

# Concerning Peace



Concerning Peace:  
New Perspectives on Utopia

Edited by

Kai Gregor and Sergueï Spetschinsky

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Concerning Peace: New Perspectives on Utopia,  
Edited by Kai Gregor and Sergueï Spetschinsky

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*To  
Tatjana Fell  
and  
Christoph Asmuth*



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# INTRODUCTION

## The Story

This book is the result of the stories of individuals. In early spring 2008 we were contacted by Tatjana Fell, co-director of arttransponder<sup>1</sup>, a well-known non-profit art gallery in Berlin. She was looking for philosophers working with her on what she called the "peace project". She wanted to create a platform open to artists and academics willing to collaborate with each other in the exploration of the idea of peace. Her interest in this topic came from what she saw as a contradiction in the way artists relate to peace. Her gallery regularly features and supports a lot of politically and socially engaged artists whose work often deals with the ideal of peace. But strangely, almost always artists only addressed peace through its opposite, speaking about war and not about peace alone. Why was it that those who dedicate their life to peace could only do so through speaking about war?

This contradiction led us to broader questions: Is it possible to address peace alone? Is a complete and authentic peace possible? What should such a peace look like? At the core of these interrogations lay the question of the conditions of possibility for a true peace.

True peace can seem elusive in our contemporary world where the omnipresence of war throws doubt on such an ambition. Although many industrialized countries achieved an enormous increase of wealth and technical power during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they caused more violence, suffering and injustice than ever before in human history. Despite the rise of ideals of freedom and equality – translating into new and supposedly better ways for citizens' participation in political power – the world was led to imperialism, colonisation, racist ideologies, genocides, totalitarianisms, world wars and post-colonial domination. History seems yet again to be the product of struggles rather than a series of harmonious developments.

But, is it not necessary to think peace outside of the terms of Realpolitik? Is not such a negative understanding of peace very narrow? Just as health is not the mere absence of sickness, peace should be more than the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: [www.arttransponder.net](http://www.arttransponder.net).

mere absence of war. Peace is an ideal and, in this sense, it seems impossible to address it alone because if it is an absolutely necessary dream of harmony and perfection, it is also empty and immaterial, having nothing to do with reality. Peace is a *utopia*: it is an unreal possibility or impossible reality. It is a beautiful and tautological fiction, an unworkable fantasy that does not seem realizable in our finite world. In this sense, peace always appears as a failed attempt, as the corruption of an ideal by reality. Peace is a *dystopia*, the real impossibility of our ideals. It is the embodied ideal and, in this sense, the ideal becoming non-ideal: the ideal which lost its self and became its other. The phenomenal thing called peace in our reality necessarily entails something un-peaceful, contradicting its very definition as peaceful. Between the two figures of ideal utopia and non-ideal dystopia an intermediary shall be found to reunify these two opposites. This would be a place where peace is omnipresent, absolutely accomplished and, nevertheless, does not suffer from this reality it has gained. Peace is also seen as a *pantopia*: a real and actual possibility for living peace that opens onto a perspective where peace does not find its location in the success or failure of actions toward an ideal, but rather in the persistent hope with which human beings systematically nourish it. From such a point of view, peace is not caught in a dualistic opposition between sensible and supersensible worlds, but is the expression of their synthesis. It expresses itself in phenomena like ethics, love, religion or wisdom, which are areas of pure ideals, yet still belong to concrete human life.

The two of us decided to take up the challenge and participate in this experimental project Tatjana Fell was proposing to us. For many months, we shaped it together with Tatjana, culminating in a series of events in October 2008. In the gallery, a documentary exhibition, along with numerous lectures, work presentations and performances, took place over the course of a month.<sup>2</sup> As academic members of the project, we organised two conferences at the Technische Universität Berlin. To frame these conferences, we chose the triangular conceptual structure between *utopia*, *dystopia* and *pantopia*; between the unreal possibility, the real impossibility and the real possibility of peace.

The first conference, entitled *Concerning Peace: Utopia or Pantopia?*, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, was perhaps the most ambitious in the sense that artistic interventions such as performances, installations, exhibitions, screenings, theatre and dance pieces were simultaneously featured in addition to the philosophical lectures. For the occasion, along with several

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<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: [www.peace-realspace.net](http://www.peace-realspace.net).

experimented artists, a dozen of young artists from a.pt<sup>3</sup>, a Belgian post-graduate art program, came to Berlin for a week and participated in the project. In three days, we had more than 20 international scholars and artists contributing to the workshop and a broad public attending the sessions. In contrast, the second workshop, *Philosophical Perspectives on Peace: Turkey, Germany, Europe*, on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of October, gathered exclusively scholars, but with the specific goal of using the tools of philosophy in order to think through concrete cases relating to the complex relationship between the three entities Turkey, Germany and Europe.

During the two events, we tried to emphasize the importance of dialogue between fields, ideas and individuals. Our central idea was that, in order to approach the unstable idea of peace, we had to force ourselves to cross the borders usually delimitating our spaces of praxis and thinking. Putting ourselves in danger, through going out of our usual fields of comfort, was meant to allow us to perceive the ideal of peace from renewed perspectives. During the first workshop, for example, this ambition translated into the maxim that scholars should speak in a way that could be understood and criticized by non-specialists, and that artists should be ready to open their work to questions and critiques. The challenge this presented for all of us facilitated dialogues during and after the sessions and allowed the questioning of everyone's own praxis from new standpoints. For us, transdisciplinarity was not simply a theoretical meeting of different fields of knowledge, but rather an encounter that had to be materialised through performative experiences of the others.

The city of Berlin itself played a great role in this ambition to render alive the question of peace, for Berlin palpably embodies the fact that peace is not a purely abstract question, but always directly concerns the reality of dreaming and suffering human beings. In Berlin, every street, every house, every monument or public building carries the living memory of people struggling in their daily lives with the ideal of peace. Peace is something that Berliners starved for desperately, seeing their people massacred in wars and their city crushed under Allied bombings. Peace was the lost dream of Jews, antifascists, pacifists, and all those who died under the Nazi regime. Peace was the city's hope during the Cold War, when the wall was suddenly constructed through the city, separating families, friends and neighbours. But peace was also the scandalous name given to states of injustice and unspoken wars and therefore became an object of hatred for Berliners. After World War I, the so-called "peace" brought the submission of the German people, producing an apocalyptic economic crisis that in turn finally led to the seizure of power by the Nazis. The

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<sup>3</sup> «Advanced Performance Training». For more information, see: [www.apass.be](http://www.apass.be).

former peace became partly responsible for the atrocities of World War II and, finally, the destruction and the occupation of the country by American and Soviet forces. This brought about another illusory peace, dividing the country in two and starting forty years of the Cold War. Finally, the reunification of Germany, which was presented as the final triumph of peace, simultaneously meant a victory for capitalism, transforming large segments of the East German population into second-class citizens, excluding them from the city's new economic, social and cultural life. For Berliners, peace was a burning need to be fulfilled, not a comfortable reality which could be calmly discussed as an abstract idea. Peace was a matter of life and death and its cruel absence as well as the simulacra of its presence profoundly marked the city and its inhabitants. In this sense, Berlin framed our discussions as the living example of peace's material and bodily condition.

The two events we organised were alternative philosophical venues in the sense that they tried to bring philosophy into what is usually considered its complete opposite. The goal was to try to unify philosophy and life: make philosophy alive and make life philosophical. If modesty prevents us from judging the success of such an attempt, still we must mention that the whole project was driven by a remarkable degree of enthusiasm. Some of the former participants helped us to organise a third venue in Istanbul, called *Toward Perpetual Peace*, at the Bosphorus University in late June 2009<sup>4</sup>. Referring to Kant, it attempted to see what relevance an idealist conception of peace could yet have in our contemporary world. The present book brings together a selection of the lecturers of the two first conferences who accepted to write an essay inspired by their original contribution to the peace project.

## The dynamic

The present book resembles its many authors and, to a large extent, its two editors, as we were the ones who initiated the whole project. The overall conception of peace it defends is to be found in a dynamic that demonstrates both the philosophical message resulting from the project and, at the same time, the process that made it possible. This dynamic expresses the dreams, inquiries, doubts and discoveries that animated both the participants and organizers during the preparation and course of the peace project. Such a dynamic can probably be best characterized by the idea of

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<sup>4</sup> Workshop co-organised at the Bosphorus University by: Sun Demirli, Kai Gregor, Zübeyde Karadağ, Sergueï Spetschinsky and Lucas Thorpe.

idealism, in the sense that it was conducted with a deep confidence that beliefs can become true, that ideals are not doomed to stay abstract wishes, but can and must be realised.

This idealism is a belief in philosophy, a belief that philosophy's purpose to understand the infinitely complex world is necessary and that such an understanding can and must change the world for the better. Addressing peace for itself and in itself, positively, and not negatively as the mere shadow of war's omnipresence, is an idealist scheme. Peace, as a moral concept of perfection and harmony, is a utopia, a pure dream. To pretend to even speak about peace itself is already a contradiction. Peace may be the most important thing for human beings, it nevertheless has to stay empty, because as soon as it is filled with discourses or actions it loses the purity and absoluteness nevertheless that precisely defines it as peaceful. To think peace is idealist in a radical sense because it means trying to achieve it in knowing perfectly well that one will necessarily fail. And despite this tragic reality of peace, idealism tells us we must try to achieve it.

Idealism brings with it the idea that to think peace is already to achieve peace, that to philosophize is already a kind of militant action. Thinking is not limited to academic circles: it must be made public and realised in concrete political, social, historical and cultural realities. All the contributions to this book are written by people who believe that to think peace is not only a theoretical question, but a practical one as well and that, in order to address the question of peace fully and consistently one must also fight for its realisation.

Such understanding of both peace and philosophy professes its own naivety. At the origin of our attempt lies indeed a radically naive statement: one refuses the world as it is for the belief that it must be shaped as it should be. The conviction that our perspectives should always be shifted from a "is" to a "must" constitutes the very condition of possibility of any authentic attempt to philosophize about peace: behind such an attempt one always finds a power to say "*no!*" to the structural inertia of reality. Without this fundamental anti-fatalism, thinking peace is contradictory: it is like pretending to think an idea without believing that there are ideas. As both a starting point and conclusion of the peace-project, we had the certainty that the utopia of peace could never become real, always affected by its dystopian reality. Nevertheless, the pantopian ideal of peace seems to play an essential role as a condition of possibility for human action. Despite our innumerable non-ideal limitations as material beings, our ideals of peace play a grounding role in human condition as counter-factual criteria or regulative ideas for the evaluation of factual reality. Without a

doubt, human beings are constitutively finite. But their hope of overcoming finitude is only to be found in their capacity to long for utopian ideals. Naivety is not only the collateral damage of philosophers trying to think peace, but their very ability to do so. Idealism's naivety transforms the abstract thinking of peace into a duty to embody philosophy in the world.

Admittedly, such a self-proclaimed naivety cannot be the only path to approach peace. Insofar peace alone is an empty concept about which nothing really proper can be said, one has to develop material strategies in order to get a glimpse of it, that is to say, one must talk of non-ideal war in order to get a grasp of ideal peace. A contradiction is at the origin of idealistic philosophical attempts: the supersensible peace always demands a sensible occasion to make itself approachable. And for philosophers, to attempt writing about peace means to attempt overcoming this contradiction.

Such a contradiction finds its concrete form in the unwinding of the peace-project itself. Editing this book, we noticed that it contains an unusual diversity, at least compared to what is common within European academia in philosophy: the contributors to the present book are 45 percent women and 45 percent non-European people. As a sign of our own limitations, reaching such a (relative) diversity was never part of our agenda. Editing this book and central parts of the peace project, we are still two white European men working in Western academic institutions whose research projects are mostly centred on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century transcendental philosophy and German Idealism. But despite our particular identities, the dynamic produced by the project allowed an unusual openness that was able to shake off some of the illegitimate rules structuring our reality. Everything happened as if setting the project as idealistic served as a self-fulfilling prophecy: understanding peace as an ideal allowed the overcoming of some of our own particularities and the emergence of something bigger than us, something we never conceived of at the outset of the project.

All the contributions to this book take account of idealism's inherent contradiction and challenge it by taking some kind of phenomenal pretext in order to think peace. Taking a radically naïve stance, their authors create opportunities for ideals and reality to meet by addressing personal and concrete concerns of theirs, making clear that philosophy is at first the expression of one's engagement toward ideals long before it is a purely theoretical praxis. In focusing on their personal engagement, the authors all acknowledge peace's absolute ideality and, in doing so, enable utopian peace to gain some reality. Courage and enthusiasm are the starting points of such a venture. Nothing, indeed, guarantees its success and it may very

well result in failure or risible progress. But what could be worse than not having had the audacity to try?

## The book

Four chapters structure the present book in representing one possible philosophical perspective on peace. Each of these perspectives groups essays more by their method than their content. In other words, it represents more a possible approach to peace by philosophy, rather than a specific view on peace. Addressing successively the concepts of peace, politics, history and culture, each chapter offers a different kind of pretext for philosophers to speak about peace.

The first chapter focuses on an abstract reflection on the *concept of peace*. It approaches peace in its most theoretical sense, using abstract ideas rather than concrete empirical examples and investigates peace's relation – or absence of relation – to things like the very nature of human being, morality and truth. *Cristiana Senigaglia* introduces the collection of essays with a general reflection on peace, situating it in both its conceptual and historical framework. She outlines the signification, status and conditions of possibility of utopian ideals through laying out some of the main past and contemporary debates on peace. Drawing on these debates, she refutes an indulgent understanding of war as a necessary evil and constructs a positive concept of peace as a dynamic that must be embodied in life and society by concrete practices of mediation. Proceeding with the attempt to produce a positive concept of peace, *Raghunath Ghosh* relies on multiple Indian philosophical traditions. Based on Sanskrit language and the Upanisadic tradition, he demonstrates how peace can be thought in connection with the human body as a way to control our sense organs through practices like yoga in order to avoid pain and inner disequilibrium. From the Buddhist tradition, he shows how such an ascetic practice can translate into an ethics when applied to principles of action and thereby allows for the realisation of peace inside as well as outside oneself. *Manos Perrakis* uses a similar method of taking a particular historical practice as a model to positively think the very concept of peace. He considers how instrumental music, seen as the best example of a non-representational art made of pure aesthetical forms, can serve as a figure for understanding peace. According to him, music reminds us of peace in the sense that it succeeds in conveying to us a sense of freedom and harmony, although it is caught in a contradiction between, on the one hand, its mathematical and rational structure and, on the other hand, the purely emotional response it produces inside us. Taking an opposite stance to that of these first essays,

*Sandra Pinardi* interrogates the possibility for a radically non-idealistic understanding of peace. Aiming to see in which sense utopia can be understood as an always already present rather than a non-existing space, she presents human being as fundamentally characterized by powerlessness and fragility. Doing so, she turns ethics into the task of postponing the moment of inhumanity, rather than the accomplishment of an absent ideal. From this standpoint, peace is always genuine and utopia always an elusive place in the sense that it does not aim at the achievement of a perpetual peace but rather at a perpetual search for peace. *Lars Leeten* continues in this endeavour to get rid of a teleological framework in order to define peace positively. Unlike Sandra Pinardi, he refuses to enter into metaphysical considerations on the nature of human being, but concentrates his attention on the matter of the communicative processes leading to peace. For Lars Leeten, the very core of peace does not reside in a moral norm or ideal but in a communal practice. He sees this practice functioning as a non-codified harmony that shows itself in the course of action and cannot be definitively fixed through rational speech. True peace is to be found in the social interaction and the multiple interactions with special forms of life aiming at peace rather than in a fixed norm of what peace should be. *Arthur Kok* is also interested in revealing the underlying non-utopian structure characterizing human desires. Basing his argument on the analysis of Paolo Pasolini's movie *Teorema*, he shows how this desire is always fated to the frustrating pursuit of a never-ending quest for self-accomplishment if it does not acknowledge itself as fundamentally connected to love. For Arthur Kok, utopian desires must dare to be truly idealistic and avoid focusing on material realisations.

The second chapter reflects on the way peace is most often talked about, namely, as a matter of *politics*. Peace indeed exists foremost for communities of human beings interacting with each other on the national or international political sphere, not as a mere abstract concept. Studying several cases of the manifestation of peace within politics, this second chapter interrogates the relationship between the idea of peace and politics, showing how the former is in fact constitutive of the very nature of the latter. *Sergueï Spetschinsky*, drawing on some of Kant's remarks, attempts to think this consubstantial origin of peace and politics. He presents what he identifies as the fundamental contradiction of this relationship: peaceful utopias are never matched by concrete political reality, which therefore systematically appears as an illegitimate form of peace. For him, it is only if this paradox is acknowledged that there is a chance for political utopia to be revived and then to be realised through human beings' democratic struggle for truth in the face of arbitrary political powers. *Sharon*



*Anderson-Gold* demonstrates how an in-depth analysis of Kant's concept of hospitality provides a powerful ground for a ruling of international relations that would authentically aim at world peace. She shows how hospitality, in contrast to its use by 19<sup>th</sup> century imperial powers, does not simply mean the opening of borders to a free commerce of goods and labour, but is a principle demanding fair and equal relationships between all states and implies the creation of impartial international organisations representing all nations equally. *Harry Lesser*, also inspired by Kant's views on hospitality, lays out an interpretation that is, to an extent, the obverse of Sharon Anderson-Gold's. Considering both the grounds for restricting and the grounds for supporting such a right for individuals to be welcomed everywhere in the world in order to offer one's labour for sale and not as a principle ruling directly international relations between states, Harry Lesser discusses how a movement of free labour may or not be a condition supporting world peace. Questioning the restrictions and support to be given such a right, he concludes his argument by defending the idea of world citizenship. Reflecting on the results of policies of free labour that encouraged Turkish people to come to Germany after World War II as "guest workers", *Abdullah Onur Aktaş* uses Nietzsche's thought in order to think migration and integration. The concept of "ascetic ideals", describing a country as inhabited by ideals of pure social unity translating into fear of change and difference, serves to diagnose the causes of integration's failure. The concept of "tragic wisdom", in seeing difference and change as beneficial and necessary parts of life, proposes a solution to such failure in suggesting a double understanding of integration, where the existing society must adapt to its newly arrived members just as those new members must adapt to the existing society. *Rachael Sotos* interrogates Sharon Anderson-Gold's advocacy for fair international institutions in discussing some of the issues inherent to their existence. She uses Slavoj Žižek's thought on morals, ethics and politics to highlight the figure of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights who was killed in Iraq in August 2003 – a man who devoted his life to peace – to show how analysing Vieira de Mello's utopian practice with Žižek's dystopian critical thinking generates, in fact, an inspiring model for understanding the task of international institutions.

The third chapter, in considering the idea of peace from the perspective of *history*, demonstrates the importance of context for the kind of relationship human beings were able to entertain with peace. Putting peace into a context, such an historical standpoint, relativizes utopian ideals in uncovering the ways they were often exploited for manipulating people's aspirations to peace. Doing so, history also offers the critical power to enable a

renewed idealistic attempt to make peace happen in avoiding the mistakes of the past. *Egidius Berns* reflects on the meaning of Europe's construction, which is usually counted among the main contemporary examples of a realised utopia, through tracing the genealogy of its flag. Although the European flag can be interpreted in rational terms as reflecting only political concerns, one can also see it as secretly carrying Catholic symbols. Furthermore, history reveals that major actors in its creation intended such similarities, trying to make the Catholic faith a central part of European construction. Through this case study, *Egidius Berns* interrogates the opposition between reason and faith, thinking through the relationship between utopian realisation of peace, supposedly creating a public space for the universal to overcome the particular, and its contrary, the particular interest of individuals understood as a dystopian force working against such a universally shared public space. *Kenichi Onodera* takes up this strategy of questioning peace with the tools of genealogy of representations and proposes a renewed understanding of "Germania", the major female mythological figure representing the German people. He retraces the history of Germania from antiquity, where she is pictured as a weak and sorrowful goddess representing the lack of autonomy of the German-speaking territories, to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where she becomes the symbol of the newly born German nationalism. *Kenichi Onodera* shows the progressive transformation of Germania as a martial figure along with the anticipation and constitution of the Prussian nation state, of which Kleist's depiction serves as paradigmatic example. He nuances such ideological use by Hölderlin's poetic description of Germania as an attempt to question imperialism and make German nationalism an ideal of peaceful unity.

The fourth and last chapter studies the importance of *cultures* in pacifying the world. As some are announcing a clash of civilisations, one can ask oneself if, instead of being menacing, cultural identities of individuals and communities cannot rather be counted among the main factors for bringing peace in many of the current and future conflicts affecting humankind. *Paula Restrepo* and *Julián Pachó* provide us with a general presentation of these possible roles for culture within a worldwide pacification process. They argue that rather than being cause of future conflicts, a diversity of cultures is a major factor for achieving higher levels of union and common understanding. Presenting as desirable a future "clash of civilizations", redefined as a global dialogue and interaction between cultures, they present knowledge of other cultures as the main means for a pacifying intercultural dialogue. *Fulya Özlem* considers concrete ways to achieve such intercultural dialogue within contemporary liberal democracies. Going along with liberalism's presupposition that the states must be

neutral in terms of moral choices and must maximize the individual freedom of their citizens to make such choices, she argues that the subsequent duty of political institutions, in order to create truly free and autonomous individuals, is to secure their access to other cultures through travelling and learning the language and culture of others. She calls "cosmocultural" such an understanding of liberalism, in the sense that it combines the advantages of both cosmopolitanist and muticulturalist theories. Fitting into this frame for which the state should support intercultural dialogue in order to make individuals more free, *Sinem Meral* presents the strength of literary translation for helping to solve problems of cultural conflicts. Focusing on the case of the role of translation of both German and Turkish literary works to help solve issues of integration of Turkish communities in Germany, she considers the translator as an intercultural mediator. She presents several authors and their works and advocates for policies of state support to the translation of quality literary works facilitating intercultural understanding. *David Tittensor* makes a strong argument against the idea of a clash of civilizations in presenting the movement of "Schools of Love" created by the Turkish Sufi Fethullah Güllen. Taking this movement as an example of a strong cultural identity, he shows how it can lead to an educational system strongly promoting humanism, ethics and mutual understanding. In describing Güllen's legacy, David Tittensor closes this collection of essays by offering us a concrete reason to have faith in the fact that utopia is not doomed to fail, but, in fact, can become real.

—*Sergueï Spetschinsky* and *Kai Gregor*  
Berlin, Spring 2010



# **CONCEPT OF PEACE**

# FOR A DYNAMIC CONCEPT OF PEACE

CRISTIANA SENIGAGLIA

## Peace as an Ideal

That peace is to be considered as a utopian concept belonging to the realm of irreality, seems to be either misleading or acceptable only to a very limited extent. If we agree on the statement, that peace and war are understood as opposites, excluding each other at least from an ideal point of view, we should also conclude that the utopia of peace would entail the "pantopia" of war, that is, its universal presence. However, this can be refuted even by considering the arguments justifying the necessity or inevitability of war itself. When people adduce that there is always (or there has always been) war in the world, they make reference to a globally calculated phenomenon. They should more precisely say: "There is always war in some part of the world". But this means strongly reducing the range of their affirmation or alternatively to reckon with odd or absurd consequences. Using an analogous inference, we could then namely claim that there is no life on earth, because there are always people (or animals, or plants) that somewhere die. Considering this, if it is possible to speak of the "utopia" of peace, it has to be related to the absolute ideal of the "perpetual peace", which lays claim to being universal and generally shared.

On the other hand, that we do not put up with the state of war as a normal, and prevailing condition, can be deduced from the fact that the language and conceptualization of war often and constitutively refer to a "state of exception". Even the theoreticians of the natural right, who proceed from the description of an initial and generalized state of war, are firmly convinced that we have to abandon it, as we could not endure it nor permanently live with it.<sup>1</sup> In other words, they exclude the possibility that living in a continuous condition of war would be bearable, desirable, or profitable. The French sociologist Raymond Aron remarks to this respect in his book *Peace and War*:

I have chosen war as a starting-point, because the strategical-diplomatical behaviour relates to the potential case of an armed conflict. [...] This time

we will consider peace as the starting-point, because peace is reasonably the aim, societies strive after.<sup>2</sup>

If war is taken as a condition brought about by organized, armed forces, then it has to be treated as a concrete possibility which can become real and becomes real, but not as a permanent characteristic forming political relations.

Nevertheless, also by considering peace as an absolute ideal, it is possible to adduce reasons which allow for sound arguments and concrete applications. We can take as example Max Scheler's reply to Spengler who on his part had assumed that the ideal of perpetual peace is meaningless. Scheler namely said:

Firstly, the good ought to be, even if it never happened. Secondly: it *works* proportionally to its empowering capacity, even if it is not *accomplished*. Thirdly: there are thousand counter-examples taken from history, in which ideas and ideals were despised and derided for centuries and millennia, were called "empty utopias" and "dreams", and *nevertheless they became true*; this happened not only in the fields of science and technology (railway, aircraft, etc. [...]), but also in the political and moral world (for instance the abolition of torture and of [...] death-penalty, of slavery and bondage).<sup>3</sup>

In this way it is possible to revalue the meaning of ideals and their weight on concrete life. First of all, the value of an ideal cannot be directly deduced by its potentiality of realization; then, the ideal has a regulative function and a real effectivity, as it conditions human action; finally, as human beings are historical, nobody can exclude that things which were thought of as impossible, soon or later become real.

These arguments are sound and emphasize the potential of ideals. Nevertheless, they need some complementary assumptions, in order to prove that the ideal itself is worth being pursued.

The form of the ideal is namely not sufficient to justify its desirability and its value. The mere assumption that "something is not realized yet" says nothing about the condition of possibility to realize it nor about the value and the consequences included in its realization. Therefore, in order to define an ideal, it is necessary to make reference to the content, even if this is understood in a formal way, for instance as something "good" or positive.

For those reasons, complementary assumptions have to imply a reference to the content of the ideal and to the connected declaration of value. Especially two conditions have to be satisfied and play a guarantee role in the definition of ideals:

*An ideal has a positive meaning or a meaning at all, if it corresponds to some disposition provable in reality. In case the ideal were totally extraneous or in contradiction with human nature and life, it would be not only questionable, but also neither clearly understandable nor conveyable.*

This does not mean that an ideal satisfying this condition is in consequence universally accepted and shared. There can be many different reasons for not subscribing to an ideal. For instance, some people do not agree with the pattern of life it proposes, or maybe it implies some consequences which are, at least for someone, negative or disagreeable, and prejudice the value of the ideal itself. By contrast, the condition mentioned above refers to a more radical issue of the value, that is, a minimal connection to human condition (and life) making it intelligible even for people not sharing it, but showing a general attitude of accessibility to comprehension. On the other hand, the relation to life seems to guarantee a minimal degree of value and desirability, which makes an ideal worth considering.

*The meaning and positive value of an ideal, even if it appears evident to intuition, has to be (and must be able to be) sustained by grounds or, alternatively, by the refutation of opposite statements.*

If the ideal is defined as a not yet realized condition which is worth achieving, there must be some explicable and argumentable reasons to justify it. Maybe these reasons do not convince all people and can lead to raising objections, but they have to contain some arguments which appear consistent at least to people affirming that ideal. Also in ideals related to faith, for example, their affirmation is always connected with a claim of truth, of better understanding of things, or of an alternative vision of the world corresponding to one's own needs and expectations. All these elements are intelligible and can be conveyed to others, although the other may see things differently and not be persuaded. And even if some people are not ready to call their ideals in question, they implicitly admit that the ideal they pursue can give a better answer or a compensating solution. This should decisively contribute, and it normally does, to strengthening the will to adduce reasons for justifying the value of an ideal and for implementing it.

According to these conditions, and with the above mentioned precautions about the difference between the effective realization and its possibility (which never can, as a matter of principle, be totally denied in relation to the future), it is not meaningless to inquire into the reasons underpinning an ideal. On the contrary, they can help to understand better its content and to furnish convincing proofs of it. With respect to this, the theoretical and argumentative relevance of grounds has to be able to be



separated from historical contingencies, without negating, on the other hand, the importance of the context in order to understand the ideal itself. Historical aspects namely contribute to making clear when a specific ideal is more strongly claimed, although they do not say the last word about its validity.

### **The theoretical roots of the ideal of peace**

In the modern history of European thought many philosophers and thinkers have stressed the value of peace. The relevance of this ideal can be connected with a reality often conditioned by the destructive effects of war and the awareness of the advantages offered by the relatively short periods of peace. In addition to this, these authors were also influenced by the awareness that human nature is not exclusively characterized by belligerent instincts and that many other capacities and qualities are deeply inhibited or damaged by a persistent situation of conflict.

Already in 1515 Erasmus of Rotterdam emphasized that human beings present certain characteristics which induce them to friendship and peaceful togetherness.<sup>4</sup> Beside physical weakness and an unequal distribution of capacities, which make for cooperation among them, Erasmus mentions the faculties of language and reason, which allow for human interweaving and are able to avoid violence or to successfully reduce its extent. According to Erasmus, language enables us to communicate and to explain to one another the different points of view. In doing so, human beings find a valid alternative to seeking a solution by means of conflict and of a supremacy of force. From this perspective, reason results to be a very effective instrument to improve reciprocal understanding, because it not only permits discussions with other people making use of arguments instead of weapons, but also helps to convince people of the inutility of war in order to solve problems. As a mixture of a faculty of reckoning and of common sense, reason raises the question: "Are you really able to damage the enemy without endangering your people?" While language makes contacts easier and mediates in the process of comprehension, reason adduces arguments demonstrating the disadvantages of war. At the same time, they develop the capacity of discussion and mediation by searching for compromise and agreement on the basis of explicable grounds as well as practicable solutions.

In today's theory of the ethics of discourse (*Diskursethik*), the faculties of language and rationality have been founded either on the everyday speech or on the transcendental level. This approach leads to an immediate intersubjective understanding and includes from the very beginning

individuals in the universal community of communication. Habermas explicitly starts from the usual experiences which are made every time when one person encounters and addresses the others (especially the unknown ones) in the street. These experiences point to a general openness and readiness to answer questions and to give information that has the connotations of truth, intelligibility, veracity, and correctness.<sup>5</sup> Apel has traced back these forms of everyday intercourse to a transcendental, that is, to an inner constitutive condition of the human being and of his or her way of thinking. Indeed, the transcendental subject has been transformed from the abstract generality of the "I think" into the concrete multiplicity of the "We speak". In other words, the transcendental level is performed by a plural subject, namely the "We" of the communication and of the talk to one another. This allows to immediately comprehend the individual as an active participant in an intersubjective process. From this perspective, according to Apel, the isolation of the internal thinking process occurring to individuals can be avoided, as they are required to make themselves understandable by means of speech-act performances and to found their assertions through argumentation.<sup>6</sup> This procedure of foundation, although it does not exclude the possibility of conflicts, is based on an immediate attitude of accessibility and communication with the others. In particular, it sets against the view that human intercourse is primarily characterized by hostility and, as Hobbes had said, by a universal condition of war of everyone against everyone else. In doing so, it also transforms the rational faculty from an instrumental and egoistic capacity of calculation into a socially connoted function sustaining dialogue, balance, and fair consideration of possible reasons and counter-reasons.

Starting from a substantial and ontological point of view, Charles Taylor has confirmed this perspective and supplied it with further argumentation. In his view, the human being is fundamentally an expressive entity, since he or she expresses him- or herself through language and this is the essential characteristic determining their nature. Language is naturally to be understood not only as the spoken or written one, but extensively as all forms of gesture, expression, artistic and work production. In consequence of this, a person can for Taylor fundamentally be defined as a *dialogical being*, not only because he or she communicates by using expressive forms addressed to someone else, but also because language can be comprehended only in *performative relation to others*. This does not exclude the capacity of the individual to be original and creative, but it signals from the very beginning the importance of contact to others in order to appropriate the necessary instruments and frames to express their own originality. Furthermore, the fundamental dialogical

dimension extends its range also beyond the initial phase, because it constantly permits the continuous exchange of opinions, statements, theses, and objections. For Taylor even the work of art, in spite of the widespread idea concerning its absolute uniqueness and individuality, cannot in reality be considered as fully separated from social intercourse. In fact, it is conceived of in relation to an at least potential public and it strives after the discovery of new forms of communication. The dialogical structures of our being are then so deeply rooted in our attitudes and in our way of thinking, that even interior and isolated reflection includes the presence and the view-points of the others. Imaginary interlocutors are created, potential objections proceeding from alternative perspectives are taken into consideration, and possible reactions or answers are anticipated. In doing so, human beings confirm the impossibility on the one hand to avoid the dialogical intercourse and on the other hand to prevent themselves from seriously and fundamentally taking it into account.<sup>7</sup>

These philosophical considerations about human beings' nature permit us to make some relevant conclusions concerning the topic of peace. If we namely admit that all these fundamental processes of learning and education as well as their results are determined in the frame of intersubjective and dialogical structures, then it is possible to infer that numerous ways of contacting and building relations to the others *are not characterized* through conflict, aggressivity, and war. Fear and distrust surely belong to the fundamental instincts and feelings of human beings, but they are neither exclusive nor all-embracing. The ideal of peace is in consequence not a mere utopia, but it can be anchored in some fundamental traits of human nature. The term utopia can therefore relate to the extension and exclusivity of peace, but not to something being understood in absolute opposition to humans and to their way of living. Concretely, conditions of peace can be found in manifold conducts and attitudes concerning social, familiar, and community life, which legitimate the pursuit of an ideal of peace as well as the striving for its affirmation. On the other hand, this does not exclude the possibility of confrontation or conflict, as it sometimes also happens in the realm of talk, dialogue, and communication. Therefore, it is not possible to refrain from considering the situations which originate conflict in an initially pacific context, nor to bracket all arguments underpinning the inevitability or even utility of war. The value of peace has to be confirmed by means of demonstration of its positive meaning as well as by refuting the counter-theses. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the existence of fundamental structures of life and intersubjective relationships inspired by contexts of peace already points to alternative forms of overcoming conflicts, which not necessarily depend

on the use of (organized) violence. They lead an analysis of the reasons which support their recognition of value and legitimate the necessity of their development.

### **Aspects of the peace debate**

The reasons for sustaining the value of peace are numerous and have been repeatedly adduced in course of history. First of all, the high loss of human lives in war is pointed out, especially because it very often concerns people who are not responsible for it and do not directly and actively participate in the conflict. Generally, cruelty and destruction are seen as the features characterizing war. This does not only imply negative consequences in the objective conditions of life, but also a worsening regarding the moral and psychological attitude of people, progressively losing their sense of respect and justice and passing into a mentality of hate and prevarication.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the high loss of human lives and the destruction provoked turn out to heavily encumber the whole society, as many capacities and potentials destined to its development are irretrievably lost and need a very long time to be (if at all) compensated. It suffices to think of all activities converted on the strength of war and of all human energies and qualities inhibited or constrained, in order to make clear what kind of pressure is exerted on society and how possibilities of free development are drastically reduced.<sup>9</sup>

Besides this, in time of war goods and resources are distributed in a much more unjust way. While in periods of peace the processes of the expansion of welfare are at least made possible and easier, the advantages and the profits of war are very limited and concentrated in the hands of very few persons (and usually not the most deserving ones). In general, peace promotes the development of business and trade and contributes in an essential way to setting up social and economic life.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, arts and knowledge take advantage of peace, because they can dispose of more expenditure, energies, subsidies, and public appreciation. In the meantime, social, cultural, and economic long-term projects as well as the setting up of infrastructures and public works can be undertaken, since peace guarantees those conditions of stability and security that are necessary, in order to program complex and ambitious development processes.

Furthermore, two more aspects of public life are massively favoured in periods of peace:

(1) the *respect of law*, and

(2) the *democratic process through the participation of citizens*.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to the first point, it can be remarked that war facilitates illegal procedures and activities. It reduces the ethical consciousness and obscures the border between legality and illegality. Moreover, as a lot of crimes are committed and many exceptions to law are tolerated, this makes it more difficult to ensure the respect of justice. As already mentioned, war is constantly connected with the idea of exception, while justice always refers to the universality and equality of people before the law. War also stresses the value of obedience and the sense of hierarchy, which allow for an order often contrasting with the equalizing effect of law. Finally, the scarcity of indispensable goods, the irregularity of supply, and the condition of general insecurity make for the implicit acceptance and tolerance of extra-legal means in order to remedy the shortfall.

With respect to the second point, the condition of war requires the concentration of political power in the hands of few people, the maintaining of secrecy, the rapid decision making, and the necessity of prompt action. All these requirements contrast with the procedure of democratic life. They inhibit the possibility of free and open debate, since this would mean making it public, slower, and less dependent on the experts' opinion. They reduce the possibility of voting, because this would imply more complicated and long-time proceedings. The conditions created by war also restrain the making of compromises, since this requires long bargaining and a readiness to relax the hierarchy, which openly contrast with the tendency to concentrate decisional power. Ultimately, the basic processes of democratic decision and formation of consensus are hindered, because the information available to the public is inadequate, reduced, and delayed in comparison with the urgency for decisions.

The reasons supporting the value of peace and the goodness of the condition ensured by its permanence appear to be overwhelming. Nevertheless, some objections against its possibility and its positive evaluation have been formulated, which have to be taken seriously, especially because they do not rest on an indiscriminate enthusiasm for war as such, but rather they try to justify why war is unavoidable. Some of these objections were expressed for instance by Rousseau<sup>12</sup> by commenting the project of perpetual peace outlined by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre,<sup>13</sup> and they were further articulated and argued by Hegel,<sup>14</sup> who objected on his part to Kant's work also pleading for a project of permanent peace.<sup>15</sup>

Aiming at the achievement of a stable peace, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre had proposed the creation of a confederation of States and the constitution of a Congress or Parliament, which had to be figured out by means of a

precise definition of rules, institutions, and tasks. The supranational organization could be enabled to settle all conflicts and to find a compromise or a pacific solution to them. Rousseau praised this project because of the incontestable advantages it granted for the coexistence of nations. Nevertheless, he called in question its possibility of realization for three reasons:

- (1) it implied for the States a strong limitation of their power and sovereignty, which was very difficult to obtain;
- (2) it required that the States renounced their particular interests in favour of the general well-being, and
- (3) the confederation did not dispose of the suitable measures of constraint in order to obtain the necessary agreement.

To obviate these objections, Kant had thought of a confederation where the States participating were not compelled to submit to a superior power and could nevertheless unit their efforts in order to maintain peace. For Kant the conservation of a peaceful order was warranted only by the prevailing of a legal constitution in every single federated State. In his opinion, the guarantee of freedom, reciprocity, and equality of treatment to all citizens originated from the expression of a collective that will sought the welfare of its members and was therefore unwilling to make war. Moreover, Kant reckoned with the increase of international trade and with a consequent globalization of the negative effects of war, seeing them as motives destined to provide an incentive to peace.

By contrast, Hegel argued much more radically than Rousseau against the possibility of such a project, since he maintained that the States are the highest organizations of political power in the realm of the objective Spirit and of its historical development. The overriding argument resided in stating that there was neither a power nor a judicial institution enabled "to decide against the State what is the right in itself and to implement this decision", so that the federation for peace was destined to remain an "ought to" claim.

The question to which Hegel draws the attention is the absence of institutions guaranteeing peace and disposing of the necessary power maintaining it. Furthermore, Hegel stresses the difficulty of building a consensus among the States, since their interests are always led by their particular sovereign will and cannot be unified into a common and persisting aim. The precariousness surrounding the reaching of international agreements as well as the instability concerning their maintenance render