



Revista de  
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## **Artículos**

# Perpetual Peace or Eternal Peace? Kant, Leibniz, and the Dutch Innkeeper's Sign

MARCO DUICHIN<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795), one of Kant's most famous, widely read, and influential works, opens with an ambiguous motto oddly inspired by the sign (*At the Perpetual Peace*) of a Dutch innkeeper, upon which a graveyard was painted. Commonly hailed as a proto-pacifist slogan, at times regarded as a satirical word-play to mock readers, or even as a reminiscence of Kant's journey (never undertaken) to Holland, the controversial expression "Zum ewigen Frieden" seems more like a pessimistic warning than an optimistic omen, evoking the "eternal peace" of the dead stated by Christian eschatology, rather than the "perpetual peace" between nations dreamt of by eighteenth-century philosophers. The aim of this paper is to show the underground links connecting Kant's funereal image to Leibniz's picturesque anecdote about an anonymous "Plaisant", "Dutch innkeeper", or "fashionable joker in Holland", which might conceal the intriguing figure of Lieuwe van Aitzema (Dokkum 1600 – The Hague 1669): a Dutch libertine, freethinker, and bon viveur, whose epitaph, inside The Hague's temple, sadly pointed to a tomb as the inevitable haven of rest for those vainly seeking perpetual peace on earth.

**Keywords:** Kant, Leibniz, van Aitzema, Perpetual peace/Eternal peace, graveyard/grave

## ¿Paz perpetua o Paz eterna? Kant, Leibniz y el rótulo del posadero holandés

## Resumen

*Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795), una de las obras más famosas, leídas e influyentes de Kant, se abre, como sabido, con un ambiguo lema ("A la Paz perpetua") curiosamente inspirado en inscripción del letrero de una posada holandesa, en que había pintada la lúgubre imagen de un cementerio. Generalmente saludada como un eslogan pacifista *ante litteram*, a veces interpretada como un juego de palabras satírico para burlarse del lector, o incluso como legado de un (nunca cumplido) viaje de Kant en Holanda, la controvertida expresión "*Zum ewigen Frieden*" parece más una advertencia pesimista que una esperanza optimista,

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algo que parece evocar la “paz eterna” del cementerio otorgada a los muertos más que la “paz perpetua” entre las naciones soñada y deseada por los filósofos ilustrados del siglo XVIII. El objetivo de este artículo es demostrar los nexos subterráneos que conectan la imagen del cementerio utilizada por Kant en la pintoresca anécdota, referida al tiempo por Leibniz y destinada a una amplia fortuna, de un anónimo “posadero” o “bromista” de Países Bajos, detrás del que podría esconderse la sugestiva figura del libertino y pensador libre holandés Lieuwe van Aitzema (Dokkum 1600 – L’Aja 1669), quien indicaba mestamente en una tumba la inevitable llegada de cuantos buscaban en vano la paz en la tierra.

**Palabras clave:** Kant, Leibniz, van Aitzema, Paz perpetua/Paz eterna, cementerio/tumba

*Only the dead have seen the end of war.*  
George Santayana, *Soliloquies* (1922)

1.

One of Kant’s best-known writings is certainly *Zum ewigen Frieden* (= *ZeF*, AA VIII 341-386), regarded by several scholars as his “most famous work” (Lettevall, 2009, p. 135) and “arguably greatest political essay” (Riley, 1995, p. 231): “by far the most important” (Arendt, 1992, p. 7), and perhaps “the most frequently read and influential of all Kant’s political essays” (Shell, 2009, p. 213). Published at Königsberg on October 4, 1795 (Klemme, 1995, pp. 459-460), with a second edition in the following year, and “hailed with enthusiasm on its first appearance” (Armstrong, 1931, p. 197)<sup>2</sup> in various countries (Prussia, France, England, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden), this renowned pamphlet, devoted to the Enlightenment topic of *perpetual peace*, was accompanied over time by a great variety of “competing” (Easley, 2004, p. 2), though “contradictory interpretations” (Gallie, 1978, p. 19), and by “many different ways to study and understand” it (Lettevall, 2009, p. 133; see also Cavallar, 1992, pp. 436ff.). Although, when *ZeF* came out, words like

<sup>2</sup> According to Arsenij Gulyga (2004, p. 279), none of Kant’s works reached such a lively and immediate interest [“Keines von Kants Werken erregte ein so lebhaftes und unmittelbar Interesse”].

‘pacifism’ and ‘pacifist’ were yet unknown in the coeval language,<sup>3</sup> it was mainly considered by later critics “a pacifist treatise” (see Gallie, 1978, p. 20), and praised—rightly or wrongly—as “the most theoretically notable work of pacifist thought” (Archibugi, 1992, p. 369).<sup>4</sup>

Kant, however, was not a “pacifist”, at least in the canonical meaning of the term.<sup>5</sup> Pacifism, quite influenced by *philanthropic* and *religious* ideas of evangelical origin, totally alien to the Kantian *juridical* perspective (*ZeF*, AA VIII 357. 32-33; *MS*, AA VI 352. 08-09; see also Gerhardt, 1995b, pp. 217ff.),<sup>6</sup> believes *peace* is the *supreme good*, to be pursued *at all times, in all ways, and at all costs*, unconditionally rejecting *war* as the *absolute evil*.<sup>7</sup> Kant, on the contrary, despite being a “Friedensfreund” (Görland, 1924), a “Friedensadvokat” (Cavallar, 1992, p. 392), and a keen supporter of “the pursuit of peace by means of law” (Bobbio, 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 142), was overtly opposed to peace “at any price” (*um jeden Preis*) (Cavallar, 1992, pp. 387, 392), which he thought was a worse evil than war if it was founded on the cemetery of liberty (*auf dem Kirchhofe der Freiheit*), that is, on the grave of universal tyranny (*allgemeine Alleinherrschaft*) and the most horrible despotism (*schrecklistische Despotismus*) (*ZeF*, AA VIII 367. 17-20, 26-27; *RGV*, AA VI 34 n.; *MAM*, AA VIII 120. 06-07; *TP*, AA VIII 310-311; see

<sup>3</sup> The terms ‘pacifism’ and ‘pacifist’ postdate Kant. They were coined and came in use only in the 1800s – 1900s (de Radonvilliers, 1845<sup>2</sup>, p. 446; Arnaud, 1901; see also Röttgers, 1989, pp. 218ff.).

<sup>4</sup> According to Pierre Hassner, for instance, Kant was a sort of philosophic proto-pacifist, “introducing philosophy into pacifist utopia”, and “pacifist utopia into philosophy” [“introduceur de la philosophie dans l’utopie pacifiste [et] de l’utopie pacifiste dans la philosophie”] (1961, p. 667). For a criticism on *ZeF*’s pacifistic interpretations, see Gallie (1978, pp. 19ff.; Cavallar, 1992, pp. 383ff.; Curi, 2010, pp. 108ff.).

<sup>5</sup> “Kant is not a pacifist” [“Kant ist also nicht Pazifist”] (Hoffmeister, 1934, p. 10; see Cavallar, 1992, p. 392); “Kant was not a pacifist, but rather a passionate legaliser” (Gallie, 1978, p. 20); “the standard picture of Kant as an intransigent pacifist [...] is rather one-sided” (Caranti, 2006, p. 29); “Kant is not himself a pacifist” (Fiala, 2014). For similar views (“nicht pazifistisch”), see Saner (1967, p. 339); Mertens (1995, pp. 296ff.); Orend (1999, p. 339); Curi (2010, pp. 108ff.); Duichin (2012, pp. 113ff; 2014, pp. 314ff.); *contra* Bloch (1969, p. 369: Kant was an “unconditional anti-bellacist” [“unbedingten Antibellisten”] and “radical pacifist” [“radikalen Pazifisten”]). For the proper meaning of “pacifism”, see Narveson (1965, pp. 259ff.); Bobbio (1984<sup>2</sup>, pp. 149ff.); Bleisch & Struß (2006); Fiala (2014).

<sup>6</sup> According to Sharon Anderson-Gold (2006, p. 137), Kant “maintains that the principle is not *philanthropic* but *juridical* and that it is only under conditions of cosmopolitan right can we be assured that progress toward perpetual peace will be possible” (italics are mine). For Rebecka Lettevall (2009, p. 133), one difference between the fundamental ideas of the pacifist movement and the peace philosophy of Kant “is the view of religiosity from which Kant distances himself”.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, *Querela Pacis* (1517), Lugduni Batavorum, Ex officina Joannes Maire (1641, p. 51): “There is so scarcely any peace so unjust, but it is preferable, upon the whole, to the justest war” [“*Vix ulla tam iniqua pax, quin bello vel aequissimo sit potior*”]. According to Kant, instead, “Only right is unconditional, peace as aim is conditional” [“Nur das Recht ist unbedingt, der Friede als Zweck ist bedingt”] (Cavallar, 1992, p. 392).

Saner, 1967, p. 339; Arendt, 1992, p. 53).<sup>8</sup> From this point of view, Kant's conception reveals some analogies not so much with the exponents of evangelical tradition (e.g. the peacemonger Erasmus of Rotterdam) (Curi, 2010, p. 108),<sup>9</sup> but with a philosophic trend (including, among others, Leibniz, Herder, and Hegel) which held that *perpetual peace*—not as the everlasting reign of peaceful relations between states, but rather as the quiet and eternal peace of graveyards—<sup>10</sup>can be compared to *stagnation* and *death* (Duichin, 2014, p. 338).<sup>11</sup> Now, “Is peace the stagnation that could also be called death?” (Arendt, 1992, p. 52; see also Khalip, 2011, pp. 243ff.).

## 2.

The early conceptual identification of *death* with *perpetual peace*, in its “metaphysical, indeed transcendental commitment underlying the desire for Eternal Peace” (Behnke, 2008, p. 515; see also Santayana, 1922, pp. 101-102), i.e., the *sempiternal rest* granted to the dead, belongs to the devotional language of religious piety and the Christian funeral liturgy. The ritual formula *Requiem aeternam / det tibi Dominus / et lux perpetua / luceat tibi* (“May the Lord grant you eternal rest and may perpetual light shine upon you”) is frequently engraved on ancient Christian tombs from the 5th century onwards (Aurigemma, 1932, pp. 133ff.; see also Lattimore, 1942, pp. 164ff.; Tosi, 1991, p. 291). In the plural form, with the addition of the final clause

<sup>8</sup> According to Patrick Riley (1995, p. 231), Kant's point “is that one must have the right kind of eternal peace – not the peace of exhaustion and desperation under ‘universal despotism’, but a peace constantly renewed by the citizens of a universe of republics”.

<sup>9</sup> “The great voice of Erasmus condemns war as an *absolute evil*, in the name of the need for peace which is identified by him with the *evangelical message*” [“la grande voix d’Erasmus condamne la guerre comme un *mal absolu*, au nome d’une exigence de paix qui se confond pour lui avec le *message évangélique*”] (Ferrari, 2000, p. 135; italics are mine); “The teachings of Jesus Christ were the main source of inspiration for Erasmus” (Van Heerikhuizen, 2008, p. 409). *Contra* Friedrich (1970, p. 10): “The deep Christian faith of Erasmus finds its counterparts in Kant’s categorical Imperative”.

<sup>10</sup> According to a suggestion of Andreas Behnke (2008, pp. 513ff.), *Zum ewigen Frieden* is “a metaphysical and transcendental rather than political project”: it “necessarily produces the ‘peace of the graveyard’”, and, consequently, the title of Kant’s essay “should be translated as *Eternal Peace*, thus maintaining the notion of a transcendental, rather than political or phenomenal realm within which such peace can only be realised.”

<sup>11</sup> See G. G. Leibnizius, *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus. Dissertatio I/1* (1693), in *Opera Omnia* (= *OO*), ed. L. Dutens, Genevae, apud Fratres De Tournes, 1768, vol. IV/3, pp. 287-288; J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784/1791), in *Sämtliche Werke*, Hildesheim, Olms, 1978, vol. XIII, p. 353; G. W. F. Hegel, *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts* (1802/1803), in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, hrsg. v. E. Moldenhauer u. K.M. Michel, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1970, vol. II, pp. 481-482; *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), in *Werke*, vol. VII, p. 492. See also Kant, *KU*, AA V 263; *EaD*, AA VIII 325ff.

*Requiescant in pace* (“May they rest in peace”), it would be adopted in the popular prayer, and codified in the liturgical oration for the dead,<sup>12</sup> whose *Introitus*, arising from the apocryphal *IV<sup>th</sup> Book of Ezra* (2, 33ff.), says: *Requiem aeternam / dona eis, Domine / et lux perpetua / luceat eis* (“Eternal rest grant unto them, o Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them”).<sup>13</sup>

The eschatological significance of this formula reappears, to give just one example, in *The End of All Things* (1794), a cryptic essay published by Kant a few months before *ZeF*,<sup>14</sup> and conceptually close to it (Pieper, 1950, pp. 100ff.; Duque, 1996, p. 192). Here, the motif of “perpetual peace” is treated in the light of philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, and apocalyptic eschatology (Salmony, 1962; Tagliapietra, 2006, pp. 47ff.). Kant’s “apocalyptic mythologem”—repeated symmetrically in *ZeF* (Raio, 2000, pp. 251ff.)—reflects both the ironical topic of “perpetual peace (*ewiger Friede*), i.e. the “end of all wars”, and the eschatological topic of “eternal peace” (*ewige Ruhe*), i.e. the “end of all times” and “all things”,<sup>15</sup> that is—simultaneously—the “beginning of eternity” (*Anfang der Ewigkeit*) (*EAD*, AA VIII 327-328),<sup>16</sup> symbolized by the metaphoric image of the graveyard: “the severe place that nothing gives back” (*EAD*, AA VIII 327. 14-15).<sup>17</sup> This kind of conceptualization of peace, “with its religious and metaphysical connotation” (Behnke, 2008, p. 513),<sup>18</sup> is clearly connected to the old Christian idea of *pax aeterna* with the decisive difference, however, that the *eternal heavenly peace* had become *perpetual peace on earth*: “its realization did not imply the end of time, only the end of history” (Stråth, 2015, p. 277).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “The church has a poetical and melancholy prayer, that the souls of the faithful departed may rest in peace” (Santayana, 1922, p. 102).

<sup>13</sup> *Thesaurus Precum Latinarum* (= *Treasury of Latin Prayers*, ed. Martin online, 1998), s.v. ‘Requiem aeternam’; Tosi (1991, p. 291); Adeleye et al. (1999, p. 343).

<sup>14</sup> *Das Ende aller Dinge* (= *EaD*, AA VIII 325-339); see Kant to J. E. Biester, April 10, 1794 (*Br*, AA XI 497).

<sup>15</sup> For “perpetual peace” as “the ironical ideal of the apocalyptic eschatology”, see Tagliapietra (2006, p. 83).

<sup>16</sup> “As distinguished from ‘perpetuity’ – an indefinite extension in time – ‘eternity’ can also designate the unlimited existence of a thing in a (theoretically inaccessible) non-temporal dimension” (see Behnke, 2008, p. 514 n1). Thus, according to Kant, within eternity there is also eternal peace [“In der Ewigkeit ist auch der Friede ewig”] (Jüngel, 2009, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> See von Haller (1743, p. 150): “Eternity holds him in its strong arms / in the severe place / which nothing gives back” [“*Ihn aber hält am ernsten Orte | Der nichts zurück läßt | Die Ewigkeit mit starken Armen fest*”]. According to his biographer Borowski (1969, p. 71), Kant knew most of Haller’s poems by heart.

<sup>18</sup> Such a metaphysical interpretation is stressed by Friedrich (1969, p. xi).

<sup>19</sup> See also Behnke (2008, p. 531): “Eternal peace is the realm of the last man. With him, mankind will have come to an end”. For “the dream of a war to end war”, and “the end of war” as “the end of secular

3.

It is well-known that in the prologue to Kant's *Friedensschrift* of 1795 recurs by way of an epigraph—with a reiteration used to reinforce the title (Haverkamp, 1996, p. 80)—the ambiguous motto ‘Zum ewigen Frieden’ (At the perpetual, nay, eternal peace),<sup>20</sup> commonly taken to be a pacifist message, but expressly presented by Kant himself as the “satirical inscription on a Dutch innkeeper’s sign, upon which a graveyard was painted” [“*satirische Überschrift auf dem Schilde jenes holländischen Gastwirts, worauf ein Kirchhof gemalt war*”] (*ZeF*, AA VIII 343. 01-03; see Shell, 2009, p. 213).<sup>21</sup> The curious *incipit* of *ZeF*—a metonymy oddly inspired by the prosaic advertisement of a foreign tavern—<sup>22</sup> sparked off a variety of contradictory conjectures and interpretations. According to Hannah Arendt, for instance, “Kant’s equivocal title” as well as “the ironical tone” of his prologue clearly show that “the essay cannot be taken too seriously” (Arendt, 1992, p. 7; see Falcioni, 2000, p. 17; Fenves, 2003, p. 93; Stammen, 2007, pp. 93ff.; Stråth, 2015, pp. 261ff.).<sup>23</sup> Instead, according to Andreas Behnke, “Kant’s acknowledgement that *ewiger Frieden* might conjure up the image of a graveyard where the deceased rest in such *eternal* peace should be taken seriously” (2008, p. 514). Other scholars, in turn, have suggested that, by using a word-play, Kant wanted to mock his readers.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it has also

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history”, see Walzer (1977, p. 329; see also Freud, *Why War?* [1932], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. L. Strachey et al., London, Hogarth Press, 1953ff., vol. XXII, p. 206: “Paradoxical as it may sound, it must be admitted that war might be a far from inappropriate means of establishing the largely desired reign of ‘everlasting’ [*ewigen*] peace”.

<sup>20</sup> Liaudet (1996, p. 5): *ewigen* may be translated both as eternal and perpetual [“*ewigen* peut être traduit par éternelle ou par perpétuelle”]; see now Behnke (2008, p. 514): “After all, the concept ‘perpetual’ does not have the same kind of religious and metaphysical connotations as does ‘eternal’”. According to Volker Gerhardt (1995a, p. 72 n8), “Kant did not appreciate the French translation of ‘ewig’ as ‘perpetual’ (instead of ‘eternal’)” [“Kant die französische Übersetzung von ‘ewig’ in ‘perpétuelle’ (statt in ‘éternelle’) nicht geschätzt [*appreciated*] hat”].

<sup>21</sup> Whether the innkeeper’s sign—Kant adds—had for its object mankind in general or the rulers of States in particular, who are insatiable of wars, or merely the philosophers who dream that sweet dream [perpetual peace], it is open to discussion (AA VIII 343. 03-06; see Curi, 2010, pp. 108-109).

<sup>22</sup> Haverkamp (1996, p. 80): “To compare the title of a book with the name of a restaurant means to take metonymy at its name, that is, the preposition *zum*, which names in one instance the ‘contents’ and in the other, ‘place’”. For the “equivocation of the German *zum*, whose ambiguity Kant must suddenly become aware of (Latin *de* in one case, *ad* or *apud* in the other)”, see Haverkamp (1996, p. 80).

<sup>23</sup> Commenting on *ZeF*, Josef Pieper has written that Kant’s optimistic view was “annulled and satirized” in the *Prologue* (1950, p. 100); see also Khalip (2011, p. 261): “the grim belief that peace *will* and *can* happen is satirized in the Dutch innkeeper’s sign that begins *Toward Perpetual Peace*”; Shell (2009, p. 213): “*Toward Perpetual Peace* presents itself [imitating the innkeeper’s sign] as a fictional device that speaks ironically”.

<sup>24</sup> Szczepański (2013, p. 33): “The title ‘Perpetual Peace’ alludes to a satirical inscription on a Dutch innkeeper’s sign on which a cemetery was painted. The anecdote prompted me to ask: was the author

been speculated that the title *Zum ewigen Frieden* was merely the by-product of fortuitous (but unsupported) circumstances.<sup>25</sup> Finally, a few years ago, a careless commentator—despite Kant was notoriously reluctant to make long journeys, never left (as the most reputable biographers report) his native town (Borowski et al., 1969, pp. 53 [Borowski], pp. 131, 143 [Jachmann], p. 270 [Wasianski]; see Höffe, 1986, p. 10)—even claimed that the old philosopher wrote *ZeF* during a travel to Holland [!], while staying in a tavern named *À la paix perpétuelle*.<sup>26</sup>

As a matter of facts, the image “which so struck Kant”, of “a graveyard with a sign reading *Pax Perpetua*” (Riley, 1995, p. 231), is not a fanciful ‘odeporic’ recollection, but it is the legacy of an earlier literary adage.<sup>27</sup> Many prominent scholars, indeed, have recognized in the prologue to *Zum ewigen Frieden* a further variation on the widespread “graveyard motif” (Filippi, 2004, p. 430), not unusual in learned eighteenth-century circles (Tundo Ferente, 2003, pp. 105-106; Mori, 2008, p. 19), the roots of which lie in a prior tradition, presumably originating with Leibniz<sup>28</sup> and destined—thanks to

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perhaps mocking his reader?”; see Haverkamp (1996, p. 80): “Kant, in the introduction to his essay *On Eternal Peace* of 1795, comes unexpectedly to speak about the double sense of his title, a word play that at first glance one would not have expected and which he immediately wants to satirize”. Behnke (2008, pp. 513-514, 531), instead, says that “The graveyard that Kant refers to in the introduction of *Eternal Peace*” is more than “an ironic quip”.

<sup>25</sup> According to Stammen (2007, p. 93), Kant could have possibly known nearby Königsberg an inn named *Zum ewigen Frieden*; he could have used the inscription of that inn as the title of his topical essay [“Kant habe in der Umgebung von Königsberg einen Gasthof gekannt, der dieses Wirthauschild führte und vom dem Kant die Inschrift ‘Zum ewigen Frieden’ für den Titel seinen aktuellen politischen Schrift genommen habe.

<sup>26</sup> “During his stay in Holland in a tavern named ‘To Perpetual Peace’, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant had the opportunity to write an essay of about a hundred pages concerning the possibility of an eternal peace” [“Alors qu’il séjourne en Hollande dans une auberge baptisée ‘À la paix perpétuelle’, le philosophe allemand Emmanuel Kant y voit l’occasion de rédiger un essai d’une centaine de pages sur la possibilité d’une paix éternelle”] (Brun, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> For Stammen (2007, p. 93): the title (including its satirical connotations) has a clear literary origin, and an evident use in philosophical pre-Kantian texts [“So hatte der Titel – auch mit seiner satirischen Konnotation – einer eindeutig literarischen Ursprung und offensichtlich Bereits vor Kant schon Verwendung in philosophischen Texten gefunden”].

<sup>28</sup> Cavallar (1992, p. 21): “Kant has borrowed from Leibniz the plastic image of the graveyard-quiet” [“Kant hat das eindringliche Bild von der Friedhofsruhe offensichtlich von Leibniz übernommen”]; Saner (1995, p. 46): “Kant has clearly drawn from Leibniz the image of the graveyard” [“Das Bild vom Friedhof [...] Kant offenbar von Leibniz übernommen hat”]; Riley (1995, p. 231): “Kant owes to Leibniz [...] this celebrated image”; Roldán (2011, p. 91 n14): “Kant would include the same [Leibniz’s] anecdote at the beginning of his essay on peace”; Hamilton (2013, p. 229): “Kant picked up the joke from Leibniz”; see now Aramayo (2018, p. 129 n4): “The image of the cemetery was given by Leibniz in his *Codex Juris Gentium*” [“La imagen del cementerio la dio Leibniz en su *Código diplomático del derecho des gentes*”].

its suggestive impact— to remain in vogue until the mid-1800s (Taswell-Langmead, 1856, p. 20; Sumner, 1874, p. 180).<sup>29</sup> Let us have a look at it.

So far as I know, the philosophic motif of *perpetual peace* as a *graveyard for mankind* first appeared (over a century before the publication of Kant's *ZeF*) in a 1688 essay by G. W. Leibniz written in opposition to French expansionism in Europe: something he accused, recalling Tacitus's famous invective against the Romans,<sup>30</sup> of being an attempt to establish "perpetual peace" in the manner of a despotic "slavery à la Turquie" ["They establish slavery and call it peace"] which would make "peace", in every respect, like a "cemetery".<sup>31</sup> Five years later, Leibniz was to re-use the same motif (*perpetual peace* = *cemetery*)<sup>32</sup> in the Latin *Preface* of *Codex Juris Gentium* (1693),<sup>33</sup> and again in a letter dated June 4, 1712 to Jean-Léonor de Grimarest, the biographer of Molière, to support his own criticism on the chimerical *Project for Perpetual Peace* by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre.<sup>34</sup> Warmly welcomed and divulged, during the 18th century, by the French

<sup>29</sup> Also, the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 – 1843) "used Kant's Dutch innkeeper's sign in one of his later poems [*The Happy Life*]" (Haverkamp, 1996, p. 82).

<sup>30</sup> Tacitus (*Agricola*, 30, 4): "They make a desert, and call it peace" ["*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*"].

<sup>31</sup> G.W. Leibniz, *Réflexions sur la déclaration de la guerre* (1688), in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (= *SSB*), hrsg. v. der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1986ff., S. IV, vol. III, p. 131: "They [the French] had undoubtedly the good grace to speak about perpetual peace, not knowing any other peace than the Turkish slavery. *Where they have established slavery, they call it peace*. But we must refer to the sign of an eternal peace, i.e., to the cemetery; and this fine title was taken by some joker as a sign for his house" ["Ils [the French] ont sans doute fort bonne grâce de parler de paix perpétuelle, eux qui n'en connaissent que celle d'un esclavage général à la Turquie. *Ubi servitutem stabilierint, pacem vocant*. Mais il faut les renvoyer à l'enseigne d'une éternelle paix, c'est-à-dire au cimetière, que quelque plaisant avait pris pour enseigne de sa maison avec ce beau titre"].

<sup>32</sup> For Leibniz's parallelism between "perpetual peace", "cemetery", and "universal monarchy", see Robinet (1994, pp. 243-244).

<sup>33</sup> *Codex Juris Gentium*, OO IV/3, pp. 287-288: "So, a fashionable joker in Holland after he had attached to the façade of his house, according to the local custom, a sign which read 'perpetual peace', had placed under this fine slogan a picture of a cemetery—Since there death does bring about peace" ["Itaque elegans nugator in Batavis cum more gentis signum pro domo suspendisset, *pacis perpetuae*, pulchro titulo figuram *cæmeterii* subjecerat. *Ibi scilicet mors quietem fecit*"].

<sup>34</sup> Leibniz to J.-L. Grimarest, June 4, 1712, OO V, pp. 65-66: "I have seen something about the project by the Abbot of *St. Pierre* in order to keep a perpetual peace in Europe. I remember the sign of a cemetery bearing this motto: perpetual peace; in fact, the dead do not fight any longer, but the living are of another humor" ["J'ai vu quelque chose du projet de Mr. de *St. Pierre* pour maintenir une paix perpétuelle en Europe. Je me souviens de la devise d'un cimetière avec ce mot: *pax perpetua*; car les morts ne se battent point, mais les vivants sont d'une autre humeur"]. On this letter see Cavallar (1992, pp. 21-22); Riley (1995, p. 231); Roldán (2011, p. 91); Stråth (2015, p. 267); Aramayo (2018, p. 129 n4).

philosophers B. de Fontenelle (1716)<sup>35</sup> and J.-B. d’Alembert (1755),<sup>36</sup> Leibniz’s *topos* finally came, in a roundabout way, to the attention of Kant,<sup>37</sup> who was so impressed by it that he used the same image (without quoting the source) in his 1795 *Friedensschrift*, where the words “graveyard” (*Kirchhof*) and “grave” (*Grab*) are oftentimes related to the peace utopias of the Enlightenment thinkers (*ZeF*, AA VIII 343. 03; 347. 06-07; 357. 04-05; 367. 26-27).<sup>38</sup>

When Kant’s essay was published, the title *Zum ewigen Frieden* must have sounded “equivocal” and “ambivalent” (*doppelsinnig, doppelbödig*) to the ears of the German public of the time.<sup>39</sup> While on the one hand, following the coeval works of European *Aufklärung* (e.g. the aforesaid Saint-Pierre’s *Project*), Kant made a customary use of the stereotyped formula of “perpetual peace” between states (*ewiger Friede = pax perpetua*), on the other hand he conjured up the “great graveyard of mankind”, that is, “the peace of the beyond” (*Friedhofsruhe = sempiterna pax*), just associated by Christian eschatology with the eternal condition of the dead (see Gulyga, 2004, p. 276; Stammen, 2007, p. 93; Mori, 2008, p. 19; Curi, 2010, pp. 108-109).<sup>40</sup> So, according to a suggestion of the leading Russian scholar Arsenij Gulyga, the very term “perpetual peace” is ambiguous<sup>41</sup> in that it reveals *two* possible

<sup>35</sup> B. de Fontenelle, *Éloge de M. G.G. Leibniz* (1716), in Leibnizius, *OO I*, p. xxiv: “he [Leibniz] sadly approves the sign of a Dutch merchant, who, having entitled it *To Perpetual Peace*, had pictured underneath the image of a cemetery” [“il [Leibniz] approuve avec douleur l’enseigne d’un marchand Hollandois [*sic*], qui ayant mis pour titre *À la Paix perpétuelle*, avait fait peindre dans le tableau un cimetière”].

<sup>36</sup> J.-B. d’Alembert, *Éloge de Saint-Pierre* (1755), in *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, A. Belin, 1821, vol. III/1, p. 257: “A Dutch merchant replied even better to the Abbot of St. Pierre taking the image of a cemetery bearing the following words: *To Perpetual Peace*” [“Un marchand hollandais répondit peut-être encore mieux à l’abbé de Saint-Pierre, en prenant pour enseigne un cimetière avec ces mots, *à la paix perpétuelle*”].

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noticing *en passant* that Kant knew very well both Fontenelle and the texts of d’Alembert” [“connaissait bien Fontenelle” and “les textes de d’Alembert”] (Ferrari, 1971, p. 479; 2005, p. 18).

<sup>38</sup> See also Bennington (1993, p. 279): “this image of the graveyard recurs many other times in the text of Kant” [“dieses Bild der Friedhofs vervolgt Kant Text noch mehrere Male”].

<sup>39</sup> Gulyga (2004, p. 276): “The title *Zum ewigen Frieden* must have sounded ambiguous to the ear of the German people” [“der Titel *Zum ewigen Frieden* mußte für ein deutsches Ohr doppelsinnig klingen”]. For Kant’s “satirisch doppelbödigen Titel”, see Lorz (1998, p. 75); Gallie (1978, p. 66 n1); Mori (2008, pp. 18-19).

<sup>40</sup> On “*la otra paz perpetua*”, i.e., “*la paz perpetua de los muertos*”, see also Pereda (1996, p. 80).

<sup>41</sup> For the double sense of the German “*ewig*” (*perpetual/eternal*), see Duden (1996, p. 469); Falcioni (2000, p. 17 n1): “In the German language the distinction between perpetual and eternal is not given: in every case we have to use the term *ewig*; for this reason, the expression used by Kant (*Zum ewigen Frieden*) suggests more properly the image of a cemetery” [“Nella lingua tedesca, la distinzione tra *perpetuo* ed *eterno* non si dà: si deve ricorrere in ogni caso al termine *ewig*; per questa ragione, l’espressione usata da Kant *Zum ewigen Frieden* suggerisce più facilmente l’immagine del cimitero”]; Ottmann (2009, p. 98): “So, the ‘perpetual peace’ [...] would mean the quiet of the graveyard. *May they*



solutions to humanity: either the end of all hostilities through an international agreement, or the eternal peace of the gigantic graveyard of mankind after a devastating war of extermination (Gulyga, 2004, p. 276; see *ZeF*, AA VIII 343. 23-26; 347. 04-07). Many philosophers—Gulyga added—were writing about the first possibility, but only Kant referred to the second (Gulyga, 2004, p. 276 [“den Verweis auf die zweite finden wir nur bei Kant”]).<sup>42</sup>

## 4.

The opening words of Kant’s *Zum Ewigen Frieden*, borrowed from Leibniz (see above n28),<sup>43</sup> possibly via Fontenelle (Shell, 1997, p. 151 n7; see Gerhardt, 1995b, pp. 35-36; Stammen, 2007, p. 93; Khalip, 2011, p. 263. For Kant’s good knowledge of Fontenelle, see Ferrari, 1971, p. 479; Schönfeld, 2000, p. 273 n61), were linked to a curious anecdote concerning the figure of a certain *plaisant* or *elegans nugator in Batavis*, so called by the learned polyglot Leibniz,<sup>44</sup> and variously translated in English as (a) “elegant trifler in Batavia” (Taswell-Langmead, 1856); (b) “elegant Dutch trifler” (Summer, 1874); (c) “elegant Dutch joker” (Roldán, 2011); (d) “fashionable joker in Holland” (Riley, 1995; Johns, 2013). Actually, in the later version of the story handed down by Fontenelle (*OO I*, p. xxiv), d’Alembert (*Œuvres complètes III/1*, p. 257), and by Kant himself (AA VIII 343), he is better known as (e) a prosaic *marchand hollandais* (“Dutch shopkeeper”) or *holländische Gastwirt*

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*rest in peace*” [“Der ‘ewige Frieden’ – so verstanden – wäre die Friedhofsruhe. *Requiescant in pace*”]; see also Georges (1875<sup>3</sup>, p. 792 [“ewig” = *aeternus*], p. 885 [“zum ewigen Frieden” = *aeterna pax*]). On the ambivalence of Kantian term ‘*ewig*’, see also Duque (1996, pp. 191-192): (a) “indefinite persistence in time” [“algo que podría darse en el tiempo, y con el tiempo, y en él proseguiría indefinidamente”]; (b): “end and conclusion of time” [“sentido de ‘cierre’ y clausura del tiempo, de un *eschaton*”]; see also Aramayo (2018, p. 42 [*ewig* = “eterno”, “perenne”, “sempiterno”]).

<sup>42</sup> Contending the “common interpretation reflected in the misleading translation of the treatise as ‘Perpetual Peace’”, Behnke (2008, p. 514) remarks that “Kant’s project of Eternal Peace needs to be understood not only as a guide to the creation of peaceful relations between states”: in fact, “despite protestation to the contrary, Eternal Peace is necessarily the peace of the graveyard”. So, according to Jüngel (2009, p. 311), the Kantian motif of the Dutch innkeeper and of his satirical sign pertains to eternity; on the other hand, Aramayo (2018, p. 17) argues that “The peace of the graveyards cannot be the only possible permanent peace” [“La de los cementerios no puede ser la única paz permanente posible”].

<sup>43</sup> According to Concha Roldán (2011, p. 87), however, “Leibniz is not usually numbered among the precursors of Kant’s essay *Zum ewigen Frieden*”; no reference to Leibniz, for instance, in Ossipow’s seminal article (2008, pp. 357ff.) devoted to the sources of *ZeF*. For the relation Kant-Leibniz, see now Wilson (2012): “Kant’s references to Leibniz, though sporadic, reveal an ongoing interest in Leibnizian problems and concepts”.

<sup>44</sup> It is well known that “Leibniz used French, German, or Latin indifferently, depending on the language of his interlocutor” [“Leibniz utilisait indifféremment le français, l’allemand ou le latin, selon la langue de son interlocuteur”] (Ferrari, 2005, p. 16).

(“Dutch innkeeper”). This anonymous Dutchman, following the custom of his country (*more gentis*), had attached to the façade of his tavern (or to the door of his house) a signboard on which the inscription *Pax perpetua* was placed above the picture of a cemetery, “since there death”, Leibniz glossed, “does bring about peace” (Riley, 1995, p. 231; see Leibniz, *Codex Juris Gentium*, OO IV/3, p. 288: “*Ibi scilicet mors quietem fecit*”).<sup>45</sup>

Now, these preliminary remarks reveal a ‘hidden side’ of Kant’s essay *Zum ewigen Frieden*, the title of which, ironically transferring the previous image established by Leibniz (Falcioni, 2000, p. 17; Mori, 2008, p. 19; Shell, 2009, p. 213; Hamilton, 2013, p. 244; see Stråth, 2015, p. 267 [“Kant linked irony of Leibniz to his philosophy of reason”]), is still open to dispute.<sup>46</sup> Usually conceived by most translators as a *pacifist slogan*, or the *optative sentence* in favor of everlasting peace between States (Eng. *For a Perpetual Peace, To Perpetual Peace, Towards Perpetual Peace*; Fr. *Pour la paix perpétuelle, Vers la paix perpétuelle*; It. *Per la pace perpetua*; Sp. *Por la paz perpetua*; *Hacia la paz perpetua*) (see Duichin, 2020, pp. 214-216),<sup>47</sup> that title

<sup>45</sup> According to Haverkamp (1996, p. 84), not only for Leibniz but also for Kant, “the outcome of war (death)” is “the condition of the only possible peace”.

<sup>46</sup> See Tundo Ferente (2003, p. 105): “The German title may be translated either as *To Perpetual Peace* or as *At Perpetual Peace*, with regard to the two possible meanings of peace: the peace as ‘the great cemetery of the mankind’; or the one that can be obtained by the federalist organization of the States” [“Il titolo tedesco può essere reso sia con *Per la pace perpetua*, sia con *Alla pace perpetua*, in relazione alle due possibili forme di pace: quella del ‘grande cimitero del genere umano’ e quella che si può ottenere con l’organizzazione federalistica degli stati”]. For the “peculiar habit” of translating Kant’s treatise *Zum ewigen Frieden* into English as *Perpetual Peace* instead of *Eternal Peace*, see Fenves (2003, p. 92) and Behnke (2008, pp. 513ff.); according to the latter (p. 513), this translation “obscures or even eliminates” the semantic ambiguity (religious and metaphysical) inherent in the German concept ‘*ewig*’. To my knowledge, only a couple of English-language editions of *ZeF* (see Hastie, 1914; Schwarzb, 1988) translate it as *Eternal Peace*; moreover, ‘perpetual’ and ‘eternal’ are used interchangeably (Behnke, 2008, p. 513 n1). Most of the French translators (except for sporadic cases: e.g. Stéphane Piobetta’s “*paix éternelle*”) have rendered Kant’s *ewiger Friede* by “*paix perpétuelle*” (Ferrari, 2000, p. 143). According to Bertrand Liaudet (1996, p. 5), “La diversité des traductions françaises du titre même de l’œuvre [...] nous montre que le titre pose un problème”.

<sup>47</sup> For the list of translations of *ZeF* into English see Duncan (1899, p. 255); Boswell (1991, pp. 232-233); into French, Liaudet (1996, pp. 93-94); Hatchuel (2008, pp. 2, 6-7, 12); into Spanish, Palacios (1974, pp. 195-202). A fresh, and more appropriate, translation into Italian (*Alla pace perpetua* vs *Per la pace perpetua*) has been suggested by two eminent scholars, Cesa (1996, p. 59 n8) and Mathieu (2012, pp. 53-54). For the Spanish translation *A la paz eterna*, as it seems suggested by the hint to the Dutch innkeepers’s signboard, see Duque (1996, p. 191); for two different meanings of the sign, see now Aramayo (2018, p. 42): (a) *Near the perpetual peace*, for its proximity to a cemetery [“el albergue al que alude Kant se hubiera podido llamar *Junto a la paz perpetua* por su vecindad con un cementerio”]; (b) *House of the eternal peace*, in the sense attributed to a restaurant, tavern, inn, etc. [“*Casa de la paz eterna* tal como decimos *Casa Manolo* para designar a un restaurante”]. Similar signboards also in German (e.g., *Zum goldenen Hirsch*, *Zum goldenen Hecht*, *Hotel zur Brücke* [I. Andrić]), French (*Au chien qui fume*, *Au sergent de Waterloo* [V. Hugo]), English (*At the sign of the White Hart*, *At the Red Lyon inn*), Italian (*Al leone d’oro*, *Al cappello rosso*, *All’antico falcone*), and Czech (*U zlatého tygra*, *U kalicha* [J. Hašek]).

is in actual fact a semantic *calque* of the funereal signboard—*At the Perpetual* [i.e. *Eternal*] *Peace*—picked by Leibniz as the *emblematic* symbol “of a fatal peace which is worse than war itself” (Riley, 1995, p. 231), in order to suggest that “peace” and “death” are *identical*, and the obstinate pursuit of peace on earth leads not to the longed for *end of all wars*, but solely to the *eternal peace of cemetery*.<sup>48</sup>

## 5.

It has been told that Leibniz (who, unlike Kant, did travel to Holland) had really drunk at the above-named Dutch inn, and that Kant had read of its signboard in Leibniz’s correspondence (Richards, 1999, p. 1). Unfortunately, there is little information about how Leibniz spent his time in the various Dutch cities he visited during the journey in November 1676 (Malcom, 2003, p. 225). We do know, however, that before returning to Amsterdam, whence he would leave for Hanover, Leibniz stopped for a few days at The Hague (18 through 21) in order to meet Spinoza (Müller & Krönert, 1969, pp. 45-46; Malcom, 2003, pp. 225ff.; Stewart, 2006, p. 14; Van Bunge & Krop, 2011, p. 35). According to this event, it is tempting to reconsider Leibniz’s much-discussed anecdote in a new light. Its origin, in fact, might be inspired by the eclectic figure of Lieuwe van Aitzema, a Dutch libertine, worldly-wise, bon viveur, and philanderer (for a portrait, see Goethals, 1837, pp. 161-165; Chisholm, 1911, p. 448; Rowen, 1987, pp. 169ff.; Israel, 1995, pp. 684, 731-732; Koopmans & Huussen, 2007, pp. 4-5) who was born at Dokkum (Friesland) on November 19, 1600 and died on February 23, 1669 at The Hague, where he was buried in the *Grote Kerk* (St. James’s Church), the main temple of the city (Goethals, 1837, p. 163).

The scholarly Aitzema, besides being a diplomat, writer, and historian, expert in peace and war matters,<sup>49</sup> was a renowned story-teller, who has at times been identified as the anonymous “plaisant”, “elegans nugator” or “fashionable Dutch trifler” mentioned in the Leibnizian writings (1688/1712) (See Taswell-Langmead, 1856, p. 20; Johns, 2013, p. 86; *contra*:

<sup>48</sup> According to Leibniz, in fact, “Perpetual peace was only conceivable among the dead [...] only the dead are capable of perpetual peace” (Stråth, 2015, p. 265).

<sup>49</sup> He was the author of Latin poems (Leo ab Aitzema Doccumanus, *Poemata Juvenilia*, Franekeræ, F. Heynsius, 1617), and published, among other things, a work on the issue of ‘perpetual peace’ (*Historia pacis, a foederatis Belgis ab anno 1621 ad hoc usque tempus tractatæ*, Lugduni Batavorum, J. & D. Elsevier, 1654).

Sumner, 1874, p. 180 [“A different person, also of Holland”]). Leibniz’s “grim joke”—repeated verbatim by Kant in the prologue to *ZeF*—concerning “the story of a Dutch innkeeper’s sign”,<sup>50</sup> might thus be the picturesque transposition, in a satirical way, of the Latin epitaph engraved on Aitzema’s tombstone inside of The Hague’s temple (*in templo Hagae Comitit*),<sup>51</sup> which, according to the German editors of his *Complete Works*, Leibniz visited during the stay on November 1676.<sup>52</sup> Seventeen years later, deeply disenchanting by the vain attempts to achieve a perpetual peace in Europe (Griard, 2007, pp. 501ff.), Leibniz would approvingly quote in a passage of the *Codex Juris Gentium* (with a very light variation: *isto sub tumulo > tali sub lapide*) the Latin couplet composed by Aitzema: “And Aitzema, famous for his knowledge of these things [i.e. peace and war], bore witness to this sentiment even in his epitaph: ‘O passerby who seeks peace and liberty, you will find them either in this tomb, or nowhere’”.<sup>53</sup>

## 6.

In conclusion: Aitzema’s pessimistic epitaph (very likely popularized by Leibniz, and later intertwined with the proverbial signboard ascribed to a certain Dutch trifler or innkeeper)<sup>54</sup> alluded to a grave, “that is, the place of Eternal Peace” as “the only reasonable utopia” (Arendt, 1982, p. 52; Haverkamp, 1996, p. 81), cynically warning that “only with the dead, not with the living, could this desire of good men be fulfilled” (Sumner, 1874, p. 180). This fits perfectly with Kant’s caveat: in fact, in the absence of a “permanent

<sup>50</sup> Riley (1966, p. 244): “both Leibniz and Kant begin their search for ‘perpetual peace’ with *the same grim joke*: the story of a Dutch innkeeper’s sign” (Italics are mine).

<sup>51</sup> The epitaph was published by the Dutch clergyman Adriaan Pars (1701, p. 115): “Epitaph of the most excellent Lieuwe van Aitzema from Friesland, which is inside The Hague’s temple: *O passerby who seeks peace and liberty, you will find them either in this tomb, or nowhere*” [“Epitaphium Viri Excellentissimi Leonis ab Aitsma Frisii, quod extat in templo Hagae Comitit, *Si Pacem quaeris Libertatemque, Viator, aut nusquam, aut tali sub Lapide invenies*”].

<sup>52</sup> Leibniz, *SSB S. IV*, vol. V, p. 51 n. 10 (“bei seinem Aufenthalt im Haag im November 1675 [sic]”); but: November 1676 (see Müller & Krönert, 1969, p. 46; Malcom, 2003, p. 225; Stewart, 2006, p. 14).

<sup>53</sup> Leibniz, *Political Writings*, ed. P. Riley, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988<sup>2</sup>, p. 166; see *OO IV/3*, p. 288: “Et Aitzema clarus harum rerum notitia, etiam Epitaphio testatus est sententiam: *Qui pacem quaeris libertatemque, viator, aut nusquam aut isto sub tumulo invenies*”.

<sup>54</sup> See Johns (2013, p. 86): “Interestingly, Leibniz invokes the ‘fashionable joker’, i.e. the Dutch shopkeeper who placed a picture of a cemetery under the phrase ‘eternal peace’. To this Leibniz adds the epitaph of Aitzema”; Sumner (1874, p. 180): “Aitzema caught the jest [of the Dutch joker] and illustrated it by a Latin couplet”; Taswell-Langmead (1856, p. 20): “an elegant trifler in Batavia [Aitzema?] hang up a picture of a graveyard as a symbol of perpetual peace: *Qui pacem quaeris ... isto sub tumulo invenies*”.

treaty of peace (*foedus pacificum*) between states”, and with the sovereigns persevering in a fatal “war of extermination” (*Ausrottungskrieg, bellum internecinum*), there will remain no other place for perpetual peace dreamt of by philosophers than the “great cemetery of mankind” (*großen Kirchhofe der Menschengattung*), i.e., the “wide grave” (*weiten Grabe*) which is to cover for eternity “both the horrors of the violence and their authors” (*ZeF*, AA VIII 343, 347, 357).<sup>55</sup> So, also the “elegant Dutch trifler”—whoever he was—“proclaimed over his door” (Sumner, 1874, p. 180).

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<sup>55</sup> See also *EaD*, AA VIII 331-332, where Kant numbers with the omens of Doomsday [*die Vorzeichen des jüngsten Tages*] the bloody wars that flare up on every corner of the earth [*in den an allen Erdenden sich entzündenden blutigen Kriegen*].

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