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THE QUEST FOR PEACE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD: WHY GREECE?ⁱ

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The dramatic date of the Chinese film “Hero” (*Yingxiong*) is the end of the Warring State Period (403-221 BCE), in which seven kingdoms fought ruthlessly for supremacy, causing massive slaughter and suffering for the population.ⁱⁱ In the film, the king of Qin, determined to conquer all of known China, has defeated most of his enemies. Over the years, however, he has been the target of many assassins. Three of these are still alive, Broken Sword, Flying Snow, and Sky. To anyone who defeats these three, the king promises great rewards: power, riches, and a private audience with the king himself. For ten years no one comes close to claiming the prize. Then an enigmatic person, Nameless, appears in the palace, bearing the legendary weapons of the slain assassins. His story is extraordinary: for ten years he has studied the arts of the sword, before defeating the mighty Sky in a furious fight and destroying the famed duo of Snow and Broken Sword, using a weapon far more devastating than his sword—their love for each other.

The king, however, replies with a different story: of a conspiracy between the four, in which Nameless’ victories were faked to enable him to come close to the king and kill him. Nameless indeed has a chance to achieve his goal. The king, exposed to his sword, tells him of his true aspiration: to conquer the warring states in order to overcome war and violence once and for all, to create a unified empire, and to establish lasting peace. Overcome by this vision, Nameless draws back his sword and walks out of the great hall—to die willingly under the arrows of the king’s bowmen.

This is a powerful and beautiful film. Its message is exciting. It raises both hope and doubts: was there really an ancient ruler who pursued a true vision of peace—even if it could be realized only at the price of war and violence? Not unexpectedly, hopes prove illusionary. The question of how to interpret the movie has raised intense debates; one plausible interpretation sees it as an allegory for Mao Zedong and communism’s unification of the world through global conquest.

An any rate, the first emperor—he who displayed his army in a now world-famous terracotta replica near his necropolis—was no visionary of peace. Later Chinese historians did not even celebrate him as one of the greatest conquerors of all time..., but rather castigated him as a cruel, arbitrary, impetuous, suspicious, and superstitious megalomaniac.ⁱⁱⁱ

Experts on war in the ancient world are numerous, those on peace harder to find; the bibliographies differ accordingly.^{iv} The topic this paper addresses is huge. My purpose is to give a broad survey, not a detailed analysis, and to stimulate discussion, whether on the issues or on some of the texts I will adduce.

Efforts to preserve or restore peace and, if war proved inevitable, to claim the justice of one's cause are probably as old as the history of warfare. Such efforts also offer a long and sad story of futility and propagandistic deception. Yet we need not doubt in all cases the seriousness of such efforts. Warmongers often had to reckon among their peoples with a widespread desire for peace and justice. I shall begin with two case studies to illustrate Homer's and Thucydides' intense concern with two universal problems: peace and just war. I shall then establish that, beyond these two authors, the Greeks produced a rich discourse on the issue of peace. Comparison with other ancient civilizations will show that in this respect they were not unique but exceptional. I will end with the question of why the Greeks, of all ancient peoples, were so deeply interested in the problem of peace.

I begin, then, with Homer and an aspect of his epics that is often ignored: the poet's tendency to engage in political reflection. As an example, I quote the famous proem of the *Iliad*:

Rage: Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage,
black and murderous, that cost the Greeks
incalculable pain, pitched countless souls
of heroes into Hades' dark,
and left their bodies to rot as feasts
for dogs and birds, as Zeus' will was done.
Begin with the clash between Agamemnon—

the Greek warlord—and godlike Achilles.
(1.1-7; trans. S. Lombardo)

Clearly, the poet here emphasizes not, as we might expect in a “heroic epic,” the glorious deeds of great heroes but their responsibility for the deaths of countless men. From this beginning, the poet weaves into the epic’s dramatic narrative a series of political considerations that focus not least on the leader’s responsibility for the community’s well-being.^v The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles that erupts in book 1 and is finally resolved in book 19, involves the overall leader and his strongest follower. The community (here the Greek army, in its fortified camp represented as a temporary city) is helpless.^{vi} It lacks laws, powerful public institutions, and a developed political culture that would enable it to control even its strongest members. The other leaders can only resort to persuasion, but where a leader’s honor and status are at stake, persuasion is ineffective. In the absence of a superior agency, arbitration is no option.

All this concerns a community’s domestic sphere. But it illuminates a crucial problem in interstate relations too that explains the classical Greeks’ difficulties in resolving conflicts by other means than war. Even if two states have agreed by treaty to submit their differences to arbitration, how is such arbitration going to work if there is no agency that has enough authority to be respected by both contestants, or enough power to impose its will, and if the prevailing political culture does not encourage peaceful rather than violent conflict resolution? I do not need to emphasize that this remains one of the greatest challenges even in our own time—and we have at our disposal a world organization created for this very purpose. In early Greece, when power was distributed more evenly, arbitration was possible.^{vii} It was not least Sparta’s role as strongest military power without imperial ambitions that enabled it to serve in this function. By the mid-fifth century, however, the Greek world was polarized between two power blocs, Sparta and Athens, each with its allies (a constellation often compared with that of the Cold War). Those trying to remain neutral were viewed with suspicion by both sides.^{viii}

This constellation made arbitration very difficult. The historian Thucydides exemplifies this in his analysis of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. I give the pertinent sections of a speech he attributes to the Athenian statesman Pericles (1.140-42):

It is laid down in the treaty [of 446] that differences between us should be settled by arbitration, and that, pending arbitration, each side should keep what it has. The Spartans have never once asked for arbitration, nor have they accepted our offers to submit to it. They prefer to settle their complaints by war rather than by peaceful negotiations, and now they come here not even making protests, but trying to give us orders... If you give in, you will immediately be confronted with some greater demand, since they will think that you only gave way on this point through fear... But if you take a firm stand you will make it clear to them that they have to treat you properly as equals... When one's equals, before resorting to arbitration, make claims on their neighbors and put those claims in the form of commands, it would be slavish to give in to them, however big or however small such claims may be. (Trans. R. Warner)

Two points are worth emphasizing. First, Athens insisted on arbitration, as provided by an existing treaty: this, they said, was the only way to resolve conflicts among equal powers. Sparta refused. Arbitration could not even be initiated unless both parties were determined to take it seriously. But one of them was not, and even if it had been, the practical problems might have been unsurmountable. Second, in the first phase of the war, Sparta suffered serious setbacks that prompted it to seek peace on the status quo. The Athenians, now hoping for victory rather than compromise and led by an intransigent demagogue, rejected the offer.^{ix} Ten years and an uneasy peace later, the war resumed. Thucydides writes

The Spartans considered that Athens had been the first to break the peace treaty. In the first war they thought that the fault had been more on their side, partly... because in spite of the provision in the previous treaty that there should be no recourse to arms if arbitration were offered, they themselves had not accepted the Athenian offer of arbitration. They therefore thought that there was some justice in the misfortunes they had suffered... But now, [the Athenians were the aggressors. Moreover,] whenever any dispute arose on doubtful points in the treaty, it was Sparta who had offered to submit to arbitration and Athens who had refused the offer. It was now Athens, the Spartans

thought, who was in the wrong through having committed exactly the same faults as theirs had been before, and they went into the war with enthusiasm. (7.18)

Fighting for a just cause guaranteed divine support and justified hope for victory. In *Children of Heracles*, performed around the time of the war's outbreak, the tragic poet Euripides effectively dramatizes the same idea, emphasizing, as Pericles does in Thucydides, that it is incompatible with liberty to yield to foreign ultimatums:

If I allow this altar to be violated
by a foreign hand, to Hellas it will seem that my
country is no free country, and that I betray
suppliants through fear of Argos.
(243-46; trans. Ph. Vellacott)^x

I return to the *Iliad* and an episode that illustrates precisely the importance of fighting for a just cause. The Trojan War's origin, of course, lies in Paris' abduction of Helen, wife of Menelaus, from Sparta. As we learn from passing remarks, the Greeks first sent ambassadors to Troy who demanded restoration and compensation (and, no doubt, threatened war if their demand were refused). The Trojan assembly debated their request and sided with Paris. The Greeks resorted to war only when they failed to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Other stories confirm this pattern.^{xi}

The justice of the Greek cause is thus clear from the beginning. Even so, the poet emphatically reiterates this fact within the epic action. Before the first battle in the *Iliad*, Paris offers to fight a duel with Menelaus, perpetrator with injured party, to decide upon possession of Helen and the stolen treasures. All the others, "having cut oaths of faith and friendship," will dwell peacefully in their respective countries. Both armies react with great joy, "hoping now to be rid of all the misery of warfare." Then the two leaders conclude a treaty, witnessed by both armies, with all the necessary rituals, and by spelling out precisely the conditions of the agreement. The hopes of both armies that this will seal peace, are captured in their prayers to Zeus. Moreover, the poet

leaves no doubt about the Trojans' resentment of Paris for having caused the war: they "hated him like black death is hated."^{xii}

Yet the duel remains inconclusive. Paris, about to die, is whisked away by Aphrodite, his divine protectress, and dumped unceremoniously in Helen's bed: no victim, no proof of victory! A Trojan, expecting rich rewards, tries to kill Menelaus and wounds him with an arrow. He thus violates oaths and truce and causes the renewal of hostilities. The Greeks realize immediately that this places justice (and with it divine support) firmly on their side. And promptly they refuse further negotiations: "Now let no one accept the possessions of Paris or take back Helen; one who is very simple can see it, that by this time the terms of death hang over the Trojans."^{xiii}

In other words, at this point even the Trojans' compliance with the Greeks' initial demands would no longer suffice to end the war. Trust in the justice of their cause and their ability to win, greed, and pride, propel the Greeks back into war. So too the Athenians, smelling victory after their early successes in the Peloponnesian War, and driven by greed for more (*pleonexia*), reject Spartan peace offers that earlier they would have accepted gladly.^{xiv}

Clearly, then, early Greek society as depicted in the *Iliad* had developed procedures in ritual and diplomacy to avoid war and resolve conflicts peacefully, and it was acutely aware of the importance of fighting for a just cause. The poet explains carefully, both politically and psychologically, why peace efforts tend to fail detrimentally. The soldiers' reactions reveal a deep resentment of war and yearning for peace among the masses. Juxtaposing on the famous shield of Achilles, made by the divine smith, Hephaestus, a city at war and a city at peace, the poet conceptualizes a contrast that is crucial for the society of his time.^{xv} The misery caused by war is highlighted in Hector's description of the fate that awaits Andromache.

It is not so much the pain to come of the Trojans
that troubles me, ...
as troubles me the thought of you, when some bronze-armoured
Achaian leads you off, taking away your day of liberty,
in tears; and in Argos you must work at the loom of another,

and carry water from the spring...
all unwilling, but strong will be the necessity upon you.
(*Il.* 6.450-58; trans. R. Lattimore)

The war god, Ares, enjoys the worst possible reputation, even among the gods. He is a “maniac who knows nothing of justice,” and a “thing of fury, evil-wrought.” Even his father, Zeus, exclaims: “To me you are the most hateful of all gods... Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, wars and battles.” He knows no dignity or decency, is a coward and adulterer.^{xvi} This negative portrait of the war god is particularly striking when we compare it with the Romans’ veneration of Mars, to which we will return.

The epic exemplifies elementary patterns in human interaction on both the individual and communal levels. Not surprisingly, therefore, similar patterns recur in Thucydides. Focusing on the Athenians’ detrimental enthusiasm for war, fueled by a powerful communal ideology and self-serving, ambitious demagogues, he says less on their sentiments about peace. But, like democracy, imperialism, and civil strife, the issue of war and peace is most important to him.^{xvii} He pursues it throughout his work, asking questions like: why does war break out and cannot be avoided even if the instruments to do so (diplomacy, arbitration) exist? What are the factors that propel a community towards war, despite the hardships and losses it causes—even if they have a choice? What are the ideological dimensions of war, and how can we unmask them? Is propensity for war and desire for domination typical especially of democracy, and if so, why?

Nor were Homer and Thucydides alone. Hesiod characterizes his Golden Age by abundance and peace, while the Ages of Bronze and Iron are plagued by incessant war. He contrasts a city of justice, prosperity, and peace with one of injustice, famine, and war. And he places the goddess of Peace (*Dikē*) high up in the divine hierarchy, making her the daughter of Zeus, the highest god, and emphasizing her importance as a primary communal value.^{xviii}

In the fifth century, citizen crowds in the theater of Athens were confronted with plays, both tragic and comic, that openly criticized the brutality and senselessness of war and, undercutting the warmongering politicians and the Athenian ideology of war, emphasized the desirability of

peace. In *Lysistrata*, for example, Aristophanes pointedly subverts the Athenian civic ideology, echoed in Thucydides' Funeral Oration, that demands that the citizen be a "lover (*erastēs*) of his city," subordinating his own interests to those of his beloved, the *polis*. The result, the poet claims, is a war-crazy city destroying itself. In the guise of a hilarious utopia, he raises crucial questions.^{xix}

At the same time, some of the sophists went beyond conceptualizations and developed theories about peace and the possibility of controlling war. The philosophers too began to deal with the issue of war and peace.^{xx} So did the historians. Criticizing the Greeks' stupid ways of fighting their wars, Herodotus lets a Persian general say: "Now surely, as they all talk the same language, they ought to be able to find a better way of settling their differences: by negotiation, for instance...—indeed by anything rather than fighting." Another speaker declares: "No one is fool enough to choose war instead of peace—in peace sons bury fathers, but in war fathers bury sons."^{xxi} The list could continue for quite a while. No doubt: the late-fifth- and early-fourth-century Greek discourse on peace was dense and intense. Before I try to explain this phenomenon, I need to point out, through a brief comparison, that this was not at all common in the ancient world.

It goes without saying that wars were frequent and brutal in all ancient or early societies.^{xxii} The label "Warring States," used for a period in early Chinese history, the pictorial reliefs in Neo-Assyrian palaces and Egyptian temples, the Mayan "Temple of the Skulls" in Chichen Itza, and the images on Mayan, Aztec, and Moche reliefs and vases or on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in Rome offer graphic illustrations. Examples could be multiplied, from all corners of the globe. The quest for "peaceable societies" has yielded few and unimpressive results.^{xxiii} No wonder: the prevailing political culture tended to encourage war rather than peace. With few exceptions, the voices we hear from antiquity are those of the powerful, elites and rulers. They were concerned primarily with legitimizing, securing, and extending their status and power. Victory on the battlefield, riches gained in war, and imperial might enabled kings and generals to erect monuments, palaces, temples, and inscriptions that eternalized their glory; poets in their service sang their praise. In city-states too, even in democratic Athens, the monumental city-scape reminded the citizens of their city's glory and power, achieved through victories in

war and sacrifice for the community, and conditioned them to emulate their ancestors. Leaders found that policies based on action and intervention paid dividends; policies of peace meant inactivity, lack of success, stagnation: nothing to fight and die for! Thucydides describes the Athenians as having been conditioned to be activists and interventionists, and this is reflected in their collective character, their way of life, and their policies. An inactive citizen is essentially useless to the community.^{xxiv}

In Rome, too, constant warfare over centuries molded society: the commoners learned to accept war as inevitable and profitable, the community to use it to increase power and wealth, to impress others and to deter allies from revolts, to satisfy communal needs at the expense of the defeated, and to deflect internal conflicts toward the outside. In the aristocracy's value system, the path to status and glory led through success in war. In the ceremonial "triumph" the victorious general paid homage and thanks to Jupiter: in a fleeting moment of equality, the greatest mortal shook hands with the greatest god. *That was worth dying for!*^{xxv}

Despite all this, the elusive commodity called peace has left its traces in the extant record. Although space does not allow detailed discussion here, all large religious movements of antiquity grappled with visions of peace, not always successfully.^{xxvi} That of ancient Judaism, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible, broke through only in rare instances and remained mostly obscured by the need of a small people, embattled in an area much contested by great powers, to fight for survival and rely on an ideology and a god that supported this fight. Early Christianity focused on another world and was soon confused by dogmatic infighting and its rise to state religion. The Islamic "community of Believers" was initially tolerant of other monotheistic religions and ecumenical to a remarkable extent, but, preoccupied with empire building, civil wars, and dogmatic splits, it soon turned monopolistic and intolerant. Buddhism was most explicit and uncompromising with regard to avoiding violence and causing pain to living creatures, but it tended to focus more on turning inward and achieving peace individually, omitted to address the problem of war explicitly, and was often unable to hold its ground against more aggressive and nationalist religions or interpretations of religion. The "crown" for unwavering commitment to peace in the sense of nonviolence should perhaps be awarded to the

Jains, a small but significant religious community found mainly in western India and dating back to the sixth century BCE.

Traces of an ideology of peace even in imperial societies are found, for example, in the rock inscription of king Aśoka in India (ca. 250 BCE).^{xxvii} Overwhelmed by the massive scale of suffering caused by his conquests, the king devoted himself “to the zealous study of morality.” Hence he advised his descendants against new conquests and urged them to be merciful, regarding “the conquest by morality as the only true conquest.” Unfortunately but not surprisingly, Aśoka’s example was not followed by his successors.

According to Achaemenid Persian royal ideology, the king, favored by the supreme god Auramazda, was capable of telling right from wrong and promoting justice, order, and peace. The “*Pax Achaemenidica*”, based on a deliberate “policy of reconciliation and peacekeeping,” however, required obedience and unwavering loyalty on the part of the subjects.^{xxviii}

So did the Roman peace (*pax Romana*). Well into the Empire, the Romans concluded peace only under their own terms and only from a position of victory and strength. Augustus’ “Altar of Peace” (*Ara Pacis*) and the closing of the Gates of Janus celebrate peace achieved by victories. In Augustus’ report about his achievements (*Res gestae*) conquest becomes “pacification.” I quote from this document: “I made the sea peaceful (*pacavi*) and freed it from pirates... I extended the territory of all those provinces of the Roman people on whose borders lay peoples not subject to our government. I brought peace (*pacavi*) to the Gallic and Spanish provinces as well as to Germany... I secured the pacification of the Alps (*pacificavi*)..., yet without waging an unjust war on any people.”^{xxix} In the *Aeneid*, Vergil defines the Roman historical and imperial mission as *imposing* civilization (*mores*) upon peace: “Your skills, Romans, will lie in governing the peoples of the world in your empire, to impose civilization upon peace, to pardon the defeated, and to war down the proud.” The beneficiaries of such generosity might have thought differently, and critics were not fooled. In Tacitus, Gallic tribal leaders contemplating revolt are reminded that the Romans punish rebels with utmost severity but invite those who submit to share in the blessings of peace—and common servitude. Before a Roman general’s final battle in Britain, the enemy leader famously says: victory “will mean the dawn of liberty for the whole of

Britain,” defeat submission to the most arrogant and exploitative rulers. “To robbery, butchery, and rapine, they give the lying name of government; they create a desert and call it peace.”^{xxx}

Perhaps the most successful example of a vision of peace that was sustained over a long time comes from a different time and place: the “Iroquois League” was forged around 1450 CE among six North-American Indian nations and lasted more than 300 years.^{xxx} Its purpose, achieved to a remarkable degree, was to maintain general peace, unity, and order among its member nations—though not beyond. Nothing like this ever came about in the ancient world, despite numerous attempts.

The search for peace can be pursued in all kinds of directions: studying terminology and complementary as well as opposing words, looking for conceptualizations, personifications, gods, cults, and monumental expressions of peace (not least in comparison with its opposite: war). I will illustrate this here by pursuing two related questions: Did peoples have deities of war and peace and what was their role in the pantheon? Were peace deities incorporated in monumental displays (statues, temples, inscriptions)? Of course, the question of cult applies only to polytheistic societies — although it is surely meaningful that Jahweh is a warrior god, while both the god and the savior of the Christians lack martial attributes, however ambivalent Christian attitudes toward war and violence may have been. The Hittites had a god of peace, the Mesopotamians and Egyptians apparently not. In Greece, we saw, Peace was personified very early and ranked high in the divine hierarchy by the seventh-century poet Hesiod. The peace-goddess, *Eirēnē*, was prominent on Athenian vases and in comedy and tragedy in the fifth century, clearly reflecting a reaction to the time’s intense experience of war. Even so, Peace received an official cult in Athens only decades after the Peloponnesian War, and in celebration of a great victory over the Spartans in 375 BCE. A famous statue by a celebrated sculptor, perhaps the cult statue itself, shows the cheerful goddess with the boy Wealth in her arms.^{xxxii}

Because in the period of the Peloponnesian War, as Thucydides demonstrates, external war often went together with internal strife or civil war (*stasis*), which produced unprecedented excesses of treachery and cruelty, a contrasting concept, concord (*homonoia*), rose to political prominence in this period.^{xxxiii} The concept was realized in a spectacular way in the Athenian “amnesty decree”

of 403 BCE, that ended the civil war between the supporters of the “Thirty Tyrants” and those of democracy; a cult followed a few decades later. The crucial clause in that decree postulates that “nothing bad should be remembered” (*mē mnēsikakein*).^{xxxiv} I feel reminded here of the Truth Commission in South Africa that tried to overcome the fall-out of Apartheid.

In Rome, peace (*pax*) was conceptually important all along because every cult act had the purpose of securing “peace with the gods” (*pax deorum*), but personification and cult followed much later.^{xxxv} While “internal peace, concord” (*concordia*) was personified and received a temple or shrine already in the mid-republic (presumably in the context of compromises in the “struggle of the orders” between patricians and plebeians),^{xxxvi} this happened with Peace only in the aftermath of the disastrous civil wars that destroyed the republic, when peace was imposed by the victors and eventually became Augustan peace (*pax Augusta*).^{xxxvii} The triumvirs put *Pax* and *Concordia* on their coins. A celebratory medallion (aureus) of 28 BCE praised Augustus as liberator of the Roman people and shows the figure and name of *Pax* on the reverse.^{xxxviii}

Augustus emphasized his accomplishment of establishing peace not only in his report on his accomplishments (mentioned before) and through the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace), but also by linking this monument symbolically and monumentally with the great sundial adjacent to it (the *Solarium Augusti*) and with the sanctuary of Janus on the Forum, which served as “indicator of peace and war”. When the shadow of the obelisk that served as the sundial’s gnomon fell through the door of the *Ara Pacis* on Augustus’ birthday on the fall equinox, it was clear that the first emperor wanted to be seen as “born for peace”.^{xxxix} Finally, and only after another round of civil wars, the emperor Vespasian, the conqueror of the Jews, built a temple to *Pax* in 75 CE.^{xl} Obviously, then, even more than in Greece, in Rome the cultic and monumental elevation of Peace came late and was prompted primarily by political and ideological motives.

It is instructive to consider “war” in the same way. The Romans saw themselves as descendants of the war god Mars; his sacred animal, and the “totem animal” of the Romans, was the wolf, and statues of the wolf (with or without the twins, Romulus and Remus), were displayed prominently in the city. Bronze statuettes of the warrior god date back to the sixth century. He was connected with rituals of war already in the early republic.^{xli} Julius Caesar planned a grandiose temple for Mars, Augustus built it, for Mars Ultor (the Avenger) in his new Forum.^{xlii}

Moreover, Mars was not the only god connected with war: Jupiter and, to some extent, Juno, were as well. From the early third century, when the conquest of Italy reached its climax, Roman generals began to use spoils to erect monuments and shrines, celebrating their victories and honoring the gods who had supported their achievement. The list of gods honored in this way contains many variations of the war and victory theme: Salus, Bellona Victrix, Jupiter Victor, Venus Obsequens, Victoria, Jupiter Stator, Fors Fortuna.^{xliii} In subsequent centuries, the Capitol, Forum, Field of Mars, and adjacent areas became a vast “memorial space,” shaping the Romans’ identity and reminding ever new generations of the great deeds of their ancestors.^{xliv}

By contrast, we saw, among the Greeks, the war god Ares enjoyed the worst possible reputation. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the city of Athens did not have a sanctuary of Ares in the Classical Period. Conversely, monuments and inscriptions celebrating victories proliferated in Athens. The elegant little temple of Nike (Victory) near the entrance of the Acropolis commemorated an important victory over Sparta; statues of Nike stood as akroteria on each wing of the magnificent Stoa (Portico) of Zeus the Liberator in the Agora; even the gold accumulated in the treasury of Athena was cast in Nike statuettes. And the greatest temple of all, the Parthenon, served as monument of Athens’ Persian victories and imperial might.^{xlv} The virgin goddess worshipped there was a warrior, and as such, fighting in the front rank and leading her people to victory (*promachos*), she stood in a famous bronze statue (Athena Promachos) on the Acropolis, the greatest among many dedications commemorating Athenian victories. Moreover, monuments celebrating Athenian martial exploits stood also in the Agora and elsewhere, and the public tombs of the heroes fallen in Athens’ wars formed a long “façade of honor” along the main road in the public cemetery outside the walls. By “monumentalizing and perpetuating with works of art the glory of her great citizens and their famous achievements, Athens gradually developed into a monument of her own historical identity.”^{xlvi}

To return to my list of things I could do to pursue my search for peace, I could examine rituals connected with peace, and efforts to avoid war and preserve or restore peace through intimidation, diplomacy, alliance, and arbitration, or to secure, in case such attempts failed, a just cause in war. We could discuss methods to stabilize peace, for example, through systems of honors, titles, or intermarriage among kings and dynasts, or through alliance systems and

treaties. All this would be fascinating, and there is ample evidence for it across the ancient world.^{xlvii} But I want to turn to another subject: intellectual concerns with peace.

The modern world features an impressive array of leading intellectuals who thought and wrote about peace. What does the ancient world offer in this respect? Rather than developing a genre of narrative history, early Indian thinkers focused on theories, categories, and ideals. Thus the *Arthashastra* or “Treatise on Worldly Gain” analyzes the arts of war and peace without discussing practical applications or historical examples.^{xlviii} In prevailing Indian ideologies the king was destined for activism, conquest, and rise to imperial rule. Inactivism was despised. In a world of petty kings and constant rivalry, the two primary conditions for peace were seen in forceful domination by one man and constant preparation for war. Only an emperor could be expected to bestow upon humankind the greatest gift possible, greater even than peace: *abhaya*, “freedom from fear.”

In China, centuries of ruthless warfare before the First Empire, the “warring state” period mentioned at the beginning, prompted intense intellectual debates and the emergence of new ideas about the natural order, human society, war, and peace. Some authors saw moral improvement as an essential condition of peace: a ruler must perfect his own virtue before he can regulate his family, govern his state effectively, and bring peace to the entire realm. Others contemplated universal disarmament. Military treatises, however, wasted no thought on peace and focused only on ways to gain victory and destroy the enemy. Virtually all thinkers agreed that lasting peace could only be established with the unification of all the contending states into a single empire.^{xlix}

In Rome, especially in the age of Augustus, the greatest authors reflected in their works on the momentous change from war to peace their time witnessed.¹ The poets (Vergil, Horace, Tibullus, and Ovid) invoked the desire for peace and praised Augustus for having achieved it.^{li} It is a remarkable fact, though, that among the immense literary production of Greece and Rome not a single treatise “On Peace” has survived and we know of only one that was written: *Pius de pace* (*Pius on Peace*), by the Roman polymath M. Terentius Varro, probably at the occasion of the “Peace of Misenum” between Octavian and Sextus Pompeius in 39 BCE. One year earlier, the

“Peace of Brundisium” between Antonius and Octavian had probably prompted Vergil to write his *Fourth Eclogue* with its vision of peace and the return of a Golden Age shining brightly in an age devastated by civil wars. At the time, peace thus “was in the air.” Varro’s essay probably left its imprint on St. Augustine’s well-known chapters on peace in *The City of God*.^{lii} Ultimately, the ideas preserved in this late antique work probably go back all the way to fifth-century BCE Greek thinkers.

This brings us back to the Greeks and to a final question. As my brief survey has shown, in developing an intense discourse on questions of war and peace the Greeks were not alone, although they may have done so more intensely and publicly than others —with the possible exception of early China. How do we explain this Greek phenomenon? Let me try to sketch an answer. First, we observed a serious concern for peace and just war already in the earliest texts preserved from archaic Greece. We do not know the origins of such concerns: Homer’s and Hesiod’s epics are our main sources for the society depicted in them, and they do not explain what they describe. Diplomatic and peace making procedures described in the *Iliad* show remarkable parallels with Near Eastern ones. Possibly, in these procedures the Greeks were directly influenced by Near Eastern models or drew on a pool of ideas available in a “cultural *koinē*” in the Eastern Mediterranean. Mesopotamians also produced “city laments” deploring the ravages of war and expressing a yearning for peace.^{liii} Such basic feelings could of course be formulated independently in many societies. In Greece, such statements were sometimes linked with criticism of elite leaders: this was possible in societies that contained a strong egalitarian element: Greek communities (*poleis*) were “citizen-states” rather than city-states. Moreover, they were characterized by a rich public culture and participation of large segments of the citizen population in public affairs. Hence issues of communal concern were widely shared; from early on they became part of political reflection and were embedded in the poetry performed at public festivals.^{liv} All this helps explain the prominence of thoughts on war and peace in Greek performative poetry.

On the intercity level, diplomacy, negotiations, alliances, and corresponding treaties were facilitated by the fact that Greek *poleis* developed in clusters; although intensely competitive, they shared basic structures and values and felt closely tied by traditions and kinship, their elites

maintained close relationships across borders, and the threat posed by a rival polis nearby or a polis growing too powerful could be balanced by alliances with others. Once these attitudes, values, institutions, and procedures were in place, they continued to develop and be influential. They were reinforced by the great authority and moderating influence of the Delphic Oracle and a common Greek belief in the power of the justice of Zeus.^{lv}

The communal function, just mentioned, of the early poets was inherited by the dramatic poets and prose authors of the fifth and fourth centuries. Whatever its constitution, the average Greek polis remained a small and open community, governed by a large segment of the citizen body and encouraging the public discussion of important communal issues. Open debate and freedom of speech of all citizens were especially valued in democracy.^{lvi} This naturally included debates on war and peace, and changes in warfare further encouraged such debates. In the archaic period war was not endemic; it was intermittent, motivated by intercity rivalries and fought for booty and contested lands rather than imperial control or survival. This changed radically when the Greeks were confronted with Persian imperialism, and subsequently forms of imperial control and rivalry emerged among the Greeks themselves. Especially in the second half of the fifth century, the face of war changed radically: it became permanent, ubiquitous, brutal and increasingly total.^{lvii} Against this new reality traditional attitudes and institutions proved ineffective; it transformed the way people were thinking about war, and it made them think in new ways about peace too. All this explains the pervasiveness and public nature of the Greek discourse on peace.

Political reflection, visible already in the earliest manifestations of Greek thought, was enhanced by the emergence of specialized philosophers and especially by that of the sophists who focused on political and social issues and developed what we might properly call “political theories.” They dealt systematically and even theoretically with war and peace as well. Such theoretical analysis concerned, for example, the causes and nature of *stasis*, the connection between external and internal war, and possibilities to overcome the rift between democracy and oligarchy and to secure internal peace.^{lviii}

No parallel theories, it seems, were developed to improve the chances for external peace. While the internal sphere of the polis could be controlled and regulated by the citizens themselves and they eventually improved their abilities and instruments to do so, the sphere between poleis or between the Greek world of poleis and that of imperial powers emerging around them was much more difficult to control. Competitiveness and a fierce spirit of independence on the one side, imperial ambitions to be realized by war on the other, made every agreement and treaty temporary. Peace was observed until one power believed it could gain more by going to war. Attempts in the fourth century to institute large-scale systems of inter-city collaboration and peace through “common peace” (*koinē eirēnē*) treaties, though potentially beneficial, failed because they were instigated by a foreign power (Persia) and benefited one Greek *polis* (Sparta) much more than others: their purpose was hegemony through peace rather than peace *per se*.^{lix} No theory could change the belief that war was an unalterable condition of the human existence. Only pragmatic solutions seemed available, including the desperate effort, propagated by the sophist Gorgias and the rhetorician Isocrates, and echoed in Plato, to secure peace among the Greeks by uniting them against their non-Greek enemies, the Persians.^{lx} This kind of peace was eventually achieved — by the Macedonian conquerors Philip II and Alexander the Great and only at the expense of Greek freedom. After Alexander’s death, it yielded again to rivalries and wars, but now on a higher level, among kingdoms and empires.

I mentioned the Athenian reconciliation or amnesty decree of 403 that ended *stasis* once and for all. It followed upon years of severe internal strife, two oligarchic coups and democratic restorations, and two decades of intense scholarly discussions,^{lxi} and might well be called an example of “applied peace theory.” Let me end with another example, no less impressive, even if it remained a blueprint that was never realized. In one of his model speeches, Isocrates presents an extraordinary idea.^{lxii} He observed that in the past, before and during the Persian Wars, the Athenians had enjoyed a highly positive reputation as supporters of the oppressed and saviors of Greek liberty. Later, however, when they built their empire and fought incessant wars to defend and enlarge it, they were hated by most Greeks and paid an exorbitant price in resources, lives, and misery for a dream (supremacy in Greece) which they were never able to realize. Even in his own time, they were still chasing this dream. Would it not make much more sense, he asked, to

give up this futile pursuit of illusions and return to the ancestors' good policies? War, he said, has only

made us poorer; it has compelled many of us to endure perils; it has given us a bad name among the Hellenes; and it has in every way overwhelmed us with misfortune. But if we make peace and [observe] our common covenants, then we shall dwell in our city in great security, delivered from wars and perils and [domestic] turmoil..., and we shall advance day by day in prosperity, relieved of paying war-taxes, of fitting out triremes, and of discharging the other burdens which are imposed by war, without fear cultivating our lands and sailing the seas and engaging in those other occupations which now, because of the war, have entirely come to an end. (*Or. 8, On the Peace* 19-20; trans. Norlin)

Isocrates realized that the issue was not to terminate one war by concluding a peace agreement, but to terminate all wars by changing common attitudes:

No such thing can come to pass until you are persuaded that tranquillity is more advantageous and more profitable than meddlesomeness (*polypragmosynē*), justice than injustice, and attention to one's own affairs than covetousness of the possessions of others (26).

In short, only the voluntary abolition of imperialism and the return to earlier policies of generosity towards others could secure for the Athenians lasting peace, happiness, and the general admiration of all other Greeks.

We find here echoes of ideas we know well from the funeral orations and suppliant plays and that were rooted deeply in Athenian ideologies of power and freedom. We also need to remember the extent to which Thucydides emphasizes *polypragmosynē* (aggressive activism) as the Athenians' dominant collective character trait that drove them ever further and finally, in Sicily, over the edge. In the debate preceding this fateful expedition, Thucydides lets Nicias warn his fellow citizens that, despite their well-known inclination, it is too dangerous this time to give in to it, while Alcibiades encourages them to act according to their nature: it has led them to the

peak of success and they will not be able to change their policies suddenly without at the same time changing their entire character and way of life.^{lxiii} This is precisely what Isocrates recommends in his speech. He understood that lasting peace could be achieved only if one was able to change radically even the most deep-seated and long-standing patterns of thinking and behaving. Naïve? Perhaps. Simplistic? Probably. But, I suggest, profoundly correct! Rarely does an ancient author speak so directly to our own time.

Abbreviations and Bibliography

BMCR *British Museum, Coins of the Roman Empire*

BNP *Brill's New Pauly*

CAH *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn.

LIMC *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*

LTUR *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*

W&P Raaflaub 2007

W&S Raaflaub and Rosenstein 1999

Adcock, Frank, and Derek J. Mosley. 1975. *Diplomacy in Ancient Greece*. London.

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Notes

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ⁱⁱ The Wikipedia entry “Hero (2002 Film)” may serve as an introduction. See also the film's official website, <http://trailers.apple.com/trailers/miramax/hero/>. On the Warring State Period, see relevant chaps. in Loewe and Shaughnessy 1999.

ⁱⁱⁱ See, e.g., Ebrey 1996: ch. 3; Portal 2007.

^{iv} The bibliography on war in the ancient world is immense (see, e.g., the chapters in *W&S* with good bibliographies). For peace, see Gilissen 1961-62; Zampaglione 1973; Sordi 1985; Binder and Effe 1989; Graeber 1992; van Wees 2001; *W&P*; Meyer 2008b.

^v For political thought in Homer, see, e.g., Raaflaub 2000, 2001b; Hammer 2002.

^{vi} On the society reflected in the epics, see van Wees 1992; Raaflaub 1997a.

^{vii} Arbitration: Tod 1913; Piccirilli 1973; Giovannini 2007: 177-84.

^{viii} Polarization preventing arbitration: Low 2007: 105-8. Cold war parallels: Lebow and Strauss 1991. Suspicion towards neutrals is exemplified by Thucydides' Melian Dialogue (5.84-114); see also, for a domestic equivalent, 3.82.8. On neutrality: Bauslaugh 1991.

^{ix} Thuc. 4.15ff., 41.

^x See also 284-87. Euripides' agreement with Pericles is all the more remarkable as the poet is often very critical of Athens' politicians and policies. On interpretations of this play: Zuntz 1955; Mendelsohn 2002: ch. 2. My own view: Raaflaub 1988: 342-44.

^{xi} *Il.* 3.205-24; 11.122-25, 138-42; see also *Od.* 21.11-21. For discussion, Raaflaub 1997b: 3-8.

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- ^{xii} All this is in book 3 of the *Iliad*. Resentment of Paris: 3.451-54; cf. 38-57; 6.523-25; 7.390. Trans. R. Lattimore.
- ^{xiii} *Il.* 7.400-2. The reported events are in books 4 and 7 of the *Iliad*.
- ^{xiv} See n. 9 above.
- ^{xv} *Il.* 18.490-540. For Greek conceptualizations of peace, see Raaflaub 2009. War and peace in the *Iliad*: Effe 1989.
- ^{xvi} *Il.* 5.761, 831, 890-91; cf. Burkert 1985: 169-70; Schachter 2002.
- ^{xvii} Thucydides on war and peace: Cobet 1986; Luginbill 1999; Raaflaub 2006.
- ^{xviii} Hesiod's *Agēs: Works and Days* 109-26 vs. 143-55, 174-201; two cities: 225-47; *Peace: Theogony* 901-2. Generally on peace in Greek literature: Arnould 1981; Spiegel 1990.
- ^{xix} Euripides' war plays: esp. *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, *Suppliant Women*; Aristophanes' peace plays: *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Lysistrata*. See, generally, Zampaglione 1973: 71-90; David Konstan, Lawrence Tritle, in *W&P*. On the role of war in classical Athens: Meier 1990b. On the Athenian ideology of war: Raaflaub 2001a. Civic ideology: Thuc. 2.43.1; Connor 1971: ch.3; Meier 1990a: ch.6. On *Lysistrata*: Henderson 1980.
- ^{xx} Sophists and Greek peace theories: Raaflaub 2009. Philosophers: Zampaglione 1973: 44-64; Ostwald 1996.
- ^{xxi} *Hdt.* 7.9b; 1.87 (trans. de Sélincourt and Marincola); cf. 8.3. Historians and peace: Zampaglione 1973: 90-106; see also n. 17.
- ^{xxii} For example, on violence in ancient Egypt, see Müller 2009; in ancient Greece, van Wees 2000.
- ^{xxiii} On the discarded myth of the "peaceable Maya," see David Webster, *W&S* 336. The same, I suspect, will happen with the Indus Valley Civilization, still characterized as a "peaceable kingdom" by McIntosh 2000: 177-83. See also *W&P* 2-5, 9-10.
- ^{xxiv} On the active (*polypragmōn*) and passive (*apragmōn*) citizen: Thuc. 1.70; cf. 2.40, 61, 64; Carter 1986; Raaflaub 1994; Christ 2006; Demont 2009. On the Athenians' attitudes toward war, see Meier 1990b; Raaflaub 2001a. On the monumental city-scape of Athens: Hölscher 1998.
- ^{xxv} Conditioning for war in Rome: Nathan Rosenstein in *W&S*; Raaflaub 1996a; Eckstein 2006. *Triumph*: Versnel 1970; Hölkeskamp 2006; Beard 2007.

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- ^{xxvi} See chapters in *W&P* by Susan Niditch and Thomas Krüger on visions of peace in the Hebrew Bible, Louis Swift on early Christianity, Fred Donner on the early Islamic “Community of Believers,” and Richard Salomon on early India. On the Jains, see Chapple 1998. More bibliog. in *W&P* 5-6. See also Nardin 1996; Smith-Christopher 1998, and recently Fürst 2006 (with chs. on Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, and Islam).
- ^{xxvii} Thapar 1961; 2002: 174-208; Salomon, in *W&P*.
- ^{xxviii} Thomas Wiesehöfer, in *W&P*.
- ^{xxix} Augustus, *Res gestae* 25-26 (trans. Brunt and Moore); on Roman peace: Carlin Barton, Nathan Rosenstein, in *W&P*; Woolf 1993; Hardwick 2000; Raaflaub 2011. On the *Ara Pacis* and the Gates of Janus, see below n. 39.
- ^{xxx} Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.850-53; Tacitus, *Histories* 4.73; *Agricola* 30 (trans. Mattingly and Handford).
- ^{xxxi} Crawford 1994 and in *W&P*.
- ^{xxxii} See n. 19 on the prominence of peace themes. Cult of *Eirēnē*: Parker 1996: 229-30; see also Simon 1986; Stafford 2000: ch. 6; Meyer 2008a. Statue of *Eirēnē*: e.g., Charbonneaux et al. 1969: fig. 399. On deities of peace in Greece and Rome, see Scheibler 1984; Simon 1988; on images of war and peace, Kranz 1989.
- ^{xxxiii} Civil strife (*stasis*): Thuc. 3.69-84, 8.45-98; Gehrke 1985; Munn 2000: ch. 5; Price 2001; Concord (*homonoia*): Shapiro 1990; see also de Romilly 1972; Funke 1980.
- ^{xxxiv} Amnesty Decree of 403 in Athens: Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 39; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.4.24-43; Loening 1987; Bleckmann 1998: esp. 315ff.; Munn 2000: 218-44.
- ^{xxxv} *Pax deorum*: Sordi 1985: 146-54; Linderski 2007.
- ^{xxxvi} In 367 or 304. For *Concordia* and her sanctuaries in Rome, see Hölscher 1990; Richardson 1992: 98-100; *LTUR* I: 316-21.
- ^{xxxvii} See n. 29 on *pax Romana*. On the cult of *Pax*: Simon 1994; Scherf 2007.
- ^{xxxviii} Hölscher 1990; Simon 1994. Cistophor: e.g., *BMCRE* I: 112 with pl. 17.4; Simon 1994: 209 no. 38 (pl. 137/38).
- ^{xxxix} Altar of Peace: Weinstock 1960; Simon 1967; Zanker 1988: index under “Rome, Ara Pacis”; Richardson 1992: 287-89; Galinsky 1996: 141-55; *LTUR* IV: 70-74. Janus as “indicator of peace and war”: Livy 1.19.2; see Galinski 1996: 294; Jeri DeBrohun, in *W&P*. Sundial of Augustus:

Buchner 1982; Zanker 1988: 144-45. Schütz 1990 is critical of Buchner's calculations and reconstruction; see now also Heslin 2007.

^{xli} Suetonius, *Vespasian* 9.1. On Vespasian's Forum and Temple of Peace, see Richardson 1992: 286-87; *LTUR* IV: 67-70.

^{xlii} Mars: Simon 1984; Gordon 2006 with sources and bibliog.

^{xliii} Caesar's plan: Suet. *Div. Jul.* 44. On the Forum of Augustus with the Temple of Mars Ultor, see, e.g. Zanker 1968; 1988: index, s.v. Rome, Forum of Augustus; Richardson 1992: 160-62; Galinsky 1996: 197-213; *LTUR* II: 289-95.

^{xliiii} Monuments to war deities: *CAH* VII.2: 408.

^{xliv} Hölkeskamp 2004; Stein-Hölkeskamp and Hölkeskamp 2006.

^{xlv} Ares: n. 16 above. Temple of Nike: Travlos 1971: 148-57; Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios: Travlos, 527-33. Parthenon: Osborne 1994; Hurwitt 2004: 106-54.

^{xlvi} Dedications: Hurwitt 2004: 79-84. See generally Hölscher 1998 (quote: 182); Raaflaub 2001a.

^{xlvii} For a brief survey, see *W&P* 17-21.

^{xlviii} On the *Arthashastra*: Kautalya 1961; Boesche 2002.

^{xlix} Moral transformation: Ebrey 1996: 46. Confucianism: Lun 1998. Generally: Robin Yates in *W&P*.

^l See above n. 39.

^{li} Poets: e.g., Vergil, *Ecl.* 4.4-17; Hor. *Epode* 7; *C.* 4.5.5-24, 15.4-20; *Carmen Saeculare* 49-60; Tib. 1.10.45-68; Ov. *Fasti* 4.407-8. See Zampaglione 1973: 131-84; Glei 1989; Jeri DeBrohun in *W&P*.

^{lii} Varro's *Pius de pace*: Katz 1985. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 19.11-13; Fuchs 1926; Laufs 1973; Geerlings 1989.

^{liii} Laments: Jacobsen 1987: pts. 6, 8; Benjamin Foster, in *W&P*. Procedures: Karavites 1992; Knippschild 2002; Rollinger 2004. Diplomacy in Homer: Wéry 1979; Raaflaub 1997b.

^{liv} Polis as a citizen-state: Hansen 1993. Egalitarian element: Raaflaub 1996b; Morris 1996; 2000: chs. 4-5; Raaflaub and Wallace 2007. Public and political function of poetry: Raaflaub 2000.

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- ^{lv} Diplomacy: Adcock and Mosley 1975. Treaties, alliances, etc.: Tausend 1992; Baltrusch 1994; Giovannini 2007. Clusters of poleis: Raaflaub 1990. Relations among elites: Herman 1987. Moderating influence of Delphi: Kiechle 1958; we should think also of the “Olympic truce”: Finley and Pleket 1976: 98-100. Justice of Zeus: Lloyd-Jones 1983.
- ^{lvi} Raaflaub 2004: 221-25, 232.
- ^{lvii} The transformation of war in the fifth century: Hanson 2001; Raaflaub, in *W&S* 141-48.
- ^{lviii} Spiegel 1990; Raaflaub 2009.
- ^{lix} Ryder 1965; Jehne 1994; see also Victor Alonso in *W&P*.
- ^{lx} Uniting Greeks against Persians: Gorgias, as quoted in Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.9 (“Trophies against barbarians demand hymns of praise, but those against Greeks lamentations”); Isocrates, *Or. 4 (Panegyric)*: esp. 172-74, 185-87; *Or. 7 (To Philip)*; see also Plato, *Republic* 5.469b-471b. On Isocrates, see Bringmann 1965; Dobesch 1968; on Plato, Ostwald 1996.
- ^{lxi} See n. 34 above.
- ^{lxii} Isocr. *Or. 8, On the Peace* 3-7, 12, 16, 18-20. See further 29-32, 63-65, 95, 133-44.
- ^{lxiii} Ideologies: Raaflaub 2004: chs. 5.1-2. Activism: n. 19. Sicilian debate: Thuc. 6.9.3, 18.3.