

interpretation

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Volume 11 number 1

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of rationality), moral stature, a grasp of the proper ends of an institution or nation, and decisiveness.

If, as Storing and Dannhauser argue, true statesmanship is in jeopardy in contemporary America, the rise of policy analysis is hardly the cause. Rather, it is more like the effect. The attractiveness of the systematic data gathering and analytical techniques of this new field among its teachers, practitioners, and a growing number of elected officials is testimony both to the role which the desire to serve the public good continues to play in our political life, and to the absence from our public discourse of a clear understanding of traditional conceptions of political leadership. Liberals and conservatives alike would do well to proceed cautiously before attaching high hopes to these new techniques. And there is no better place to begin for thinking through the implications of the new policy science than this fine volume.

Masters of International Thought. By Kenneth Thompson. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980. Pp. xi + 249. \$20.00.)
Morality and Foreign Policy. By Kenneth W. Thompson. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980. Pp. xiii + 197. \$16.95.)

ROBERT F. SMITH

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These books continue Professor Thompson's quest for a viable theory of international politics as the basis for effective and moral foreign policies. In *Masters of International Thought*, he examines the life and writings of eighteen theorists whose principles of international politics transcend particular foreign policy problems. In *Morality and Foreign Policy*, he examines the "relations between morals and politics or between moral principles and the national interests" with emphasis on international politics.

The masters are selected on the basis of their writings, reputations, and influence, as well as on the effect they have had on Thompson's own intellectual development. Each master is the subject of a separate essay, in which that master's personal background and impact on the intellectual and political world is presented and assessed. Leading assumptions, concepts, principles, and overall theory are analyzed and appraised. A bibliography of primary and secondary writings is provided. The essays are organized under four categories. The first, normative thought, includes the Christian realists Herbert Butterfield, Reinhold Niebuhr, Reverend John Courtney Murray, and Martin Wight. The second, European-American concepts of power and politics, includes leading balance of power theorists: E. H. Carr, Hans J. Morgenthau, Nicholas Spykman, Arnold Wolfers, John Herz, and Karl Deutsch. The cold war analysts, the third category, are Walter Lippmann, George F. Kennan, Louis J. Halle, Jr.,

and Raymond Aron. And the fourth, world order theorists, includes Quincy Wright, David Mitrany, Charles De Visscher, and Arnold Toynbee.

The masters share important characteristics. All have a broad understanding of the world and draw on a variety of disciplines. Their method, for the most part, is historical, empirical, and deductive. Only Deutsch is a behaviorist with a special concern for methodology. All are normative, committed to the classical values of justice and peace. Many have European backgrounds and were trained in the classical tradition. Most important perhaps, all are in some measure political realists. Even the world order theorists, while in a sense visionaries and idealists, are sufficiently pragmatic, practical, and aware of the role of power to adjust their ideals to the limits of existing power relations.

Each theorist can be singled out for a unique contribution to international theory: Butterfield for his historical treatment of international ethics; Carr as the leading advocate of realism during the 1930s; Deutsch for his use of modern social science techniques in behalf of traditional values; Lippmann and Kennan for their influence on concrete policies; Mitrany for his theory of functionalism; and so on. But international theory is especially indebted to Niebuhr, Thompson believes, in particular for his conception of political morality. Niebuhr, Thompson declares, affirming Kennan's assessment, is the intellectual "father of us all."

Fittingly, Thompson's former mentors at the University of Chicago, Quincy Wright and Hans Morgenthau, are given special praise. Wright is lauded for his breadth of interests, commitment to scholarship, contribution to the understanding of war, and for his warm and humane approach to teaching and concern for students. Morgenthau's special role was to turn American scholars and statesmen away from idealism and toward political realism. Advocating realism at a time when idealism was still popular and post-World War II cooperation with the Soviet Union was expected, Morgenthau was subjected to harsh criticism, and in particular the charge that his theory was devoid of morality. Perhaps reacting to this, Thompson makes a special effort to demonstrate the moral dimensions of Morgenthau's teachings. He also offers a moving tribute to Morgenthau's personal morality, ending with the assertion that "I can say with Walter Lippmann, he was indeed the most moral man I ever knew" (p. 90).

Thompson is moved by the "simple, straight-forward wish to share with others the wisdom and knowledge of leading writers in international relations." He has done this admirably. His choice of masters is judicious. The essays are well-organized, clear, informative, and useful. Individually, they serve as an introduction to each theorist. As a whole, they provide an excellent survey of the principal concepts and theories of international politics as a modern, developing discipline.

Morality and Foreign Policy is more difficult and complex. Most political philosophers, starting with Socrates, have known that attempts to impose abstract moral principles on concrete historical situations can be extremely de-

structive. They know that the kind of justice actually possible required, in practically all cases, a compromise between theory and practice. The distance between the ideal and existing politics only measured the deficiencies of the latter. This awareness negated self-righteousness and enhanced moderation. It prevented most philosophers from trying to make a virtue out of compromise. Thompson, in contrast, sometimes seems to be elevating the necessary compromise between the ideal and the possible into the highest moral principle, or stated more generally, to argue the moral superiority of political realism over any other thought system. He does so by analyzing the relations between morality and foreign policy by drawing on a "respected and enduring body of political and moral thought" and pitting opposing views against one another. His claims, however, are modest. If he can crystallize the main lines of debate and define them more sharply, his efforts will have been worthwhile.

Thompson begins first by constructing a perspective from which to conduct his analysis. Politics, and especially international politics, are characterized by conflict. Men and nations desire to be moral but they are also selfish and immoral. Under these conditions, only proximate morals, or moral maxims, which reflect both good and evil are possible as guides to human conduct. That faculty which can inform the statesman or theorist about morality and its proper relationship with politics is *moral reasoning*. Moral reasoning can delineate practical concepts of morality, justify moral maxims, and show the connection between the morally desirable and practically possible. In sum, it "calls on those who would be moralists to be political realists as well" (p. 28).

By political reasoning, Thompson then examines the "great issues" and "case studies" in morality in American foreign policy history. In his historical analyses, assessments, and policy recommendations, Thompson is at his best. He reiterates the realist critique of such moralistic concepts as "no entangling alliances." Manifest Destiny, Wilsonianism, and the Truman Doctrine and shows how they have led to erroneous policies. He analyzes and assesses American relations with the Third World, our foreign aid programs, and President Carter's human rights policy. He criticizes Kissinger's "personalism." He argues for more sensitivity to the problem of the Third World and stressing of our mutual interests. Our foreign aid policies should be more discriminate and better related to our national interests. And, our human rights policies should avoid excessive idealism. Here, Thompson's assessments and recommendations, grounded on political realism, are always eminently reasonable.

Thompson expresses the view that a philosophy of international relations is not in the fullest sense philosophy and therefore does not have to be concerned with fundamental questions. That is, it does not have to give a full account of itself. This view, I think, helps account for the problems in his theoretical arguments. Only a few illustrations can be given here. In his efforts to show the superiority of political or proximate morality, he is highly critical of other moral theories. He denies with little or no argument the ability to provide moral

guides to politics of such diverse thought as classical and Christian natural law theories, “bourgeois individualism,” modern rationalism, naturalism, Marxism, and liberalism. In most cases, he doesn’t identify the writers with whom these theories are connected. He gives scant attention to their differences, and especially their views toward the relationship between theory and practice. He seems to assume that traditional political philosophers who postulated universal moral principles were also determined to implement them in practice. That is, he fails to distinguish between political philosophy and modern ideology. He also seems to forget that most political philosophers were in a sense realists in foreign policy. For example, Plato recommended “Machiavelian” tactics in defense of the Republic, the ideal regime. In short, before Thompson can justifiably claim that realism “more adequately reflects the complexities and problems of politics with fewer illusions” than these other theories, he would have to subject them to a deeper and more comprehensive critique.

In his account of practical morality, he does not make clear its ground or source. He admits the existence of universal principles of morality, but he doesn’t seem to derive practical morality from such principles. He stresses the importance of actual conditions, including existing laws and norms as sources of “moral maxims”, but he doesn’t show how moral principles derived from such conventions can be binding. And finally, he describes domestic politics as characterized by the prudent statesman formulating and applying proximate moral principles, aided by checks and balances and separation of power, in balancing good and evil and reconciling conflicting goals and interests. He does not, however, give a clear account of those constitutional principles, which a preponderance of citizens *believe* are universally true, that govern and make possible these political processes. Or, he doesn’t consider clearly the possibility that proximate morality depends upon at least the *belief* that “fixed” principles of morality exist.

Nevertheless, this book, along with *Masters of International Thought*, provides an important contribution to international theory and a sound basis for reasonable and effective foreign policies. Actions stemming from political realism will always be, it seems to me, somewhat self-serving and therefore a bit shameful. Yet, few would doubt that foreign policies based on realism are more moral than those based on idealism or cynicism. They are far more likely to benefit not only the nation that pursues realistic policies but also the nations that are their objects. That is, realism in foreign policy contributes to moderation and restraint and thereby enhances world peace. Those theoretical difficulties that realism encounters, therefore, might well be met with a paraphrase of Justice Holmes’s admonition cited by Thompson in another context: if the conclusions are sound, how they are arrived at isn’t always so important.