (WOB 204) Elsewhere the Guardian refers to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s hope “in the hoisting of the standard of the Lesser Peace, in the unification of mankind, and in the establishment of a world federal government on this planet.” (CF 126) However, while for Kant, the realization of a global federation or “league of peace” marks the terminus of humankind’s socio-political evolution, for the Bahá’í Faith, the Lesser Peace which brings about “*unity in the political realm*” (SWAB 32) is only a transition phase to the still more comprehensive Most Great Peace in which

*all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the shadow of this Divine... and will become a single nation.*

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*Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race, and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland* (SAQ 65 emphasis added).

In the Bahá'í vision, the ultimate end of our social evolution will be a unity based on spiritual principles which will over-ride differences of religion, race, class and nationality, and make the earth itself our homeland. This, of course, requires a momentous spiritual transformation that will, in effect, make politics as we know them, obsolete.

For Kant, such a vision raises concerns about national sovereignty i.e. the rights of nations. When all "*dwell in one common fatherland*" what remains of the autonomy of the national state? As he says, "Such a federation is necessarily tied rationally to the concept of the right of nations." (Kant 1983, 117) Only in regards to war-making can there be any limitation of national sovereignty or rights. The basic problem with this is that as noted above, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century we have learned by experience that establishing peace requires measures far beyond political and diplomatic agreements for reducing the ability to wage war; enduring peace can only be established when other, non-political/diplomatic conditions are met such as unity of world-view and the abolition of racial, national, religious and class prejudice. It is relatively easy for well-meaning or politically shrewd nations to admit that unilateral war-making is not a national right. As Kant says, "[F]rom the throne of its moral legislative power, reason absolutely condemns war as a means of determining the right." (ibid 116) Few would argue that being stronger proves one is right. However, the question that 20<sup>th</sup> Century history raises is 'How long can such good political intentions last if the foundations for peace are not firmly in place'? How long can they resist internal pressure from a population ablaze with racial, religious, nationalist or class fervor? And how long can they refrain from war in a struggle of ideologies? Kant, of course,

could not have foreseen such developments and, therefore, he set up no provisions for preventing or short-circuiting them. The Bahá'í Writings, on the other hand, seem to have foreseen such developments insofar as they prescribe, as we shall see, the exact measures needed to forestall them. While they do not use the word 'ideology'—who would have understood it at the time?—they do prescribe the exact remedies needed to undermine and undo the effects of these various forms of prejudice and their ideological outgrowths.

The Bahá'í Writings both agree and disagree with Kant's proposals in "*Perpetual Peace*." They agree that the "league of peace" must be a federation of some kind. Asked by an official of the American government how best to serve both the interests of his country and the people of the world, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised him "*to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism underlying the government of your own country to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world.*" (WOB 36 emphasis added) In American federalism, responsibilities and rights are divided between the central government which looks after the well-being of the whole federation, and the states which look after a particular part of the union. The individual states are united by a covenant or agreement but are not subject to an autocratic centralized government. In this regard, 'Abdu'l-Bahá also states,

*It is very evident that in the future there shall be no centralization in the countries of the world, be they constitutional in government, republican or democratic in form. The United States may be held up as the example of future government—that is to say, each province will be independent in itself, but there will be federal union protecting the interests of the various independent states* (PUP 167 emphasis added).

It is noteworthy that the "*federal union*" will protect the legitimate interests of its "*independent states.*" What these "*legitimate interests*"

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are may, of course, vary from one historical circumstance to another; this guarantees flexibility but the rights and responsibilities of the constituent states prevents this power to look after the whole from becoming a dictatorial centralized power. According to Shoghi Effendi, the principle of federalism applies even to the Most Great Peace; he describes the international form of government in the Most Great Peace as "a world federal system." (WOB 203)

This general agreement notwithstanding, the Bahá'í concept of federalism differs substantially from Kant's. The difference is not one of degree but of kind. As we have already seen, Kant writes that nation-states can join the federal union of the "league of peace" "without their having thereby to subject themselves to civil laws and their constraints." (Kant 1983, 117) Elsewhere he writes, "Nations can press their rights only by waging war and never in a trial before an independent tribunal," (ibid 116) and that nations "have outgrown the compulsion to subject themselves to another legal constitution that is subject to someone else's concept of right." (ibid) In other words, nations remain absolutely sovereign except in regards to war-making which they relinquish by voluntary agreement. There is no supra-national authority or tribunal where a state may be arraigned.

Such is not the case in the Bahá'í vision of a world federalism neither in the Lesser Peace nor in the Most Great Peace. Shoghi Effendi points out that Bahá'u'lláh advocates "the *inevitable curtailment of unfettered national sovereignty* as an indispensable preliminary to the formation of the future Commonwealth of all the nations of the world." (WOB 40) This preliminary to the Commonwealth of the Most Great Peace is foundational to the Bahá'í vision of the future world order. Humanity must abandon the basic principle of the Westphalian system of international politics in order to attain genuine security and progress in eliminating the basic causes of war. This alone makes the difference between Kant's "Perpetual Peace" and the

Bahá'í vision a difference not in degree but in kind. In essence, Kant's plan is still Westphalian in nature, and Bahá'u'lláh's is not and this divergence leads to a number of significant consequences.

For example, as Shoghi Effendi tells us, there will be more than a "league of peace"—there will be a "world super-state" (WOB 40) in which all nations will not only give up the right to make war, and, by implication, to build up war-making potentials, but will also give up "certain rights to impose taxes." (WOB 40) The political and diplomatic provisions for limiting the capacity for waging war are, in principle, present in Kant's dictum that "standing armies (*miles perpetuus*) shall be gradually abolished." (Kant 1983, 108) Obviously, standing armies must be eliminated not only because they encourage wars of aggression by encouraging arms-races that increase the risks of war breaking out, but also because they impose needless and burdensome costs on the citizens of a nation. However, nothing in "*Perpetual Peace*" suggests that the "league of peace" will "include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth" (WOB 40). For Kant, this integral part of the Bahá'í vision would go too far in requiring nations "to *subject themselves to civil laws and their constraints* (as men in a state of nature must do), (Kant 1983, 117 emphasis added) something which he finds unacceptable. Because it entails a severe curtailment of national autonomy, Even more unacceptable to Kant is the concept of "a supreme tribunal whose judgment will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration." (WOB 40) Obviously this entails a severe curtailment of national autonomy since according to Kant, nations can never pursue their rights in "a trial before an independent tribunal." (Kant 1983, 116) Such subjection would be exactly the kind undergone by individuals in the state of nature. However, historical developments have surpassed Kant's rather Westphalian version of global federalism. Rather than having

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absolute, even autarkical independence, members of the WTO take each other to binding arbitration on a regular basis and political leaders have found themselves charged and/or tried by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for policies they have enacted both abroad and in their own countries. Finally nations can find themselves being sanctioned by the U.N. for their behavior. Appeals to the principle of absolute national sovereignty are still made but they no longer carry the conceptual or ethical force they once did. The Westphalian concept of unfettered national independence is rapidly becoming an artifact of humankind's political past.

On this issue of absolute national independence and tribunals, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

*It is necessary that the nations and governments organize an international tribunal to which all their disputes and differences shall be referred. The decision of that tribunal shall be final... International questions will come before the universal tribunal, and so the cause of warfare will be taken away. (PUP 300 emphasis added)*

In other words, on certain matters at least, nations can indeed, be required to face an international tribunal which is akin to a Supreme Court in a federal system. Moreover, this tribunal's decisions are "final," i.e. not appealable to any higher authority and thus, binding on nation-states. Shoghi Effendi adds,

*A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. (WOB 202 emphasis added)*

The fact that this tribunal's verdicts are compulsory in "all and any disputes" involving the "various elements" making up the "universal system"

suggests that even non-state actors like NGO's, transnational corporations, cartels and international unions fall under its jurisdiction. After all, modern politics, especially at the international level, is no longer limited to state-actors as was traditionally the case. This position, too, indicates a substantial difference with Kant's proposals and outlook insofar as the Bahá'í plan is not necessarily limited to state-actors.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, it is important to re-emphasize that the Bahá'í version of world federalism simply applies the federalist principle of the division of powers to the international sphere. The central government and each constituent state, province, canton or republic have their own, inviolable sphere of rights, powers and responsibilities. There will be no autarkies. "*[E]ach province will be independent in itself, but there will be federal union protecting the interests of the various independent states.*" (PUP 167) With this division of power "the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded." (WOB 202) According to Shoghi Effendi, even though there will be "a single code of international law" (WOB 40) in the future world commonwealth, "the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded." (WOB 202) He adds that in a Bahá'í global federation, there is no intent "to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential **if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided.**" (WOB 41 emphasis added) Over-centralization is seen as a cause of war for which reason one of the goals of the future world is "*[t]o cast aside centralization which promotes despotism is the exigency of the time. This will be **productive of international peace.***" (PUP 167 emphasis added)

A federal framework is also conducive to the essential Bahá'í concept of unity in diversity, i.e. the goal of preserving unity while at the same time maintaining

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the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race (WOB 41).

Shoghi Effendi summarizes the Bahá'í position: "It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity" (WOB 41). Federalism is the only way to achieve this goal.

Because excessive centralism inevitably leads to tensions and hostilities, it is an example of 'structural violence,' i.e. social, economic and political structures that repress certain groups and deprive them of their rights. This repression is built into law, political processes and rules, social customs and economic arrangements and are regarded as 'normal' or 'appropriate' by those who benefit from the arrangements. Sooner or later, however, such structural violence erupts into open hostilities because it is inherently unjust; "the absence of justice is the principle source of social upheaval and unrest."<sup>20</sup> On this issue as well, there is a significant difference between the Bahá'í Writings and Kant, who simply passes over this subject. This is noteworthy because some of his predecessors in writing 'peace literature' such as Emeric Cruce and St. Thomas More touched on many of these issues as part of their proposals. Whether Kant was aware of them or not is a matter for Kant specialists to decide. What matters to this study is that in contrast to the Bahá'í Writings, Kant gives no consideration to the topic of structural violence.

The Bahá'í Writings make it clear that economic injustice is an absolutely intolerable form of structural violence and to cure it envisages a "world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized." (WOB 40) Unlike Kant, the

Bahá'í federal system recognizes that economic ties are necessary to establish and maintain peace both within nations and among them. Within nations, the Writings teach that the extremes of wealth and poverty should be abolished (DG 20) not only because such extremes are unjust but also because they create a climate for class conflict within society. By recognizing the “interdependence of Capital and Labor” Bahá'í federalism removes the basis for all concepts of class warfare, i.e. the belief that the interests of the working classes and of capitalists or investors are always irrevocably opposed in a struggle that can only end with the complete victory of one or the other. By saying that “Capital and Labor” are interdependent, the Bahá'í federalism suggests that their best interests can be managed so they are complementary insofar as each depends on the other. Thus, each benefits by restraining and conforming its demands for the good of the whole economic system. Furthermore, at the international level, making nations economically inter-dependent and, thereby making each of them an integral part of the global economy will help make destructive actions such as war economically unfeasible. The more national economies depend on each other, the less they are able to go to war against each other.

Finally, the Bahá'í federal world order will be one in which:

the clamor of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgment of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding **consciousness of world citizenship** (WOB 40 emphasis added)

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In the future state sought by Bahá'ís, some of the major causes for war will be eliminated, i.e. "religious fanaticism" as well as "racism" and lawlessness or anarchy in international affairs. The first two undermine peace because they are really forms of tribalism dividing humankind into "them versus us" factions and, thereby, creating a culture of conflict that is the necessary psycho-social pre-condition for war. Without a "single code of international law" there will be anarchy in international affairs which in turn engenders an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and fear of the unpredictable, in which arms races flourish. These, in turn, destabilize international affairs and often make it easy for wars to be ignited.

There will also be a monumental expansion of loyalties as people see themselves not only as citizens of a particular nation but also as citizens of the world. This widening of perspective is not merely a matter of sentiment. Our loyalties influence our priorities and these affect our actions. For example, the issue of global poverty elicits different responses from those who think primarily in terms of a global loyalty than from those who think primarily in terms of national loyalty. We would approach problems not from a particularistic perspective of one nation or group of nations, but from the perspective of the whole world. This is especially true in an age when very few national issues do not have international repercussions given globalism in trade, communications, travel, finance, military matters and increasingly, culture. Of course, this expansion of loyalties is not intended "to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts"(WOB 41) but an "intelligent patriotism" means precisely that we can recognize that the long-term best interests of our own country are in self-restraint and cooperation for the good of the whole global community.

The cumulative importance of these differences between Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" and the Bahá'í vision of a global federalism is that the Bahá'í vision seeks to remedy the underlying conditions that make war possible whereas Kant's proposals for the most part

seek remedies at the political or diplomatic level. Consequently, his proposals are primarily superstructural in nature and do little to remedy the underlying causes that are pre-conditions for war. Among these are international anarchy, i.e. too much national independence or diplomatic and economic autarchy; racism, religious fanaticism, “militant nationalism;” class warfare ideology, and extremes of wealth and poverty. “*Perpetual Peace*” has little if anything to say about these.

The diplomatic or political nature of Kant’s proposals is evident even from a cursory examination. For example, the first, “No treaty of peace that tacitly reserves issue for a future war shall be held valid” (Kant 1983, 107) is something that only rulers or governments can decide among themselves. What is or is not valid in international affairs is a matter of political convention. The same can be said regarding the rule that “The rights of nations shall be based on a federation of free states.” (ibid 115) Who else but rulers or governments could agree to or sign such an accord? It is strictly an issue of government-to-government negotiation and ratification. Here are other ‘articles’ of Kant’s “*Perpetual Peace*” that are largely matters of diplomatic convention:

1. No nation at war... shall permit such acts of war as shall make mutual trust impossible during some future time. [Assassinations, instigation of treason etc.] (ibid 110)
2. No independent nation be it large or small may be acquired by another nation by inheritance, exchange, purchase or gift. (ibid 108)
3. No national debt shall be contracted in connection with the foreign affairs of the nation. (ibid 109)
4. No nation shall forcibly interfere with the constitution and government of another. (ibid)
5. Standing armies (*miles perpetuus*) shall be gradually abolished. (ibid 108)

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The decision to establish and abide by each of these articles or conventions lies entirely in the hands of a nation's political and diplomatic leadership. Who else would have the authority to agree to and institute any of them? Who else could be responsible for maintaining them? Who else but leaders and diplomats could amend, abrogate or counteract them on the international scene? Of course, the Bahá'í vision of a new world order also includes political measures but it focuses equally if not more on establishing the necessary pre-conditions for an enduring peace.

Reasonable and workable as they are, Kant's proposals implicitly assume that if nations and rulers agree to these provisions, there shall be universal peace, i.e. that political will or fiat are sufficient to create and maintain peace perpetually. There are at least two serious difficulties with Kant's assumption. The first is the "*force majeure*" problem, i.e. external forces compel actions that a ruler does not wish to take.<sup>21</sup> Such actions may include violations of the "league of peace." Common examples throughout history are natural disasters such as prolonged unseasonable weather, disease and famine or unfortunate conjunctions of events ("perfect storms") like precipitous plunges in economic fortunes. If, for example, a ruler's people are facing starvation and a neighboring ruler has a vast surplus he will not share, the first ruler may not have much choice about going to war to get food to get territory where food can be produced. This violates at least one of Kant's rules, i.e. not acquiring territory by conquest. The ruler may not want to do so this but the people may demand it regardless of what treaties have been signed. Political will or fiat is simply inadequate to keep the peace in such cases. As we shall see later, the Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace outlined in the Bahá'í Writings have ways of solving these difficulties. World War I is another example of the "*force majeure*" problem. The balance of power politics was supposed to prevent WW I yet leaders quickly lost control of a seemingly unstoppable cascade of unforeseen events. Again we see that diplomatic means and political will

may be sufficient to establish peace but they are not always sufficient to maintain it especially in times of crisis.

The second weakness in Kant's reliance on diplomatic means is the "bad apple" problem. The inevitable succession of monarchs or changes in republican politics make it doubtful that political fiat alone can maintain peace perpetually because sooner or later there will arise one or a number of leaders who manipulate political, economic and social factors into an 'explosive mix' that suits their aggressive purposes. This is exactly what led to WW II. Despite the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1929) which renounced war "as an instrument of national policy,"<sup>22</sup> it was three signatories—Japan, Italy and Germany—which manipulated and/or violated diplomacy to bring about war. Again, this shows the limitations of purely political measures to establish and keep peace. More than treaties are needed to maintain peace. We shall examine below how the Bahá'í vision deals with this problem.

It is, therefore, clear that Kant's diplomatic proposals are incapable of maintaining peace because they do not address the underlying conditions that make war possible and, indeed, likely. However, Kant does appear to recognize the importance of underlying conditions for peace in one important—albeit political—respect. In the first place, he believes in a constitutional state, one in which the exercise of power is limited by law so that the will of an individual does not become the supreme power. To have "domestic legitimacy,"<sup>23</sup> a state must "cohere with the concept of right" (Kant 1983, 115) within countries. Without this coherence with right, a state becomes despotic and despotism facilitates war. In conjunction with this requirement for "domestic legitimacy," Kant stipulates that the "civil constitution of every nation should be republican" (ibid 112) by which he means it should have a division between the executive and legislative branches of government. (ibid 114) Republicanism also ensures the translation of the public will into political action, a development that he believes "provides for this desirable result, namely, perpetual peace." (ibid 113)

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According to Kant, in a republic, war requires the "consent of the citizenry" (ibid) and, therefore, will also require the citizens to make great sacrifice of materiel and lives, often themselves or their children. Except for self-defense, citizens are rarely inclined to go to war. Moreover, since in a representative government rulers "take[] hold of the public will and treat it as their own private will" (ibid 114) the public will is translated into political action and war will, thereby, avoided.

The foregoing explanation shows that even when Kant discusses a nation's internal conditions for peace, he focuses on the political aspects of national life, i.e. on legitimacy, power, representation, leadership and so on. This is not to suggest that these matters are unimportant but as the far more comprehensive Bahá'í vision shows, while they are necessary they are not nearly sufficient to achieve the abolition of war. From a Bahá'í perspective, this makes Kant's proposals deficient.

Furthermore, Kant's proposals are clearly associated with the concept of 'negative peace,' i.e. focusing on the actual fighting, either preventing it or stopping it once it starts. In this approach, peace is simply the absence of actual fighting.<sup>24</sup> Negative peace only addresses "overt, direct violence but largely ignores those social inequalities... [or] 'structural violence' from which overt violence often springs."<sup>25</sup> We shall examine below what the Bahá'í Writings have to say about 'positive peace' and the creation of conditions that facilitate peace, but for now it is important to note that the Writings also concern themselves with 'negative peace' i.e. the prevention or stopping of actual combat:

*Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal*

*order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation (GWB 249)*

Clearly, Bahá'u'lláh is aware of the necessity of preventing aggression which means that action must take place before the aggression starts. In other words, He recommends pre-emption, a controversial issue even in our age with a United Nations to oversee collective security. Nothing in "*Perpetual Peace*" suggests that the principle of pre-emption fits into its framework. On the other hand, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly mandates pre-emption, He says "*all should unitedly arise and prevent him*" i.e. He speaks in the imperative; pre-emption is a duty for leaders. This is vitally important in facilitating peace. If nations can be sure that potential aggressors will be prevented from gathering arms and attacking, then they can meet their security needs even while keeping armaments at a minimum. This, in turn, reduces military tension among states, i.e. "ensure peace and composure," and allows other, peaceful methods of problem solving to do their work.

However, Bahá'u'lláh's injunctions go beyond the principle of pre-emption. In His Tablet to Queen Victoria he says, "*Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.*" (WOB 40, 192) Again, it is important to notice the imperative mode of this statement. This is not a matter of choice, of political preference or even of popular will. It is an unqualified duty and this duty is identified with "justice." Modern history justifies Bahá'u'lláh's strictness in this regard. The events leading to WW II show the results of not following Bahá'u'lláh's commands: Japanese aggression in China in 1935; Fascist Italy's attacks on Ethiopia starting in 1934; and Nazi Germany's march into the Rhineland in 1936 are all significant preludes to the global conflict of WW II. Nor should we carry out Bahá'u'lláh's command in a half-hearted or sporadic fashion; doing so simply opens the door to aggression as various nations 'try their luck' in avoiding counteraction.

#### 4: Peace-Building

Let us now turn our attention to positive peace-building. In its broadest terms, peace-building involves establishing the political, social, cultural, economic and spiritual conditions that make possible an enduring peace. The concept of peace-building is based on the conclusion that "[t]raditional methods of diplomacy have proved ineffective in preventing and resolving... hostilities."<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that diplomacy is unnecessary, but only that without the foundations for a lasting peace, diplomacy is not sufficient to prevent wars from erupting. While diplomats can make peace, they are unable to maintain it without establishing conditions that make peace a more advantageous option than war. Peace-building assumes that if the right conditions exist within and among states, there is little if any chance of war occurring because there will always be more political, social, cultural, economic spiritual and even military factors against war than for it.

Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" really has only one proposal in regards to peace-building i.e. that all states must be representative and republican. (What that means precisely we shall examine in a moment.) This proposal makes "*Perpetual Peace*" one of the first examples of what is now known as "democratic peace theory"<sup>27</sup> according to which citizens of democratic states do not go to war, at least not against other democratic states. In this view, "the spread of legitimate domestic political orders would eventually bring an end to international conflict."<sup>28</sup> Peace is "fundamentally a question of establishing legitimate domestic orders throughout the world."<sup>29</sup> Kant would agree for which reason he insists that the "civil constitution of every nation should be republican." (Kant 1983, 112) Constitutional republican states are not much inclined to go to war because the traumas of war are not borne only by professional armies but also by the general population. The vast majority of people are generally adverse to such ordeals, though, of course, defensive war may be the exception. Consequently, according to Kant, if all nations

were republics as he prescribes, then war will be eliminated. However, Kant's assent to "democratic peace theory" is qualified because he does not think being republican by itself is not enough assure peace. That is why he proposes the "league of peace." Republicanism is part of the solution but not all of it. On this he is in agreement with the Bahá'í Writings.

It should be noted that we must be careful not to interpret Kant's republicanism as identical to democracy. Universal suffrage, a *sine qua non* for modern democracy is not even mentioned in "*Perpetual Peace*"; indeed, Kant is "no champion of democratic government"<sup>30</sup> in its modern form. He associates democracy as we understand it with "despotism" (ibid 114) because majority rule—"the tyranny of the majority"—threatens individual freedom. As we have seen before, Kant's republicanism only requires representative governments in which the executive and legislative branches are separate. The representation need not come from popularly elected representatives.

The Bahá'í Writings agree with Kant that representative government is, in the last analysis, the only legitimate form of governance. However, the Writings differ markedly from Kant in defining what constitutes a legitimate government. Unlike Kant, they show preference for popular democracy. Bahá'u'lláh states that although "*a republican form of government profiteth all the peoples of the world,*" (TB 28) He prefers constitutional monarchy which combines democratic representative government with monarchy. He writes,

*The system of government which the British people have adopted in London appeareth to be good, for it is adorned with the light of both kingship and of the consultation of the people. (TB 93)*

The British parliamentary system is, of course, a form of democratic representative government in which the representatives are elected by popular vote. At the same time, Britain is a constitutional monarchy,

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i.e. a popularly elected democratic government with a monarch who is the head of state but does not rule. Actual executive power rests with a prime minister who, as head of the government, rules in the name of the monarch who is the titular head of state and has largely ceremonial functions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly supports democratic i.e. free and consultative forms of government:

*Consider what a vast difference exists between modern democracy and the old forms of despotism. Under an autocratic government the opinions of men are not free, and development is stifled, whereas in democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is witnessed. It is likewise true in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought and right of speech prevail—that is to say, when every man according to his own idealization may give expression to his beliefs—development and growth are inevitable. (PUP 197 emphasis added)*

'Abdu'l-Bahá portrays "modern democracy" positively and associates it with "the greatest progress." The "old forms of despotism," whether secular or religious, hinder progress and development by stifling free thought and expression. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses the importance of freedom elsewhere too. He makes freedom the third of the 'seven candles of unity' and, in his introduction to the seven candles, individual freedom is the underlying condition which makes peace and unity possible. (SWAB 31) For example, he mentions the freedom to travel and communicate, to associate without hindrance, and to exchange viewpoints and beliefs. Because of these freedoms and the interdependence they encourage, "the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved." (PUP 197) Here, too, we observe how closely freedom, democracy and progress are connected in the Bahá'í world-view. The Bahá'í International Community makes a similar point, stating that

democracy is among the chief characteristics that ensures human progress.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, grassroots democracy is an integral part of the Bahá'í Faith's internal structure as seen for example in the Feast which "combines religious worship with grassroots governance and social development."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the Feast is an arena of democracy at the very root of society<sup>33</sup> and in that sense, of the Bahá'í social order.

However, in reflecting on the subject of democracy it is important to keep in mind Shoghi Effendi's statement that

No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy... none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned... It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded. (WOB 152)

The future Bahá'í Administrative Order will incorporate the positive aspects of the various forms of government without "introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess." (ibid) Indeed, Shoghi Effendi explicitly states that "The Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character" (ibid) because "democracies depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people." (ibid) Shoghi Effendi's words strongly suggest that democracy, while invaluable in the progress of human development, is not the end-station in regards to humankind's socio-political evolution.

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The Writings also associate progress and peace. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

*God has chosen you for the purpose of investigating reality and promulgating international peace; God has chosen you for the progress and development of humanity (PUP 434).*

Elsewhere he says,

*Bigotry and dogmatic adherence to ancient beliefs have become the central and fundamental source of animosity among men, the obstacle to human progress, the cause of warfare and strife, the destroyer of peace, composure and welfare in the world. (PUP 439)*

The reason for associating progress and peace is clear: unless people today progress beyond the "old order" (PB ix) and its restricted beliefs, attitudes, world-view and ways of thinking and acting, we shall be stuck with its political, religious, cultural and economic hostilities. If we cannot move beyond the "old order" we shall be trapped within it and its constantly erupting wars as we have been in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This, in turn, undermines all other positive human developments or progress.

The foregoing argument makes it clear that "*Perpetual Peace*" and the Bahá'í Writings converge on an "inside-out"<sup>34</sup> approach to international relation insofar as they both link the internal, political constitution of a state to its external relations. Each sees the establishment of representative and republican government as conducive to peace, although the Writings differ from Kant inasmuch as they require democratic representative government. Both also agree that representative government, while necessary, is not sufficient to guarantee peace which is why Kant proposes a "league of peace" and the Bahá'í Writings some form of a global tribunal.

However, unlike Kant, the Bahá'í Writings outline various vital peace-building measures necessary to ensuring peace in the phase of the Lesser Peace and its fruition in the Most Great Peace. In our view, the most fundamental teaching to eliminate conflict is recognizing the essential unity of humankind. Without a deep commitment to this idea, i.e. a commitment so strong it will over-ride cultural, national, ethnic, class, economic, religious and political barriers, there is no realistic hope of establishing a durable peace. We must learn to make loyalty to humanity our prime—though not only loyalty—and to realize that the best way to serve our own nation or sub-group is by serving the good of the humankind as a whole. As long as we fail to shift our primary loyalty to humanity we will continue to be divided along lines that sooner or later fracture into hostilities. The reason why is clear: a primary loyalty to humankind limits the influence of narrower national, ethnic, religious or other interests on our world-view and decision-making. Or, to put it in pragmatic terms, until the good of all as opposed to the good of some becomes the primary goal of global action, we cannot rationally expect to achieve and maintain peace. Anything less inevitably pits some against others and re-creates situations that undermine peace and facilitate war. Moreover, until human beings inwardly identify themselves with all other humans, i.e. until our identity as humans trumps all other identities, we cannot create a mental and spiritual condition that is prepared to make the sacrifices necessary for global peace. To use a sports expression, everyone must be willing to “take one for the team.” In support of this psycho-spiritual condition, the Writings frequently mention the importance of sacrifice. (PUP 130) As Bahá'u'lláh says, “*Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...*” (PB viii) Such a shift in our scale of loyalties is an absolute *sine qua non* for the elimination of war.

To support the contention that realizing the oneness of humankind is essential to peace, the Bahá'í Writings provide two ways in which

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humankind is essentially one. The first of these is the universal possession of a "rational soul." (SAQ 208)

*The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things. (SAQ 208)*

This may be understood from a secular and spiritual perspective. From a perspective of secular philosophical anthropology, this statement asserts that rationality is the distinguishing feature of all human beings. Regardless of culture, historical time or circumstances, all humans possess the power of rational thought which allows them to discover the truth about reality and reason abstractly. (SAQ 187–188) Even a cursory glance at human achievement shows that humans possess rationality to such an overwhelming extent that we are, in effect, different in kind from animals. In other words, there is a uniquely characterized human nature that we all share<sup>35</sup>—and this human nature is one of the foundation stones of human unity. Of course, this single human nature with its countless potentials can be expressed in different ways in different times and circumstances. But in the last analysis, it is always a clearly recognizable human expression. The oneness of humankind is also observable at the physical level; humans share a fundamentally identical physiology so that doctors trained in one part of the world can practice medicine in another. There are some physiological differences but these are accidentals adhering to an essential or universal identity.

Furthermore, it is possible to take a spiritual perspective on the concept of the rational soul. The rational soul is the basis for our spiritual lives since it sets us free from an animal captivity to the senses and allows us to reason not only about physical, natural phenomena but

also about non-physical beings like God, gods and ultimate powers, as well as revelation, the soul, Manifestations and spirituality in general. Consequently, the universality of religion and the efforts to understand and explain non-physical reality provides additional evidence for the universality of human nature and the rational soul.

The Writings also offer a purely spiritual reason for accepting the oneness of humanity: we are all the creations or children of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "Look upon the whole human race as members of one family, all children of God; and, in so doing, you will see no difference between them." (PT 170) Elsewhere he states,

*each individual member of the human family is a leaf or branch upon the Adamic tree; that all are sheltered beneath the protecting mercy and providence of God; that all are the children of God, fruit upon the one tree of His love. God is equally compassionate and kind to all the leaves, branches and fruit of this tree. Therefore, there is no satanic tree whatever—Satan being a product of human minds and of instinctive human tendencies toward error. (PUP 230)*

And again,

*therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life. (SWAB 76)*

Our 'humanity' must be our only over-arching identity, which, while including others, has priority over them. However, we are not to lose our identities: rather, we are to become "as" one soul and "as" one heart," i.e. distinct but harmonized by one supreme identity. The mandate of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation is to let this essential oneness of humankind achieve outward expression in the lives of individuals, societies

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and the world in general. We should cease indulging in a fetishism of artificial, man-made barriers, and seek ways to make differences work together, or, if necessary, rid ourselves of them altogether. As Bahá'u'lláh says, "*He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.*" (GWB 213 emphasis added) He also says,

*If any man were to meditate on that which the Scriptures, sent down from the heaven of God's holy Will, have revealed, he would readily recognize that their purpose is that all men shall be regarded as one soul, so that the seal bearing the words "The Kingdom shall be God's" may be stamped on every heart* (GWB 259 emphasis added).

In our interpretation, the injunction to regard each other as "one soul and one body" means that we must work together, cooperatively, as the human body and soul work together to engender a unified living being. Consequently, we must set aside all accidental differences that hinder laboring together on the common project of building peace. (Diversities that do not prevent us from working together are a different matter.) In other words, we must work organically, with each part in its own way supporting every other part. Applied to the planet as a whole, this means that we must not only be unified physically or by material means but also spiritually, as in "*one common faith.*" (SAQ 65)

These statements from the Writings make it clear that the oneness of humankind must be transformed from a fine sentiment for ceremonial occasions into a robust, universally applied principle that informs thoughts, feelings and actions both in individuals and collectives. For peace to be enduring instead of temporary, we must cease to think, feel and act as if race, religion, nationality or class constituted essential differences among humans instead of being mere accidentals.

Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" does not include the inherent oneness of humankind as part of its foundations for a durable peace. It is mentioned neither explicitly nor implicitly. The closest he comes to this idea is his concept of "cosmopolitan right" (Kant 1983, 118) or "universal hospitality." (ibid) Kant claims that "the right to visit, to associate, belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface." (ibid) He then adds that "the idea of cosmopolitan right" is part of an "unwritten code of national and international rights, necessary to the rights of men in general." (ibid 119) In other words, for Kant the oneness of humankind is chiefly a juridical matter established by governments and diplomats i.e. by fiat, in sharp contrast to the Bahá'í concept of a natural oneness based on human nature and a spiritual oneness based on the Fatherhood of God. The problem with a juridical oneness is that laws can be unmade according to the willfulness of rulers and governments. Consequently, such a concept is weak and, thereby, a poor foundation for a lasting peace. It does not serve Kant's purposes well. On the other hand, a concept of oneness based on human nature cannot be undone by sheer willfulness or political action; it is an empirical fact of nature and will assert itself through any attempt to deny or suppress it. Nor is our status as divine creations subject to human will. Therefore, the Bahá'í concept of the oneness of humankind is more solidly grounded than Kant's concept of human oneness insofar as we find one in "*Perpetual Peace*."

Another key principle of peace-building is the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "*The fourth principle or teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the readjustment and equalization of the economic standards of mankind.*" (PUP 107) Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" says nothing about this vital topic or even about economic reform in general as a necessary part of building an enduring peace. For that reason alone, belief that his proposals are sufficient to establish a permanent peace is not justified. The "maldistribution of wealth"<sup>36</sup> inevitably undermines both domestic and international stability and unity (COL 25) especially in an age when global

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communications make it impossible to hide the enormous disparities in wealth. This sets the stage for war.

*This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.* (PUP 181 emphasis added)

When, for example, a small portion of the world's people use up half or more of the world's resources, we would be foolish to expect a lasting peace. The immense suffering and consequent anger caused by such gross inequalities undermines peace in two ways. First, it destabilizes countries internally as various groups scramble for what little wealth is left and/or violent revolutions erupt and second, it destabilizes international relations as internal conflicts affect surrounding nations and political opportunism exacerbates problem through foreign involvement. Even a cursory glance at the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reveals how all of these scenarios can unfold and unbalance large portions of the world.

While the Bahá'í Writings recognize that reasonable economic and social differences are based on natural variations of ability and temperament, they also teach that these variations do not justify excessive disparities of income. Shoghi Effendi sums up the Bahá'í position by saying, "Extremes of wealth and poverty should... be abolished." (DG 20) Sympathy for the less fortunate is one reason: "Is it possible that, seeing one of his fellow-creatures starving, destitute of everything, a man can rest and live comfortably in his luxurious mansion?" (SAQ 276) However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives another reason:

*[e]very human being has the right to live; they have a right to rest, and to a certain amount of well-being. As a rich man is able to live in his palace surrounded by luxury and the greatest*

*comfort, so should a poor man be able to have the necessaries of life. Nobody should die of hunger; everybody should have sufficient clothing; one man should not live in excess while another has no possible means of existence. (PT 131–132 emphasis added)*

It is important to notice the “rights” language, used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This language implies that people have an innate and irrevocable claim to the basic “necessities of life” solely by virtue of being human. Conversely, this implies that society has at least some obligation to provide people the opportunity to attain their basic requirements. (Precisely how this is to be done, is, of course, a matter of intense debate and cannot be discussed here.) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes extreme disparity of wealth as “*the height of iniquity*” and adds that “*no just man can accept it.*” (SAQ 273) By implication, no just society can accept it either. The importance of this issue is emphasized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s insistence on economic justice for workers. In order to “*regulate the excessive fortunes of certain private individuals and meet the needs of millions of the poor masses*” (ibid)

*laws and regulations should be established which would permit the workmen to receive from the factory owner their wages and a share in the fourth or the fifth part of the profits, according to the capacity of the factory; or in some other way the body of workmen and the manufacturers should share equitably the profits and advantages. (ibid)*

To counteract these injustices, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá establishes the principle of wage and profit-sharing as a way of preventing an undue and excessive concentration of wealth which exacerbates tensions and hostilities within and among countries. He also teaches a just redistribution of wealth must include provisions for old age as well as what we today call a ‘progressive income tax’: “*taxation will be proportionate to capacity and production and there will be no poor in the community.*” (FWU 37)

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At this point, it is very important to issue a caveat that the Writings must not be associated with communism in regards to income distribution. 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes it clear that

*absolute equality is just as impossible, for absolute equality in fortunes, honors, commerce, agriculture, industry would end in disorderliness, in chaos, in disorganization of the means of existence, and in universal disappointment: the order of the community would be quite destroyed. (SAQ 273)*

The unfortunate history of communism in Eastern Europe and Russia proves the truth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's warnings on this matter. Thus, the Writings accept some differences in wealth as natural, but do not accept that these differences should be allowed to emiserate large portions of humankind. Moreover, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw how destabilizing gross maldistribution of wealth can be. For example, though it eventually morphed into something else, the Russian Revolution of 1917 was a reaction against the extreme concentrations of wealth and the subsequent emiseration of much of humanity. Its destabilizing effects were felt throughout the rest of the century. It is simply unrealistic to expect an enduring peace within or among nations without decisively remedying this underlying injustice which distorts and destroys the lives of countless human beings.

In addition to legal reforms, the Writings in addition to making voluntary donations also offer another way to achieve the appropriate adjustment of wealth: the law of Huqúqu' lláh. This law—which has many detailed provisions—provides a way of calculating a payment made of a percentage of one's increase in wealth, beyond what is essentially needed, to a special Fund at the Universal House of Justice for humanitarian services. The prime purpose of Huqúqu' lláh is *"the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, and a more equitable distribution of resources."* (PUP 102) In other words, obeying this law is one way in which virtually everyone can contribute to the laying

the foundations of world peace. The law of Huqúqu' lláh fosters the spiritual maturity needed to make people voluntarily accept the moderation of wealth, a new attitude that is itself a necessary part of the economic foundations of a lasting peace. Unless people evolve to find satisfaction and purpose in things other than the accumulation of wealth, the innate competitiveness of material, economic pursuits will continue to destabilize the intra-and-inter-national scene.

In the Bahá'í teachings, another necessary foundation stone for establishing and maintaining an enduring peace is the essential oneness of religion. Religion has always played an important role in human existence and, therefore, must be included in any serious plan for changes in international relations. No other social phenomenon in history has shown itself as potent in transforming large numbers of people as religion, a fact which suggests that Kant's plan to establish a "perpetual peace" without religion simply ignores human nature and is, thereby, unrealistic. Moreover, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá points out, "*It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.*" (PUP 361) Without including the potency of religion, it is highly doubtful that rationally based political plans for world peace will be successful.

However, religions can only fulfill their role as an agent of perpetual peace if they cease to promote divisions among humankind and decide to work in unity on the basis of their essential principles which are identical. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sums up this position quite succinctly: "*Truth is one in all religions, and by means of it the unity of the world can be realized.*" (PT 129) By 'religion' the Writings mean "*the essential foundation or reality of religion, not the dogmas and blind imitations which... are inevitably destructive.*" (PUP 363) Because the "*essence of all religions is the Love of God, and... is the foundation of all the sacred teachings,*" (PT 82) religion, or at least, religion in its original intent, is necessary for an enduring peace. When religions return to their

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essential truth, they, not man-made philosophical concepts, will unify humanity Bahá'u'lláh declares,

*O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men.* (GWB 215 emphasis added)

In a similar vein, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "*The central purpose of the divine religions is the establishment of peace and unity among mankind.*" (PUP 98) "[U]nity is the essential truth of religion." (PUP 32)

The need for religion as a 'partner for peace' illustrates the need for a unifying world-view, or, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states it, the need for "*unity of thought in world undertakings.*" (SWAB 32) If we are to have genuine peace, we must have effective cooperation, and effective cooperation requires a common framework of thought and action, i.e. a common world-view. This common world-view provides, among other things, the ultimate purpose for which we act; the allowable means by which we may act to achieve those goals; the terms in which to analyze and evaluate situations; the guidelines for planning, prioritizing and coordinating action. Furthermore, if different nations and/or cultures are to work together effectively, they need a set of "core values... which are sought to be maintained."<sup>37</sup> Without such a set of "core values" participants will have neither goals to aspire to nor standards by which to judge their efforts; in effect, they would be 'flying blind.' These values also provide the moral legitimacy to enlist popular support. In addition, they provide the "unity of conscience"<sup>38</sup> needed to motivate people intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, i.e. to awaken and energize the complete human being. Without all these advantages provided by a coherent world-view, our efforts to achieve peace will be half-efforts at best and counter-productive at worst.

Kant's "*Perpetual Peace*" does not, of course, promulgate anything like the essential oneness of all religions. This is a major short-coming that the Bahá'í Writings remedy. However, Kant does recognize the need for a unifying world-view or framework of thought to establish a genuine peace. As stated in "*Perpetual Peace*," for Kant the necessary harmony of thought is based on a universal ethical and juridical unity based on the concept of 'right.' According to Kant, "All politics must bend its knee before morality" (Kant 1983, 131) or "the right" (ibid 128) by which he means that politics must be guided by morality or 'the right' and not by expedience or any consideration of results. This holds true both for individuals and nations.

Men can no more escape the concept of right in their private relations than in their public ones; nor can they openly risk basing their politics on the handiwork of prudence alone, and, consequently they cannot altogether refuse obedience to the concept of public right (which is particularly important in the case of international right). (ibid 131)

'Right' applies to all human activities, including politics because the concept of 'right' takes precedence over all other considerations. Consequently, he is able to say, "The rights of men must be held sacred, however great the cost of sacrifice may be to those in power." (ibid 135) The alternative to such strict principles is social and political anarchy because actions will no longer be guided by a universal rule. Rulers and nations will simply do whatever is convenient. Without such law, how are we to judge actions or insist on certain standards? For Kant, 'right' itself derives "from the ought, whose principle is given *a priori* through pure reason" (ibid 134) which means that 'ought' and 'right' are determined by reason alone and not by expediency, prudence, desirability or consideration of consequences. 'Ought' and 'right' have an "unconditioned necessity," (ibid 132) i.e. the 'ought' and its resulting 'right' are applicable regardless of results or wishes. Kant approvingly quotes the dictum, "Let justice reign, even if all the

rogues in the world should perish." (ibid 133) Summing up his ideas, he says, "Seek first the kingdom of pure practical reason and its righteousness and your end [Zweck] (the blessing of perpetual peace) will come to you of itself." (ibid)

More specifically, actions are 'right' if they conform to the categorical imperative (CI) which for Kant has uncontested universal validity. Kant does not specifically explicate the CI in "*Perpetual Peace*" but make use of it in his arguments as shall see. In its first form, the CI states, "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."<sup>39</sup> In other words, if we do something we should agree that everyone else should do the same thing in the same circumstances. For example, if we choose to act on the principle of 'destroy your enemies,' we would soon realize that everyone—ourselves included—would eventually be destroyed because everyone is somebody's enemy. The irrational, suicidal nature of the act is immediately clear. Analogous results follow if we apply Kant's CI to lying, stealing, cheating or being lazy, to name only a few. Social existence would quickly become unworkable. "*Perpetual Peace*" applies the first form of the CI to nations, which, he says do not have the right to go to war

because it is then a law of deciding what is right by unilateral maxims through force and not by universally valid public laws which restrict the freedom of everyone.<sup>40</sup>

Even states must behave in such a way that its acts may become universal law instead of being arbitrary and special-pleading. The latter is a logical fallacy and inimical to Kant's rationalism.

The other form of the CI asserts that we should always treat all humans as if they were ends-in-themselves and never as means to serve the purpose of another's will.<sup>41</sup> In "*Perpetual Peace*" Kant refers to this form of the CI in his objection to standing armies, i.e. paying men

to kill or be killed is to “use them as mere machines and tools in the hands of another.” (Kant 1983, 108) It violates their right to be ends-in-themselves. (The whole modern theory of human rights grows out of this aspect of Kant’s work.) If we treat others as ‘means’ to satisfy our will, then others are logically entitled to treat us as ‘means’ too—a situation which rapidly makes personal and collective life unworkable. Special pleading or making ourselves an exception from either form of the categorical imperative traps us in a logical inconsistency, i.e. in irrationality, which violates our nature as rational beings.

Both Kant and the Bahá’í Writings endorse treating human being as end-in-themselves and not merely as a means or tool to be used to the advantage of another. The Writings state this in two ways. The first is through the teaching that we must love all human beings; to love another person is to value him in-himself, to see him as an end-in-himself, as a ‘Thou.’ There is no meaningful sense of separation or limitation to such love.<sup>42</sup> Of course, the Bahá’í Writings express this in a theological form as in the following:

*Like the sun, let them [“the loved ones of the Lord”] cast their rays upon garden and rubbish heap alike, and even as clouds in spring, let them shed down their rain upon flower and thorn.*  
(SAQ 257)

Another way of stating that all humans are ends-in-themselves is to say we are made in the image of God and that “*Inasmuch as all were created in the image of God, we must bring ourselves to realize that all embody divine possibilities.*” (PUP 113) Consequently, all persons are valuable in-themselves as unique, distinctive and irreplaceable images of the divine and must be treated as ends-in-themselves. Because they recognize that everyone is an end-in-himself, the Writings implicitly acknowledge that the rules of behaviour we apply to ourselves must be applicable by all insofar as we are all equally images of God. This agrees with the first form of the categorical imperative.

## 5 Why Religion and not "Reason Alone"?

The foregoing discussion leads to an important question vis-à-vis Bahá'u'lláh's and Kant's plans for world peace: Why choose religion over philosophy as a unifying world-view? Or, to put it another way, what does religion offer the quest for world peace that philosophy lacks? To answer these and related questions, it is necessary to examine Kant's proposal in the light of recent history.

According to Kant and the Bahá'í Writings, humans are essentially rational by nature. In other words, rational behavior and thought is more appropriate to our essential nature than irrational behavior though although we still have free will to act irrationally. Again, this is not specifically explicated in "*Perpetual Peace*" but underlies its arguments. That is why Kant says, for example, that we look down on those who prefer a senseless and lawless, "mad freedom to a rational one," (Kant 1983, 115) which restrains "the depravity of human nature." (ibid 116) The Bahá'í Writings assert that "[t]he human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one thing." (SAQ 208) What Kant calls the "depravity of human nature," they refer to as our "animal nature" (PUP 41) which we must overcome in order to live up to our distinctly human and rational potentials. Of course, we must recall that in the Writings, the rational soul requires the assistance of "*the spirit of faith*" (SAQ 208) in order to "*become acquainted with the divine secrets and heavenly realities.*" (ibid) Consequently reason is not fully independent in regards to ethical teachings which are ultimately grounded in a transcendental God. Reason may prove the validity of these teachings, but proof alone is not authority of which God is the ultimate source. Kant does not recognize any need for such assistance because he denies that we can ever know the transcendental, noumenal or "heavenly realities."

Despite our rational nature, humans do not always act rationally. At least some leaders do not care about logical inconsistency in their actions if they can get what they want by acting irrationally. They are not impressed by the universality of the CI, and are quite prepared to indulge in special pleading for themselves. They are willing to 'take their chances' and are agreeable to other leaders doing the same, thereby, ironically fulfilling Kant's dictum that we must be willing to see our behavior universalized. Then, there are other motives to act irrationally—such as a belief in national destiny or in a certain ideology or even a belief in 'war hygiene' as to weed out the weak and unfit. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, humankind has witnessed all of these motives at work. Consequently, it is clear that leaders must intentionally choose to be reasonable in their domestic and international dealings. That means they must be willing to sacrifice certain advantages for the sake of reason and rational morality. They must willingly forego the freedom to exploit another nation's weakness or natural misfortune, to pass up an opportunity to form an advantageous alliance or to acquire new territory or to weaken a political or economic rival. But why would they want to do so? What fundamental attitude would encourage them to make such a choice?

Given the historical record, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that while rationality is necessary to peace-building, it is by no means sufficient. What is needed is something that can motivate humans to *want* to apply reason, to *want* to be rationally consistent and to *want* to value themselves and others. "*Perpetual Peace*" explains how reason can help us do these things in political action but it does not provide a motivation to actively desire to do them, especially when it is to our advantage to ignore them. What can fill this gap?

What is needed is not a purely intellectual idea but rather, an existential attitude or stance towards humankind, the world, the Not-me, the stranger, the 'Other.'. It must be something that does not rely only on calculative reasoning about gain and loss, 'mine and

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thine' or 'friend and foe.' It must also not simply be rational but trans-rational, i.e. not just an idea but an idea with personal and collective transformative power. In other words, it cannot only be objective but must have a subjective aspect as well so that it really touches people's hearts because ideas that do not touch the heart, no matter how well conceived they may be, can atrophy all too easily. There must not only be a new world-view, but there must also be a new world-feeling, a deep, personal and subjective sense of connection to all peoples and a commitment to their future together. Purely intellectual agreement is not enough to bring about a new way of being-in-the-world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes this clear when he says,

*the Holy Spirit unites nations and removes the cause of warfare and strife. It transforms mankind into one great family and establishes the foundations of the oneness of humanity. It promulgates the spirit of international agreement and insures universal peace. (FWU 85)*

His reference to the family taps one of the strongest and deepest subjective experiences of love known to humankind. Applying these feelings to humanity would go a long way in establishing genuine peace.

The lack of such a trans-rational and transformative element in "Perpetual Peace" is only one of the decisive differences between Kant and the Writings. Unlike the Bahá'í Writings, Kant does not consider this topic at all, apparently believing that political and diplomatic action within the current framework is sufficient to reach his goal. He neglects the need for personal and intellectual transformation in both populations whose views must be represented and in diplomats and politicians who must craft and carry out agreements. After all, both these groups have had their thinking and feeling shaped by the competitive Westphalian nation-state system with its emphasis on absolute national sovereignty. Perhaps his proposals lay the objective

foundations for peace but overlook the equally necessary subjective pre-conditions for peace.

According to the Bahá'í Writings, the motivation to adopt the way of being-in-the-world needed to establish and maintain a lasting peace, must come from love. As Bahá'u'lláh says, “*Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...*” (PB viii) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains why this is so:

*God alone is Creator, and all are creatures of His might. Therefore, we must love mankind as His creatures, realizing that all are growing upon the tree of His mercy, servants of His omnipotent will and manifestations of His good pleasure.* (PUP 230)

Elsewhere he says,

*My admonition and exhortation to you is this: Be kind to all people, love humanity, consider all mankind as your relations and servants of the most high God... God has created all, and all return to God. Therefore, love humanity with all your heart and soul.* (PUP 290–291)

Bahá'u'lláh identifies the ultimate goal, saying, “*He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.*” (GWB 214) This universal love is based on the fatherhood of God: “*God is the Father of all*” (PUP 266) regardless of our worldly circumstances or spiritual state. According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “*we are the servants of one God, that we turn to one beneficent Father, live under one divine law, seek one reality and have one desire.*” (PUP 66) With an outlook of universal love, we naturally approach others with goodwill, and desire to treat them as ends-in-themselves instead of means, and want such treatment to be the universal standard of behavior. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states,

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*The third virtue of humanity is the goodwill which is the basis of good actions. Certain philosophers have considered intention superior to action, for the goodwill is absolute light; it is purified and sanctified from the impurities of selfishness, of enmity, of deception. Now it may be that a man performs an action which in appearance is righteous, but which is dictated by covetousness... But the goodwill is sanctified from such impurities.* (SAQ 301 emphasis added)

With universal goodwill as a foundation for their actions, humans are inwardly transformed so that humans will choose to act rightly not from a sense of duty or fear or logical consistency but from an inner *want* to do the right thing, a *want* to apply the categorical imperative to their dealings with others. With goodwill, each person chooses to be his 'brother's keeper,' and has a sense of "ultimate concern" for the well-being of others. Goodwill effects an inward character transformation that simply cannot be replaced by any outward regulations no matter how detailed they are. When goodwill is the basis of diplomacy, problems like deception, secrecy and under-handed methods—all mentioned in "*Perpetual Peace*"—disappear not because of formal treaties, concerns about logical consistency or notions of duty, but because with goodwill, diplomats lack the desire to commit such acts. Moreover, with goodwill, their peoples no longer expect them to indulge in perfidy for the sake of the 'national good.'

We know this from history: without genuine love and goodwill, diplomats will be free to support treaties as long as it suits their interests to do so. The 1929 Kellogg-Briand treaty is an example. All future instigators and participant of W.W. II renounced war, yet Kellogg-Briand was not enough to restrain the unscrupulous. Clearly, true restraint must come from within and must be borne of deep conviction, i.e. must come from transformation of character and a new way of being-in-the-world. Insofar as they neglect this aspect of achieving "perpetual peace," Kant's proposals are inadequate to their task.

It may be objected that the whole project of "*Perpetual Peace*" as well as the second form of Kant's categorical imperative, i.e. the injunction of treating others as ends and not means already covers the issue of goodwill. Indeed, Kant seems to give implicit recognition to the importance of goodwill by enshrining rules against secret clauses (Kant 1983, 107) and dishonest tactics. (ibid 109) One problem, of course, is that a diplomat may sign any number of such protocols without sincere goodwill. "A man may smile and smile and be a villain."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, diplomatic and political means, while necessary in establishing and maintaining a durable international peace, are not sufficient to guarantee the required universal goodwill. Leaders and governments, and with them, policies and attitudes, inevitably change. The decisive fact is that Kant does not specifically identify and develop goodwill or love as crucial components in "*Perpetual Peace*"; he seems to think that the outer restraints provided by treaties, agreements and purely rational agreements can create and maintain peace without any character transformation.

Another issue is the problem of "the transcendent."<sup>44</sup> Put in its starkest terms, the difficulty revolves around the question, 'Can we achieve perpetual peace by means of immanent reason alone?' Immanent reason rejects any suggestion of the transcendent, i.e. God, as a necessary factor in the quest for peace and confines itself to the phenomenal realm.<sup>45</sup> However, if perpetual peace has no better and more authoritative grounding than human reason, then sooner or later this peace will be challenged by another idea. Perhaps a belief will arise that war is good hygiene for the nation and species, that it rids us of the weak and unfit and establishes the natural dominance of the biological and intellectually stronger. If ideas have no other authority than themselves, who is to say if this last alternative is wrong or evil? All we can do is argue on the basis of yet another idea which also has its authority only in itself. Thus, we are caught in an infinite regress making a solution impossible—and this is a situation which makes perpetual peace an unlikely prospect. If immanent reason is

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insufficient to serve as a foundation of goodwill and peace, then we are at least obliged to examine the alternatives.

According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, there is good evidence to reject immanent reason as sufficient. Kant's proposals operate within the framework of what 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls "*material civilization*" (PUP 11) which pertains to scientific, technical, economic, government, law and so on. However, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá points out, and, as we have learned in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even a high degree of material civilization is no sure bulwark against barbarism:

*Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance, by the revelations of the All-Merciful and by godly virtues, and be reinforced by spiritual conduct... Therefore, this civilization and material progress should be combined with the Most Great Guidance (SWAB 284).*

Elsewhere he adds,

*among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with Divine civilization, the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind, will not be attained... These battleships that reduce a city... are the result of material civilization. (SWAB 303)*

Immanent reason and its resulting material civilization are unable to deliver peace to the world for the next phase of its evolution because they cannot effect the inner transformation, i.e. the universal love and goodwill, needed to bring about peace. Therefore, while necessary, they are not sufficient to reach the goal of an enduring peace.

This conclusion leads to a new question: 'What can religion provide that immanent reason cannot?' Most obviously, religion can provide the element of "the transcendent," i.e. the belief, however it is articulated, that there exists something beyond the limits of human perception and ordinary human experience to which we can and must develop a positive relationship. The universal presence of belief in the transcendent throughout all known cultures from all historical times and places, not to mention the strong resurgence of religious faith after decades of systematic suppression in the former Soviet Bloc provides irrefutable evidence that belief in the transcendent is inherent in human nature.<sup>46</sup> Whether this faith is intellectually sophisticated or not is irrelevant—the need it fulfills is the same. The transcendent may be called God, gods, the Tao, Brahman, the One, the Unknowable or anything else but in each case it exists beyond the limits of all phenomenal things and finite human beings. Ideas grounded in "the transcendent," i.e. ideas that 'come from God' also seem to show a far greater transformative power than ideas originating from men. `Abdu'l-Bahá confirms this when he says that the influence of the greatest philosophers comes nowhere close to the influence of the Manifestations Who are the Spokesmen for the Transcendent. (PT 164, SAQ 14) The transcendent origin of their teachings gives these ideas a legitimacy and authority that no mere human ideas can ever have.

This leads to an interesting line of thought. Even if one does not believe in the ontological reality of the transcendent, given the vast power that belief in it clearly has, there are reasons to act *as if* it really exists. Why not make use of this idea, since it will always be a factor in human affairs? Indeed, Kant did something very like this in *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant discusses "the existence of God as a postulate of pure, practical reason."<sup>47</sup> According to Kant, practical reason "must postulate the existence of God, as the necessary condition of the possibility of the *summum bonum* (an object of the will which is necessarily connected with the moral legislation of

pure reason).<sup>48</sup> Kant's postulatory theism holds that although we cannot prove God's existence speculatively, i.e. by logical argument, we must, nonetheless, postulate God's existence as a purely practical matter, i.e. as the basis of morals. How else can moral injunctions gain legitimacy and final authority? God is needed because morality is connected to achieving the greatest good (*summum bonum*) and it is only God Who can make this highest good a matter of absolute moral duty. As Creator of all, He alone has, or could have the ultimate legitimacy and authority to do so. That is why "it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God."<sup>49</sup> Consequently, on the basis of Kant's own work, we can assert that religion bestows a practical reason for basing the necessity of universal love and goodwill on the existence of God.

However, Kant does not make use of this religious aspect of his thought in "Perpetual Peace." This is a major difference with the Bahá'í Writings which, of course, completely reject the notion of a mere "postulatory theism" and recognize God's ontological reality, even from a strictly logical standpoint. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

*The existence of the Divine Being hath been clearly established, on the basis of logical proofs, but the reality of the Godhead is beyond the grasp of the mind. (SWAB 46)*

The "Godhead" is unknowable, but the logical necessity for such a 'Being' can be known by man within the limits of human experience and reason. From the foregoing discussion, we may conclude that a religious approach to establishing and maintaining world peace is more likely to succeed than a purely rational approach such as taken by Kant.

## 6 The Guarantor Question

Any discussion of world peace inevitably raises the question 'How can we be sure this is not just a pipe-dream?' Kant shows his awareness of this question when he writes,

Perpetual peace is insured (guaranteed) by nothing less than that *great artist nature*... whose mechanical process makes her purposiveness [*Zweckmassigkeit*] visibly manifest permitting harmony to emerge among men through their discord, even against their wills. (Kant 1983, 116)

In other words, the natural processes of history, including human conflict, ultimately lead to harmony and peace—even if it is against our wishes. Such is the purpose of nature. Kant, however, goes even further, adding

the mechanism of nature, in which self-seeking inclinations naturally counteract one another in their external relations, can be used by reason as a means to prepare the way for its own end, the rule of right, as well as to promote and secure the nation's internal and external peace. (ibid 124)

Kant's idea, which pre-dates Hegel's "cunning of reason"<sup>50</sup> asserts that reason uses usually conflicting human self-interest as a means to achieve peace both domestically and externally. In other words, reason itself takes an active role, as if it were a character, in the evolution towards a perpetual peace. Thus reason takes on a role not unlike that of a transcendent God, Who guides humankind through the wilderness of its own errors and evils towards the ultimate promised land. Through its 'cunning,' reason is able to make positive use of our mistakes, or, as Milton put it in *Paradise Lost*, reason or God will "Out of our evil seek to bring forth good."<sup>51</sup>

As we have seen above, the "rule of right" is intimately connected to the goal of perpetual peace since, as we have seen before, politics must be based on "the rule of right" if proper order is to be maintained. Kant even thinks that war itself is part of the historical process of evolving towards perpetual peace since "through war she [nature] has constrained them to establish more or less legal relationships." (ibid 121) The possibility of war forces humans to organize themselves i.e. adopt orderly, legal regulation in their national and international relations (ibid 124) and, thereby, eliminate war itself. Kant also recognizes the importance of "mutual interest," (ibid 125) especially economic mutual interest as a means by which "nature unites[s] people against violence and war" (ibid) and says,

financial power may be the most reliable in forcing nations to pursue the noble cause of peace (though not from moral motives); and whenever war threatens to break out they will try to head it off through mediation as if they were permanently leagued for this purpose.

Kant seems to recognize that the "league of peace," its political and diplomatic treaty and the establishment of "cosmopolitan right" may be incapable of eliminating war. This reliance on economics is a *de facto* admission of the insufficiency of his statement that "All politics must bend its knee before morality" (ibid 131) or "the right."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, even though Kant believes war "appears to be ingrained in human nature," (ibid 123) he maintains that the necessity of survival will drive human beings in the direction of order, the rule of right and, ultimately, peace. But, here, too, he argues on the basis of animal necessity rather than rational right and, thereby, makes his 'right' based argument unnecessary. Humanity will attain perpetual peace with our free and conscious participation or without it. Nature will compel us to act in the ways that will bring about peace despite our lack of interest: "in this fashion nature guarantees perpetual peace by virtue of man's inclinations to themselves." (ibid 125)

The problem with this position is obvious both from a Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í perspective. The natural “mutual interest” common to humankind has always existed—and yet has been remarkably ineffective in eliminating or even limiting war. Our personal survival and economic needs have not changed for ages; the needs of trade and finance are fundamentally the same (though now fulfilled in different ways) and yet war continues, and indeed, is itself a profitable business. Even class loyalty could not over-ride forces like nationalism as shown at the start of WW I when socialist deputies—who had previously sworn to oppose international war in the name of class loyalty—everywhere voted in favor of war credits to their governments in 1914. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine that Kant would not have known this, given the history of his own time, let alone previous human history. The inescapable conclusion is that economic motives are not sufficient to eliminate war. They cannot serve as replacements for goodwill and love, though they can support the efforts motivated by goodwill and love.

From the perspective of the Bahá'í Writings, there are several noteworthy points in Kant's views. The first, and perhaps most important, is the introduction of the transcendent as the guarantor of ultimate peace. “*Perpetual Peace*” thus gives the place of the transcendent or God to nature, which, according to Kant, has its own “purposiveness” in letting order, “rule of right” harmony emerge from conflict. We have already noted how Kant assigns an active role to reason in transforming human self-interest into an instrument for peace; reason itself has virtually become an active character in its own right. Seen in this light, Kant's proposals surreptitiously rely on the power of God, the transcendent or a somehow active reason as a guarantor of ultimate peace no less than the Bahá'í Writings. This is an area of agreement between them, but it is not, of course, an intentional agreement since Kant's whole philosophy rejects invoking the transcendent in any way. The fact that he invokes God, albeit in the form of a personified nature, indicates that Kant, too, has found

no better way of 'grounding' his proposals for a durable peace than in the transcendent.<sup>53</sup> We have already seen why in the foregoing discussions on diplomacy and economics.

Kant's position—at least in effect, though not in intention—is similar to the Bahá'í position insofar as the guarantor for world peace is a transcendental power or God. Through His Manifestations, God has guided humankind through numerous evolutionary stages and historical circumstances, but always with the theme of unity in mind:

*All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. They have taught that men should love and mutually help each other in order that they might progress. Now if this conception of religion be true, its essential principle is the oneness of humanity. The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice. (pup 32)*

In the Bahá'í vision, God acts through history, i.e. through human beings and Manifestations living in particular historical circumstances; thus, while the theme of love and human unity is always present, it appears in different forms through the vicissitudes of history. That is why Bahá'u'lláh says,

*Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us. (PM 14)*

In other words, even the troubles and hostile actions against us serve God's purposes. Another prayer emphasizes the same idea, stating that "All are His servants and all abide by His bidding!" (SWB 217) The concept that God uses history as a vehicle for the realization of

His plan is also found in the teachings about the process of world history. Jeffrey Huffines writes, that the Bahá'í world view

is shaped by the teleological belief in the oneness of humanity that is at once a cardinal principle and an assertion of the ultimate goal of human existence on this planet... Bahá'í theology presupposes a linear flow of history....<sup>54</sup>

The apparent chaos of historical processes notwithstanding, there is a goal and purpose at work in history, viz. the unification of humankind in the Most Great Peace. This means, in effect, that the goal of the historical developments we live through is, in the long run, to bring about the “perpetual peace” both the Bahá'í Writings and Kant desire. The Bahá'í International Community writes,

The central theme of Bahá'u'lláh's writings is that humanity is one single race and the day has come for its unification into one global society. Through an irresistible historical process, the traditional barriers of race, class, creed, faith and nation will break down. These forces will, Bahá'u'lláh said, give birth in time to a new universal civilization. The crises now afflicting the planet face all its peoples with the need to accept their oneness and work towards the creation of a unified global society.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, in the Bahá'í view, this goal will be achieved through the power of the Manifestation and religion and not through the power of immanent reason alone.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussions—and there is still more to be said—demonstrate the untenability of any suggestion that Kant's “*Perpetual*

## The Bahá'í Writings and Kant's "Perpetual Peace"

*Peace*" anticipates the Bahá'í vision of a Lesser and Greater Peace in anything but accidental ways. They are substantially different in underlying assumptions as well as in what they consider to be the necessary components of any realistic peace project. In the Bahá'í Writings, the foundation of peace is made of spiritual principals such as the Fatherhood of God, the essential oneness of humankind, justice, the role of the Manifestations and the primacy of love and goodwill. Political diplomatic and economic factors in addition to natural self-interest are secondary insofar as they gain their value, purpose and direction from the spiritual foundations. In Kant, the situation is virtually reversed. Spiritual factors, if they play any role at all, do so surreptitiously. Nature is portrayed as having plans and reason as cunningly turning our self-interest into public benefit. However, these concessions to the need for the transcendent are smuggled into Kant's argument.

These differences notwithstanding, some rapprochement with Kant is possible, at least from a Bahá'í perspective. Kant's proposals in "*Perpetual Peace*" can be integrated almost *in toto* into the Bahá'í plan; none of his articles contradict or undermine the Writings and some of them, such as the need for representative government and the need for moral conduct in politics are in clear agreement. Of course, Kant's reliance on immanent human reason alone contradicts the Writings, but this difficulty is mitigated by the recognition that he smuggled in the transcendent in order to guarantee the workability of his proposals. Generally, we conclude that Kant's proposals are better suited to the process of the Lesser Peace and not to the Most Great Peace which is based on spiritual principles and developments.

Unfortunately, the converse is not true. "*Perpetual Peace*" has no place for many key aspects of the Bahá'í plan, above all for the necessity of character transformation and the cultivation of love and goodwill towards all on the basis of recognizing the Fatherhood of God. This is obviously essential to the Bahá'í plan. From a Bahá'í viewpoint

this lack of a religious foundation is a serious weakness in Kant's program, if only because religion has historically demonstrated the power to effect deep and permanent character transformation in large numbers of people. This transformation may be for good or bad—but the transformative power of religion is beyond question and any plan to change humanity without it is self-defeating.

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### NOTES

- 1 Paper presented at the Irfan Colloquium, May 18–22, 2011 at Bosch Bahá'í School. This paper is dedicated to my parents, Dr. Frank Kluge and Annaberta Kluge. The author can be contacted at [iankluge@netbistro.com](mailto:iankluge@netbistro.com). Additional material by the author related to this subject can be found at <http://www.bahaiphilosophystudies.com/index.php>
- 2 Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, translated by Ted Humphries. Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1983.
- 3 also see Kant. *On History*, edited by Lewis Beck,
- 4 Frank E Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, p. 519.
- 5 Anthony Adolf, *Peace: A World History*, p. 127.
- 6 Anthony Adolf, *Peace: A World History*, p. 127.
- 7 See, for example, Shahrzad Mohtadi, "Conflict and Harmony Among Nations: The case for International Trade," in Chales O Lerche, editor, *Healing the Body Politic*.
- 8 Anthony Adolf, *Peace: A World History*, p. 127.

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- 11 Ali Nakhjavani, "The Lesser Peace and the Most Great Peace" in *Lights of Irfan*, Volume 9, p. 290.
- 12 *ibid*, p. 295.
- 13 J Tyson, *World Peace and World Government*, p. 75.
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- 17 *ibid*, p. 293.
- 18 *ibid*, p. 295.
- 19 *ibid*, p. 293.
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- 26 *ibid*, p. 1.
- 27 Scott Burchill et al, editor, *Theories of International Relations*, p. 62.
- 28 *ibid*, p. 59.
- 29 *ibid*, p. 61.
- 30 *ibid*, p. 61.
- 31 Baha'i International Community, 1998 Feb 18, *Valuing Spirituality in Development*.
- 32 Baha'i International Community, 1992, Magazine—*The Baha'is*.
- 33 *ibid*

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- 34 Scott Burchill et al, editor, *Theories of International Relations*, p. 59.
- 35 See Donald Brown, *Human Universals*.
- 36 John Huddleston, *The Earth Is But One Country*, p. 8.
- 37 Danesh Sarooshi, "Collective Security as a Means of Ensuring Peace Among Nations" in Charles O Lerche ed. *Processes of the Lesser Peace*, p. 163.
- 38 J Tyson, *World Peace and World Government*, p. 76.
- 39 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Trans. by H.J Paton, p. 89.
- 40 Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans. by Lewis White Beck, p. 101. I have used Beck's translation because Humphrey's is rather obscure on this point.
- 41 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Trans. by H.J Paton, p. 95.
- 42 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*,
- 43 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. V, 108.
- 44 I have borrowed this term from the German existentialist, Karl Jaspers.
- 45 The nature of Kant's work in this regard can be seen in the title of his *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, which derives God's existence from morality instead of vice versa.
- 46 In Soviet and Eastern European classrooms, "scientific atheism" courses were mandatory throughout school. The sudden resurgence of religion in these countries after 50–80 years of rigorous anti-religious education highlights scientific atheism's failure to convince large portions of the population and strengthens the argument for humankind's inherent religious needs.
- 47 Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Section V. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5683/pg5683.html>
- 48 ibid
- 49 ibid
- 50 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, Part III, Section 36. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/history3.htm>
- 51 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Bk I, line 165.
- 52 Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, trans. by Lewis White Beck, p. 128.
- 53 Once again we observe the truth of the saying that when God is tossed out the front door, He quietly returns through the back.
- 54 Jeffrey Huffines, "Bahá'í Proposals for the Reformation of World Order," Babak Bahador and Nazila Ghanea, eds. *Processes of the Lesser Peace*, p. 1.
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