

Review of: "Active Peacebuilding as a Challenging Task of the Catholic Social Ethics"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare. However I am a Catholic.

The article, pleasant to read, is of particular interest as it involves the documented deployment of the Catholic Church's doctrine on just war.

However, it is susceptible to small improvements on the formal level. Thus, Francisco de Vitoria was not a Jesuit but a Dominican. And we miss authors like Tertuliano or Ginés de Sepúlveda. The phrase that Pechke incorporates "if you want peace, prepare for war" is a quote from Flavio Vegeccio Renato in *De Re Militari*.

The idea of a just war, evolves over time; it cannot be removed from its context without losing part of its meaning and praxis. It is not a timeless concept, quite the opposite and it also depends on the culture considered. In addition, war is a political activity, even though it is carried out by military means. It is politics that differentiates military activity - carried out in favor of a certain group - from a riot or from confrontations between bands of looters. And what is fair or unfair belongs to ethics or law.

So, the idea of a just war thus combines different conceptual planes (one political and the other ethical or legal) and does not admit a solution. It is an aporia, like a green touch or a sound solitude. In fact, the idea of a just war generates a melancholic loop whose lack of resolution is what generates all the literature we are talking about.

Can justice be obtained through a series of unjust acts? Where is the justice in killing a civilian, say a milkman, who carries weapons on the wrong side? It may be politically necessary and legal, but not fair at all.

Furthermore, war is not the opposite of peace. They are terms that are conjugated together and do not exist independently.

And war incorporates the dialectical contradiction that its goal is peace, that it is an empty concept that it must be explained in order to really mean anything. In fact, we can see a war as a confrontation between two ideas of peace. A conqueror is a friend of peace, he only aspires to it to consolidate his victory. In that way, victims are always peace enemies.

War and peace belong to politics, which is what gives them their meaning. And peace is not necessarily based on justice, but quite the opposite: on injustice that, being perceived as such, is bearable for all the parties.

Authors like Machiavelli show the contradictions that occur under the political level because they are related to political concepts. Political logic is a specific paradoxical logic a transformation logic that highlights the mutation of the ethical-

operative framework that occurs when moving from the particular-individual level to the general and group.

Thus, "César Borgia was considered cruel, and his cruelty, however, had repaired the evils of Romagna, extinguished its divisions, restored peace to it, and made it faithful. If we go into his conduct well, we will see that he was much more clement than the Florentine people were, when to avoid the reputation of cruelty he allowed Pistoia to be destroyed."

That is why he is unconcerned with the relationship between justice and politics, submitting the first to the second and putting the latter at the service of the general interest. In fact, both in chapter XXVI of *The Prince* and in his *History of Florence* use a literal quote from Tito Livio referring to the Samnite war : "only wars that are necessary are just; and weapons are pious when there is no hope outside of them".

This phrase is nothing less than the first moral justification of the war that has been made in the *History of the West*. Its value is therefore very high. In this way, ends, means and results are brought together in a kind of *ius post bellum* that evaluates the justice of a conflict in relation to them and a posteriori, resolving the conceptual paradox that embodies the idea of just war. To do this, it makes war a useful instrument to resolve blockade situations, using the final result as a criterion of truth and justice.