

to the moral life more generally. I know of no better brief introduction to contemporary debates within the scholarship, and few more comprehensive treatments of the practical orientation that Kant's moral teaching takes for granted.

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Howard Williams, *Kant and the End of War: A Critique of Just War Theory* (Palgrave International Political Theory Series)

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As Howard Williams makes clear from the start, this new work addressing Immanuel Kant's views on justice, war and international politics challenges not only popular readings of Kant but the just war theory with which he often is associated. On Williams's view, Kant's discussions (principally in *Toward Perpetual Peace* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*) ultimately reject 'just war reasoning' for its tendency to destabilize international relations and perpetuate war. Not only was Kant correct in his criticisms, says Williams, his arguments actually provide an excellent starting point for challenging just war theory's contemporary proponents.

The result of Williams's clear and careful discussion is a valuably nuanced reading of Kant and an insightful Kant-based criticism of contemporary views. His book should be of interest to political philosophers and theorists as well as Kant scholars and accessible both to students and specialists. Below, I offer a brief overview of the work as a whole and a more detailed look at Williams's central interpretative and critical claims. I close with a thought about what is most valuable both in Kant's own views and in Williams's illumination of them.

Williams divides his discussion into seven substantive chapters and an eighth that helpfully summarizes main points and aims. Chapters 1–5 are principally interpretative, focused on Kant's theory itself. Chapter 6 argues that Kant's views on international law and cosmopolitanism do not lend support to theories favouring humanitarian intervention, as some (e.g. Roger Scruton and Fernando Teson) recently have suggested. Chapter 7 distinguishes Kant's views on the justifiability of war from those of contemporary just war theorists including Michael Waltzer and Jean Bethke Elshtain.

Williams begins his interpretative discussion by noting what many might miss – the recurrence of war as a theme throughout Kant’s works. Whether in addressing the justice of international political conflicts, as in *Perpetual Peace*, or as part of his examination of moral and aesthetic judgement or of disputes regarding human knowledge, as in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, war and warlike conflicts are of continuing concern to Kant. In each case, he recognizes both the terrible destructive potential of war and the innovation often born of it. Yet Kant’s message, says Williams, is constant across cases. Wars between nation states and similar conflicts in other contexts are ultimately the result of ‘bad habits of mind to which we all are prey’ (p. 37). Though war may bring with it some advantages while it persists, its abolition is required by reason, attainable through regulative rational principles and must be a chief aim of philosophy in all its guises.

This introductory discussion sets the stage for Williams’s central interpretative claim: Kant consistently classifies war between nations as a moral wrong and advocates its abolition not only in *Perpetual Peace* but in the somewhat later, and arguably more hawkish, *Metaphysics of Morals*. Beyond the language of Kant’s texts themselves, Williams’s chief focus here is recent work by Brian Orend and Susan Shell. Each contends that, contrary to the once prevailing interpretation of Kant as an adamant opponent of just war theory, he is best understood to offer a modified version of his own. Since Shell and Orend rely substantially on *The Metaphysics of Morals*, specifically on the discussions of international and cosmopolitan justice in the *Rechtslehre*, Williams sets himself the task (over three chapters) of carefully interpreting and comparing the better-known *Perpetual Peace* with this lesser-known (and often less well-regarded) work.

Williams first considers the possibility (in chapter 3) that the two works in fact present opposing views on just war theory. Central to this discussion is analysis of Kant’s use of the term ‘sorry comforters’, in *Perpetual Peace*, to describe just war theorists including Grotius, Pufendorf and Vattel. With assistance from recent work by Georg Cavallar, Williams argues that the Kant of *Perpetual Peace* rejects the just war theory of his time as both providing political leaders ready justification for offensive war and too easily accepting that human beings are naturally and inevitably disposed to violent conflict. Given this strong condemnation of just war theory, and of war in general, it is surprising to find Kant offering what seems a very different view just two years later. But on the face of things, Williams agrees, he seems to do precisely that. For the *Rechtslehre* discussion of war and peace not only acknowledges the right of free states in the state of nature to go to war with one another (*The Metaphysics of Morals* (MM), 6: 343).

It carefully describes conditions for justified declarations of war and for just conduct during and after engagement (*MM* 6: 348).

Having thus entertained the possibility of inconsistency between the two works, Williams argues convincingly (in Chapters 4 and 5) for quite a different conclusion. Most importantly, he urges that we read the discussion of war in the *Rechtslehre* in the context of Kant's overall critique of law and his exploration of its appropriate relationship to justice. For textual and historical reasons that Williams nicely details, the Kant of the *Rechtslehre* best is understood to characterize states of his own time, judged in relation to each other, as 'lawless savages' and the international law that condones the wars that occur among them as contradicting the demands of justice. On this reading, the right to engage in war acknowledged in the *Rechtslehre* is not a right supported by justice but simply 'a right in the absence of right' (p. 86). Kant does not intend to support or justify such wars. His aim, instead, is to describe and support the very union towards peace and cosmopolitanism that he endorses in *Perpetual Peace*.

In both works then, according to Williams, Kant takes the view that true peace is an ideal that states must strive gradually to approach and that the situation in which justice can be said to forbid all wars has yet to be achieved. The focus of the *Rechtslehre* is on the confusion and error of extant international law and that of *Perpetual Peace* on the gradual realization of the ideal. Because of its focus, the latter should be taken as the more authoritative when questions arise regarding Kant's views on the demands of justice in international spheres. But the views he expresses in the two works not only are consistent. They are founded on the same account of justice and its ultimate rejection of war.

With this account of Kant's position in place, Williams takes up its relationship to contemporary views. Especially worth noting is his consideration (in chapter 6) of Kant's likely position on armed intervention by one nation in the internal affairs of another. Contemporary theorists offer what they take to be Kant-based justifications for such interventions on humanitarian grounds. Kant's own commitments though, according to Williams, require far greater restrictions on such interventions than any of these authors accept. Specifically, interventions justified from a Kantian standpoint require: (1) a condition of civil war in the subject state; (2) a request for intervention from that state's citizens (as well as conformity with right more generally); and (3) authorization from a peaceful federation of states. Even when these conditions are satisfied, intervention to prevent abuses is only allowed, not required, and must be guided by a commitment to advancing world peace that prefers nonviolent methods of addressing abuses. Together, these restrictions reflect the view, expressed most clearly in *Perpetual Peace*, that war is always wrong. Although it may sometimes

be necessary to produce the conditions in which law eventually can emerge, war cannot directly be ‘an agent for improvement in the world’ (p. 136).

Given this, the post-cold-war tendency to offer ‘just war’ reasoning in support of armed conflict is particularly disturbing from Williams’s Kantian perspective. In his view, contemporary just war theorists formulate their arguments from Hegelian foundations that tie individual political loyalty to the nation state and accept war among nations as inevitable. Both elements of this perspective, of course, are contrary to Kant’s philosophy as Williams understands it. Thus so far from providing a foundation for contemporary just war theory, Kant’s work denies its underlying assumptions. More, Kant allows us to see contemporary just war theorists as themselves ‘sorry comforters’. They encourage us to identify wars as justified or unjustified and to condemn the latter while at least accepting, and sometimes applauding, the former. In so doing, they not only offer moral approbation for what deserves our condemnation; they encourage war by developing a moral framework for engaging in it.

Williams’s book is well worth reading for its analysis and criticism of contemporary theories, for its careful reading of Kant and the sophisticated and integrated interpretation it offers, and for its critique of those who see Kant as a just war theorist and contemporary proponents as his heirs. What is best and most important in Williams’s work, though, is his refusal (and his recognition of Kant’s refusal) to accept the way in which their opponents frame debates about the moral status of war. We need not, and should not, see the question before us as how justly to engage in the wars that inevitably will occur among (and within) human societies. And we must not see wars that are warranted given prevailing conditions as fully justified from a moral perspective.

War may be the only option available as a nation attempts to serve both obligations to its own citizens and its duty to work towards a cosmopolitan ideal. Or it may be the best among a set of unpalatable alternatives. But from Kant’s perspective, and Williams’s, we must always see participation in war as a moral failing. Not only must we thus exercise enormous care to avoid exacerbating this failure by committing further wrongs (e.g. through calculated attacks on innocents or the inhumane treatment of prisoners). We must shape our actions during war and in its aftermath both to rectify wrongdoing and to move positively in the direction of cosmopolitan justice. In particular situations the human condition may necessitate our participation in the wrong that is war, but these demands of the moment neither fully define our moral obligations nor set the boundaries for our moral possibilities.

Readers may wish that Williams had taken his analysis of Kant, and of the moral status of war, humanitarian intervention and the like, even

further. In particular, some may worry, on the one hand, that Williams (and Kant) will sometimes leave us paralysed in the face of deep injustice and, on the other, that Kant's view, as here described, condemns us to a kind of moral no man's land where rightness is simply unavailable. Neither of these worries seems warranted. Indeed, we might see Williams's Kantian model as just what is needed during a period when powerful nations have been all too ready to undertake bloody conflict without entertaining options that are likely both to be less destructive and more effective in the pursuit of human welfare and long-term cosmopolitan aims. Though there is surely more to be said on the subject, Williams has put us firmly on a fruitful path. This is all that one could ask of one small volume.

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