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The Rendering of Kant in International Relations Theory¹

Kant's political writings range far beyond the mainstream concerns of international relations. Yet, through a long succession of attempts to situate international relations scholarship in terms of the provocative challenges his thought offers the field, Kant's works have been rendered with considerable impact into one of the central points of reference for the discipline. The conventions underlying the resulting "Kantian theory of international relations" are found most obviously within the liberal extremes of the discipline, where international peace and order is given considerable hope. And, interest in this point of view has peaked as the pursuit for universal ideals and global concerns has appeared more important than any primary dedication to regional self-protection and constant preparation for the threat of war. Conversely, interest has typically fallen as the value attributed to these optimistic strivings has been belittled in the face of recurrent violence across the globe. Thus support for Kant's work has generally followed the ebb and flow of the "great debates" across theories of international relations.

Currently, 'Kantianisms' are again achieving considerable currency within mainstream arms of the discipline. There are in fact several versions of Kantian thought that are now promoted with respect to politics, ranging across philosophical, literary, and economic interests as well as theories of the state. Most impressively, though, a broad range of scholars are again seeing within Kant's writings the basis of analysis from which true inter-state peace may finally be anticipated or sought. Thus it certainly appears that some form of liberalism is gaining serious momentum against the realist core of international relations once again. However, it is my initial contention here, that most present appeals to Kant in this regard ought not to be viewed simply as movements in still one more swing of the pendulum between realism and idealism. Utopianism is not now gaining fashion across the discipline of international relations. Rather, I argue that despite the undeniably liberal tone present in such concerns, recent invocations of Kant's writings attempt to finally overcome the old intellectual see-saw that has afflicted the discipline from its beginnings. These are efforts to describe ways in which one may address the facts of contemporary international politics without falling into an either/or trap of realism/idealism. And, Kant's texts *function* largely to provide the authoritative voice behind such disciplinary and theoretical progress or escape.

Crudely put, theories of international relations traditionally shuttle between two apparently reasonable claims that are taken as mutually exclusive or, at least, inimical to one another: that, on the one hand, states are ultimately autonomous actors and naturally in eternal competition with each other and that, on the other hand, all political communities of the modern era are inherently interrelated and united in their attentions by the fact that they ultimately and inescapably interact with each other as well as share a singular and finite environment or social space. However, an increasing body of scholarship, concerned especially with international organization, international law, transnational politics, and international political economy, is now re-introducing Kant's work as foundation for theory that may build positively from the back-and-forth struggle that debates of realism/idealism encourage. Kant's thought is supposed to break down the essential contradictions between realism and idealism. And his words are employed to project a worldview that affirms change in the conditions of international politics as opposed to the supposed immutable truths provided by either side of the traditional debate.

To demonstrate how this is the case, I will first present the Kant that is most often and almost exclusively taken to be *the* Kant of international relations. In conjunction I will trace the scattered range of traditional renditions of Kant as a theorist of international relations from which current readings in this vein may and do find their most immediate source. In doing so, I aim to establish how Kant's thought is received ultimately as both a problematic and potentially connecting force across the discipline, as opposed to merely an emblem for the one side. From this point, I will go on to examine how this sort of reading is actually deployed, particularly in recent literature to do with the role of democracy in promoting international peace and the structure of international law in world order. With this in mind, I will, in addition, explore how these invocations of Kant's writings give license to a very specific treatment of questions to do with ethics in international relations. For, it is ultimately in this area of concern that current appeals to the revolution in thought regarding the potential for peace that Kant supposedly offers achieve their greatest impact.

In the end, however, my more pressing interest here is to show that what is displayed throughout contemporary readings of Kant, insofar as his thought is viewed as a progressive ground for approaching a world politics for states, is less a forward-looking reform than what may at first appear. I argue that the resolution to the perpetual crisis among theories of international relations that the bulk of current revivals of Kant's texts apparently offer is in actual fact a highly conservative move. The recent re-introduction of Kant into the heart of international relations theory proves mostly to announce a potential end to the contest between the intellectual bookends of the discipline and not a true examination of the problems that may be inherent within those limits. In this instance, his words are used only to displace debate from the politics of states to the apparently less controversial ground of human needs and interests. Consequently, old and unresolved problems of theory are disguised in new categories. But no new way for the explanation of international politics is actually constructed. And international relations theory, as a project, is thus falsely secured.

Of even greater concern, what this critical analysis shows is that the place of Kantian thought in theories of international relations is itself erroneously obtained. Those calling for a return to Kant are quite right to suggest that his position is not legitimately mapped within the traditional spectrum of theoretical debate. And, they rightfully indicate the need to fully reconsider the conventions

of Kantian theory in international relations. However, it is also the case that the current revival of Kant does not take up this work in any serious way. Rather it is based on mere reworkings of the poor readings already established within the tradition. Thus, the true significance of Kant's theory for the study of international relations remains an enormous question yet to be engaged. And one of the central theoretical pillars of the discipline is shown to be conspicuously hollow.

Readings of *Perpetual Peace*

Kant gains his reputation as the consummate idealist in international relations theory largely in direct opposition to selected readings of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.² As most new scholars to the discipline are soon taught, in chapter 13 of Part I, Hobbes testifies that human life is conditioned always by repetitive violence—a war of all against all—and that the pain of such existence can be minimized only where a group of persons submits to a singular sovereign, who consolidates and concentrates the force and authority of all into One. Consequently, each sovereign commonwealth of persons faces each other as a singular subject and body, protecting its component organs within. Isolated from the rest of this lengthy and complicated work of political theory, Hobbes' claim that human life is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short”³ serves as a banner for realism and suggests an entire mainstream of pessimistic thinking that places states and their power interests at the focus of every analysis and laments the reputed invariable character of human interaction. It is then only fitting that the place of optimism reserved for Kant is similarly defined and reduced on the basis of a singular short text. Trimmed from a career of prolific thought and writing, spanning well over fifty years, Kant's short pamphlet *Perpetual Peace*⁴ has functioned as almost the sole ground for his reputation as a theorist of international relations. Other of Kant's short writings have proved of general interest.⁵ However, it is indeed treatments of *Perpetual Peace* that come to govern Kant's role in the discipline most directly.

A reading of *Perpetual Peace* at its face-value quite handily delivers the idealist caricature that presides under Kant's name. In the confines of this particular text, Kant appears to theorise that war between states may not only be brought to an absolute halt but, more to the point, that international conflict may be elimi-

nated as a potentiality altogether. He displays great willingness to place stock in the capacity of states to gain true respect for one another's existence, rights, and interests. Kant seems to treat egoism and domineering instincts as elements that may be outgrown in international politics. Read in this manner, *Perpetual Peace* then provides the very foundation of utopian thought against which E. H. Carr protests so vehemently in his celebrated *The Twenty Years' Crisis*.⁶ Thus, *Perpetual Peace* serves as a text underlying the greatest turn against idealism achieved within international relations theory in the past century.

These general sentiments are first exhibited in Kant's six Preliminary Articles of a Perpetual Peace Between States:

1. No conclusion of peace shall be considered valid as such if it was made with a secret reservation of the material for a future war.
2. No independently existing state, whether it be large or small, may be acquired by another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase or gift.
3. Standing armies (*miles perpetuus*) will gradually be abolished altogether.
4. No national debt shall be contracted in connection with the external affairs of the state.
5. No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state.
6. No state at war with another shall permit such acts of hostility as would make mutual confidence impossible during a future time of peace. Such acts would include the employment of *assassins* (*percussores*) or *poisoners* (*venfici*), *breach of agreements*, *the instigation of treason* (*perduellio*) within the enemy state, etc.⁷

In these articles, he offers a basic guide as to how an international peace may finally take form.

Articles 1 and 3 underline the primary understanding of peace under which Kant operates in this text. He emphatically states that by "peace" he means a thoroughly new condition and advancement

in the processes of international politics. He rejects the notion that any treaty or agreement that leads to a cease in battle and competition between states, no matter how successful or lasting, may provide sufficient grounds for peace. Peace, Kant reasons, could only truly be such if there is no cause for political leaders to even entertain war as a means to state interests.⁸ On the assumption that the maintenance of a corps of professional soldiers or the stockpiling of arms or the capital with which to fund a military machine in itself may pose a visible threat, he claims that even a defensive position threatens peace between states. Moreover, Kant holds that the attempts made by 'peace-loving' states, through the accumulation of troops and other forms of material prowess, to deter the potential aggression in their neighbors can in themselves instigate direct confrontation. For, the requirements of maintaining such a deterrent, in the name of peace, may prove far more of a financial and social drain on states than can war and domination. And war may, therefore and unfortunately, become a more astute political option.⁹

In recognition of this problem Article 4 is offered as a preventive measure that seeks to stave off temptation toward such buildup. Kant argues here that foreign financial aid used to maintain social infrastructure and food-stores is not threatening in itself. Yet, he warns that the modern structures of international commerce that allow for mass lending and borrowing of capital between states make possible the funding of war machines far in excess of what any one state could muster of its own accord.¹⁰

Articles 2, 5, and 6, on the other hand, betray a high moral tone lying behind Kant's interest in encouraging such a peace. In these instances, one can see a staunch belief in what may be understood as the inherent autonomy of each and every state. He argues for the internal integrity of states, suggesting that they are not things that can truly be owned or commodified in any manner. A state, Kant claims, is at root constituted on the basis of a social will of some form and gains its structure from the rights that the citizens of the society attribute to one another.¹¹ Thus, in this light, he cannot tolerate the notion that one state could possibly have any just claim in meddling with the affairs of another people. Moreover, he refuses the suggestion that there is any ground under which one state may deem another society as deserving of disruption or punishment. As separately founded communities, Kant understands that no state has true authority over another in any manner.¹² It therefore does indeed appear

necessary that the materials and arts conducive to international domination be eliminated.

Understanding, along with realists, that there is no international authority to bring international relations into accord with such Articles, Kant goes on to claim that it must and will be the states themselves who will mold this final peace.¹³ Agreeing implicitly with Jean-Jacques Rousseau,¹⁴ he suggests that even if there ever was a natural state of humans in which peace and equality prevailed it is certainly not something to which civilized persons may return. Hence, Kant actually offers even more direct concurrence with Hobbes, in this respect, claiming that the predicament of human life outside of the protection of the sovereign is surely a state of war. Moreover, Kant recommends that peace is something which may only be “*formally instituted*” in a political manner.¹⁵ And it is, therefore, here that one may first see the assimilation of Kant to idealism as perhaps overstated.

Kant goes on in *Perpetual Peace* to underline this point regarding the central importance of state politics to international peace with his three Definitive Articles of Perpetual Peace:

1. The civil constitution of every state shall be republican.
2. The right of nations shall be based on a federation of free states.
3. Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.¹⁶

Here he describes how such a pacific condition in international politics could be attained. Additionally, Kant may be seen to display a strong faith in the rational will of human individuals and organizations as the mechanism through which such conditions may be organised.

He anticipates the transformation of modern states into true republics. And, by a republican constitution, Kant means a political community which is founded on principles of freedom for all people, dependence of all members on a singular rule, and equality for all citizens.¹⁷ Furthermore, he understands a republic to gain its legitimacy from and standing on a constitution brought about by the rightful consent of the citizenry as a whole in its origin. Decisions regarding whether such a state will or will not engage in warfare is up to the people themselves. Kant therefore hypothesises that

the public itself will reject war and the inherent disposition of states will be such that interstate conflict will be avoided at all costs:

For [supporting such conflict] would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war, such as doing the fighting themselves, supplying the costs of the war from their own resources, painfully making good the ensuing devastation, and, as the crowning evil, having to take upon themselves a burden of debt which will embitter peace itself and which can never be paid off on account of the constant threat of new wars.¹⁸

Holding to this level of logic, he imagines that republican states will in turn seek peace with one another in the form of a federal union. Without the existence of a transnational authority to which states may mutually appeal, Kant submits that republics will have no better option than to diffuse all potential threat with one another.¹⁹ Just as one might expect that a republic may be successfully constructed to serve the interests of the citizens and the citizens themselves aim to avoid the destructive depletion of resources and the social fabric caused by war, he foretells that an international contract of some sort between states is attainable.

Kant's emphasis here, though, is that republics around the world can and ought to construct this federation as free states. It must be a voluntary union, where no power is transferred above state sovereignty.²⁰ Equality is of primary import, so as to divert the possibility of distrust, envy, or conceit from inaugurating imbalances of any kind. Hence, it is that Kant insists in the third and final Definitive Article that a mark of true peace will be the case in which any traveler is treated with civility on the soil of any foreign land. For this will signal a circumstance in which it is universally recognized that the entire globe is a single community of human beings.²¹ It just so happens that different groups of humans have banded together under different forms of legitimate rule, as they respectively see fit.

When taken as the foundation of Kant's thought on international relations, his Preliminary and Definitive Articles, then, display a singular optimism in the ability of humans to overcome differences. In admitting to the sensibility of perpetual peace and in joining into a world-wide federation of states, each separate community inherently recognizes and stands for inalienable human rights

that apply universally, regardless of one's association. Kant shows a belief in the notion that the strife of politics may ultimately be torn away from state structures and social hierarchies and taken up by the interests of each individual. In the hands of individuals, politics may, on a global scale, be rethought in terms of what humans each share. *Perpetual Peace* offers the hope that cosmopolitan interests can channel selfish desires.

Elaborating on his second Definitive Article, Kant admits that his political ideal would consist in the formation of an international state.²² However, he recognizes the fact that humans and the communities that they compose are disinclined to give themselves over to a singular political constitution from which the appropriate social conduct and mores for all persons will be determined. He thus states that "the positive idea of a *world republic* cannot be realised."²³ Yet, Kant continues to provide potential evidence for those who would receive him as the radical idealist he is so often thought to be. Even if he denies the possibility of a world state structure as such, Kant does urge that international conditions require that states unite with other republics, both near and far, so as to form at least "something analogous to a universal state."²⁴ He disavows the possibility of global sovereignty. Yet, he apparently leaves the door open for an actual dominant body constituted from members world-wide.

It is precisely this sort of statement that impels such later theorists as Hedley Bull to perceive Kant as a proponent of extremes and to treat him as one who does indeed advocate world government.²⁵ Dedication to this reading, however, also forces one to recognize a frustrating inconsistency between what Bull sees as Kant's simultaneous prescription for universal political rule and recognition of the anarchical condition underlying its possibility.²⁶ On this basis, Bull argues that the only force that could bring warring states together would be the force of one will over all others, leaving the whole idea of a global union thoroughly unattractive.²⁷

On the other hand, accepting the tension between world government and the conditions of anarchy as merely the realistic challenge of international politics, Thomas L. Carson states that it is the prospect of such an overarching global force that indeed makes Kant's position particularly compelling in the modern world of nation-states.²⁸ And Carson complains that Kant does not admit to what Carson perceives as the true benefits of a global military. Consequently, he retheorizes the grounding of *Perpetual Peace* in

such a manner as to allow for the unifying power that Bull either finds absent or fears.

For those who have essayed to move somewhat beyond a narrow literal reading of *Perpetual Peace*, however, the majority opinion prefers a Kant who does not hold out for a world government, as such. This case is established already with some strength in the texts of Carl Joachim Friedrich and F. H. Hinsley, which have served as the central foundations to understanding Kant within international relations theory. Friedrich acknowledges the sort of dilemma of interpretation that leads someone like Bull in the path that he takes. But he draws his readers' attention back to other elements of *Perpetual Peace*, where Kant himself suggests the contradictory quality that an achievement of a world state would pose in the face of the supposed freedom of individual states.²⁹ Hinsley insists that Kant's use of the Latin term *foedus pacificum* in identifying what he means by "something analogous to a universal state" must be understood in its specificity. He notes that *foedus* refers to a treaty and not a state. Thus, he announces that, of course, "Everyone knows that [Kant] did not advocate world government or the complete but less universal merger of states: he explicitly rejects this solution."³⁰

As noted above, though, from reading Kant's first Preliminary Article and his second Definitive Article one knows that he does not accept treaties as offering sufficient grounds for the final peace he envisions. He writes: "a *peace treaty* may put an end to the current war, but not to that general warlike condition within which pretexts can always be found for a new war."³¹ However, it is also important to note that Kant is careful to make a strict distinction between a *foedus pacificum* and a *pactum pacis*. He refers to the latter as the simple peace treaty which itself, in his opinion, does little honor to the idea of peace. And with the former he appeals more directly to the notion of a "pacific federation" of states.³² Kant in fact pushes this notion in so many words, stating that:

This federation does not aim to acquire any power like that of a state, but merely to preserve and secure the *freedom* of each state in itself, along with that of the other confederated states, although this does not mean that they need to submit to public laws and to a coercive power which enforces them, as do men in a state of nature.³³

With this in mind, Hinsley even suggests that the very style which Kant employs to write *Perpetual Peace* indicates that a world-state

is furthest from his thoughts. Hinsley reminds his readers that this text is constructed primarily in terms of prefatory articles and as a description of what Kant sees as the conditions for peace.³⁴ His point is that *Perpetual Peace* does not offer a constitution of any sort. Nor, does it outline the substance of an international legal structure. Rather, as a document, Kant's text offers a guide and potential framework on which, he believes, a peaceful global order of states may be begun.³⁵

With the sort of caution that each employs, both Friedrich and Hinsley have ultimately indicated the relationship Kant makes between politics and morality as the key point of access for subsequent readings into his entire thinking on international politics. Together their analyses show that it is in the certain association he perceives between these things that supposedly allows Kant to propose a true federation of republics which avoids the rise of a global ruler. And it is thus in this relationship that the notion of universal governance may be and is seen to finally mesh with an acceptance of anarchy in the world.

Within both his second Definitive Article and the Appendix to *Perpetual Peace*, Kant makes the point that all political action and posturing pays homage to some form of legitimacy, of a rule based on *right*.³⁶ He holds the position that all political actors seek the semblance of justification in their actions, whether such behavior warrants the excuse or not. Kant claims that, regardless of how a politician or government may strategize to get around the limitations of a rightful position, such figures invariably seek the cloak of legitimacy so as to maintain the support of subjects and allies.³⁷ And the basis of this right in action and position is the assumption that politics is ordered with respect to moral sense.

Whereas he distinguishes politics as the applied aspect of right, he appoints morality as the theoretical component of right.³⁸ In addition, Kant understands that politics on an international scale will succeed only once these branches of right are appropriately brought into balance. And that which will bring about such equipoise will be the free willing of a politics that operates under a concept of right that has already been morally determined. The international federation that Kant hopes for will occur only insofar as a particular moral position comes to drive the political portion of right. And this moral impulse is what each republic will ultimately freely adopt.

Kant recognizes that any political actor can conjure a moral attitude to accommodate given political actions and interests.³⁹ He

refers to such a person “who fashions his morality to suit his own advantage as a statesman” as a “political moralist.”⁴⁰ However, Kant believes that the political moralist ultimately defeats the possibility of his own political aspirations. The political moralist is always incapable of providing the moral underpinnings of his claim to right in any way other than in retrospect.⁴¹ Hence, the political moralist is never in a position to truly offer a rightful direction in politics. He can never make a successful claim to right without having perpetrated illegitimate acts. In contrast, however, Kant does declare a belief in the possibility of a “moral politician” who is able to determine principles of political propriety in accordance with morality.⁴²

What this means is that he imagines political actors who, through reason or experience, are able to establish political duty as prescribed by the natural conditions faced by all human beings. These conditions include the facts that humans naturally form communities through necessity, that these communities inescapably come into contact with one another, and that the space available for national migration on this planet is finite.⁴³ So, the conditions are such that the respective social interests of each state, and, thus, the respective interests of each individual, depend on the protection that the arm of politics may achieve in the interstate sphere. The only guarantee to such safety, according to Kant, is a total peace among them. And this peace must indeed be extended globally to ensure the domestic interests of each and every state. Hence, the moral politician will seek an order in which a variety of states living under a diversity of respective rules may coexist without bringing harm to one another. This is the very guideline posed in Kant’s *Articles of Perpetual Peace*. And he pronounces these as moral by the fact that, as he suggests, they represent a social/political structure that could be adopted by all persons without injury. He believes that it allows for the rights of all to be respected.

Kant goes so far as to say that “a true system of politics cannot therefore take a single step without first paying tribute to morality.”⁴⁴ The significance of this statement is that he suggests here a manner by which the dilemma of international relations may be thought without framing politics purely in terms of power. Kant’s point is that the notion of maintaining domestic interests simply through the wielding and accumulating of force is counterproductive in an age of truly international politics. Political expediency, he argues, is best served through attention to the moral require-

ments of modern life. And once politicians and governments are finally impressed with this idea, Kant trusts, a political resolution toward peace will arise. Most important, though, he imagines that this will indeed be a volition that may compose the basis for a form of 'world government' without a superior force or leader. For, the moral position is supposedly one that each state could and ought to establish independently of one another. It is a will that may emerge naturally in each context.

It is primarily this early focus on the links made between morality and politics in *Perpetual Peace* that has made way for the reception of Kant as a particularly *new* theorist of international relations. As one can see through an examination of the histories of international relations theory written, respectively, by Torbjörn Knutsen⁴⁵ and F. Parkinson,⁴⁶ Kant's writing is cultivated as a point of specifically *modern* awareness. Parkinson, in particular, notes how Kant's concentration rests on an idea of a modern state, as opposed to any given territorial political institution that one might care to pull from European history.⁴⁷ This is a state modeled most specifically on the republic envisioned in the French Revolution, which inspired Kant directly.⁴⁸ It is a nation-state in which a popular government is installed, supposedly resting on the general will of a population viewed indifferently throughout the territory.

In addition, Knutsen notes how *Perpetual Peace* "ushers in a new epoch in International Relations theory," wherein the power dynamics of international politics are thoroughly rethought.⁴⁹ He identifies Kant as the figure who initiates a negation of the idea that an equilibrium between states is something that states themselves can control through negotiations of the physical force each represent. In this rendition, rather, *Perpetual Peace* represents the notion that a model of balance between states is something by which each republic must allow itself to be claimed. Each republic must give itself over to the rule constituted through the relations circulating across the balance. Knutsen draws attention to the points at which Kant argues that no one or collection of states is anymore able to successfully force one particular order in the world. In this regard, he suggests that states are not sufficiently in control of the conditions that underlie international relations.

Perpetual Peace certainly does present an argument for the recognition of the intranational, transnational, and multinational forces and movements that have come to characterize much of the dilemma of modern international relations. Kant is particularly mindful of the force of international commerce in the formation of

international political orders.⁵⁰ He makes the point, which is commonplace among contemporary political economists, that commercial links made between and across communities, internationally, score a level of relations to which the states in themselves are not fully adequate. And on this basis, Kant suggests that states will inevitably seek peaceful relations with one another, so as to in part facilitate the industry that has so quickly and successfully outgrown the aspirations of mercantilism. Consequently, Parkinson interprets Kant as having finally got beyond the realist dilemma most often identified with Hobbes, where the state of nature is simply understood as being at odds with civil society.⁵¹ In Parkinson's eyes, Kant recognizes that the very changes in international conditions noted above render the traditionally viewed obstacle of nature quite differently.

In Hobbes' *Leviathan* one learns that violence is inherent to the supposedly natural competition for land and resources and forces individuals into the formation of separate and distinct commonwealths, which remain at war with one another on a larger scale. Yet Kant suggests that this same violence, in a world progressively surfaced with nation-states that are in inescapable contact with one another and have grown intractable bonds, will alternately necessitate movement toward peace.

Already in the Anglo-American world of the early twentieth century, this representation of Kant's view proved compelling. Foremost on the mark, A. C. Armstrong inaugurates in 1931 a tendency, seen in some later writers,⁵² to treat Kant's *Perpetual Peace* as a kind of *prophecy*.⁵³ He attempts to defend Kant against the charges of utopianism prevalent at the time. And, the point of his writing involves the fact that *Perpetual Peace* was already being used as a basis for theorizing a practical peace in Europe since the Russian disarmament proposals of 1899 and the Peace Conferences at the Hague.⁵⁴ Despite finding Kant to be a man of his times,⁵⁵ Armstrong reads *Perpetual Peace* as containing the ideas most parallel to the developments that lead to and the plan that characterized the League of Nations that came about after the World War I.⁵⁶ He remains unsure of how Kant would react to the specific conditions of international relations 130 years after his death.⁵⁷ Yet, Armstrong is convinced that Kant would find some way of adjusting the generality of his proposals and throw his lot well within the camps of those seeking peaceful resolution through the League.⁵⁸

Hinsley is less upfront in offering an actual evaluation of Kant's relevance to historical reality. In this regard, he merely submits

that if Kant's Preliminary Articles were indeed ever accepted on a global level, peace would most surely be accomplished.⁵⁹ Alternatively, Friedrich is even more enthusiastic than Armstrong in his assessment of Kant's potential role in sketching the future of international relations. Anticipating sentiments found within recent attention to Kant, Friedrich is of the mind that the success of any world order depends on what he understands to be the capacity of all humans to develop universal moral standards of value, regardless of particular domestic values.⁶⁰ And he attributes the supposed foresight of his own comments directly to the work of Kant. Thinking at this point in terms of the birth of the United Nations, Friedrich proclaims:

What is more, looking back from San Francisco in 1945, we can test [Kant's] ideas by the intervening century and a half, and we can say, 'He was right.' Or rather, that he was more nearly right than anyone else at that time or since.⁶¹

Such ebullience over Kant's alleged relation to the design of either major inter-state union has surely waned as the initial fervour surrounding the founding of each body has itself lapsed. Still, his successive interpreters maintain a strong association between the analysis present in *Perpetual Peace* and the qualitative changes to late-modern international order. As Patrick Riley comments, one of the most striking points that emerges from Kant's writing in this context is the idea that the stability of each sovereign state is fully dependent on the manifestation of some form of international federalism.⁶² And this may be and is read forcefully with respect to the manners in which states are progressively finding it necessary to expand alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. In this light, Charles Beitz finds Kant's attention to the growing interdependence of nation-states, along economic, political, and cultural lines, to successfully anticipate practical principles of justice on a global scale. Beitz suggests that Kant could be quite correct in assuming that international links and cooperation might lead to such cosmopolitan moral-political structures in the same way that one may understand social cooperation to found distributive justice within states.⁶³

Along the way, then, the Kant which is at first glance associated with proposals for an alternative international order is replaced by or at least supplemented with a Kant who is the watchful interpreter and tracker of the historical movement in political conditions.

Ian Clark, for example, puts forth a rendition of *Perpetual Peace* in which Kant appears most significantly as a simple voice for change.⁶⁴ He too rejects the notion that Kant somehow advocates a world-state. And from this point, Clark establishes Kant's project as one in which the futility of international war is revealed and altogether new forms of world-wide political negotiation is recognized.⁶⁵ This point is all the more underlined in Howard Williams' attempts to highlight the gradualism to be found in *Perpetual Peace*. Williams insists that Kant's message be taken only as a potential and approximate way in which, through experience and debate, a truly new world order may be achieved at some unknowable point in the future.⁶⁶ Similarly, Jürg Martin Gabriel prefers to emphasize the idea that Kant's broad outline for an international code of law is not meant as an ideal structure to be realised as such but, rather, as a temporary expedient through which unforeseen alternatives may arise.⁶⁷ Consistent with Clark, Gabriel offers Kant as one who recognizes the necessity of shifts in thinking. And, in this manner, Gabriel too appears to betray a willingness to view Kant as a prophet of late-modern developments in international politics. For, in the same breath, he suggests that Kant's proposals are of the same quality that have ultimately been adopted in the Conventions established both in The Hague and Geneva, where the rights of humanity supposedly override those of specific government interest.⁶⁸

However, this Kant, who merely sets out sensible guidelines for an approach to shifts and evolution in international relations, turns out to be a source of trouble. Read in this series of manners, *Perpetual Peace* does not offer a convenient source from which a new international relations theory may be built. In fact, it is on the basis of this set of impressions that Kant comes to take on his "difficult" role in the discipline.⁶⁹ For the classification of his writing becomes more of a question than an accomplishment. This rendition displays a Kant who offers both a resignation to states, as the uppermost political actors, and hope for practical change in the very manner in which international politics is conducted. Hence, within the confines of his own text, Kant is seen to embody the very contradiction or paradox that has given rise to the back-and-forth debates that characterize the discipline in the first place. For instance, while Armstrong, Hinsley, Friedrich, and Beitz see a prediction for the liberal globalizing trends of the twentieth century with his writings, Charles Covell finds Kant to, rather, anticipate Margaret Thatcher's attitude toward the European Union, wherein federalism is viewed as viable and desirable only through the pri-

mary protection of state sovereignty.⁷⁰ And, as a result, Kant's work has at times been adopted as a signal of legitimacy for both sides.

As is pointed out by Michael C. Williams,⁷¹ the contrary manners in which Kant is taken up within the discipline is perhaps seen best in a contrast of the respective readings given by Clark and Kenneth Waltz. As noted above, Clark focuses on Kant as a proponent of global optimism, where real change may be anticipated through a variety of new developments in the international sphere. Clark pits Kant against realists.⁷² On the other hand, Waltz prefers to place greater emphasis on Kant's lack of faith in the ability of states to act peacefully on their own accords. He writes: "While Kant may be seen as a backsliding liberal, he may also be considered a theorist of power politics who hid his Machiavellian ideas by hanging 'round them the fashionable garments of liberalism."⁷³ Waltz clings to a reading of Kant in which selfish, autonomous units hold sway, as proof that the philosopher is ultimately as pessimistic as Waltz himself:

Kant sees in combination of what others have often separated—the defects, or as he says, the evil of men and the possibility of their living good lives, the strength of the state and the liberty of its subjects, progress amidst ever greater difficulties, the approach to peace as wars become fiercer and more frequent. He has, as many liberals do not, an appreciation of politics as struggle, an idea of possible equilibrium not as simple and automatic harmony but always as something perilously achieved out of conflict.⁷⁴

He suggests that Kant, despite his hopes, accepts people to be essentially self-interested and warring throughout time.

On balance, though, such efforts to claim Kant for one or another tradition of international relations theory has proved fruitless. It remains difficult to campaign for one received aspect of Kant without dredging up those others that cause the first to fray. As a result, attempts to situate Kant simply as an idealist or a realist, or as a reformer of either view, appear somewhat more as ideological positioning than portrayals of careful or thoughtful analysis.

W. B. Gallie, one of the most sophisticated interpreters of Kant's theory of international relations to date and certainly the most influential, exemplifies through his own ambivalence this need to resist a single-minded view.⁷⁵ Gallie basically praises what he sees

as the ‘undeniable truths’ generated in Kant’s astute observations of the practical function human reason plays in the formation of international problems and the eventual resolution of international conflict. He accepts the liberal aspect of Kant’s proposals, suggesting that Kant is certainly prescient in his discussion of the conditions required for international peace.⁷⁶ In this regard, he applauds Kant for being “mankind’s first naturally global thinker.”⁷⁷ And Gallie shows appreciation for what he identifies as the mature and wise liberal tone that he perceives in Kant’s work.⁷⁸ However, Gallie also argues that Kant is ultimately naïve in his cosmopolitanism to a wide variety of important political realities in the realm of international politics.⁷⁹ He chastises Kant for concentrating too much on what he takes as Kant’s focus on the ideal of situations in international affairs and for not appreciating the particular contingencies of what actually occurs in the world. In this regard, Gallie accuses Kant of unjustifiably treating all international concerns as somehow reducible to one grand problem.⁸⁰ And he finally finds himself bridling his commendations in a rather confused fashion. Gallie writes:

To be sure, Kant’s contribution to political philosophy as a whole remains inspirational rather than substantial: certainly it does not supply easily digested fodder for those who want good stock answers to old stock questions. But it suggests a way of conceiving politics as part of the task of Reason, or of the calling of Man, which in its width, and in its balanced view of human capacities, seems to me unrivalled in the modern world.⁸¹

He thus leaves Kant in a conflicted condition, suggesting that Kant is directly stimulating to the interests of both realists and idealists, and yet, as such, is not of much concrete assistance in either regard.

The most recent and sustained endeavours to inquire into this dilemma have in fact found it unfeasible to establish Kant’s pedigree whatsoever. After considering all possible sides of the debate with respect to *Perpetual Peace*, Andrew Hurrell finally decides that Kant’s position as a theorist of international relations is at heart indeterminable:

Whilst Kant is certainly much more of a statist than the characterization of the Kantian tradition would suggest,

the continuing interest of his work is strengthened by the tension between the two sides of his writings. This tension remains unresolved and there are many difficulties with the answers that Kant gives and with his fascinating but frustrating combination of rigorous moralism and political realism.⁸²

Moreover, Hurrell suggests that Kant pursues the assumptions held respectively by both idealists and realists, so as to ensure a total inquiry into the concerns of international politics.⁸³ He argues that within Kant's refusal to theorise a world-state lies an experiment in which Kant tries to understand the potential relation between state-order and cosmopolitan interests. On yet another level, Michael C. Williams sustains the notion that Kant ought to be seen as operating well within both paradigms. Williams remains suspicious of any either/or solution to the interpretation of Kant's politics. As a result, he too comes to the conclusion that irresolvable tension resides at the root of Kant's thought:

Kant steadfastly refuses to fall into the fatalistic dualisms of *Realpolitik* which leave only an "ideal" world of tranquility or a "real" world of continual war, a domestic society of "justice" and an international order of "power." His thought lives in a continual state of dialectical tension, a refusal to flee from the realities of the present and an unwillingness to see that reality one-sidedly as objectively fixed, finite, hopeless, or devoid of possibility.⁸⁴

Williams' point is that Kant must be understood as one who refuses to divorce morality from the realm of states and simply into a competing vision of an evolving globalism. Rather, he takes the Kantian theory of international relations to involve an ongoing process in which the state and the globe mutually shape and inform one another within an inescapable relationship between domestic and foreign.

It is perhaps because of this conflicted classification that Kant ultimately gains in international relations theory that so few have been attracted to explore deeply the source that Kant offers the discipline. For, to take this set of readings of *Perpetual Peace* seriously does not simply ask that one entertain a novel or even unpopular position in the field. Rather, the Kant that emerges from interpretation within international relations theory demands an

attitude of which it is difficult to make sense. Effectively, this Kant does not even appear to volunteer an alternative approach to thinking international politics. Instead, he takes bits and pieces from traditional aspects and offers them in a supposedly complete form. There is no recognized attempt in *Perpetual Peace* to show how these fragments of theory may be reconciled with one another. The apparent paradox is simply allowed to persist.

It is therefore of considerable interest to consider whether it is Kant who is confused or whether there are essential weaknesses across the theories of international relations that make it impossible to develop a coherent picture of his work. Attempts to render Kant's position within any of meaningful aspect of the discipline serve only to highlight the exceptional difficulty scholars in the field have in cleanly establishing the limits and categories of their discourse. Attention to Kant serves rather to demonstrate how the poles of international relations theory stand less firmly on their own feet than they come to give each other muddied and mutable ground.

Requirements of a 'Kantian' Paradox

It is helpful to view recent and contemporary works in international relations that acknowledge intellectual debt to the writings of Kant as generally reflective of the turns of thought made available, for example, in the Grotian sentiments presented by Bull⁸⁵ as well as John Herz's musings surrounding the world-wide security atmosphere present after World War II.⁸⁶ In short, those in the study of international relations who draw from Kant tend to build not only on a perception of the world in which the relations between states are irreducible to notions of inter-state conflict; current appeals to Kant, in general, also work from an understanding that posits a distinct and intimate connection between a multiplicity of agents throughout and across what are traditionally taken as the international and the domestic realms.

The inspirational role that Kant's writings take on with respect to perceived relations between these networks of political actors and levels may be witnessed in a variety of subfields to the discipline. However the character of this position is certainly most manifest within the range of writing in peace studies which seeks to link *Perpetual Peace* to what is sometimes referred to as the "peace-loving democracies hypothesis."⁸⁷ Kant's writings are now