

Intricate Link between War and Human Nature

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores crucial but often neglected aspects that contribute to the causes of war. While just-war requires just causes and just practices in warfare and for that reason asserts the importance of right intention, the paper observes not only the neglect of this criterion but also the predomination of wrong intention like hatred, fear, greed, and lust in the ethics of warfare. The paper's engagement with the subversive side of human nature affirms an intricate link between human nature and war. It does so by examining the infiltration of the internal orientation in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, Aron Ralby, Sigmund Freud, St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, Rousseau, Edmund Husserl, Vorster and others. Crises in internal orientation thus inadvertently contribute to the causes of war.

1. Introduction

JWT's emphasis on right intention for the justification of a war is compromised in modern just-war narration when the latter failed to address issues of character & of virtuous practices of warfare. Owing to the paper's concerned with the evaluation of the internal orientation, the study presupposes that unjust practices of war are prompted by wrong intention. In this regard, this paper will discuss the attribution of human nature to war. The paper's engagement with the subversive side of human nature indeed affirms that there is an intricate link between human nature and war.

War, a form of orchestrated violence has a broad and narrow connotation. This connotation ranges from the act of taking life to a state of hostility. This form of collective violence is either directed toward a group or toward a single individual. The causes of war which owes to the claim for territory and resources dates since the invention of farming and fixed settlement. Other causes of war which the article observes is due to crises in internal orientation. There is an intricate link between human nature and war since wrong-intention not only animates war but unjust practices of war. Despite just-war theory's assertion of right intention, this criterion came to be compromised: when wrong intention like hatred, fear, greed, lust primarily predominated war and the ethics of warfare; when naturalism invaded the consciousness of the spirit it objectifies and relativizes the sacred realm of the spirit; when in the absence of right intention there is a union between creative and aggressive instincts for great purpose there is war. Thus, crises in the internal orientation inadvertently contributes to the causes of war.

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1.1. Theoretical Framework

The study of internal orientation to war is built-in around the framework of Just-War Theory (JWT), Social Contract Theory and in the works of other thinkers and philosophers.

Just-war theory is a rule of warfare that aims to maintain a balance between humanitarian concern and military requirements at the same time (Dinstein, 1993). In JWT, the criterion of “right intention” paramounts for **the justification** any war to be just. The theory’s emphasis of right intention requisite that war be not undertaken for wrong reasons that is, war may not be presupposed from fear or be initiated out of greed and cruelty. Rather the theory recommend war with the exception that it be used against the wicked and for the pursuance of an upright cause (Grotius, 2006; Vorster, 2015). Despite the importance of right intention for the justification of any war, the paper observes compromised of this criterion in modern JW. *Modern just war discourse seems to have relinquished some of its earlier moral roots* (Vorster, 2015, p. 56). Although traditionalists' strand of thinking highly regarded subjective elements such as virtue and right intention as important criteria for war ethics, modern JW discourse rarely addresses issues of character and, therefore, virtuous practices of warfare. Right intention criterion, the subjective element of JW came to be compromised in contemporary just-war discourse when Modern JW discourse considers Augustinian condition of "just cause" and "authority" as an adequate criterion over “right intention” (Vorster, 2015).

Social contract theories about the state of nature as well comprehend the intricate link between human nature and war. While social contract theorists’ justification for the formation of a state institution owes to their pessimism about human nature, this article questions the very existence of a state institution for failing to provide a solution to the problems and inconveniences of the state of nature which is a state of war. Social contract theorists’ understanding about the internal orientation to war is supplemented by St. Augustine’s assertion about human free-will in the origination of evil and Frued’s “Instinct theory” which presents war as the resultant reaction of two powerful instincts called *eros* and *thanatos*. These and other relevant analysis about the interrelationship between war and human nature are elaborated under the discussion section.

1.2. Research Objective

To evaluate how internal orientation like wrong-intention breeds war and unjust practices of warfare. Thereby show that there is an intricate link between war and human nature.

2. Methodology

2.1. Analytical Approach

This approach employs the method of analysis to break a problem down into its constituent parts then add elements to prove and establish an assumption. This paper employs analytical approach to evaluate and prove that there is an intricate link between human nature and war. The behavioral aspects of this study analyse the implications internal orientation has to war and to unjust practices of warfare.

3. Discussion

The business of war is not confined to an act of killing or of taking life, but it connotes a broader meaning to that of *systematically combining forces to combat another combined forces* (Ralby, 2013, p.8). This denotes war as a form of orchestrated violence, usually with at least one actor, a government (Galtung, 1990). Violence on the other hand is any act that violates basic human

rights (Riga, 1969). War is therefore a form of collective violence. Collective violence involves the “instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group...against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives” (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 215). War is the business of combining forces against another with broad or narrow connotation. War, a form of collective violence narrowly defined involves an act of hostility directed toward certain individual or individuals often involving violation of basic human rights. The implications of warfare are further discussed in its causes.

3.1. Causes of War

3.1.1. War Developed Over Claims for Territory and Resources

Though some debates about war claim its recent origin, “many scholars speculate that war developed over territorial claims as a result of agricultural and fixed settlement” (Ralby, 2013, p.9). In fact, according to Aaron Ralby (2013), war defined as the business of combining one force against another is very old. It developed with the invention of farming and fixed settlement. Ralby’s in-depth analysis about the world of warfare captures the changing as well as the unchanging faces of war. According to him, though emergence of new technology and tactical innovations have changed the nature of war, yet the causes of war are almost constant.

Wars are still waged in competition over territory and resources, out of hatred, intolerance or the desire for vengeance; or because of simple greed for glory of individual rulers, who by the very force of their character rally vast armies to fight for their cause-however just or unjust (Ralby, 2013, p.8).

3.1.2. Crises in Internal Orientation

Speculation about the causes of war reveals an intricate link between human nature and war. This conception about the causes of war demonstrates predominance of hatred in the commencement of war and wrong intention in the reproduction of unjust practices in war. Hatred has not only predominated the motivation of war but has also come to determine the ethics of war. Book V of Plato’s *Republic* (388-367 BC) captures a discussion between Socrates and Glaucon on the ethics of war. Socrates and Glaucon discussed how the idea of Greek hatred has come to distinguish the Greeks from the non-Greeks and how this idea applies to the code of conduct of warfare. While the Greeks conceived “faction” as the kind of hatred that propels a fight between another Greeks- for they are friends by nature; the hatred that propels a fight between the Greeks and the barbarians or the non-Greeks, whom the Greeks consider an enemy by nature is termed war proper. As such, the code of military conduct intended between a Greek did not apply while engaging in a fight against a non-Greek (Plato, 2006). We have seen how applying hatred to military code of conduct have bifurcated the ethics of warfare as it allows wrong intention to dominate just practices during a war. War is, therefore, intricately linked to human nature.

Thinkers including St. Augustine (387-88), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Sigmund Freud (1930), Thomas Hobbes (1651), John Locke (1632-1704), Edmund Husserl (1935), Nico Vorster (2015) and others have attributed war to human nature.

St. Augustine in his work *On Free Choice of the Will* (387-88), strongly advocates evil to the state of our internal orientation and not to God. According to him, what animates evil is human free will therefore, God cannot be the author of evil (Vorster, 2015). This is because according to Augustine the internal orientation driven by *libedo* (lust) and *cupiditas* (greed) inform man

about preventive killing and pre-emptive killing (Carnahan, 2008; Augustine, 2010; Vorster, 2015). Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) one of the influential psychologists of the twentieth century held similar view on war and human nature.

Sigmund Freud's "Instinct Theory" presented in the *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) accredited war to human nature. This work presents war as the resultant reaction of two powerful instincts called *Eros* and *Thanatos*. While *eros* represents creative and unifying drive of men, *thanatos* or death instinct represents human aggressive and destructive nature. Instinct Theory of Freud states the inevitability of war when *thanatos* and *eros* unify through a great purpose. The combined instinctive drives of *eros* and *thanatos* are often destructive in nature as they are blind and irresistible. In the past, there has been an instance where war was driven for the purity of the Aryan race or for the glory of the brotherhood of Allah. Freud developed his "Instinct theory" in response to the unprecedented scale of brutality which claimed 20,000,000 lives during the First World War. Freud's experienced and speculation about human nature and war is dark. All these thus points him toward the inevitability of a war. Many sophisticated observants of humanity across different ages have as well felt war an inescapable fact. Despite his pessimism about human nature and war, Freud regards the optimism for peace a moral necessity. His protests about war and its ravages are clearly evident because war

violates the fundamental right of a human being to life; because it cuts off young lives in the midst of their flowering and thereby deprives humankind of their promise; because it brutalizes the individual by forcing him into "situations that shame manhood, obliging him to murder fellow men, against his will"; because it ravages the fruits of human labor; and because, given the continual refinements in arms technology, we are speeding toward the day when war will mean the sheer extermination of all combatants (Gordon, 2008).

Social contract theorists as well remark similar view about war and human nature. Thomas Hobbes description of the state of nature is a state of war since his account of the state of nature is marked by never ending conflict for resources and domination. Hobbes description of the state of nature as a state of war immensely owe to the disposition of man. In his seminal work *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes states that man in the state of nature are perpetually driven by the all-consuming lust for power. This drive for power he describes is rooted in man's selfish, anxious and fearful nature about the future. Since he cannot assure himself of the securities of life, he keeps amassing more materials than which he has at present. The pride for gain thus drives all men, even the greatest of kings. As such, kings sought to strengthened themselves "at home by laws or abroad by wars" (Hobbes, 2009, p. 7). John Locke's pessimism about human nature and their judgments also highlight the same conflict. Though men in state of nature are born equal and are imbued with liberty, owing to their inclinations and ill-nature men by nature are prejudice and unreliable. Locke's uncompromising zeal for liberty is most prominent in his consideration of freedom for securing and preserving life. For Locke, liberty is so important that any attempt to usurp this particular right sanctions the right to self-assertion. Moreover, in the state of nature reason obligates men to the observance of the law of nature. Preservation of the law becomes a necessity since it confers to men the executive role of punishment. This means punishment of such offenders whose crime is beyond reparation. But when he lost faith in men's nature and judgment, he invoked the idea of civil authority like the government. According to Locke, God had appointed the civil authority "to restrain the partiality and violence of men" (Locke, 2009, p.16). This to him is the remedial task of government which is in a state of war.

However, the article observes that far from improving the lot of man, coming into a compact run a havoc on human nature. Rousseau in his *Second Discourse* (1755) contemplates whereby

the inherent goodness of man is corrupted by society. Society dismantles and robs man of the inherent goodness by instituting unjust and oppressive laws. This happens in a given social setting when naturally established equality is replaced by artificially instituted inequality. In order to forge a new community through his social contract, mandatory the voluntary surrendering of individual's will to the general will, the issue of alienation and the fallen state of man nevertheless is not resolved by the forging of a new community. Further, the fundamental assumption of social contract theorists about the State were challenged when state institution posed "preeminent threat to these rights" (Lazar, 2017, p.41). These rights came to be compromised in the issue of obligation which is the problem of being obligated into war. There have been many instances where violence perpetrated on innocent civilians were justified under the pretext of duty and patriotism. Thus, the normative condition of the state came under serious threat for jeopardizing life. For obligating combatants to fight and die in a war they know to be unjust (Riga, 1969; Baron, 2010; Ryan, 2011).

Outside of war zone, different forms of gross human rights violation have as well occurred in a state orchestrated form of structural¹ and cultural violence². When the insidious affects of warfare occur in a form of state-sponsored terrorism and "state-perpetrated or state condoned gross human rights violation", (Mertus, 2006, p.117) war becomes a necessity. Just-War rules of warfare that aims to maintain a balance between humanitarian concern and military necessity justifies a war when war is waged out of wrong intention and for wrong reasons. That is, when aggression in a war is inflicted out of hatred, cruelty, fear or greed for glory and resources. Under these given conditions war becomes justifiable and even inevitable. For the same reasons, just-war justifies a war of self-defense in order to protect life, rights and liberty and for national defense. The rules of ethically engaging in a war also endorse humanitarian intervention in a war in order to avert greatest of crimes. This includes waging a war to rectify a wrong, that is, in pursuance of a righteous cause by coercing the wicked. Thus, the moral ground of just-cause and right-intention of just-war is not detached from the good it aims to achieve which is to "promote good and avoid evil" (Vorster, 2015).

According to social contract theorists man came into a compact and formed an organized state institution in order to end the problems and inconveniences in the state of nature. This includes the duty of the state institution to secure life, Liberty and property. Though the state of nature represents social contract theorists' justification for the formation of an organized state institution, what actually prompted men in the state of nature to form into a compact in the first place is neither the pursuit of happiness, nor the presence or absence of moderate power, but the perpetual lust for power. This includes the drive to secure and preserve the birth right to liberty and equality. Therefore, of the justification to war when these rights are endangered. Thus, the study maintains that internal orientation of man contributes to war.

Furthermore, there is an issue with social contract theorists' justification for the formation of an organized state institution since coming into a compact- which primarily aimed to overcome the all-encompassing conflict for resources and domination, could not resolve problems in the state of nature. This necessitates the moral and spiritual side of man. It also implies that man is not purely a biological or material being. Further any attempt to dissolve the distinction between the different aspects of man creates crisis in the internal orientation. Thus, the

¹ Johan Galtung in his *Cultural Violence* (1990) defined structural violence as a serious social-political-economic form of oppression and psychological alienation.

² According to Galtung (1990) and Barash & Webel (2014), the tasks of cultural violence is to internalize and legitimize structural and other forms of violence which slowly erode humanistic values without getting noticed.

following point is elaborated to show that there is an intricate link between war and human nature.

3.1.3. Extension of Materialism to the Life of the Spirit

An obvious reason for war and conflict extends to the life of the spirit as well. Edmund Husserl in his work *Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man* (1935) opens up the most subtle yet often ignored side of human being. In this work, Husserl acknowledged that crisis in European man is due to his naturalistic view of life. According to him, extension of materialism or naturalistic view of life to spiritual life of consciousness distorts the unique character of the spirit. This departure from the spiritual life of consciousness began when western philosophy distanced from Greeks' predisposition for unbiased rationality and when the extraordinary successes of science was epitomized to the knowledge of the spirit. The extension of materialistic view of life to the knowledge of spirit led to the objectification and relativization of the "unique life of the spirit". Consequently, in order to favour Naturalism, Philosophy reduced the spiritual consciousness of man to space-time continuum as such it has lost the spiritual nature of man (Kauffmann, 1994). Husserl's speculation about crisis in the internal orientation of man thus gives an insight into the inadvertent causes of war.

3.1.4. Wrong Intention Breeds War

This section discusses the importance of intention- be it right intention or its contrary wrong intention, in the ethics of warfare and aims to answer the question: How wrong intentions lead to unjust practices of war?. The study observes the importance of right intention for the justification of a war and, at equal length consider wrong intention important because unjust practices of war often allude to wrong intention. The importance of right intention and the danger of wrong intention is discussed in the following.

Although justification of a war requires right intention, this criterion came to be compromised in modern just-war discourse. The subjective element for the justification of a war were compromised when just-cause and authority criteria superseded right-intention in modern just-war (Vorster, 2015). Though modern just-war overlooked right intention criterion for just-cause and authority, this paper stress on the sufficiency of right intention in determining moral justifiability of a war.

Intentional neglect of Augustine's right intention for the justification of any war owes to the possibility of "a just cause without intending to fight for it; without anybody knowing it"³ (Steinhoff, 2014). Besides, modern just-war neglect for just-cause is perhaps because of the inability to assess the intentions or motives of people as in contrast to the assessment of just outcome in relation to their actions (Boyle, 2013). However, an inch mistake in the assessment of intention would be counterproductive to just-war aim. Thus, when right intention also considered as the subjective element responsible for the justification of a war is overlooked in contemporary just-war, the intention of just-war aim to right a wrong (Harrer, 1918) and its consideration of war either as response to aggression or violation of rights (Solomon, 1996; Moseley, 2020) were also compromised. In Vol. xxii of *Contra Faustum* (1887) St. Augustine descried and condemned the counter-nature of right intention which include: "the passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such like things" (p.74). For these reasons, despite modern just-war theorists' claim for the sufficiency of just-cause and authority, Augustine not only condemned wrong intention and its practices in a war but he as well foresaw the impossibility

³ "'Right Intention', the subjective element of the justification of a war, on the other hand, is not subsumed under the criterion of just cause: there can be just cause without anybody knowing it".

of just-cause in the absence of right-intention. This asserts that just-cause and right-intention are synergistically linked. Therefore, the validity of just-cause invariably leads to the question of right-intention.

Since there is an intricate link between just-cause and right-intention and the neglect of right-intention for just-cause exhibits its counter-nature in wrong intention, Aquinas for that matter is critical about wrong intention. To Aquinas, just-war criterion of right intention is critical because wrong intention could annul the justifiability of a war (Yoder, 2009). For similar reason Cicero justified a war. Cicero approved war when treachery and slavery hides behind faulty peace. His conception of true peace does not involve treachery (Harrer, 1918, p. 27) and obviously not slavery. He says, "The name of peace is sweet, and that condition is salutary, but between peace and slavery, there is a great difference" (p. 38). Aquinas is opposed to such peace which is faulty. When right intention is excluded in favour of wrong intention war is its hidden agenda. His love for genuine peace is evident in this statement: "In my opinion, we should always plan for true-peace which will involve no treachery" (p.27). Cicero therefore considered war inevitable in the compromise of "right intention" (Harrer, 1918). For similar reason, Aquinas strongly argued that right intention be not excluded. According to Aquinas, "war should not be waged out of greed or cruelty but should be aimed toward securing peace, coercing the wicked and helping the good" (Vorster, 2015, p. 62). Freud in his *Instinct Theory* (1930) similarly states that war is the resultant reaction between two powerful instincts called *eros* and *thanatos*. It happens when through a great purpose life and death instincts join (Gordon, 2008).

The discussion on the importance of right-intention for the justifiability of a war equally maintains the importance of wrong-intention since it carries a serious implication on the ethics of warfare. This section as well deal with the behavioural aspects of just-war.

The entwining nature of right-intention to just-cause insists on inculcating higher virtues in the context of military art. According to Aquinas, "right intention not only demands the restitution of justice, but also the recovery of peace" (Vorster, 2015, p.61). This statement thereby affirm that just-war does not conflict with peace but is waged in order to achieve peace. Since peace is centre to just-war, allowing evil to prosper is not true form of peace. Aquinas believes that true peace exists in consensus with justice; therefore, a cause is just that attempts to restore peace.

Peace, when defined as a state where virtue is fully developed and prosper do not exclude excellence in warfare. Excellence in warfare is not devoid of virtue but is part and partial of virtue. In fact, excellence in war is but the lowest and smallest requisite of virtue (Stalley, 1983). Focusing on warfare as part of virtue, Plato in his *Laches* (399-390 BC) depicts Socrates teaching on the importance of inculcating higher virtues like prudence, justice, and moderation in order to well establish the virtue of courage in the context of military art. The exercise of courage is not confined to military practices only but courage is expected while fighting wars, against desires, pain or fear, and others. War like courage is not limited to war. Thus, courage must be viewed in light of other virtues. In the *Laws* (348 BC) among the divine goods, Plato states the precedence of prudence, followed by intelligence and moderate disposition of the soul, and from admixture of the two with courage is born justice. He also firmly warned against courage devoid of other virtues. In the word of Socrates, *the danger of possessing courage without having internalized other virtues, such as moderation, justice, and not lest prudence without proper guidance from other virtues, courage can lead one astray* (Plato, 2006, p. 23). Hence, war and justice can go along so far as warlike courage is subordinated to the imperative of higher virtues.

This discussion thus equally considered the importance of right and wrong intentions because of the overwhelming implications both have on the practices and outcome of war. The former alludes to just practices in a war and the latter, to unjust practices of a war. While traditionalist strand of just-war contradicts any kind of peaceful resolution which is devoid of right-intention hence justify the inevitability of war in the compromised of it; the stress on the link between right-intention and just-cause of just-war as well insists on inculcating higher virtues in military art. Therefore, the claim that the criteria of right-intention and just-cause of just-war are linked. In fact, these criteria are so intertwined and crucial for the justifiability of a war that thinker like St. Augustine foresaw the impossibility of just-cause in the absence of right-intention. The intricate link between them insists on inculcating higher virtues in the context of military art. Thus, this section's focused on how wrong-intention contributes to unjust practices of war points to the behavioural aspect of just-war.

4. Conclusion

The claim that there is an intricate link between human nature and war is evaluated from various causes of warfare. This evaluation showed that nature of warfare changes overtime. Aron Ralby's in-depth analysis about the nature of warfare examined the changing as well as unchanging faces of warfare. Unchanging causes of warfare developed over claims for territory and resources. Technological warfare on the other hand is increasingly witnessed with the emergence of new technology and tactical innovations. Similarly, according to Freud's "Instinct theory", war is the resultant reaction of two powerful instincts called *eros* and *thanatos*. This theory states that when creative and destructive blind instincts of human nature combined there is war. St. Augustine's assertion that God is not the author of evil but human free-will animates evil when it is driven by lust and greed supplements Ralby's and Freud's accreditation of war to the state of our internal orientation. Thus, the analysis about the interrelation between war and human nature points the causes of war to human nature. Social contract theories about the state of nature as well comprehend the intricate link between human nature and war. Men's drive for never ending competition and conflict for resources and domination in the state of nature is said to be rooted in human nature. According to Thomas Hobbes (1651) while man's perpetual drive for power is said to be rooted in his selfish, anxious and fearful nature about the future; Locke owing to conflict in man's internal disposition considered man as prejudiced and unreliable. While Social Contract Theorists' pessimism about human nature considered formation of a compact a solution to the state of nature which is a state of war, this study observed the justification for the formation of a state institution questionable. The justification for the formation of a state is questionable since far from restraining the partiality and violence of men, an organized state in turn has become an oppressive and unjust institution. Further, Locke and Rousseau have highlighted the corrupting affect society has on individuals. Society dismantled and robbed man of their inherent goodness which included the right to equality and liberty by instituting unjust and oppressive laws. Under the pretext of duty and patriotism these unjust and oppressive laws of the state institution could jeopardized lives. Locke therefore justify the use of force since the law of nature confers to man the executive role of punishment to those who threatened his liberty and whose crime is beyond repair. On similar ground, Just-War Theory sanctions and justifies a war. According to Just-war theory, war became justifiable when the virtue of right-intention is pervaded by selfish ambitions like hatred, cruelty, fear or greed for glory and resources. Edmund Husserl as well drew an inadvertent cause of war and conflict to crisis in the life of the spirit. This crisis happened when the successes of sciences was epitomized to the knowledge of the spirit. But when naturalism invaded the consciousness of the spirit, it objectifies and relativizes the sacred realm of the spirit. St. Augustine also foresaw the impossibility of just-cause in the absence of

right-intention. Right-intention, subjective element for the justification of a war were compromised when just-cause and authority criteria superseded right-intention in modern just-war. Since the paper's examination of crises in internal orientation indeed proved that there is an intricate link between war and human nature, inculcation of higher virtues especially in the context of military art is reiterated. Hence, behavioral aspects of just-war assessed the judgment right and wrong intentions have on the ethics of warfare.

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