# IN DEFENSE OF THE COMMON GOOD:

# STRATEGY, ETHICS, AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMAND

BY

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2018

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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The conclusion and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lt Col Valpiani was commissioned in 2004 from the U.S. Air Force Academy. He holds a doctorate in astronautical engineering, and master's degrees in public administration and experimental flight test engineering. He has served in a variety of assignments to include fighter combat operations, flight command, and flight test. Lt Col Valpiani is a French Test Pilot School graduate and a senior instructor pilot with more than 1200 flying hours in over 30 U.S., European, and Soviet aircraft types. He has flown combat missions on two deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a privilege to reflect on war ethics, strategy, and command over the last several months. For this opportunity, I owe a debt of gratitude to the faculty of SAASS, who have been unfailingly generous in the intellectual freedom they have afforded me. In particular, I extend thanks to Col. Kristi Lowenthal and Dr. James Kiras, each of whom braved Aristotelean ethics with unflagging interest. Also, my thanks to Dr. Dan Connelly, who offered invaluable perspective as an instructor of the just war tradition.

Discussions with my SAASS classmates have sharpened this work and my reflections on war more generally. Pursuing truth alongside them has made for a deeply rewarding journey and I consider myself fortunate to be in their number. Aquinas, Aristotle, and Clausewitz have been constant, patient, and generous companions. I look forward to applying their wisdom for the common good of my fellow Airmen and Americans in the years ahead. Hours spent in the company of these giants were also hours spent away from my family, which has given freely and joyfully to invest in my intellectual formation. To my wife and children, I offer my deepest gratitude, and my love.

The following work encapsulates one officer's reflections on the nature of his profession and the profound obligations this nature imposes upon those who lead it. My colleagues, friends and family have greatly contributed to it, but I alone bear responsibility for its shortcomings. Though imperfect, perhaps it will help others in forging coherent links between strategy and ethics where they matter most: in the minds of future commanders.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is addressed primarily to just war ethicists and military thinkers in the virtue tradition. It argues that Aristotelian virtue ethics can give a coherent account of the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. To advance its case, it constructs and applies a four-part framework of the purposes, responsibilities, acts, and character of command uniting Aristotle's account of ethics with Clausewitz's account of strategy. This work's main contribution is to reframe just war principles in two ways: first, by integrating them into a unified account of moral psychology originating in war's purposes and ending in the commander's character, and second, by setting them in the context of strategic responsibilities. The result is a coherent framework which enables officers and scholars to investigate strategic and ethical aspects of command in an integrated manner.

*It is the task of theory, then, to study the nature of ends and means.*

Carl von Clausewitz

*Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself.... Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good.*

Aristotle

*Other activities in the state are directed to private utility, but the end of military activity is the protection of the entire common good.*

St. Thomas Aquinas

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## Introduction

> *What I would prefer is that you should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her. When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard.*
>
> Pericles

Pericles, in a funeral oration for the first-fallen soldiers of the Peloponnesian War, praised the dead for acting in a manner worthy of Athens, where the law "commands our deep respect…especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break."[1] The dead were praiseworthy because they had been "ashamed to fall beneath a certain standard,"[2] and had acted accordingly. Fifteen years later, a contingent of Athenian soldiers under the command of Philocrates operated according to an altogether different standard. In accordance with a strategic imperative to dissuade rebellion in the empire, Philocrates and his soldiers slaughtered the surrendered men of Melos and sold the city's women and children into slavery. In divorcing strategic imperatives from ethics – those "unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break" – Philocrates betrayed the highest ideals of his city and led his soldiers to disgrace.[3]

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[1] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 145.
[2] Thucydides, 149.
[3] By 405 B.C., the Athenians were deeply anxious that they would suffer the same fate they had meted out to the Melians at the hands of the Lacedaemonians. Xenophon, *Hellenica*, trans. Carleton L. Brownson, Loeb Classical Library (London: 1918), accessed

Much has changed since the age of trireme and hoplite, but the strategic and ethical nature of command has not. At each successive level of responsibility, strategy and ethics place increasing demands on the commander's intellect and character.[4] However, while strategic studies occupy a central place in Western military education, the same cannot be said for ethics.[5] Though military education rests "largely on broadly Aristotelian assumptions about the nature of ethics"[6] and the development of character,

> in one important respect, the military appropriation of Aristotle is less than complete. There tends to be little if any attention to the intellectual component of Aristotelian ethics in development of practical wisdom and a deep intellectual understanding of the reasons underlying the expected behaviors. The practical syllogism begins with *an intellectual grasp of the reason the goal being sought is good*. Military education that attempted to round out the picture of Aristotelian assumptions would insure that, over and above habituation through routine action, military personnel would, in addition, be afforded opportunities for deeper intellectual understanding of the moral significance of the military life. It would understand *why* the ethical limits on legitimate military action derive from that moral significance….[7]

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May 5, 2018, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0032.tlg001.perseus-eng1:2.2.3.

[4] Martin L. Cook, "Moral Reasoning as a Strategic Leader Competency" (U.S. Army War College, n.d.), 1, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army-usawc/moral_dev.pdf.

[5] Peter L. Stromberg, Malham M. Wakin, and Daniel Callahan, *The Teaching of Ethics in the Military* (New York: The Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, 1982), 66–67.

[6] Martin L. Cook, "Military Ethics and Character Development," in *Routledge Handbook of Military Ethics*, ed. George R. Lucas (London: Routledge, 2015), 101.

[7] Cook, 101.

Fostering strategic reflection in the absence of ethical reflection promotes intellectual confusion[8] and incoherence.[9] Philocrates' example illustrates the failure of command that such incoherence, at its limit, can produce. Motivated by the search for a deeper understanding of the moral significance of the military life, this work argues that *Aristotelian virtue ethics can give a coherent account of the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command.* To advance its case, it constructs a four-part framework uniting Aristotle's account of ethics with Carl von Clausewitz's account of strategy, which enables officers and scholars to investigate strategic and ethical aspects of command in an integrated manner.

The Aristotelean tradition is an ideal foundation from which to start ethical reflection for two reasons. First, as previously noted, it is the foundation for military ethics education. Second, the West's longstanding reflection on ethics and war, the just war tradition, traces one of its most influential forms to Aristotelian virtue ethics, through St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus, the Aristotelian tradition offers a coherent account of individual, political, and military ethics consistent with present military education and practice. The latter, Clausewitzian tradition, is likewise ideal. First, Clausewitz's reflections on the nature of war and command are cornerstones of military education. Second, Clausewitz's concern with the purposes of human activities is consistent with Aristotelian methods. Consequently, the two traditions may readily be placed in conversation with one another.

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[8] One frequently-noted symptom of this is the tendency to confuse ethics and law: "Many service members tend to identify 'ethics' with legal compliance with rules and regulations" which are "the bare minimum of the normative expectations of military organizations." Cook, 98.
[9] Stromberg, Wakin, and Callahan, *The Teaching of Ethics in the Military*, 5–6.

The framework presented here rests on two philosophical disciplines central to Aristotelian virtue ethics: teleology and moral psychology. Teleology studies the *purposes* of human acts, and moral psychology studies how agents act to attain these purposes. According to the latter, the human *capacity* of practical reasoning gives rise to acts; good *acts* (those which fulfill their purposes) promote virtues; and v*irtues* perfect human capacities to do good acts.

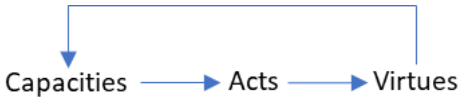


**Figure 1: Moral Psychology**
*Source: Adapted from Thomistic Psychology*

This thesis applies these two disciplines to military command, first by identifying the purposes of war, then by investigating the acts and virtues by which these purposes are pursued. It draws on the following key texts: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, and Clausewitz's *On War.*

The resulting framework is a four-part synthesis of Clausewitz's strategy and Aristotle's ethics. First, it gives an account of the *purposes* of war in light of war's political nature. Second, it reasons analogously from human capacities to the violent acts by which war's ends are attained, to identify the *responsibilities* of command. Third, it gives an account of good *acts* in light of the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command, drawing on the just war tradition for the latter. Fourth, it gives an account of the good commander's *virtues*, or character. In particular, it focuses on the virtue of military prudence, which perfects the capacity of practical reasoning for the defense of the common good.

This thesis is addressed primarily to just war ethicists and military thinkers in the virtue tradition. Its main contribution is to reframe just

war principles in two ways: first, by integrating them into a unified account of moral psychology originating in war's purposes and ending in the commander's character, and second, by setting them in the context of strategic responsibilities. Given its scope, this thesis does not address a wide range of contemporary issues confronting the just war tradition.[10] Also, since this work is set within the field of virtue ethics, it is not intended to persuade adherents of rival traditions. Still, its content may help illuminate and clarify points of disagreement between them.

## I – Definitions

Both strategy and ethics are central concepts in later discussion. For clarity, both terms are defined here.

Military strategy (or strategy) as used here is distinct from, and subordinate to, national strategy but superior to tactics. For this kind of strategy, theorists have advanced several definitions:

- Clausewitz: the use of engagements for the object of the war;[11]
- Corbett: the art of directing force to ends;[12]
- Liddell Hart: the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy;[13]
- Gray: the direction and use made of force and the threat of force for the purposes of policy as decided by politics;[14] and

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[10] For a compendium of seminal just war texts, plus a sampling of arguments and objections from other traditions on ethics and war, see Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby, eds., *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).
[11] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 128.
[12] Julian Stafford Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1972), 308.
[13] Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed (New York: Meridian, 1991), 321.
[14] Colin S. Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 18.

- Luttwak: the art of the dialectics of wills that use force to resolve their conflict.[15]

It is possible to reconcile these definitions by applying the Aristotelian framework of the four causes: what is a thing (formal), what is it about (material), what is its origin (efficient), and what is its purpose (final)? From this perspective, the similarities and differences between these definitions stem from the subset of causes each implicitly addresses. In terms of formal cause (what is it?), these definitions largely agree that strategy is the comprehensive activity of rationally linking and directing force to ends. In terms of efficient cause (what is its origin?), these definitions suppose the existence of a strategist who does the activity of strategy. In terms of material cause (what is it about?), these definitions agree that strategy concerns military means and political ends. In terms of final cause (what is it for?), though most definitions incorporate a notion of political ends, Luttwak's implies a specific political end to which strategy is ordered, namely peace.[16]

Synthesizing these elements, military strategy may be defined as *the activity which links military means to political ends, issuing in the direction of force and the threat of force, for the sake of peace.*

Like strategy, ethics is a complex concept. Contemporary definitions of ethics include:

- The branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles;[17]

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[15] Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 269.
[16] Clausewitz makes this point explicitly: "The original means of strategy is victory – that is, tactical success; its ends, in the final analysis, are those objects which will lead directly to peace." Clausewitz, *On War*, 143. The final cause of strategy will be investigated in more detail in Chapter 2.
[17] "Ethics," *Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press), accessed February 3, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ethics."

- The discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation;[18] and
- [The branch of philosophy] that defines what is good for the individual and for society and establishes the nature of duties that people owe themselves and one another.[19]

The differences between these definitions suggest at least three points in need of clarification. First, the definitions give conflicting accounts of the subject matter of ethics. Second, the relationship between the terms "ethical" and "moral" is unclear. Third, the role of religion in ethics is also unclear.

Concerning subject matter, virtue ethics has generally concerned itself with three central themes: 1) what constitutes a good life? 2) what constitues good character? and 3) what distinguishes good from bad, and right from wrong, acts? While ethics is concerned with the nature and content of human duty, this is a narrow conception of its subject matter. Concern for the human good, and not merely what is obligatory or prohibited, is characteristic of ethics.

Concerning the terms "moral" and "ethical," their Latin and Greek meanings are identical (concerning character). Historically, philosophers have used the terms interchangably. Some contemporary philosophers make distinctions between these terms and their derivatives, but this work treats them as equivalent.

Concerning ethics and religion, treatment of revealed truth is the essential distinction. Ethics is a systematic body of knowledge and its pursuit, based on natural reason and observation. As such, it does not

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[18] "Ethics," *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, accessed February 3, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics.
[19] "Ethics," *WEX Legal Encyclopedia* (Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School), accessed February 3, 2018, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/ethics.

acknowledge appeals to revelation (i.e., sacred texts). In contrast, religion is a set of beliefs and practices concerning the divine. In principle, then, ethics enables rational discussion and consensus on how best to live together in multi-religious, pluralistic polities that do not agree upon a common set of revealed truths. For instance, ethicists commonly appeal to a set of universal moral principles that are accessible to human reason, while setting aside questions about the source of those moral principles.[20]

In light of these considerations, the four causes of ethics are:

- Formal (what is it?): branch of philosophy concerning morals; moral philosophy;
- Material (what is it about?): investigations based on natural reason and observation into what constitutes a good human life, what constitutes good character, and what distinguishes good from bad, and right from wrong, acts;
- Efficient (what is its origin?): all people, and ethicists in particular; and
- Final (what is it for?): to discover how best to live.

Bringing these elements together, ethics may be defined as *the branch of philosophy which investigates what constitutes a good human life, what constitutes good character, and what distinguishes good from bad, and right from wrong acts, using natural reason and observation, to discover how best to live. Also known as moral philosophy.*

[20] The reader may note that, despite this work's emphasis on philosophical (rather than theological) inquiry, a number of its references cited have Christian affiliation. This is not coincidental, as the West's just war tradition has deep roots in Christian thought. However, as the tradition's ancient origins and its modern secular variants illustrate, its argument for restraint based on commonly-held notions of justice is both broadly appealing and accessible by reason independent of religion.

## II – Context

To place this work in context, this section begins by situating the just war tradition alongside its rival traditions. Then, it briefly investigates the development of the just war tradition, tracing its roots to Aristotelian virtue ethics. Finally, it reviews related works in virtue ethics and just war, upon which this one builds.

### Just War and Its Rival Traditions

The central tenet of the just war tradition is that some purposes justify resort to war, and that such wars may be conducted in a just way. Implicit in the tradition are four assertions about ethics and war, each of which is contested by rival traditions.[21] First, the tradition claims that war as a whole admits of ethical evaluation, which realism denies. Realism is explored in more detail below. Second, the tradition claims that some wars can be just, which pacifism denies. Pacifism is not directly relevant to military command, though it is closely related to an alternative view, *raison de guerre*.[22]



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[21] This taxonomy is derived from Kenneth W. Kemp, "Just-War Theory and Its Non-Pacifist Rivals," in *International Studies Association - South Regional Meeting* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 1993).

[22] For the argument that pacifism lends license to *raison de guerre* by obscuring important moral distinctions and thereby encourages a resigned rejection of all limits in war, see G. E. M. Anscombe, "War and Murder," in *Nuclear Weapons: A Catholic Response*, ed. Walter Stein (London: Burns & Oates, 1961), 43–62.

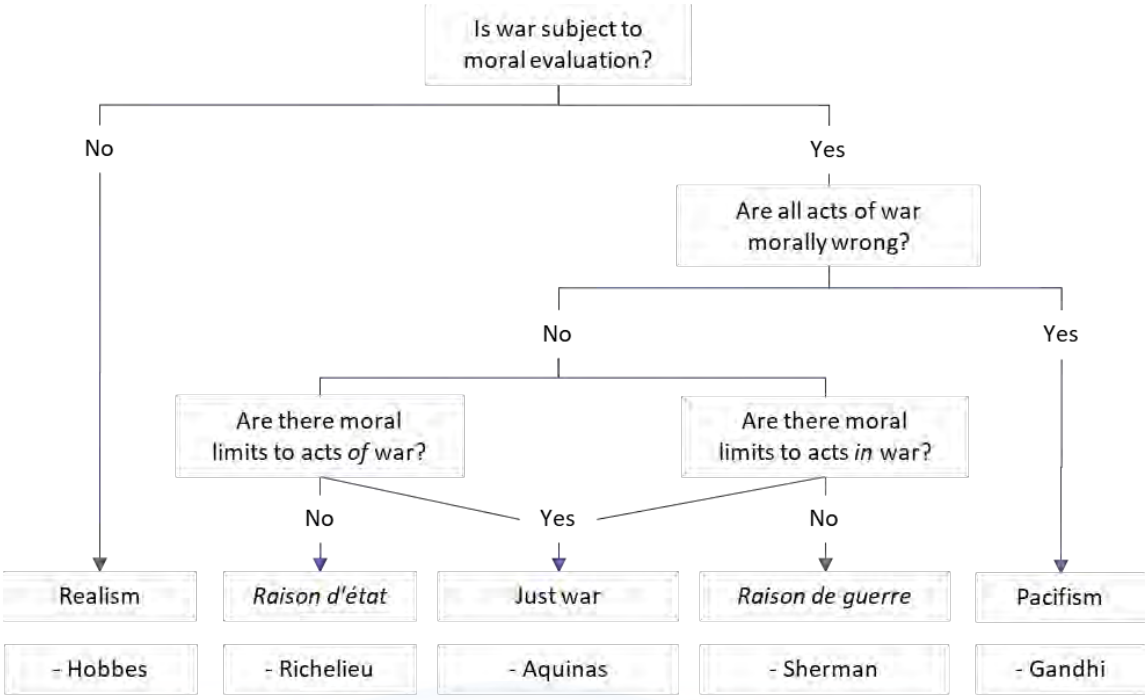


**Figure 2: Taxonomy of Ethics and War**
*Source: Adapted from "Just War Theory and its Non-Pacifist Rivals"*

Third, the tradition claims that some acts *of* war are morally impermissible, which *raison d'état* denies. According to *raison d'état*, the decision to enter into a state of war is the amoral prerogative of sovereign authorities, but only some acts of violence in war are morally permitted.[23] War is a duel in which rules apply, but whose purposes may have no moral justification. Fourth, the tradition claims that some acts *in* war are morally impermissible, which *raison de guerre* denies. According to *raison de guerre*, only some wars are just, but in such wars any act of violence is morally permissible if it hastens the end of war. War is hell, so worthy ends can justify morally abhorrent means. *Raison d'état* and

[23] For an account of the conceptual transition from war as a morally evaluable act (i.e., to war against another), to war as a mutually-agreed upon condition subject to its own moral rules (i.e., to be in a state of war), see Gregory M. Reichberg, "Historiography of Just War," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics of War*, ed. Seth Lazar and Helen Frowe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 61–63.

*raison de guerre* may be seen as extremes on a spectrum of increasingly relaxed limits on acts *of* war and *in* war, respectively.

Of these traditions, realism predominates in strategic studies.[24] Two points may help to clarify its nature. First is the dichotomy between realism and utopianism. Utopianism is a pacific tradition that anticipates the development of a super-national political order to restrain states and ultimately end war.[25] Liberalism is a kind of utopianism that shares its goal of peace through national or international governance. This tradition has deep roots in humanist thinking, joined in more recent times by religious pacifists.[26] Modern political realism of the sort that underlies the field of strategic studies arose in the early 20th century as a "doctrine of protest" against utopianism.[27] Realist critiques tend to associate all considerations of ethics with utopianism and liberalism to the exclusion of other traditions – notably just war – which share its pessimism about the potential for human institutions to achieve lasting peace.[28]

The second potential source of confusion is realism itself, which admits of a number of varieties. Its maximal form, as a "doctrine of protest" against utopianism, is descriptive in its claim that ethics have

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[24] John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Colin S. Gray, eds., *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies*, Fifth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6.
[25] James Turner Johnson, *The Quest for Peace: Three Moral Traditions in Western Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), xii–xv.
[26] For studies of the historical development of utopianism and liberalism, see Johnson, *The Quest for Peace*; Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
[27] James Turner Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force: Just War in Historical Perspective*, Justice, International Law and Global Security (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 103–16.
[28] Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force*.

no place in the international sphere (and hence, in war). As a prescriptive tradition, however, realists have tended to admit some ethical considerations into the practice of statecraft.[29] To the extent that they do so, this has the effect of undermining realism's theoretical ground[30] while at the time establishing an unstable priority between context and an instrumentalized ethics.[31]

This work is concerned primarily with the just war account in its traditional form. It shares with realism a commitment to an accurate description of the nature of things rather than a system of ideals imposed upon reality (hence, its anti-utopianism). Like realism, it recognizes that "power is an integral part of political relations and that military force is properly to be maintained as an element of political power"[32] (hence, its anti-pacifism). Unlike descriptive realism, however, the just war tradition argues that acts of individual statesmen and commanders are irreducibly ethical. It is because statesmen and commanders act on behalf of the good of a community that the just war tradition admits of a political ethic specifically different from individual ethics in its license to wield power and violence, within limits. Thus, the just war tradition is both permissive and limiting, attuned to the grammar of power and violence but not subsumed by them.

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[29] For a typology, see David J. Lonsdale, "A View from Realism," in *Ethics, Law and Military Operations*, ed. David Whetham (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30–31. For an example of this kind of realism, see Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil," *Ethics* 56, no. 1 (1945): 1–18.
[30] Kemp, "Just-War Theory and Its Non-Pacifist Rivals," 6–8.
[31] Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force*, 107–8. "Ethics are so woven into our societies; they cannot be ignored.… Therefore, the realist must at least pay lip service to ethical concerns, and thus deal with them in an instrumental way." Lonsdale, "A View from Realism," 31. "Reasoning consequentially, it does not pay strategically to be ethically challenged." Colin S. Gray, "Moral Advantage, Strategic Advantage?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 3 (June 2010): 358.
[32] Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force*, 113.

**Roots of the Just War Tradition**

The just war tradition itself is not grounded on a single ethical framework.[33] It traces its roots back to ancient Greece[34] and the virtue ethic that originated there. In particular, it owes much to Aristotle, whose work on virtue ethics and politics exercised "a formative influence on subsequent just war thinking."[35] Over time it was adopted and built upon by Christian thinkers (notably, St. Augustine), and comingled with several sympathetic strands of thought.[36] St. Thomas Aquinas, in the tradition of Aristotle, synthesized and distilled the tradition into one of is most influential forms.[37] In the early modern period, secular humanist jurists – most notably Grotius – took the just war principles from their virtue-based context and codified them into legal norms.[38] This legal tradition transformed a set of ethical reflections on the proper interior disposition of statesmen and soldiers into a set of external constraints. In time, this strand of the just war tradition became the basis of modern international law. Modern branches of ethics – deontology and consequentialism – also took up the project of grounding just war thought on their own first principles.[39] While each of these strands –

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[33] Nicholas Fotion, *Military Ethics: Looking Toward the Future*, Hoover Press Publication 397 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 13.
[34] Reichberg, Syse, and Begby, *The Ethics of War*, 3.
[35] Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby, eds., "Aristotle," in *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 31–32.
[36] Johnson gives a definitive account of this development from the Medieval period to the modern day in James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
[37] Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby, eds., "Thomas Aquinas," in *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006). For Aquinas' most well-known contribution to just war, see ST IIaIIae.40. This work uses conventional notation for the *Summa Theologiae*, based on the following edition: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute, 2012).
[38] Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force*, 2.
[39] For a consequentialist account, see R. B. Brandt, "Utilitarianism and the Rules of War," in *War and Moral Responsibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 25–

traditional and modern ethics, and international law – largely agree on the principles which constitute just wars, they differ on how these are to be applied and the relative importance accorded to each.

The just war tradition has retained a basis in virtue ethics despite these developments.[40] For instance, *jus ad bellum* principles include right intention, just cause, and proportionality. Roughly speaking, intention concerns character (virtue), just cause concerns rules (deontology), and proportionality concerns consequences (consequentialism). While modern ethics struggle to fully account for all of these principles,[41] the Aristotelean virtue tradition as expounded by Aquinas can do so. In fact, as this thesis will show, Aquinas' formulation of virtue ethics reveals a coherent structure underlying the just war principles, which otherwise appears ad hoc.

**Related Works**

Though virtue ethics was eclipsed by other ethical theories in the modern period, it experienced a renaissance in the middle of the twentieth century that continues to the present.[42] Inspired by dissatisfaction with modern moral discourse and practice, a growing number of thinkers returned to the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions for fresh insight into modern problems.[43] In parallel, thinkers concerned

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26. For a deontological account, see James F. Childress, "Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of Their Criteria," *Theological Studies* 39, no. 3 (September 1, 1978): 427–45. For a post-modern account, see Christopher Coker, *Ethics and War in the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[40] James Turner Johnson, *Morality & Contemporary Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 41–51.

[41] William H. Shaw, *Utilitarianism and the Ethics of War*, War, Conflict and Ethics (New York: Routledge, 2016), 70.

[42] For a succinct overview of modern developments in virtue theory, see Nancy E. Snow, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–6.

[43] Among the most influential of these works are G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19; G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, 2nd ed

with the ethics of contemporary wars led a popular revival of the just war tradition in political discourse, military doctrine, and international law.[44] These two related revivals – one of virtue ethics, the other of the just war tradition – have inspired recent efforts to reconnect the just war tradition with the broader virtue ethic from which it drew much of its inspiration.[45] Particularly relevant to this thesis are these works' focus on the virtue of prudence, the "mold and mother of all moral virtue."[46] What makes prudence unique as a virtue is its concern with practical acts. As such, it encompasses both excellence of character and excellence in reasoning to attain one's ends. Recent scholarship has revived the notion, first systematized in Aquinas and little commented upon since then, of a kind of prudence concerned with military command.[47] It is military prudence's dual excellences of character and intellect that make it a promising point of departure for unifying the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command.

As previously described, the Aristotelian account of moral psychology begins with an agent's *capacity* of practical reasoning which issues in *acts;* good acts repeatedly done promote the *virtue* of prudence; and the virtue of prudence in turn perfects the capacity of practical

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(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

[44] See, for example, Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

[45] Works along these lines include: Darrell Cole, "Thomas Aquinas on Virtuous Warfare," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 57–80; Grady Scott Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue: An Essay in Aristotelian Ethics* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1992); Ryan R. Gorman, "War and the Virtues in Aquinas's Ethical Thought," *Journal of Military Ethics* 9, no. 3 (September 2010): 245–61; Gregory M. Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); James Hugh Toner, *Morals Under the Gun: The Cardinal Virtues, Military Ethics, and American Society* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

[46] Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), 31.

[47] Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*.

reasoning. Thus, the military commander's capacities, acts, and virtues bear directly on his strategic and ethical responsibilities. Just war thinkers have studied a number of aspects of this moral psychology, including the link between just war principles and the structure of human acts,[48] the just war principles grounded on virtues,[49] and the commander's virtue of military prudence.[50] This thesis continues the work of these others by unifying the commander's strategic and ethical responsibilities at each stage of moral psychology, from capacities, to acts, to virtues.

The work of Carl von Clausewitz is an ideal source for linking strategy to ethics. At first glance, this may seem unlikely given how little Clausewitz had to say about ethics, and his association with the development of *raison d'état* in 19th century European thought.[51] In matters of both teleology and moral psychology, however, Clausewitz's thought bears an unmistakable affinity with the methods and concerns of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Embedded in his argument that war is for the sake of politics is a teleological claim about the purpose of warfare. This claim dovetails with virtue ethics' broader investigation into the purpose of politics and establishes a link to Clausewitz's other reflections on strategy and tactics. In addition, Clausewitz's initial chapters in *On War* contain one of the best accounts of military virtue in the Western cannon. His insightful descriptions of both the character and the

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[48] Kenneth W. Kemp, "Just-War Theory: A Reconceptualization," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 1988): 57–74; Christopher Toner, "The Logical Structure of Just War Theory," *The Journal of Ethics* 14, no. 2 (June 2010): 81–102.
[49] Gorman, "War and the Virtues in Aquinas's Ethical Thought"; Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*.
[50] Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*; Gorman, "War and the Virtues in Aquinas's Ethical Thought"; Reed Bonadonna, "Military Command as Moral Prudence," The Strategy Bridge, accessed January 31, 2018, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/9/22/military-command-as-moral-prudence.
[51] Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 268.

intellect of the commander complements Aristotelian moral psychology. As other authors have noted, Clausewitz's reflections on the nature of war and command reveal philosophical common ground with virtue ethics' understanding of human acts and character.[52] Thus, works in his tradition are taken as the primary source of strategic thought for the project at hand.

### III – Thesis Outline

The thesis proceeds in three chapters. Chapter 1 presents the foundations of Aristotelian-Thomist virtue ethics, drawing on the two disciplines of teleology and moral psychology discussed earlier. Section I gives a teleological account of the *purposes*, or ends, of human acts. Section II takes up moral psychology to account for how humans pursue their ends. Specifically, it details how an agent's intellect, will, and passions interact in a *capacity* known as practical reasoning to produce acts. Section III outlines the moral evaluation of *acts* as good or bad.

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[52] "There are, however, indications that Clausewitz intended *On War* to have an ethical dimension…. He accordingly urged commanders to cultivate the military virtues – courage especially – which can enable them to perform well on the battlefield. In this respect, there is a close affinity between Aristotle's treatment of courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Clausewitz's penetrating analysis of 'strength of character' in *On War*…. For both thinkers, virtue (of the intellect and the emotions) is deemed indispensable if there is to be right action in a world marked by indeterminacy and chance. Similarly, Clausewitz's insistence on the subordination of war to politics creates a framework for reflection on the relation of military force to justice." Gregory M. Reichberg, Henrik Syse, and Endre Begby, eds., "Carl von Clausewitz," in *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 553–54. "There is some explicit evidence of Clausewitz's moral conscience at work in On War. But Clausewitz's moral credentials reside not so much in what he said, as in what he made it possible to say. Clausewitz establishes that the activity of warfare is bounded, largely by 'politics', but he does not exclude the possibility (perhaps the inevitability) that a principal ingredient of politics is morality. Whether by accident or design, *On War* then goes rather further into the moral realm. Not only are Clausewitz's theory of war and the just-war tradition functionally compatible, both also insist on the primacy of individual judgement." Paul Cornish, "Clausewitz and the Ethics of Armed Force: Five Propositions," *Journal of Military Ethics* 2, no. 3 (November 2003): 224. For an extended treatment of this theme, see Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*, 83–110.

Section IV completes the account of moral psychology by detailing the transition from good acts to *virtues*, focusing on the virtue of prudence, which perfects the capacity of practical reasoning.

Chapter 2 applies the generic treatment of virtue ethics from Chapter 1 to the specific case of military command. It draws on the same disciplines of teleology and moral psychology – applied to the works of Clausewitz and Aristotle – following the same structure of the previous chapter. The result is a four-fold framework of *purposes*, *responsibilities*, *acts*, and *virtues* that integrates the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command. Section I gives a teleological account of the purpose of war, joining Clausewitz's argument that war is for politics with Aristotle's argument that politics is for the common good. Section II takes up moral psychology, reasoning analogously about war as an instance of collective practical reasoning to delineate three unique activities of war: politics, strategy, and tactics. Drawing on Clausewitz, it outlines how the purpose of war interacts with the violent nature of strategy and tactics to define the commander's strategic and ethical responsibilities. Section III outlines the content of good acts of command, incorporating both strategy and ethics. The result is a synthesis of just war principles and strategic considerations proper to each of the three activities of war. Section IV completes the account of moral psychology, detailing the character of the good commander. It focuses on the virtue of military prudence, or excellence in practical reasoning about the defense of the common good.

Chapter 3 applies the four-part framework of *purpose*, *responsibilities*, *acts*, and *virtues* from the previous chapter to three cases of military command. It aims to provide evidence for the work's thesis, that virtue ethics can give a coherent account of both the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. The first case, at the tactical level of war, analyzes Lieutenant Michael Murphy's actions after he and his

SEAL team were soft-compromised during Operation Red Wings in Afghanistan's Kunar Province in 2005. The second case, at the theater level of war, analyzes General Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1944 decision to employ Allied airpower to destroy civilian rail terminals throughout France in support of Operation Overlord. The third case considers the supreme emergency exemption, perhaps the hardest challenge faced by the just war tradition. The concluding chapter summarizes the thesis' findings.

## Chapter 1

## The Foundations of Virtue Ethics

> *You were not born to live like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge.*
>
> Dante

This chapter presents the foundations of Aristotelian-Thomist virtue ethics, drawing on the two disciplines of teleology and moral psychology. Section I gives a teleological account of the *purposes*, or ends, of human acts. Section II takes up moral psychology to account for how humans pursue their ends. Specifically, it details how an agent's intellect, will, and passions interact in a *capacity* known as practical reasoning to produce acts. Section III outlines the moral evaluation of *acts* as good or bad. Section IV completes the account of moral psychology by detailing the transition from good acts to *virtues,* focusing on the virtue of prudence, which perfects the capacity of practical reasoning. This four-fold foundation establishes the general account of human acts and character, which will be applied to the specific case of military command in Chapter 2.

### I – The Ultimate End of Human Acts

Not all acts of humans are properly human acts. Some acts are merely reflexive and therefore common to humans and animals. Other acts proceed from a deliberate (reason-guided) will. Since intellect and will are unique to humans, *these* acts are properly human acts, and they are the focus of this chapter.

Every properly human act is undertaken with a purpose, or end, in mind. In general, ends are pursued for the sake of other ends, and since these cannot proceed infinitely, the end for which all others are pursued

is the ultimate end. Above all, humans pursue their own perfection, and that which is characteristic of humans is the intellectual capacity, so the ultimate end is the perfection of rational activity – both reasoning and acts guided by reason.[1] This perfection is commonly called human flourishing, and it must be self-sufficient to be pursued for its own sake. Yet humans are born and live in need of others – first in families, then in society – so a complete account must involve life in common with others.[2] Thus, flourishing, the ultimate end of human action, is *excellence in a common life of rational activity*.

To attain this ultimate end, rational activity aims at a wide variety of lesser ends. These ends are also called goods, for the good is what human appetites naturally desire.[3] Goods are divisible into the pleasant (food), the useful (money), and the honorable (justice).[4] Goods are also divisible according to whom they benefit.[5] Individual goods benefit individuals without being diminished (knowledge). Private goods benefit one person at a time and cannot be shared without being diminished (food). Collective goods are aggregate goods (wealth). Public goods are those from which no one can be excluded and that are not diminished when shared (clean air). They are the opposite of private goods. Finally,

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[1] NE I.1098a1-15. This work uses conventional notation for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, based on the following edition: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999).
[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Aquinas: Political Writings*, ed. R. W. Dyson, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5–8.
[3] On the Aristotelean account, there are three kinds of appetites. Two of these humans share in common with other animals: the concupiscent and irascible, where the former inclines agents to pleasurable goods like food, and the latter inclines agents to resist difficulties for the sake of goods. The third kind of appetite is the will, which inclines agents toward the good itself, as determined by the reason. This appetite is uniquely human. For a detailed explanation of these appetites, see Robert Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of the Nature of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1941).
[4] NE VIII.1155b18-19.
[5] The following definitions follow James G. Murphy, *War's Ends: Human Rights, International Order, and the Ethics of Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 23–24.

common goods are public goods which arise from joint action and cooperation between members of a group (peace). Common goods are not mere aggregations of private goods, nor are they goods which benefit a group at the expense of individuals. Rather, they are goods which benefit each person who participates in common activity.

On first consideration, it seems doubtful that a rational ordering exists among these goods. All things toward which human appetites incline have something of goodness in them, and consequently the range of goods that humans pursue seems limitless. However, since humans seek perfection as rational and social, rather than sensual and solitary beings, reason apprehends a proper ordering of goods.[6] The first desires that humans experience are those of the senses, which seek pleasurable goods. As humans grow in knowledge, they come to desire goods known by reason, first the useful and then the honorable. Honorable goods, desirable for their own sake, are therefore the highest of these three kinds. Common goods, which serve the many, are likewise higher than individual goods. Thus, common honorable goods[7] – shared goods which are desirable for their own sake – are the highest goods of all.

Consequently, the ultimate end, human perfection and flourishing, is *a* common good. *The* common good is the perfection and flourishing of a whole community, which rests upon a set of common, collective, and individual goods.[8] Importantly, the common good is not a mere

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[6] ST IaIIae.94.2

[7] Hereafter, common goods.

[8] For a detailed discussion of the common good, see *De Regno:* Aquinas, *Aquinas: Political Writings*, 43–45. For commentary on Aquinas' discussion, see Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 127–34; Michael Pakaluk, "Is the Common Good of Political Society Limited and Instrumental?," *The Review of Metaphysics* 55, no. 1 (2001): 57–94. From these sources, the common good may be defined more precisely as communal flourishing deriving from the virtuous life of the multitude, based upon a unifying peace, character-building laws, just rewards and punishments, a sufficient

aggregation of lesser goods. Rather, the individuals who comprise a community have need of several different kinds of goods proper to them as individuals (health), as members of families (parental love), as members of social groups (friendship), and as participants in a political order (justice). Thus, lesser goods are not subsumed by the common good, but neither should the former be pursued so inordinately as to endanger the latter.[9] In sum, individual, familial, and common goods are each necessary for the flourishing of humans, but it is the last of these which are highest, to which the others are ordered, and which contribute most fully to flourishing.[10]

The general moral task, then, is to ensure that "the pursuit of particular goods does not jeopardize the good of the whole man, something that happens when the pursuit of the ends of lesser inclinations impedes the pursuit of the ends of higher inclinations."[11] Right ordering of goods places lower goods in service to higher goods: humans eat to thrive, not thrive to eat.



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standard of material well-being, constitutional order, an effective defense force, friendship and neighborly love.

[9] Respect for the goods proper to individuals, families, associations, and polities is characteristic of the Aristotelean conception of the common good. In contrast, collapsing these goods and equating them with the good of the state is a fundamental error of collectivist and totalitarian doctrines.

[10] This understanding of the ordering of goods proper to human flourishing is a distinguishing feature of the military life: "Loving the good of some city in order to *possess* and to own it does not make a good citizen; that is how a tyrant loves the good of a city, in order to control it. In such a case, in fact, he loves himself more than the city, for he covets this good for himself rather than for the city. To love the good of a city in order to *preserve* and defend it is to love it in a real sense, and this makes someone a good citizen, in that some people are prepared to subject themselves to the risk of death in order to preserve or increase the city's good, and to ignore their own personal good." Thomas Aquinas, *Thomas Aquinas: Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, ed. Thomas Williams, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119.

[11] Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas on Human Action: A Theory of Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 122.

Reason apprehends this hierarchy by observing the natural ends of goods and activities in relation to human perfection. It also apprehends that some acts – such as murder – are by their very nature inimical to the common good.[12] From these apprehensions, humans develop sets of general principles about what does and does not conduce to the good: "respect human life," "shun ignorance," and so on.[13] These principles are both universal and abstract, requiring the capacity of practical reasoning to apply them to the contingent features of daily life.

This section has detailed the ultimate end of human acts – flourishing and the common good – and the natural ordering of goods to it. Section II takes up moral psychology and its account of practical reasoning, the process by which the human intellect and will relate goods to the common good in action.

## II – Practical Reasoning

### Stages of Human Acts

Each of the four stages of practical reasoning involves complementary acts of the intellect and of the will. The will naturally inclines toward the good. The good cannot be aimed at directly, however, and all lesser ends necessarily contain an imperfect goodness which alone cannot attract the will. Therefore, the intellect must determine

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[12] "Now not every action or feeling admits of the mean. For the names of some automatically include baseness – for instance, spite, shamelessness, envy [among feelings], and adultery, theft, murder, among actions. For all of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base. Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well.... On the contrary, it is true without qualification that to do any of them is to be in error." NE II.1107a10-19.

[13] For more detail on these general principles, also known as natural law, see Joseph Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133; McInerny, *Aquinas on Human Action*, 121.

whether the end in question serves the good, to determine the will's inclination. Exercise may be good with respect to health but not with regard to pleasure. The intellect's determination of whether pleasure or health is more suited to the good determines the inclination of the will, from which action follows.

Figure 3 depicts the four stages of practical reasoning: intention, deliberation, decision, and execution.[14] As discussed, each stage includes an act of the intellect and a corresponding act of the will.[15]

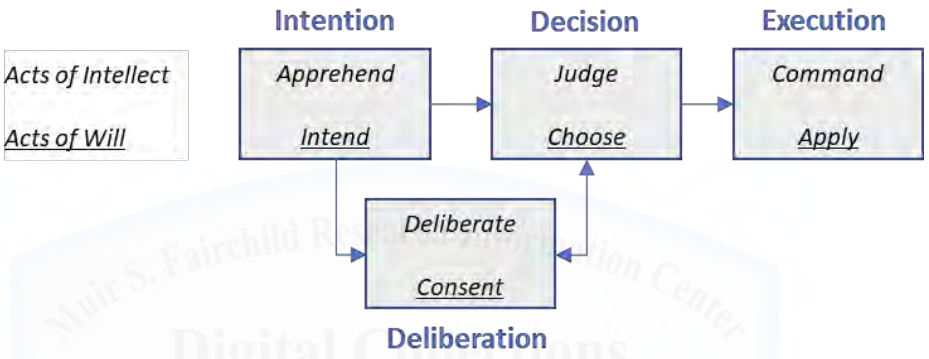


**Figure 3: Stages of Human Action**
*Source: Right Practical Reason*

The first stage of practical reasoning is intention. Here, the intellect apprehends an attainable good, or end. Consequently, the will intends it. At this stage, the means may not yet be known or chosen. However, once the means are chosen, intention extends to include the means as well.

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[14] This discussion follows Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). For a related account, see Servais Pinckaers, "La Structure de l'Acte Humain Suivant Saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 55 (1955): 393–412. Both of these authors reject the traditional twelve-step presentation as inconsistent with Aquinas' intent.
[15] Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 131.

The second stage of practical reasoning is deliberation. Its purpose is to identify means to the intended end. With the end as a given, the intellect characteristically works backward from the end to discover potential means. The intellect may find one or several potential means. When the intellect's deliberation identifies potential means, the will consents to each of them. In cases where the means to the end are obvious, deliberation is omitted.

The third stage of practical reasoning is decision. When there are several potential means, decision involves selecting the best one. Then, the agent must decide to pursue the means for practical reasoning to issue in action. This explains how human acts, including acts that do not require deliberation about means, are voluntary. Through decision, humans exercise the freedom to choose to act which separates them from animals, even in routine acts where the means are evident.

Decision involves a distinct kind of reasoning from deliberation. Where deliberation seeks means that will attain the intended end, decision considers whether the ordering of goods proposed by deliberation conforms to the natural ordering of goods discussed in Section I. The process can be likened to an operative syllogism, that is, the logical union of a major and a minor premise that results in action.[16] The major premise is a general principle which reflects an agent's understanding of the natural ordering of goods, and the minor premise is a particular judgment of the means. Together, the general principle and the particular judgment generate a conclusion of whether the means conduce to the good, and therefore, of whether to choose them or not.

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[16] Westberg, 147–64.

A man intends to help his friend fix her car. He deliberates to several potential solutions, one of which involves taking a tool from his employer's workshop. Now he must decide to act. He holds two general principles about the common good: "avoid stealing," and "help friends." When he is considering whether to take the tool, he can make particular judgments about two very different features of the act. On the one hand, he can judge "taking this tool is stealing." On the other hand, he can judge "taking this tool helps my friend." From these judgments, two opposed conclusions follow:

| | |
|---|---|
| Avoid stealing | Help friends |
| Taking this tool is stealing | Taking this tool helps my friend |
| Avoid taking this tool | Take this tool |

The particular judgment that an act is of a certain type is critical, because it influences what general principles an agent will apply. The example illustrates how the agent is largely free to judge the situation as he likes. It is possible to judge the act in a way that invokes some general principles over others and thereby arrive at a preferred conclusion. As the next subsection discusses, passions play a central role in how an agent perceives and judges particular acts.

The conclusion of the operative syllogism expresses both the intellect's judgment and the will's choice. The result is a decision either to execute the best means to the intended end, or to not act at all if the means have been rejected.

The fourth and final stage of practical reasoning is execution. Following immediately from decision, the intellect commands and the will correspondingly applies the body. Together, the intellect and will ensure that the chosen means are actualized.

The four stages of practical reasoning constitute a seamless process. Whereas deliberation stands out as the dominant rational feature of an act, the other three stages are generally imperceptible. This is especially true for routine acts of daily life in which deliberation plays a limited role. Still, a complete account of human action as purposeful and freely chosen must include the stages of intention and decision. Likewise, the stage of execution is necessary to account for the transition from thought to action. Therefore, all properly human acts, even the most inconsequential and routine, involve practical reasoning from intention through decision to execution.

**Passions and Human Acts**

The passions play a central role in the human act. The six passions associated with the concupiscible appetite, which inclines toward the simple good and away from the bad, include love, desire, and joy for the good; and, hate, aversion, and sorrow for the bad. The five passions associated with the irascible appetite, which inclines toward a good that is difficult to attain or away from something bad which is difficult to flee, include hope and despair for the good; and, courage and fear for the bad. Anger in the face of an offending bad is the final irascible passion.[17]

[17] ST IaIIae.23.2

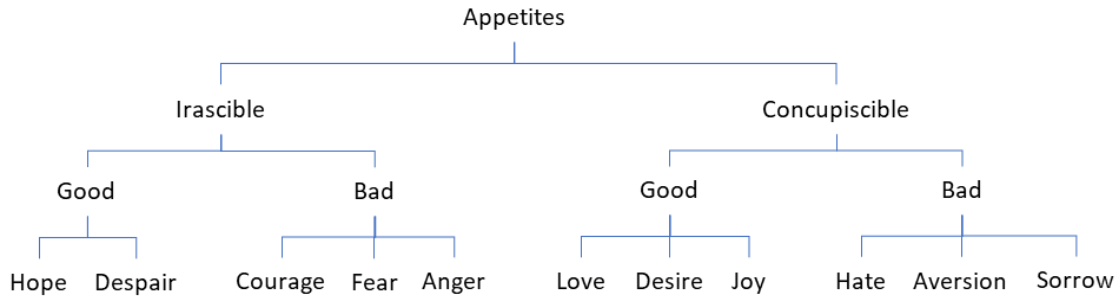


**Figure 4: Human Passions**
*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

The passions influence human acts in several ways, all of which concern the operation of the intellect. First, they can serve or hinder the intellect to the extent that they align with, or oppose, its judgments. Second, they can alter an agent's perception, making certain alternatives appear more or less good to the intellect. The example above, concerning theft of an employer's tool, illustrated the potential of this kind of influence on human decision-making. Third, they can distract the intellect from options it should consider. Fourth, they can augment the intellect by rendering intellectual activity pleasurable.[18]

Though the occurrence of passions is beyond human control, normally functioning agents can control how they act in response. Passions may cloud deliberation and decision, but the intellect and the will generally retain the ability to resist the passions and overcome their associated appetites. Consequently, passions do not determine the outcomes of practical reasoning. However, passions contrary to reason, habitually indulged, render right practical reasoning more difficult.[19]

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[18] Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey, and Christina van Dyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 85–89.
[19] ST IaIIae.10.3

This section has outlined the process by which intellect, will and passions interact in the capacity of practical reasoning to order goods to the common good, and pursue them. How well the individual's ordering conforms to the natural ordering of goods discussed in Section I is the concern of moral evaluation, the subject of Section III.

## III – Good Acts

When reason correctly grasps the order of goods to the common good, it is the proper measure of the goodness and badness of individual acts. Three principles distinguish good from bad acts:[20]

1. The three aspects with respect to which a human action can be either good or bad are the *end*, *object*, and *circumstances*;
2. Goodness is accord with reason; badness is contrariety to reason; and
3. For an act to be good, it must be good in every respect; for it to be bad, one defect suffices.

The first principle highlights the three aspects of an act which admit of moral evaluation. The end explains the agent's aim, the reason why he acts. Humans seek two kinds of ends: intermediate and ultimate.

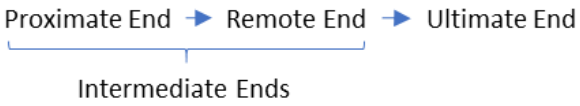


**Figure 5: Kinds of Ends**
*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

The ultimate end, as previously discussed, is human flourishing and the common good. Intermediate ends are goods which the agent perceives to be constitutive of, or in service to, the common good. These may be

[20] Kenneth W. Kemp, "The Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Thomistic Conference* (Vilnius, Lithuania, 2000), 5.

proximate or remote. Practical reasoning is formulated explicitly in terms of some intermediate end, and only implicitly in terms of the ultimate end.[21]

The second aspect of an act which admits of moral evaluation is the object. The object is the act itself, the chosen means to the intended end. The object describes the act as a whole, independent of the agent's intended end. It encapsulates the causal chain of steps from the ends backwards to the first concrete step conceived of in deliberation.[22]

The third aspect of an act which admits of moral evaluation is the circumstances, which may be divided into three general categories.[23] The first includes circumstances related to the four causes of the act: who and by what aids, what, about what, and why?[24] The second category is related to the act itself: when, where, and how? The third category is related to the consequences of an act: what effects?



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[21] Though a man who resolves to walk from Montgomery to Los Angeles does not consciously link every step to his remote end of seeing the Pacific Ocean, each step will be so linked in his intention. Like the remote end, his ultimate end – flourishing – motivates his every step even when he does not reflect on it explicitly.
[22] Steven J. Jensen, *Good & Evil Actions: A Journey Through Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 299–309.
[23] Diagram adapted from Johannes Gründel, *Die Lehre von Den Umständen Der Menschlichen Handlung Im Mittelalter*, Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Philosophie Und Theologie Des Mittelalters, xxxix, 5 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1963), 614. Aquinas gives various accounts of the circumstances of an act throughout his corpus. This list includes the eight he includes in the *Summa Theologiae* (ST IaIIae.7.3), along with a variant on "what" as the formal cause of an act which he uses elsewhere. Though the formal cause of an act can be defined by either its object or its end(s), for simplicity it is associated here with the object. Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St Thomas Aquinas*, 174–80.
[24] These correspond to the four causes mentioned in the introduction. Note that the formal and final causes correspond with the object and end of an act.

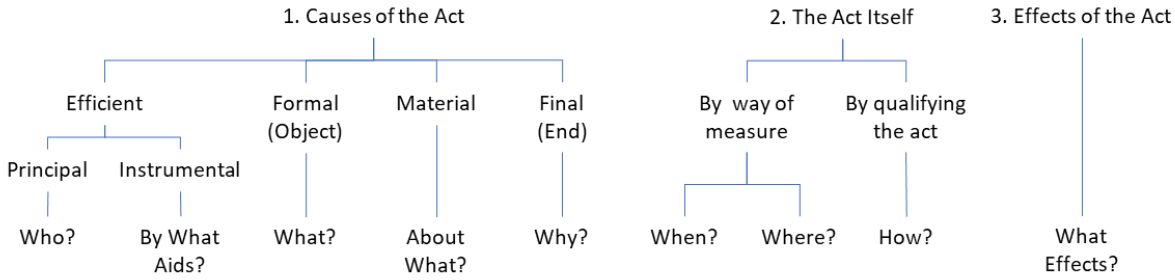


**Figure 6: Circumstances of Human Acts**
*Source: Adapted from Den Umständen Der Menschlichen Handlung*

From an agent's perspective at the moment of decision, consequences are either foreseeable or unforeseeable. Foreseeable consequences are themselves either unforeseen due to a lack of due diligence, or foreseen. Foreseen consequences can be further divided into those which are intended and those which are not. Thus, the circumstances of an act include four kinds of consequences: unforeseen, intended, unintended, and unforeseeable.[25]

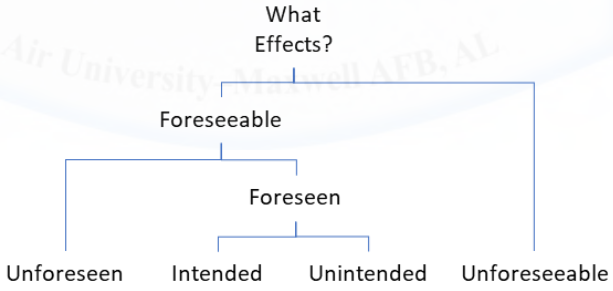


**Figure 7: Four Kinds of Consequences**
*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

These three aspects – end, object, and circumstances – comprise the whole act. As the second principle of moral evaluation notes, right reason is the standard by which these aspects are judged to be good or bad. Thus, the intended end is good or bad depending on whether it is

[25] ST IaIIae.20.5

rationally ordered to the ultimate end. The object may be good or bad according to the same criterion. Importantly, some objects are evaluable as good or bad regardless of the agent's intended end. For example, rape is always bad, because it is repugnant to the good of others. Objects may also be indifferent if they have no necessary relationship to the good. For example, the acts of picking up a stick or killing a person have no unambiguous relationship to the common good apart from the agent's intended end or circumstances.[26]

Circumstances, including intended and negligently unforeseen consequences, may affect the character of an act in one of three ways. First, many circumstances have no bearing on the goodness or badness of an act, as the time of day changes nothing about the badness of an act of theft. Second, a circumstance may increase the goodness or badness of an act, as the badness of theft is exacerbated if much, rather than little, is stolen. Third, a circumstance may directly concern an act's order to the ultimate end. Such circumstances are key determinants of the goodness or badness of an act, as the circumstance that a car belongs to someone else makes driving it without permission an act of theft, and thus bad.

Two circumstances merit further discussion. First, unforeseeable consequences do not affect the moral character of an act. Second, unintended bad consequences may not affect the moral character of the act if they are proportionate to the good anticipated by it. However, care

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[26] It is not possible to evaluate an act of killing without knowledge of the intended end. A woman may kill in order to defend herself, while another may kill in order to exact revenge, and still another may kill to fulfill a judicially ordered execution. Without the intent, killing someone is underspecified and is therefore indifferent in the abstract. However, every act performed by an agent has an intended end, object and circumstance, and can only be either good or bad, never indifferent.

is required since this principle of double effect[27] is frequently misapplied. An agent's intention is committed to the whole object produced by deliberation: the causal chain from intended end to first concrete step. A thief intending to rob a bank deliberates backward from this end, concluding that entering the vault requires him to kill a guard. If the thief chooses this object, he cannot intend to rob without at the same time intending to kill, even if he would prefer not to do the latter.

As the third principle explains, all three aspects of end, object, and circumstances must be good for the whole act to be good, but only one aspect needs to be bad for the whole act to be bad. Thus, a good intention, an inherently good or indifferent act, and good circumstances are each necessary, but not by themselves sufficient.

Moral evaluation is integrated throughout the process of practical reasoning presented in Section II. To illustrate this fundamental unity, consider the following scenario.[28] A military unit is threatened by rapidly approaching enemy troops. The unit sends a soldier on an urgent mission to destroy a bridge in the enemy's path. He *intends* the *proximate end* of defending his fellow soldiers, which is clearly ordered to the common good. As the soldier prepares to remotely detonate the explosives he has laid, he sees a child on the bridge. He quickly *deliberates* to discover *objects* (means) to his end, working backward from the end in a causal chain: he envisions the bridge's collapse, then the detonation of the explosive, then pressing the remote control. His deliberation uncovers no other possible objects to his end. Evaluating the *circumstances*, he foresees the child's death as a terrible consequence of the object he is considering. Nevertheless, the child's death is not part

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[27] ST IIaIIae.64.7.
[28] This example comes from Jensen, *Good & Evil Actions*.

of the object's causal chain – it is an unintended consequence. Since the unit's situation is dire and many lives are liable to be lost, he judges that the good foreseen from destroying the bridge is proportional to the child's death. The circumstance of her death, though tragic, does not make his otherwise good object, bad. In this case, should the soldier *decide* to detonate the bridge, the end, object, and circumstances of his act will coincide with rightly-ordered principles about the common good, and thus the act itself will be good.

Two aspects of moral evaluation deserve emphasis. First, acts are not evaluable exclusively based on intent, absolute prohibitions, or consequences.[29] Each of these has a role to play in determining the goodness or badness of an act. Accounts which incorporate these three elements holistically encompass common-sense notions about ethics: intent determines an agent's responsibility for some consequences, but intention is not infinitely malleable; some acts are always prohibited, but not many; and the balance of foreseen consequences influences the goodness or badness of an act, but not exclusively.

Second, the foregoing example illustrates how virtue ethics can be action-guiding, rather than merely retrospective. The goodness or badness of an act is determined from the agent's perspective, given the agent's context and limited knowledge of foreseeable consequences, at the moment of decision. Thus, ethics has immediate relevance to practical action. Though evaluations made in hindsight based on knowledge of actual consequences – including unforeseen consequences

[29] These bear on the end, object, and circumstances of an act, respectively.

– may be useful for historians and students, they are no help to the agent who is deciding how to act.[30]

This section has outlined the moral evaluation of acts according to their ordering to the common good. Section IV details how good and bad acts form character over time, leading agents toward or away from their ultimate end.

## IV – Good Character

Humans by nature seek not simply to do good acts, but to *be* good – that is, to perfect themselves. Thus, ethics concerns not only good and bad acts, but also good and bad character. Acts and character are intimately related, for they share the same origin in human capacities. As Section II discussed, the capacities of intellect and appetites (both sensible appetites and the will) operate together in practical reasoning to generate human acts. Repeated good or bad acts lead to habits, which in turn alter the capacities and incline them to certain kinds of acts.[31] Habits which perfect capacities and incline them to good acts are *virtues*, whereas habits which corrupt capacities and incline them to bad acts are *vices*.[32] Together, virtues and vices constitute character, the perfection of which is the ultimate end of man.[33]

Two kinds of virtue perfect the capacities which generate human acts: intellectual virtue perfects the intellect, and moral virtues perfect the appetites. Of the intellectual virtues, the virtue of art is right

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[30] Murphy, *War's Ends*, 182–86.
[31] See Figure 1.
[32] Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of the Nature of Man*, 260–79.
[33] In Section I, the ultimate end was described as the perfection of rational activity (in common life), where rational activity includes both reasoning and acts guided by reason. The former refers to contemplation, and the latter refers to practical action. This section concerns the perfection of those capacities necessary for the latter.

reasoning about things to be made.[34] For example, a doctor who possesses art is able to heal sick bodies well. While the virtue of art confers aptness for good works, it does not incline the agent to act for good ends. Though the virtue of art helps an architect in drafting excellent building designs for the sake of fraud, it does not disincline him from his nefarious purposes.

In contrast, moral virtues both perfect the appetites and incline them to good acts. There are three moral virtues, one for each of the appetites. The first is *temperance*, which moderates the concupiscible appetite's desire for pleasurable goods like food. The second is *fortitude*, which strengthens the irascible appetite against dangers and hardships. The third is *justice*, which inclines the will toward the good of others.[35] These moral virtues perfect both the person and his acts, so that, for example, a just man is both able to do just acts and is inclined to act justly. Moral virtues are the proper concern of character.[36]

Though moral virtues perfect the appetites' desire for good ends, humans require another intellectual virtue to attain these ends: *prudence*, or right reasoning about things to be done. Prudence perfects the intellect and will in practical reasoning about acts directly concerning the individual or common good. Whereas moral virtues perfect an agent's desire for good *ends*, prudence perfects his reasoning about good *means*. Thus, the moral virtues and prudence require each other to

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[34] ST IaIIae.57.3

[35] Rollen Edward Houser, ed., *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert and Philip the Chancellor*, Mediaeval Sources in Translation (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 164–66.

[36] ST IaIIae.56.3. Together, these three virtues form the core of military ethics training, above all fortitude (the soldier's virtue). Underlying notions of virtue and character is a rich account of human nature, the flourishing of individuals, and the common good. As discussed in the introduction, the military's commitment to Aristotelean-based character development makes this tradition ideal for developing a deeper intellectual understanding of the ethical foundations of command.

produce morally good acts. For this reason, prudence is both an intellectual and a moral virtue. Together, temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence constitute the cardinal virtues.

Prudence has parts which correspond to each of the last three stages of practical reasoning. In the deliberation stage, *eubulia* is Greek for good deliberation, or excellence in identifying means to intended ends. In the decision stage, *synesis* and *gnome* are Greek terms for good judgment. The former is excellent judgment according to common law, and the latter is excellent judgment according to principles which transcend common law. In the execution stage, *prudence* (in the narrow sense) is excellence in directing the chosen means to attain the end.[37]

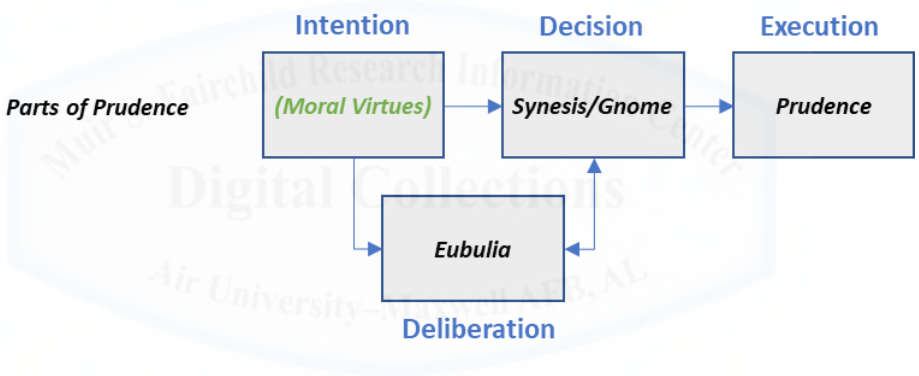


**Figure 8: Parts of Prudence**
*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

Prudence also perfects several elements of practical reasoning. Chief among these elements is foresight: "the capacity to estimate…whether a particular action will lead to the realization of the goal."[38] Circumspection, too, is essential: the ability to consider whether contemplated means are suitable to the intended end in view of relevant

[37] J.E. Naus, *The Nature of the Practical Intellect According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Analecta Gregoriana (Università Gregoriana, 1959), 121–36.
[38] Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 18.

circumstances.[39] Finally, prudence involves shrewdness, or fast conjecture about the means to an intended end.[40]

Each of these is necessary for perfect prudence. It is possible, for example, to deliberate well in discovering potential means, and yet fail to judge well whether the means are good. It is possible to deliberate and judge well, but fail to command well in executing the means. It is also possible to deliberate too slowly, foresee dimly, or fail to account for important circumstances. In short, excellent deliberation, judgment, and command are each necessary for prudence.

Modern misconceptions about the term prudence obscure the extraordinary role this virtue plays in human life. In deliberation, prudence operates amidst the contingent circumstances of daily life, lacking fixed rules, to uncover potential means to the end and to foresee their likely consequences. In decision, prudence applies general principles to the particular means and circumstances under consideration to ensure they are consistent with the common good. Resolutely accepting the uncertainty inherent in human affairs, prudence chooses good means and launches into action. In execution, prudence adapts the chosen means to changing circumstances to attain the intended end.[41]

In light of all that prudence requires, there are three general habits that fall short of, or oppose, this virtue. First, there is imperfect prudence, which aims at some particular end short of man's ultimate

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[39] ST IIaIIae.49.7

[40] In total, Aquinas lists eight such elements: memory, intelligence, shrewdness, reason, docility (openness to learning), cautiousness, circumspection, and foresight.

[41] This description of prudence reflects the original meaning of the word and explains why it was held in such high regard until modern times. Beginning in the modern era with Machiavelli, prudence has come to mean a narrow, cautious self-interest not in keeping with its true definition – see false prudence and cunning below.

end. This habit is common in complex arts like commerce, which require deliberation about means to particular goods. Second, there is imprudence by defect, characterized by a culpable fault in one of the three parts of practical reasoning: precipitateness, or lack of good deliberation; thoughtlessness, or lack of good judgment; and negligence and inconstancy, or lack of prompt will and dedication in execution. Inasmuch as these faults are voluntary or result from a lack of due striving, they reflect on the virtue of an agent.[42] Third, there is imprudence which is positively opposed to prudence. One form is cunning, or intentional use of bad means for good or bad ends. The other is false prudence, the use of effective means to bad ends.

**Table 1: Habits Short of or Opposed to Prudence**

| | **Intention** | **Deliberation** | **Decision** | **Execution** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Prudence** | Ultimate ends (moral virtues) | Good deliberation (eubulia) | Good judgment (synesis & gnome) | Good execution (prudence) |
| **Imperfect Prudence** | Particular ends short of ultimate ends | | | |
| **Imprudence by Defect** | | Lack of deliberation (precipitation) | Lack of judgment (thoughtlessness) | Lack of prompt & dedicated execution (negligence & inconstancy) |
| **Imprudence by Opposition** | Effective means to bad ends (false prudence) | | Bad means to good or bad ends (cunning) | |

*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

Though prudence perfects all stages of practical reasoning, it most characteristically concerns command, the intellect's activity in the stage of execution. Here, reason transitions to action. Individual prudence, for example, may be viewed as self-command according to individual ethics,

[42] There is another kind of imprudence which stems from an unwilled absence of intellectual aptitude. This is not a moral fault.

which has been the implicit focus of this chapter. Since prudence perfects acts concerned with the common as well as the individual good, there are several kinds of prudence for the command of multitudes.[43]

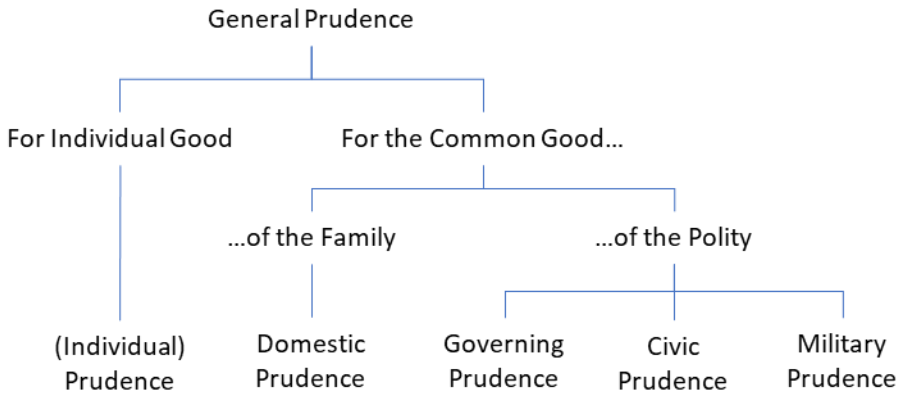


**Figure 9: Kinds of Prudence**
*Source: Adapted from Summa Theologiae*

Together, these five kinds of prudence perfect human action across those areas of life directly concerned with the individual and common good. In the following chapter, investigation turns from command of self to command of others, and the essential role of military prudence.

## V – Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the foundations of virtue ethics in four parts. It reviewed the *purpose* of human acts, the *capacity* of practical reasoning which issues in acts, the moral evaluation of good *acts*, and the *virtues* constituting good character. Each of these parts is summarized below.

[43] Aristotle and Aquinas give different accounts of the kinds, or subjective parts, of prudence. Military prudence is unique to Aquinas; however, he gives varying accounts of its relationship to the other kinds. The location of military prudence in the depicted hierarchy is the author's interpretation.

All properly human acts aim at a *purpose*, or end. The ultimate end, for the sake of which all other ends are chosen, is human flourishing and the common good. Human reason apprehends the natural ordering of lesser ends, or goods, to the common good. From these apprehensions, humans develop sets of general principles about what does and does not conduce to the common good.

Humans apply these general principles to the contingent features of daily life through the *capacity* of practical reasoning. In practical reasoning, the intellect, will, and passions cooperate in four stages to order ends to an agent's flourishing. First, the agent intends an end. Second, if the means to the end are uncertain, the agent deliberates to identify suitable means. Third, the agent decides on the best means to the end or abandons the act altogether. Decision takes the form of a practical syllogism, where general principles about the good linked to particular judgments about the means under consideration issue in conclusions about whether to pursue the means. Finally, the agent executes the chosen means.

Throughout the process of practical reasoning, humans judge the goodness of their *acts* by considering whether the three aspects of end, object and circumstances are properly ordered to the common good. Consequently, intention, moral principles, and foreseen consequences each have an irreducible role to play in the goodness or badness of acts.

Acts repeatedly done lead to the formation of habits which alter the human capacities of intellect, will, and appetites. Good habits, or *virtues,* perfect these capacities. Moral virtues perfect the will and appetites by inclining them to desire good ends. Given such ends, the intellectual virtue of prudence perfects practical reasoning about the means. Together, the virtues of temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence, constitute good human character. Prudence is particularly

relevant to this work, as it is the virtue by which humans govern themselves and others according to the common good.

This brings the account full circle. By nature, humans desire and have the capacity to pursue goods in accordance with the common good so as to flourish. Good acts correspond to this natural ordering of goods. Those who habitually do good acts develop virtues which perfect their character. The result is a life of flourishing. Chapter 2 applies these four concepts to the case of military command.

## Chapter 2

## The Strategic and Ethical Responsibilities of Command

> *Strategic theory must therefore study the engagement in terms of its possible results and of the moral and psychological forces that largely determine its course.*
>
> Carl von Clausewitz

Chapter 2 applies the generic treatment of virtue ethics from Chapter 1 to the specific case of military command. It draws on the same disciplines of teleology and moral psychology – applied to the works of Clausewitz and Aristotle – following the same structure of the previous chapter. The result is a four-fold framework of *purposes*, *responsibilities*, *acts*, and *virtues* that integrates the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command. Section I gives a teleological account of the purpose of war, joining Clausewitz's argument that war is for politics with Aristotle's argument that politics is for the common good. Section II takes up moral psychology, reasoning analogously about war as an instance of collective practical reasoning to delineate three unique activities of war: politics, strategy, and tactics. Drawing on Clausewitz, it outlines how the purpose of war interacts with the violent nature of strategy and tactics to define the commander's strategic and ethical responsibilities.

Section III outlines the content of good acts of command, incorporating both strategy and ethics. The result is a synthesis of just war principles and strategic considerations proper to each of the three activities of war. Section IV completes the account of moral psychology, detailing the character of the good commander. It focuses on the virtue of military prudence, or excellence in practical reasoning about the defense of the common good.

## I – The Ends of War

Just as individuals naturally seek an ultimate end, so too are communities formed to seek some ultimate end. Since the political community is the highest kind, it aims at the common good of the whole.[1] The purpose of politics is to promote the common good, and when necessary, to defend it against external threats. War and the threat of war are politics' violent instruments for securing this end, a license for which distinguishes political from individual ethics. Thus, war does not exist for its own sake.[2] Clausewitz rescued this insight from the philosophy of his day, stating a timeless truth about the nature of war: "The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, *and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose*."[3] This formulation liberates war from its own self-regard and invites a further reflection: what political purposes does war serve?

Though Clausewitz's exclusive focus on war led him to set aside considerations of policy and policy's ends, he left open the possibility of a project such as this one, in his reference to moral philosophy: "It can be taken as agreed that the aim of policy is to unify and reconcile all aspects of internal administration as well as of spiritual values, and whatever else the moral philosopher may care to add. Policy, of course, is nothing in itself; it is simply the trustee for all these interests against other states. That it can err, subserve the ambitions, private interests, and vanity of those in power, is neither here nor there. In no sense can the art of war ever be regarded as the preceptor of policy, and here we can

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[1] Pol I.1252a1-5. This work uses conventional notation for the *Politics*, based on the following edition: Aristotle, *The Politics, and the Constitution of Athens*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[2] "Hence we see very plainly that warlike pursuits, although generally to be deemed honourable, are not the supreme end of all things, but only means." Pol VII.1325a5-10.
[3] Clausewitz, *On War*, 87. Emphasis mine.

only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community."[4] This opening to ethics, though ambivalent, is unsurprising given Clausewitz's fundamental position that human activities such as war have natures which reason can discern. If war has a nature, then politics certainly has this quality too.

The preceding discussion picks up where Clausewitz left off, by elucidating the nature of politics and its ultimate end. Politics summons war to address some precedent injustice to the common good by an adversarial political community. Consequently, war seeks to restore the common good in the form of a just peace.[5] Circumstances may prevent war from redressing all injustices, and political aims may extend beyond the good of peace to other goods necessary to restore the common good. Still, war's natural ordering is to political objectives consistent with an imperfectly just peace.[6]

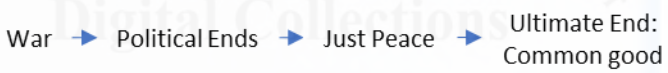


**Figure 10: The Ends of War**
*Source: Author's Original Work*

These reflections offer an important refinement to Clausewitz's generic formulation. *War is not for the sake of any political end, but for political ends which constitute a just peace and the common good.*[7] Of

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[4] Clausewitz, 606–7.
[5] Pol VII.1333a30-36.
[6] Murphy, *War's Ends*, 102–12; Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 133.
[7] Michael Howard considers precisely this point: "Clausewitz's theory was teleological. In warfare, every engagement was planned to serve a tactical purpose. These tactical purposes were determined by the requirements of strategy. The requirements of strategy were determined by the object of war; and the object of the war was determined by State policy, the State being the highest embodiment of the values and the interests of the community. Thus the objectives of State policy ultimately dominated and determined military means the whole way down the hierarchy of strategy and tactics. War was not an independent entity with a value-system of its own.... But what if one

course, as Clausewitz suggests, war is regularly employed for unjust ends using means inimical to peace, just as war regularly devolves into military operations divorced from politics. These observations do not disprove war's political and just nature. Rather, they indict those commanders and politicians who fail to respect it.[8]

Section II takes up moral psychology to identify the characteristic activities of war. Understanding the nature of those activities, and how they contribute to the ultimate purpose of war, will clarify the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command.

## II – The Activities of War

War consists of the hierarchically arranged activities of politics, strategy, and tactics.[9] These activities may be understood as a single instance of collective practical reasoning seeking and executing means to intended ends. In this analogy, politics establishes the intended ends of



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introduces one further, and ultimate, step in the hierarchy, to which State policy itself should be subordinated – the ethical goal? The State itself then becomes not an end but the means to an end." Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 57–58. This was Aristotle's and Aquinas' central point, that all human activities, including politics and its instrument of war, point to the ultimate end of the common good.

[8] "It is, of course, well-known that the only source of war is politics – the intercourse of governments and peoples; but it is apt to be assumed that war suspends that intercourse and replaces it by a wholly different condition, ruled by no law but its own. We maintain, on the contrary, that war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. We deliberately use the phrase 'with the addition of other means' because we also want to make it clear that war itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different…. War cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense." Clausewitz, *On War*, 605.

[9] "The conduct of war, then, consists in the planning and conduct of fighting…. One has been called *tactics*, and the other *strategy*." Clausewitz, 128. Modern war admits of additional levels between strategy and tactics, notably operations. These intermediate levels are set aside for the sake of clarity, though the argument presented here is intended for them as well.

war, strategy deliberates and decides upon the means to the intended ends, and tactics executes the means.

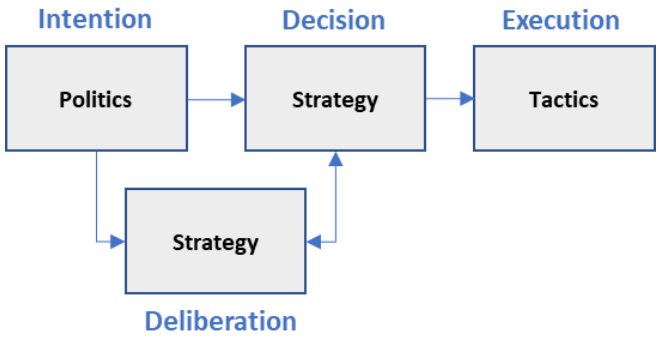


**Figure 11: Warfare as Practical Reasoning**
*Source: Author's Original Work*

Politics gives direction to its subordinate activities, and hence to military command, via its political objectives. However, these objectives do not rule over activity at each level as a tyrant.[10] Instead, they must adapt to the unique nature of strategy and tactics, reviewed below.

Strategy, as its definition suggests, is practical reasoning for the direction of warfare. That is, strategy involves deliberation to identify military means to political ends, decision on the best means, and command of the means. Each of these stages confronts characteristic difficulties which contribute to strategy's nature. First, in the stage of intention, is the challenge of translating political objectives into the grammar of violence. Because violence cannot generally attain political objectives directly,[11] strategy aims instead to secure advantage in

[10] Clausewitz, 87.
[11] "Sometimes the *political and military objective is the same* – for example, the conquest of a province. In other cases the political object will not provide a suitable military objective. In that event, another military objective must be adopted that will serve the political purpose and symbolize it in the peace negotiations." Clausewitz, 81.

material strength and morale.[12] In turn, strategic advantage serves as leverage for political leaders to coerce or force adversaries in accordance with the political objectives. Second, in the stages of deliberation and decision, is the challenge of friction. Deliberation, which seeks means apt to attain strategic advantage in the form of a "theory of victory," takes place in a climate of "danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance"[13] which makes the simplest thing difficult.[14] Third, in the stage of execution, is the absence of natural harmony between levels of war which impedes the coalescence of strategic advantage.[15] In sum, strategy is most clearly an intellectual exercise concerned with the direction of tactics for strategic advantage.

Tactics, too, is a form of practical reasoning with characteristic challenges at each of its stages. First, in the stage of intention, are tactical objectives which are self-evidently incomplete. Thus, tactical objectives point beyond themselves to the need for strategic advantage, without obvious means for attaining it. Second, in the stages of deliberation and decision, is the tension inherent to tactical means. These means depend on standardization for predictable performance but must be adapted to the context to remain effective.[16] Third, in the stage of execution, is the enemy, "an animate object that *reacts.*"[17] Tactics, then, is most clearly an executive exercise – demanding the utmost

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[12] "We have to remember that strategy may pursue a wide variety of objectives: anything that seems to offer an advantage can be the purpose of an engagement…." Clausewitz, 130. See also Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 62–64.
[13] Clausewitz, *On War*, 104.
[14] Clausewitz, 119.
[15] Luttwak, *Strategy*, 234.
[16] Luttwak, 109.
[17] Clausewitz, *On War*, 149.

courage, discipline, and adaptability[18] – concerned with the application of violence according to strategy's direction.

Despite their differences, strategy and tactics are fundamentally unified in the violent pursuit[19] of strategic advantage for the sake of political ends.[20] Since political ends are naturally ordered to the common good, this violent nature presents a persistent difficulty. Violence contributes to the common good in only a qualified sense; unrestrained, it becomes a danger to the very end it is called on to defend.[21] Consequently, war's constituent activities sit in uneasy tension between defense of the common good and the common good itself.

This tension takes definite form in the strategic and ethical responsibilities that the common good imposes upon military commanders.[22] First, as noted above, commanders are responsible for the violent pursuit of strategic advantage to rectify some previous injustice. Second, commanders are responsible for the good of the servicemembers entrusted to their care. Third, commanders are responsible for acting consistent with the communal life of virtue that it

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[18] Luttwak, *Strategy*, 103–11.
[19] "[It] is inherent in the very concept of war that everything that occurs *must originally derive from combat.* It is easy to show that this is always so, however many forms reality takes. Everything that occurs in war results from the existence of armed forces; *but whenever armed forces, that is armed individuals,* are used, the idea of combat must be present." Clausewitz, *On War*, 95.
[20] "The attacker is purchasing advantages that may become valuable at the peace table, but he must pay for them on the spot with his fighting forces." Clausewitz, 528.
[21] David J. Lonsdale, "Beyond Just War: Military Strategy for the Common Good," *Journal of Military Ethics* 15, no. 2 (July 2016): 104.
[22] Clausewitz summarizes these responsibilities: "Command becomes progressively less a matter of personal sacrifice and increasingly concerned for the safety of others and for the common purpose." Clausewitz, *On War*, 190. Consistent with this account, Walzer identifies three responsibilities of military commanders, on which this section builds. That is, commanders have responsibilities up the chain of command to the political leaders and citizens who have entrusted them with command; down the chain of command to the men and women entrusted to them; and outside the chain of command, to those who their activities affect. See Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 39–48.

is their duty to defend. This means, among other things, avoiding intentional harm and minimizing unintentional harm to those not engaged directly in support of the war effort (civilians). Yet, these three responsibilities often conflict. Violent pursuit of strategic advantage places subordinates and civilians in harm's way. Protecting subordinates and civilians from violence limits the advantage a commander can pursue.[23] Shielding civilians limits the actions a commander can take to protect his subordinates.

As Chapter 1 suggested, the commander's task is to resolve this tension by properly ordering his responsibilities and their concomitant goods – strategic advantage, and the safety of subordinates and of civilians – to the common good. A natural ordering is evident among these goods. Servicemembers are called, by the nature of military service, to the pursuit of strategic advantage.[24] In turn, the pursuit of strategic advantage is directed to the communal life of virtue that constitutes the common good.[25] Thus, in general terms, commanders are charged with protecting subordinates from harm but not so inordinately as to preclude all strategic advantage, and with pursuing advantage but not at the intentional or disproportionate expense of civilians.

The practical challenge for commanders is to reconcile the violent pursuit of advantage with the restraining demands of justice in their particular circumstances. An ever-present temptation is to treat strategy and tactics underlying the former as arts – instrumental activities

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[23] For a more detailed discussion of this kind of tension, see Don M. Snider, John A. Nagl, and Tony Pfaff, *Army Professionalism, the Military Ethic, and Officership in the 21st Century* (U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 1999).
[24] See Chapter 1, footnote 10.
[25] "[The] general who ordered acts wholly inconsistent with bedrock norms of war [could not be counted a success], for the resulting victory would be morally pyrrhic, having undermined the collective life of virtue that it was his duty to defend." Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 78.

evaluable on their own technical terms. The all-consuming complexity of strategy and tactics exacerbates this temptation, encouraging commanders to pursue advantage for its own sake.[26]

Clausewitz explains how to avoid this error: "If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it."[27] Though political objectives vary, the nature of politics from which the objectives spring remains unchanging, oriented to justice integral to the common good.[28] Thus, while strategy and tactics have an obvious technical component, justice is intrinsic to their practice.[29] *The responsibilities of command, then, include the rightly ordered and justly bounded pursuit of strategic advantage for just purposes.* The content of good command acts and character are the subjects of Sections III and IV.

## III – Good Acts of Command

In normal arts, an act that is technically apt but (morally) bad is nevertheless a competent act.[30] As noted above, strategy and tactics do not admit of that distinction: a competent act is necessarily a good one,

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[26] Lonsdale, "Beyond Just War: Military Strategy for the Common Good," 106.
[27] Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.
[28] Clausewitz illustrates how political objectives moderate the effort, or violence, employed in war: "Of even greater influence on the decision to make peace is the consciousness of all the effort that has already been made and of the efforts yet to come. Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in *magnitude* and also in *duration*. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow." Clausewitz, 92. Extending Clausewitz's reasoning, politics' orientation to the common good requires moderation to violence even for relatively unlimited political objectives. Aquinas expresses this conclusion succinctly: "As regards princes, the public power is entrusted to them that they may be the guardians of justice: hence it is unlawful for them to use violence or coercion, save within the bounds of justice." ST IIaIIae.66.8.
[29] Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 72.
[30] An architect drafts an excellent building design to defraud his employer. His act is technically competent, but bad.

and a bad act is necessarily an incompetent one. For both activities, the technical end sought is strategic advantage, and the primary moral consideration is justice. Thus, incompetent acts of command are those which are either inapt to produce strategic advantage, unjust, or both. Competent acts of command are those which are both apt to produce strategic advantage, and just. Since these are both demands of the common good, competent acts simply are good acts.[31]

**Table 2: Competent Strategic and Tactical Acts**

| | | **Moral Evaluation** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Just** | **Unjust** |
| **Technical Evaluation** | **Apt** | Competent | Incompetent |
| | **Inapt** | Incompetent | Incompetent |

*Source: Author's Original Work*

The just war tradition, dating from antiquity, has long contemplated the ethical content of competent acts of war. Aquinas, one of the most influential thinkers in the tradition, gave a concise three-part formulation: for any war to be just, it must have sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention.[32] By just cause, he meant redressing a precedent wrong against the common good, such as an unjust seizure of land. Within right intention, he included peace and restoration of the common good. Modern accounts of just war have added several other considerations, divided between acts of war (*jus ad bellum*) and acts in war (*jus in bello*). The variety of these accounts tends to impute an ad-

[31] In contrast, incompetent acts are not simply bad acts. If incompetent because unjust, then the act is bad. If incompetent because inapt, and inaptitude is due to some morally culpable fault like negligence, then the act is bad. Otherwise, the act remains good, but in a qualified sense. Note that the evaluation under consideration pertains to the moment of decision, not after the fact.
[32] ST IIaIIae.40.1

hoc quality to the tradition.[33] It is possible, however, to discern a logical structure to just war principles, and thus competent acts of war, by returning to the moral psychology within which Aquinas' formulation was set.[34] Though a structured account of good command acts clarifies only one part of the four-part framework advanced by this thesis, it is nevertheless one of the most important parts for clearly discerning the moral foundations of command.

One approach to discerning the structure of just war principles begins by recalling the previous section's analogy of warfare as a collective act of practical reasoning composed of three activities: politics, strategy, and tactics.

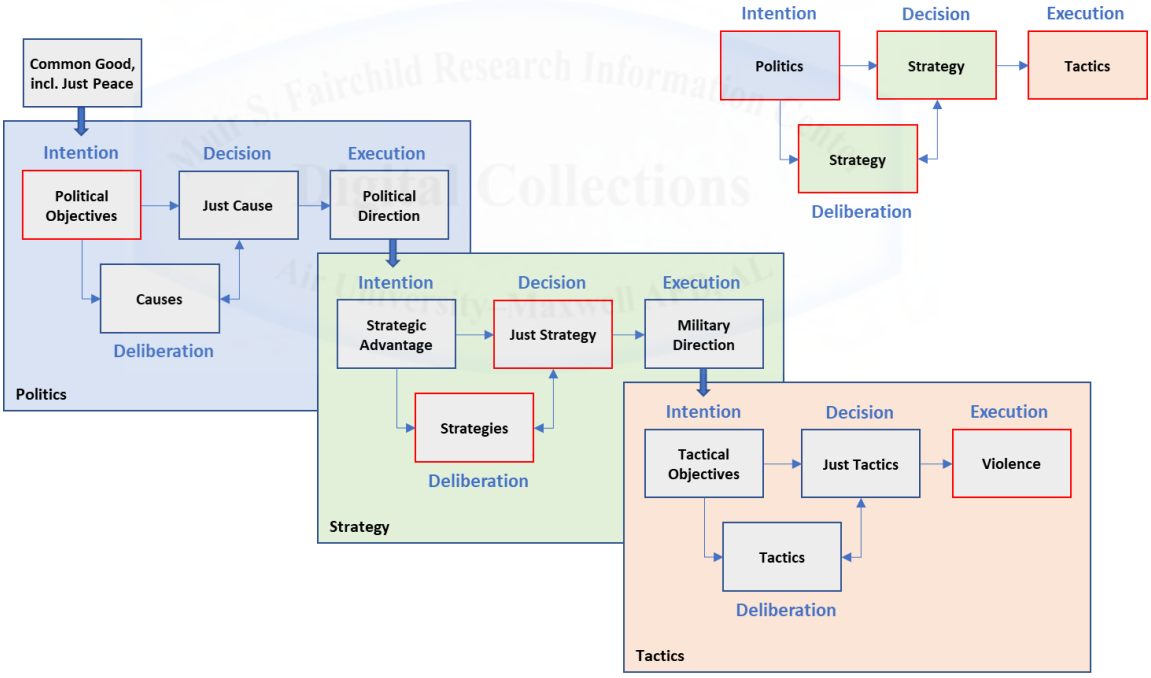


**Figure 12: Collective and Individual Acts of Warfare**
*Source: Author's Original Work*

[33] Toner, "The Logical Structure of Just War Theory."
[34] Recent works on the structure of just war, from which this one draws inspiration, include: Toner; Murphy, *War's Ends*; Kemp, "Just-War Theory: A Reconceptualization."

Each of these activities has a unique nature and contribution which distinguishes it from the others. Politics intends, strategy deliberates and decides, and tactics executes. In turn, each kind of activity is itself a collection of individual instances of practical reasoning.[35] Warfare, then, may be viewed as a collection of three unique kinds of practical reasoning continually issuing in individual acts, as Figure 12 illustrates.

As Chapter 1 discussed, every act is composed of the same essential aspects – end, object, and circumstances – which constitute the subject matter of practical reasoning. The just war tradition may be understood as a set of guiding principles concerning each of these three aspects of individual acts (end, object, and circumstances), grouped by kind of act (political, strategic, and tactical).

Good command acts, conceptualized in this way, possess the structure represented by Table 3. Each of the three columns concerns a unique activity of war: politics, strategy, and tactics. From left to right, these represent the stages of the collective act of war, from intention (politics) to deliberation and decision (strategy), to execution (tactics). Each of these three activities is itself composed of individual instances of practical reasoning, which is captured in the vertical axis. From top to bottom, an individual act moves from intention, to deliberation and decision, to execution. The four stages in the vertical axis are associated with the three aspects of any act: intention concerns the end, and deliberation and decision concern the object and circumstances. Execution brings the contemplated act to fruition.

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[35] For conceptual clarity, these activities are depicted as logically sequential and hierarchical. In reality, they occur simultaneously and exert influence on one another continuously. Luttwak, *Strategy*, 89–91.

## Table 3: Structure of Competent Acts

| | | | Collective Act → | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Jus ad Bellum | Jus in Bello | |
| | | | Intend (Politics) | Deliberate & Decide (Strategy) | Execute (Tactics) |
| Individual Act → | Intend | *End*<br>Why? | **Right intention**<br>*Proximate: political objectives*<br>*Ultimate: common good/just peace* | Right intention<br>*Proximate: just strategic advantage*<br>*Remote: political objectives* | Right intention<br>*Proximate: tactical objective*<br>*Remote: just strategic advantage* |
| | Deliberate & Decide | *Object*<br>What/About What? | **Just cause**<br>*What: redress unjust violence*<br>*About: common good* | Just strategy<br>*What: direct all military means*<br>*About: legitimate strategic objectives* | Just tactics<br>*What: harm*<br>*About: legitimate tactical objectives* (**discrimination**) |
| | | *Circumstances* | | | |
| | | Who? | **Legitimate authority** | Lawful authority | Lawful authority |
| | | By What Aids? | | | No weapons mala in se |
| | | When? | **Last resort**<br>**Probability of success** | Necessity<br>Military discretion | **Necessity**<br>Military discretion |
| | | Where? | | | |
| | | How/What Effects? | **Proportionality** | Proportionality | **Proportionality** |
| | Exe | | Define political objectives | Decide on strategy | Execute means |

Notes
**Bolded principles form a typical account of just war**
Questions in blue correspond to the four causes of an act

*Source: Author's Original Work*

Viewed holistically, acts of war begin at the top left of the table. There, the executive politician intends a political end consistent with just peace and the common good, then continues downward through the process of practical reasoning to define the political objectives. Strategic objectives derived from these become the intentions for strategists at the top of the middle column, who continue downward in a process of practical reasoning to decide on strategy. Finally, tactical objectives derived from strategy become the intentions for tacticians at the top of the right column, who continue downward in a process of practical

reasoning to issue in the execution of tactical means at the table's bottom right.[36]

A typical account of just war principles, represented in bold, populates the structure of Table 3. Unbolded text includes just war principles from more recent treatments.[37] Two qualities distinguish Table 3 from other accounts of just war. First is the distinction between strategic and tactical acts (the second and third columns, respectively). Though these share many of the same principles, distinguishing strategic from tactical acts is useful in highlighting the qualitatively different character of these levels of war. In the case of proportionality, for example, whether a soldier should call in an artillery strike on an active insurgent position with civilians in the vicinity, and whether a theater-level commander should approve an indefinite aerial bombing campaign against densely-populated industrial centers, are evidently different kinds of evaluation demanding different degrees of strategic and moral wisdom. Table 3's distinction of *jus in bello* principles between strategy and tactics emphasizes the need for continued reflection on war ethics as officers' responsibilities expand beyond the tactical level.

Second, by placing the *jus in bello* columns in strategic context, this formulation provides a more complete account of good command acts. A comparison between tactical *jus in bello* principles (third column)

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[36] Individual acts (represented vertically) considered in this way reveal a natural hierarchy of principles. Intended ends and objects are always matters of goodness and badness, whereas only some circumstances pertain to moral evaluation. Parsing acts by their four causes (in blue) reinforces the priority of ends and objects, and elevates certain circumstances above others – namely the actor and his aids. Unsurprisingly, Aquinas' formulation of right intention, just cause, and sovereign authority addresses the three essential aspects, and four causes, of any act: end (why), object (what/about what), and circumstance (who). The remaining circumstances – when, how, what effects, and where – are secondary principles of only potential moral relevance.

[37] For a detailed analysis of many of these principles, see Toner, "The Logical Structure of Just War Theory."

and political *jus ad bellum* principles (first column) is instructive. Modern *jus ad bellum* principles offer a relatively comprehensive account of the political act: why the act should be done (secure just peace), what should be done about it (redress unjust cause), who should act (legitimate authority), and in what circumstances (as a matter of last resort, when success is possible, so long as the foreseen unintended harms of war are proportional to the intended good). Altogether, these principles provide grounds for evaluating the competence of a politician's whole act, both in terms of aptitude and justice. More to the point, *jus ad bellum* affords the politician a guide to forming his judgment and to committing competent acts of war.

In contrast, modern constructions of tactical *jus in bello* offer only a limited, restrictive characterization of in-war acts. In other words, the three bolded principles in the right column of Table 3 do not fully address the three aspects of any act: end, object, and circumstances. First, they do not explicitly specify the intended end of acts, for which political objectives are not an adequate substitute.[38] As discussed in the previous section, political objectives must be translated into the violent

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[38] As Aquinas points out (ST IaIIae.12.3), nothing prevents an agent from intending several intermediate ends in one act: either because they are linked together for some still more remote end, or because an agent regards them as linked in some other way. Where he addresses intention in war (ST IIaIIae.40.1), he says that intention must be directed toward peace, justice, and the good, and away from vengeance, cruelty, power, lust, and the like. In intending peace, a servicemember is also intending all the concrete means to attain it, including (and, relevant to this discussion), the proximate tactical objectives toward which his act is directed. In other words, it is clearly true to Aquinas' thought that a servicemember should intend peace, but this does not exhaust his argument about right intention. By incorporating proximate intentions in *jus in bello* accounts, the just war tradition can offer a positive vision of just acts in terms most relevant to the servicemember: the tangible, tactical objective. At the same time, this formulation invites reflection on how tactical objectives are linked to the more remote ends of just strategic advantage, political objectives, just peace and the common good (i.e., the progression of intentions from the right, tactical column to the left, political column of Table 3). In other words, this formulation demonstrates how the just war tradition spans the "gradation of objects at various levels of command [that] further separate the first means from the ultimate purpose." Clausewitz, *On War*, 96.

grammar of strategy and tactics. Consequently, these activities aim proximately at imperfect substitutes: tactical objectives and advantage in material and morale. Only remotely do they aim at political objectives, just peace, and the common good. Formulating *jus in bello* intention in terms of tactical objectives and strategic advantage makes explicit the criteria by which to evaluate the aptness of an act. It also invites reflection on which objectives and advantages are just to pursue, and which are not. Second, in terms of the object of an act, the modern *jus in bello* principle of discrimination (between combatants and civilians) is a negative qualifier, rather than a complete description. Strategy and tactics primarily involve violent harm to people and property. Specifying the complete object (of just tactics, for example) invites reflection not only on the legitimacy of the target, but also on the kind of violence it is appropriate to employ, and whether such violence is apt to attain the intended end.

Incorporating the proximate intended end and complete object of *jus in bello* acts with the traditional just war principles gives a relatively comprehensive account of competent strategic and tactical acts. Of tactical acts, for example, they include: why the act should be done (secure a tactical objective and just strategic advantage), what should be done about it (harm legitimate targets), who should act (servicemembers under orders), and in what circumstances (as a matter of military necessity, when something of value worthy of expected sacrifice is likely to be gained, so long as the foreseen unintended harm is proportional to the intended good).

Table 3 does not exhaust all the considerations of a competent act, particularly technical aspects of strategy and tactics. As a guide to investigating (and forming) practical reasoning, it is not intended to. It does, however, give the full structure of an act so that technical aspects may be considered alongside their just war counterparts. Of note, the

term "just strategic advantage" pairs together two quite abstract concepts, which share in common an aspirational quality and a tendency to be defined by what they are not.[39] Consequently, tactics' remote end of just strategic advantage generally takes the form of negative injunction – that is, restrictions to prevent *in*justice and strategic *dis*advantage.[40]

Competent command acts – those that are both just and apt to attain strategic advantage (or avoid strategic disadvantage) – come about through the process of practical reasoning captured in the vertical axes of Table 3. For example, at the tactical level, a commander begins by intending a tactical objective consistent with strategic advantage. In deliberation, the commander seeks possible, violent objects to his intended end. In decision, he reasons according to a practical syllogism. He applies general principles about the common good and advantage to

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[39] Speaking generally about law, Aquinas offered this important insight: "Law's precepts provide a common instruction, and the things that ought to be done when imperiled cannot be reduced to something common as the things to be avoided can." ST IaIIae.140.1. A similar difficulty in formulating common instruction is evident, for example, in Gray's discussion on strategic effect: "Strategic effect has only limited educational, and zero operational, utility.... [To] understand a strategic concept, to recognize its truth and its purpose when translated into strategic behavior, is by no means synonymous with knowing exactly, or even imprecisely, how to do it...." (Gray defines strategic effect as the cumulative impact of consequences on enemy behavior and thought. Strategic advantage, then, is the state of affairs that results from the accumulation of net positive strategic effect). Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*, 140.

[40] A paradigmatic case is the 2009 Tactical Directive of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander, General Stanley McChrystal: "Our strategic goal is to defeat the insurgency threatening the stability of Afghanistan.... [We] will not win based on the number of Taliban we kill, but instead on our ability to separate insurgents from the center of gravity – the people.... We must avoid the trap of winning tactical victories – but suffering strategic defeats – by causing civilian casualties or excessive damage and thus alienating the people. While this is also a legal and a moral issue, it is an overarching operational issue.... I expect leaders at all levels to scrutinize and limit the use of force...likely to produce civilian casualties.... Commanders must weigh the gain of using [Close Air Support] against the cost of civilian casualties, which in the long run make mission success more difficult.... I cannot prescribe the appropriate use of force for every condition that a complete battlefield will produce, so I expect our force to internalize and operate in accordance with my intent.... I expect leaders to ensure this is clearly communicated and continually reinforced." Stanley McChrystal, "International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Tactical Directive" (Kabul, Afghanistan: NATO, July 6, 2009).

particular judgments about the objects and circumstances. Thus, he minimizes risk to his subordinates commensurate with the objective's value, and rejects acts that intentionally or disproportionately harm civilians. He also rejects acts inconsistent with rules of engagement. Then the commander executes. The result is a rightly ordered, justly restrained act apt to attain strategic advantage for the common good.

This section has investigated the content of good acts of command, integrating both strategic and ethical responsibilities in one coherent account. Though the resulting formulation of a command act – outlined in Table 3 – is only one part of this thesis' four-part framework, it plays a particularly important role in investigation and study. Section IV turns to the character of the good commander which makes such acts possible.

## IV – The Good Commander's Character

Knowledge of practical affairs, whether of strategy or just war, is useless unless applied to action. Applied well, such knowledge leads to competent (good) acts. Competent acts, repeated over time, form virtues which in turn strengthen capacity for competent acts. Perhaps nowhere else is this virtuous cycle more necessary than in matters of war:

> One more requisite remains to be considered – a factor more vital to military knowledge than to any other. Knowledge must be so absorbed into the mind that it almost ceases to exist in a separate, objective way. In almost any other art or profession a man can work with truths he has learned from musty books, but which have no life or meaning for him.… It is never like that in war. Continual change and the need to respond to it compels the commander to carry the whole intellectual apparatus of his knowledge within him. He must always be ready to bring forth the appropriate decision. By

> total assimilation with his mind and life, the commander's knowledge must be transformed into genuine capability.[41]

The principles of just war, like those of strategic theory, are not meant to serve as checklist items, but as guides to formation. They are "meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield…."[42]

It is the military commander, above all, who stands in need of this formation. Bridging the space between strategy and tactics, the commander is charged with the application of general precepts – be they strategic direction, operational and tactical doctrine, or the principles of just war – to the contingent features of war. At the tactical level, the individual servicemember is rightly consumed by the employment of violence. Rules of engagement and laws of armed conflict help steer him from injustice or strategic disadvantage. At each successive step away from the tactical level, the commander's responsibility for just strategic advantage, and the intellectual hurdles to attaining it, grow.[43] Eventually, at the level of executive strategist, the intellectual difficulty "becomes among the most extreme to which the mind can be subjected"[44]

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[41] Clausewitz, *On War*, 147.
[42] Clausewitz, 141.
[43] "The quality that in most soldiers is disciplined by service regulations that have become second nature to them, must in the commanding officer be disciplined by reflection." Clausewitz, 190. Cook elaborates on this point in reference to moral reflection: "Strategic leaders, almost by definition, deal only in the realm of the unanticipated, the uncertain, the ambiguous. The world of strategic leadership is fundamentally one where conventional wisdom is inadequate. Success at the strategic leadership level continually requires capabilities to see and frame novel ways of approaching problems and of seeing beyond or beneath the ways things are conventionally done. At the strategic level, therefore, just as one requires skills in critical thinking or interpersonal negotiation one might have succeeded without at lower levels of leadership, one needs to develop post-conventional approaches to moral thinking as well." Cook, "Moral Reasoning as a Strategic Leader Competency," 5.
[44] Clausewitz, *On War*, 146.

The principle virtue concerned with the rigors of command is military prudence – right reasoning about the defense of the common good. Like the strategic and tactical acts it perfects, military prudence concerns technical elements but is no mere art,[45] requiring more than aptitude for strategic advantage. Moral virtue is also necessary. Thus, a prudent commander is both apt and morally virtuous.[46] An imprudent commander is either inapt, morally vicious, or both.[47]

**Table 4: Prudent and Imprudent Commanders**

| | | **Moral Virtue** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Virtuous** | **Vicious** |
| **Intellectual Virtue** | **Apt** | Prudent | Imprudent |
| | **Inapt** | Imprudent | Imprudent |

*Source: Author's Original Work*

As Chapter 1 outlined, there are many ways to fall short of prudent command.[48] First, commanders may seek ends short of strategic advantage for their own sake, to the detriment of political objectives or the common good. Countering incomplete prudence – the pursuit of tactical or operational victory in contempt of implicit or explicit strategic considerations – was a central theme in Clausewitz's work. Taken at face

[45] "We therefore conclude that war does not belong in the realm of arts and sciences; rather it is part of man's social existence." Clausewitz, 149.
[46] Clausewitz emphasizes the need for both moral and intellectual virtue in true military prudence: "Boldness will be at a disadvantage only in an encounter with deliberate caution, which may be considered bold in its own right, and is certainly just as powerful and effective; but such cases are rare. Timidity is the root of prudence in the majority of men." Clausewitz, 190.
[47] Aquinas observes that military command is an art in one sense, and a practice in another: "Military prudence may be an art, in so far as it has certain rules for the right use of certain external things, such as arms and horses, but in so far as it is directed to the common good, it belongs rather to prudence." ST IIaIIae.50.4. For military prudence's dependence on intellectual virtues, see Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 80.
[48] See Table 1.

value, General Douglas MacArthur's famous phrase, "there is no substitute for victory," encapsulates imperfect prudence.

Second, commanders may lack the necessary intellectual aptitude for their station, through no culpable fault of their own. Given the many qualities necessary for prudence, there are likewise many ways to fall short: ponderous deliberation, dim foresight, or inability to identify relevant circumstances, for example.[49] Unsurprisingly, "No case is more common than that of the officer whose energy declines as he rises in rank and fills positions that are beyond his abilities."[50]

Third, commanders may be imprudent by defect, by culpably neglecting the demands of deliberation, decision, or execution. Characteristic of this kind is inconstancy, or a lack of intellectual determination and courage in the face of uncertainty. Of these commanders, Clausewitz explains in decidedly Aristotelian terms: "their courage and their intellect work in separate compartments, not together; determination, therefore, does not result. It is engendered only be a *mental* act; the mind tells man that boldness is requires, and thus gives direction to his will."[51]

Fourth, commanders may positively oppose prudence by selecting means contrary to justice to attain strategic advantage. The vice of cunning – embracing a "dirty hands" approach to war – is a perennial temptation of the commander who does not recognize his higher allegiance to the common good.

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[49] These point to an absence of *coup d'oeil*, Clausewitz's term for "quick recognition of a truth that the mind would ordinarily miss or would perceive only after long study and reflection." Clausewitz, *On War*, 102.
[50] Clausewitz, 110.
[51] Clausewitz, 103. Ironically, this defect is often misattributed to prudence based on a modern narrowing of the concept to cautious self-interest.

In summary, a good commander is a prudent commander. He possesses both moral and intellectual virtues. He intends just and advantageous ends, deliberates to apt means, decides in accordance with the principles of strategy and just war, and directs ably amidst the fog and friction of war. In time, his competent acts of command accrue just strategic advantage over the enemy, advancing the cause of just peace and the common good.[52]

In contrast, a bad commander is an imprudent commander. He lacks either moral virtue, intellectual virtue, or both. He may intend unjust or disadvantageous ends, deliberate to inapt means, decide in contempt of or overt opposition to the principles of strategy and just war, or direct ineffectively, overcome by the fog and friction of war. In time, his incompetent acts of command accrue strategic disadvantage, or unjust advantage over the enemy, either of which harm the cause of just peace and the common good which he has been summoned to defend.

Cleverness in deliberation from ends to means is a cornerstone of the pursuit of strategic advantage. Applied to bad ends, it is the same as the vice of cunning. Paired with the moral virtues in the pursuit of good ends, cleverness is fundamental to prudence.[53] The Latin term Aquinas used to describe cleverness is *ingeniositas*: the quality of being gifted

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[52] Political prudence and military prudence are fundamentally linked in their concern for the common good. Aquinas relates them by way of analogy, where political prudence is akin to the concupiscible appetite in seeking out what is conducive to the common well-being, and military prudence is akin to the irascible appetite in defending it (ST IIaIIae.50.4). For discussion on the qualities proper to political prudence (and by extension, to military prudence), see Alberto Coll, "Normative Prudence as a Tradition of Statecraft," *Ethics and International Affairs* 5 (1991): 33–51; J. Patrick Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," *Public Administration Review* 58, no. 1 (February 1998).

[53] This is essentially the part of prudence called *eubulia.*

with genius.[54] To refine Clausewitz's insight, then, some amount of genius is necessary, but not sufficient. Moral character is likewise necessary but insufficient. Only the union of the two accounts for the whole nature of the good commander.[55]

## V – Chapter Summary

This chapter has applied teleology and moral psychology to military command, mirroring the foundation of virtue ethics outlined in Chapter 1. The result is a four-part framework of *purpose, responsibilities, acts,* and *character* which gives a coherent account of the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. These four parts are summarized below.

The *purpose* of war is not any political end, but the particular political ends which constitute a just peace and the common good. Its activity can be understood as an instance of collective practical reasoning, with three hierarchical stages of politics, strategy, and tactics.

While political objectives govern each subordinate stage, they are pursued according to the violent grammar of strategy and tactics that aims at strategic advantage. Yet violent pursuit of strategic advantage also endangers the common good, in particular the good of servicemembers and the communal life of virtue that requires the protection of civilians. Thus, the common good demands not only advantage, but also restraint. The strategic and ethical *responsibilities* of

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[54] Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, "Ingeniosus," *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=ingeniosus.

[55] General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, expresses this point well, allowing for his narrower use of the term 'competence': "You can have someone of incredible character who can't lead their way out of a forward operating base because they don't have the competence to understand the application of military power, and that doesn't do me any good. Conversely, you can have someone who is intensely competent, who is steeped in the skills of the profession, but doesn't live a life of character. And that doesn't do me any good." As quoted in Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 80.

command, then, include the rightly ordered, justly restrained pursuit of advantage.

Competent *acts* of command, then, must be both apt to generate strategic advantage, and just. The just war tradition offers a longstanding reflection on the content of competent acts of war. Modern just war criteria, set within the moral psychology from which they were derived, possess a natural structure consistent with the three aspects of any act: end, object, and circumstances. Applied to *jus in bello*, this approach provides a relatively comprehensive account of competent acts incorporating both the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command.

For the commander, knowledge of the just war tradition, like knowledge of strategic theory, is only useful if its principles lead to habitually competent acts, or *virtue*. Cultivation of both moral virtue and aptitude for strategic advantage is essential for military prudence, or right reasoning about defense of the common good. There are many ways to fall short of this ideal. Habitual focus on the narrow end of victory, negligent or inconstant execution, and willful embrace of "dirty hands" means are all forms of imprudent command. In short, a commander must leaven whatever store of genius he possesses with intellectual and moral excellence, in order to be truly good.

In conclusion, the four-part framework may be summarized as follows:

> The *purpose* of war is to attain political ends consistent with just peace and the common good;
>
> The *responsibilities* of command include the rightly ordered and justly restrained pursuit of strategic advantage for the sake of political objectives;
>
> Good *acts* of command fulfill these responsibilities both in aptitude to produce advantage (or to avoid disadvantage), and in just restraint; and

Good commanders possess both intellectual and moral *virtues* culminating in military prudence, which enables good acts of command.

Chapter 3 applies this framework to three cases of military command.

## Chapter 3

## Case Studies

> *Our present discussion does not aim, as our others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us.*
>
> Aristotle

Chapter 3 applies the four-part framework of *purpose*, *responsibilities*, *acts*, and *virtues* from the previous chapter to three cases of military command. It aims to provide evidence for the work's thesis, that virtue ethics can give a coherent account of both the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. The first case, at the tactical level of war, analyzes Lieutenant Michael Murphy's actions after he and his SEAL team were soft-compromised during Operation Red Wings in Afghanistan's Kunar Province in 2005. The second case, at the theater level of war, analyzes General Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1944 decision to employ Allied airpower to destroy civilian rail terminals throughout France in support of Operation Overlord. The third case considers the supreme emergency exemption, perhaps the hardest challenge faced by the just war tradition.

The first two historical cases involved extraordinarily difficult decisions with life-and-death stakes and no ready answers. Each commander faced strategic and ethical challenges demanding the kind of virtue – especially military prudence – that this thesis has argued is the essence of good command. They are presented here in a spirit of humility, not to pass judgment, but to illustrate how virtue ethics can aid in understanding and learning from their examples. They begin with a brief review of the relevant context,

then continue with an analysis based on the four-part framework this thesis has advanced. Particularly prominent in each evaluation is the *act*, which draws on the structure outlined in Chapter 2 to integrate both strategic and ethical considerations.[1] In what follows, many details are omitted to facilitate analysis of key points of deliberation.

## I – LT Michael P. Murphy & Operation Red Wings

### Context

On the evening of June 27th, 2005, Navy Lieutenant (SEAL) Michael Murphy, Gunner's Mate Second Class (SEAL) Danny Dietz, Sonar Technician Second Class (SEAL) Matthew Axelson, and Hospital Corpsman Second Class (SEAL) Marcus Luttrell inserted via fastrope to the mountainous terrain in the Pech District of Afghanistan's Kunar Province. The four-man reconnaissance element was operating in support of Operation Red Wings, a five-phase operation conducted by the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Marine Regiment. The stated purpose of the operation was to "Disrupt anticoalition militia activity in the…region to further stabilize the area for forthcoming 18 September 2005 national parliamentary elections."[2] The first two phases aimed to kill or capture Ahmad Shah Dara-I-Nur, leader of a small group of fighters working to impede the national elections and aid Taliban in the region. The latter three phases aimed to sweep key terrain and villages in the area for insurgents, then conduct stability operations in support of locals' needs.[3]

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[1] See Table 3. In the analysis section of each case, italicized text draws attention to the parts of acts, just war principles, and virtues discussed in previous chapters.
[2] Ed Darack, *Victory Point: Operations Red Wings and Whalers: The Marine Corps' Battle for Freedom in Afghanistan* (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2009), 101.
[3] Darack, 102–3.

The operation's goals were consistent with broader counter-insurgency and nation-building operations taking place throughout Afghanistan.

Murphy, the officer-in-charge, and his team were essential to the first two phases. Their tactical objective was to take up a concealed overwatch position in the suspected vicinity of Ahmad Shah, identify and observe Shah and his men, then guide a direct action team against them in phase two. Early on the morning of June 28th, after a seven-hour trek to their overwatch position, Murphy and his men were discovered by three local goat herders, including a young teenage boy, and their large herd of goats. Lacking equipment with which to restrain the Afghanis, Murphy and his men deliberated as a group to determine how to proceed.

**Analysis**

*Purpose*

The purpose of the mission was to help capture or kill a regional insurgency leader, as part of a larger strategic effort to eliminate conditions which terrorists could exploit to prepare attacks against Americans.[4] The political aim was to establish a functioning Afghan government in order to restore a just peace for the common good.

*Responsibilities*

Acting on behalf of the common good, Murphy's strategic responsibilities included securing advantage for stability operations, either by facilitating the elimination of a threat to local stability or, at least, not contributing to instability. His ethical responsibilities included

[4] The following analysis draws on Luttrell's account in Marcus Luttrell and Patrick Robinson, *Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of SEAL Team 10* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008).

shielding his men from unnecessary danger and avoiding harm to civilians.

*Act: Deliberation*

Lieutenant Murphy's act was heavily constrained by circumstances. The team's deliberation revealed only two viable options – to release or kill the herders *(objects)*. Both options would prevent the mission from continuing as planned, since either the herders or their families were likely to compromise the SEALs' location.[5] Murphy recognized that the mission had fundamentally changed from securing advantage to avoiding disadvantage *(end)*. In light of this new end, he foresaw international strategic repercussions of killing the Afghanis, and the advantage this would accrue to the Taliban *(circumstance)*.[6]

From an ethical perspective, Murphy foresaw that either option would gravely endanger the good of his men *(discretion)*. If they released the herders, and those herders informed Shah's fighters, the SEAL team would be greatly outnumbered. The likelihood that some or all of his men would be killed was high. If instead they killed the herders, the SEALs would very likely face murder charges and imprisonment.[7]

In considering the good of the herders, the team faced a difficult challenge. The nature of counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan made it hard to clearly distinguish between friend, neutral, and foe *(discrimination)*.[8] Standing rules of engagement, which stated that

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[5] Luttrell and Robinson, 204–5.
[6] Luttrell and Robinson, 203.
[7] Luttrell and Robinson, 203.
[8] Luttrell explains in detail the difficulties of distinguishing friend from foe in order to apply rules of engagement concerning unarmed civilians in Afghanistan. Luttrell and Robinson, 166–72.

"civilians are not targets,"[9] were difficult to apply in practice since insurgents blended in with the civilian population. What was the herders' relationship to Shah's fighters?[10] Was uncertainty of their intentions sufficient to consider them a threat, and if so, were the SEALs entitled to do everything possible to defend themselves behind enemy lines? At least one SEAL thought so. Yet, the herders were unarmed and compliant, and that made a profound difference to what justice and the common good required. As Murphy argued, killing them would be interpreted by others as "the murder of innocent unarmed Afghan farmers."[11]

*Act: Decision*

At the end of their deliberation, Murphy led the team to a decision. As previous chapters have discussed, decision is akin to a practical syllogism, in which a particular judgment about the means matched to a general judgment about the common good leads to action. Before choosing an option, Lieutenant Murphy reminded the team of several particular and general judgments worth considering: "If we kill these guys we have to be straight about it. Report what we did. We can't sneak around this. Just so you all understand, their bodies will be found, the Taliban will use it to the max. They'll get it in the papers, and the U.S. liberal media will attack us without mercy. We will almost certainly be charged with murder."[12] Murphy started by reminding the team of a general judgment, that as men of character they were bound to tell the truth about their actions. Then, he reminded them of a specific judgment that killing the herders would be strategically advantageous to

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[9] Darack, *Victory Point*, 115–17.
[10] Luttrell and Robinson, *Lone Survivor*, 201–2.
[11] Luttrell and Robinson, 202.
[12] Luttrell and Robinson, 206.

the enemy. Finally, he reminded his men of a specific judgment that their individual and common good were at stake – both in terms of imprisonment, and complicity in murder.

At that point, Murphy turned to Luttrell for his thoughts. Luttrell's account reveals his inner turmoil: "Something kept whispering in the back of my mind, it would be wrong to execute these unarmed men in cold blood. And the idea of doing that and then covering our tracks and slinking away like criminals, denying everything, would make it more wrong."[13] Luttrell clearly apprehended the demands of the common good given the particular circumstances, and the general judgments deriving from them: do not murder, and do not lie. Though he attributes these judgments to his Christian faith, Pericles had long ago spoken about the noble soldier's reverence for the laws, "especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break."[14] Many centuries later, General MacArthur would echo the same point: "The soldier, be he friend or foe, is charged with the protection of the weak and unarmed. It is the very essence and reason of his being… [a] sacred trust."[15] In the end, Luttrell made his decision, and Murphy agreed:

> Do not murder
> Killing these unarmed men is murder
> Do not kill these unarmed men

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[13] Luttrell and Robinson, 205.
[14] Even the SEAL who favored killing the herders acknowledged these general judgments, though he differed in his particular judgment of whether such an act constituted murder: "We're not murderers. No matter what we do. We're on active duty behind enemy lines, sent here by our senior commanders. We have a right to do everything we can to save our own lives." Luttrell and Robinson, 205.
[15] As quoted in Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 317. This quote comes from MacArthur's affirmation of General Yamashita's death sentence at the end of World War II, which was then and remains now a source of ethical debate. Nevertheless, the quote itself reflects an important truth about the servicemember's self-understanding.

Consequently, the SEALs released them. In leading the team to this conclusion, Murphy kept sight of, and rightly ordered, both his strategic and ethical responsibilities. He helped his fellow SEALs recognize that releasing the Afghanis was both apt to avoid strategic disadvantage and just, even if some continued to believe that killing them would also be just. Above all, he honored the confidence placed in him by his country and his subordinates to reason well in defense of the common good. His was a competent act of command in the fullest sense.

*Virtue*

From Luttrell's description, Murphy exhibited each of the cardinal virtues. First, he checked his conflicting passions with *fortitude* and *temperance*, not allowing fear or hate to unduly influence him. Second, his practical reasoning demonstrated *prudence*. He led the SEALs in deliberating well to potential means, and in foreseeing strategic consequences. He also judged well with respect to the strategic and ethical imperatives in the rules of engagement, and above all with respect to moral principles prohibiting murder. Third, his will, following the judgment of his reason, exhibited *justice* to the unarmed herders.

Shortly after the goat herders were released, the team's worst fears were realized. In the subsequent battle, the four SEALs demonstrated extraordinary nobility of character. Michael Murphy, Danny Dietz, and Matthew Axelson lost their lives, and Marcus Luttrell was severely wounded.[16] Lieutenant Murphy was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his self-sacrificial valor on behalf of his team. His character – prudent and courageous – exemplify the moral and intellectual virtues of the truly good commander.

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[16] Among the unforeseeable and tragic consequences of their heroically just decision, sixteen special operators died during the rescue effort.

## II – Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower & The Transportation Plan

### Context

In December 1943, Allied forces began to consider how air supremacy over Europe might be exploited in support of Operation Overlord, the cross-Channel invasion planned for summer 1944.[17] A central preoccupation for the Allies was isolating the landing zones from German reinforcements which could decisively defeat the assault. Key to German troop movements was the European rail system, a complex and redundant web encompassing 30,000 miles of track in France alone.[18] Planners focused on large rail centers, identifying a set of ninety-three targets – mainly in city centers – throughout France which altogether might paralyze the transportation system. These targets were to be attacked by aerial bombardment in a three-month campaign leading up to the invasion, known as the Transportation Plan.[19]

On March 25th, 1944, the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, gathered his top air commanders to determine a plan forward. War Office and Economic Ministry representatives estimated that the Transportation Plan would reduce railroad efficiency by thirty percent – significant, but not enough to prevent German military traffic. In spite of this pessimistic outlook, Eisenhower insisted that the greatest airpower contribution to Operation Overlord would be to "hinder enemy movement,"[20] however limited the effect. After Eisenhower dismissed an alternative plan to target German oil supplies, the air

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[17] Gordon Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), 217.
[18] Stephen A. Bourque, *Beyond the Beach: The Allied Air War Against France, 1944* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 167.
[19] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 218.
[20] Harrison, 222.

commanders agreed to the rail plan. At the close of the meeting, the conversation turned to the British Government's deep concern with the implications of unintentionally killing French civilians,[21] marking the start of a month-long deliberation between Eisenhower and Prime Minister Winston Churchill concerning the operational details of the Transportation Plan.[22]

**Analysis**

*Purpose*

The purpose of the Transportation Plan was to employ widespread aerial interdiction to paralyze railway movement from western Germany to the landing zones, as part of a larger strategic effort to land an Allied invasion force in northern France. The political aim was to secure Nazi Germany' surrender, to reestablish a just peace for the common good.

*Responsibilities*

Acting on behalf of the common good, Gen Eisenhower's strategic responsibilities included denying German advantage in the form of reinforcement potential. His ethical responsibilities included shielding

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[21] The principle of double-effect, introduced in Chapter 1, applies here. Eisenhower's intent was to destroy French rail equipment. French civilian casualties were a foreseeable but unintended consequence.

[22] For an extended review of the political and military context surrounding Allied decisions to conduct aerial bombardment in France, and in particular the evolution of British policy on this issue, see Lindsey Dodd and Andrew Knapp, "'How Many Frenchmen Did You Kill?' British Bombing Policy Towards France (1940–1945)," *French History* 22, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 469–92, https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/crn042. Concerning the Transportation Plan, the authors highlight a number of factors unaddressed in this brief analysis that influenced the debate between Eisenhower and Churchill, including the inertia of the operation and a more muted French response to the bombings than initially expected.

Allied forces from unnecessary danger and avoiding harm to French civilians.[23]

*Act: Deliberation*

Gen Eisenhower's plan faced significant opposition from Churchill and the British War Cabinet *(object)*. Initial estimates of up to 160,000 civilian casualties, including 40,000 dead,[24] deeply concerned Churchill *(circumstance)*. On April 3rd, he wrote to Eisenhower to express the British position: "My dear General, The Cabinet to-day took rather a grave and on the whole an adverse view of the proposal to bomb so many French railway centres, in view of the fact that scores of thousands of French civilians, men, women, and children, would lose their lives or be injured. Considering that they are all our friends, this might be held to be an act of very great severity, bringing much hatred on the Allied Air Forces."[25] Churchill, in insisting on alternative uses of air forces, added, "Postwar France must be our friend. It is not alone a question of humanitarianism. It is also a question of high state policy"[26] *(end)*.

Eisenhower, acknowledging fears that the Transportation Plan would threaten relations with France,[27] sought to reassure Churchill. Working with his air commanders, he challenged the accuracy of the casualty figures, arguing that losses would amount to only a fraction of

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[23] Separate, but related ethical questions concern Eisenhower's operational decisions to conduct deception bombing throughout France and Belgium to conceal the identity of the planned invasion location, and to strike bridges and towns which might serve as choke points for German transportation. For an overview of these decisions, see Dodd and Knapp. For detailed analysis of the deception plan and its costs, see Chapter 9 of Bourque, *Beyond the Beach*.
[24] "War Cabinet No. 43 of 1944, Confidential Annex," Cabinet Papers, 65/46 (UK National Archives, April 3, 1944).
[25] Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Road to Victory, 1941-1945 (Volume VII)* (Hillsdale: Hillsdale College Press, 2015), pt. 14742.
[26] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 232.
[27] Eisenhower, 232.

the initial estimates *(proportionality)*. His assessment was based in part on his plan to issue general and specific warnings to inhabitants, by radio and by leaflet, prior to the attacks.[28] Despite Churchill's protests, the Transportation Plan would proceed.

As the operation continued, mounting civilian casualties caused deep anguish within the British Government. On April 26th, Churchill discussed the plan with the War Cabinet Defence Committee, stating that "He did not believe that the people of this country had yet realized the implications of our present attacks on railway centres and that when they did so, there would be a reaction against a policy which was not in keeping with British morality and resulted in killing large numbers of our friends in France."[29] On April 27th, Churchill acknowledged the revised estimate of 16,000 killed, with 3,000 – 4,000 presumed already dead. Still, "He was not satisfied that the strategic merits of the plan justified its continuance, and it was certainly wrong on humanitarian grounds." As a result, he sent a letter to Eisenhower requesting that the attacks be limited to those railway centers where estimated casualties did not exceed 100-150.[30]

*Act: Decision*

On May 2nd, Churchill summarized Eisenhower's decision to the War Cabinet. Eisenhower stated that those railways for which heavy casualties were estimated, including two in Paris, would be left until the end of the program. "This postponement would inevitably affect the full efficacy of the plan, but this handicap could be accepted in view of the

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[28] Eisenhower, 232.
[29] "War Cabinet Defence Committee No. 8 of 1944," Cabinet Papers, 69/6 (UK National Archives, April 26, 1944).
[30] "War Cabinet No. 57 of 1944, Confidential Annex," Cabinet Papers, 65/46 (UK National Archives, April 27, 1944).

weighty political considerations involved"[31] *(proportionality).* Militarily, he pointed out, the delay that railway damage would create for German reinforcements would be of "inestimable value" to the invasion effort *(necessity).* He further indicated that he "had modified my plan as far as possible without vitiating its value."[32] If he were to limit bombing to those targets where estimated casualties were less than 100-150, "the perils of an already hazardous undertaking would be greatly enhanced"[33] *(discretion).* Consistent with his correspondence, he "directed the suspension of attacks on twenty-seven targets in heavily populated districts."[34] Churchill expressed his reservations to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who refused to usurp Eisenhower's prerogative as Supreme Allied Commander. On May 16th, resigned to the program and assured that casualties were likely to remain less than 10,000, Churchill advised the War Cabinet to drop the matter.[35]

This correspondence reveals, in an unusually explicit way, the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. Eisenhower and his staff, attuned to the political difficulties of the Transportation Plan, had incorporated measures to minimize civilian casualties from the start.[36] Churchill, however, saw beyond the immediate political ramifications to considerations of the just peace with France, Belgium, and other occupied states. He also anticipated the moral revulsion of the British population to apparently indiscriminate bombing policy. Compared to the limited military effect he expected the operation to have, he considered the anticipated strategic advantage to be disproportionate,

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[31] "War Cabinet No. 61 of 1944, Confidential Annex," Cabinet Papers, 65/46 (UK National Archives, May 2, 1944).
[32] Bourque, *Beyond the Beach*, 164.
[33] "War Cabinet No. 61 of 1944, Confidential Annex."
[34] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 223.
[35] Harrison, 223.
[36] Bourque, *Beyond the Beach*, 163–65.

and therefore unjust. Eisenhower, for his part, recognized the validity of Churchill's argument.[37] He willingly imposed limitations upon his means in deference to the common good. Still, he recognized the supreme importance of isolating the landing zone to his subordinates' good and the invasion's success, and the importance of the invasion to attaining peace. He also understood that other target sets would not likely hamper German reinforcements. By reducing his target set to minimize casualties, he ensured that the strategic advantage he recognized as essential was rightly ordered and justly restrained. Thus, Gen Eisenhower's act of command was competent in the fullest sense.

*Virtue*

Gen Eisenhower's deliberations with Churchill took place over a month, during which time his virtue was evident. He reasoned well about the potential means, identifying apt solutions to deny German advantage while distinguishing between essential and nonessential advantage. He also judged well with respect to strategic and ethical imperatives, recognizing the need for restraint without vitiating the operation's military value. By D-Day, the "transportation system was on the point of total collapse," with Allied bombing having achieved up to seventy-five percent reduction in German rail capacity in northern France.[38] Crippled transportation systems, along with daytime Allied interdiction, severely limited Germany's ability to reinforce the landing zone.[39] In demonstrating strategic foresight and sensitivity to ethical restraint, Eisenhower proved himself to be a prudent commander.[40]

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[37] Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 232–33.
[38] Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 224.
[39] Harrison, 408–11.
[40] In his autobiography, Eisenhower discussed the relief of a combat leader, revealing the importance that both ethics and effectiveness held for him: "On the other hand,

Some have objected that, given the low initial estimates of the Transportation Plan's effectiveness, projections of 16,000 dead French civilians made the plan disproportionate and therefore unjust.[41] Recognizing the contingent nature of war, a virtue-based framework such as this one "stands apart from various forms of moral casuistry that set out to enclose an ethical dilemma tightly within the bounds of distinguishing principles and formulas drawn from previous similar cases so as to resolve it definitively."[42] Instead, the virtue tradition holds that "judgments of right and wrong must be embodied within a realistic appreciation of consequences and circumstances, empirical limitations, and the overall feasibility of actions."[43] It acknowledges that people of good will can disagree within reasonable bounds about the application of just war principles such as proportionality and necessity, without thereby rendering them devoid of meaning. Ultimately, Eisenhower merits the title prudent not because his ethical and strategic reasoning were unassailable, but because in his concrete circumstances he pursued advantage in a recognizably just way.

## III – Supreme Emergency

Whether, when, and how moral principles yield to strategic advantage are among the most difficult queries that the just war tradition faces. Though this framework does not provide answers to hard cases, it can help in formulating the right questions to ask about them.

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really inept leadership must be quickly detected and instantly removed. Lives of thousands are involved – the question is not one of academic justice for the leader, it is that of concern for the many and the objective of victory." Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 188.

[41] For a reflection on possible alternative options, and a French perspective of the destruction wrought by the Transportation Plan and other aerial bombardment operations in support of Overlord, see Bourque, *Beyond the Beach*.

[42] Coll, "Normative Prudence," 44.

[43] Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 180.

Perhaps the most well-known of the just war tradition's responses to hard cases is Michael Walzer's supreme emergency exemption, which morally obligates violations of *jus in bello* principles when a political community faces mortal danger that is both "close and serious."[44] In reaction to this claim, several others have been advanced,[45] from skepticism that supreme emergencies exist to absolute prohibition against exemptions.[46] From the commander's perspective, all of these answers are problematic. On the one hand, Walzer's supreme emergency exemption requires that:

> Sometimes, in conditions of extremity…commanders must commit murder or they must order others to commit it. And then they are murderers, though in a good cause…. *They have killed unjustly, let us say, for the sake of justice itself, but justice itself requires that unjust killings be condemned.*… Stated in general terms, it amounts to this: that a nation fighting a just war, when it is desperate and survival itself is at risk, must use unscrupulous or morally ignorant soldiers; and as soon as their usefulness is past, it must disown them. I would rather say something else: that decent men and women, hard-pressed in war, must sometimes do terrible things, and then they themselves have to look for some way to reaffirm the values they have overthrown. But the first statement is probably the more realistic one. For it is very rare, as Machiavelli wrote in his *Discourses*, 'that a good man should be found willing to employ wicked means, even when such means are morally required.' And then we must look for people who are not good, and use them, and dishonor them.[47]

Walzer's account of the military commander's responsibilities in a supreme emergency is remarkably clear. It is also evidently incoherent:

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[44] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 251–55.
[45] Martin L. Cook, "Michael Walzer's Concept of 'Supreme Emergency,'" *Journal of Military Ethics* 6, no. 2 (June 2007): 138–51.
[46] Christopher Toner, "Just War and the Supreme Emergency Exemption," *Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 221 (October 2005): 545–61.
[47] Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 324–25. Emphasis mine.

how can justice command injustice?[48] As a result, it contradicts notions of character fundamental to Western military formation. On this account, the commander must manipulate subordinates contrary to their own commitment to justice, or he must seek out subordinates with little or no such commitment, to intentionally kill civilians.

On the other hand is absolutism, which is also clear. In rejecting exemptions to *jus in bello* principles, it rejoins: "The soldier entrusts his conscience to his superiors, and it is wicked and shameful for them to betray that trust. The wickedness is compounded if they then deflect responsibility from themselves and use the soldier to effect their escape. The act is cowardly and unfair."[49] This position is perfectly coherent, for it does not command injustice for the sake of justice. On this account, the commander keeps faith with his subordinates and the common good by rightly ordering his responsibilities. Yet, it also requires the commander to forgo unjust advantage, to accept defeat and perhaps the destruction of his community for the sake of justice.

The commander, charged by the common good both with its defense and with justly restrained violence, faces an agonizing decision in the supreme emergency dilemma. This framework in its maximally coherent form is absolutist, properly ordering the demands of justice by making no exceptions to *jus in bello* principles for the sake of strategic advantage. Officers will find this view difficult to accept. In terms of investigation and education, however, beginning from this position has the virtue of clarifying what is at stake in making exceptions to the primacy of ethics over strategy:

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[48] Cook, "Michael Walzer's Concept of 'Supreme Emergency'." 138–39.
[49] Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue*, 108.

*Purpose* of war: Which is the higher common good, justice or survival? What, aside from the maximal case of genocide, does it mean for a political community's survival to be at stake? What are the consequences for political objectives and peace of doing injustice, both in the short and long term?

*Responsibilities* of command: To what does the commander owe his higher allegiance, a community's survival or its principles – that is, its honor? What is the proper ordering of a commander's strategic and ethical responsibilities? Are these the sorts of questions that should be left to the judgment of individual commanders? If a commander believes strategy should overrule ethics in certain circumstances, what does he owe his subordinates in terms of their character formation? What does a commander owe the subordinates he orders to contravene their shared understanding of justice? What does a commander owe the community whose shared notions of justice he contravenes? What does the community owe the commander?

Good *acts* of command: Under what conditions would it be acceptable to command injustice, and how much injustice is acceptable? What are the strategic consequences of unjust acts, both in the short and long term?

Good commander's *virtue*: How much injustice is it acceptable to order before a commander becomes morally vicious?

These are perhaps the most difficult questions a commander can face, and they stand as evidence of the need for sustained development of ethical reasoning alongside strategic reasoning with increasing levels of responsibility.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in reflecting on war ethics, adds an important insight which is worth citing at length:

> Modern writers on the ethics of war tend to begin in the wrong place…. [The] problems on which they focus tend to be those that arise when a war has already broken out and indeed has reached some critical stage…. Preoccupation with examples of this type naturally enough suggests that the moral problems of war are characteristically formulated as dilemmas in which either alternative involves inflicting or permitting appalling suffering. Since the reasons for choosing one alternative cannot be shown to outweigh those

> for choosing the other, it is equally natural to conclude that such problems confront us with existential, criterionless choice.... In this case it is not only the selection of examples that is likely to mislead us; the situations described in such examples are generally themselves symptoms of earlier moral failure. Before we ask what we ought to do in such situations, we need to ask what we ought to do so as not to get into such situations. And to ask this involves beginning with a much more general enquiry into the place that war and preparation for war occupy in human life. What emerges from such an enquiry is how closely war is linked to our most intimate moral concerns.... [It] is only through the study of the moral dimension of the human life that we shall be able to understand war and the military vocation. Ethics is not a supplement to be added to the military curriculum, as it is in Colorado Springs, West Point, and Annapolis. It is the heart of the matter.[50]

In that spirit, the framework presented here offers one method for reflecting systematically on the responsibilities of command.

## IV – Chapter Summary

This chapter has applied the four-part framework from Chapter 2 to two historical cases of military command. It has illustrated how, drawing on virtue ethics' teleology, strategic objectives may be linked to the ultimate end of the common good. It has also showed how, following virtue ethics' moral psychology, strategic and ethical responsibilities may be treated in a unified manner when evaluating command acts and character. Finally, it has demonstrated how the framework can help systematically formulate questions about hard ethical dilemmas in war. Together, these cases illustrate how virtue ethics in the Aristotelean tradition can give a coherent account of the strategic and ethical responsibilities of command.

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[50] Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Wrong Questions to Ask About War," *Hastings Center Report*, December 1980, 40–41.

## Conclusion

> *All commanding officers and others in authority in the Air Force are required –*
>
> *(1) to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination;*
>
> *(2) to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command;*
>
> *(3) to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Air Force, all persons who are guilty of them; and*
>
> *(4) to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Air Force, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.*
>
> 10 U.S. Code § 8583 – Requirement of Exemplary Conduct

Clausewitz warns his readers that strategic theory, regarded as external knowledge, is of little use to the commander at war. Instead, it must become completely assimilated into his mind and life to become genuine capability.[1] The same is true of ethical knowledge embodied in the just war tradition. Yet, as the introduction noted, military education inhibits this assimilation when it fails to foster intellectual understanding of ethical principles: why they exist and how they relate to the strategic demands of the military profession. This work has endeavored to facilitate deeper intellectual understanding by linking war ethics and strategy to the virtue-based foundation that grounds Western military character formation.

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[1] Clausewitz, *On War*, 147.

Specifically, this thesis has argued that Aristotelian virtue ethics can give a coherent account of the ethical and strategic responsibilities of command. To advance its case, it constructed a four-part framework uniting Aristotle's ethics with Clausewitz's strategy:

> The *purpose* of war is to attain political ends consistent with just peace and the common good;
>
> The *responsibilities* of command include the rightly ordered and justly restrained pursuit of strategic advantage for the sake of political objectives;
>
> Good *acts* of command fulfill these responsibilities both in aptitude to produce advantage (or to avoid disadvantage), and in just restraint; and
>
> Good commanders possess both intellectual and moral *virtues* culminating in military prudence, which enables good acts of command.

This thesis' main contribution has been to reframe just war principles in two ways: first, by integrating them into a unified account of moral psychology originating in war's purposes and ending in the commander's character, and second, by setting them in the context of strategic responsibilities. The result is a coherent framework which can aid investigation and education concerning command. In particular, it may prove useful for uniting strategic and ethical themes in mid-career professional military education, in preparation for higher command.

In closing, war is not ordered to any policy, but to those policies consistent with just peace and the common good. And, good commanders are not those who possess a genius for violently securing advantage, but those who meld genius and character in the pursuit of just advantage. As Philocrates' manifest failure of command attests, a coherent account of just war principles and strategic theory is essential for the formation of the mind and character of good commanders.

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