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The Legacy of Classical Antiquity

Saevit toto Mars impius orbe ("The merciless war-god rages throughout the world").

Virgil [Publius Vergilius Maro], *Bucolica et Georgica*,
ed. T.E. Page (London: Macmillan, 1931), I: 511, (p. 41)

*A Latian use there was, which Alban towns
Kept ever sacred, and Imperial Rome
Keeps now; whene'er they summon Mars to strife . . .
Twain Gates of War there were, so named from dread
Of awful Mars, revered and holy fear,
Barred by a hundred bolts' eternal iron;
And Janus there the threshold constant guards.
Here when the Fathers' sentence is for war,
The Consul, in Quirinus¹ gown, and cinct
In Gabine wise,² unbars the door himself,
Himself calls battles forth, then all the rest
Call, and the trumpets blow with harsh assent.*

The Aeneid of Virgil, trans. Charles J. Bilson, 2 vols.
(London: Arnold, 1906), vol. ii: bk. vii, lines 601–15

The Temple of Janus, mentioned in the first and seventh books of *The Aeneid*, originally consisted of two gates connected by two walls open to the sky and containing a statue of the god Janus. It was located in the Forum in front of the Curia. When Roman armies went to war, they marched through this enclosure in a kind of ceremony of purification.³ Victorious armies returning from battle again marched through this triumphal arch, apparently because

Roman soldiers felt the need to be purified from the taint of bloodshed after battles. When the Gates of War, as the gates of the Temple of Janus were called, were closed in time of peace—and this happened rarely in the history of Rome—it was hoped that they would imprison the devils of war. The gates of the Temple of Janus thus functioned as an *index pacis bellique*, that is, an “indicator of peace and war.”⁴

Warfare was pervasive in the ancient world, as an examination of the histories of ancient Greece and Rome and the other political societies they came in contact with will demonstrate. Even brief periods of tranquility reveal an undeclared state of war; peace was more apparent than real, and a concept of peace revealed itself slowly and incompletely. It was and remains difficult to imagine peace in a world overtaken by war. We are the heirs of this legacy of martialism that stretches back to classical antiquity, and this has been passed on to us in the Western Tradition. Part of the reason for this disposition to bellicosity is that the writing of history since the time of Homer has been, to a large degree, concerned with war. It is also more difficult to imagine peace than to describe warfare because the latter is an activity commonly recorded in history, while the former is “a state or condition” more slowly achieved by law and the weight of moral reasoning. Moreover, philosophers, theologians, lawyers, and politicians spend more time discussing when war is justified than how permanent peace might be achieved. And, over the centuries, the reading public has shown a distinct preference for reading about heroes rather than moral philosophers.⁵

The Greek martial ethos

In the archaic period of Greek history, violent conflict was endemic and wars occurred frequently. Giambattista Vico tells us that during this time, when men were “superstitious and fierce,” and before they made good use of the faculty of reason, they equated divine justice with force and revenge. It was divine justice that they sought in order to settle their quarrels by fighting duels. When they began entering into political societies and establishing laws, duels were forbidden. After they had established monarchies and city-states, they continued to view the declaration of public war as an invocation of divine

justice. War was a part of the life of the citizen of the *polis* or city-state, and citizens were expected to fight in these wars as long as they were physically able. Their athletics, moreover, were directed toward maintaining physical fitness for war. Most of our knowledge of early Greek warfare of the Bronze Age comes from the epic poems of Homer. Homer's narrative focuses on the deeds of heroic individuals who strut across the stage of history and vaunt their glorious deeds. In battle, they run ahead of their comrades and seek out warriors of great repute among the enemy in order to engage them in individual combat. All of this has been arranged by gods and goddesses such as Athena who choose to bestow honor and glory on their favored heroes. The victor in the battle believes that he has gained glory if the person whom he has killed is of high repute—even if the manner in which he kills him is less than heroic.⁶

The accounts of battles and warfare, in general, in ancient times are difficult for the modern reader to understand because these tales are fabulous and cannot be taken at face value. There exists a language of arms that we find difficult to penetrate. The historical reliability of ancient Greek literature is called into question by the fact that descriptions of battle and martial culture are often "stylized literary constructs." One of the functions of martial poetry and narrative in ancient Greece was to reinforce the existing social structure. The sixteenth-century French humanist and historian Jean Bodin points out that it is difficult to get an accurate picture of the wars that the Greeks fought among themselves or with others because they tended to heap glory on themselves, whereas an outsider such as Alexander the Great (a Macedonian as the Greeks would have insisted) thought that what the Greeks regarded as a great war looked to him like "a war of mice and frogs." Bodin adds that the Greeks tended to magnify their own victories with little regard for the achievements of others. He also cites Thucydides, Plutarch, and Didorus Siculus who condemned Herodotus for inventing speeches and putting them in the mouths of heroes and narrators to please readers who preferred eloquence to truth.⁷

In examining the literature of classical Greece, Simon Hornblower finds that although Greek writers generally profess a dislike of war as unnatural, they are fascinated by it and write extensively about it, which can lead one to believe that war was both more frequent and played a more significant role in ancient Greek culture than was actually the case. While it is true that c. 490–338 BCE, the Athenians were at war something like two out of every

three years, Athens was not typical of all Greek city-states. Other Greek polities did sometimes settle their disputes by arbitration.⁸ Even if war was not as pervasive in the Hellenic world as used to be thought, it still is arguable that the Greeks did not require much of a pretext to go to war. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a state of peace in ancient Greece because of the perpetual conflict between the Greek city-states. In early Greece and Rome, as in most tribes and nonstate societies, anyone who was a foreigner, that is, a person different in language, culture, and customs from themselves, was considered to be an enemy. Although the Greeks may not have regarded war as the most desirable way to settle disputes, they often resorted to violence and revenge rather than diplomacy in order to resolve their conflicts with those whom they regarded as hostile. One of the main reasons that violence was endemic in the ancient world was that the violence of daily life and the weapons employed in street fighting carried over into war.⁹ Levels of violence were high and exceeded what was proportionate to the ends to be achieved. Besides fighting among themselves, the Greeks were even more likely to become involved in wars with Asian races, such as the Persians or lesser peoples such as the Macedonians whom they regarded as barbarians. Nor were their methods of war always constrained by rules. Even fellow Hellenes were sometimes massacred as prisoners of war.¹⁰

Greek philosophers made a distinction between civil war (*stasis*) and war (*polemos*). War was at the heart of Greek culture and gave the Greeks a sense of identity. Civil war, on the other hand, led to annihilation. War in the Greek world was a kind of athletic competition, fought according to rules that assumed the prior existence of law. The existence of law, in turn, assumed that there was an agreed way of seeking vengeance within an agonistic or competitive society. Greeks such as Heraclitus thought that competition within an agonistic society was far better than living in a primitive state of nature where every person was at war with everyone else—as Thomas Hobbes later imagined it. To put it another way, asymmetrical warfare was carried on without constraint, and describes the violent conflict engaged in by primitive tribes that were not civilized enough to form themselves into state or political societies. The Greeks believed in fighting wars according to the rules—although their conflicts could be brutal and quite lethal. And, as in all wars, there were Greeks who sometimes broke those rules.¹¹

Greek poets and historians made war the central topic of their writings, but other than attributing these wars to the intervention of the gods, they had little to say about the causes of war in terms of human actions. In heroic ages, such as those that Homer wrote about, war was regarded as a natural part of life, and could be justified by the acquisition of territory, trade, or slaves. In this regard, the Greeks differed little from the so-called barbarians for whom they had only contempt.¹² Homer stresses that the gods approve of war, and sometimes allowed mortal heroes the opportunity to participate in their wars and win personal glory, or at other times, they sanction wars to punish mortals if they believe that they have been insulted. Thus, war also functioned as a divination or legal trial to reveal the will of the gods. Although the Greeks possessed sufficient moral sensibilities to recognize that war was an evil, they still enjoyed the violent conflict. Achilles chose the life of a warrior knowing that it would shorten his life span, while Odysseus preferred war to cultivating his fields. The Spartans thought that living on booty seized in battle afforded both sustenance and glory, while the fruits of laboring in their fields afforded only sustenance. Also, as Herodotus observed, both Greeks and barbarians believed that shopkeepers and those who worked with their hands should be assigned a lower social status than those who devoted themselves to war. The intellectual recognition that peace was better than war might exist, but the fact remains that one comes across few pacifists in Greek literature and history.¹³

Belief in the divine inspiration of the gods played an important role in ancient Greek warfare. The Spartans, for example, were notably religious. They refused to come to the aid of the Athenians against the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE until they had performed the customary religious rituals and sought divine blessings. They variously worshiped Artemis, Hera, Demeter, and Pan, who, the Spartans thought, gave them the courage to go forward.¹⁴ When the Greeks went to war, they sacrificed to all of their gods, but different Greek cities regarded different gods as their patron deities. They had ambivalent feelings about these gods such as Athena, goddess and protector of Athens, and Ares, god of war:

Pallas Athena, the city's protector, I shall begin singing:
Dreadful is she, her concern is with Ares, polemics and war work,
Sacking of cities concern her and bellicose shouting and battles.

Yet it is she that protects all the populace going and coming.
Hail to you, goddess, please grant me good luck and felicitous fortune.¹⁵

The Greeks might pray to the gods to help conquer cowardice and to achieve victory, but even as early as the time of Homer, Ares was regarded as despicable—the personification of bloodlust. Although the Homeric poems and other literary expressions of archaic and classical Greece were largely concerned with describing war, it does not follow that the Homeric poets glorified war. They regarded war as abnormal and peace as something to be highly valued.¹⁶

Thucydides provided a more secular and rational explanation of the causes of war. In defending the domination of their empire, he has the Athenian delegates at Melos in 431 BCE tell the Spartans that it has always been the rule that the stronger should rule the weaker:

Of the gods we think according to the common opinion; and of men that for certain by necessity of nature they will everywhere reign over such as they be too strong for. Neither did we make this law nor are we the first that use it. . .; but as we found it, and shall leave it to posterity for ever, so shall we use it, knowing that you likewise, and others that should have the same power which we have, would do the same.¹⁷

In bellicose societies, competition for honor and military glory is intense because that is usually the path to political prestige. Such societies will find frequent pretexts for going to war.¹⁸ Greek writers sought to justify wars in moralistic terms. However, Thucydides admitted that wars were usually fought over “three of the greatest things, honour, fear¹⁹ and profit.” In the archaic and classical periods the Greek aristocracies were driven to acquire more honor and more wealth, which necessitated a resort to war because aristocratic honor would diminish without displays of martial ardor. In the archaic period, this meant that men of repute never traveled abroad without a sword, and needed to be prepared to fight in the streets as well as on the field of battle. Because they fought only to garner fame and glory, their methods of warfare were little influenced by a concern for tactics or military organization.²⁰ As interpersonal violence declined during the classical period, more participation in battle was expected.²¹ The cost of weapons tended to reinforce the aristocratic monopoly on making war, and it was considered dangerous to arm the peasantry.²² The

armies of the Greek city-states remained small when they fought one another—typically between 6,000 and 8,000 men. When they faced a common enemy, such as Philip of Macedon at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, they might field as many as 35,000 men. The Greek armies were small because the agricultural economies of the various city-states could not support larger armies, and the hoplite phalanxes were made up entirely of aristocratic warriors who furnished their own armor and weapons, and depended on the labor of others. Also, the privilege of fighting in the armies of the Greek city-states of the archaic and early classical periods had to be confined to those who could control the other social orders.²³ Aristotle thought that wars were related to the amount of wealth that the citizens of a neighboring city-state possessed. The envy of the wealth of an adjoining city-state could invite attack. For this reason it was desirable that men be taught not to covet and possess excessive wealth, but at the same time, it was well that citizens should possess sufficient wealth to arm and sustain themselves for the defense of their city-states. Plato and Aristotle both agreed that wars rose from greed for luxuries, not a struggle for necessities. Consequently, Greek society was always unstable because the aristocratic classes were always competing for wealth and honor.²⁴

The expansion of Athens was curbed by the Peloponnesian War, but civil war among the Greek city-states remained an intractable problem, and the Persians kept Sparta from being overwhelmed in order to sow discord among the Greeks. The Persian Wars, as described by Herodotus, emphasized to the Greeks the difference between them and the barbarians, as they called the rest of humanity. Although Herodotus might admire the Persians for their courage, the Greeks viewed barbarians as lacking both rational and moral faculties, and worthy only to be slaves. In response to the continuing Persian threat, a number of Greek cities, led or compelled by Athens, formed the Delian League to ward off the enemy. This defensive alliance came to resemble nothing so much as an Athenian empire, and caused much resentment among other Greek city-states. Athens claimed that the Delian League was defensive, but it was seen as aggressive and overbearing by other Greeks. In a debate at Sparta in 432 BCE, on the eve of the Peloponnesian War, an Athenian ambassador insisted

We have done nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then refusing to give it up. . . . And we are not the first to act in this way. Far from it. It has always

been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong; and besides, we consider that we are worthy of our power.²⁵

Plato concluded that it was “the folly of mankind” that led men into war, and in a well governed state the magistrates had a duty to ensure that the citizens trained regularly in preparation for war during the brief periods of tranquility. The state was organized for war, and even during these periods of apparent peace, there actually existed an undeclared state of war against all other city-states. Hence, the citizens needed to exercise arms at least one day a month in all weathers, and they were to be accompanied into the field by their women and children. They were also to be encouraged to organize sporting contests and combats that simulated real warfare, and these should be accompanied by panegyrics on martial prowess and rewarded with prizes or reprimanded with censures for those who failed.²⁶ The ancient Greeks are the source of the belief that military service was a moral duty of the citizen, which in modern times has become closely linked to nationalism. Except in Sparta and among its allies, the concept of democratic participation was as strong as the martial ethos. But it remained true that war was always imminent. Thucydides observed that the Peace of Nicias of 421 BCE could hardly constitute a state of peace after twenty-seven years of war—especially considering that the Spartans continued to block the Athenians’ access to the sea and their overseas empire by occupying the port of Piraeus, and neither side honored the terms of the treaty.²⁷

The Persian and Peloponnesian Wars were quite unlike earlier Greek wars because they ushered in more intensive conflict and necessitated changes in how the Greeks fought their wars. Herodotus depicted the outcome of the Persian Wars as a victory of democratic institutions over Persian despotism. In actual fact, the methods of warfare of the Greeks, such as the use of the heavy-infantry phalanx, resembled those of other Mediterranean peoples. It was in the Lyric Age (especially the eighth to the fifth centuries BCE) that the solid phalanxes of disciplined hoplite warriors emerged in Greece. They were small farmers and craftsmen of means, but substantial enough to furnish their own weapons and armor. The risks they took as a warrior class conferred sufficient status on them to claim rights of citizenship, including participation in decisions concerning going to war. Sparta was a typical hoplite power at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, and adhered closely to the traditional

rules of hoplite fighting. Their soldiers had been bred to strict rules of discipline since childhood. Indeed, Sparta's defensive walls were ordered demolished by Lycurgus because they were incompatible with Sparta's martial culture in which Spartans were expected to stand their ground and defend their city. However, the evolution of the phalanx came to require more discipline than the Athenians and other Greeks were used to, and increasingly led to the use of mercenary soldiers. Athens abandoned the single-battle concept of hoplite warfare, and thought that as an imperial and naval power, it could wear down the Spartans and their Peloponnesian allies in a more drawn-out war. Athens had become a very bellicose political society in the fifth century BCE, and this was accompanied by a more democratic form of government in which its citizens were easily swayed by the rhetoric of leaders such as Pericles. However, the Spartans adapted to the Athenian methods of fighting on the seas better than was anticipated, and with Persian assistance, won a naval war against the Athenians, whose reserves of manpower had been depleted by a visitation of the plague.²⁸

Warfare in the writings of Herodotus had been concerned with the epic—how destiny moves individuals across the stage of history in their quest for glory. The individual rather than the political community or society is the subject of history, and the individual sometimes helps shape the unfolding of events through the intervention of the gods. It was for this reason that the epic was concerned mostly with recording the individual deeds of those warriors who most distinguished themselves in battle. Whether the battle was won or lost or military and political goals achieved did not signify. But Thucydides was more interested in war as a collective action in which effective leadership and discipline were especially important. For Thucydides, heroism was a reflection of corporate rather than individual endeavor, but most generals were more concerned to garner individual glory. Because he did not emphasize the heroic deeds of individuals, the Greeks did not find Thucydides enjoyable to read. Moreover, he did not write in verse. Because the Peloponnesian War was a civil war between Greeks, his readers did not find it as glorious as the wars against the Persians and the barbarians, and Thucydides failed to pay attention to the role of the gods.²⁹

Thucydides, who served as an Athenian general, began his *History of the Peloponnesian War* at the beginning of the war because he thought that the

conflict between Athens and Sparta would be especially memorable. He was afforded the leisure to continue gathering sources and composing his text after the Athenians removed him from command and exiled him following his loss of the Battle of Thrace. He thought that wars were caused by chance, but that the overheated rhetoric of political leaders and envoys made the Peloponnesian War inevitable. In speeches that Thucydides composed as summaries of the Spartan and Athenian positions, he distinguishes between the pretexts given in public for resorting to war, such as the breaking of peace treaties, and the real motives that he discusses retrospectively. The actual motive was Spartan fear of the growth of Athenian power, but the Spartans could hardly admit that they harbored fear in their breasts.³⁰

Polybius, like Herodotus and Thucydides, thought that war dominated international relations. Wars came about because of rational decisions made by political leaders based on expected gains balanced against possible losses. He discerned another kind of warfare caused by emotional reactions, such as shame and revenge, rather than rational calculation. Writing for an aristocratic audience, Polybius also spoke of a third kind of warfare—that undertaken to preserve honor. Polybius, whose political pragmatism and moral values have been compared to those of Niccolò Machiavelli, approved of the first and third justifications of war, but not the second: “No man of sound mind goes to war merely for the sake of crushing an adversary.” Polybius did not deny that war was a terrible thing, but he insisted that peace was to be sought only if it was consistent with honor and justice, which presupposes a war leading to victory. Polybius attributed the eventual Roman victory over Carthage, despite fighting at a disadvantage, to Roman “nobility of spirit.” Even utter defeat was preferable to a peace without honor. Polybius insisted that only someone who had been a soldier and had risked his life in personal combat was competent to write about war. Polybius had done so at the gates of Carthage during the Second Punic War when he had served as a military advisor to Scipio Aemilianus (Scipio the Younger).³¹ As a Greek of the Achaean League, a group of Peloponnesian states opposed to Spartan hegemony, Polybius viewed the Hellenistic world as chaotic because the various states that succeeded Alexander the Great’s empire possessed no set of moral standards nor a body of international law to govern relations with one another. Although the rulers of these Greek and Hellenistic states did engage in negotiations, disputes were almost invariably settled by

war. Polybius understood that the strong would always prevail. Taken as a political prisoner to Rome, Polybius came to believe that Roman power was exercised with greater restraint than was the case with Sparta or Macedon, and that political alignment with Rome made sense and allowed the Hellenistic Greek communities some room for negotiation.³²

Whether men fought wars because of instinct or mere perversity, it certainly can be argued that the Greeks were preoccupied with war. Plato's *Republic* uses the word *polemos* ("war") and its cognates "nearly ten dozen times." Other words relating to war, such as *battle*, *courage*, *manliness* or *cowardice* also occur frequently in Plato's text, but the word *peace* occurs no more than a dozen times, and is sometimes employed in a disparaging context, or to refer to inner peace, or to the kind of peace that comes when old age obliterates sexual desire. War is a fact of political life; peace is for contemplation. Government by oligarchy necessarily brings factionalism, while democracy is never free from contention, and tyranny is even more chaotic.³³ In the hoplite warfare in which swordsmen on foot fought in phalanxes, courage was considered more important than skill at arms. Such soldiers were drawn from among the citizens of the Greek *polis*, or city-states, who furnished their own weapons. As such, they were associated with government by oligarchy. The resources of these political communities, and the need to bring in the harvest before the beginning of the campaigning season had tended to make warfare a seasonal activity in the Archaic and early Classical periods. Plato, however, believed that war was an art and required full-time training, and for this reason, he does not discuss militias or citizen-armies. Thus, the army that he recommends is a professional standing army, and the main reason for the existence of the city-state is to support such an army. The warriors must be heavily armed, and therefore, dangerous, but their education and training should not attempt to make such warlike and spirited men less warlike and more pacific. Rather, the city-state needed a well-developed system of justice to restrain and discipline them. The pastimes that Plato recommends for training this warrior class, not surprisingly, are those in which warrior aristocracies have always delighted: hunting, horse racing, athletic contests, and dancing. Plato recommended that they be billeted in austere barracks in a fortified camp that was situated so that it could be easily defended. The soldiers should take their meals in common and make music that was appropriately martial. It is interesting that Plato does not

exclude the possibility of enlisting females since some women are well suited by nature for making war. Indeed, whole families might comprise the military band and follow their husbands and fathers into battle. In this way, the apprenticeship in arms could begin at an early age.³⁴

Hoplite warfare developed over a long period of time in archaic and classical Greece. First came the armor and the weapons: these included a bronze helmet, breastplate, and greaves (or leg shields), together with a wooden shield, a short iron-tipped spear and a short sword for stabbing. The warriors had to be farmers of some substance, who could afford to provide their own weapons. The tactics came later, and three years of intensive training gave the hoplites an iron discipline, a powerful cohesiveness and comradeship that made them especially effective in face-to-face combat. The hoplite heavy infantry could advance swiftly on the battlefield, and alarmed the Persians. These qualities also promoted loyalty to the *polis* and fused the obligation of military service with civic participation. However, this hoplite civic spirit disintegrated when hoplites began serving as mercenaries in the fourth century BCE.³⁵

In late archaic and early classical Greece, these phalanxes of hoplites, or armored heavy infantry of aristocratic status, fought shoulder to shoulder in tight formation, which might be eight or more ranks deep. The hoplite phalanx moved as one body, and in the first phase of battle pushed against the enemy phalanx. Lack of space meant that skill at arms did not signify until the formation broke ranks. The hoplites fought only with short swords and thrusting spears, and scorned the use of projectile weapons, which were only used by light troops of lesser social standing who were no part of the hoplite formation. The pitched battle did not commence until the location and time of meeting were agreed on, and sacrifices to Ares and the other gods of war were offered. The battle did not cease until the losing side ceded victory by sending a herald to ask for permission to recover their dead.³⁶

Hoplite methods of fighting in phalanxes constituted a stylized and formal kind of warfare. Much of our knowledge of it comes from the epics of early Greek writers. The concept of agonistic warfare is a modern interpretation of hoplite styles of battle denoting a military struggle fought according to rules and constraints analogous to those governing athletic contests. While archaic and classical cultures certainly did employ athletic endeavors to prepare for war, there is limited evidence that the Greeks followed rules of fair play in

warfare or that they regarded their enemies—whether Greek, Persian, or barbarian—as worthy opponents. Hoplite ideals of warfare, insofar as they ever existed, went into decline when generals resorted to stratagems and deception. Some of these, such as the fortification of cities and the use of siege engines of a primitive sort to besiege fortified places, date back to the Trojan wars; others, such as the use of light troops, cavalry, projectile weapons, and naval warfare, certainly were in use by the time of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars when the hoplite ideals of the archaic period were in decline. Political and military objectives became more important than the demonstration of valor or the validation of honor by individual warriors. Military commanders resorted more frequently to stratagems such as ambushes and surprise attacks, and pitched battles grew more infrequent.³⁷

The hoplite mode of warfare was devoid of strategy, and one conflict usually resolved the issue only for that short summer campaigning season. Hoplite tactics and limited warfare declined during the Peloponnesian War as a consequence of the spread of democracy in Athens, the use of naval warfare and the rise of the Athenian empire. When Athens was besieged by Sparta and the Peloponnesian League, the Athenians retreated behind their extensive fortifications; they could fight over a longer season and could draw food, supplies, and wealth from their overseas colonies. In effect, Athens under Pericles had invented a concept of grand strategy that allowed Athenians to fight a long war against the Peloponnesian League because of their abundant manpower and other resources. The Peloponnesian War was a long, drawn-out affair that was indecisive, resulted in unforeseen consequences such as the Plague, the breakdown of accepted conventions of war, and the use of mercenary soldiers. Athens lost the war, but its democratic institutions gave it an internal cohesion that allowed it to survive as a city-state despite the disintegration of its empire.³⁸

Alexander the Great and empire-building

Despite the attempts at empire-building by the Athenians, the Greeks of the classical period lacked the logistical and tactical abilities to unite themselves into one political unit. They were incapable of, and probably could not have

afforded the expense of keeping a permanent military force standing for any period of time. The very localized political loyalties of the classical Greek world did not facilitate the emergence of larger political societies, such as the empire that later appeared under the leadership of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great. The individualistic approach to war and the adulation for heroes of the Greeks of the archaic and classical ages got in the way of fighting wars for political and military ends. Political unity came only at the beginning of the imperial or Hellenistic period when these defects were remedied by a permanent military force that incorporated innovations such as better weapons, a siege force, heavy cavalry capable of dealing with the Persian light cavalry, and a well drilled infantry with tactical skills superior to the traditional Greek forces and that was capable of meeting the Persians on an equal footing and sustaining the effort for a long period of time. The most important feature of the Macedonian army under Philip and Alexander was its logistical ability to operate over considerable distances without being heavily dependent on slow wheeled transport.³⁹

Alexander gave detailed attention to the provisioning of his army as he crossed Asia into India and back. He did not depend on wheeled transport, and the use of pack animals was limited by the fact that in crossing barren and sparsely inhabited expanses they would have consumed more than they could carry. To overcome these supply problems, Alexander, who had always given much thought to logistical strategies, arranged to have provisions gathered at the destinations of his march in advance of his arrival. This required a sophisticated intelligence system. He supplied his troops by sea when possible, and took into consideration factors such as weather and local harvest dates in areas to be conquered. He broke down his forces into smaller units so as not to put too much pressure on the consumption of available supplies, and sometimes, resorted to forced marches. The number of servants and family members accompanying his expeditions was always strictly regulated. In order to accomplish his logistical goals, Alexander had to devise a new type of military organization that carried with it a light baggage train, moved quickly, and was highly motivated. This terrified his enemies. Reading Xenophon's *Anabasis* (or *The March Up Country*) is thought to have led Alexander's father Philip to believe that a well disciplined Greek army with a minimal baggage train could defeat a Persian army many times larger.⁴⁰

The Assyrian, Egyptian, and Persian empires had all developed armies that were more technologically advanced in terms of weapons, strategy, and logistics, but it was the Greeks who contributed the enduring concept that being a warrior was a source of individual glory. To wield the sword, to display courage in the face of death, and to undergo the hardships associated with campaigning was thought to be an ennobling experience according to the Homeric sagas. During the transition from the archaic to the classical period, these values came to dominate the culture of the Greek world, and to represent the heroic ideals to which all politically active citizens of the Hellenic age aspired. The foundations of this admiration for the heroic individual were reinforced by the pantheon of gods found in Greek religious mythology and the rationalism of Greek philosophy and science. Greek philosophy of the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods would endure over the centuries and continue to function as a guide to masculine conduct down to modern times.⁴¹

During the Persian Wars, the Greeks regarded the Persians as an inferior people, a corrupt race who accepted political subjugation to an oriental despot and fought from a safer distance with projectile weapons such as bows and arrows, instead of engaging in face-to-face combat with short swords, thrusting spears, and shields as the Greek hoplites did. They were cast in the role of being an effeminate, Asian people, as contrasted with the masculine and brave Greeks. The Romans would later depict the Carthaginians in the same vein—as a feminine, oriental people who had migrated west from Phoenicia. The Western style of martial symbolism and propaganda thereafter frequently attempted to demonize the enemy.⁴² The problem with that kind of reasoning is that it is difficult to garner honor and glory on the battlefield if one's enemy is an inferior and unworthy opponent. Another problem is that when the Greeks fought the Persian armies, they were often fighting their fellow countrymen since the Persian Great Kings, as they were called, employed numerous Greek mercenary soldiers. Also, the presence of Greeks in the cities of Asia Minor and the use of Greek mercenaries made the frequent rebellions of the Greek inhabitants of those cities which were located in Persian satrapies look like Greek civil wars.⁴³

Philip II of Macedon arrived on the scene after the Greeks and the Persians had exhausted themselves in the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. The Greeks despised the Macedonians as barbarians despite the fact that the Macedonians

were linguistically and culturally similar. However, Macedon was a dynastic monarchy, whereas the Greek city-states shared the political values of self-governance and reverence for the law. In 359 BCE, Philip and the Macedonian army defeated the Greeks, led by Athens and Thebes, at Chaeronea. At the urging of Isocrates, the Athenian orator who admired and trusted Philip and hoped that he could bring peace and unity to the Greeks by making war on the Persians, the Macedonian king crossed the Hellespont in 336 BCE to rid Asia Minor of the Persians and to free the Greek cities there from Persian rule. Philip was assassinated shortly thereafter, and was succeeded by his son Alexander III, whom we know as Alexander the Great.⁴⁴

When Alexander the Great crossed into Asia Minor to make war on the Persians, he attempted to unite the Greek people by proclaiming that he was avenging the atrocities and other injuries committed by Xerxes and other Persians against the Greeks and the insults hurled at their gods. He did this by drawing on the cultural heritage of the Greeks as contained in such works as *The Iliad*. This first necessitated defeating the superior forces of the Persian army, and then attempting to conciliate the Persian nobility. When Alexander conquered Asia Minor, he encountered many cities where Greeks had long lived. The campaigns of Alexander, like the earlier Persian Wars, were viewed by Hellenistic Greeks as a continuation of the mythical Trojan Wars—a repetition of the *anabasis*, or “march eastwards from the sea.” This expansionism grew out of the cultural gulf between East and West. In more recent times, these Greek communities in Asia Minor had come to be ruled as Persian satrapies. Alexander told the Greeks that they had been liberated from Persian tyranny, but in actuality, he merely replaced the Persian *satraps*, or provincial governors, with Macedonian soldiers. And because he claimed to be the heir of the Persian Achaemenid Dynasty, he continued to levy the same taxes as the Persian rulers. Military functions took precedence over civic governance for fear that the Persians would attempt to reconquer Asia Minor. Very little had changed for the descendants of the original Greek colonists. After he had won over members of the Persian nobility and peace settled on Asia Minor, Alexander also appointed some of them as governors.⁴⁵

One way that Alexander conciliated the Persian nobility was by adopting the wife and daughter of the Persian Great King Darius instead of ransoming or enslaving them as was the usual practice. Darius was also offered peace if he

would accept Alexander as his suzerain. Darius refused, and the Macedonian army had to defeat another large Persian army. The Persian cities, as they surrendered, were remodeled as Greek city-states. Only the Persian capital, Persepolis, was ravaged and looted, and this was done to prevent a mutiny among Alexander's troops, who had previously been denied booty in order to win over the conquered Persians. Alexander also destroyed Xerxes's palace. After that, he moved further east through Bactria (Afghanistan), marrying the daughters of Persian rulers to solidify his claims to Persian sovereignty and to fuse the Greek and Persian peoples. He took more brides from among the daughters of Bactrian chiefs to buy peace on his way to India.⁴⁶

In Plutarch's account of Alexander, he enjoyed the reputation of being the founder of more than seventy cities, which were supposed to have brought civilizing influences to barbarian peoples. The reality is that Alexander needed to establish fortified bases in the conquered territories that could be garrisoned by his own soldiers. His practice of settling immigrants from Greece in these new towns frequently aroused the violent resistance of the local populace, and these revolts were brutally suppressed. He often named these new cities after himself or his son, who was also named Alexander. The most famous of the new cities was, of course, Alexandria in Egypt, which was the only one of Alexander's cities that was not heavily garrisoned—perhaps because a large number of Greeks had settled there.⁴⁷

After he claimed the Persian throne and ruled Persian subjects, Alexander began gradually to introduce the dress and protocol of the Persian court, hoping to reach a compromise acceptable to his Persian and Macedonian subjects. Besides affecting Persian court dress, Alexander, as Great King of Persia, tried to alter court rituals when he met together with Greeks, Macedonians, and Persians. He sought to persuade the former two groups to accept a modified version of the Persian obeisance when greeting him, but to those in the Greek-speaking world, *proskynesis*, or "prostration," was performed only when worshipping the gods, which would have implied that Alexander was a god (he was, in fact, deified after his death). Gradually, a cult was built around Alexander, from being a kind of god among men to proclaiming himself as descended from the gods. Alexander even claimed to be the son of Zeus. His attempt to introduce Persian court ritual alienated many of his followers, and prompted a number of assassination plots against him.⁴⁸

Alexander's success in conquering Greece, the Persian Empire, parts of Bactria, and India—uniting for a time parts of Europe and Asia—made him the very model of an empire-builder to succeeding generations. His successes drew admiration and imitation on the part of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Marc Anthony—not forgetting later empire-builders such as Napoleon. While these would-be conquerors of a universal empire forgot that Alexander's empire split into a number of feuding Hellenistic kingdoms following his death, we have to grant that Alexander, despite his paranoia and insatiable ambition, did actually help to promote cosmopolitanism among his subjects. The building of bridges between cultures became characteristic of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds despite many instances of internal political squabbles.⁴⁹

Stoicism and Greek concepts of peace

Greek culture of the archaic and classical periods, at least among the aristocratic classes, was formed by the need to make war or prepare for the next war. Greek towns were built on promontories and surrounded by walls to facilitate defense. The Homeric poems, which were compilations of heroic sagas written or composed by bards of earlier generations, reflect the background of ever present violence and war. Archaic Greek warfare often led to the annihilation of the enemy warriors and the destruction of their cities. While the heroes or aristocratic warriors of the Homeric poems pursued glory, we occasionally learn something of the feelings of ordinary soldiers drawn from among peasant farmers, who thought that war was the greatest of calamities. Even the greatest of ancient Greek martial epics does not ignore the blessings of peace that are forfeited by the pursuit of martial glory. In his close scrutiny of the very detailed scenes described as being displayed on the shield of Achilles in *The Iliad*, Oliver Taplin says that the similes that these scenes evoke force us to “think about war and see it in relation to peace.” Only then can we fathom “the price of war and heroic glory.” Also, the warriors of *The Odyssey* are not usually given to the bragging that characterizes the heroes of the earlier Homeric tales, and were less likely to exalt on slaying an enemy and were disposed to show mercy. Warring armies began the practice of agreeing to a truce to give each side the opportunity to bury the dead. Gradually, the Greeks began to see the

need to agree on rules for the conduct of war. These constraints on how wars were fought supposedly derived from the influence of the gods of Mt. Olympus, who, though they sometimes influenced the outcome of Greek wars, did not really approve of war—with the notable exception of Ares.⁵⁰

Plato believed that while people in prepolitical conditions were gripped by fear, this did not mean that they were savages. People were eager to associate with other people, and were willing to share their meager resources of food, although they still had much to learn about how to live in peace and harmony. They had acquired a primitive body of cultural and moral values from their gods and they were more trusting of one another and more inclined to live peaceably than after their descendants had formed city-states and entered into so-called civilized society.⁵¹ While Plato accepted the idea that a well governed city must be prepared to fight wars to defend itself, he insists that the question of whether to wage war can never be considered apart from the principles of justice. The state should be primarily concerned with peace, and a good ruler should be able to avoid war. However, in his last work, *The Laws*, Plato concedes that the view of Kleinias and his fellow Cretans that an undeclared state of war existed among all states was not easily dismissed. But Plato still thought that peace was preferable to war, and it was to be hoped that people would display good will toward one another regardless of civic allegiance.⁵²

Greek mythology maintained the idea that a Golden Age had once reigned. The poetic depiction of myths of golden ages in a number of ancient religious cultures expressed collective hopes for peace in the future. When the Persians burst on the Hellenic world and the internecine wars between Athens and Sparta grew more destructive, other voices began to protest the martial ethos and bellicosity of the rulers of the Greek city-states as depicted in Homer's epic poetry. Pindar of Thebes, the great lyric poet who lived during the Persian Wars, wrote that "War is sweet to those who have no experience of it, but the experienced man trembles exceedingly at heart on its approach."⁵³ Even as early as the eighth century BCE, the didactic poet Hesiod expressed the feelings of ordinary men and lamented that he had been born in an age of iron and recounted the peace that had characterized the Golden Age, or as Hesiod had put it, the golden race of men who had lived in the Age of Cronus. Hesiod propagated the myth of men who had once lived like gods in a pastoral paradise where they enjoyed peace and happiness, but were later replaced by an iron

race with a proclivity to wage war. The principal cause of war, Hesiod thought, was lack of justice. He singled out those gods and goddesses who sowed the seeds of war, but also praised Zeus as the fount of justice as well as his children such as Eirene, the goddess of peace.⁵⁴

The poetical metaphors of the gold, silver, bronze, and iron races of humankind were devised by Hesiod. Other ancient civilizations had similar accounts of a mythical golden age. Subsequently, the Latin poet Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, reworked the golden-age myth and depicted an iron age where men no longer enjoyed the fruits of the earth in common, but divided the earth into property worked by iron ploughs and fought over by weapons of iron. In the poetical explanations of the end of this halcyon age, classical Greek and Roman writers all agreed that the Golden Age of peace broke down when people ceased to live on a vegetarian diet; they began to hunt and kill animals, to eat flesh and to take delight in the cruelty of blood sports. From ancient times until the disappearance of horsed cavalry, hunting, that is, the pursuit of deer, boar, and similar beasts on horseback was regarded as a rehearsal for or a simulation of war. The Ovidian age of iron is the Golden Age turned upside down. Although the Ovidian age of iron derives its name from the ferrous metals used to forge weapons and ploughs, the real source of contention was the competitive acquisition of wealth. Ovid does not suggest the possibility of a return to a Golden Age, so presumably the age of iron is the last stage of history. Men began to look for powerful leaders—usually kings—to lead and protect them and to build fortified cities. As we can discern in the writings of many classical poets and historians, concepts of honor and the pursuit of martial glory also led to armed conflicts.⁵⁵

In the archaic period of Greek history, the word *eirene* originally meant the opposite of war, or the abundance that people enjoyed when they ploughed their own lands and tended their own flocks. Peace did not come to those who traveled abroad or traded with foreign parts. Peace could be enjoyed only by those who were satisfied with the simple life. Not until the fourth century BCE did the word *peace* take on the meaning of a negotiated treaty that ended a war. The Peace of Antalcidas (386 BCE), signed by the Spartans and the Persians, bound the signatories not to reopen the conflict and established the legal concept of a “common peace” between the Greek cities and Persia. This established the precedent for negotiated peace treaties in modern international law. Under the

influence of Greek religion, peace also came to signify that tranquility of mind that comes from the favor of the gods and leading a just life.⁵⁶

Isocrates (436–338 BCE), who is generally considered a Sophist, lived a very long life and had witnessed the Peloponnesian War. In 357 BCE, he and his fellow citizens were gathered in the Athenian assembly to discuss the question of war and peace with regard to the rebelliousness of some of the allies of Athens, who had come to resent the domineering leadership of the Athenians. Isocrates advocated a policy of peace, not only toward the disgruntled Athenian allies, but also in her relations with all of the Greek city-states, just as they had signed peace treaties with Sparta and Persia. Isocrates condemned the imperialistic expansion that earlier had led to the Peloponnesian War. He thought the possession of a navy displayed excessive bellicosity toward the neighbors of Athens, and was incompatible with democratic government, as was the employment of mercenary soldiers—especially since these were things that Athens could ill afford.⁵⁷

Another philosopher who was skeptical concerning the fruits of war was Cineas (fl. third century BCE), who was a companion and royal servant of King Pyrrhus of Epirus on the northwestern border of Greece. Pyrrhus, attacking with elephants, had succeeded in defeating a Roman army at Heraclea in southern Italy in 280 BCE, and imagined that he could go on from there to build an empire in Italy and Sicily. Cineas pointed out to his master that he already possessed great wealth, and suggested that the cost of victory could well exceed what he might gain. Following a very costly victory at Asculum in Apulia in 279 BCE, Pyrrhus exclaimed: “If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined.” Hence, the expression “pyrrhic victory!”⁵⁸

As a consequence of the Peloponnesian War, the Greeks became disillusioned with the *polis* as a model political society because it had come to be viewed as promoting fragmentation and conflict. The Sophists, in particular, began to put forward the idea of human equality—even, possibly, between so-called barbarians and Greeks. Such ideas would eventually lead to the concept of cosmopolitanism and the spread of Greek culture. The person most instrumental in the diffusion of Greek cultural values was the soldier and conqueror Alexander the Great, a pupil of Aristotle. He was hardly a man of peace, but his actions did lead to the creation of the Hellenistic world that resulted in a degree of peace between Greeks and non-Greeks within an

enlarged sphere of Greek culture and language. Stoicism, in particular, was the moral philosophy that helped Greeks to deal with the collapse of the city-states following the Peloponnesian War and to learn to accept the equality between Greek and barbarian and to live in the cosmopolitan world of the Hellenistic monarchies. Stoicism attributes causation solely to providence or fate, but Stoics insist that people still have choices to make, and were morally responsible for such actions despite the influence of fate. Stoics insist that virtue is sufficient for happiness, but distrust emotions. Virtue consisted of the ability to put things to correct use. Humans are rational beings, and this means living in accordance with nature. Stoics rejected all sufferings and calamities as external to themselves in order to cultivate internal peace. The overriding characteristic of Stoicism is that it places a heavy emphasis on ethics. Of all ancient philosophies, it had the most influence on modern European cultures.⁵⁹

The philosopher who is generally regarded as the founder of Stoicism was Zeno of Citium (322–264 BCE); the influence of his ideas lasted several centuries and spread throughout the Greek and Latin worlds. Although only fragments of Zeno's writings survive, we know that he advocated one universal state, and it seems reasonable to infer that the purpose of this was universal peace. In this cosmopolitan and ecumenical society, all would accept one divine being and adhere to a moral code in an atmosphere of brotherly love and a recognition of the common relationship of all humanity. Many of the writings of other Stoics before the Roman period also failed to survive, but we learn from the writings of later authors that Chrysippus of Cyprus (c. 280–c. 208 BCE) was also a major source of Stoic thought, and that these earlier Stoics abhorred violence and war. Later writers, such as Diogenes, Cicero, and Seneca, all held the moral principles of Chrysippus in the highest regard. That war existed in the world these earlier Stoics attributed to the fall from grace in Hesiod's Golden Age, and the remedy for the violence that afterward afflicted mankind was a universal monarchy, such as the empire of Alexander or the Roman state that Stoics hoped would eventually bring a return of peace.⁶⁰

The Greek philosopher Epicurius (342?–270 BCE) advocated withdrawing from worldly affairs to seek peace of mind and intellectual pleasure. If duties were imposed on a person, they should be performed, but ambition or advancement of a person's career were always to be avoided. Epicureans were individualists who thumbed their nose at convention. They were lovers of

peace who believed that enthusiasm often led to fighting wars in order to achieve glory, and was therefore to be shunned. They felt benevolence toward all humankind, but had no interest in cosmopolitanism, and wished merely to be spectators. The foremost teacher of Roman Epicureanism was Lucretius (c. 94–55 BCE), who advocated a more active engagement in the life of the world. He believed that war and superstition must be eliminated if society were to evolve to a higher form, and in his *De rerum naturae*, he called on the goddess Venus to persuade Mars to put “the savage works of war to sleep.” Another Epicurean was the Syrian Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–180 CE) who believed that war was a great imposture that was exploited by morally obtuse politicians.⁶¹

One noteworthy thinker who stood outside the mainstream of Greek philosophy was Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 540–c. 475 BCE). He criticized Homer for wishing that conflict might vanish from the affairs of gods and men because he thought that conflict between opposites was the creative force of nature. Indeed, Heraclitus viewed war, as personified by King Polemos, as superior to Zeus and all the other Greek gods. Warfare was pervasive among humankind just as there was strife in nature. There was no such thing as good and bad strife. Justice was merely a seasonal cycle of the two. King Polemos was the father of all, and the father of history.⁶²

The teachings of the orator Dio Chrysostom (c. 40–115 CE) give a good idea of the thrust of Stoicism during the period when the Greeks lived under the Roman Empire. Dio was well acquainted with historical tendencies toward factionalism among the Greeks of the archaic and classical periods. He believed that concord within individual communities should be valued more highly than the abstract concept of universal peace. Factionalism leading to civil war should be more feared than war between states. Concord begins in the family and household, and spreads to the local community, and then governs the relations between cities. Thus, the road to peace began with persuading the Greeks to live in concord.⁶³

Epictetus (c. 55–135 CE), another Greek, was the slave of a high-ranking official at the court of the Emperor Nero whose master allowed him to study philosophy. He eventually became a free man. He observed that although the Roman state was able to provide freedom from external violence during the time of the *Pax Romana*, it could not furnish the kind of internal peace and

freedom from personal suffering caused by illness, jealousy, emotional turmoil, or personal tribulations. A man could achieve a large degree of inner peace by cultivating the values of Stoic philosophy, but that could be achieved only through the use of reason, which was a gift of God. After the Emperor Domitian banished philosophers from Rome in 89 CE, Epictetus sought refuge in Nicopolis, where he taught philosophy until his death in about 135.⁶⁴

The Roman military machine

Roman military organization was an adaptation of the Greek hoplite phalanx. Unlike the phalanx, the Roman legion had a more hierarchical command structure, and could be broken down into a number of smaller and more maneuverable tactical units. Like the hoplite phalanxes, the Romans did not leave the battlefield until they had obtained a decisive victory, and they were prepared to fight until they had won. The soldiers of the Roman legions were armed with only short swords and javelins. The rear ranks were also equipped with thrusting spears. In the earlier days of the Roman armies, which were made up of citizens and small farmers, they neglected the use of the light infantry and cavalry that Alexander the Great had employed, but they learned the value of more flexible tactics when they ran up against the brilliant Carthaginian general Hannibal.⁶⁵

The Roman Republic was a state organized for and devoted to making war, and had no parallel until the rise of the early modern state. Roman society has been described as a military machine. Because the Roman army was so well drilled, it did not need brilliant generals. Those who commanded and led the Roman armies possessed no special qualifications or training, and were drawn from senatorial and equestrian families. This does not mean that they were devoid of military knowledge and experience because military service went hand-in-hand with their duties as civil magistrates throughout their careers. In the senatorial oligarchy of the Roman Republic, admission to that elite came through a long military apprenticeship and service, and the duties of the magistrates were essentially military. Because of the wealth and glory that military command could provide, there was competition for the higher military offices that were the reward of extensive campaigning.⁶⁶

In the time of the republic, the decision to go to war was made by aristocratic members of the Roman Senate. The senators shared a common martial culture, and understood that warfare and expansion of empire could bring them wealth, honor, and access to the highest political and military offices. The small farmers of the republican period, who were subject to service in the army, would in theory also have had a voice in such matters as members of the Popular Assembly, but they could easily be persuaded to follow the senatorial lead by a successful military commander, to whom he would promise booty, land and slaves—not forgetting the prospect of adventure and glory. Following the military reforms of 107 BCE instituted by Gaius Marius, a hard-bitten professional soldier who had little use for aristocrats, the Roman legions became a standing army that relied less and less on the traditional Roman citizen-soldier. In the late Roman Republic, the decision to go to war became concentrated in the hands of a few ambitious men such as Marcus Crassus and Julius Caesar. Both the Roman Senate and the Popular Assembly lost influence, and Caesar's political base came to be located in an army made up of long-service veterans. Gradually, military recruiting spread beyond Italy to the less romanized provinces of the empire. Such men were at first enlisted as auxiliaries, and later, as regulars. Caesar's heir Octavian Augustus was able to concentrate decisions concerning war and peace in his own hands, although he sometimes consulted a council for the sake of form. Augustus's motives for going to war are not easy to discern, but the probable explanation is that he needed to enhance his reputation as a military leader with some notable successes so that he would appear to be a worthy successor to Julius Caesar, although he possessed no great qualifications to lead armies. The Roman language of arms emphasized and exaggerated the deeds of heroes in order to reinforce their command of military forces and the right to govern. It was commonly assumed that military success would lead to political success. Also, since Augustus was in possession of an army of 300,000 men, stationed mostly in the frontier provinces, he needed to keep them busy and away from Rome. The policy of pacifying the outlying provinces ended up expanding the boundaries of the empire.⁶⁷

The expansion of Rome was a driving force under the republic, and this was a deliberate policy of the senate whenever circumstances permitted and profit beckoned. However, the empire was not necessarily construed as a territorial

entity over which Rome claimed authority, but also included client states where the Romans wielded power. As Rome annexed neighboring cities on the Italian peninsula, it demanded military service, whereas the Athenians had been content to demand tribute. Moreover, the military service was to be rendered every year during the campaigning season. It took time to formally incorporate all these client states into the administrative and military system of the empire, but before the process of annexation was completed, the Romans thought of themselves as the rulers of the world. That the Romans did not possess a coherent plan of imperial expansion does not gainsay the fact that they felt a strong compulsion to do so. The Greek writer Onasander believed that Roman expansion was advanced by the ambition of generals rather than by fortune, but Polybius appears to have been the only ancient historian who had a clear picture of what the Romans were doing.⁶⁸ Under the influence of Stoicism, Polybius believed that the political unity created by the expansion of the Roman Empire must lead to universal unity that would bring peace and an end to conflict.⁶⁹

The perpetual wars of the Roman Republic required military mobilization on a scale that matches or exceeds the total war of the early twentieth century. Roman law of the regal period was heroic in nature, and was derived from the assumption, based on the rights of conquest that “the strong and the weak were different in kind.” Consequently, the plebs were originally regarded as being no better than slaves. This understanding of the heroic law had been accepted from the founding of Rome until the enactment of the Petelian Law, contained in the Twelve Tables (451 BCE), which finally freed the plebeians from their base status by recognizing their marriages as legal. This change in social status was earned by the plebs fighting in the Roman wars and demonstrating heroic virtue. In the second century BCE, some 10 percent of the free Roman males were conscripted for service in the Roman armies. This made it difficult for small-holders to retain their holdings, which fell into the hands of the aristocracy. The labor force of these *latifundia*, as the huge aristocratic estates were called, was supplied by slaves captured in the wars of imperial conquest. When the legionaries were discharged from military service, they expected to be compensated with lands. The failure of the senatorial aristocracy to meet these expectations caused soldiers to look to their generals for rewards, and thus, diminished their loyalty to the Roman state. The support that the

generals increasingly received from their soldiers magnified the political ambitions of military commanders such as Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar. Augustus smoothed the transition from city-state to universal world-state or empire by ensuring the loyalty of the many soldiers discharged following the civil wars of the late Republic. He provided grants of land—paying for some from his own personal wealth and for others by expropriating the lands of small-holders to make way for the discharged veterans. This may have angered the small farmers, but it pacified the former soldiers who were armed and could have made trouble. Subsequently, the Roman army became a smaller, but well disciplined professional force. Julius Caesar had doubled the pay of the army, and substantial bonuses were paid to the soldiers upon their discharge. Conscription was ended by Tiberius, and this helped to diminish the discontent of the small Roman farmers.⁷⁰

Virgil was an admirer of Julius Caesar, but not necessarily of Augustus. He may have borne a grudge against Augustus, because Augustus's land commissioners appear to have expropriated part of the family farm near Cremona where he grew up, in order to settle discharged soldiers on it. At the end of book I of the *Georgics*, Virgil sees the bucolic life of the small Roman farmer being turned upside down by pervasive war—both internal and on the frontiers—during the civil conflicts that occurred at the end of the Republic, and he hopes that Augustus can bring peace to Rome. He imagined the wars causing the fields to fill with weeds, blood to ooze from wells, wolves howling in the cities, and ploughs and sickles being beaten into swords and spears. He could not conceive of how the husbandman could survive this upheaval.⁷¹

While Augustus had gone to war to acquire glory and to increase his popularity, it appears that some of the later Roman emperors had sought to maintain peace in order to deny military glory to generals whom they feared might become rivals. Or, if war could not be avoided, they might assume personal command in the field. This was risky if the emperor had no military experience, as was the case for some two centuries of those emperors who followed Tiberius. An emperor who went to the frontiers to play general always needed to be wary of what went on behind his back in Rome.⁷²

In the popular imagination, the age of Augustus and the expansion of the Roman Empire were believed to have inaugurated a new age of peace symbolized by the closing of the Gates of War in the Temple of Janus and a

return of the Golden Age as described by the poet Hesiod. Virgil hoped that this might be true:

Then wars shall cease, and the rude age grow mild.
 Quirinus and his brother,⁷³ white-stolled Faith,
 And Vesta shall give laws, War's iron gates
 Stand closed. Within, upon her savage arms,
 Inhuman Rage will sit, by thousand links
 Of brass chained back, and snarl with bloody fangs.⁷⁴

The policies of Augustus ended the civil strife that had characterized the late Roman Republic and achieved internal peace. Edward Gibbon makes the point that the *Pax Romana* meant that the army was stationed on the frontiers of empire, and that obedience to the laws and payment of taxes on the part of Roman citizens was so habitual that the assistance of the army was rarely required, in contrast to the more frequent turbulence and popular discontent in the monarchies of Asia. And as so-called barbarians and other non-Romans became assimilated and were granted the rights of citizenship, they also acquired the habit of obedience to the magistrates. Even though the number of slaves in the time of Claudius probably equaled the number of free inhabitants in the empire, their servitude was not always perpetual; they were sometimes freed, and their descendants had an even better chance of manumission and citizenship.⁷⁵ The expansion of the Roman Empire also came to mean that men could travel the length and breadth of the Roman world and not fear brigands or pirates provided they accepted Roman law and authority. However, this internal peace and the expansion of empire rested on force. The costs of operating the Roman state after the accession of Augustus were largely based on maintaining an army of some 300,000 men for the next three centuries. The size of this army was fairly constant, as was the cost of running the Roman state, because the cost of maintaining Roman rule was almost entirely accounted for by military expenditure. Rome was always at war, unlike its medieval and early modern successor states, which were at war only about half the time. Thus, despite the internal peace of the *Pax Romana*, Rome was perhaps the most bellicose state that ever existed in the Western world.⁷⁶

The Romans were less interested in philosophical speculation than the Greeks. For them, war revealed a divine judgment. The strong Roman belief in the necessity of providing a justification for going to war grew out of Roman

religion and a legalistic frame of mind. The *fetiales*, the college of priest-heralds, regulated interstate or foreign relations; they consulted with the sybils and priestesses, and conducted the sacrifices and other religious ceremonies prior to going to war as well as making the formal declaration of war. This practice was peculiar not only to Rome, but also to the other Italian states that Rome conquered or otherwise absorbed. The Romans attributed their success in the many wars of expansion to their scrupulous observance of the religious and legal niceties, but as Roman expansion continued they developed considerable legal and rhetorical expertise in justifying their many wars. It was from these ceremonies and practices that the concepts of *ius in bello* ("rights in war") and *ius ad bellum* ("right to make war") derived, which formed the basis of subsequent attempts to construct a code of constraints on the conduct of war, and eventually, helped to provide a foundation for international law in the modern period. Only the state could declare war, and Onasander thought that the commander who explained the reasonable and just causes of a war to his soldiers did much to enhance the morale and courage of his men when facing the enemy.⁷⁷ The Roman definition of an enemy was based on the distinction between who had a right to declare and wage war, and who did not. An enemy in a war declared by a lawful ruler possessed a right to certain considerations; a brigand, a pirate, or a rebel had no such rights.⁷⁸

Cicero, who once called himself a man of peace despite the fact that he had served in the Roman army in order to qualify for the office of consul, said that the use of violence was harmful to justice and law in a constitutional state. Nonetheless, he believed that the Roman Republic had rendered a service to Rome's Latin neighbors and that the peace settlements concluding those wars demonstrated clemency. All that changed as the wars of expansion continued following the Punic Wars against Carthage. Cicero advocated political solutions over the use of military force, and believed that war should be undertaken only when there was no other way to secure peace. He thought that political decisions often required more courage than wielding the sword on the field of battle. The goal of those who are entrusted with governing the state should be "peace with honour." This is what makes them fit to govern, and for this reason they were honored as aristocrats (*optimates*) because it is assumed that they would not conclude a peace devoid of honor. "Peace with honor" in this context meant concord, or domestic peace within the Roman state. Since the

Romans ruled most of the known world, their concept of peace did not really extend beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire. If war were to be declared, Cicero would insist on a proper observance of the accepted rules of war; hostilities were to be formally declared by priestly heralds with no preemptive attacks, and the enemy was to be treated as a worthy opponent.⁷⁹ It has been asserted that Cicero was not consistent in urging ethical constraints on how wars were fought by citing the maxim *inter arma enim silent leges* ("the laws are silent during wartime"). However, this is often taken out of context. Cicero actually uttered this maxim as a lawyer while defending a man in a murder trial, and it should be classified as a rhetorical flourish such as attorneys have been known to employ on such occasions. Cicero spoke these words, when the Roman Republic was dissolving into chaos characterized by conflict between armed mobs. It does not refer to the conduct of war against external enemies.⁸⁰

The Emperor Augustus maintained that his pacification of the Germanic tribes north of the Alps was a just war, but then the ruling classes of Greece and Rome had always believed that the conquest of so-called barbarians was justified. Most Roman commentators, including Tacitus, assumed that the acquisition of military glory, the defense of military honor and the suppression of mutinies and revolts provided adequate justification for undertaking war against barbarians without any discussion of the morality of these issues. Although he might recognize good moral qualities in the Germanic tribes and perceive the tactical advantage of sometimes pursuing diplomacy instead of warfare, Tacitus could still be quite bellicose in advocating the expansion of empire.⁸¹

Partly as a consequence of the longevity of Rome as a political society and her success in defeating rival powers, and partly as an attempt to warn off rivals in the latter days of the Roman Empire, Roman writers propagated the myth of the Roman martial ability to achieve perpetual victory. This was a message that legates always carried to barbarian courts and camps to emphasize Roman legitimacy of rule, their martial prowess, and their great good fortune. The title *imperator*, which later came to signify the ruler of a universal empire, began as a military title given to a commander after he had won a great victory. Thus, from the beginning, the title *imperator* drew on a culture of victory that was acted out in triumphal processions, personified by deities, commemorated on coins and statuary, and in athletic games. These triumphal ceremonies

continued under the Byzantine Empire, and the propaganda must have been quite effective because the enemies of Rome more than half believed in the “eternal victory” supposedly enjoyed by Roman military forces.⁸²

Roman concepts of peace

One of the legacies of the classical world is the belief that a secure peace can be obtained only through war. Thucydides insisted that “war gives peace its security, but one is still not safe from danger if, for the sake of quiet, one refuses to fight.”⁸³ Cicero, who was educated in the Greek classics, said: “If we wish to enjoy peace, we must wage war. If we fail to wage war, peace we shall never enjoy.”⁸⁴ Polybius thought “that war is a terrible thing . . . but it is not so terrible that we should submit to anything to avoid it.”⁸⁵ This advice was passed on to the medieval world by Vegetius, the Roman military writer: “He who desires peace, let him prepare for war.”⁸⁶ The Romans were also believers in the cyclical view of history, that is, that periods of war alternated with times of peace. When Scipio Aemelianus gazed on the destruction of Carthage, Polybius records, he wept for the fate of his enemies, and reflected that all great empires, cities, and nations must inevitably suffer the same fate—even Rome—for no human society can endure forever.⁸⁷ The Romans believed that war and peace alternated as cause and effect. The civil wars broke out because of the extravagance that followed in the wake of earlier wars. The luxury and prosperity of the later Roman Republic and Empire, and the enervating effects of peace effeminized its citizens and made them the prey of barbarian invaders.⁸⁸ Tacitus states that Roman legions posted to Armenia to fight the Parthians had grown lax, and had neglected the exercise of arms because of a lack of exposure to war. Peace could cause an army to deteriorate rapidly.⁸⁹

The Roman concept of peace was fragmented. One way of looking at this is to remember that during the regal and republican periods of history there was no god or goddess who personified peace. While it is true that Saturn was said to have established the Golden Age, a time of perfect peace and harmony, and that no war could be declared during the festival of Saturnalia, the Golden Age was no more. Peace was an abstract and alien concept that was imported into Rome and personified as a goddess.⁹⁰ At the same time, there were several

deities who personified war, such as Mars and Minerva. Diana was the goddess of the hunt, which was understood to be closely related to war.

Another way of looking at the slow development of the Roman concept of peace is to examine the changing meanings of the word *pax*. According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*,⁹¹ *pax* originally meant a pact between individuals, or a blessing conferring freedom from divine anger. It could also mean the opposite of war, as applied to the relations between two political entities or two gods. The olive branch, now regarded as a universal symbol of peace, originally signified no more than a pact between Venus and Neptune. *Pax* took on the meaning of a broad concept or policy only in the time of Augustus with the *Pax Romana*, a state of tranquility within those parts of the empire that had been pacified. This broader notion of peace did not exist except with reference to the Roman Empire. The personification of peace as the goddess Pax also appears to date only from the time of Augustus. It is important to note that the classical Roman concept of peace assumed that peace must be preceded by a total victory imposed by the victors, which assumes the existence of war. The goddess Pax was associated with the end of the civil wars and the expansion of empire. Augustus had derived the concept of peace from the Greek goddess Eirene, who had been known to the Greeks since the time of Hesiod. Although the Greeks had fought their wars ferociously, they, and the other city-states of the ancient Greek world, had generally restored peace through negotiated peace treaties rather than demanding total victory. A Roman peace treaty was imposed on enemies after a crushing victory and was never negotiated. Thus, a Roman treaty differed from those agreements employed in the Greek world, where the theory was that both parties to the treaty had identical rights and there was some room for negotiation. Roman coins often depict Pax linked to the goddess Victoria, with the latter wielding a sword and shield and displaying war trophies. This reinforced the idea that peace was something to be imposed, hence the motto *Mars pacifer*, which emphasized that victory and peace imposed through war achieved unity and agreement. The views of peace expressed by Roman poets do not differ significantly from the values expressed by the legends and mottos on Roman coins.⁹² A more limited notion of peace can be found in the cult of the goddess Concordia, which may have originated in the fourth century BCE as a symbol of social reconciliation between patrician and plebeian factions, but became prominent only in the time of

Julius Caesar when it was associated with the suppression of military mutinies. Thus, Concordia came to personify civil harmony, but had no relation to external political entities.⁹³

From the time of King Tarquin in the regal period, the Romans had always demanded the *deditio* or unconditional surrender from their enemies. Polybius thought that the Roman methods of warfare were more brutal than those to be found in the armies of the Hellenistic kingdoms. The Romans appear to have used very severe methods against non-Italian peoples. For example, it was their policy to employ terror against the Germanic peoples who lived north of the Alps in order to discourage future rebellions. Captives who did not immediately surrender when called on to do so were either slaughtered or enslaved. The execution of the leaders of such rebellious tribes was part of the rituals of a military triumph of a commander on his return to Rome. Livy, in his history of Rome, *From the Founding of the City*, makes a distinction between surrender to the power of Rome, which left the defeated forces in an uncertain state, and surrender to the good faith of Rome, which assured clemency.⁹⁴ The Roman style of besieging towns was more usually based on terror. For example, they might display the heads of captured enemy leaders on spears, or catapult them into the public spaces of the besieged town. The Greek philosopher Onasander, in his treatise on generalship, advised Roman commanders preparing to besiege towns to promise good treatment to the defenders in order to persuade them to surrender without a siege. In practice, Roman commanders expected besieged towns to take the initiative in this matter. Julius Caesar cultivated a reputation for clemency when he believed that it was to his advantage, but he could also be quite ruthless. However, most Roman commanders observed the convention that cities were sacked only after capture, but not after surrender.⁹⁵

Rome was a militaristic society animated by a martial culture. Because the Romans took pride in their past military successes, war was never unpopular. Besides, it brought Roman citizens tangible benefits such as new lands to cultivate and slaves to do the labor. Livy thought that since the Romans had a past that was distinguished by military glory, it was not unreasonable for them to think that they were descended from Mars. Livy also said that the Romans believed that Mars was the father of Romulus, the founder of the city of Rome, and was their father also. For this reason, they thought that they were destined to rule the world. This message was, according to myth, conveyed to a mortal

Roman after Romulus had become a god, and he also told the Romans to cultivate skill at arms in preparation for this great task.⁹⁶ Roman military leaders who undertook ambitious schemes of territorial expansion also turned to foreign gods to act as patrons for their conquests. Sulla had enlisted the Cappadocian goddess Ma in his adventures, and linked her to Bellona. Caesar claimed Venus as the ancestor of his dynasty. He also revived half-forgotten cults and religious titles and offices to support his political ambitions. Augustus employed the Greek god Apollo as a god of victory, and adopted Mars Ultor, “the avenger of Caesar’s murder” as a dynastic deity.⁹⁷

This may help to explain why the Roman pantheon contained such a large collection of war gods, but no peace god until the time of Augustus. Mars was foremost of the Roman war deities, a majestic figure who was second in importance only to Jupiter. He was the husband of Bellona and a lover of Venus. Only Venus was thought to be able to restrain Mars since when war raged he ruled. His epithet, *Mars Ultor*, means “Mars the Avenger,” and he was usually depicted naked with a helmet and a shield. Although he was the equivalent in Roman mythology of the Greek Ares, he was held in higher esteem, whereas Ares was little more than the personification of bloodlust. Another Roman God, Quirinus, together with Jupiter and Mars, belonged to the trio of Roman war deities known as the Capitoline Triad, and he was third in importance behind Jupiter and Mars. Quirinus had probably been a Sabine god, and was usually portrayed as a bearded man in religious and military garb.⁹⁸

The Romans pantheon of war deities also included goddesses. Minerva was the virgin goddess of warriors and arms. The worship of this goddess was inherited from the Etruscans, who in turn, had derived her from the Greek Athena. Like Pallas Athena, Minerva was usually represented wearing a helmet and bearing arms. She was particularly associated with heroic endeavors and cunning stratagems. Bellona was another ancient war goddess. She appears to have been an Etruscan deity, older than Mars, to whom she was married. Later, she becomes a minor deity, and is represented wearing a helmet and a breastplate and bearing a spear and a torch. Meetings of the Roman Senate having to do with military matters were held in the Temple of Bellona. The Roman goddess Victoria (or Victory) dates from the third century BCE when expansion of the empire increasingly absorbed the energies of the rulers of

Rome. She was the Roman equivalent of the Greek Nike, but unlike Nike, Victoria was a major deity with many temples erected in her honor. Roman generals held ceremonies and triumphs to give thanks for her favors. Statues of Victoria were adorned with wings, and she was usually depicted bearing the trophies of battle that were so dear to the hearts of Roman military men. The Roman religious calendar also featured festivals that were specifically military in nature, such as the *Equiria* in the spring, when cavalry mounts were exercised, and the *Armilustrum* in October, when the blessing of arms took place.⁹⁹

Augustus maintained that he was restoring the Roman Republic when he came to power at the end of the civil wars. This was, of course, part of a propaganda program that also included the proclamation of the *Pax Romana*. When Augustus returned to the city of Rome in 13 BCE after three years of campaigning in Gaul and Spain, he entered the city by night without a formal military triumph in order to present the appearance of modesty. He also refused the offer to erect an altar in his honor in the senate, but he did consent to have one built in the Campus Martius, the military training ground beside the River Tiber, known as the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. Augustus knew better than to be too greedy for honors, and besides, he had already allowed an altar to be installed in the senate, dedicated to Victoria after his return from the defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra in 29 BCE. He also built an important temple in the Forum Augustum in 2 BCE where captured enemy standards were placed. The new Forum Augustum was intended to celebrate Augustus and his family among the founders of Rome, and to link his dynasty with military glory.¹⁰⁰

Like many thinkers of the Hellenistic world, the Romans had a cosmopolitan notion of human society that extended beyond their empire, but writers such as Cicero placed limits on sociability, and distinguished between fellow countrymen and strangers and between relatives and friends.

In the whole moral sphere . . . there is nothing more glorious nor of wider range than the solidarity of mankind, that species of alliance and partnership of interests [*utilitates*] and that actual affection which exists between man and man, which coming into existence immediately upon our birth, owing to the fact that children are loved by their parents and the family as a whole is bound together by ties of marriage and parenthood, gradually spreads its influence beyond the home, first by blood relationships, then

by connections through marriage, later by friendships, afterwards by the bounds of neighbourhood, then fellow-citizens and political allies and friends, and lastly by embracing the whole human race.¹⁰¹

Cicero also made a further distinction within Roman society between those who were educated and cultivated, and lived within a social framework of family life and affection, and those more lawless elements who tilled the fields and lived in “sylvan retreats.” The latter did not bother much with marriage rituals and would have had trouble identifying their own children.¹⁰²

Marcus Terrentius Varro (116–27 BCE), a Stoic who is sometimes classified as a Platonist, wrote a treatise entitled *Logistoricus de pace*, which condemned war because Varro insisted that humans must remember that they belonged to a larger community comprehending all humankind as well as their own kinship group. We do not know the precise contents of this essay because Varro unfortunately chose the wrong side in the civil war between the armies of Caesar and Pompey, and his library was destroyed when his villa was sacked. However, Caesar pardoned him and he spent the rest of his long life engaged in scholarship and writing.¹⁰³ Epictetus (55–135 CE) also maintained that all men owe an allegiance to this universal city, which is the brotherhood of man, because all are sons of God (i.e., Zeus). This could be taken as an argument for universal peace. But, at the same time, Stoics were bound to accept the course of human events as the unfolding of God’s will, which made it difficult to deny the historical fact that humans devoted much of their time to fighting wars.¹⁰⁴

This survey of the literary and iconographic evidence for the origin of the concept of peace in the Roman world suggests that peace was not a condition characterized by an absence of war, but a consequence of war, won on the battlefield.¹⁰⁵ Thus, we must look elsewhere for a more fully developed concept of peace. Classical and Hellenistic Greece offers more fertile ground for exploration. In classical Greece, the concept of a just war evolved as an attempt to seek justice and to restore peace. Because peace was that which was sought, wars could not be conducted in such a way as to make the restoration of peace impossible. The concept of a just war, therefore, incorporated the idea of constraints on the way war was waged. Because the Greek city-states were all roughly equal in size, arbitration was possible and did occur. But the Romans, because of their size relative to other states and the magnitude of their pride, did not submit to mediation. Although the Hellenes engaged in perpetual

warfare with one another, they did make a distinction between fighting with other Greeks within a code of restraint, but this code of conduct did not apply to warfare with barbarians. However, the subsequent conquests by Alexander the Great spread a cosmopolitanism that enlarged the concept of what constituted the civilized world. Thus, people could be Greek in terms of culture if not ethnicity, and only those outside the Hellenistic world would be considered barbarians. Another test of what constituted civility was the degree to which people behaved rationally. This broadening concept of cosmopolitanism, combined with Greek Stoicism, would eventually furnish a concept of peace that embraced all humankind.¹⁰⁶ The Romans were influenced by this Greek idea of cosmopolitanism, but the more immediate influence was to persuade the Romans that wars needed justification, and since the Romans were devoted to war and had a genius for propaganda, they became very good at justifying them. Although the concept of a just war was based on a wide degree of ethical agreement, a just war could also be based on little more than a desire for vindication or revenge.¹⁰⁷

The concept of the *Pax Romana* was an ideological or cultural derivative of Roman expansion and part of a wider pattern of violence and war. The Roman conquerors believed themselves to be more humane and civilized than the barbarians who lived outside the boundaries of the empire. The Roman wars of expansion carried across several centuries, but the fighting tended to be confined to the frontiers of empire, and therefore, there was a large degree of peace within the older parts of the empire. But this peace could be maintained only by the exercise of imperium or armed power to suppress revolts, mutinies, and banditry within the empire and to repulse those barbarian hordes who attempted to penetrate the empire which necessitated extensive garrisons on the frontiers.¹⁰⁸ This is not to say that the Roman people were not glad of a measure of peace, because there must have existed a weariness with war. But it helps to put the *Pax Romana* into perspective to remember the famous passage from *The Agricola* of Tacitus where, on the eve of battle with the Romans, Calgacus, the Caledonian chieftain, a man “of outstanding valor and nobility,” was supposed to have addressed his warriors and warned them that their freedom was threatened by the most insatiable conquerors in the world: “To robbery, butchery and rapine, they [the Romans] give the lying name of ‘government’; they create a desolation and call it a peace.”¹⁰⁹

As the Roman Empire reached its fullest extent, the Roman governing classes, although steeped in Stoic philosophy, failed to deal with the problem that war, employed as an instrument of imperial expansion, still disturbed the peace. We must remember that Stoic philosophers remained skeptical concerning how far people could achieve peace in this world. Although the Roman state was able to provide considerable freedom from external violence during the time of the *Pax Romana*, Epictetus reminded his readers that it could not furnish the kind of internal peace and freedom from personal suffering caused by illness, jealousy, emotional turmoil, or personal tribulations. An individual could achieve a degree of inner peace by cultivating the values of Stoic philosophy, but this was available only to a few through the use of reason, which was a gift of God.¹¹⁰ That war could not be totally eliminated, Stoic thinkers such as Seneca (c. 4–65 CE) attributed to humankind's corrupt and vicious nature. "If mortals always practice eternal hatred, and if the rage which has arisen never leaves their minds; if the fortunate hold to their arms and the unhappy prepare for war, wars will leave nothing. To desire to restore peace is expedient for the victor and necessary for the vanquished." In effect, he said that Rome's cultural attitudes condemned individual murders done in private, but praised conquering heroes for the mass slaughter of whole peoples. These praiseworthy Stoic sentiments, which embodied cosmopolitanism and brotherly love, found little application in the real world of governing an empire. As Gerardo Zampaglione observes, Seneca's dichotomy between Stoic cosmopolitanism and the raw Roman political world anticipates St. Augustine's distinction between the City of God and the City of Man.¹¹¹

Early Christian pacifism

Whether the *Pax Romana* was good or bad depended on who you were and where you lived. Origen, one of the Greek fathers of the Christian Church, insisted that the expansion of the Roman Empire and the *Pax Romana* facilitated the spread of Christianity, which would have been slower and more difficult had there been many states as was the case during the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods.¹¹² Indeed, the belief that the *Pax Romana* was the work of Divine Providence was widespread among Christian thinkers even though the

first three centuries of the Christian era were, for them, a time of persecution.¹¹³ From the apostolic age to the time of Constantine, most Christians were men of peace. This was not because the New Testament disallowed participation in warfare or forbade Christians to be soldiers, but because early Christianity imposed a new and higher code of values on its adherents that was profoundly different from classical Greek and Roman or Hebrew attitudes toward war.¹¹⁴ Despite the vagueness of the New Testament concerning Christian values regarding war, the early Fathers of the Church were more explicit in their condemnation of military service. Tertullian held that a Christian could not become a professional soldier because warfare was not a proper profession for a Christian. Moreover, a Christian who became a soldier in the Roman army would have to swear oaths to two masters, and the need to travel to far corners of the empire would be inconsistent with Christian family life. Before Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, soldiers might well be ordered to participate in the persecution and execution of Christians. Furthermore, Roman soldiers were expected to make sacrifices to gods who were associated with warfare, and to decorate themselves with laurel and myrtle crowns associated with those deities.¹¹⁵

Strictness of observance of these teachings varied from one Christian community to another, but there appear to have been few Christians who actually served as Roman soldiers before the end of the third century. The way to peace was no longer victory at the end of a war with barbarians, but rather the Christian path to peace became meekness and an expression of fellowship with the gentiles. Yet, in the final analysis, the pacifism of the New Testament urged on individual Christians a submissive spirit, not a plan for world peace.¹¹⁶

Pacifism in its purest form, that is, an absolute prohibition against participation in war, was an important teaching only in the early period of the Christian Church, when hope for an early second coming of Christ remained strong. By the time that Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the barbarian invasions posed a threat that could not be ignored, and henceforth, pacifism remained an ideal only among the clergy. The Christian Church reworked the Roman doctrine of the just war, and attempted to direct martial ardor against heathens, infidels, and heretics.¹¹⁷

Perhaps the most important influence on Latin Christian views concerning war and peace, as passed down through the medieval world, was provided by a

Roman who became a Christian only as an adult. This was St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Augustine's ideas were derived, in part, from the Old Testament and from the Roman legal concept of a just war. Hebrew culture was deeply religious, and peace was regarded as a gift of God, so this left no room for a secular concept of peace. People could only trust in God for peace; it could not come about through the endeavors of humans. Thus, St. Augustine taught that wars were sometimes sent by God to punish wickedness and sin. This, of course, provides the basis for a providential explanation of history, which leaves no room for secondary or human causation. According to St. Augustine, true peace can only exist based on justice and a balance of rights and duties among men and between men and God. Mere tranquility does not constitute peace. A war that aims at peace by seeking to restore this combination of justice and rights is to be regarded as a just war.¹¹⁸

Stoicism and constraints on war

The main source of pacifist thought in classical antiquity was Greek and Roman Stoicism, the latter deriving from the former. The meaning of the word *pax* came to mean freedom from "turbulence of mind." The spread of Stoicism introduced concepts of tolerance and tranquility of mind. The Stoics believed that the Time of Cronus (later called the Golden Age by the Latin poets) as described by Hesiod in his *Works and Days* was historical and not mythical. This Golden Age was a time that was free of war and misfortune, a time of abundance when there was no need for private property or slavery. While the Stoics did not think that the Golden Age could ever be recovered, their belief in it did afford a moral standard by which to judge whether a war was undertaken for just causes. Wars might be waged for defense, and vengeance might be exacted only in accordance with justice and humanity. While the original form of Stoicism tended to be detached and reclusive, the Stoics of the Hellenistic world encouraged public service and constancy in the face of vicissitudes. They also were advocates of cosmopolitanism, which led them to a belief in the brotherhood of man and the natural equality of all men. Thus, Stoicism contained a number of beliefs that anticipated the message of Christianity. The defeated enemy must be granted clemency unless the soldiers

had been bloodthirsty and barbaric in their methods of warfare. Essentially, Stoicism urged constraints on warfare; it did not propose to abolish it.¹¹⁹

Some Stoics went further in their views of war and peace; they believed that the universe was a rational system and that war was irrational. The Greek Stoic philosophers living under the Roman Empire in the time of Augustus had no experience of war, and could anticipate no need to fight a war in the future. They regarded soldiers, who were no longer citizen-soldiers, but rather mercenaries, as socially debased. These Greek Stoics went so far as to condemn war, even when fought for liberty or self-defense.¹²⁰ A number of Roman Stoics also rejected the concept of just wars, and especially condemned generals who were driven by lust for martial glory. Pliny the Elder thought that of all animals only humans were disposed to perpetual war, and therefore, inferior to the most frightening wild beasts.¹²¹ The Roman grammarian and lexicographer Festus speculated that the Latin word *bellum* ("war") was derived from the Latin *belua* ("large beast or brute").¹²²

Perhaps the most well known exponent of Stoic thought was Cicero, a Hellenized Roman, who gathered his ideas on these matters in his *De officiis* (*On Duties*). Cicero, who called himself a man of peace (despite the fact that he had to serve in the army to qualify for the office of consul), argued that the use of violence was harmful to justice and law in a constitutional state.¹²³ He believed that rational and civilized people should be able to settle their disputes by peaceable discussion; it was the way of beasts and brutes to resort to force. The only justification for going to war was when discussion failed; wars should be resorted to only to preserve peace.¹²⁴ He advocated political solutions over the exercise of military power. Cicero further believed that political decisions often required more courage than wielding the sword on the field of battle, and that war should be undertaken only when there was no other way to secure peace. But, at the same time, he never doubted that the gods favored the expansion of the Roman Empire.¹²⁵

Stoicism, in its various guises, was widely accepted by the Greco-Roman educated classes, but it remained a personal philosophy rather than forming the basis for a political philosophy. However, it did introduce an ethical concern with the practical problems of governance and duty that placed some constraints on how wars were fought, and the Romans came to display a degree of willingness to grant clemency to those who surrendered without putting the Roman armies

to too much trouble. Beginning in the Renaissance, the legacies of Stoicism and early Christianity would provide a foundation on which Erasmus and his circle of Christian humanists could build a more uncompromising concept of pacifism.

The Greeks were a wonderfully imaginative people, possessed of great intellectual gifts. But they could not imagine a world in the near future in which peace reigned. Their poets believed that a golden time of peace had existed in the Age of Cronus, but that was in the distant past. The Greeks of the late archaic and classical periods were aware that they lived in an iron age of pervasive warfare. Unless they wished to appear cowardly and devoid of honor, they needed to be prepared, as a duty of citizenship, to be ready to carry arms into battle and know how to wield them. While they invested little thought concerning why wars occurred so frequently, it cannot be said that they lacked explanations for the causes of war: habits of violence and an acquired taste for flesh learned from hunting characterized the end of the Golden Age; mischief sown by the gods, a lack of justice and fear of enemies, the jealousy and ambition of kings and the inflammatory rhetoric of demagogues stirred up conflict. The Greeks invested far more thought in how to fight wars and win glory than they ever did in imagining a world without war. They never ceased to relish tales of heroes, displays of courage, and skill at arms. The decline of interpersonal violence that characterized the archaic period may have only increased the conflict between the city-states and great empires of the classical and Hellenistic periods. The periods of time between declared wars and hard-fought battles may have appeared tranquil by contrast, but they actually constituted a climate of undeclared war.

The Roman state in the republican period was primarily organized for making war, and many centuries later, would provide a model for the early modern fiscal-military state. The hierarchical command structure and the superb discipline of Roman armies would also furnish a model for the standing armies that emerged in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe. The senators and citizens of Rome expected to serve in the army, and they grew used to the idea that they must never leave the battlefield until they had obtained a decisive victory. The senatorial and equestrian families also understood that the pursuit of public careers necessarily involved both military

and civil duties, and that a good military reputation was necessary for a successful political career. The demand for larger armies kept in the field for longer periods of time and in the more distant outposts of empire led to a decline in the use of citizen-soldiers. Roman armies became more professionalized and increasingly recruited soldiers beyond Rome, and later, outside of Italy. Consequently, the Roman Empire became more cosmopolitan as the boundaries of the civilized world were extended. The Roman concept of peace was at first limited, and was always preceded by a crushing victory and unconditional surrender. This concept of peace, which originally meant a pact limited in scope, time, and place, gradually took on a wider meaning as a consequence of contact with the Greek world. Even in time of war constraints came to be placed on methods of fighting, and Roman commanders sometimes showed mercy to the defenders and inhabitants of fortified towns that surrendered instead of resisting. However, James Turner Johnson believes that classical antiquity contributed little to legal restraints on how wars were fought and Christianity had little more to add. Both Roman and Christian thinkers insisted on the need to fight just wars for the right intentions. The Romans did not believe in using more force to accomplish their military goals than was necessary, not for moral reasons, but in order to conserve military resources. Violence was merely a tool to accomplish a military goal.¹²⁶

Roman imperial expansion was undoubtedly accompanied by war and crushing defeats, but despite frequent barbarian and Persian incursions and outbreaks of civil war, the extension of Roman authority and law brought a previously unknown degree of security to a wider world. Whereas the Carthaginian Empire depended on the institution of slavery, the Roman Empire came to be held together by the concept of citizenship. Moreover, this Roman concept of citizenship was the most cosmopolitan that the ancient world had seen.¹²⁷ As Bryan Ward-Perkins points out, for five centuries between 67 BCE, when Pompey the Great at the head of a Roman fleet cleared the last pirates from the Mediterranean, until the fifth century CE, when the Vandals crossed into North Africa, mariners and merchants could travel the seas in safety. And, unlike the medieval and early modern world, Roman cities in the interior provinces could be built without walled fortifications.¹²⁸ Tacitus may have been critical of the moral shortcomings of Rome under the emperors, but he never questioned the justness of Roman expansion because the rule of law

and a settled way of life were preferable to the disordered mode of existence that characterized the Germanic and Turco-Mongolic tribes beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Tacitus admired certain moral qualities that he perceived among the Germanic peoples, but their violent and marauding ways together with the arbitrary government of their kings and chieftains provided a horrifying contrast to the civilizing influences of the *Pax Romana*. Tacitus wrote a kind of didactic history in which he was capable of praising the good qualities of Rome's enemies in order to underline the defects of his own society, but he never doubted that Rome's contributions to civilization outweighed its defects. Prophetically, he predicted that the abandonment of the Roman provinces and the collapse of Roman imperial authority would bring war and misery.¹²⁹

As the eastern Roman Empire became more Christianized, a philosophical revival of pagan Hellenism occurred that strengthened the tradition of classical learning and philosophy, and sometimes led to a dialogue with Christian thinkers that ensured that the teachings of the Greek philosophers would survive into the High Middle Ages. Christian thinkers showed that they were quite prepared to absorb the philosophical teachings of classical civilization. In this way, the heritage of the Roman Empire was saved from destruction even as its military defenses collapsed.¹³⁰