Topic no. 2: Immanuel Kant

   Ethical and political philosophy faces and has faced the great concern of how to make peace "perpetual" (as in Imm. Kant's *Towards Perpetual Peace*). But the main question is not "how to maintain peace?", but "why peace rather than war?" – this is where any philosophy on war and peace should begin. Many philosophers have based their choice for peace on ethical judgements – although seeing differently the basis of morals, they have reached the conclusion that peace is "good" and war is "bad". Just as an example, the utilitarians believe that war is less useful (=produces less pleasure as a whole) than peace; on the ohther hand, Kant's categorical imperative, which tells us to see the others as goals in themselves, involves the conclusion that war is definitely not moral – same conclusion, different ways to reach it.

   What I am going to do in the following lines is to reevaluate the main question ("why war rather than peace?"), as well as the problem of which direction in ethics should be followed – in order to find out whether the conclusion remains the same or rather tends to justify war as legitimate in a way or another.

   First of all, what should ethical philosophy mean and how should it reach its conclusions? As Gilles Deleuze noted in *What is philosophy?*, the philosophical work is much about creating concepts. The evolution of those concepts, according to Rudolf Carnap, has led to words without meaning (*sinnlos*). A so-called pseudo-concept (*Scheinbegriff*) is a word which have lost its meaning without receiving another one. The logical positivism shares this view that most of the ethical and metaphysical concepts do not have a meaning and, as Wittgenstein stated in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, "of what we cannot talk, we should keep silence". I am not going to use the positivist view in this reasoning, but I have to start from it: the most important idea it expresses is that concepts change their meaning – how did the concept of "ethics" change its meaning? Ethimologically, "ethics" comes from the Ancient Greek word εϑος, that refers to certain behavoiur norms. These norms cover (almost) all the aspects of life, thus they are specific for a certain group in a certain epoch. Only later have the meaning of the word "ethics" become "norms generally valid that everyone should follow". Considering the fact that the ethical thinking has not been the

same during the history of philosophy and the ethical norms have also changed in time, it is fair to say that ethical philosophy is not about *Moralität*, but about *Sittlichkeit* – there is no reason to believe in some universal ethical principles that men must follow, but there are certain norms of behaviour, different from one historical age to another, from one place on the earth to another.

However, Immanuel Kant talks about the "practical reason" – which is an attribute of each man and which leads his actions – it lays, thus, in the human nature. Nevertheless, the human nature is not at all reasoning, but mostly affective reactions to the environment. The reason, far from being the essence of man, is just a means used by men in order to achieve their goals. It is easy to prove this, considering the fact that reason asks "why" – endlessly asking why leads nowhere; there must be something stronger than the reason, the will to live for instance. And if men were such "rational beings", they would have constantly questioned this will to live and would have eventually killed themselves. Therefore, ethical principles are wrongly considered to belong to the human nature; in fact, they came from the outside in order to limitate the potential natural actions, it is in conflict with the nature of man. But it is made by man itself, isn't it? The human being is, by essence, a cultural being – this means man creates something by all his actions. The creation of "ethics" cannot be a way to limitate the own self, but to limitate the other's actions in order to live in society – and here we have the beginning of politics; but isn't it "immoral" to limitate other people's actions? All this discussion leads to the conclusion that there is no universal moral principle, but there are only different ethological systems in different social groups. This fact proves that man does not act according to anything else but the human nature and it is useless to impose principles from the outside.

The situation presented above shows a diverse, non-unitary world – what happens to the different sides? – they *naturally* get into conflict. By "sides", I mean ideas on certain matter which are different than other ideas on the same matter; I avoid saying "groups" because individuals can also constitute a "side". We have seen that politics begins with the ethics. Considering the fact that there are many different ethical perspectives, the only lawful (= accepted by each individual) poltical system could be a right-libertarian one (as presented in Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*), because it does protect a side from the arbitrary action of another, but it does not impose an unitary view. In such a system, two sides could get into conflict if they both wanted, but, at the same time, any kind of totalitarianism would be impossible. In other words, a community made of different sides which naturally fight without denying each other could only exist by allowing each one to do anything it wants about itself. Public liberalism allows private (for example) conservatorism, but public (for example) conservatorism does not allow private liberalism. I have written all this paragraph about where ethics and politics meet just so as to reach the problem of war inside the state and between the states. And while liberalism in the radical way presented above is based on

the individual will, there is no reason to force some people to fight for a group they accidentally belong to. Thus there is no reason why war between states should be justified. On the other hand, war between groups to which people belong because they wanted to do so is justified and should be allowed inside a state with the condition that each side is protected from interferece in its private life (thus the state is protected from totalitarianism). Any group is different than an individual human being, therefore it does not have will, nor is war in its essence.

Another problem raised by Kant's quotation is that of the human rights: "war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights". The liberal thinking has begun with the belief that these rights are in the nature of man, as well as equality is in the nature of man – these ideas can be found in the works of John Locke or Jean Jacques Rousseau. However, men are fisrtly individuals, thus their nature cannot contain something about how others should treat them; it cannot contain anything about the meeting of two men, but only about how one is and acts. For the same reason, equality between people cannot be natural; in fact, men are not equal, but unique and if they happen to be, at a certain time, equal in some matter, it is not a necessary thing. One might say that war, as a state of fact *between* men, following the same reasoning, cannot be natural either. Considered in this way, it truly cannot. But considered as the human tendency to fight against the others, it is – the goal of the fight does not matter.

Returning to the human rights, we can see that they are conventions for living in society. They are legitimate because they can fit coherently into the sistem of Nozick's "minimal state", as the only lawful state, and the reason why one must respect them is not a moral reason, but a political one – if a side interferes into another side's private space without the latter's agreement, it is possible that the former, which has its certain views, eventually gets to comprise the whole group of sides and to impose them its views – when a *Weltanschauung* is imposed to an individual who does not want to approach it, the natural non-unitary aspect of the world is denied, the human nature is denied itself and the situation reached is not justified by anything but an arbitrary system of ideas. The human can no longer be found in man.

In this case, it looks like there is no war between sides inside a state justifiable, because war means agression and interference. Nevertheless, if there is a state of war where each of the individuals involved in it wants to take part of it, there is no reason why it should be forbidden. In activities such as competitions, where people "fight" against each other, the war seems to be very "peaceful" – so it is no longer war. However, if two men agree to fight, no matter what their reason is, it may be a violent "war" without breaking the principle of non-interference. Thus the meaning of war must be enlarged – it is not an agression combined with interference, but fight, conflict in any way, because peace does not only mean the absence of violence, but the absence of any kind of conflictual state.

According to the meaning of war stated, what kind of war lays in the human nature? – It is war as conflict of any kind, conflict caused bt the spontaneous interaction of items which cannot fit coherently into the same system; it is war in the same way that Heraclitus used the word to describe the constant movement of particles that build the world. If "everything flows" (παντα ρεί) in the human nature, the war characterising man can be defined as constant movement causing interaction and thus conflict. Peace as absence of movement is not human at all because it is against life; the only peace which can be applied to human beings is the random absence of conflict because of the coherence of the items interacting. War should not be seen as a means to obtain something, but as a state of fact appearing naturally and then developing to a certain result. War for a goal cannot be anything but war as agression and interference – this is not only illegitimate inside a state and between states, but also far from what the human nature means; it is, like reason, a means and not one of the sides of man's essence that exist *an sich*, without the need to be justified or based on something else.

Considering this view upon the concepts of "war" and "peace", let us see whether now any of the conclusions are different than what Kant sustained. When about "war between us as states", the German philosopher has nothing else to say, although the way he got here ("the morally practical reason") is exactly the opposite of the ipothesis of this essay (there is no universal moral principle; man *is* and doesn't "have to"). But Kant also says: "There is to be no war, neither between you and me in the state of nature" – this means conflicts between individuals are not lawful. The conclusions of this essay show that war coming spontaneously and which does not interfere in the private space without permission is not only justifiable, but even natural, so in this case I have to disagree with Kant.

Moreover, Kant stated that "war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights". This raises another problem: it is true that in a lawful state, such as the libertarian one, the rights are protected by the state – but what happens when passing from an illegitimate state to another one, which is legitimate? Should war be used as a means or not? For the war itself is illegitimate as a means. But a state which does not allow each individual his/her own private space and does not provide protection from interference in that space is a state that attacks – actually, it is a group of people sharing the same views that attacks the rest of the people, those with different views. So in this case, war as means already exists, thus it can be used as a means for extending the individual negative liberty, unlike Kant sustains.

To sum up, war is one of the reflections of the unity found in the human nature, because it exists without justifications and fragmentations. Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, noted about pain that "the fact that it hurts is not an argument against it, but its own essence" – the same thing can be told about war, about the war that is naturally extending in the human existential space. The fact that it kills should not be an argument against it, for it builds much more – while peace means stability and the persistence of a certain situation, war means

perpetual change and gives the opportunity to recreate, to redefine, eventually to build more. Culture is the essence of man and war is condition and *causa prima* for culture.