

Chapter Title: “The Place of Political Forgiveness in *Jus Post Bellum*”

Abstract:

Jus post Bellum is, like *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*, a part of just war theory. *Jus post Bellum* is distinguished from the other parts of just war theory by being primarily concerned with the principles necessary for securing a just and lasting peace after the end of a war.

Traditionally, *jus post bellum* has focused primarily on three goals: [1] compensating those who have been the victims of unjust aggression, while respecting the rights of the aggressors, [2] punishing and rehabilitating those guilty of war crimes and other violations of the principles of *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello* and [3] developing measures that will prevent future war and violence (Orend 2000 and May 2012). In this chapter, I outline an account of political forgiveness and explain the role that political forgiveness can have in promoting the goals of *jus post bellum*.

My conception of political forgiveness requires some unpacking. Let me begin with individual forgiveness, which I understand along familiar Butlerian lines as the renunciation of resentment (Butler, Sermon IX in McNaughton 2017: 75-83), though with a bit of a twist. More exactly,

- An individual, I, forgives J for doing F if and only if I renounces all her own warrant for resenting J for doing F.

Resentment is a judgment-sensitive attitude, and, therefore, it tends to track judgments concerning its warrant (Scanlon 1998: 20 and Smith 2015). In cases of *perfect* forgiveness, I's renunciation causes her to cease feeling resentment toward J for doing F, though, of course, less perfect cases are possible.

I reject the idea that there is a sharp discontinuity between individual and political forgiveness, a position argued for by, e.g., Peter Digeser (1998 and 2001). By contrast, I understand political forgiveness as the renunciation of resentment by the relevant political body in question. With greater precision,

- A sovereign political body, P, forgives J for doing F if and only if P renounces all warrant that its citizens have for resenting, as part of their public lives, J for doing F.

A little more explanation is in order. Sovereign political bodies, such as national governments, claim degrees of control over the lives of their citizens, in both their public and their private aspects, though the claims with respect to the former tend to be considerably more expansive than the claims with respect to the latter. I assume here that, at least in the case of legitimate governments, these claims of control are often valid. Such governments may reasonably renounce certain grounds for motivating action in the public sphere. For example, governments may renounce all warrant that its citizens have, as part of their public lives, for hating members of marginalized groups. In practice, this means that, while citizens might continue to act in their private lives out of hatred for members of these groups, their appeal to this hatred is seen by the state as irrelevant to matters of law and public policy as well as being wholly out-of-place in

public discourse. Political forgiveness toward J for doing F, as I understand it, involves an analogous rejection of resentment, on the part of citizens in their public lives, toward J for doing F.

I turn now to the matter of how political forgiveness supports securing a just and lasting peace between former belligerents. With respect to the first goal of *jus post bellum*, political forgiveness helps to balance compensation for victims and respect for the rights of defeated aggressors by countering the all-too-human tendency to overvalue harms done to oneself and to members of one's group. As regards the second goal, political forgiveness plays a similar role but also provides a model for rehabilitation by exemplifying among the victorious the behavior to be emulated by the vanquished. Finally, political forgiveness promotes the third goal of *jus post bellum* by providing a space for nations to meet as moral equals rather than allowing one nation to have the moral high ground over the other.

None of this, of course, means that political forgiveness should be unearned or that it should be confused with condonation (Kolnai 1973 and Pettigrove 2004). However, the question of what is required to put oneself in a position to be forgiven as part of *jus post bellum* is a matter that goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

References

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