Augustinian Realism and the Morality of War: An Exchange*

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*In the fall of 2013 ethicists Edmund Santurri of St. Olaf College and William Werpehowski of Georgetown University discussed at a distance Werpehowski’s provocative reflections on Augustinian realism and the morality of war. Werpehowski set forth his proposals, and Santurri responded with some theoretical alternatives. What follows is a record of that discussion.

Hello Ed,

I’m thinking of writing an essay about war and “Augustinian realism.” The thesis has emerged slowly. Its genesis was 9/11—the very day. Did I ever tell you the story? I followed the awful unfolding watching TV and listening to radio at work. Not really interested or able to do much else, I wrote an email to Gil Meilaender at Valparaiso after lunch: “This is a sad, sad day. I feel sorry for the whole world.” Recalling disagreements we’ve had over the years, I added, “I realize that you may not find this to be the most appropriate kind of response.” Gil fired back promptly that, while not inappropriate, what I wrote was insufficient. “Just remember Reinhold Niebuhr’s distinction between the equality of sin and the inequality of guilt. Certainly we have a considerable inequality of guilt in this case.” The next day I rejoined that, “I think our little conversation gets at something important about the differences between H. Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr on these matters. More to come, maybe.”

There was nothing more to come, but I have continued to return to the exchange for what’s now been more than a decade. It seems to me that the Niebuhrs teach distinct lessons about the meaning of “Christian political realism” that protect one another from distortion at the same time as they advance our understanding of the theological and
spiritual roots of “just war” theory and practice. Interestingly enough, each theologian appears to work with and adapt insights from Augustine.

“I feel sorry for the whole world,” captures something important in H. Richard Niebuhr’s sensibility about responding to war in a world ruled by God. And I don’t have to tell you that “the equality of sin and the inequality of guilt” comes right out of Reinhold’s greatest work.¹ As for Augustine? Were I to write something, I would pitch it as a reflection on my favorite passage of his on warfare.

But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, if he remembers that he is a human being, he will rather lament the fact that he is faced with the necessity of waging just wars . . . For it is the injustice of the opposing side that lays on the wise man the duty of waging wars; and this injustice is assuredly to be deplored by a human being, since it is the injustice of human beings, even though no necessity for war should arise from it. And so everyone who reflects with sorrow on such grievous evils, in all their horror and cruelty, must acknowledge the misery of them. And yet a man who experiences such evils, or even thinks about them, without heartfelt grief, is assuredly in a far more pitiable condition, if he thinks himself happy simply because he has lost all human feeling.²

That’s the gist. What say you?
Bill,

Good to hear.

You hadn't told me about the exchange with Gil. Interesting and complex, as is your idea about Augustine, just war, and the Niebuhr brothers. Oddly enough I've been thinking about "Augustinian realism" a bit myself lately and have wondered whether Augustine is a genuine "realist" at all despite claims that he is by people like R. Niebuhr or Herbert Deane—that is, if by "realism" one means a kind of healthy skepticism about the ideal aspirations of political regimes.³ Certainly in that sense he sounds "realistic" when he talks about just wars as he does in the text you cite from the City of God. But that text is one piece in a polemic against "pagan" philosophical systems claiming that genuine happiness is possible in this life, a polemic that forms part of his general defense of Christianity against the charge that the Roman Empire became unhappy because it became Christian. He tends to be less "realistic," it seems to me, when he talks about the Christian political regimes themselves (e.g., Theodosius).⁴ In these contexts, Augustine seems more a “propagandist” than a "realist." But you're obviously thinking along different lines about the Niebuhr brothers as Augustinian realists. Tell me more.

Ed,
Your remarks about Augustine’s “realism” giving way to propaganda in the case of Christian political regimes are a needed reminder for me. I tracked down what Peter Brown had to say: “Augustine’s summary of the virtues of a Christian prince, and his portraits of Constantine and Theodosius, are, in themselves, some of the most shoddy passages of the *City of God,*” “especially the sketchy and superficial panegyric,” on the latter! So thanks, and please lay out more of your thinking about this.

Since you asked: I have two senses of “realism” in mind, one for each brother. Reinhold Niebuhr defines it as “the disposition to take into account all factors in a social and political situation which offer resistance to established norms, particularly the factors of self-interest and power.” In these terms, he cites Augustine as being “by general consent, the first great ‘realist’ in western history.” Niebuhr’s social analysis very often had to do, in line with your own statement, with keeping in play the “factors” that bring our moral “idealism” up short. To ignore them risks “unrealistic” and morally dangerous projects and practices fueled by sentimentality, naivete, “liberal” or “Enlightenment” “progressivism,” self-righteousness, self-deception, complacency, etc. History is characterized by self-interested conflicts over power, and the pursuit of justice and peace among peoples requires that these forces “must be harnessed and beguiled rather than eliminated.” Augustine, as Reinhold reads him, realized that excessive self-love or pride, along with the desire to acquire dominating power, threatened all human communities. It cannot simply be removed from a fallen human race that builds an earthly city on the foundation of fratricide—as Cain with Abel and Romulus with Remus and on and on. The use of power or coercive force, and even the use of violence, is part and parcel of political life to curb inordinate self-assertion on the part of individuals and groups,
however much moral ideals and fellow feeling might also find a place in struggles for justice.

While sharing some of these tenets, H. Richard positioned them in a context that stressed an ever-present divine providence, and a vision of the Christian life as a “permanent revolution” of mind and heart through repentance and conversion for the sake of faithfulness to God and the universal community of being under God. This is a “realism” about God’s reality and our relation to Him that brings to Christian political ethics conceptions of “judgment,” “correction,” and “transformation.” It may be a stretch, but I find in H. Richard an adaptation of Augustine’s providential, “punitive” account of war in Against Faustus that serves the former’s appeal to repentance and conversion.

Needless to say, I view just war theory as an expression of “Christian political realism.” Based on a commitment to justice in history, in which the use of coercive force amidst self-interested conflict is ineliminable, the theory offers a framework of practical deliberation about how to “harness” and “beguile” such force for moral purposes. “Just war” is above all “limited war” (I know you know all this), contained by a “just cause” pursued with “right intention” and waged out of “competent authority” to defend the common good of the nation and community of nations. It must promise a “reasonable hope of success” in rectifying the injustice specified by “just cause,” be waged as a “last resort,” and should not do more harm than the good it seeks (“proportionality”). Wars are to be waged with means that protect noncombatants from direct attack and in any event limit destructiveness to well-tailored military objectives that destroy as little as necessary. And as Augustine knew, too, wars are always and only waged for the end of peace; it’s a requirement built into “right intention.” Just war theory takes seriously the realities of
social conflict while reining in the will to power in its commitment to justice, limited war, and with strictures rejecting self-righteousness on the side of the “just” and the propensity to demonize the “unjust” enemy.9

Now cut to 9/11 and my correspondence with Gil. “I feel sorry for the whole world.” A horrendous attack on innocent life spurs me to ask, as H. Richard always asked in his ethics, “What is going on?” My words presume the entire world’s fallenness, with its provincial loyalties and the inhumanity these engender. There is a need for a permanent revolution of mind and heart toward a broader loyalty fitting for faithfulness to God and God’s cause. That need applies across the board. I wasn’t excusing, let alone justifying murder. The comment perhaps implied an inquiry into causes, but not excuses. It may also have carried worries about how the suffering of innocent victims on American soil could give rise to a chilling reassertion of partial, self-righteous loyalties that exact, through war, ever more innocent suffering.

My remark sparked Meilaender’s retort, however, because its “realism” about our miserable state and future peril was either, for him, not realistic enough or, if it encouraged a hand-wringing, appeasing quietism, not realistic at all. “Remember that there is an inequality of guilt in this case.” Reinhold Niebuhr was careful to say that guilt, the consequences of sin in creating injustice, appears often to fall on those who wield the greater political economic power; but he was not less driven to denounce the wicked arrogance and destructiveness of the “weak.” In the case of the terrorism of 9/11, Gil is saying that unjust violence demands a just response, even if through the violence of war. He was not calling for indiscriminate acts of vengeance. He would only countenance a limited war if war was necessary.
But the very ascriptions of “innocence” and “guilt” may themselves invite self-righteousness and demonization, just as a sense of our universal need for repentance and transformation may prompt an unseemly avoidance of the need to make relative judgments in history regarding the moral assertion of power and unjust power. Do you get what I’m trying to say? An appeal to the universal need for contrition and reform, lest more inhumanity visit inhumanity, risks losing sight of the realistic need for just response that names injustice and answers it with force. An appeal to just response with violent force risks in turn a defensive, black-and-white line-up of the righteous and the wicked that the call to contrition intends to thwart. Without ever explicitly engaging the specific criteria of just war theory, both theologians may be read to contribute to a deeper understanding of its conditions and meaning—indeed, of its “spirituality,” of how the theory is rooted in and inspired by a kind of lived vision of and relation to the world in light of the relation to God. I am interested in explicating that spirituality as it takes its theological bearings from the two brothers and, behind them, Augustine.

Set me straight, pal.

Bill,

Thanks. I don't know that you need to be set straight or, if so, that I'm the one to do the setting. But let's see if I'm understanding things correctly.

Your general view seems to be this: However tendentious and “unrealistic” Augustine might have been in his pious glorification of Christian political regimes, a
genuine realism emerges from his deep anthropology, which casts the entire world as fallen and all of humanity as marked by a lust for domination (*libido dominandi*). Given this "realistic" appraisal, human beings need to be protected from each other, sometimes with military violence—thus the possibility of just wars and pacifism's lack of realism. At the same time, in the initiation and waging of a just war, the *libido dominandi* is an ever-present danger even for those on the side of justice. Consequently some sort of moral check is required to insure that those in the relative right (sin’s being universal) don’t lose their moral way. Just-war theory with its *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* criteria helps to corral the lust for domination by establishing moral limits on war's initiation and conduct. Reinhold Niebuhr presumably signs on to all of this. H. Richard Niebuhr adds something else yet derived also from Augustine, namely, the idea that God providentially operates within the world transforming it via a process of agent judgment, repentance and conversion, a process active in wartime. This last general claim states a "realism" about the "reality" of God's governance of the world. Therefore, it is always appropriate for the Christian to ask "What is going on?" or perhaps "How is God's redemptive transformation of the world showing itself here and now, in this war, or on 9-11, in its violence and in the reaction to that violence?" Thus the appropriateness of the questions you pose in your exchange with Gil. Have I gotten you right? Correct me if I haven't.

For the moment, let’s assume that I do have you right. There are a number of issues, then, that come to my mind at least. Here is one. I'm unsure about how your view comports with Reinhold Niebuhr's own critique of just-war theory in *Nature and Destiny of Man*. Reinhold, you'll recall, was especially critical of the theory's expression in Roman Catholic natural law, which, according to him, presumed an excessively high
level of confidence in just-war judgments given the formidable impediments of human finitude, historical complexity, and sinful self-deception: "[E]ven a war which is judged by neutral opinion to be wholly defensive cannot be waged with completely good conscience because the situations out of which wars arise are charged with memories of previous acts of aggression on the part of those now in defense." Now I happen to think that Reinhold’s criticism here is a bit overstated since proponents of just-war theory need not deny ambiguities and difficulties in application, and Reinhold, himself, allows that judgments of relative guilt are necessary. But even as one acknowledges that in some sense Augustine was a just-war theorist, I wonder whether Augustinian anthropology doesn’t up the ante here and heighten attention to the way that just-war theory may abstract from the reality of war by projecting an impossibly ideal vision of what war can be and by obscuring from view what war is in fact given the libido dominandi and other forms of prideful self-assertion. In this account, war is not a game played by clear rules transparently adjudicated by referees with penalties neutrally applied for infractions. Rather war is an awful reality saturated with sin, and any insistence that you can live through that reality cleanly by adhering absolutely to just-war principles may be a sign of the very prideful self-righteousness that an Augustinian theology (at least in your rendering) purports to expose.

I am reminded here of Abraham Lincoln's artfully veiled threat through presidential edict to execute Confederate prisoners of war (themselves found guilty of no war crimes) in retaliation against the Confederate policy of summary execution of black Union prisoners of war or white leaders of black companies. The purpose of the threat of reprisal was to get the Confederacy to discontinue the abominable practice. Just-war
theorists today likely would argue no execution of innocent prisoners of war and no threats of same, period. But then they would face Frederick Douglass’s complaint that we bear moral responsibility for the projected outcome of our omissions, that a refusal to threaten what Lincoln threatened gives aid and comfort to a grossly discriminatory policy in the conduct of war.\textsuperscript{11}

Given complexities such as these, Reinhold Niebuhr himself tended toward a rough consequentialism in the moral evaluation of the means of war, knowing full well that this consequentialism committed him to allowing sometimes what he regarded as the doing of evil for the sake of good. Thus his openness to the use of the atomic bomb against Japanese civilians in World War II in order to end that war and very likely “save the lives of thousands of American soldiers who would otherwise have perished on the beaches of Japan.”\textsuperscript{12} For Niebuhr use of the atomic bomb in these circumstances “was the quintessential revelation of ‘how much evil we must do in order to do good,’ of how much guilt accrues even to those who have ‘defeated tyranny.’”\textsuperscript{13} Absolute adherence to the just-war principle of noncombatant immunity under those circumstances on grounds that one never does evil that good may come, Reinhold likely would have argued, obscures the guilt incurred for the innocent lives lost as a result of the refusal. Here just war theory, Reinhold might have said, serves as a morally prudential cover of sinful reality.

Now whatever one makes of Reinhold’s judgments here (and I have some qualms about them myself), how do those judgments comport with your assimilation of his normative ethic to Augustinian realism and to just-war thinking?

I have many other things to say, but enough for the moment.
(Werpehowski): You have me right by and large. Thanks for your care, clarity, and questions. Your reply to Niebuhr’s specific critique of just war theory on natural law grounds is on the mark. I agree with you. We are also on the same page about how our human, all too human embrace of the theory may distance us from the reality of war. Augustine’s analysis of the human condition “ups the ante” as you describe. That “favorite passage” of mine from Augustine moves in this direction, no? We may wage just wars, but we wage them, unless we have lost all human feeling, with horror. In the same vein, anything that reduces that horror and therefore our ambivalence, including this or that formulation of just war theory and/or the uncritical confidence with which we “apply” it, is, on Augustinian terms, “unrealistic.”

As for Niebuhr’s consequentialism, I wonder whether that, too, may abstract from the reality of war and serve as “a morally pridelful cover of sinful reality” because it tracks wartime practices that ultimately admit of no limits whatsoever, especially in relation to attacks on noncombatant lives. We may be left with what our mentor Paul Ramsey might have called, “total war, with tears.” Insisting on unexceptionable moral limits, like the immunity of noncombatants from direct attack (or of captured soldiers from being murdered or even threatened with murder), does not or need not of itself remove our horror or enhance our self-righteousness. It can, of course; but I wonder whether the consequentialist temptation is greater because it can work hand in hand with our sinful proclivity in wartime to love our “just causes” and enjoy the “way of life” we defend too much. We may cherish them so totally that we are willing to defend them by
any means we deem “necessary.” The Augustinian realism I’m reaching for includes the themes in Reinhold that you describe, including the “self-correcting” implications of acknowledging in wartime, not only the “inequality of guilt,” but also the “equality of sin.” I want to add in the fuller account a kind of redemptive dimension that I see at work in H. Richard, one that I think goes with but “works over” themes we find in Augustine. If what I’m up to amounts to a “spirituality” underlying just war theory, then the theory and its practical uses will have to be critically ordered to it. At the moment, that’s the best answer to your last question I can come up with.

By the way, how do you understand "Augustinian realism?" I ask keeping in mind the “healthy skepticism” you wrote about earlier.

(Santurri): I take your point about the dangers of Reinhold's consequentialism. I suppose he might reply—regarding conflict between adherence to cherished principles and prevention of tragic consequences—that it is at least mistaken to assume you can always find refuge from moral guilt in choosing adherence to principles. In illustration consider again my earlier example. It’s been suggested that Frederick Douglass may have been impatient with Lincoln for waiting too long in issuing the Order of Retaliation to prevent Confederate summary execution of black soldiers.14 If so, the impatience would have reflected Douglass’s conviction that Lincoln had an obligation to protect black union soldiers by threat of reprisal, an obligation rooted presumably in (a) a duty to keep faith with black soldiers who risked and gave their lives for the Union cause; (b) egalitarian
commitments to combat racism; (c) a sense that the normative force of POW protections
depends on mutual or reciprocal adherence; and (d) predictions that the abominable
Confederate practice would continue unless the South was threatened with action in
kind. Of course, Lincoln did issue the Order of Retaliation (though he expressed grave
moral reservations about hanging innocent Confederate soldiers in reprisal), and the
Confederate outrages seemed to stop shortly after he issued the Order (though the reason
for the cessation isn't entirely clear). Maybe Lincoln shouldn't have issued the Order, but
even so, Reinhold might have said, there would have been residual moral guilt in the
president's refusal to do so knowing that atrocities against black soldiers would continue
as a likely result. What would Augustine say? Certainly he would have seen a kind of
tragedy in Lincoln's plight, yet another occasion for lament over the profound misery
endemic to fallen existence, and that sense of tragedy presumably would have some
connection to what you are calling the "spirituality" of just war theory. At the same time,
I also see here a major difference between Reinhold and Augustine. I believe the latter
would not have been inclined to speak in R. Niebuhrian fashion of inevitable guilt in
situations like Lincoln's. Whatever an Augustinian just-war "spirituality" amounts to, it
would not involve the conviction that wartime confronts agents with situations in which
moral wrongdoing is inevitable; it would not involve the agent's experience of inevitable
guilt in those situations.

This brings me to the last question you pose as a kind of afterthought but which,
of course, is really central and something I've been evading until now: How precisely do
I understand "Augustinian realism"? Again, whether Augustine was less a "realist" than a
"propagandist" who spared Christian regimes the pain of his "realistic" deconstructions is
an issue that for me hovers over our discussion, but we can set that matter aside and 
assume, at least for the sake of our exchange, that an Augustinian realism, however 
understood in detail, theorizes about the conditions of an across-the-board fallen 
humanity. Now here I think it's useful to distinguish between two kinds of "realism" 
about international political life often differentiated in contemporary political-theoretical 
discussions and ask how the distinction might apply to Augustine. First, there is 
empirical political realism, which holds that international collectivities or their agents in 
fact are motivated predominantly by self-interest, power, reputation, or some other 
narrowly conceived social or political good and that it is unrealistic to assume such 
collectivities or agents can be motivated in any decisive way by the highest moral ideals. 
Second, there is normative political realism, which holds that international collectivities 
or their agents ought to be prudent and thus ought to be prepared to compromise the 
highest moral principles in the face of practical realities. ¹⁵ In some versions of normative 
realism, e.g., Reinhold's Christian realism, the position demands virtually paradoxical 
expression, for instance, that statesmen charged with the defense of nations are morally 
required to violate cherished moral principles or abandon the highest moral ideals given 
certain practical exigencies. In other words, political agents, in this version of normative 
realism, must "dirty their hands" morally speaking in order to achieve some good 
sanctioned by morality itself.

Now it seems to me that Augustine may be something of an empirical realist 
(though not unequivocally so) but that he is not at all a normative realist--especially if 
one has in mind the "dirty hands" variety. This last exclusion is significant given the 
tendency of some recent commentators to parse "Augustinian realism" in terms of its
putatively recognizing "the problem of dirty hands" where agents are required to do evil for the sake of good. A locus classicus of this reading, of course, is Augustine's infamous meditation on the plight of the judge who must torture persons he knows may be innocent to secure information essential to the common good or condemn the innocent based on false testimony extracted through torture. However, Augustine isn't saying there that the judge is residually wrong, albeit morally justified overall, in torturing the innocent or effecting erroneous condemnation. He assumes that the judge's hands are clean, that what the judge does is morally warranted without qualification (hard as that may be for modern Augustinians to acknowledge). Here I think John Parrish's reading is largely on the right track—though I would take issue with his claim that Augustine "solves the problem of dirty hands" by rendering any "external act" permissible if performed with the right intentions since, as Parish himself admits, Augustine believed there were some absolute prohibitions whose violation could not be justified with good intentions. At any rate, Augustine's point in this meditation, again, is not to mark the judge's "dirty hands" in actions morally warranted all things considered but to underscore just how miserable is a world in which judges must torture or condemn persons who may be innocent—ergo, the implausibility of pagan optimism about the possibility of happiness in this world. To put the general point in a way that highlights the contrast with Reinhold's Christian realism, Augustine doesn't say here and would never say that political functionaries in exercising the duties of office leave Christian love or the ethic of Jesus behind, thereby incurring residual moral guilt. Quite the contrary, the functionary's use of coercion or violence to meet "the claims of human society" is for Augustine an expression of Christian love entirely consistent with the ethic of Jesus.
Whatever Augustinian realism means, then, it does not mean that the fallen world is constituted by the tragedy of genuine moral dilemmas—i.e., situations where agents inevitably do something morally wrong no matter what they do.

But to leave the matter at that is to offer an unfinished picture of Augustinian realism. For while Augustine’s responsible judges, statesmen and soldiers are clear of moral wrongdoing in the appropriate use of coercion and violence in this fallen world, they are nonetheless complicit, as all human beings are, in the fashioning of a world in which such coercion and violence are made necessary. The complicity is a function of the species’ connection with Adam in his prideful rebellion. For that rebellion we are all guilty and rightfully punished with the unhappiness that saturates this fallen world. Here we can only pray with Augustine’s judge: “Deliver me from my necessities.”20 I can imagine Lincoln’s praying that prayer in deciding to issue the Order of Retaliation. And I can imagine the prayer captures some essential dimension of what you call the “spirituality” of just-war theory.

Bill, there’s a lot more to be said about Augustinian realism. But perhaps enough for now.

(Werpehowski): To address your first and your last point: Yes, there is the difference you cite between Reinhold and Augustine on whether or not wartime, or political life generally, “confronts agents with situations in which moral wrongdoing is inevitable.”
My Augustinian account “would not involve the agent’s experience of inevitable guilt in those situations;” however, it would take stock of humanity’s complicity “in the fashioning of a world” where “coercion and violence are made necessary.” I’m not sure what notion of “guilt” you are employing in your statement of the second claim, and the meaning of “punishment” needs to be parsed, at least by me down the line, in a way appropriate to Augustine and his use of the idea in his writings about war. In any case, for me “the equality of sin” does not reach to your “inevitable guilt” in the sense of moral blameworthiness. The truth in “I feel sorry for the whole world.” does not either, though it does mean to capture something of complicit involvement in a fallen world.

Your remarks lead me to reflect on a related issue having to do with the “moral injury” that soldiers suffer in wartime—a disintegration of moral self-identity and burdening of conscience given what they have done and experienced. My colleague Mark Wilson is working on this. He highlights a passage from Tim O’Brien’s literary memoir of the Vietnam War.

I want to tell you this: twenty years ago I watched a man
die on a trail to My Khe. I did not kill him. But I was
present, you see, and my presence was guilt enough. I
remember his face, which was not a pretty face, because his
jaw was in his throat, and I remember feeling the burden of
responsibility and grief. I blamed myself. And rightly so,
because I was present. 21

Using your last observations as a frame (and I am indebted to Mark and to you here), I understand this experience of “guilt” to point to a warrior’s sense of
responsibility for the suffering and deaths of one's fellows, enemies or not, that does not presuppose moral culpability. That sense ties in with a morally fitting solidarity that one brings to the scene of human tragedy. It's not only solidarity as a sinner in and with a fallen world. There is also a more positive disposition of moral accountability to and for others. Wilson identifies the response, the response-ability, as "moral grief," and he draws from—guess who?—Augustine on grieving over the ills of war as a source! You have addressed something similar in your book in terms of "moral regret."\(^{22}\) Yes?

My Augustinian reading of H. Richard comes into play at this point. I haven't said a whole lot about that so far, have I? Ah, well.

Before signing off, I should say that your argument that Augustine is not, like Reinhold, a "normative realist," is spot on. The former is an "empirical realist," although, as you note, "not unequivocally." He can't be one "unequivocally" because Augustine views the political world as corrigeable to commending and enacting, however ambiguously and unsurely, moral and religious values and aspirations. As a Bishop he writes to magistrates against the death penalty because it comports badly with enabling repentance.\(^{23}\) Just wars, too, as he conceived of them, involved rightly opposing injustice. Still, Augustine remains an empirical realist, and most basically because he thought that political societies could never be genuinely just without ordering their loves and conceptions of right relation between citizens to God.

The consequences for Augustine's normative account of politics need not drive him all the way to Hobbes's version of empirical realism (which I have always associated with psychological egoism, i.e., that human beings are naturally selfish and can not act otherwise). As others have shown,\(^{24}\) "peoples" for Augustine are constituted by
agreements about the specific objects of their love and thus about the goods necessary for mortal life. The "earthly peace" which polities may attain and which members of the earthly and heavenly cities, ever commingled, use for vastly different purposes will yield better or worse forms of "social justice" beyond exclusively self-interested arrangements—"better or worse" depending on the quality of the loves that bind.

(Santurri): We are agreed that Augustine is not a proleptic Hobbesian and this for all the reasons you state, pace Herbert Deane's association of the two perspectives in one tradition of political realism. But some other points in reaction to your last comments. You register uncertainty about the meaning of "guilt" and "punishment" when I say that in Augustinian realism "we are all guilty and rightfully punished with the unhappiness that saturates this fallen world" for our complicity in Adam's prideful rebellion. I'm not saying anything all that profound here, just that Augustine is pretty clear throughout that pain and sin in this fallen world are punishment for the sin of Adam. For Augustine we are all "guilty" with Adam in his original disobedience. So the agony of the judge who prays for deliverance from his necessities is an agony he deserves in virtue of the species connection with Adam. Thus, while Augustine's judge, or his statesman, or his soldier does not incur moral guilt for specific employments of coercion and violence serving the common good, that judge, statesman or soldier is, in virtue of connection with Adam's original sin, responsible for the excruciatingly unhappy circumstances that mark those employments and rightly suffers those circumstances as
punishment. In that sense the judge’s misery marks the judge’s guilt. I take it that
Augustinian realism, at least in Augustine's prototypical formulation, is bound up with
this narrative of original sin. I also take it that one challenge of the modern Augustinian
is to determine whether an Augustinian realism can be preserved without further
mystification once the Adamic story is demythologized, a demythologization required, I
presume, by the modern conviction that things like sin, guilt and responsibility are not
literally disseminated to subsequent generations. Pace Augustine, we can no longer take
seriously the claim that Adam passed his sin on to the rest of us through sexual
intercourse.\textsuperscript{27}

It seems you're attempting just such a critical retrieval of Augustinian realism
with your notion of responsibility without specific moral culpability in a given instance, a
notion glossed with O'Brien's responsibility through presence and Wilson's "moral
grief." On the face of things, these offer compelling accounts of wartime experience.
But I worry slightly about the danger of giving normative status to what in fact may be
pathological experiences however routine and understandable those experiences in
wartime are. I also worry about trading Augustinian mystifications of corporate
responsibility and solidarity in guilt for mystifications in another idiom. I suppose my
worries are Pelagian of a sort. I want to see ascriptions of responsibility for bad things
tied in some way to individual instances of dereliction, however remotely connected to
the bad things in question. So the soldier who feels a "burden of responsibility and grief"
or "guilt" in being present to a dying soldier he hasn’t killed has to tie this feeling to some
individual moral failure at least largely connected--e.g., he chose to fight in a war that he
sensed was immoral; he should have refused to go, and he knows this deep down; or the
horror he now witnesses reminds him of his own unnecessary brutality in another context. Of course, the Augustinian will frame all of this with an anthropological account insisting that all human beings are in fact derelict in this way--and this is part of what we mean by the fallen condition of humanity. The trick here is how to say this last without compromising ascriptions of full responsibility. All the Pelagian questions arise at this point. If all humans are in fact derelict in this way, can they be otherwise? And if they cannot be otherwise, can they be held responsible, etc., and so forth. These are large issues, needless to say.

I also wonder a bit about your connecting the experience of the soldier described by Tim O'Brien and the "grieving over the ills of war" described by Augustine in *City of God* XIX, 7 as well as your bringing both under a single rubric of "moral grief." O'Brien's soldier describes the guilt he feels and his sense of responsibility for the death of the fallen enemy he didn't kill. Augustine describes what he regards as an appropriate sense of sorrow over the horrors of war. Admittedly, for Augustine, among the horrors rightly lamented are the injustices that give rise even to just war, and thus it does seem reasonable to conclude that in commending sorrow over war's horrors he is commending a kind of moral grief. But in this text, at any rate, Augustine doesn't seem to be saying that the wise man should feel guilt or responsibility for the horrors of war lamented, just that the horrors should be lamented or regretted. Of course, one might say reasonably that a person who didn't so lament was morally deficient, but that's a different point. In any event, it seems to me that there are different kinds of "moral grief" being depicted by O'Brien and Augustine in that text. I'm prepared to hear that there are other moments in Augustine that are closer to O'Brien--though I can't think of any right now.
But you also say that your "Augustinian reading of H. Richard Niebuhr comes into play at this point" and that you "haven't said a whole lot about that take so far."

Agreed on this last--so maybe now is the time for a turn in that direction.

(Werpehowski): I am not disposed to disagree with anything you last wrote; rather, I'll say a word on behalf of a kind of inquiry into the character of the moral life that your remarks could be taken to reject.

Here's Augustine:

[F]or the reason I have mentioned, (though it may be that there are other and weightier reasons that are hidden from us) man was created as one individual; but he was not left alone. For the human race is, more than any other species, at once social by nature and quarrelsome by perversion. We are warned to guard against the emergence of this fault, or to remedy it once it has appeared, by remembering that first parent of ours, who was created by God as one individual with this intention: that from that one individual a multitude might be propagated, and that this fact should teach mankind to preserve a harmonious unity in plurality.²⁸
The beginning of the quotation refers to an earlier passage where he says that the origin of the race in one man was intended by God “more emphatically” to commend human unity and “the bonds of sympathy,” in that human beings may see that they “are bound together not merely by likeness in nature but also by the feeling of kinship.”

The “hidden reason,” I suppose, refers to the fitness of the restoration of harmony for fallen humanity in one man also, the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

You may think I am not only papering over Augustinian mystifications, but also multiplying them. Here I am, relying in a new way on the literal creation story in Genesis! No. I am interpreting Augustine to indicate that inscribed in our creaturely being, if you will, is an inclination to unity and concord with all human beings that is akin to “the feeling of kinship.”

This tendency to creaturely solidarity implies an awareness of individual responsibilities to, and not only for, one another that include, but are not limited to, specific deeds for which we are or are not culpable. The awareness may powerfully manifest itself or otherwise come into play in situations in which we find ourselves where bad things happen beyond our control. O’Brien’s expressions of “guilt” and self-blame seem odd, misplaced. “He did nothing wrong.” I’ll stipulate for the sake of argument that in his case there were no distantly related “derelictions.” He was “merely” “present.” Why is that such a problem for him? I want to hold out for investigation and reflection about our individual responsibilities that truthfully emerge, in wartime and other deeply tragic circumstances but not only there, simply in virtue of our involvement as human agents and patients in what is going on. “I did nothing ‘wrong.’ But I am involved, and hence caught up in this arena of dealing out death and suffering on a horrific scale. This
dead man, this human fellow—brother?—in this time and place calls me to give an account of myself, and to him, and I am bound to answer."

The answer may lead to calling oneself and one’s moral integrity into question, and in a way that could, eventually, damage one terribly. It may lead to critically reassessing or recasting, even if not finally rejecting, one’s involvement. It may make way for renewed, sharpened attention to caring for others as one can. The answer may be “I have to do something,” say, to shroud the dead man, not because we find him repugnant, but because it is unseemly and degrading that he, even an “enemy,” be open to the gaze of others.

(Santurri): Thanks. I don’t see my last set of remarks as rejecting what you are proposing here now. I had thought that in your earlier citation of O’Brien you were affirming the soldier’s self-ascription of "guilt" through mere "presence" and connecting that in some fashion to an Augustinian account of human solidarity in guilt via Adam’s original sin. But here I see that you are distancing yourself from that position and projecting instead an Augustinian vision of a divinely established human solidarity rooted in common descent from Adam. Because all human beings are one family as Adam’s progeny, O’Brien’s soldier, in witnessing the gruesome dying of this man who is both enemy and Adamic brother, questions himself as participant in a collective process that issues in such horrific results. That self-questioning might move in any number of directions: moral pain, moral grief, moral regret, moral conversion, moral repair. An
Augustinian just-war spirituality, in your rendering, will be especially attentive to such phenomenological trajectories. Agreed.

But I'm still waiting eagerly for your "Augustinian take" on the other Niebuhr brother--H. Richard. How about it?

(Werpehowski): Ok, Ed, here we go. I mentioned that Against Faustus is my point of departure. There Augustine claims that the “real evils in war” are “love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust for power and such like.” And “it is generally to punish these things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authority, good men undertake wars.”31 “Punishment” divinely considered is the just and merciful correction that humbles the proud and prompts them to repent and turn from their selfish idolatrous loves toward the good. Perhaps in tension with the above, Augustine also writes of the power and mystery of God’s providence. The reasons for the distribution of God’s judgments and mercies in war may be unknown to us, but are nonetheless just. The “measures and numbers and weights by which the Creator . . . arranges all things are concealed from our view”32 So, Augustine asks, who really knows “about the value of what human beings do and suffer” in wartime?33

H. Richard engages and re-visions these themes. Moving in reverse order: He conceives Christian moral agency to be a response to “what is going on” in the providential counsel of God, who would judge and destroy all the narrow, idolatrous
causes that occupy human history. At the same time “Christ is God’s word to us that God is faithful and true, that he does not desire the death of the sinner, that he is leading his kingdom to victory over all evil.” The Christian is called to discern God’s action in all actions upon him or her, and to respond to all such actions in a manner fitting to this divine action. In their response the faithful are involved in that “permanent revolution” which turns away from tribal gods and turns to and for all beings “with reverence, for all are friends in the friendship of the one to whom we are reconciled in faith.”

Augustine’s idea of corrective punishment finds expression in Richard’s claim that in war we suffer the judgment of God, who is “the rock against which we beat in vain, that which bruises and overwhelms us when we seek to impose our wishes, contrary to his, upon him . . . That structure of the universe, that will of God, does bring war and depression upon us when we bring it upon ourselves, for we live in the kind of world which visits our iniquities upon us and our children, no matter how much we pray and desire that it be otherwise.” The divine judgment is redemptive, meaning to chasten and change, transform, and redirect us. It beckons to repentance by having us reckon with the suffering of the innocent. “Wars are crucifixions. It is not the mighty, the guides and leaders of nations and churches, who suffer most in them, but the humble, little people who have had little to do with the framing of great policies.”

God’s judgment in war extends to all of its contending groups and forces. “When Isaiah saw that Assyria was the rod of God’s anger whereby Israel was chastised he also saw that Assyria was wrong before God and that the axe had no right to boast of itself ‘against him that heweth therewith.’” Hence faithful response can never mean justification of either the enemy or the self, but only a humble recognition that in one’s
fallenness one is, nevertheless held up by a graciousness that does not brook but destroys our inevitably constricted standards of judgment by the mercy of God. At first glance this looks like a big departure from Augustine, but in light of his recognition of the mystery of providence, is it? And if it is, how much?

What do you think so far? Thanks.

(Santurri): Good to see finally the "other" Niebuhr brother in the mix, a rich concoction indeed.

But I have to say that I am a bit surprised by the role H. Richard is playing in your Augustinian account of war. I had expected to see a different kind of connection, and what I am seeing prompts some questions.

First, what I had expected to see. The point of departure would have been the end of Christ and Culture where Richard identifies Augustine, with some reservations, as a "Christ-transforming-culture" or "conversionist" type of Christian social thinker. In this type, Christ neither opposes culture, nor merges with it, nor stands above it, nor relates paradoxically to it. Rather for the "conversionist" and thus for the Augustinian, Christ transforms and elevates a cultural convention and created human nature corrupted by sin. Accordingly, in the ethical domain, "the moral virtues men develop in their perverse cultures are not supplanted by new graces, but are converted by love." As you know, Paul Ramsey later ran with this H-R Niebuhrian theme when he advocated generally the idea of love's transforming justice and applied the idea in his Christian ethical
assessment of war. Augustine figured prominently in that assessment with his rejection of violence in self-defense as incompatible with Christian charity and with his limitation of violent defense to defense of the innocent neighbor. Thus, in Ramsey's "Christ-transforming-culture" reading, Augustine offered, at least by implication, a normative account of war that transformed and elevated a culturally available just-war theory, which presumably had permitted wars in self-defense. Other things could be said here about an H. R. Niebuhrian-inspired, Augustinian vision of love's transforming or elevating or converting or redeeming culturally legitimated or naturally warranted just-war traditions and theories, but my larger point here is that I expected you would continue this normative trajectory and am surprised not to see as much.

Instead you take H. Richard's "war essays" as a point of departure (reasonably enough) and forge links with Augustine's Against Faustus. Your mediating construct is a reading of war as divine providential judgment and correction of sin. But it seems to me that the character and tone of these two providential accounts are very different. Augustine's principal emphasis in Against Faustus is to depict just wars as implementing God's justice in their punishing and correcting the unjust (though I grant your point that Augustine qualifies the position with his observation that we cannot know precisely how God's justice, in all its particular detail, is manifest in war). For H. Richard, in those powerful war essays, bellicose history is a kind of baptismal unfolding, a dying and rising of selves brought on by the tragedy of war and the human recognition, via cruciform reflection, of complicity in that tragedy. In war, that is, the innocent are crucified; all agents and observers of the war, whether they are on the side of “justice” or not, can realize their complicity in that crucifixion, repent of that complicity and be transformed
thereby. God, then, judges and corrects centrally by this process and less, if at all, by the punishment of the unjust in a just war. Indeed, it is striking that in those war essays H. Richard typically marshals his theological observations in support of a radical critique of the kind of assessments just-war theorists make, and his critique is focused in part on what he sees as just-war theory’s misguided presumption that it can clearly ascertain guilt to punish it.  Here H Richard sounds less like Augustine and more like brother Reinhold (recall our earlier exchange about Reinhold’s critique of just-war theory). Toward the end of your last set of remarks you do acknowledge some (apparent?) tension between Augustine and H. Richard on just-war theory’s claims to retributive justice, though you also seem to question the significance of the tension for your position. In any event, I may be seeing the difference between the Against Faustus Augustine and the "war essay" H. Richard Niebuhr on this matter as more profound than you do.

To return to 9-11 and to paint admittedly with very broad strokes, I'm prompted to say that the sensibility of the Against Faustus Augustine leads naturally to something like Jean Bethke Elshtain's response to 9-11 in her controversial Just War Against Terror. The central issue for her was the "inequality of guilt," the fidelity to moral absolutes, the avoidance of relativism, the insufficiency of an unqualified pacifism and the moral necessity of punishing the horrific injustice of Al Qaeda terrorism. Alternatively, the sensibility of the "war essay" H. Richard Niebuhr leads naturally to something like Rowan Williams’ response to 9-11 in his equally controversial Writing in the Dust. The central issue for Williams was the formidable complexity of moral assessments and understanding "the cross of Jesus" as "not a magnified sign of our own suffering," but "the mark of God's work in and through the deepest vulnerability."
Indeed, in many respects I see your initial conversation with Gil on 9-11 as mapping that debate and the “debate” between Augustine and H. Richard. To express proportionately:

Augustine/H. Richard = Elshtain/Williams = Meilaender/Werpehowski.

But I fear that I'm missing something crucial, and you mentioned that there was "more" in your account. So give me the more or show me what I'm missing or both.

(Werpehowski): You think you were surprised!

The kind of “conversionist” reading you present is how I usually relate Augustine to H. Richard. Ramsey meant to advance the relation. The problem is that when Augustine explicitly writes about war, the themes you present hardly jump out, at least not to me.

Indeed, nothing near a systematic “just war theory” emerges, however much I agree with the common wisdom that he is a “father” of it in the West given a number of important “elements” in his thought.46 From him you have claims that wars may need to be fought in a fallen world to defend justice, for a “just cause” identified by a “legitimate authority” and waged with a “right intention,” i.e., the end of peace.47 In addition to these “jus ad bellum” norms, Augustine stresses that warriors must be “peaceful in warring,” and that has led contemporary thinkers to reflect on norms having to do with “jus in bello,” or just conduct in war.48 As you say, Augustine appears to reject for Christians resistance in self-defense, but to permit resistance to defend the innocent neighbor under unjust assault. The American Roman Catholic Bishops go so far as to name that
“Augustinian insight” the “central premise” of just war theory, and Ramsey “rums” with that insight to defend the rule that in the conduct of war noncombatants are immune from direct attack; for what justifies war (defense of the innocent) must also limit it (no assaults on the innocent can be consistent with defending them).

Again, I see these as “elements” found in “bits and pieces” of Augustine’s writing. I am picking up on another of these and trying to draw a line from it to H. Richard Niebuhr. “[T]he children, wives, and mothers, humble obedient soldiers, peasants on the land, who in the tragedy of war are made an offering for sin” stand present to us in their vicarious suffering. “All agents and observers of the war,” as you say, may “realize their complicity.”

“Just wars” presuppose that Christians (and others) waging it may partake in a real conversion to God and His cause of universal concord and right order by His merciful grace. Conversion means abandoning moralistic judgments that isolate or privilege or justify ourselves or our allies. It requires disinterested attention to “what duty we have to perform in view of what we have done amiss and in view of what God is doing.”

Wars go forward if they must as a miserable necessity, without “self-defensiveness, all self-aggrandizement, all thinking in terms of self as central.” With this may emerge renewed responsibility for the innocent upon whose backs have fallen the self-imprisoning, self-defensive evils of nations and other collectives. In sum, “to carry on war under the judgment of God is to carry it on as those who repent of their self-centeredness and who now try to forget about themselves while they concentrate on the deliverance of their neighbors.”
Yet how different Against Faustus appears, since H. Richard explicitly attacks just war theory as a narrowly “retributive” account. What is Augustine’s treatise if it is not “punitive,” and hence “retributive?”

Here’s my response.

The “punitive” account is critically distinct from retributive “self-defense” and all its egocentric dangers. Punishment for Augustine has as its primary warrant “the repentance and conversion of the transgressor.” War “will be waged in a spirit of benevolence; their aim will be to serve the defeated more easily by securing a peaceful society that is pious and just. . . . For the good would even wage war with mercy, were it possible, with the aim of taming unrestrained passions and destroying vices that ought . . . to be uprooted or suppressed.”

So wartime punishment is corrective and steers clear of self-defense. Against Faustus, however, seems to present this scenario in the way of the (unambiguously?) just correcting, and not selfishly, the (unambiguously?) guilty. Hence not everyone involved in war in the face of innocent suffering is “complicit” and called to reform

If we take the City of God as central to Augustine’s view of political societies, that position misses the mark on his own terms. To paraphrase Paul Ramsey, who sought to “correct” him on a related issue, if Augustine believed that there was always only one side that can be regarded as under God’s judgment, requiring the “punishment” of correction in the wars a Christian will find himself responsibly engaged, then he should not have believed this.

Why? Augustine holds that all peoples short of the City of God fail to be just. Their particular loves and the earthly peace they strive for are disordered because they are
not ordered to God. Accordingly, all nations will overreach, loving what is “theirs” idolatrously. They “desire the permanent enjoyment” of their common life, and thus “are resolved that this too shall not pass away.”

Each Niebuhr uses Augustinian “elements” for his respective account of responsible political agency. The cruciform shape of the reality of war is unique to H. Richard, and it contributes both a wide view about the causes of conflict and war and a redemptive edge that pushes in hope to the sources of just and authentic peace. Reinhold’s use of Augustine to defend the political relevance of the Reformation doctrine of “justification by faith” is unique to him (more on the latter later, I hope), and that contributes a decisive resolve to identify and combat grave injustice with armed force when that is morally required.

I see Jean Elshtain to be more representative of Reinhold’s vision and Rowan Williams more representative of his brother’s. Each Niebuhr, shaped by Augustine, roughly alludes to the other’s position while articulating his own. Reinhold “gets it” about the equality of sin. Richard “gets it” that wars are sometimes a moral necessity. What I am trying to “get” or “get at” is how the each position may enrich and, as I wrote earlier, correct possible excesses or deficiencies in the other.

(Santurri): I think your reading of the Niebuhr brothers as complements to each other in a largely unified vision of war is convincing (though I have a harder time seeing Elshtain and Williams as analogous complements to each other). As to the unified vision
itself, I find it normatively attractive, and more than anything else I'm reminded, again, of Lincoln by it--especially the Lincoln of the Second Inaugural, this president who could issue the Order of Retaliation or wage "hard war" against the South and at the same time acknowledge northern as well as southern complicity in the evils that gave rise to the belligerency in the first place.\textsuperscript{60} But to cut to the Augustinian chase, and somewhat telegraphically:

(1) In my mind, the strongest connection you draw between this Niebuhrian/Lincolnian vision of war and Augustine's is in noting the latter's insistence that all historical political regimes fall short of the City of God. As Lincoln might have put the point, "the Almighty has his own purposes" beyond those of the parties in a belligerency.\textsuperscript{61} Recognizing as much should induce the kind of humility and reservation about ultimate moral judgment in war that the Niebuhrs typically commend and that you seem to be commending qua Augustinian realism.

(2) But, as you suggest, there are different "elements" of Augustine, different "bits and pieces," on the morality of war, and the elements one finds in Against Faustus overall, I think, are not easily assimilated into the normative vision you associate with the Niebuhr brothers. There Augustine combats Faustus's objections to the Old Testament rooted in Manichaean pacifistic reservations about the wars of Moses. Augustine's response is that war is not intrinsically evil, that it is fully legitimate if commanded by God. While, as you suggested earlier, Augustine does acknowledge a measure of uncertainty about how God's justice plays out in particular wars, the general tone of his response in this text is not one of modesty and humility in moral judgment about war or reflective of a sense of universal complicity in war's evils. Rather his tone is that of holy-
warrior or crusader confidence in basic moral assessments. Moses is justified unequivocally in his wars by divine command, and he's justified in the necessary means employed, no matter how cruel on their face, precisely because he was, as you suggest, the instrument of God's punishing injustice. "It is, therefore, malicious to blame Moses for waging war since he ought to be blamed less if he waged war on his own accord than if he were not to do so."\(^{62}\) Admittedly you separate your own position from this crusading dimension in Against Faustus by noting Ramsey's corrective of Augustine on the possibility of unambiguous guilt and innocence in war, a corrective rooted, ironically, in Augustinian principle itself. But now it seems there are many Augustines on war. All of this makes me wonder about the precise normative status of "Augustine" in your Christian realism about war. I surmise that for you the controlling Augustinian insight in your realism derives from Augustine's account of sin's universality and the consequent distancing of all political-moral perspectives from the ultimate normative perspective of the City of God. This distancing generates a critical principle that sometimes might be employed, interestingly enough, in criticism of Augustine himself on certain particular issues. Nicely done!

(3) You do try to retrieve one moment of critical realism from Against Faustus in proposing that Augustine's "punitive account" of war's legitimation is "critical of... 'self-defense' and all its dangerous egocentric perils." I grant that in principle an exclusively punitive rationale for war would preclude justifications from self-defense, and I grant the independent point that appeals to self-defense do carry the "egocentric perils" you identify. But punitive accounts of war's legitimation carry their own distinctively crusading perils. As Reinhold often suggested, the cruelty of the crusader is
unsurpassed and can lead to the most horrific of injustices. And as the legal philosopher Moshe Halbertal has said just recently, the spirit of self-sacrifice is sometimes complicit in an evil greater than egoism:

Misguided self-transcendence is morally more problematic and lethal than a disproportionate attachment to self-interest. In line with a long philosophical tradition, I think that self-transcendence does constitute the moral act. But from that fact itself, self-sacrifice also derives its corrupting force. Misdirected self-transcendence falsely simulates a noble moral act.... The religious sensitivity to such a phenomenon is the reason why misguided self-transcendence constitutes the ultimate sin of idolatry. Idolatry, in this sense, is the utmost surrender to a cause that is not worthy of the corresponding sacrifice.\textsuperscript{63}

May there be something Augustinian about Halbertal’s observations too?

Alas, not quite as "telegraphic" as I had originally envisioned. Sorry.

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(Werpehowski): The appeal to Lincoln reminds me of Reinhold’s discussions of his Second Inaugural Address.\textsuperscript{64} There are also resonances between that speech and what H. Richard says about how war humbles all, “winners” and “losers,” under God’s judgment. Also, one might see a “twist” in Lincoln’s view of “corrective justice” that stalks the very
crusading tendencies you bring to light with your attention to Halbertal’s “misguided self-transcendence.” Much to ponder, but not now.

I see your worries about my tracking a line from Against Faustus. But I concur that Augustine’s theology of the two cities saves Augustine some, both for my interpretation of him and from himself, i.e., from his own unilateral, retributive vision of war in the anti-Manichean tract. There are “many Augustines” on war (including the “Augustines” who both risk and refuse an idolatrous “misguided self-transcendence!). The “elements” are open-ended and disparate; different inclusions, exclusions, combinations and emphases will yield different moral accounts.\textsuperscript{65} I hope that I am not being unfaithful to Bishop of Hippo; but I suppose I think there are more than a few ways not unreasonably to keep faith.

The “Augustinian realism” underlying these reflections on the Niebuhrs and a “just war spirituality” is first, as you note, the universality of sin and the “distance” afforded by his two cities theology. There is, second, a vivid sense of living really in a world where God providentially preserves, corrects, directs, and eschatologically surpasses and completes social existence in time. To repeat, Augustine writes that earthly polities are founded on fratricide. Accordingly, Romulus slays Remus. He also says that Romulus founded Rome as a refuge for criminals, so “the remission of sins, the promise which recruits the citizens for the Eternal Country, finds a kind of shadowy resemblance in that refuge.”\textsuperscript{66} Human values like justice and mercy and peace that realize, even if only by a “shadowy resemblance,” authentic human relations well ordered to God may and should be pursued responsibly in political life, even if by way of war among sinful parties.
Reinhold interpreted this possibility through the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, which “in the realm of justice means that we will not regard the [self-interested] pressures and counter-pressures, the tensions, the overt and covert conflicts by which justice is achieved and maintained, as normative in the absolute sense; but neither will we ease our conscience by seeking to escape our involvement in them.”

God is redemptively at work, moreover, even in war to turn us—all of us—away from ourselves and toward those values and bonds that honor, ambiguously but still meaningfully, our Highest Good and the community He graciously governs. H. Richard signals this when he writes that Augustine’s “conversionist” “elements” would prompt Christians to “look forward with hope to the realization of the great eschatological possibility, demonstrated and promised in the incarnate Christ—the redemption of the created and corrupted human world and the transformation of mankind in all its cultural activity . . . the redirection of all man’s work among temporal things into an activity glorifying God.”

We acknowledge grave injustice wrought by the “inequality of guilt” and seek to rectify it for the end of a more just peace. So we will wage “just wars.” We will lament the necessity, sorrowing for the injustice and with it for the whole world that, in its selfish partiality, defensiveness, and plain pathetic smallness, makes wars necessary while seeming ever to live in its shadow. And we will by God’s grace live and act in response to His corrective judgment and merciful offer to glorify Him in service and sacrifice for a common human life worthy of Him and, in and for His glory, ourselves.
(Santurri): I now have a better sense of what you mean by "Augustinian realism" and "just-war spirituality." I have just three observations in final response, the first, specific and exegetical, the second and third, more general and far-reaching.

First, I've always read the Reinhold "justification by faith" text you cite (along with the following sentence that you don't cite--see below) as affirming the "dirty hands" position that we agreed earlier could not be part of any realism associated with Augustine. In my reading of the Niebuhr text, he criticizes, at least implicitly, a sectarian withdrawal from political life as incurring moral guilt since such withdrawal abandons a Christian responsibility to the world, but he also acknowledges that political engagement inevitably brings moral guilt with it. So moral guilt is unavoidable since even those who withdraw from the world get their hands dirty in sinning by omission. "We will know that we cannot purge ourselves of the sin and guilt in which we are involved by the moral ambiguities of politics without also disavowing responsibility for the creative possibilities of justice." But the message of justification by faith is the message that salvation doesn't depend on moral perfection. For Niebuhr, to insist on a morally clean way out of this predicament is to deny the need for justification by faith, and such denial is presumably an expression of prideful self-righteousness. Thus "justification by faith in the realm of justice means" in some sense an affirmation of genuine moral dilemmas where the agent does something at least residually wrong no matter what he or she does.69 As you know, apart from the question of how such a view meshes with Augustine, I have argued that acknowledging the existence of moral dilemmas in that sense poses major problems for the Christian doctrine of God since such dilemmas signify either incoherence in the
divine will or some other deficiency in God's nature. I do think you can preserve your larger point as well as fidelity to the doctrine of justification by faith without affirming genuine moral dilemmas, but here just see my Perplexity.\textsuperscript{70}

Second, as you noted in your earlier remarks, for Augustine the real evil in war is "love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust for power and such like." But war for Augustine can and must be "waged" without this evil--"in a spirit of benevolence," as you quote him, or "with a sort of kind harshness," as he also says in the same letter you cite.\textsuperscript{71} In other words, for Augustine one can and must love the enemy one kills, and all of this has prompted me to wonder just how "realistic" this view is as psychology of war. For example, military social-psychologist Dave Grossman has argued recently that human beings harbor such a natural aversion to killing other humans that learning to kill in warfare requires a soldier's cultivating, through relentless training in depersonalization or demonization, either a brutal indifference toward or an implacable hatred of the enemy. Grossman also suggests that this radical transformation of personality typically comes at great psychic cost to the agent, including perhaps the "moral injury" you referred to earlier.\textsuperscript{72} But whatever the score on that last matter, how do we assess the "realism" of Augustinian dicta to love the enemy in wartime given Grossman's psychological observations?\textsuperscript{73}

The third response is related to the second. As my thoughts unfold in this exchange, I find myself worrying more and more about the crusader temptation. We noted how Augustine, himself, succumbs to the temptation, whatever his sense of political limits in the final analysis. And I'm inclined to think now that a certain kind of "realism" about war counsels special vigilance on this matter. Indeed, Reinhold once
said that "all wars are religious wars, whether fought in the name of historic creeds or not" since "[m]en do not fight for causes until they are 'religiously' devoted to them; which means not until the cause seems to them the center of their universe of meaning." That may be to overstate the point; but Niebuhr's claims about the inevitable religiosity of war should raise the question in anyone's mind whether the "reality" of war is indeed reasonably subject to the kinds of moral constraints and reservations that he, himself, seems to commend in certain moments and that certainly are a centerpiece of your Augustinian realism.

Interestingly enough, the case of Lincoln is again instructive as you hint in your last message. Indeed, it is sometimes said that when Lincoln changed the goal of the Civil War from simple preservation of the Union to Union preservation plus emancipation, he transformed the belligerency from a morally limited enterprise to a crusading total war, whatever theological tentativeness he might have expressed about the war in the Second Inaugural. Robert Kagan's remarks in his book Dangerous Nation are representative:

Lincoln recognized perhaps better than anyone the problems inherent in such a crusade. . . . But Lincoln did not let theological doubt deter him. Uncertainty about God's intentions did not absolve men and leaders from deciding to go to war, and he was prepared to press forward and let God decide who was right, on the battlefield.

The ideological nature of the conflict [as a war for emancipation rather than simply preserving the union] . . .
helped determine the brutal, horrific manner of the struggle. When the war became ideological, it also became a "total" war waged not only between combatants but between and against peoples... [Sherman] understood that the South was fighting for a way of life and that the people of the South would not surrender until they concluded that the loss of their civilization was preferable to the horrors of war. Therefore the North must "make the war so terrible... [and] make them so sick of war that generations would pass away before they would again appeal to it."

Grant and Sherman did make the war terrible, with Lincoln's full support... If God willed that the war must continue... then Lincoln would devastate the South and its people... The Union's conduct of the Civil War would remain, for American commanders in both world wars of the twentieth century, 'the model of a great war... a war of "power unrestrained" unleashed for "complete conquest."' 75

Kagan's is not an uncontroversial interpretation of Lincoln or the Civil War. But neither is his reading obviously implausible.76 At any rate, his account strikes perhaps another kind of "realistic" note about the tension between an ideal discourse of humility in the prosecution of war (such as one finds in Lincoln's Second Inaugural) and the real practice
of wars, especially those motivated by supremely just causes. Do we have here another variation on Augustinian realism? But, no, that would be to multiply Augustines beyond the point of endurance!

Bill, this has been an enormously stimulating exchange. I hope it has been as fruitful for you as it has been for me.

(Werpehowski): What? We’re done? I was just getting started!

Seriously, the exchange has been terrific, thanks.

Now I'm thinking it might be useful to share these ideas--all of them--with a wider audience.

(Santurri): That's not a bad idea.

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4 The City of God V, 26, pp. 221-224.
7 Ibid., 122.
13 Oakes, The Radical and the Republican, 213.
16 The City of God XIX, 6, pp. 859-861.
18 The City of God XIX, 6, p. 860.
19 The City of God XIX, 6, p. 861.

27 *The City of God* XIII, 14, p. 523.

28 *The City of God* XII 28, p. 508.

29 Ibid., XII 22, p. 502.

30 See Wilson, "Moral Grief and Reflective Virtue."

31 Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XXII 74, at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140622.htm

32 Ibid., XXII, 78.


39 Niebuhr, "War as the Judgment of God," 51.


43 H. Richard Niebuhr, "War as Crucifixion" in *War in the Twentieth Century*, 64-65.


52 Niebuhr, "War as the Judgment of God," 51.

53 Ibid., 53.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 54.

56 "Introduction," in *Augustine: Political Writings*, xxii.

59 Ibid., 31.
62 Against Faustus the Manichaeus Book XXII, 78 in Augustine: Political Writings, trans. Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas Kries (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994) 225-226. Indeed, Augustine is even more pointed elsewhere in his commentary on Joshua 11:14: “One should not at all think it a horrible cruelty that Joshua did not leave anyone alive in those cities that fell to him, for God himself had ordered this. However, whoever for this reason thinks that God himself must be cruel and does not wish to believe then that the true God was the author of the Old Testament judges as perversely about the works of God as he does about the sins of human beings. Such people do not know what each person ought to suffer. Consequently, they think it a great evil when that which is about to fall is thrown down and when mortals die” (Questions on Joshua 16, quoted in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament IV: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, ed. John R. Franke [Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005] 67). Moshe Halbertal, On Sacrifice (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) 78.
76 For a similar view see Harry S. Stout, Beyond the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War (New York: Viking, 2006) 189.