

Philosophy After Hiroshima

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Edited by

Edward Demenchonok

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In memory
of my parents, Olga and Vasily,
and of the many others
who lived through the wars,
dreaming of peace

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FOREWORD

FRED DALLMAYR

It is a distinct honor for me to have been asked to write a Foreword to this volume titled *Philosophy After Hiroshima*. The volume grows out of conferences organized by the International Society for Universal Dialogue at Hiroshima and other places.

The theme of the volume is timely and extremely topical in an era ravaged by “terror wars” and seemingly incessant global warfare. In an age of globalization, warfare is liable to take on the character of a global civil war—with the prospect of a global nuclear holocaust. Instead of bringing people closer together in a shared world, globalization in its hegemonic version becomes a struggle for global political, military, and economic supremacy. The emphasis is bound to be placed on domination, security, and containment of “terror”—in lieu of the cultivation of cross-cultural learning, cooperation, and the cultivation of peace. As an old adage has it, the first casualty of warfare is truth; another casualty is justice and the rule of law. The sidelining of justice results in another major casualty: peace. That justice and peace are intimately linked is part of the ancient wisdom of humanity. The globalization of politically organized violence, inherited from the last century and escalating into the twenty-first century, poses formidable challenges to philosophy.

The title of the book recalls the stark query of Adorno whether there can possibly be poetry after Auschwitz. Both Hiroshima and Auschwitz are markers of extreme brutality, of the abject savagery into which humanity was willing to descend in late modernity. The volume continues Adorno’s query, but in a more upbeat vein. And rightly so. Precisely after Auschwitz and Hiroshima poetry and philosophy are necessary as crucial antidotes to brutality and destruction. In fact, abandoning poetry and philosophy would mean to grant final victory to holocaust and nuclear mayhem. This, to be sure, does not imply a forgetting of past horrors, but rather a determination to enlist memory work in the service of resistance and recuperation.

Next to poetry (and perhaps some forms of faith), philosophy is particularly well suited to provide an antidote to inhumanity. In the present

context, let me briefly lift up two important qualities of philosophical inquiry: its closeness to “universal dialogue” and its intrinsic affinity with peace. In the Western tradition, the dialogical quality of philosophizing is attested in Socratic questioning and the structure of Platonic dialogues. In the Asian tradition, examples of dialogical interrogation can be found in the exchanges between Confucius and his disciples and also in the dialogical format of some of the Indian Upanishads. What is crucially distinctive of dialogue is its opposition to domination or manipulation. In genuine dialogue, the interlocutor is neither externalized nor appropriated, assimilated or controlled. To this extent, dialogical philosophizing offers a counterpoint to “power politics,” rampant warfare, and militaristic forms of social and political interaction. In recent times, this recuperative quality of dialogue has been extolled especially by Hans-Georg Gadamer, for whom philosophical understanding necessarily involves a dialogue between reader and text, between self and other, between familiar and alien cultures. Building on Gadamer’s initiative, I have myself tried to articulate the vision of a “dialogue among civilizations” (borrowing that phrase from the former Iranian President Khatami).

The second quality of philosophizing, though linked with the first, is still more important: its affinity with peace. The point is that this affinity or relationship is not marginal or extrinsic. As we know, philosophers think and talk about many things: about the rules of logic, about epistemic knowledge, about ethics, aesthetics, about stem-cell research and global warming. Yet, one can argue: peace is not one of those things. Pointedly phrased: philosophers do not just (occasionally) think about peace, but philosophizing is itself an initiation into the practice of peace. This is so because philosophizing leads us into basic questions: what is the point of our “being,” what does it mean for us to “be”? In the words of Martin Heidegger (whom I follow here): “To be human means to philosophize”—or else: to philosophize means to inquire into our humanity. To inquire in that way, we step back from mundane preoccupations; we are freed from heady compulsions (to possess or control) and released from the oppressive idols of the market. Such release or equanimity, however, is the basic way-station to peace.

The intrinsic connection between the core of being and peace is confirmed by scripture where we read: the divine abode “is established in peace” (Psalm 76:2).

Fred Dallmayr
May 2010
University of Notre Dame

INTRODUCTION

FROM POWER POLITICS TO THE ETHICS OF PEACE

EDWARD DEMENCHONOK

The essays included in this volume were originally presented at the Seventh World Congress of the International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD), entitled *After Hiroshima: Collective Memory, Philosophical Reflection and World Peace*, hosted in Hiroshima, Japan, in the summer of 2007, and at the XXII World Congress of Philosophy, entitled *Rethinking Philosophy Today*, in Seoul, South Korea, in the summer of 2008. The authors of the essays analyze the themes arising out of these congresses. They discuss the problems of politically organized violence, war and peace, and the ethics of co-responsibility. Philosophers from various countries express diverse perspectives, and at the same time seek to find a common ground in promoting universal dialogue and peace.

Hiroshima has marked sixty-five years since the first atomic bomb attack. In part, this volume is a response to ongoing debates in philosophy and political science regarding the beginning of the Atomic Age and its consequences, the problems of war and peace, and the need to confront a new kind of violence in a globalized world. The authors of these essays examine the use of military force as a political instrument in the globally interrelated world. They argue for the vital importance of the ethics of peace in international relations, emphasizing the role of collective memory, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They show the relevance of the ideas of non-violence in different cultures, and, in particular, focus on Kant's concept of perpetual peace. The essays elaborate the ideas of a culturally diverse multipolar world order of peace and cooperation based on strengthened international law and institutions, such as a properly reformed United Nations, as well as transnational democratic movements, and a transition toward a cosmopolitan order of law and peace.

I will, in this introductory essay, address some of the ideas conveyed in the essays herein regarding various aspects of violence-prone globalization and its challenges to ethics and to peace. Then, within this context, the

second part of this introduction will provide a brief review of some main themes elaborated in the essays of the volume.

I. The Long Shadow of Hiroshima

The twentieth century was marked by the unprecedented violence of two world wars, the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and many other civil wars and international conflicts. On the eve of the twenty-first century, many hoped that with the end of the Cold War a turning point had been reached, and that humanity would at last embrace new opportunities for peaceful international relations and cooperation for the mitigation of the social and global problems. Our global problems—such as underdevelopment, the environmental crisis, and war in a world full of weapons of mass destruction—are interrelated and constitute a bewildering system of difficult challenges without obvious solutions. The arms industry absorbs colossal amounts of human and economic resources and aggravates the ecological crisis. Meanwhile, the hegemonic policies of the few who control the resources of the many are reinforced by cultures of militarism, thus creating a vicious circle of violence against human beings and nature, with little room for positive programs of social development and preservation of the environment.

The twenty-first century, which started with the war in Iraq and “the global war on terrorism,” the global economic crisis, and the speedy advancement of climate change, seems to be repeating the pattern of the past century. But now things are different. These developments are not limited to a sole country or continent. They are on a global scale. This calls for a profound rethinking of the whole situation and for proper actions to stem violence and quell other global problems. The authors of the essays in this volume realize that this is a philosophical challenge. The escalation of global problems poses challenges to *philosophy* and renews calls for its *transformation*.

Hiroshima: The Atomic Age's Inauguration

Contemporary discussions regarding nuclear weapons hinge on two realities: the existing nuclear stockpiles and the tendency toward proliferation. The search for the solution must overcome the most common counterarguments: deterrence and claims that nuclear weapons are an effective means for countering possible aggression with conventional weapons. The assumption that nuclear weapons are necessary, and that their emergence is historically inevitable underlies these positions. On the

basis of these assumptions, nuclear weaponry is cast as a political instrument.

This is, however, a justification of what *is*, without considering what *could have been* in the past, what *ought to be* at present and what *can be* in the future. But this is what philosophers have the luxury to do: to consider such questions, without hindrance. And with that, philosophers and the “reasoning public” hope to shape today and tomorrow by their thoughts, which then might be translated into political choices and actions.

Today’s world would be better off without nuclear weapons, which hang as a Sword of Damocles over humanity. To avert this, a principled comprehensive policy of nuclear nonproliferation and arms reduction, aiming for complete disarmament, is necessary. This requires reducing the threat of conventional weapons. In a broader sense, it requires the abandonment of power politics and the establishment of peaceful and cooperative relations among all nations.

The invention of the atomic bomb, placed in its proper historical context, was not inevitable and its first use was unnecessary. Most writings on the use of atomic bomb in August 1945 focus on the historiography of that event, the decision making, and actions that led to the event in the first place. But with time, we are able in hindsight to rethink the views we once held without contrary argument, and to approach these matters within a broader perspective.

First, in contrast to the deterministic view of history, we should not be limited to explaining the events that have already taken place, but should approach history as open and be willing to explore the different tendencies and possible alternative choices that existed at that time, which could have been realized. Second, we need not only limit the view of atomic weapons to the immediate effects of their use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also fully consider the long-range consequences of these weapons for international relations, world politics, and the future of humanity. More than sixty years after the events, we are better able to fully realize the implications of nuclear weapons—and, hence, able to examine nuclear weapons in their totality from an ethical perspective.

There are two main positions and narratives surrounding the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The “orthodox” perspective is based mainly on the official version of events, which justifies the atomic bombings. The other, called the “revisionist” perspective, is more reflective, ethically oriented, and critical. The latter argues that the use of the atomic bombs was unnecessary at the end of the war with Japan, and that the emerging superpower considered it to be a means for advancing geopolitical goals.

In brief, the official version of the atomic bombings was first pronounced by President Harry Truman in his statements after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The first statement in the White House press release on August 6, 1945, sixteen hours after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, began with a description of the colossally destructive power of the new weapon—the atomic bomb—in the possession of the United States.¹ In justifying its use, Truman first cited retribution for Pearl Harbor, and then mentioned that Japan had rejected the Potsdam ultimatum calling for its unconditional surrender. Truman, in his radio speech to the nation on August 9, after the second atomic bomb was dropped—this time on Nagasaki—added another justification for the use of the atomic bombs: “We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.”² The latter argument became the cornerstone for the justification of the use of atomic bombs during the Second World War, thus forming the “orthodox” perspective.

That’s what President Truman did say, in short, but it is what he *did not* say regarding the production and use of atomic bombs that might be more revealing. Indeed, many historians consider this beginning of the official narrative to be built on a “half-truth” (Lifton and Mitchell 1996, 5). In what does this half-truth consist?

First: The victims of the bombs were not the perpetrators of Pearl Harbor and of war crimes. They were mostly innocent civilians.

Second: The President referred to Hiroshima as a “Japanese Army base,” but the military units there were scattered at the outskirts of the city, while the bomb was dropped on the center of a city of mostly civilians.³

Third: In his August 9 radio address, President Truman said that the bomb was used “against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare.” Although it is true that Japan violated the rules of war, the use of the weapons of mass destruction, resulting in mass killing of civilians, was itself a violation of the rules of *jus in bello*, of the principles of discrimination and proportionality. The wrong committed by the one side in no way justifies the wrong then committed by the other side of the conflict.⁴

Fourth: One must be struck by the disproportionality between Truman’s declared ends—persuading the Japanese government to accept the Potsdam ultimatum and ending the war quickly—and the means: the use of the new colossally powerful atomic weapon of mass destruction. By the time of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan was practically defeated and it was seeking negotiations to end the war. In Truman’s statement, the use of disproportionate violence was rhetorically justified

as necessary to defeat the enemy: “The force from which the sun drives its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.” Resorting to the means of unlimited destructive force resulted in countless innocent victims, thus trampling the principles of *jus in bello* and of human morality.

Fifth: President Truman’s reference to Japan’s “prompt rejection” of the Potsdam ultimatum as a justification for using the atomic bombs was based only on the Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki’s statement at a news conference, as reported by the press, and not on a formal reply through official diplomatic channels.⁵ Nevertheless, Suzuki’s vague statement was sufficient for Truman to conclude that the ultimatum was rejected.

Indeed, President Truman’s order to drop the bomb was made on July 24, two days before the Potsdam Proclamation was even issued. Truman refused to include in the ultimatum of unconditional surrender any reference to the fate of the emperor. He must have known that the Japanese government would not accept any demand of unconditional surrender that did not include the possibility of retaining a constitutional monarchy. President Truman also excluded the Soviet Union from signing the Potsdam Proclamation, despite its eagerness to be a signatory. If the Soviet Union had been included, this would clearly have signaled its entrance into the war against Japan, which surely would have shocked Japan into immediately surrendering.

President Truman justified the use of the bomb in order to shorten the war and to save the lives of thousands of American soldiers. If this were his primary goal, it could have been achieved more effectively through diplomatic means, without use of the bomb. The Potsdam Conference opened a golden opportunity for doing just that. Truman was aware, including from the decoded intercepts of Japanese diplomatic correspondence, that the Japanese government was already seeking peace negotiations through Moscow and using “peace feelers” in Switzerland and the Vatican, attempting to negotiate surrender prior to the atomic bombings on terms accepted by Truman *after* Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Unfortunately, these opportunities were not considered and the chance of ending the war more quickly, sans the atomic bomb, was missed.

Sixth: Although President Truman did not mention the entrance of the Soviet Union into the war, he knew that it had been agreed upon at the Yalta Conference, confirmed in Potsdam, and scheduled for August 15, 1945. Actually, the Soviet Union did enter the war earlier, declaring war against Japan on August 8, and the next day starting operations against the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria. This was before the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The entrance of the Soviet Union

in the war radically changed the whole situation. It sealed the fate of the war, leaving Japan no other option but to surrender.⁶

All this has led several historians to conclude that President Truman was not really interested in Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam ultimatum prior to the bombs being dropped.⁷ As Tsuyoshi Hasegawa argues, "Truman wrote that he issued the order to drop the bomb *after* Japan rejected the Potsdam Proclamation. The truth is quite opposite, however: the rejection of the Potsdam Proclamation was required to justify the dropping of the bomb" (2005, 152).

Seventh: The continuation of the Manhattan Project, which produced atomic weapons at the very end of World War II, was unnecessary, and it should have been canceled, since its initial reason for existence was no longer relevant. The rhetorical trope of the "war of laboratories" exaggerated the German atomic threat, which was more hypothetical than real.⁸ Since the fall of 1942, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States had fought as Allies in the war in Europe, and the defeat of Germany was imminent before the conclusion of the Manhattan Project. No super-weapon was needed to win the war.⁹ Germany capitulated on May 8, 1945. With this victory, Truman lost his justification for the production of the bomb, so the target switched from Germany to Japan. But the Pacific War was also coming to its end, at this point, and Japan was practically defeated without the use of super-weapons. Therefore, there was no justification for the continuation of the Manhattan Project.

President Truman's statement—"We have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history—and won"—has left some wondering about what victory he referred to. The atomic bombs did not play any role in defeating the Nazis, and perhaps only at best a marginal role at the very end of the war against Japan. The victory over Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism was achieved not through a super-weapon, but primarily through cooperation between Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States as Allied powers, and as result of the heroism of those who sacrificed their lives for this victory.

Nevertheless, two months after the capitulation of Germany, on July 16, 1945, the nuclear device, under the allusive name "Trinity," was first tested. What President Truman dramatically called a "race" and "war of laboratories" was in reality a unilateral and unchallenged U.S. program, racing against itself in the absence of any competition for being the first to have a new weapon and to inaugurate the Atomic Age. One may wonder what would have happened to the atomic bombs if Japan had surrendered before they were ready. It seems that the nuclear project, conceived during the war (which was its initial justification), would have continued its

development regardless of the outcome of the war. The development of nuclear weapons became the end by itself, and used as the means for other political ends after the war.

Finally: What is striking in President Truman's statements is that the imaginary is triumphant and technocratic, devoid of human consideration. President Truman was proud of the technological achievement of the United States, having a weapon that "is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe," and conferring omnipotence on those who possessed it. He announced: "a new era in man's understanding of nature's forces." Ironically, this reference to the humanity's possession of such an immense force of nature is presented in the context of using this force in the form of a weapon. President Truman's statement that the possession of the atomic bomb supplements the growing power of the U.S. armed forces indicates a broader, long-range agenda and can be interpreted not only as a warning to the Japanese, but also to the whole world (Lifton and Mitchell 1996, 6–7). It presents the Manhattan Project as "the greatest achievement of organized science in history," as if it were a contribution to human progress rather than to the mass destruction of human lives and, perhaps, of civilization itself.

President Truman's statements set the tone for discourse surrounding the atomic bomb. They marked the main points of the official narrative, justifying the production and use of atomic bomb.¹⁰ Time and again, they were rehashed by the complicit media. The administration's media blitz was successful in instilling the official version of events in public opinion and it remains the predominant mode of thought among many.

However, not all scholars or public intellectuals buy into this narrative. The horrific results of the use of atomic bombs, which are, in a certain sense, beyond any rationalization, triggered an ongoing discussion. Many historians, political scientists, and philosophers have questioned the triumphant orthodox narrative, providing new outlooks on the use of the atomic bomb and its apocalyptic consequences.¹¹ In 1946, a study conducted by the panel *The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey* concluded that the use of atomic bombs was unnecessary.¹² The influential books by Robert Butow (1954) and Gar Alperovitz (1985) challenged the basic assumptions of the orthodox narrative and stirred discussions. In the 1990s, the new studies involved declassified documents and broadened post-Cold War conceptual perspectives about the A-bomb, the end-of-the-war, and the Cold War. They include publications by Barton Bernstein (1995), Martin Sherwin (2003), John Dower (1993) and Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (2005), among others.¹³ They made a strong case in rebutting the orthodox justification of the atomic bombing, arguing that it had only a

relatively limited influence, among other factors, on the Japanese surrender, and that it was unnecessary. But if the atomic bomb was unnecessary, this begs the following questions: Why was it even used? What was the motive for taking this action—despite objections of some top scientists, military officials, and politicians, and despite the great risk for the prospects of peace and even for the very existence of humanity?

One argument is that President Truman's motive was in the interest of an emerging superpower in possession of a powerful weapon that could be used as a political instrument, and that its use was a demonstration of force to the Soviet Union, which was viewed as a potential geopolitical rival, and to the world.¹⁴ This links the super-weapon to the superpower, to the Cold War, and to hegemonic geopolitics.

Gar Alperovitz's book, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* (first published in 1965), illuminates the relationship of the atomic bomb to the policy toward the Soviet Union. He argues that one of the reasons for dropping the atomic bomb, from the perspective of power politics, was to use it as the "master card" of diplomacy toward Russia to make it "more manageable."¹⁵ Some other scholars come to a similar conclusion. John Rawls considered both the fire bombings and atomic bombings of Japanese cities to be "very grave wrongs." Referencing Alperovitz's book, Rawls writes: "Some scholars also believe the bombs were dropped in order to impress Russia with American power and make Russian leaders more agreeable to American demands," adding in a footnote: "If true, it is particularly damning" (Rawls 2002, 95, 100 and fn. 20).

But questions still remain about the post-war continuation of the atomic bomb development project: Why, after the war, did the United States not abandon this project, instead of continuing it and producing even more powerful nuclear weapons, including a hydrogen bomb?¹⁶ The researchers find the answer to this question by "following the money" (or tracing the political power and interests) within the broader context of U.S. hegemonic strategy. They show connection between atomic bomb, the Cold War, and the imperial politics of global domination. The United States, following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, continued to use nuclear weapons as a threat against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, after its end against "rogue" states, and in general as the "big stick" to enforce U.S. global dominance.¹⁷ Despite the end of the Cold War, the nuclear threat didn't end, and initial steps toward expected disarmament were short lived. The colossal U.S. nuclear arsenal remains, while switching the targets, with the development of the "missile defense" program of a shield to complement the first-strike nuclear sword. It is

viewed as a threat by many states, fueling the continuation of the nuclear arms race that threatens the future of humanity.

Historians will continue to argue about the military aspects of the end of World War II. But this debate should not overlook the historical context and perspective. It should not abandon the real significance of the atomic bomb: the inauguration of the Atomic Age, which would prove to be a turning point in the history of civilization, providing the human race with the material means for its own self-destruction. The decisions to produce and use atomic bombs should be evaluated not by the narrow criteria of their immediate impact on the military operations of World War II, but rather by the full consideration of their long-range consequences for the post-war international relations and the fate of our civilization.

The adherents of the Truman administration's position in favor of the atomic bombing in Japan argue that it was justified because it shortened the war and saved the lives of many thousands of American soldiers. But there are other important factors that they need to weigh: This action not only resulted in the deaths of more than two hundred thousand civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it also created the Atomic Age and triggered the nuclear arms race and proliferation, which became a threat to the future of humanity. Retrospectively, it is clear that these two kinds of considerations—one military and political versus the other, concerning world peace and the fate of humanity—are incommensurably different.

Looking back at options that existed at that time, the choices made, and the paths not taken, it is clear that neither the inauguration of the Atomic Age nor the perpetuation of war (from World War II to the Cold War, and to the open-ended "global war against terrorism") were predetermined or inevitable. The atomic bomb was not merely a military consideration. Indeed, it was very much a political affair, dramatically impacting post-war policy. The decisions to develop the atomic bomb, then to use it, and further to produce various forms of atomic weapons as a nuclear arsenal were choices for the worse; none of these choices was predetermined—they could have been different at each stage, avoiding this dangerous path and preventing the fatal turn that propelled human history toward a nuclear whirlpool.¹⁸ Retrospectively, we can say that it played a role in shifting the U.S. relations with the Soviet Union from a cooperative wartime ally to a mistrusted foe, eventually instigating the Cold War. The atomic bomb was both a trigger and a vehicle of the Cold War, as well as of the continuing imperial geopolitics. If there were no atomic weapons, the United States would have been more realistic and not so overly ambitious in its geostrategic goals; it would have no reason to engage in a decades-long

nuclear arms race with the Soviets. And we would not have the problem we now have in regards to nuclear proliferation and disarmament.

What must be emphasized again is that, as with the decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan, the Cold War was not inevitable: It was a war of choice and contrary to the will of peoples to live in peace after World War II. It takes two to tango. At the same time, the U.S.-Soviet conflict demonstrated “the powerlessness of power,” showing that force is unable to solve the deeper problems of security and human rights. The creators of the nuclear Frankensteinian monster became its hostages. The Cold War was a colossal waste of human and economic resources, as well as the natural resources of the planet. In taking a long-range view, if the trend of positive relationships between the Allies and Soviet Union had continued after the war, considering peaceful coexistence and legitimate interests of each nation and of humanity, it is not unlikely that, in peaceful conditions, the peoples within the Soviet bloc countries might have undertaken their internal reforms much sooner, the world would be free from the nuclear stockpiles, and all countries would benefit from creating the new world order of peace and cooperation.

Knowledge and Power in the Atomic Age

The scientists, who were involved in the Manhattan Project and President Truman, who with his cabinet members made these decisions, were well aware of the colossal destructive nature of this weapon and its potential threat to the destruction of civilization. This concern was voiced by certain scientists, politicians, and military officials as the Manhattan Project progressed. But it was kept secret from the public, and after Hiroshima many intellectuals around the globe explicitly expressed it. In particular, Camus, Sartre, Dewey, and Russell all realized the existential threat to the human race posed by the atomic weapon, which was evident in their immediate responses following the bombing of Hiroshima.

Science was used to create this monstrous weapon. Consequently, one cannot avoid raising serious questions about the relationship between scientific knowledge and power. The scientists possessed the knowledge to produce new weapons as military means, but the politicians had the power of decision making over their use. Some scientists opportunistically conformed to that. But for others the scientists’ knowledge was used as means to further an end that they were against, resulting in a tragic conflict of conscience.

For Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard, both scientists who in 1939 drew the attention of President Roosevelt to the possibility of developing an

atomic weapon, their initial motive was a concern that the Nazis might develop such a weapon first. But they both faced an internal struggle: to defeat Hitler and the prospect of introducing such an immensely powerful weapon. As we know now, the fear of a potential German atomic program was not substantiated, and the Nazis were defeated without use of the atomic bomb. The bomb did not play any role in the victory over the Nazis, and even its marginal role at the very end of the war against Japan was, at best, questionable.

Later, during the early 1940s, Albert Einstein became concerned that, despite Nazi Germany's imminent defeat, the Manhattan Project continued with accelerated speed toward successfully manufacturing the bomb. Einstein sent a letter to Roosevelt, asking him to meet with Szilard, but it was too late: Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. After Hiroshima, Einstein regretted his first letter to President Roosevelt that had initiated the Manhattan Project.¹⁹

Szilard, who asked Einstein to send the first letter to President Roosevelt, became concerned about the possible use of the bomb against the already defeated Japanese, and initiated a petition made up of scientists to send to President Truman. Of course, it did not matter—the decision had already been made. Later on, in an interview, commenting on a quotation from President Truman—"We have spent 2 billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history—and won," Szilard said:

To put the atomic bomb in terms of having gambled 2 billion dollars and having "won" offended my sense of proportions, and I concluded at that time that Truman did not understand at all what was involved. (1960)

In the same interview, Szilard said that if Germany had dropped the atomic bomb, then:

Can anyone doubt that we would then have defined the dropping of atomic bombs on cities as a war crime, and that we would have sentenced the Germans who were guilty of this crime to death at Nuremberg and hanged them? (1960)

In the relations of knowledge and power, the expertise of scholars was used to create the military means, but once the atomic weapons were created, their subsequent use was out of the scholars' control and the ends were determined by politicians with their own worldviews and agendas. Perhaps even contrary to their intentions, the scholars' knowledge, within the existing power structures, was reduced to mere instrumental rationality.

One of the lessons from Hiroshima is how a very small group of people made decisions in secrecy that had such far-reaching global implications. Wars provide many opportunities for abuse of power. This raises questions about the democratic decision-making process. Should the possibility of destroying the world rest in the hands of one person? Moreover, should the fate of the entire human race be a hostage to the politics of one country?

Contemporary society, possessing the immensely powerful means provided by science and a technology-based economy, needs to make sure that they are used for the morally good ends of the betterment of humanity. Policies and decisions that potentially could affect society and the international community must be based on collective wisdom in a global context. The complex, diverse, and interdependent high-tech world of the twenty-first century requires genuinely robust democratic relations within society and among the nations as equals, an adequate political culture, and an enlightened “reasoning public.” Otherwise, a society that has powerful techno-economic means but is ethically blind and short-sighted could ultimately suffer the same fate as the dinosaurs, with their huge bodies but disproportionately small brains.

Toward a World without Nuclear Weapons

To justify maintaining nuclear weapons immediately after World War II, politicians invoked concerns for the security of the public. But this argument does not hold up for at least two reasons: First, there was no security threat to America after the end of the war—it was the strongest country economically and militarily.

Second, and perhaps most important: The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 opened an opportunity for a positive alternative in international relations. It promised an avenue to express the will of the nations to prevent future wars by laying the foundation of a new world order based on the rule of law and principles of the UN Charter. It promised, too, to provide collective security and serve as the basis for human rights protection and the cooperation of nations in solving common worldwide problems. Thus, since the establishment of the United Nations, politicians around the world have had an alternative way to pursue the legitimate interests of national security and resolution of disputes. With this institution in place, it is difficult to make a compelling argument for illegitimate use of force and for the development of weapons of mass destruction.

After the Cold War ended, many again hoped that a turning point had been reached, and that humanity would at last come to its senses and embrace the new opportunities for peaceful and collaborative relations among nations as equals, completing disarmament, and redirecting resources for the solution of social and global problems. But their hopes were soon dashed. Even before the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the world was already troubled by the appearance on the world stage of a unilateral national actor that seemed determined more and more to go it alone. This shift in world politics was not inevitable, but rather was a result of the neoconservative “revolution,” which, for the sake of global domination by a hegemonic superpower, torpedoed the peaceful achievements of the first post-Cold War decade.

Hegemonism was the midwife of the birth of the atomic bomb. The use of nuclear weapons as an instrument of imperial geopolitics brought humanity to the brink of the nuclear precipice. Given the deadly connection between empire and nuclear weapons, in order to avert this threat and to reverse the suicidal path of escalating violence, it is necessary to abolish both, ends and means: the imperial politics of global domination and the genocidal weapons of mass destruction.

Critics of nuclearism point out an unacceptable gap between the legal and moral imperatives prohibiting nuclear weapons and the primacy of geopolitics, which often suppresses international law and morality. But people should not be hostages of these politics: “It is up to us as citizens to do our best to close these gaps between what law and morality prescribe and what dominant political forces favor” (Falk 2008a, 42). The danger of nuclear annihilation remains. “We missed a golden opportunity in the aftermath of the Cold War to back away from the precipice by immediately and drastically reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and making good faith efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament,” write Falk and Krieger (2008, 5–6). They attribute this failure to the “hegemonic mentality” that “nuclear weapons from their initial use at Hiroshima and Nagasaki imparted the sense of American geopolitical dominance” (Krieger and Falk 2008, 236–237).

Arguably, the current shift of focus of nuclear-weapons states toward proliferation and terrorism obfuscates the major issue: the danger of the existing nuclear stockpiles and the urgent need for disarmament.²⁰ Additionally, there is a selective approach concerning non-proliferation. Counter-proliferation was used as the pretext for the war against Iraq in 2003, and the current buildup of tensions with Iran. This results in a double-jeopardy: “the mind-game of nonproliferation both distracts us from the real challenges of nuclearism and provides nuclear weapon states

with a geopolitical justification for launching an aggressive war” (Falk 2008b, 231).

Total denuclearization is, however, only the first step toward a comprehensive disarmament process designated “to dismantle the whole military machine” (Falk 2008a, 46). The Non-Proliferation Treaty’s preamble, particularly its Article VI, contains language affirming the desire of treaty signatories to move in the direction of general and complete disarmament.

President Obama’s commitment to the vision of a world free from nuclear weapons is greatly welcomed. But today it is much more difficult to be achieved than back in 1945, *before* the inauguration of Atomic Age, or even in early 1990, before the Bush Doctrine shifted the U.S. policy toward military preponderance and hegemonic unilateralism. Barack Obama has become the first U.S. president in history to declare a U.S. commitment to seek peace and security in “a world without nuclear weapons.” The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague by U.S. President Obama and Russian President Medvedev, was an important step toward this goal.

Even for a well-intended president it is not easy to achieve such noble goals. And this one would require dismantling the military-economic-political structures of the war system. The process of disarmament cannot be achieved in a world in which the sole superpower pursues a policy of hegemonic domination. Thus disarmament requires demilitarization and de-hegemonization of policy.

Although in most anti-nuclear publications criticism is focused mainly on the politics of the U.S. government, it should nevertheless be clear that today the United States is not the only cause of the problem, nor the sole solution. There are other members of the nuclear weapons club and countries possessing (or seeking) nuclear weapons, which share responsibility for not doing enough to dismantle the foundations of nuclearism. However, given the U.S. superpower status in today’s world, the progress in nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation, and global peace cannot be achieved without its constructive position and consistent politics prioritizing these goals as of paramount importance. Nuclear weapons have become a global problem, requiring a global solution through joint efforts of the nations in getting rid of nuclear weapons and averting this threat to the future of humanity.

In order to make progress toward world peace, foreign policy must be free from militarism and hegemonic ambitions; furthermore, it must abandon the traditional pattern of power politics and establish new international relations, as equals, with all other nations. It can do this

based on international law and the principles of the UN Charter, to build up a new world order of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among nations in a common effort to solve social and global problems. This peaceful alternative to existing threats will lead the way to survival and prosperity for the human race.

The two paths toward the future remain: One hinges on maintaining traditional power-politics and hegemony. The other embraces politics of peace and cooperation based on international law and principles of the UN Charter. The latter is the only path leading toward the solution to the global problems that threaten humanity's future.

Toward an Ethics of Nonviolence and Planetary Co-Responsibility

The breakdown of civilization led Theodor Adorno to proclaim after World War II that "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (1983, 34). He worried that "mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism." After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, a relapse into barbarism is not merely a hypothetical threat:

Auschwitz *was* this relapse, and barbarianism continues as long as the fundamental conditions that favored that relapse continue largely unchanged... Furthermore, one cannot dismiss the thought that the invention of the atomic bomb, which can obliterate hundreds of thousands of people literally in one blow, belongs in the same historical context as genocide. (Adorno 2003, 19–20)

The monstrosity that took place has shattered the basis for reconciling speculative metaphysical thought with experience, and "After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims" (Adorno 1995, 361). According to him, philosophy has failed badly in its efforts to comprehend this social catastrophe. He criticized philosophy as the "Western legacy of positivity," and called on philosophy to reflect on its own failure and its own complicity in such events. If philosophy is to be possible today, it must be a philosophy that regards human suffering as the precondition of thought and as the undoing of all claims to totality. Adorno's statements, aimed against "empty and cold forgetting" or shallow rhetoric about those tragic events, reflected the concerns of many intellectuals about the role of philosophy, its failures in the past, and the need for its transformation in order to fulfill its potential for humanity in the wake of the Holocaust and Hiroshima.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki opened a new era in the history of humanity. In the twisted path of modernity, the bitter irony of the second half of the twentieth century was that it was a triumph of “theoretical reason” in scientific-technological discoveries, including that of atomic energy, but a deficit of “practical reason.” Neither the voice of moral conscience nor existing democratic institutions proved strong enough to prevent the use of this most powerful means for an inhumane end. In the Promethean-like challenge of God, human beings went too far and lost their immortality. In previous historical times, wars devastated large territories and nations, but human life and culture continued in other parts of the world. An individual was mortal, but there was the hope and possibility of continuation through descendants, who could maintain the spiritual tradition for future generations: glimpsing eternity through the endless chain of transmission of the life and culture of an immortal human race (in the collective sense). Now, as never before, we are living under the threat of a total annihilation of humankind. As Jean-Paul Sartre pointed out, human history is made by human beings, and thus there would be no one around to shut the dead eyes of the human race (Sartre 1989, 132).

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy of World War II, including the first use of atomic weapons on an undefended populace, many philosophers and writers focused public attention on the stark choices that now faced humankind. The use of atomic bombs raised the ethical concerns of many philosophers, who understood its long-range consequence for the future of humanity. They responded with strong moral criticism. The first critical essays were published in August of 1945 by Albert Camus (in the newspaper *Combat*) and Bertrand Russell (in *Forward*), and later on by Jean-Paul Sartre (in *Le Temps Modernes*), John Dewey (in *The New Leader*), Emile Benoit-Smullyan and Joseph Neyer (in the philosophy journal *Ethics*), as well as several publications on this topic by Teilhard de Chardin. Russell published his *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*, Albert Schweitzer his *Peace or Atomic War?*, and Karl Jaspers his *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen* (translated in English as *The Future of Mankind*).

Martin Heidegger also referred to the atomic bomb and the desertification of the world. In his philosophical reflection on the nuclear age, he criticized the inhumane use of technology that “increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth.” Emmanuel Lévinas insisted on the priority of ethics over ontology, which attempts to create a totality, reducing the “other” to sameness and identity. This desire for totality is a manifestation of instrumental reason, which does not determine the ends to which it is applied, and thus can be used in the

pursuit of goals that are destructive and inhumane. According to Lévinas, Western philosophy, through its embrace of instrumental reason, displays an objectifying and destructive “will to domination,” which is responsible for the crises in the twentieth century. It is “a type of knowledge which leads to the atomic bomb.”²¹

In 1957, Albert Einstein joined with Bertrand Russell, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, and other prominent scholars to found the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an academic policy movement that called for an end to war, for nuclear disarmament, and for a search for peaceful alternatives to international conflict. “Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?” the Russell-Einstein Manifesto asked.

Many philosophers worried about the future of the human race in the age of unchecked technology of destruction. They argued that nuclear war could bring about the end of the human species. The “extinction” thesis (also termed as “nuclear winter,” “second death,” or “omnicide”) was broadly discussed in numerous publications during the 1970–1980s by John Somerville, Carl Sagan, Jonathan Schell, Douglas Lackey, Gregory Kavka, Steven Lee, Russell Hardin, William C. Gay, and Andrey D. Sakharov, among others.

We can no longer deny the obvious: that humanity finds itself today on a planet with a rapidly deteriorating ecology and the risk of potentially becoming “Hiroshimized” on a global scale. The “overkill” capacity of the existing stockpiles of thermonuclear weaponry is so enormous that even if 90 percent of them were eliminated, the remaining 10 percent would still be enough to exterminate much of the life on Earth, perhaps even threatening all life.

There exists not only the immediate threat of living on the “powder keg” of the stocks of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, which can be detonated by regional wars and explode at any time, but also the “time bombs” of the escalating ecological crisis and of the deteriorating social-economic conditions in the underdeveloped countries. The “end of history” of humanity can come “not as a bang but as a whimper”: an entropy-like, agonizing process of degradation.

These threats to the human race raise fundamental metaphysical questions about the meaning of history, limits, horizons, evil, nothingness, and the suicidal character of war itself. But it also puts at the forefront escalating social and global problems, such as the deepening ecological crisis, Third World underdevelopment, and war in a world full of weapons of mass destruction.

Contemporary civilization has developed powerful means of destruction, including weapons of mass destruction, and has become their hostage. This reveals the dangerous gap between sophisticated high-tech power and inadequate ethics, between the world-wide effects of politico-economic activities and the lack of global consciousness. The use of military force as a political instrument has proven to be counterproductive and dangerous. In an interrelated world, the use of these powerful means by one individual or group for evil ends can result in a global catastrophe.

The collective destiny of the world increasingly depends on the goals and actions of individuals, which requires global awareness and co-responsibility. Today ethical ideas of nonviolence and co-responsibility are not only individual concerns, but also have societal importance and affect the future of humanity.

Humanity can no longer afford to resort to violence as a means of dealing with problems concerning the common vital interests of the many, such as nuclear proliferation, human rights violations, poverty, cultural homogenization, the ecological crisis, etc. The escalating global problems threaten the future of human race that faces a dilemma: either break away from the traditional vicious circle of violence and of the “ethics of animosity” or perish.

Where, then, does the future lie? Unilateralism, hegemonic political anarchy, mass immiseration, ecocide, and global violence—a Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*? Or international cooperation, social justice, and genuine collective—political and human—security? Down which path lies cowering, fragile hope?

Humanistic thinkers approach these problems from the perspective of their concern about the situation of individuals and the long-range interests of humanity. They overturn an old myth that “violence saves, war brings peace, and might makes right.” They examine in-depth the root-causes of these problems, warning about the consequences of escalation and, at the same time, indicating the prospect of their possible solutions through non-violent means and a growing global consciousness. Today’s world is in desperate need of realistic alternatives to violent conflict. Nonviolent action—properly planned and executed—is a powerful and effective force for political and social change. The ideas of peace and nonviolence, as expressed by Immanuel Kant, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and many contemporary philosophers—supported by peace movements—counter the paralyzing fear with hope and offer a realistic alternative, a rational approach to the solutions to the problems, encouraging people to be the masters of their own destiny.