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INTRODUCTORY

The chapters which follow deal with a handful of writers whose thoughts on peace and war have never, to my knowledge, been previously brought together for comparison, analysis and assessment. Except in one instance, their influences upon one another, although of interest, were not of the first importance. My authors form not a school, nor even a clear succession or progression of thought about peace and war; they form, rather, a constellation, a number of neighbouring sources of intellectual light converging upon, and suggesting the outlines of, the most urgent political problems of our age. As much by the differences in their approaches and conclusions as by the similarities and overlaps of their teachings, they help us to collect our thoughts, to begin to unify our still usually separate lines of thinking, about the roles and causes of war and the possibilities and conditions of peace between the peoples of the world: an enterprise which the ablest minds of previous ages had, with very few exceptions, either ignored or by-passed, and which researchers of our century, despite all their scientific and philosophical advantages, have done sadly little to advance.

Until the eighteenth century, international politics – centred on the use of the threat of war and expansion of commercial and cultural contacts – hardly admitted of systematic study: the contacts and conflicts of peoples and governments were too sporadic, variable and ill-recorded to admit of generalised description, still less of systematic prediction and control. But during the eighteenth century the future commercial unity of this globe was beginning to be recognised, as was the ever increasing cost of wars between the European powers – a cost that was to be measured not only by rising taxes but by the perpetual postponement of much needed constitutional reforms. This new situation was reflected, from different angles, in the writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Vattel among others; but it was first expressed with philosophical authority and precision by Kant when he wrote in

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1784 that ‘the problem of establishing a perfect civil constitution is dependent on the question of a law-governed relation between states, and cannot be solved until the latter is also solved’.¹ This statement, it is now natural to think, could and should have inaugurated a revolution in political philosophy; but nothing of the kind took place. On the contrary, while the next hundred and twenty years – roughly from the rise of Napoleon to the arrival of Lenin – saw many notable advances in the social sciences, in the specific field of political thought, and more specifically in the study of international relations, it showed a marked falling-off from the promise of the eighteenth century. And it is in the light of this falling-off that we most should ponder the judgement of Martin Wight, one of the few really notable ‘international theorists’ of our time, that ‘international theory remains scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible to laymen. . .and marked not only by paucity but by intellectual and moral poverty’.²

In making this judgement, Martin Wight had in mind that established academic discipline, which seeks to achieve general truths and theoretical understanding of international relations on the basis, chiefly, of diplomatic history and international law. But while these two specialisms are no doubt indispensable for all detailed studies of international relations, one may doubt whether they can supply or evoke the historic vision and the mastery of categories required for understanding how our so-called international system has developed, and why it remains so profoundly unsatisfactory. The best contemporary work in international relations certainly tries to supply the required vision and categories; but progress in either direction has been piecemeal and has been retarded by the deep distrust which most historians feel for explanatory models of any kind. We can perhaps best come to appreciate the distinctive structure of the international problem, centred on the nature and causes of war and the possibilities of peace, by studying the reaction to it of a cluster of thinkers who were forced to face it at a time when it seemed very much simpler than we now know it to be. Kant, Clausewitz, Tolstoy and the founding fathers of Marxism all saw the international problem in what we today might well consider to be simplistic terms. But this does not mean that they showed themselves simpletons in their handling of it. On the contrary, I shall maintain, they identified certain of its most permanent elements with a clarity that could hardly be surpassed; and the more we appreciate their achievements in this respect, the better equipped we should be to deal with the new complexities of the international problems which have lately grown up around us.

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My authors have another interesting feature in common. Each a supreme master in his particular field – Kant in philosophy, Clausewitz in military theory, the first Marxists in economics and the theory of revolution, Tolstoy in the novelistic presentation of both military and civilian life – found himself driven to engage with the international problem from his own peculiar viewpoint and in terms which reflect his own intellectual compulsions. This might suggest that my authors were a bunch of amateurs, and indeed amateurs whose separate endeavours could have little real bearing on each other's. The fact is, however, that their different approaches supplement each other to a remarkable degree. Indeed, the longer I have studied them, the more I have found myself regarding them as, almost, participants in a time-transcending dialogue. Nor is this at all absurd. For they were all men of immense intellectual force and range, deeply concerned with the plight of humanity, and in their different ways strangely prescient of the developing international scene. Their master-questions and their characteristic methods and approaches are, at first sight, wholly different; but the questions, methods and approaches of highly intelligent men always possess a wide range of relevance; and the main concern and conclusions of my authors constantly impinge on one another – now contradicting and challenging, now lending one another support in the most unexpected ways. Kant's answer to the characteristically philosophical question 'How are we to *conceive* the problem of peace?' might seem at first blush to have little connection with Clausewitz's struggle to pin down the element of rationality in war. But, as I shall argue, their arguments and conclusions, so differently motivated and so different in personal style and spirit, can be seen by us today to supplement one another to a degree which neither of their authors could possibly have appreciated. And similarly with my other authors: their thoughts and views, so bold and so passionately conflicting, so involved in the social and political struggles of their different times and places, are capable of yet further life if we are prepared to relive them as an inspiration and pro-paedeutic to our own intellectual endeavours. None of my authors ever met each other; and except for the Marxists' early recognition of Clausewitz, none of them showed much appreciation of the others' works. Yet, in bringing them together in these lectures, I am reasonably confident that I am not making either a historical, or a philosophical or, to indulge in a moment's whimsicality, even a social gaffe. If we can see the virtues of their different viewpoints on international matters, might not they themselves conceivably have done so? This is a line of thought to which I shall return in my concluding remarks.

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In the chapters which immediately follow, however, I shall not be engaged simply in advertising and extolling the contributions of my authors to the understanding of international life. I have also before me a more humdrum, a harder, certainly an indispensably prior task: that of presenting their views on our topic in a fuller and clearer form, and in simpler terms, than they themselves succeeded in doing, or than most of their expositors have succeeded in doing since. A few words on the necessity of both these tasks will be useful here.

With the exception of Kant, all my authors were able, and some were of course outstandingly gifted, writers. Yet none of them produced a book, or even an essay, which does full justice to his concern with our topic. All Kant's political writings belong to his old age when his style was at its worst. Moreover Kant was one of the few philosophers in whom one *can* dissociate the style from the man: the former so obsessively pedantic, the latter, despite a few pathetic foibles, so heroically human. I have therefore felt no compunction about rephrasing and reordering the views expressed in *Perpetual Peace* so as to bring out its most original probings, questions, arguments, and conclusions – which Kant's clumsy efforts at popularisation in that pamphlet have served to conceal. With Clausewitz the difficulties are even greater. *On War* is an immensely impressive, almost a sublime book. But it was left unfinished, and contains some fundamental inconsistencies, and many of its most important ideas are introduced in the most unexpected places, almost as marginalia or asides. Moreover, despite years of effort, Clausewitz never found a satisfactory way of expressing the central insight upon which most of his arguments hinge. His idea of Absolute War has never been adequately expounded, because it has never been adequately analysed and criticised with respect to its origins, to its place in Clausewitz's conceptual system, and to the confusions with which it is entangled in the opening chapter of his book. So Clausewitz, although his style has been compared for elegance with Goethe's and his best sayings belong to world-literature, stands in need of much sympathetic and critical reinterpretation, if he is to be genuinely appreciated. This may make parts of my chapter on Clausewitz difficult going; but I can only add that, in my belief, if the way is hard the prize is great. With Marx and his lieutenants the position is different again. None of them wrote anything that approximates to a treatise on international affairs, or on peace and war considered from a revolutionary socialist point of view. Their most perceptive, and also in some cases most self-betraying, utterances on our topic

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are to be found in writings of the most varied kinds – popularisations of their central social doctrines, sketches of more specialised studies, political manifestos, newspaper articles, letters, scattered notes and memoranda. It is hardly surprising that these should show inconsistencies of which Marx, Engels, and Lenin seem to have been unaware. Recognition of such inconsistencies naturally passes into judgement on their importance, which is often difficult and always fallible. And I expect little thanks for my efforts in this regard from any party in the doctrinal struggle. Finally, what of Tolstoy? It might be imagined that, having inserted his general views on our topic in the body of one of the greatest and most popular novels ever written, he could hardly have failed to get them across to the public at large. But the result has been quite otherwise. Most readers of *War and Peace* have either skipped or skimmed through or fallen asleep over the philosophical disquisitions which it contains; while Tolstoy's later anti-war writings seem to have been taken seriously only by convinced pacifists (who, I suspect, must have found them curiously uncomfoting) or by close students of the inner drama of his life and thought. Here again the fault lies largely with our author. Titan among writers though he was, Tolstoy lacked the skills of political persuasion, which, like Plato, he would not have deigned to cultivate. The result is that the wealth of general truths which one feels just below the living surface of *War and Peace*, and the (at least) brilliant half-truths which keep breaking through the dogma of his later 'Peace essays', have been almost wholly neglected by students of international relations.

But if, with all their gifts, my authors have failed to impress upon their readers their respective contributions to our topic, this failure has been aggravated by the persistent ineptitude, or excessively partisan spirit, of their expositors. This has been particularly true of Kant. Few of even his ablest expositors have taken his *Perpetual Peace* and related political writings seriously; while, with hardly an exception, those political and legal theorists who have been impressed by *Perpetual Peace*, have, as we shall find in Chapter 2, also been afflicted by something like word-blindness with respect to its actual arguments and conclusions. Indeed it is one of the greatest curiosities of political philosophy that the world had to wait till some fifteen odd years ago for a Cambridge scholar to construe the text and reconstruct the argument of Kant's pamphlet with the patience and care which its difficulties demand and the deftness of touch which its prodigious originality requires. Clausewitz has in some respects fared worse than Kant,

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having not only been bowdlerised by his first expositors – instructors in the military academies of nineteenth-century Prussia and France – but having had his text, in one crucial passage, deliberately falsified.³ More recently, however, *On War* has been rewarded by a succession of scholarly treatments of high quality, notably those of the great Hans Delbrück and of Professor Raymond Aron, whose *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz* is as expectably impressive in its range and accuracy of treatment as it is moving in the generous sympathy of its spirit. Where Clausewitzian scholarship still falls short is in philosophical appreciation and criticism: neither the originality of Clausewitz's general philosophy of action nor the logical confusions involved in the doctrine of Absolute War have as yet received adequate attention from philosophers. With the Marxists, inevitably, differences over exposition and interpretation of key texts have usually been subordinated to differences over doctrinal orthodoxy on the one hand and scientific acceptability on the other. The result as regards our topic is that an important dimension of Marxist thought has remained virtually unstudied by Marxists and anti-Marxists, classical Marxists and neo-Marxists alike. I have therefore confined myself to the original sources of the Marxist contribution to international theory, which have retained their freshness largely because the doctrinal battles have passed them by. As to Tolstoy and his critics, I cannot speak so confidently, since the extensive criticism of *War and Peace* as history, which exists in Russian, is known to me only at second hand. I have the impression, however, that Tolstoy's critics have been much more interested in the biases and inaccuracies of his historical narrative and generalisations, and for that matter in his so-called philosophy of history, than in his much more central and passionate concern with what, in Chapter 5, I call 'the truth of war' – along with its endless falsities.

In sum, this book is primarily the examination of a number of texts concerned with a supremely important topic, and all contributing to it, in my belief, insights of lasting value. Considered severally, each of these texts deserves the careful study that is reserved, usually, for acknowledged masterpieces of science, history and imaginative literature. I have concentrated my attention on the compelling ideas, the *idées maîtresses*, behind these texts rather than on the brilliantly original personalities which they also serve to express. Nevertheless it is possible that I shall be accused of having over-personalised certain ideas whose importance consists in their permanent and impersonal relevance; and indeed, in so far as I compare and contrast my authors, I may have

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W. B. Gallie

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over-dramatised the logical relation between their different doctrines. But in a field of study whose practical implications are so great, and whose intellectual inspiration has until recently been so meagre, I feel that to over-personalise or over-dramatise the issues is a small fault, so long as it galvanises thought, quickens debate, and gives to future students the sense of having great allies behind them. The texts now to be studied may seem to have fallen and to have lain long on barren ground: but they have kept their vitality, and perhaps the ground is ready for their growth and flowering.

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KANT ON PERPETUAL PEACE

Kant's celebrated pamphlet, *Perpetual Peace*,¹ was published in Königsberg, East Prussia, late in 1795. It is unique among Kant's writings in that it was written for a wide public, and that its publication can be regarded as a political act. It will be useful, therefore, to recall in outline the political situation which gave rise to it.

Prussia had taken a leading part in the war of intervention against the French revolutionary régime. But by the end of 1794 it had become clear that the French would not easily be conquered, and the Prussian government prepared to withdraw from the war, a decision which was ratified by the Treaty of Bâle, signed in January 1795. This event greatly impressed and delighted Kant; for although a political liberal, Kant was a dutiful citizen of autocratic Prussia; and although repudiating political rebellion (and still more regicide), he remained a passionate defender of the aims of the revolution. The new and more hopeful political climate encouraged him to make public his own revolutionary ideas of a revised international law, which he believed to be a necessary condition of any lasting peace. But not all the results of the Treaty of Bâle were to Kant's liking. Released from the war with France, Prussia joined in the third and final partition of Poland, an act which affronted Kant's principles and which he came as near to denouncing in his pamphlet as any Prussian citizen could have dared to do. Thus the possibility of great new political improvements and the threat of ever-recurrent political wickedness alike impelled him to speak out in a quite unusual way: not, as was his wont, in a scholastically worded, highly formalised treatise, but in a short, popular, strikingly direct and topical pamphlet. And judged by immediate results, Kant's attempt to give popular expression to his ideas seems to have worked well. The first edition of *Perpetual Peace* was sold out within a few weeks and a second edition, encumbered with two new philosophical appendices, which Kant could not forbear from adding, appeared early

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in the next year. Translations into English and French soon followed; and throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in English and American editions, the pamphlet continued to be read, and to be discussed in the literature of the peace movement. Indeed, during the early decades of our century *Perpetual Peace* was frequently cited – although far from correctly – as a notable precursor of the League of Nations idea.

But, judged by more stringent standards, Kant's attempt to make *Perpetual Peace* a popular work must be pronounced a failure, and indeed a disaster. It has tragically delayed a just appreciation of what Kant had to contribute to the understanding of international relations. He had no gift for lucid popular exposition; and it could hardly be expected that at the age of seventy, and after forty years devoted almost exclusively to abstract academic teaching and writing, he would at the first attempt produce an effective essay in political persuasion. And in fact his efforts at popularising his thoughts on European peace were to lead to a proliferation of contradictory interpretations which can hardly be matched in the history of political thought. Thus *Perpetual Peace* has usually been taken to be a call for immediate political action and to provide a recipe for the immediate achievement of a lasting European peace;² but it has also been interpreted as presenting a moral ideal to which states ought indeed to aspire in their external relations, although there is no chance of their actually attaining it.³ Again it has been presented as a carefully qualified plea for the 'enforcement of peace' by the combined power of a league of peace-loving nations⁴ – and with equal confidence, as a demonstration of the hopelessness of this policy. It has been widely taken to be a pacifist tract,⁵ although in fact it expressly allows the creation of citizen militias for defence purposes.⁶ And it has been hailed as a harbinger of world-government, despite Kant's clear rejection of this ideal and his insistence that his project leaves states with all their sovereign rights intact, apart from the right to make war at will.⁷ Now to many minds it may seem that a work which admits of such conflicting interpretations cannot be of great importance. But before discussing this point, let me first try to give an introductory impression of the lay-out and the peculiar literary difficulties of Kant's pamphlet.

Its opening section is something of a *tour de force*. Without any preliminary discussion of why or in what circumstances war must be considered an unacceptable evil, Kant at once puts forward a number of 'Preliminary articles of Perpetual Peace between States'.⁸ These are

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articles which, if honestly adhered to, might well have maintained peace between any eighteenth-century powers which agreed to them. They pledge the signatories to abjure all secret treaties; the acquisition of any state by another through inheritance, purchase or gift; the maintenance of standing armies; the incurring of a national debt for military purposes; any interference with the internal constitution of another state; and the use of assassins, subversion, etc. which make future peaceful relations between states virtually impossible. There can be little doubt that it is this first section, so forceful, and so straightforward, which gained the pamphlet its immediate popularity and which also gave rise to the belief that in it Kant was offering the world a recipe for an immediate and lasting peace. Yet even in this opening section there are hints, especially in the footnotes, of a regression to the characteristic pedantries of Herr Doktor Professor Kant – a tendency which becomes more marked in the second section, which contains what Kant called the Definitive Articles of his treaty. By this he meant the main political presuppositions and safeguards without which no eighteenth-century state could seriously be expected to adhere to the earlier Definitive Articles.⁹ In particular the signatories must enjoy what Kant calls a ‘republican’, i.e. in some degree a representative, constitution; their union or ‘free federation’ must be of the barest kind, confined to a repudiation of war-like or war-making acts against each other, while the enforcement of laws of common benefit to the signatories must be left to the *particular* state that is most immediately concerned. In this way Kant makes it clear that the signing of his preliminary articles would be only the *inauguration* of a long-term project of peace-building, whose completion would be a task calling for centuries of political experiment and effort in the face of recurrent disappointments, and which, even when accomplished, would never be perfectly secured. The section contains Kant’s most original political thinking. But, notoriously, original thinking and popular exposition are not easily combined. And almost all popular expositions of *Perpetual Peace* are witnesses to the fact that Kant’s purpose in his Definitive Articles has escaped the attention of most of his readers. With the third section, which contains his so-called Guarantee of Perpetual Peace, all pretence of popular exposition is abandoned. What we are given is not a guarantee in any known sense of the word, but at best a suggestion of how support for Kant’s idea of perpetual peace may be found in his own (extremely subtle but here quite inadequately developed) philosophy of history. Finally, the two appendices which