Andrew Fiala and Jennifer Kling: Can War Be Justified? A Debate

Reviewed by Gordon Hertel

War is often described as the ultimate cruelty, and with over a hundred ongoing armed conflicts across the globe, all generations are coming face to face with this cruelty. Fighting continues in Ukraine and Gaza, and civil wars rage on in Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar and many other countries. With the advent of the internet, we are more aware of ongoing conflicts than ever before. Despite this knowledge, we still lack the answers for the most important question of our time: for what reasons do we continue to wage war? Fields of literature of all kinds have sought to identify these justifications for war, be they philosophical, strategic, or societal in nature.

Can War Be Justified? by Andrew Fiala and Jennifer Kling is a summary of two sides of this debate; one side is Just War Theory (JWT) which states that some wars can be justified, while the other side is a pacifist argument which states that most wars cannot be justified. This monograph is written by the two authors in the form of a dialogue. Fiala takes the pacifist perspective. His previous works demonstrate an extensive knowledge of pacifism, ethics, theology, and politics. He is a professor of philosophy at California State University and has written books on pacifism since 2004. Kling argues for the JWT perspective. Her focus area includes political philosophy, war and peace, feminism, and race. Her other works delve into subjects such as activism, refugees, genocide, and pacifism. She is currently an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado Springs. These two authors have long tenure in the field of war and peace, and their debate represents a culmination of decades of study.

Prior to any debate, however, David Barnes (professor of English and philosophy at the United States Military Academy) provides a foreword. This section establishes the goals for the debate quite well. Barnes states, "upon reflection, we ought to ask ourselves (1) whether war is inevitable and (2) whether war can ever be morally justified; (3) if war can be justified, then how so; and (4) if war is not inevitable and it cannot be morally justified, should we ever go to war or fight in war?" (xiii). These questions make up the core of the monograph. The introduction serves well in setting the tone for the debate.

Fiala and Kling also provide further context on the upcoming debate in the preface. The target audience is established as undergraduate students or people new to the study of pacifism and JWT (xiv). The goal of this book, it follows, is to introduce readers to the varied points and nuances of this long-lasting debate, all while remaining understandable for those who are entering the discourse for the first time. The preface also dedicates its opening sentences to the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, which, as the authors note, will become a crucial case study for both pacifists and just war theorists (xvii). The authors justify the absence of more nuanced topics from the debate in stating their attempt to remain approachable for those unfamiliar with the field. Fiala and Kling end the preface on a hopeful note that international collaboration will put an end to armed conflict and create a more peaceful future – which is the collective goal of both the just war theorist and the pacifist. The following sections are framed around a dialogue between the pacifist perspective – taken by Fiala – and the just war theorist perspective – taken by Kling.

Chapter 1 is written by Fiala and explores the pacifist argument. The opening statements are focused on three central claims: "1. War produces bad consequences including death, destruction, and dislocation. 2. War involves bad (evil or wicked) intentions and actions that are intrinsically evil. 3. War solves nothing in the realm of ideas" (3). These statements summarise the consequentialist perspective, the deontological perspective, and the pacifist tradition in a brief and understandable fashion. Fiala uses the next sections to further elaborate on these perspectives and utilise compelling examples. Both the consequentialist and deontological pacifist arguments are unified in their support for the pacifist tradition. Demanding peace is one thing, but the pacifist tradition insists that the means to ensure peace likewise be peaceful in nature. Where the just war tradition seeks to wage war peacefully with the goal of preventing further conflict, the pacifist tradition instead focuses its efforts on institutional, societal, and global change through non-violent resistance. Fiala's analysis is well done and demonstrates extensive knowledge of not only the pacifist sphere of literature, but the JWT sphere as well. Despite both perspectives sharing the same goal of a peaceful world, Fiala criticises the JWT by using Martin Luther King Jr.'s argument: unjust means cannot pursue a just end; likewise, war is an unjust means and cannot be used to achieve peaceful ends. Fiala's opening statement provides a deep look into the realm of pacifist theory and tradition and considers numerous perspectives and examples to back up the three central claims.

Chapter 2 is written by Kling and outlines Just War Theory. Her opening statement outlines the main arguments for contemporary JWT, as well as the stringent requirements necessary to make a war *just*. This section is focused on three of these requirements: *jus ad bellum* (justice of going to war), *jus in bello* (justice in war), and *just post bellum* (justice after war) (66). Kling centres her

opening statements around these requirements, which provides a framework for her argument that war can be justified in certain cases. Kling explores each of the three requirements, briefly outlining their main restrictions and considers both traditionalist and revisionist perspectives. It is here where she defines the overarching goal of JWT: "The entire goal of jus ad bellum, jus in bello, and jus post bellum is to restrict warfare to only those wars that are necessary and proportionate" (74). The difficulty in the realm of JWT, it follows, is determining when war is *necessary* and *proportionate*. In the following sections Kling delves further into the details of JWT. She considers more nuanced aspects of the theory such as the use of JWT to bring groups to the table for negotiation, the danger war poses to groups caught in the crossfires, as well as the role JWT plays against oppression. These following sections focus deeply on the people affected by war, be they refugees, civilians, or soldiers. When considering whether a war is just, it is vital to also consider the role *everyone* plays within it. Kling argues against the consideration of refugees as collateral damage – a move which is gaining traction in the JWT field – but unfortunately does not divest much time into exploring this further. Kling concludes with an overarching summary of her arguments in support of JWT. She reiterates that it is a philosophical body of theory flexible to critique, and that its theorists view war only as a last resort in order to stop further harm. She concludes by stressing that war is difficult to justify. Her contributions to the debate are well founded and make use of strong examples. While some areas would have done well with further analysis, the opening statements clearly demonstrate Kling's experience and knowledge in the field and present this expertise in a very concise and understandable fashion.

After the opening statements, the debate is structured around each author's response to the other's theory. Throughout these responses, the other author also makes small statements found in cutouts. This helps the monograph read like a discussion. Fiala begins by responding to Kling's opening statements. The pacifist, Fiala argues, would take issue with the supposed necessity of war and instead prioritise non-violent preventative measures. He also stresses that pacifism is absolute, whereas JWT leaves too much room for interpretation. These are good points which demonstrate how JWT might be used to justify dangerous backsliding and militarist behaviour when used with ill intent. Kling's replies in this section are focused on the concept that JWT should incorporate pacifism as a goal and must remain vigilant against this danger. This is further expanded upon in Kling's response to Fiala's opening statement, which begins with the statement: "every just war theorist worth their salt would rather pacifism prevail in the world" (152). Kling focuses intently on weighing both the consequences and the dangers of patriotic religious followings. Her first two replies are focused on the nuanced problems of consequentialism. She then warns of the dangers of using patriotic Christianity (and other religions) to justify war, because although religions may appear morally sound, they often create narratives that support unquestioning loyalty. Her reply is concise and well structured. It points out the similarities between JWT and pacifism quite well and makes a strong case for collaboration. After these replies, a brief conclusion summarises the points on both sides and the monograph concludes.

The core arguments of *Can War Be Justified?* seem simple at first, but the work excels in displaying the many complexities of the debate. Fiala and Kling's goal is "to bring people into thinking through these topics in a systematic way" (xiv), and the debate is comprehensively structured to facilitate this. Both authors present their arguments and case studies in a very compelling manner. The monograph is an easy read while being full of important information, questions, and examples that can leave the reader pondering this topic long after reading.

Considering both perspectives, it is impossible to say which one provides a stronger argument for its case. Both authors, as mentioned, provide concise explanations, meaningful arguments, as well as helpful and important case studies. They also convey the numerous similarities between both traditions in a clear manner, something which might come as a surprise to the reader. The dialogue is intended to be read by those new to the debate, and its goal is to present each author's perspectives on the three central questions mentioned in the preface. In this regard, the monograph succeeds in achieving what it set out to do. Both Fiala and Kling address the questions outlined in the preface in unique ways, summarising their experience and knowledge in the field. This work is well adjusted to the target audience, and any bachelor's student or person new to the dialogue could easily read and understand the many nuanced points it makes.

When it comes to more complex issues, however, the monograph is unfortunately found to be lacking in several ways. Although the authors admit in the preface that analysing the many nuances of JWT and pacifism would detract from the flow of the argument, the reader is still left with a feeling that important topics have been left out. Take for example future generations. War and its horrendous effects on land, people, and society are intergenerational damages which cause intergenerational trauma. Kling does make mention of a "collective psychic scar" (153) present in Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, this is mentioned only within the context of "culture, politics, and spirituality" (153) rather than taking to account the event's impact on future generations more directly. The future is only the subject elsewhere when assessing consequences for pacifism. But this is insufficient. Would JWT consider the negative impacts of war on future generations *collateral damages*? Could the consequentialist pacifist weigh the damages on future generations when considering whether a war is just? These are questions Fiala and Kling could have addressed in their respective opening statements or their replies. While it is true that this monograph is primarily concerned with the question of a justifiable war, the possible deaths of future generations ought to be considered in the justification presented or the arguments against it.

'War' is a dirty word. The term carries with it destruction on a grand scale, the displacement and killing of many civilians, and a prolonged generational struggle. The suffering and pain of war is considered self-evident. It follows that those who wage war don't always consider it as such. Russia's 'special military operation' is a good example of how terminology can be intentionally used to influence how citizens view cruelty. These shifts in perception have the capacity to consequently shift perceptions of war overall. How do people attempt to justify war by simply avoiding the term? And where might we place 'military exercises', 'temporary occupations', and 'peacekeeping operations' within the JWT framework? Who maintains the responsibilities of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum* in these instances? While Fiala and Kling do not delve into these specific elements, nor into the role future generations play in warfare

and justifying war, their piece certainly represents a strong and significant entry point into these debates. In this world of ever shifting justifications and definitions of warfare, *Can War Be Justified?* is a work dedicated wholeheartedly to clarity and readability which, combined with the thoroughness of its many arguments, makes it well worth a read.

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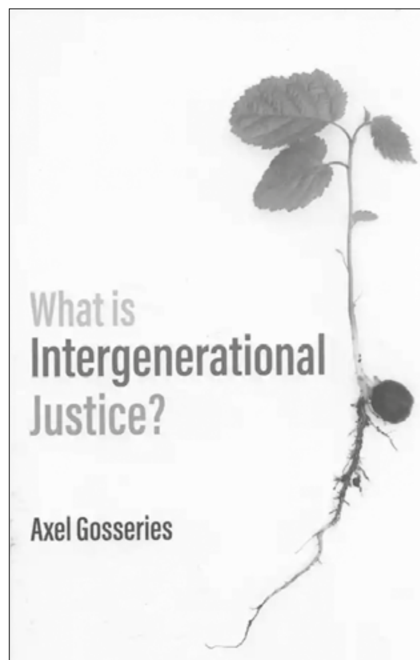
Axel Gosseries: What is Intergenerational Justice?

Reviewed by Helene Weinbrenner



As Axel Gosseries states in the acknowledgements to his latest book, philosophy is an intergenerational effort. So is the conundrum about finding a good definition for 'intergenerational justice'. *What is Intergenerational Justice?* is Gosseries' extremely valuable contribution to advancing this search. Gosseries, a professor for economic and social ethics in Louvain, Belgium, is already a well-established voice in the field: As early as 2004, he published the monograph *Penser la justice entre les générations*, followed by the influential volume *Intergenerational Justice* (2009), which he edited together with Lukas H. Meyer. In 2016, he co-edited *Institutions for Future Generations* with Iñigo González-Ricoy. This study can thus be read as the subtotal of years of multi-thematic and polyphonic scholarship.

In his introduction, Gosseries gives a clear and concise overview of his study's scope, ambitions, and limitations. He starts off by defending philosophy's merit for the field of intergenerational justice, underlining the importance of theoretical considerations and insights for deliberative democracies, and thereby making clear that his book not only addresses experts, but the general public alike. Gosseries then proceeds to specify the study's central concepts, provisionally defining intergenerational justice as justice "between individuals from different generations" (5). He also distinguishes between age groups and birth cohorts (i.e. groups in the same phase of life and groups defined by the time of their birth; the study's focus being on the latter), and between overlap and non-overlap scenarios (i.e. coexisting and non-coexisting generations).

The book is structured around questions which, in a way, add up to answer the titular question: *What is Intergenerational Justice*? In asking: "Can we act *unjustly* towards the future?" (20), chapter 1 deals with the non-identity problem (NIP) and presents three distinct strategies to overcome the challenges posed by its implications. The first strategy consists in introducing a 'new grammar' (36), i.e. a norm-based notion of harm, in order to disband the 'harm-justice-nexus' at the problem's core. The second strategy, 'containment', aims at utilising overlap generational dynamics to contain the scope of the non-identity problem. As Gosseries argues, its implications for efforts in intergenerational justice do not apply to any scenario that involves an intergenerational overlap since the older generation, in these cases, is generally taken to be able to adapt their actions to the younger generation's existence and 'identity'. Strategy three envisions a 'full severance' of the relation between justice and harm. Only a notion of justice that does not equate a violation of justice with harm allows for 'non-person affecting approaches', thereby effectively "freeing justice from the non-identity problem" (50), Gosseries concludes.

Having thus established that we *do* have duties of justice to the future, Gosseries moves on to ask: "*How much* do we owe to the future?" (52) by reflecting on the principles of justice that efforts to support intergenerational justice should rely on. He presents four separate accounts. The first is called 'non-decline'. This account is based on (indirect, descending) reciprocity between generations and prohibits dis-savings (i.e. passing on less than inherited). Gosseries criticises this account for not allowing for net transfers. The second account is a utilitarian one, aiming for a 'better future' and requiring savings from one generation to the next (i.e. passing on more than inherited). The third account comes from a sufficientarianist perspective and is threshold-based, allowing for both savings and dis-savings as long as future generations are guaranteed to 'have enough', as well as requiring savings if this is not the case. The fourth and last account, called the 'narrow path', is based on leximin egalitarianism, prioritising each generation's least well-off individual, thereby leaving only a narrow path for just intergenerational distribution and very little room for both savings and dis-savings. Gosseries himself shares the most common ground with this account, although he advocates for a less strict version of it. He then goes on to problematise the role of inheritance in each of these accounts,