

Just War Theory: What's the Use?

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Anyone seriously interested in applying traditional just war theory to current international affairs finds it difficult even to begin. Part of the problem is that the theory itself is badly misunderstood. Some people—proponents and detractors alike—think it is first and foremost a product of Christian theological wisdom and a repository of Christian principles having relevance to relations between states. A Catholic who points to recent popes, to John Courtney Murray, or to the tradition of Thomas Aquinas when evoking just war categories adds weight to this conception of just war theory. So too does a Protestant who goes to Martin Luther or Paul Ramsey for information about just war. It is true that just war doctrine was advanced and preserved by Christian theologians and canon lawyers. But these were not the only contributors to the tradition of just war thought, nor have they been the only important preservers of whatever wisdom it contains for limiting war.

Some others think just war theory is a misleading name for contemporary international law on armed conflicts. (They have in mind not only the various kinds of *jus in bello* regulations coming out of Geneva and The Hague, but also the attempts to state a *jus ad bellum* in the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the U.N. Charter.) Here the tendency is to equate justice (as in “just war”) with the content of specific treaties and their level of acceptance within the international community. When the classic just war tradition is evoked in this context it is for the purpose of placing modern international law in perspective: It is seen as having sprung from a moribund *Christian* just war doctrine in the seventeenth century, and Hugo Grotius is often named as midwife. I have done this myself in certain contexts, but this too disguises the truth, because it suggests that the idea of just war is somehow preserved whole in contemporary international law. Such is far from the case.

The major misunderstandings of just war theory, then,

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are two: (1) to regard it as a Christian theory only, with all the associated problems of applying it in societies where Christian religion has lost (or never has had) hegemony; (2) to see it as stated for our time in contemporary international law and so be left with the problem of how to reduce these general principles to specific rules for action. So common are both misunderstandings, in fact, that when someone declares “There has never been a just war” it is hard to know whether the speaker is reflecting the moralist misunderstanding or the legalist one—or is making a metaethical claim about the abstractness of justice as an ideal and the impossibility of us poor mortals ever achieving it.

I suggest that the traditional doctrine does have a possible application to contemporary affairs, but only when it is understood for what it is: a product of Christian and secular contributions over a period of several centuries of Western cultural development, a broadly defined collection of practical principles not exhausted in particular sets of rules (like those enumerating the classes of persons to be accorded non-combatant immunity). I want further to associate myself with the position taken by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., when he makes the following claim:

It is through the idea of national interest that moral values enter most effectively into the formation of foreign policy. Here the function of morality is to clarify and civilize conceptions of national interest. Morality primarily inheres, in short, in the content a nation puts into its idea of national interest.

Though Paul Ramsey has sometimes overstated the distance between the work of the Christian ethicist and the statesman, I believe his formulation in *War and the Christian Conscience* is saying much the same thing as Schlesinger's: “[E]thics is a practical *scientia*, while political practice, like an art, requires *doing*.”

In attempting to clarify and civilize conceptions of national interest one may address the general moral consciousness of the citizens of a nation, or the

fashioners of policy themselves and their advisors. It is certainly easier for any one person to attempt the latter. And, indeed, both Schlesinger and Ramsey have taken this course, with Schlesinger close to the centers of national power, Ramsey farther out in dialogue with academics and other analysts of policy alternatives. Moreover, in his writings on nuclear strategy and counterinsurgency war Ramsey has consciously and directly addressed the problem of how to explicate just war theory in terms that are meaningful within policy debates.

In Ramsey and Schlesinger, then, not only do we have a model for relating ethics and political practice, we also have examples of two persons who address the policy-makers. No such models spring readily to mind when we seek those who attempt to instruct the general moral conscience of a nation's citizenry—but this is more for lack of results than for lack of trying. Here the procedures are far more varied and diffuse than are those for influencing the relatively few professional politicians, bureaucrats, soldiers, and academics close to the top. And yet, if we examine the civil rights movement and the Vietnam debate, it is possible to indicate some ways in which moral principles can be introduced into the thinking of citizens-at-large to influence the shape of national policy. These include the words and witness of clergy and academics, attitudes expressed by the media, and the formation of what might be called "communities of witness," such as the early Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Congress of Racial Equality and the various Vietnam war opposition groups. In the case of war pacifist bodies are a general example of such "communities of witness." But if, as I have argued, just war theory is so badly misunderstood, the task of general moral education requires first that the educators be educated. This demands that we must clarify the implications of just war concepts for teachers, clergy, policy analysts, and others who are public leaders and spokesmen. I wish to propose several items as the initial elements in such clarification, and I will begin with the concepts of *jus ad bellum* (when it is right to go to war) and *jus in bello* (what is right or justifiable in fighting the war).

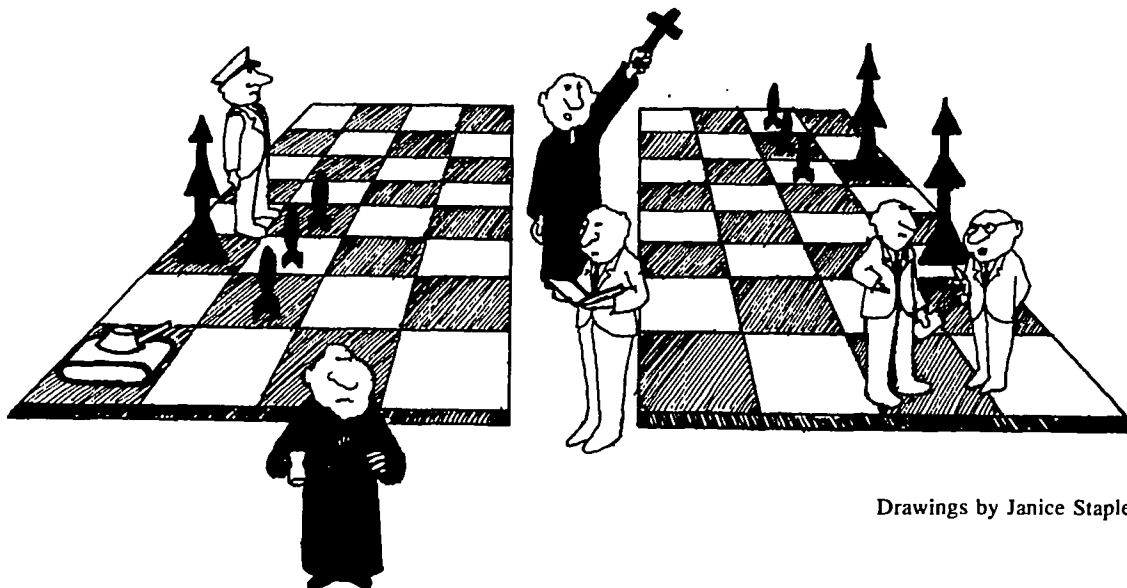
A. Toward Removing Some Distortions in the *Jus ad Bellum*

What use ought to be made of a properly understood just war theory? One might say that its most appropriate use would be by clergy to instruct lay churchmen in the nature of the moral limits that should be imposed in war. Or one might argue that the most proper use would be to provide reference points for the decisions of government and military policy-makers. But to think in terms of such an either/or is to perpetuate the misunderstandings outlined earlier: Just war theory is by history and intent a politico-moral doctrine, one that has implications and possible uses in both the religious and secular spheres. True, these implications and uses are not the same for both spheres, but they are nevertheless present in each. When this fact is ignored, distortions appear.

The pessimism of my essay's title derives from the fact that there are numerous ways to misconstrue or distort classic just war theory and only a narrow range of ways to understand it correctly. I want now to catalogue some of the more significant distortions that have appeared historically in interpretations of the theory's meaning, distortions that must be removed in order for creative work to begin. All pertain to the question whether it is just to go to war; all of them are distortions caused by emphasizing certain components of the classic *jus ad bellum* to the exclusion of others.

There are six elements in the classic *jus ad bellum*, and all of them must be satisfied before there can be an affirmative answer to the question whether it is allowable to go to war. These elements are just cause, right authority, right intent, proportionality of good to be accomplished over evil brought on by the contemplated war, that waging war be the last resort, and that the end of the contemplated war be peace. Each of these elements has its own peculiar distortion in the history of just war theory.

Just cause. This criterion originally was associated with the concept of fault: for just cause to exist, the purpose of war must be redress of wrong done by the enemy. But as early as the fourteenth century questions were being raised about this criterion. In the Hundred



Drawings by Janice Stapleton

Years War the belligerents were the French and English monarchs and their forces. According to English law, which allowed accession to a throne through a female relative, the English king rightly should have sat also on the throne of France. But according to French law, which recognized male descendants only, the English claim was invalid. Moreover, the English monarch was also titular lord of several holdings that made him, according to feudal custom, a vassal of the French king. In such a complex situation where does just cause lie? Though the question could be posed, the solution was to require centuries. Only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the writings of Spanish theologian Francisco de Victoria and of Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, did a way out of this perplexity appear.

Considering the case of the Indians of the New World and whether they had the right to defend themselves against the Spanish explorers and missionaries, Victoria invoked the concept of invincible ignorance. It is possible in war, he argued, that one side may *be* in the right, while the other, by invincible ignorance, may *believe* itself in the right. Indeed, it is possible to conceive of wars in which *both* belligerents are deceived by invincible ignorance into thinking they have a just cause, when in fact neither does. In such cases it is not a question of “objective” versus “subjective” just cause, because even an objective third party observer may be unable to disentangle conflicting claims so as to adjudicate the matter. So, Victoria argues, both sides should be treated as if they had the just cause, and both sides must consider themselves scrupulously bound by the limits of the *jus in bello*, the law of war.

The *jus ad bellum*, here focused closely upon the element of just cause, resolves itself into a doctrine of simultaneous ostensible justice. In Grotius, who follows the lead of Victoria on this matter, a further step is taken. With the idea of just cause reduced to a nullity by the concept of simultaneous ostensible justice, Grotius further dilutes the purpose of the *jus ad bellum* by emphasizing its formal side: the need for both belligerents to declare their intents and claims formally for all to see and judge.

Right authority. Grotius, by this step, also prepares the way for a distortion of the concept of right authority. In Augustine “right authority” implies all the ends of good government. The ruler has his warmaking authority so that he can, in the stead of his people, weigh the cause of war and decide whether it is just. It is a secondary criterion. But when just cause is the *de facto* possession of any warring party, the authority to make war becomes the primary focus of thinking about the right to go to war. The result, culminating in the nineteenth-century practice among nations, is the concept of *compétence de guerre*, according to which a prince, as a man without masters, may initiate war against another sovereign for whatever reasons he considers just.

Right intent. The movement begun by Victoria and Grotius and their contemporaries stressed the importance of the *jus in bello* at the expense of the *jus ad bellum*. The result has been a tendency to define the right to conduct

war in terms of an *ex post facto* judgment on the way the war is being conducted. In classical theory these were considered separate elements; both were important, yet important in different ways. We see this confusion of ideas in a widespread criticism of United States methods in Vietnam. Because (so the judgment went) the war was being waged disproportionately (in the short-run, *jus in bello* sense), it was a disproportionate war (in the long-run, *jus ad bellum* sense). This distortion follows from the imbalance in modern thought between the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello*, which in classic just war tradition were held in a balanced tension with each other. The specific problem here, though, is that a single term, “proportion,” is used to signify two quite different ways of thinking about limits on warmaking. In the *jus ad bellum* sense it implies the long view: policy and strategy rather than tactics, the interests of nations as collectives of their citizens rather than the interests and lives of individuals. In the *jus in bello* sense this term implies just the opposite. When the two uses are assimilated, their meaning is distorted.

Proportionality. Part of the problem here has already been discussed above in connection with distortion in the concept of right intent. But there is another difficulty that arises out of the concept of proportionality in its strict *jus ad bellum* sense. This is the claim of modern-war pacifists that the machinery of war has become so terrible that any war necessarily produces more destruction and suffering than it produces good. The most common form of this claim today is nuclear pacifism. Nuclear pacifists state that whatever the claims to justice in war during some earlier historical epoch, today an exchange of nuclear missiles would result in a holocaust of unimaginable fury and horrifying impact. Their distortion of the *jus ad bellum* is not that they misconstrue the criterion of proportionality. It is their insistence that contemporary warfare must necessarily be disproportionate. They overlook the purpose of just war theory as a *moral* doctrine, which is to provide a base from which rational decision-makers can move in deciding which of the possibilities open to them they ought to take. When the criterion of proportion in the *jus ad bellum* sense is applied to the possibilities of destruction available to modern putative (or actual) belligerents, it means quite simply that decision-makers should not easily go to use of nuclear weapons. It requires them to use their reason to calculate the ration of good to evil all up and down the line of available possibilities.

The end of peace. Whenever one belligerent seeks the end of peace above all other concerns, there is a general breakdown in all other just war categories, whether of the *jus ad bellum* or the *jus in bello*. “Peace” is an idea with eschatological implications. The end of peace, whether taken alone or put in first place, is a utopian claim that requires infinite efforts but which can never be realized. That is, if the end of peace is taken as primary, this produces enormous pressure for all-out war. Such a distortion has occurred historically in connection with significant ideological or national differences: as in the holy wars of the post-Reformation century, the United

States use of atomic bombs on Japanese cities in World War II, and the fashioning of the strategy of massive retaliation by John Foster Dulles when the cold war was at its height. The only proper conception of the end of peace is as a *modus vivendi* among nations. No more than proportionality is it to be taken as an absolute; it is a base from which government leaders can rationally and morally move to eliminate hostility among nations. Christians above all should know that the "peace" invoked here is not the peace of Christ that awaits humankind at the end of days; yet Christians have more often than not been the principal exponents of a utopian vision of an international order totally without conflict. To combat this tendency was a major task undertaken by Reinhold Niebuhr. Yet the utopian vision of world peace persists.

Last resort. The peculiar distortion of this criterion is to be found in contemporary international law, where the right to go to war is defined in terms of the right of self-defense alone. Here aggression—defined as first use of force—is outlawed, and defense—understood to be second use of force—is generally allowed. The contemporary aggressor-defender concept of *jus ad bellum* is thus the legal expression of a concept of the right to make war that makes of the criterion of last resort the primary consideration. A number of authors, myself included, have commented upon the injustice of this formula, which favors aggressors by disallowing defensive use of force until the initial attack in force is launched, and which also favors nations able to subvert others by propaganda, spying, and covert activities short of military means.

The purpose of this brief catalogue of errors surrounding the *jus ad bellum* is to clarify that they are, in fact, errors, and to argue that the proper use of traditional just war theory requires at least the simultaneous presence of all the classic elements comprised in the *jus ad bellum*. I mean, moreover, to imply for all these characteristics what has been stated explicitly for two of them: that the proper use of a moral principle or doctrine is as a base from which the individual ought to move, using reason and experience, to particular decisions. If we can no more remain content with simultaneous ostensible justice, with *compétence de guerre*, with the aggressor-defender *jus ad bellum*, and the rest, no more can we remain content with a conception of just war theory as (in part or in whole) a utopian structure that either leads to excesses of policy or has no relation to the world of actual policy-making. To restore traditional just war theory to a place of utility in contemporary American political life involves, then, an explication of the traditional *jus ad bellum* categories, in their entirety and in their inter-relatedness, in order to clarify their meaning as moral bases for rational decision-making. The *jus ad bellum* is in particular need of such elaboration, as it has been largely ignored since the seventeenth century except by those who have distorted it by singling out one or another of its elements.

B. Needed Elaboration of the Jus in Bello

The situation is somewhat different with regard to the *jus in bello*. Here neglect is not the chief problem, but

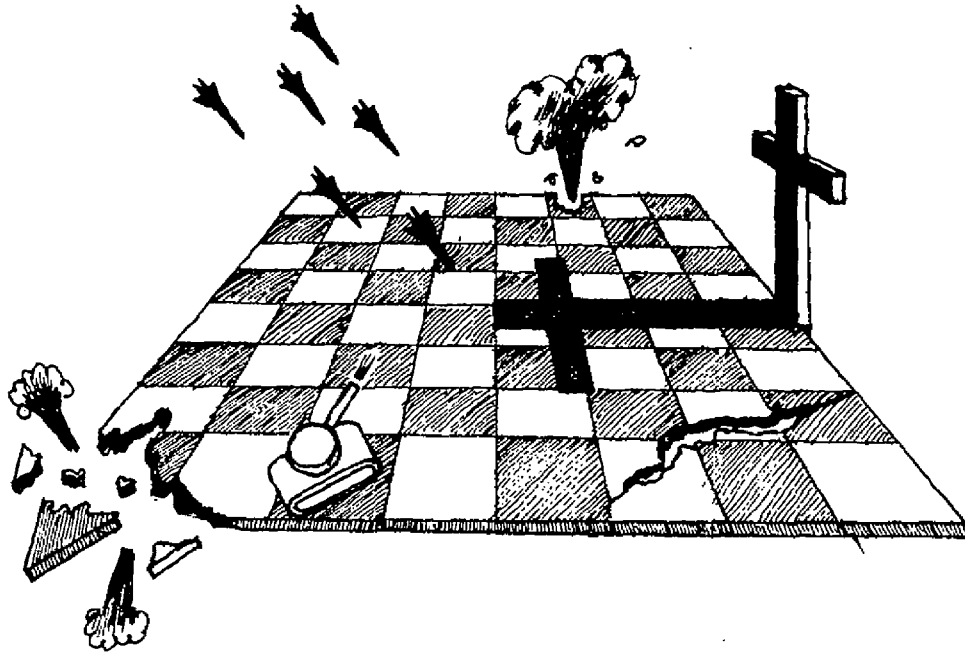
inadequate spelling out of the major provisions. Still, the *jus in bello* contained in contemporary international law on armed conflicts and national codes like the U.S. Army regulations on land warfare goes much farther in the direction of general adequacy and usefulness than anything currently available for the *jus ad bellum*. When one considers the matter of air power in contemporary warfare, however, the story is much less happy, for few restraints are put upon air war by contemporary law.

Nevertheless, a moral theory like that of just war does not exist only where there are legal provisions putting it into effect. Indeed, its principal purpose and function are to provide a source to which law and practice can appeal for judgment. Thus, if the contemporary *jus in bello* is inadequate, it is because the principles comprised in it are either inadequate or are poorly understood and badly applied.

To understand the *jus in bello* it is necessary to know its roots. By common consent this portion of just war theory is defined in terms of two principles: proportionality and discrimination. (Though some commentators add a third—relevance—it can be understood as contained in the other two.) I have already spoken briefly on the question of proportionality, and here I shall not add much. This aspect of the *jus in bello* is a latecomer to the scene; little is made of it before the modern period, when weapons began to get destructive enough to be hard to control. A convenient benchmark to define the beginning of reference to this principle is Emerich de Vattel's prohibition of bombardment with red-hot cannon balls in the mid-eighteenth century, though even here the primary reference is to the effect these weapons have on noncombatants, who are protected under the principle of discrimination. (See his *Law of Nations*, Section 169.) Proportionality in its *jus in bello* sense has to do with short-run calculations of good and evil, with tactics rather than strategy. It stands in constant tension with the demands of military necessity, and it is possibly the least well elaborated of all just war criteria, precisely because it has been around for only a relatively short time. But its meaning is relatively clear; its only inherent problem is the difficulty of making accurate predictive calculations.

The criterion of discrimination, in the form of non-combatant immunity, is, on the other hand, a much more ancient component of just war theory. It is, moreover, principally a secular contribution, deriving from the code of chivalry and from formal and informal agreements among belligerents about who would be subjected to the ravages of war. In the Middle Ages the distinction between noncombatants and combatants was made in two ways, and the same distinction persists in contemporary law and practice of war. The first of these is *function*; the second is *class difference*.

The *functional* distinction derives from the prohibition of harm to certain classes of persons whose social function is other than soldiering—some because they are absolutely forbidden to serve as soldiers (priests, monks, and those on religious pilgrimages), others because they are not serving as soldiers in the particular war being waged (travelers, peasants on the land, merchants, women doing "women's work," the aged, the infirm,



children). Since these people are not making war, war is not to be made against them. Thus noncombatant immunity according to function. Whenever anyone belonging to one of the above classes moves into a soldierly function, however, he or she becomes a combatant.

This type of distinction remains significant today in considerations of who deserves noncombatant immunity. But function alone is too vague or too gross a criterion. In a war of insurgency a single man or woman may be a peasant now, a soldier later in the day. And the nature of an insurgency is such that even the sick, the lame, the aged, and the very young can perform as soldiers—through acts of terrorism or sabotage. Thus, where functional lines are so easily crossed, the principle of immunity for noncombatants can perhaps be maintained only in part; curfews, internment of suspected insurgents, and mass population transfers become the most humane ways to fight such a war.

Another kind of problem is posed by the mechanization of warfare even when the war is conducted by two states that are only minimally industrialized. Which factory workers are to be treated as noncombatants and which as combatants? It is something of a sophistry to suggest that a bomb aimed at a munitions plant is *intended* only to blow up the munitions, not kill the civilian work force as well. In practice these are combatants, while other civilians making baby clothes some distance away are not. There is no doubt that the concept of strategic bombing, whether conventional or nuclear, greatly enlarges the number of persons to be treated as combatants, and there is no doubt that modern war creates dangers for some civilians that are even greater than for some soldiers. Nevertheless, I am still not convinced that civilians whose activities closely support military activity are easily assimilated in the category of combatants. Witness the camp followers who, as non-combatants, accompanied major field armies until the middle of the nineteenth century. They are historical

representatives of the principle that it is the soldier himself who is to be directly assaulted, not those who accompany the army to cook, to wash clothes, to provide recreation, and to care for the wounded. If the criterion of function implies immunity of field hospitals from direct attack, it ought also to imply at a minimum that civilians working or living in a target area for strategic bombing should be given advance notice and allowed to leave that area. This criterion also means that indiscriminate "wasting" of peasants among whom insurgents live like "fish in water" should be frankly disallowed as a valid means of war.

The two ways of approaching education in just war requirements are important to recall at this point. Whether the soldiers brought up for trial in the Mylai massacre had actually been given adequate exposure to the requirements of the army manual on the law of land warfare is only one of the questions to be asked. What of the attitudes of the general populace? Are these attitudes well enough informed that citizens expect even in war that certain moral standards still obtain? In the case of citizens of this country the answer is all too obviously No. This suggests a serious need for employment of just war theory by those responsible for moral education in the public sphere.

The other classic way of distinguishing noncombatants from combatants had to do with *class differences*. A profound snobbishness set the knight aloof from other classes of people. Knights took the oath of chivalry; their virtue was in the employment of their arms in just causes, whether in service of their feudal lord or in the protection of the weak wherever they might be encountered. Not only were priests, women, and others marked off by function from soldiers; they were also placed outside of the soldierly class, that of knighthood. When Honoré Bonet, writing for a chivalric public in the fourteenth century, denounced "false usage" in war, his example

was that of the “*man-at-arms* [who] takes a woman and does her shame and injury, or sets fire to a church.” It is noteworthy that he did not say “a knight.” When Welsh longbowmen felled the flower of French chivalry at Crécy, more died than the French knights: the rigid distinctions of class prejudice in warfare began to die too. And more was won than an English victory: yeomen in arms (a class the French never made as much of as the English) began to become truly soldiers, by virtue of their valor and disciplined performance.

Class distinction animates current international law on armed conflicts in one notable way: the requirement that insurgents wear recognizable insignia to distinguish them as soldiers, that they serve under a responsible leader (in effect, that they possess a chain of command), and that they obey the laws of war. In short, they are to behave as soldiers. If they do not, they are subject to being treated as common thieves and murderers.

The importance of this attitude toward warfare should not be deprecated. Professional soldiers do not fight primarily to die, as civilian-soldiers stirred up by ideological fires sometimes do; rather, the professional soldier fights to demonstrate valor and prowess as a soldier. In this the medieval knight and the contemporary West Point graduate are brothers. It is precisely when war has been most totally the work of professionals that it has been conducted most rigorously by existing rules and conventions: the early campaigns of the Hundred Years War, the wars of the eighteenth century, the first year of our own Civil War. This suggests that a further use of just war theory should be to enhance the sense of class difference, together with the responsibilities it implies, in those who are about to become soldiers—including draftees as well as novices from the military academies.

C. The Problem of the Original Question

Finally, there is an urgent need—at least from the perspective of *Christian* just war thought—to ask again the question that gave rise to a Christian doctrine on just war in the first place. That question, posed by Saint Augustine and still being posed in the high Middle Ages by Scholastic theorists and canon lawyers, was *whether it is ever justified for Christians to participate in war*. The nature of this question possibly explains why Christian just war theory has been addressed to the *jus ad bellum*. Even more significantly, it points to something that has largely been forgotten in modern forms of just war theory: the question *could* have been answered *either way*.

As many pacifists have pointed out, the New Testament strongly implies that Christians should hold themselves aloof from war and related violence. Jesus counsels his followers to turn the other cheek when they are struck on the one. He also rebukes Peter and commands him to put away his sword when Peter attempts to defend Jesus against the soldiers who have come to arrest him (John 18:10-11; cf. Matt. 26:51-52). Thus Jesus appears not only to forbid self-defense, but also to disallow fighting in defense of others. Tertullian, in *On Idolatry* 19, is only one of the ancient commentators to make this interpretation. When Augustine in the fifth century,

Gratian in the twelfth, and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth pose the question whether it is ever just for a Christian to go to war, they do so in full awareness that this is a *serious* question, not a mere ploy. At least two implications flow from recognizing this.

First, if our century's just war theorists will themselves pose this question seriously, they will bring into sharp focus what Paul Ramsey has called the “twin-born” character of Christian just war doctrine: permission with limitation. According to this conception, Christian participation in war must be *justified*, it is deemed only *permission*, and it is strictly *limited* by necessary criteria, *all* of which must be present to justify the Christian's taking up arms. There is reticence to justify Christian participation in war, as evidence the medieval requirement that after a war soldiers do penance for the sins they might have committed in the process of their warmaking.

It hardly needs to be said that such reticence does not characterize modern just war thought, even when it rises out of a specifically Christian context. Already by the time of the great Spanish theorists Victoria and Suarez (the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries), much of the urgency of the original question had been lost. Today it is ironic that Ramsey, who reintroduced the dual theme of permission-with-limitation into twentieth-century Christian just war thought, is nevertheless regarded as a sinister figure by many pacifists who know his work. It is ironic, but the fault is not entirely in the pacifist interpretation of Ramsey. Part of the problem is that both his major works in just war theory (*War and the Christian Conscience* and *The Just War*) emphasize *jus in bello* questions and assume that the fundamental question of the *jus ad bellum* has already been answered in the affirmative. In doing this, though, Ramsey only follows what has been the norm throughout the modern period: to emphasize *in bello* issues at the expense of those pertaining to the *jus ad bellum*.

Again: Posing anew the original just war question means that Christians who look war in the eye must attempt to discover whether they are, in this case, *permitted* to take up arms and what are the *limits* of warmaking imposed upon them by loving concern for their enemies. One obvious result of such probing should be clarification of the scope to be allowed selective (or so-called “just war”) conscientious objection.

The second implication of recognizing anew the importance of the original just war question is that pacifists and just war theorists working from a Christian context have in this question a common ground for debate. Currently any debate that takes place is soured by polemical considerations and misapprehensions on both sides. To the pacifist the just war theorist may seem only to be engaged in trying to find a rationale to excuse the latest form of warfare; to the just war theorist the pacifist may seem an irrational utopian. But the original just war question directs attention elsewhere. It reminds both sides of the debate that there may be some other values important enough to be bought even at the cost of war and its suffering.

There are, of course, different kinds of pacifists, and the debate in which one kind participates is perhaps not

possible for another. It is convenient, for example, to distinguish between the absolute pacifist, who takes his stand in his reading of Jesus' pacifism in the New Testament, and the utilitarian or pragmatic pacifist, who declares modern war to be unthinkable because of the destructive powers possessed by nations today. The latter type may be subdivided further into those pacifists who take this stand for Christian reasons and those who invoke other reasons. Obviously, since the original just war question pertains to *Christian* participation in war, asking it anew does not in itself increase possibilities of dialogue between Christian just war theorists and non-Christian utilitarian pacifists.

Between the Christian just war theorist and the Christian utilitarian pacifist, however, the situation is different. Neither of them excludes entirely the possibility of justifiable war; they disagree rather on whether war can be justified *today*. There would seem to be considerable room for a truly mutual discussion here, as the major disagreements are categorical and historical.

Pacifists who take their stance in an understanding of the New Testament are, though, pacifists of another stripe. Between them and just war theorists is more than a simple historical judgment as to the inevitability of war, though this is sometimes presented as the case. Christian just war theorists do not take their mandate from an historical judgment that, since there has never been a world without war, there will never in the future be a warless world. Nor do the New Testament pacifists take their mandate from a utopian vision of a world transformed by peaceful intentions into a conflictless "kingdom of God on earth." The difference goes far deeper and is *theological* rather than a dispute over the interpretation of history between "realists" and "utopians." Theologically, pacifists associate themselves with the transformed society of the New Age that is yet to come beyond history. They are able to adopt a *laissez faire* attitude toward this world because they place their faith utterly in the lordship of God, understood as manifest in condemnation of the sin of this aeon. Just war theorists, on the other hand, associate themselves with a theological position that affirms this world, even in its sinfulness, as part of the plan of God for salvation in which human beings can participate. To put the difference more starkly, pacifists look to God's saving them from this world, while just war theorists look to how they can cooperate with God in redeeming this world through love (as notably in Augustine's concept of the *civitas terrena* gradually transformed into the *civitas Dei*). If debate is at all possible between Christian pacifists of this sort and just war thinkers, it may be limited of necessity to clarifying their respective theological positions.

A conclusion and a practical suggestion: What I have argued in the last section pertains specifically to *Christian* just war theorists, whereas I took pains earlier to declare the just war tradition to be neither Christian nor secular alone. I do

not intend the previous section to revoke that judgment. The dual nature of the just war tradition in fact requires three separate yet related kinds of inquiry: one within the Christian sphere, one by theorists working designedly in a secular context, and one that brings the other two into contact.

The central theme of this essay has been that just war theory must have a purpose, a use; it is not enough merely to have it *be* over there in the tradition. That purpose, as I conceive it, is first and foremost to inform conceptions of national interest. This requires taking seriously the religious and secular dimensions of classic just war thought. It requires understanding that thought properly and in its entirety, and then connecting it to contemporary affairs. It also requires that its implications be communicated to the nation's citizenry—both from above, through structures of governmental authority, and from beneath, through education of citizens-at-large in the values contained in the tradition and their implications. That I have devoted most of this essay to items directed to the clarification of just war theory follows from my somewhat pessimistic judgment of our present failure to relate values to political "realities" today. For values to have a meaning, they must first be understood. To produce right understanding is thus the first task in attempting to answer the question, "What's the use of just war theory?"

This leads me to a quite practical suggestion. A model does exist for relating moral wisdom to political and social concerns, one that, moreover, includes possibilities for influencing relevant professionals and the media and forming a broadly based "community of witness" as well. That model is provided by recent developments in the field of bioethics.

Specifically, I am thinking of the impact upon bioethics of two interdisciplinary centers, The Hastings Center of the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences and the Center for Bioethics of the Kennedy Institute at Georgetown University. I suggest that a nationally based center for political ethics, structured on the model of these two interdisciplinary bioethics centers, would provide an enormously valuable context in which "educating the educators" in policy analysis could go on.

One of the most valuable contributions of interdisciplinary collegiality within a political ethics center would be the breaking down of misapprehension and plain ignorance about fields of inquiry other than one's own. I think of this metaphorically as the process of creating a "language" for doing political ethics. This has, indeed, been no small part of the contribution of the bioethics centers to their area of concern. In the case of just war theory such a "language" would imply the disappearance of those misconstrued notions about the theory such as I have sketched in this article. This could only create a better understanding of what the theory is all about, and it would clear the way for reassessing the possible use of the concepts of justice in war that make up the traditional theory.