1

Introduction

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the classical theory of international relations, or, as we will call it here, "international political theory." We define international political theory as that aspect of the discourse of International Relations which addresses explicitly issues concerning norms, interpretation, and the ontological foundations of the discipline; it could be argued that all theories of International Relations necessarily address this agenda, but international political theory does so explicitly (Neufeld, 1995; Frost, 1996). One way of looking at this revival is in terms of a renewed engagement between "International Relations" and "Political Theory," two modes of thinking about the world that, for much of this century, have developed in isolation – "renewed" because, as will be demonstrated in the rest of this book, there have been many periods in the past when the idea of a clear-cut distinction between the "international" and the "domestic" has not existed. Part of this renewed engagement has involved a re-examination of the classics of the field, but this re-examination has been hampered by the fact that many of the texts which might be thought of as central to the emergence of a historical approach to international political theory have not been available, or at least not in convenient, accessible editions or translations. It should also be added that there is little in the way of consensus as to which, actually, are the most important texts in international political theory, precisely because of the lack of a clear-cut distinction between the international and the domestic referred to above.

Our aim in this book is to remedy the first problem by making available substantial extracts from texts on international political theory from classical Greece to the First World War, that is, from the beginnings of "Western" thinking on the subject up to the point where, after 1914–18, the academic discipline of International Relations emerged; in performing this task we will, of necessity, be obliged also to address the second issue. The purpose of this general introduction is to explain the principles we have employed in making our selections and in organizing the collection, and to set out,

in brief, a number of themes which, although they do not all appear in every era, will, we hope, be helpful in assisting readers to navigate their way through the wealth of material presented below. Before proceeding to this task, however, it may be helpful to dispose of one issue; we do not propose to provide an extended defense of the worth of international political theory or to relate its past to current debates in International Relations concerning "positivism," "constructivism," "post-modernism," and similar contemporary ideas (Smith, Booth, and Zalewski, 1996; Wendt, 1999). Although our sympathies are (in different ways) broadly "post-positivist," we see no reason why our readers need agree with us on this. The writers represented in this collection can be made to address contemporary debates in International Relations theory, but the significance of what they have to say about the world is unrelated to those debates; they have to be understood in their own terms and their own context before they can be turned into our contemporaries. Our aim in this collection is, as far as is possible, to allow the authors we select to speak for themselves rather than to respond to our agenda. We believe that what they have to say will remain relevant long after the academic debates of the end of the twentieth century have been superseded.

Delineating the international political theory "canon"

Obviously, before classical writers can "speak for themselves" they have to be selected as suitable for inclusion in a collection of this nature – unless, in some sense, they can be said to choose themselves. On the face of it this seems a rather strange idea, but, in fact, in some similar circumstances, it is supported by our intuitions; for example, it is fairly uncontroversial that any collection of plays purporting to represent dramatic works in English through the ages would have to include some works by Shakespeare; in this context, Shakespeare, as it were, chooses himself. Another way of putting this would be to say that Shakespeare is part of the *canon* of English literature. The notion of a canon is derived from the study of religion. The canonical texts of a religion are those that meet the rules and criteria governing the authenticity of its scriptures, as it might be the rules which established which books are to be included in the Old and New Testaments in the case of the Christian religion. By extension, the "canon" has come to be a term applied in other areas of intellectual life to works which are paradigmatic, exemplary within a particular field. Of particular relevance here is the use of the term in Western political philosophy to refer to the masterpieces, the great achievements, of that discourse by writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine,

Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Bentham, Mill, and Marx.

Clearly this is a controversial notion. The presence of several names on this list could be contested, and others substituted, simply on the basis of a dispute over the quality of the work in question. Moreover, determining which writers are candidates for the canon becomes more and more difficult as one gets closer to the present day, because one feature of canonical status is precisely the longevity that no modern can demonstrate, and, *a fortiori*, because the relevant criteria can change on the basis of current fashions – thus, for example, the fact that all the writers named above are white male Europeans might, or might not, be regarded a legitimate criticism. Nonetheless, the idea of establishing a canon of exemplary texts in a field has much to be said for it as an educational device. Some thinkers clearly have produced more significant work than others and it seems right that this should be recognized in an informal way, always assuming that the canon is never fixed once and for all, and is always open to revision in the way that, for example, in recent years, albeit for different reasons, the names of Wollstencroft and Nietzsche have been added to the above list.

What can be said of the canon in international political theory, if indeed there is one? This question needs to be approached with caution. Clearly there are a number of classical authors who are as unavoidable in this context as Shakespeare is in his. It would be very difficult to imagine a collection of this sort which did not contain work by Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Grotius, and Kant – and these authors are, indeed, substantially represented herein – but it is important to stress that their canonical status represents a judgement about the quality of their thought in general, and does not depend on their role in contemporary debates in International Relations theory. These authors are indeed employed by contemporary theorists to articulate particular positions (see, for example, the construction of a Grotian tradition by "English School" writers, and the use of Kant to buttress the Democratic Peace hypothesis by Michael Doyle) but there is a danger that if they are studied only for this reason or in this context a misleading picture of their thought will emerge (Bull, 1966; Doyle, 1983).

The best illustration of this danger comes in the appropriation of figures such as Thucydides and Machiavelli by realist International Relations theorists. When Barry Buzan writes of "the timeless wisdom of realism" (albeit with a question mark), he is drawing attention to a particularly troubling cast of mind here (Buzan, 1996). If realism is a timeless doctrine this means, first, that its tenets can be illustrated by texts drawn from any period past or present, but, second, all of these texts can be treated as though they were written by our contemporaries. Thus it is that a canon of texts by pre-modern "realists" who are taken to be addressing our agenda – once a few allowances are made for

turns of phrase, different vocabularies and the like – can be constructed, and books written with titles such as *Thucydides and the Politics of Bipolarity* explicitly linking the Peloponnesian War of the fifth century BCE with the Cold War of the 1960s (Fliess, 1966). The problem with this approach to the canon is not so much that it necessarily results in absurdities – Peter Fliess' book is actually a sensitive reading of *The Peloponnesian War* – as that it relies on a pre-determined account of international relations. In effect, international relations becomes defined by the concerns of the dominant theories of the post-1945 discipline of International Relations, and the historical record is then searched to find instances when thinkers from another time and another place can, plausibly, be taken to be responding to similar concerns. In a circular argument, the work of these thinkers is then employed to reinforce the initial definition of the field. Thus, Thucydides is taken to be a realist because he appears to employ characteristically realist concepts such as power and interest in his account of the causes and conduct of the Peloponnesian war. Extracts from his book, such as his account of the underlying causes of the war or his rendition of the dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians, are then held up as classic texts of realism, which can be employed to buttress modern theories of international relations by demonstrating that they have a distinguished past. In fact, it can just as well be argued that this reading of Thucydides is a projection of modern concerns and that the way in which he, and virtually all other classical Greeks, thought about these matters cannot be conveyed by using these modern categories of thought. For example, both the Melians and the Athenians think about their relationship to their fellow citizens in ways that are shaped by the religious ceremonies and rites of the *polis*, which means that their dialogue is resistant to the kind of a-historical reading that would see it as an early case study in statesmanship and moral choice (the introduction to the first collection of readings in this book, on classical thought, discusses these problems at length).

The use made of Thucydides by realists is but one example of the difficulties which arise when a canon is constructed with reference to current concerns. As "contextualists" such as Skinner have stressed, it is a mistake to think that there is a timeless agenda of political questions that thinkers from all ages can be taken to be addressing; instead each thinker addresses the agenda of his or her own age in his or her own terms (Tully, 1988). It may be that their agendas can, in certain circumstances, be seen to be not dissimilar to ours, but this identification cannot be taken for granted; it has to be argued for on a case by case basis. However, a determination to avoid the unsubtle reading of past thinkers in terms of our current agendas brings with it a major problem of its own. The advantage of approaching matters a-historically is that the criteria for selecting the canon can be reasonably clear cut. Thinkers are included if they can be made to say things that appear

to relate to our problems, and, if not, not. Once it is decided to present texts in their own terms and not in ours, deciding which texts are important and why becomes a decidedly difficult task. If the "international" has no predetermined meaning, if it is a notion that is negotiated afresh by every age then it is difficult to think of establishing criteria upon which a canon of texts in international political theory could be constructed.

To illustrate this danger consider the state of international political theory in the European middle ages. For most of this period – bounded by the fall of the Roman empire and the modern European state-system – there were no states in the modern sense of the term, nor were there territorial political units which could with any plausibility be equated with states, as was the case with the *polis* in classical Greece. "Political" authority was divided amongst a number of different kinds of entities, ranging from territorial magnates and incorporated bodies such as towns or universities to universal entities such as the Holy Roman Empire or the papacy. Each of these bodies exercised some authority, none exercised sovereignty in the modern sense of the term. This is a state of affairs that leads realists to draw a veil over much of the period between St. Augustine (who can be seen as anticipating some modern realist thinking on human nature and the contingent quality of political authority) and Machiavelli (whose alleged advocacy of *raison d'état* marks for realists the beginning of the modern international order).

It should be clear that this is an extremely unsatisfactory approach to medieval thought. People in the middle ages thought about social life in different ways from the ways that we do, but they thought deeply and with great theoretical sophistication; it is inherently implausible that they would have nothing interesting to say about relations between political communities. What is less clear is what the right approach to medieval thought would be. The danger here is that presenting medieval thought in its own terms leads to problems in two directions. First, the texts chosen to illustrate medieval conceptions of the "international" are liable to amount to an overview of medieval thought as a whole, since the idea of the international as a separate sphere of social life is not one that medievals would accept, and this is simply too large and unmanageable an undertaking. But second, and perhaps more important, it would be difficult to draw connections between this body of thought and that which preceded and followed it. In effect, this strategy would leave one with a series of self-contained accounts of the thought of particular ages with too few points of contact between them. Clearly this would not be acceptable.

To summarize, although it would be a mistake to look for a common agenda of problems persisting over the ages, it is necessary to try to establish points of contact between one period and another. Unless family resemblances can be identified to link the writings of the classical Greeks, medieval

theologians, early modern natural lawyers, and nineteenth-century political philosophers, the question of a canon of international political theorists cannot arise. In fact, such family resemblances can be found; there are a number of themes which although they do not recur in all periods and are by no means addressed by all classical writers do, nonetheless, establish points of contact across time and between very different sets of political circumstances.

Themes in international political theory

While there is no common agenda that all the classics of international political theory address, there are a number of themes, or clusters of themes, that recur over time – not all of the writers we present later in this collection address all of these themes, but most address some of them, and they would hardly be recognizable as international political theorists if they did not. The most important themes are, first, "*inside/outside*" – international political theory addresses relations between collectivities, and how collective identities are forged, where the "domestic/international" line is to be drawn, if drawn at all, is a recurrent theme. Second, "*universalist/particularist*" – this theme refers to the normative orientation of individuals towards "their" collectivity and its relationship to the wider whole. Third, "*system/society*" – at a minimum the idea of International Relations presumes the existence of regular contacts between collectivities, and this theme concerns the quality of those contacts, the role of norms and power, the possibility that relations can be managed, even governed. Each of these themes warrants further elaboration.

The first theme raises the most fundamental questions. That this collection addresses specifically "international" political theory and not simply "political theory" suggests immediately that relations between collectivities are at the heart of the matter. The term international itself is a convenient coinage of Jeremy Bentham in the context of a discussion of the "law of nations" (*ius gentium*) which he was the first to give its modern English name, international law (Bentham, 1789/1960: 426). In the Roman Law origins of the *ius gentium*, the nations in question were peoples within the Roman empire – within, that is, one wider political authority – and the law that governed the relations between these peoples was originally concerned primarily with commercial matters of one kind or another, the sort of legal relationships covered by the modern discourse of *Private* International Law. This original sense of the "law of nations" gradually became superseded, in a process that will be illustrated at length in chapters 4, 5, and 6 below, by the modern usage that identifies international law as governing legal relationships among

politically autonomous units, *Public* International Law. However, the earlier meaning of "inter-national" raises interesting issues about the nature of the inside/outside distinction.

An obvious point is that although international political theory addresses relations between separate collective entities, such entities are not necessarily autonomous, territorial political units. "International" relations can take place between the inhabitants of cities in classical Greece and between papacy, emperor, corporation, and prince in the middle ages as well as between modern nation-states. Perhaps something akin to international relations can exist within empires, or, for that matter, within medieval universities where, at Paris, for example, scholars were organized in "national" groupings and the politics of the university were, in this sense, "inter-national." The key notion here is that individuals find themselves part of a collectivity with an identity which distinguishes them from others; international political theory emerges when the nature of this identity and its relationship to others becomes a matter for reflection.

This may seem obvious, but an inference that can be drawn from the same starting point is less intuitively appealing, namely that there is a sense in which *all* politics is "international." This is a proposition that contradicts the distinction between the "domestic" and the "international" which is fundamental to both conventional Political Science and conventional International Relations. The model on which these disciplines are based posits a clear separation between politics within the collectivity (city, empire, dynastic state, nation-state, or whatever) and politics between collectivities; as the Roman roots of the term "international" remind us, the problem with this model is that it is clear that almost every collectivity is itself an ensemble of other collectivities. Such is clearly the case with the ancient city: cities such as Athens and Rome were founded as associations of families, and the lineage groups of the original families, the tribes, continued to play an important role in the politics of the city throughout the classical period – under the republic, the Romans always voted with the tribe as the constituency rather than any territorial sub-division of the city, and tribal identities were equally important amongst the Athenians, where the large number of resident aliens – some of second or third generation or more – testified to the near impossibility of non-descendants of the founders achieving citizenship. Rome had a more open policy in this respect, but under the Republic the notion of descent as the basis for citizenship was preserved by the policy of adopting naturalized citizens into a particular tribe. Within the modern "nation-state" the link to lineage groups is less obvious, if present at all, but it remains the case that virtually all modern states are actually multi-national in composition. The number of mono-national states is very small, and in even these exceptions other kinds of deeply felt collective identities divide the people – see, for

example, the importance of clan membership in Somalia, the only African state that is not multi-ethnic (Lewis and Mayall, 1996).

What this near-universal phenomenon suggests is that while any particular collective entity is engaging in relationships with other collective identities, its component collectivities are engaging in relationships with each other. The unitary actor which plays such a large part in the assumptions of a great deal of international theory can only come into existence as the result of a successful negotiation of internal collective identities to create a new meta-identity, in the manner of the Athenian or Roman tribes, or, by the suppression of such different collective identities by one dominant faction, a process often seen in modern nation-states. The first theme which is addressed by a number of authors collected in this anthology involves the elaboration of this kind of intra-collectivity "international relations" as well as the more conventional notion of relations between collectivities.

This theme amounts to an exploration of the politics of "inside/outside" (Walker, 1992). Whereas conventional political theory explores the development of community within a collective context which is taken for granted, international political theory focuses more self-consciously on the way in which one particular notion of collective identity comes to dominate others in the creation of separate communities, and the relationship between this process and the process of relating to external others. To what extent does the "outside" constitute the inside? The origins of the Greek *polis* appear to have been defensive; it seems the word *polis* itself originally meant "fortified place," which indicates that the families that came together to create cities did so as a means of collective self-defense. Thus, at the very beginning of Western experience of these matters, the presence of an external enemy, outsiders, is crucial to the constitution of insiders, fellow citizens (and their dependent subjects). Putting it like this suggests that the foundation of this particular kind of polity was the product of voluntary acts, which has often not been the case, even if it was in pre-classical Greece. However, whether the clash between insiders and outsiders reflects real experience or is contrived in the interests of dominant groups is, in this context, neither here not there. What is important is that a collection of texts in international political theory should not be restricted to writings on the external relations of collectivities; there is a place also for the study of the internal constitution of collectivities by these external relations. This means, for example, that the common view that empires, universal political orders, do not have international relations does not stand up to close examination, as will be demonstrated below.

The first theme, or perhaps cluster of themes, thus both establishes and questions the inside/outside distinction. The second cluster of themes relates to characteristic normative orientations towards this distinction. There are a number of possible different accounts of where the moral center of

the individual ought to be located, what rights and duties individuals who inhabit different collectivities can claim of each other, and an obvious contrast here is between *universalist* and *particularist* thinking. Universalists regard their identity as part of a local collective body – state, city, or whatever – as less significant than their identity as part of the wider whole, which is often, but not always, defined in religious terms. This seems to have been the attitude of most medievals towards their identity as, say, bondsmen or guildsmen or local fief-holders as opposed to their identity as part of the wider world of Christendom. It is the attitude of, for example, Christian pacifists or Islamicists and, indeed, in principle, though often not in practice, of all followers of Christ or the Prophet. It was the attitude of the post-classical Greek philosophy/religion of the Stoics, who contributed their word for the universe (*cosmos*) towards the creation of a synonym for universalist: cosmopolitan. Sometimes universalists have desired to create a universal political order, a world government of some kind, but others (including the Stoics) have defined their universalism in moral rather than institutional terms. On the other side of the divide, particularists give their primary allegiance to local as opposed to universal notions of identity, or, more accurately, refuse to see the claims of the universal as, even potentially, in opposition to the claims of the local. This was the orientation of most of the Greeks in the era of the *polis* and has been the position of the majority of nationalists in the modern era; in modern times its best non-nationalist advocates have been Hegel and later neoHegelians.

The universalist/particularist divide captures a large part of the content of this cluster of themes, but it undervalues the importance that some thinkers have placed on what might be termed the "civilizational." The Greeks of the classical age gave their primary allegiance to their fellow citizens with whom they shared the rites and ceremonies of their *polis*, but many also drew a clear distinction between fellow Greeks – with whom they shared a common language, the Olympic games, some common shrines and oracles, most particularly at Delphi, and, in the realm of mythology, the Homeric Pantheon – and the "barbarians" who, as their (onomatopoeic) name suggests, could not speak Greek and thus were not part of Greek civilization. The world of Islam makes a primary distinction between lands governed by believers, the Dar al Islam, and the realm of war, the Dar al Harb, but also a secondary division of considerable importance between those non-Muslims who are, nonetheless, peoples of the Book (Jews and Christians) and unbelievers such as Hindus and Buddhists. The former have rights, the latter do not; they may not be forcibly converted and may practice their religions subject to payment of a poll-tax and agreement not to evangelize. Similarly, in the European middle ages, universalism meant commitment to Christendom, which although, in principle, a universal religion, in fact covered only part of the world and was regularly

in conflict with its neighbors. Thus, this second theme, the orientation of the individual towards the distinction between inside and outside which is common to all political arrangements, is more complex that at first sight might be thought.

A third theme which recurs in this collection is less oriented towards the individual, more towards different conceptions of the rights and duties owed to one another by the collective entities themselves rather than by their members. As with the orientations of individuals, there is a range of possible positions here, each of which has been advocated at one time or another. One position is that collectivities have responsibilities only towards their own members and that relations with other collectivities rest simply on the contingencies of power and interest. These relations may be regular and patterned, that is, they may form a system, but they are not normatively grounded. This is sometimes described as the realist position, although not all of those usually thought of as realists actually subscribe to it in this blunt form. It appears to be the position advocated by the Athenians at Melos as presented by Thucydides – although whether Thucydides himself subscribed to it is another matter – and described, but again not necessarily advocated, by Machiavelli. The classical twentieth-century realists – Niebuhr, Morgenthau, Kennan – for the most part would not have subscribed to this position, but some neorealists may; their emphasis on the international system as the creation of an interplay of objective forces lends itself to this interpretation.

On the basis of the historical record, it seems a reasonable to say that any international order whose members do not acknowledge some kind of obligation towards one another will be unstable and short-lived. Those orders that have persisted for substantial periods of time – in particular, of course, the modern states-system – have been based on a normative framework which involves collectivities acknowledging each other's rights and duties. In the medieval world this framework was provided by the universal church and the memory of the unity of the Roman empire; in the modern world, the international relations of the absolutist state were to an extent based on reciprocity, with rulers recognizing each other's rights as a way of promoting their own which is the basis of, for example, modern diplomacy; but, more fundamentally, the rights and duties of modern states have been conceived in legal terms. In so far as there is today, or has been in the recent past, an international *society* in which relations have been norm-governed, it has been international law that has been the critical force in its creation. One aspect of this theme which will recur in this collection concerns the extent to which international law is *sui generis* – is this a unique achievement of the modern system, the secret of its longevity, or can institutions performing the same function be found in other international