Introduction

How did a people learning to think of themselves as 'civilised' reconcile themselves to war? How did they manage the problems of conscience posed by the terrible effects of warfare? And how did those who tried absolutely to oppose war justify their attempt? These questions relate primarily to moral issues rather than to problems of strategy, fire-power, logistics, or the many other factors that might occupy a historian of war. In this study, such questions are posed in relation to an expanding reading public, some of whom went to war, but most of whom stayed at home.

It was a readership that included growing numbers of women, and that was increasingly influenced by the social and moral concerns of the middling sort. It was often addressed by writers concerned with moral and material improvement – with the improvement of readers, of the poor and, increasingly, of those who lived in distant lands that had come under the power and influence of Britain. War had to be justified in ways compatible with peaceful social ideals, just as morals and manners had to be reformed in the light of those ideals. The glorification of war was always in tension with the promotion of good manners and morals, and in some areas of culture, such as the novel, it was sometimes condemned and contrasted with the peaceful virtues of domestic life – usually represented most clearly by a young heroine. In the later decades of the century, as opposition to particular wars and their consequences becomes more widespread, there are signs of a growing awareness of the ways in which ordinary social life is not only influenced by, but implicated in, the violence of war. By the end of the century the same moderating process that worked to reconcile war with gentler manners had begun to motivate organised opposition to war. Opposition to government policy was sometimes tempered by, or deflected into, a broader concern with changing the public's general attitude to war. This is the point at which the drive for moral reform gives rise to what we now term 'peace education', and to the founding of the first Peace Societies dedicated to a non-resisting pacifism. The ideal

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of peace was often bound up with the prospects of empire, of spreading Christianity and British civilisation abroad.

This book is concerned with attempts to define an appropriate response to war, whether of justification or opposition, in a modern commercial society defended by professional armed forces. It offers a selective survey of examples drawn from across the long eighteenth century as a whole. Many of these examples are works of literature, but in citing such works I am not concerned to give a comprehensive reading of them, nor with their current canonical status. My aim is to show what they can tell us of contemporary attitudes to the morality of war. This means that works like John Breval's Gibraltar poem *Calpe* and Richard Glovers' epic *Leonidas* – which are routinely passed over in literary studies – can receive as much, or more, attention than works that are widely discussed, while many canonical works that might have been cited are not mentioned at all. The field of study is vast, and this survey is necessarily highly selective. I have referred to a few dramatic works in passing, but there is obviously much more to be said about war and the theatre. An adequate treatment of that would require a separate study, one that could do justice to the combination of special factors that condition theatrical performances, including the licensing system, the social composition of the audience, the styles of acting and the technical capacities of the theatre itself. Some fine work has already been done in this area, but there is much more to be done.[1] Many of the examples in this book are from areas of eighteenth-century culture that are not usually considered to be literary: religious, philosophical, historical. They all involve attempts to imagine war, or peace, in moral terms.

In the rest of this Introduction, I shall outline some of the particular concerns of the study: moral dualism, the need to confront violence, the moral situation of the non-combatant and of what we now term the 'pacifist'. I shall consider some of the historical conditions that influenced these issues, define some of the key terms at work, and conclude with a brief chapter plan.

Moral Dualism

In war, the moral codes that normally organise social life begin to lose their purchase. The peaceful operation of society requires murder, plunder, and a host of other violent practices to be outlawed; in war, the same practices are accepted and even promoted. This issue was addressed in a wide range of eighteenth-century writings, from Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714) to an anti-war sermon by Anna Barbauld (1793).[2]

The twentieth-century sociologist Maurice Davie claimed that societies have two moral codes, 'one for the comrades inside and another for strangers outside'.[3] The moral dualism may not be quite so clearly defined as this suggests, but it certainly gives rise to two general views of war, which for convenience I shall term 'moral' and 'national'. I avoid using the term 'patriotic' here, since this is a notoriously protean term which, while it always signified 'love of country', could be harnessed to quite different causes and be conceived in different ways, as we shall see later. The moral view, seeking to encourage good conduct within society, recoils from the cruelty, suffering and corruption produced by war and by its glorification. The national view, focusing on national interest in relation to 'outside' communities, justifies and celebrates the nation's war-making.

In the eighteenth century, the national war effort was endowed with a vision of historical destiny, hallowed by the authority of royal command, and given a privileged relationship with divinity itself, reinforced by the national Fasts and Thanksgivings, sermons and other religious activities. It was endowed, that is, with a complex mythical framework designed to control its interpretation. In this way, the overriding of moral norms in the collective national interest could be made to seem not only an unfortunate necessity, but inherently good. However, a stream of writings emphasising the moral view of war flowed throughout the eighteenth century, including sermons, educational works, essays and fictions. This view could be inflected in various ways – as what twenty-first-century readers might identify as anti-heroic, anti-imperialistic, or pacifist – but all shared a moral disapproval of war. Some of the most famous works of the century were part of this stream, including Fénelon's modern prose 'epic' *Telemachus*, Swift's satirical fiction *Gulliver's Travels*, Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and, with some ambivalence, Tom Paine's *Rights of Man.* Some political theorists, without embracing absolute non-resistance, formulated proposals for establishing political and legal structures that would enable peaceful conflict-resolution. The Abbé de Saint-Pierre's project for a 'Universal Peace' founded on a general alliance of sovereigns appeared in an English translation in 1714, and its aims were echoed and modified by a series of later writers, including Rousseau, Bentham and Kant.[4] For these writers, war was a malign symptom of moral and political failure that required major changes in the approach to government. In Britain, party politicians usually had no such ambitions, but argued for or against particular wars according to the interests at stake, and sometimes, in seeking to discredit a wartime ministry, deplored the destructive effects of a campaign.

The public at large, while subject to a wide range of national propaganda, was kept well informed about the horrific brutality and suffering generated by war. Although most Britons were spared direct exposure to the terrors of the battlefield, since most of the century's battles were fought overseas, the human costs of war were clearly apparent. Those who had lost fathers, sons, brothers, or husbands in warfare knew these costs only too well. Soldiers and sailors returning home from combat could give first-hand accounts of the violence, while the maimed and wounded were a familiar sight in towns and villages across the country. The setting up of daily newspapers with detailed war reports, the publication of war journals, essays and pamphlets about ongoing campaigns meant that the public had access to unprecedented amounts of information about the conduct of war.

The flow of opinion and information helped to ensure that, despite the vast resources devoted to promoting war, the national view of it had to coexist in an unstable relationship with the moral view. We can see this coexistence in many areas of the culture of eighteenth-century Britain. War is celebrated as a defence of national liberty and condemned as a source of social oppression. It is conceived as a valiant defence of the nation's homes and as a disastrous wrecker of society's domestic fabric. Sailors and soldiers are seen as both heroic defenders of the nation and as a disreputable menace to social order. The dualism was unstable in part because it was subject to ever-changing conditions, including those produced by political rivalries. The popularity of wars could wax and wane. The threat of invasion inevitably boosted the national view, just as the arrival of peace tended to stimulate complaints about war's dire social consequences.

We need to understand that the two views do not necessarily present themselves as alternatives that people can simply choose between. There is abundant evidence that, in the eighteenth century, individual Britons were able to judge war from both a moral point of view and a national one without reconciling them. It is hardly unusual for people to hate war, and complain about its horrors while loyally supporting their nation's own war effort – the famous case of the First World War poet Wilfred Owen, who wrote movingly of the futility of war while recovering in Britain from shell shock, but returned to the war zone to fight, vividly illustrates this possibility. Indeed, it is possible for people to argue for the abolition of war while expressing some pride in their nation's military successes – as we shall see below in the case of the poet William Cowper. The moral view of war and the national view can evidently coexist without cancelling each other out.

While the unstable relationship between these views of war seemed in practice ineradicable, the appeal to ideas of virtue could provide a form of reconciliation between social and martial values. Social order and war-making depend upon some of the same virtues: not only obedience to authority, but group loyalty, and a willingness to make sacrifices for the common interest. Within the context of nation states they both involve 'love of country'. Official justifications of war usually emphasise this common ground. As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, the idea of sacrifice assumes a major importance in pro-war works of the period.

The emergence of humanitarian accounts of human nature, including ideas of benevolence, proved useful in the process of reconciling the public to war (see Chapter 1). Benevolence did not simply involve doing the right thing; it was also an emotional predisposition to do the right thing. By associating goodness with a predisposition of the agent, rather than insisting on the immediate or distant effects of an agent's actions, expressions of compassion could provide a kind of absolution for civilians who were implicated in wars through their consumption, trade or investments, and for the soldiers and sailors who actually did the fighting. The kinds of feeling involved in war therefore began to assume a new importance. Saint Augustine had acknowledged the significance of right intention and feeling in war, arguing that a good man will lament the necessity of just wars, and feel the misery of the evils caused by them.[5] In eighteenth-century Britain, this principle was transformed into an important form of justification. It encouraged a tendency to approach the morality of war as a matter of individual conduct, of individual virtue, rather than a systemic issue; it provided a way of insulating individual combatants, and readers, from the wider moral implications of organised violence. Both the combatant in the war zone and the non-combatant at home had to be imagined in the appropriate way, and endowed with suitably benevolent feelings. As we shall see, the role of benevolence when imagining war was typically to make a virtue of acquiescence.

Confronting Violence

One of the most influential exponents of benevolence, Shaftesbury, argues that war is akin to philanthropy:

> it is strange to imagine that war, which of all things appears the most savage, should be the passion of the most heroic spirits. But it is in war that the knot of fellowship is closest drawn. It is in war that mutual succour is most given, mutual danger run, and common affection most exerted and

> employed. For heroism and philanthropy are almost one and the same. Yet
> by a small misguidance of the affection, a lover of mankind becomes a rav-
> ager, a hero and deliverer becomes an oppressor and destroyer.[6]

The difference between war as a noble form of philanthropy and war as a
kind of savagery is conceived not as a huge gulf between contrasting meth-
ods of fighting, humane and brutal, but as the result of a 'small misguid-
ance of the affection'. Brutality, like humanity, is a matter of feeling. It
follows that, to avoid this 'small misguidance,' affection must be properly
guided, so that virtue can be reinforced.

Here Shaftesbury is giving eloquent expression to assumptions that
seem to have been widely shared. The rise of humanitarianism produced
writings which criticised the way feelings about war were misdirected by
literature and history. There was a growing discomfort with the martial
values of epic.[7] And there was increasing criticism of the way violent his-
torical conquerors had been represented as admirable heroes in history.
The celebration of Alexander and Caesar, for example, was condemned by
a wide range of writers, including William Temple, Madeleine de Scudéry,
Boileau, Samuel Clarke, Alexander Pope and Henry Fielding.[8] What had
once been hailed as virtues were now condemned as vices. John Locke
in his *Thoughts on Education* ventured a general condemnation of all his-
tories that treat slaughter as heroic.[9] Such criticisms did not necessarily
signal any fundamental disapproval of warfare. Indeed, the demonization
of commanders such as Alexander and Caesar could help to justify the
war effort of one's own nation. After all, Saint Augustine had defined just
wars in contrast to wars driven by aggressive ambition.[10] If these histori-
cal figures were judged in personal terms, as compelled by tyrannical and
cruel passions, then condemnation of them could be a sign of one's own
humanitarian feeling and moral virtue. Vilifying them and the destruction
they caused could help to create an alternative, virtuous space for one's
own war effort. Samuel Clarke, for example, in the dedication of his edi-
tion of Caesar's *Commentaries*, contrasts Caesar's war-making, which he
sees as driven by an ambition for personal renown, with that of the Duke
of Marlborough, which he claims was a defence of the rights and Liberties
of Europe and of his Country.[11] Marlborough's war-making, he implies,
entailed protective rather than aggressive feelings.

This co-option of the moral view by the national view served the dual
purpose of simultaneously arousing and pacifying the public. On the one
hand the public must be encouraged to support the nation's own war-
making, and overcome any reluctance to bear the costs of it; but on the
other hand, from a humanitarian point of view, it must be discouraged

from displaying unseemly bellicosity, and preserve an appropriate sense of moral horror in relation to war. The attempt to reconcile these two apparently conflicting demands was initially the job of writers and artists – but it was soon taken over by combatants themselves.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, we find dramatists, poets, and essayists attempting this kind of reconciliation – trying to show warriors as at once effective men of war and sensitive men of feeling, reconciling martial and social virtue.[12] The idea of dying for one's country as an admirable form of sacrifice was one of the ways in which war and philanthropy could be reconciled. But there was also a need to idealise the process of inflicting violence on others. As Philip Shaw notes, images of the suffering inflicted by war were produced 'with the express purpose of conditioning audiences to support belligerent activities'.[13] It would be a mistake to regard such fictional, idealised representations as mere fantasies that had no influence upon combatants who had to deal with intractable realities of war. There is some evidence that the way war is imagined by writers – even by those who have no experience of war – can have a significant and even formative influence on the way combatants think about what they are doing when they fight. The work of poets in addressing the moral problems posed by war is sometimes especially revealing, as their use of condensed, idealising forms can bring the problems and their imagined solution into sharp focus.

One of the most influential examples of the attempt to reconcile martial and social virtue was Joseph Addison's poem *The Campaign*, which celebrated the Duke of Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Blenheim (1704). Like other Whig poets who celebrated Marlborough's victory, Addison did not shy away from the brutality of the Blenheim campaign, in which tens of thousands of soldiers died and in which Marlborough ordered a systematic ravaging of the Bavarian countryside, burning and plundering villages. Addison needed to accommodate such brutality in order to show the appropriate emotional response to it. His first readers would have already learned about the battle from newspapers, printed reports, and other sources. The most authoritative would be the eye-witness accounts sent by serving officers, to which no doubt Addison himself referred for some of the details of his poem. Here is an extract from one of these, showing how an Officer who was in the engagement described the burning of Bavarian villages:

> The Elector of Bavaria having return'd evading Answers, to the kind Invitations sent him for an Accommodation: a Party of 4000 Horse was commanded out to burn and lay waste his Country. But the Elector continuing obstinate, and depending much upon the Relief which Mareschal Tallard

> was bringing up to him, our Generals resolv'd to attack the Town of Ingol-
> stadt; and Prince Eugene being advanced as far as Dillengen, we pass'd
> the Paer, and came to Kiebash the 4th of Aug. Our Left Wing reaching to
> Aycha, and the right beyond the Castle of Winden, burning all the Villages
> we had spared before between those two Camps.[14]

This is fairly typical of the way officers reported engagements at this time.
It is not eloquent or even particularly clear. But the idea is to give the
facts dispassionately, in a matter-of-fact way and to apportion blame to
the enemy as clearly as possible. There is no attempt to describe the emo-
tional responses of those involved, which seem completely irrelevant to the
Officer's purpose. The account reflects the military ethos of the period –
stoical and professional.[15]

   This is how Addison describes the destruction of Bavarian villages in his
poem *The Campaign*:

> In Vengeance rous`d, the Soldier fills his Hand
> With Sword and Fire, and ravages the Land,
> A Thousand Villages to Ashes turns,
> In crackling Flames a Thousand Harvests burns,
> To the thick Woods the woolly Flocks retreat,
> And mixt with bellowing Herds confus`dly bleat;
> Their trembling Lords the common Shade partake,
> And Cries of Infants sound in ev'ry Brake:
> The list'ning Soldier fixt in Sorrow stands,
> Loth to Obey his Leader's just Commands;
> The Leader grieves, by gen'rous Pity sway`d,
> To see his just Commands so well obey`d.[16]

Addison imagines the event as a sensory and emotional experience – he
evokes the various sounds involved, and the disturbance to animals and
children. In fact, he makes it seem much more dreadful than the minimal
eye-witness report. The dreadfulness is important to his purpose. He is sup-
posedly thinking about the feelings of the combatants here. But of course,
his primary interest is in the feelings of his audience. This representation of
the soldier's sorrow is clearly designed to allow readers to imagine that all
who took part in this atrocity were not motivated by malice or brutality: they
showed the appropriate feeling, a conflict between compassion and duty. At
the same time, the lines show how readers themselves should respond to
such acts of violence: not with sadistic glee, or even with a matter-of-fact
stoicism, but with resolute compassion, with humanitarian feeling. Violence
requires acquiescence, in the form of pained benevolence. Addison was not
condemning Marlborough for this terrible atrocity, but absolving and vin-
dicating him, and so endowing him with a more acceptable kind of glory.

Historians have identified a range of influences that contributed to the spread of humanitarian feeling in the mid-eighteenth-century Britain: the evangelical revival which promoted a religion of the heart, the rising influence of the professional classes who could exercise power through philanthropic initiatives, the increasing influence of women readers, the influence of conduct books, the development of the novel, the work of the Scottish Enlightenment.[17] It seems clear that comparable developments were taking place in other European countries at this time.[18] Such developments helped to encourage the use of the language of humanity in discussions of war. Whereas at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this language is found primarily in the idealising work of poets like Addison, in heroic dramatists, periodical journalists and other 'literary' contexts, by the time of the Seven Years' War (1756–63) it had become common in eye-witness reports coming from war zones. It appears in reports from French and German officers, in accounts involving Russian forces and elsewhere. This suggests that by the mid-century military officers and commanders, who were sending back reports to the ministry or to newspapers, had generally absorbed this language from their own reading. They used it to guide the sympathies of their readers.

So, the *London Magazine* of March 1758 includes a report from a Hanoverian officer to prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, of an action involving an attack with fixed bayonets. The writer assures us that 'humanity suffered for the slaughter which then happened' (139). Those who inflicted the violence are represented as victims of it. In a report about the siege of Fort William Henry in the *Universal Magazine* in October 1757, the Marquis the Montcalm tells Colonel Monroe 'I am obliged in humanity to require you to surrender your fort' because he is unable to restrain the 'savages' (that is, his native American allies) much longer (183). The language of humanity is used to deliver a threat. In guiding the reader's reactions, it was not unusual to focus on victims in a tableau. We can see this in an 'Impartial Narrative' of a failed British expedition to St Cas on the coast of France in 1758, which describes how British soldiers were left stranded on the beach, exposed to the guns of advancing French forces, with not enough rowing boats to get them to the safety of the ships out at sea. This passage describes the fate of soldiers clinging desperately to the side of the rowing boats:

> the Sailors, lest the Boat should sink, were obliged to cut some of their Hands off […] It is impossible to describe the Feeling of the Troops, who from the Ships beheld this dreadful Scene, looking on their Fellow Soldiers and Friends, without being able to sustain them.[19]

In this 'dreadful scene' we are invited to think not about the feelings of those struggling in the water having their hands cut off, nor about the feelings of those in the boat trying to save themselves by doing the cutting, but the feelings of the helpless onlookers on the ship. That is how it must be appreciated, as a horror beyond the reach of personal intervention. Here, as in the previous passages, the spectators' compassion is a sign that individual will, and hence moral choice, is being overruled by circumstances.

A final example provides a convenient comparison with Addison's poem. The *Gentleman's Magazine* July 1760 includes a letter from Major General James Murray, writing from Canada. It is written in an apologetic mode that recalls Addison's *Campaign*, and explains his decision to torch much of the village of Sorel (in Canada) to teach its inhabitants a lesson:

> I found the inhabitants of the parish of Sorel had deserted their habitations and were in arms. I was therefore under the cruel necessity of burning the greatest part of these poor unhappy people's houses. I pray God this example may suffice, for my nature revolts when this becomes a necessary part of my duty. (275)

The letter was published under the heading 'The HUMANITY of the Major Murray'. Murray's sister wrote to him about the very warm public reception of this letter in Britain: 'The world does you justice […] the letter is thought a masterpiece'.[20] The letter could be seen as a masterpiece because, like Addison's poem, it was clearly written with the specific intention of reconciling readers to what was, in fact, a rather commonplace atrocity. Instead of making readers feel terrible about a horrific action done in their name, the reference to humanity could actually make them feel good about it. The feeling is a guarantee that this violence is not the work of 'savages', but of civilised individuals with an appropriate care for human life and private property, who feel an apt moral horror, and are performing their duty in an admirable spirit.

In eighteenth-century Britain, the image of the soldier fighting in a spirit of humanity, a sign of just conduct, was used as a substitute for, and an implicit guarantee of, the justice of the cause. It apparently helped to reconcile readers at home to the horrors of war, and to their own complicity in them, and it helped to reconcile some combatants, apparently, to the violence of their occupation. By mid-century, some writers and artists began to turn from the process of inflicting violence to dealing with the consequences of violence – foreground acts of humanity, such as, relieving the distresses of the besieged, attending to the wounded on the battlefield, rescuing sailors from the sea. But the feelings of the combatant remain