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Business Ethics and Military Ethics: A Study in Comparative Applied Ethics

William H. Shaw
San José State University, USA

Abstract

In the past three decades, philosophers have delved into applied ethics, pursuing a surprisingly wide range of practically oriented normative questions, and a number of fields of applied ethical research and teaching are flourishing. There have, however, been few comparative studies of different fields in applied ethics, but such studies can, I believe, teach us something. Accordingly, this essay compares and contrasts business ethics and military ethics as distinct disciplinary or sub-disciplinary areas. The two subjects might appear to be worlds apart. Yet there are not only differences, but also intriguing similarities between them. Specifically, I discuss the skepticism that often greets the idea of both business ethics and military ethics, compare the emergence of the two as academic fields, and examine some pedagogical issues they face. I then try to put some central questions in both fields in fresh light by comparing and contrasting the goals and responsibilities of corporations and their managers, on one hand, and of the military and its officers, on the other.

Keywords: military ethics, business ethics, managerial responsibility, military officers, teaching

In the past three decades, philosophers have delved into applied ethics, pursuing a surprisingly wide range of practically oriented normative questions, and a number of fields of applied ethical research and teaching are flourishing. There have, however, been few comparative studies of different fields in applied ethics, but such studies can, I believe, teach us something. Accordingly, this essay compares and contrasts business ethics and military ethics as distinct disciplinary or sub-disciplinary areas. The two subjects might appear to be worlds apart. Yet there are not only differences, but also intriguing similarities between them. Specifically, I discuss the skepticism that often greets the idea of both business ethics and military ethics, compare the emergence of the two as academic fields, and examine some pedagogical issues they face. I then try to put some central questions in both fields in fresh light by comparing and contrasting the goals and responsibilities of corporations and their managers, on one hand, and of the military and its officers, on the other.

Is Ethics Even Possible In These Areas?

As anyone who teaches or writes on either business ethics or military ethics knows, laypeople tend to view these subjects with skepticism or disbelief. They joke that the concept (business ethics/military ethics) is oxymoron-like or that business (the military) certainly needs more ethics. Naturally, those who work in these fields regard these comments as ill-informed and, in a social context, simply shrug off them off with a smile. But because analogous comments are rarely made to someone who teaches medical ethics, say, or environmental ethics, it may be worth wages war with the layperson’s underlying question: Is ethics even possible in these areas?

But let’s turn this question around: Why might one think that it was not possible? To begin with, business, there is a widespread perception, at least regarding large enterprises, that business is a totally self-seeking, amoral activity, driven only by a concern for profit and lacking any intrinsic regard for employees, customers, suppliers, or society at large. Popular American novels and films frequently depict business leaders and the corporations they direct as villains—ruthless, greedy, and untroubled by ordinary moral scruples—while the daily news seems filled with stories of corrupt business conduct. It must be granted that such people and such companies exist, but the question is whether they represent the true, inescapable nature of business.

The problem with thinking that they do, with thinking that business is at its core a totally amoral activity, is that this view ignores the extent to which business activity presupposes adherence to certain elementary moral standards. Without widespread, if perhaps unconscious, compliance with certain norms, without some degree of trust, business could barely function. It would certainly fail if they were inefficient or ineffective at providing society with the goods and services it needs or wants. Indeed, without some sense of ethics, business would descend into gangsterism. Those businesspersons who act unscrupulously attempt to take advantage of the ethical restraint and rule adherence of others, just as liars try to exploit the fact that communications are generally assumed to be truthful. These points may be simple, but they suffice to show that one cannot plausibly maintain that ethics and business have nothing to do with each other. This conclusion tallies with commonsense morality, which does not hesitate to identify and criticize some business conduct as wrongful—for example, when a company avoids paying vendors the money it owes them, misleads its stockholders about its financial condition, fails to provide customers with the goods or services they were led to believe they would receive, or loots the pension fund of its employees.

If skepticism about business ethics arises from business appearing to be a completely self-serving and egoistical enterprise, skepticism about military ethics arises because of the violence inherent in combat and the deadly, destructive, and inhumane nature of war itself.

How can there be anything ethical about it? As with ethics in business, though, further reflection suggests that morality can and does apply to war.

First, almost every culture has thought that under some circumstances waging war would be, not merely imprudent, but wrong or irreverent. And the commonsense morality of most people today condemns some wars, such as those of national aggrandizement, as wicked and immoral while deeming others, such as wars of national defense, to be morally permissible or at least necessary evils. Second, throughout history the warriors of many, perhaps most, cultures have recognized certain restrictions on their conduct: Certain weapons, certain tactics, or certain ways of fighting have been considered dishonorable or even taboo. This, too, tallies with commonsense morality, which unanognously repudiates certain ways of fighting, for example, the systematic use of rape as a terroristic military tactic. However, if these two points are correct, then one can quite sensibly ask, as military ethics does, (1) when if ever is it morally permissible to wage war and (2) if and when wars do break out, how is one permitted to fight them?

So ethical analysis and argument seem perfectly applicable to both business and war. But this fact by itself does not explain why business ethics and military ethics have become recognized and, indeed, flourishing fields of academic endeavor. Teaching and university life raise interesting ethical issues, and some people have written insightfully about these important matters, but academic ethics is not, or not yet anyway, a recognized academic field with courses in the subject, textbooks, journals, and a community of researchers. Let’s look, then, at the origins of business ethics and military ethics as academic subjects, their institutional contexts, and the nature and purpose of ethics education in schools of business, on the one hand, and military service academies, on the other.

Business Ethics and Military Ethics as Academic Subjects

Although the occasional course on ethics in business was offered before 1960, the number of undergraduate courses in business ethics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These days such courses are commonplace,

1 On managerial versus engineering ethics, see Charles E. Harris, Jr., Michael S. Pritchard, and Michael J. Ribbins, Engineering Ethics: Cases and Concepts, 4th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2009), pp. 172-175, and the works they cite.
2 The reflections that follow were stimulated by an academic year that I, a long-time teacher of business ethics, recently spent at the U. S. Naval Academy. I thank the Academy’s Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership for its financial support and my colleagues at the Center for many valuable and stimulating conversations.


4 For two examples, see Victor David Hanson, The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece, 2nd ed. (Berkley: University of California Press, 2009), and David Wetheam, Just Wars and Moral Victories: Surprise, Deception, and the Normative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).


6 Richard T. De George, “The Status of Business Ethics:
and most state and large private universities not only offer them, but also see such courses as an important and necessary component of the university curriculum. Furthermore, any self-respecting business school must seem to provide its students with some sort of ethical instruction, and undergraduate business majors are frequently required to take a separate course on business ethics, often taught by instructors from the philosophy department.

Once universities began offering business ethics courses, then textbooks soon appeared, along with academic conferences, professional societies, and specialized journals. This resulted in the more common academic pattern. Usually, a new area of scholarly study is first explored in professional articles and books and at conferences of specialists and is then further institutionalized as journals devoted to the field began to appear, before the subject begins trickling into the undergraduate curriculum. In the case of business ethics, however, the demand for it as a subject of instruction came first. As this demand grew, and as more and more people found themselves teaching courses on business ethics, many of them became intellectually engaged by basic questions in moral and political philosophy. Indeed, it is likely to have an impact on those broader fields that goes well beyond questions of war. By contrast, the leading work in business ethics, for example, are the corporate social responsibility, that many philosophers are now engaging in important new ways to central issues in moral or political philosophy more generally. This work, despite its importance within broader fields and is largely restricted to business ethics journals. For example, if one scans the prestigious journal Ethics over the past two or three decades, one can find much that could qualify as military ethics but little that would be the case that the military ethics journal. Because work on ethical issues in war has had more outlets, there has been less demand for specialized immoral or harmful business behavior by inculcating a professional ethos. This has played a role in America’s future business leaders, and the teaching of business ethics to undergraduates was seen as one very important way to do this. Today it is taken for granted that the business school curricula have many of the features of an academic department.

Military ethics offers some interesting contrasts and comparisons. For philosophers and political theorists, Michael Walzer’s 1977 book, *Just and Unjust Wars,* opened up an important realm of moral reflection that, professionally, trained philosophers had largely ignored. This came at a time when Anglo-American moral philosophy had been almost completely preoccupation with metaethics. Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* had recently put beyond doubt the importance and viability of substantive normative theorizing, and an increasing number of philosophers seemed to be orientated philosophers was keen to examine socially salient moral and political issues, such as abortion, civil disobedience, and affirmative action. In this environment it was natural that a number between the teaching ethics at American military academies and their counterparts in other western countries. Unsurprisingly, both the military ethics and the business ethics communities have links with practitioners in their fields, that is, with business people and military personnel. That this should be is obvious for those teaching in military academies. By contrast, in my experience, philosophers who teach business ethics or even write on topics in business ethics seldom have much business experience or much contact with business leaders. Many, non-philosophers working in business schools also teach business ethics, but they will probably have little business experience, or, on whistle-blowing or manipulative advertising has—rightly or wrongly—not yet been seen by other philosophers as connecting in important new ways to central issues in moral or political philosophy more generally. This work, despite its importance within business ethics, seems to have had little impact on those broader fields and is largely restricted to business ethics journals. For example, if one scans the prestigious journal Ethics over the past two or three decades, one can find much that could qualify as military ethics but little that would be the case that the military ethics journal. Because work on ethical issues in war has had more outlets, there has been less demand for specialized immoral or harmful business behavior by inculcating a professional ethos. This has played a role in America’s future business leaders, and the teaching of business ethics to undergraduates was seen as one very important way to do this. Today it is taken for granted that the business school curricula have many of the features of an academic department.

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in their conduct. Nevertheless, I tend to think that in contrast to business ethics the emergence of military ethics as a discipline, as a subfield of teaching and philosophical research, reflected developments that were in a significant extent organic or internal to changing ideas of military education and less a response to, or a reflection of, a perceived social need on the part of the public for more moral behavior by members of the armed forces. Although the Vietnam war tarnished the U. S. military, today it is a highly respected institution (a state of affairs that contrasts with popular attitudes toward big business and its leaders, which mix distrust and cynicism with admiration or to a worldly success). Even those Americans who have been critical of the wars their country has recently chosen to fight have not blamed them on the military or reproached it for fighting the wars it has been directed to fight.

Some Pedagogical Issues in the Two Fields

Business ethics presupposes something like the moral legitimacy or potential legitimacy of capitalism whereas military ethics assumes something like the moral legitimacy or potential legitimacy of some wars. Obviously, these presuppositions can be contested: Socialists would reject the former, and pacifists the latter. Both fields, however, take such objections seriously. As mentioned above, the same sort of point is often made with respect to ethical theory. Neither business students nor cadets and midshipmen, it is sometimes contended, need to be exposed to the intricacies of ethical theory. If they are to remain practical individuals, they need to be exposed only to the extent that the alternatives to them are worse, or perhaps they are simply inevitable activities that we need to make them better businesspeople or better soldiers.

13 Today the public has higher confidence in the military than in Congress, the press, the clergy, or colleges and universities, and young people are more likely to trust it to do the right thing than they are the Supreme Court, the president, Congress, the United Nations, the federal government, or the media. (See the articles by C. E. Harris and Michael Davis in Teaching Ethics, vol. 10, no. 1 (Fall 2009) and by Bernard Gert, C. E. Harris, and Michael Davis in Teaching Ethics, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 2011).)

14 For a debate over the usefulness of moral theory for practical ethics, see the articles by C. Hardwick and Eric Rovie, “The Professional Need for Moral Theory—For,” Teaching Ethics, vol. 10, no. 1 (Fall 2009) and by Bernard Gert, C. E. Harris, and Michael Davis in Teaching Ethics, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 2011).

15 (Obviously, we do not know that they will do better (nor do we know for certain that anything else we do in an ethics classroom will have beneficial long-term results.)


17 For example, Brian Orend, The Morality of War (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 2006).

across the board. This institutional commitment to, and concern with, ethics is evident in a variety of ways.

Here is one example: Although a team of professional philosophers at the U. S. Naval Academy teaches its required courses about business ethics in a variety of sections that are led by officers or former officers who volunteer to teach them. The fact that people they respect, who have often seen combat and whose careers they aspire to emulate, have chosen to take this course is important in teaching business ethics. In the military academies, there is also a tension between the extremely rule-bound institutional regime to which cadets and midshipmen must submit, which has the goal of inculcating in them an ethic of adhering to rules, and the philosopher’s goal of encouraging students to question and to think for themselves. This is not to say that this tension is insurmountable, because, for example, graduating with a guerilla force in another country, propping up a failed state, or supplying humanitarian aid after a natural disaster. Given civilian control of the military, the military can act autonomously, or fully autonomously, in pursuing these objectives. These general points apply above all to sub-units of the military as well, for example, to divisions and brigades. In a business organization, too, sub-units must follow instructions and carry out policies and directives from above. But business organizations as a whole are not subordinate to some higher authority; they are autonomous and free (subject to certain moral and legal constraints) to advance their own interests as they see fit.

To be sure, business provides the goods and services that people need, and it is watchful about its costs. However, on the contrary prevalent view these days, which backs up Adam Smith, the provision of those goods and services is a side-effect of the pursuit of profit. The point of business activity is simply to make money. Outside of business ethics classrooms, this is the message that students frequently receive, implicitly or explicitly, from their business courses: Maximization of profit (or, alternatively, of shareholder wealth) is a business’s only goal. Providing socially useful goods and services is only a means to that end (although, strictly speaking, neither necessary nor sufficient for it). Conservative and liberal economists may agree about the extent to which business activity should be constrained by rules and regulations and what those rules and regulations should be, but they tend to agree that, once we have the right rules in the rule book, about what one may do to win. On the one hand, business is always animated by an ideal that is larger than itself, accepting of certain elementary norms or moral rules, a point emphasized by Milton Friedman himself, because a market system cannot flourish without widespread acceptance of certain elementary norms or moral rules, such as honesty and good faith. Does business have social or moral responsibilities above and beyond the pursuit of profit? In the paper the rules of the game, thus understood? The answer to this question is hotly contested, and debate over it is likely to remain long in any class on business ethics. As I have intimated, economists are likely to agree that business is the trick is to get the right laws and regulations and then to turn business loose. Some business theorists and probably most of those who teach business ethics believe, to the contrary, that businesses do have such responsibilities—responsibilities to employees, to suppliers and other business partners, to consumers, to the environment, and to the larger society—beyond what the law and the elementary norms of business practice require. The practical implications of the two views often coincide. That’s because those who believe that business has broad social or moral responsibilities also argue that companies who embrace those responsibilities tend to be more profitable than companies that do not whereas those who deny that companies have those responsibilities in the first place acknowledge that it may be in their interest to do so.

The thesis that businesses have responsibilities beyond attempting to maximize profit within the existing framework of law, regulation, and accepted business practice can be understood in two ways. The first is that these putative responsibilities are additional side-constraints on business activity, that is, additional restrictions on the pursuit of profit beyond those already laid down by law and customary business morality. The second is that business has, or should acknowledge itself as having, other goals besides the pursuit of profit, for example, providing a service to their customers or satisfying the interests of its customers. On the former view, then, business has a single goal (profit) although pursuit of this goal is subject to constraints beyond those implicit in the rules of the game. By analogy, one’s goal in playing tennis may be to win, even though one acknowledges various constraints, beyond those specified in the rule book, about what one may do to win. On the second view, business has many goals, and it must pursue several different and independently valuable ends, balancing them as best it can. By analogy, in playing tennis one might be pursuing several goals at once—striving not just to win but also to exercise or have fun with friends—with none of those goals lexically prior to the others. If something like this held true of business, that is, if business were best understood as having multiple goals, we would have to learn exactly what those goals were understood to be—its role would no longer be defined by self-interest; it would

19 Princeton University appears to be one. And at many universities, ethics courses, even if not required, often satisfy university-wide general education requirements.


21 I should state, for what it is worth, that it does not correspond to my experience at the U. S. Naval Academy.

22 Miller, “Squaring the Circle”: 214.


have a service component to it.

There is a view of business activity that is more radical than this. Like the view with which I began, it sees business as having only one goal. However, this goal is not profit, but the provision of some good or service.

For example, John Mackey, founder and CEO of Whole Foods, claims that customer happiness, not making a profit, is his company’s true end. 25 In response to Milton Friedman’s claim that "the only social responsibility of business is to increase its profits," Whole Foods is simply maximizing its profits through providing consumers with a service they value, Mackey insists that his company does not treat customer satisfaction as a means to an end, but rather, it is the whole point of his business, the reason for its existence. Profitability is a side effect of pursuing that goal well. At the same time, profitability is a necessary means of continuing to pursue it effectively because a company that fails to make money will not be able to go on providing the goods and services that are its rationale for existing in the first place.

To summarize the discussion schematically, if A = producing some socially useful good or service, and B = making a profit, then there are three positions:

(1) Business has only one goal: A is merely a means to B.
(2) Business has at least two independent goals, A and B.
(3) Business has only one goal: B is merely a means to A.

One might object that this scheme is too simplistic and ignores the possibility of more sophisticated variants of these positions. I can ignore this objection here, however, because I am not trying to settle the debate over the proper role and responsibilities of business, but rather to draw some broad comparisons between business and the military, and my schema suffices for that. As I argued above, the idea that managers are autonomous agents, and what they should or should not do is not something that we can derive directly from the goals, even as constrained by law and by elementary market morality, of the company in question. Managers are autonomous agents, and what they should or should not do is not something that we can derive directly from the goals, even as constrained by law and by elementary market morality, of the company in question.

Military officers have even stronger duties to the organization and to cooperate actively and constructively in achieving its legitimate ends. The analogy with the fiduciary responsibilities of manager is obvious although (1) the stakes can be considerably higher here than in business and (2) the organization that officers serve is itself premised on service and not, as view 1 would have it, on self-interest. Like managers, however, the rules are autonomous moral agents. Just as the rules of the game or their own sense of responsibility constrains the pursuit of profit by managers, so the rules of war, that is, the moral and legal restrictions on the conduct of war that philosophers call jus in bello, constrain what military personnel can do in pursuit of the objectives they are given. Some of these restrictions are fairly detailed and legally codified, for example, those that govern the treatment of prisoners of war. Others are broader and their application to, or implications for, certain specific situations are often contestable, for example, the duty to respect civilian immunity or refrain from force that is out of proportion to its military objective. Still, the norms are real and widely accepted even if hard cases abound.

The laws and norms that govern business behavior are not formalized by the same sort of legal or social pressure that constrains military behavior. Economists and other business theorists debate whether having businesses operate within this or that framework will produce better results—although, as I have suggested, to the extent that these debates fail to provide adequate guidance to the moral manager. Similarly, the rules of war do not provide clear answers to every moral problem an officer might encounter, and when they do provide answers, it is possible that morality might require more or, conceivably, less, than the rules of war. The rules themselves, on one plausible view, are analogous to those that govern business in being norms or conventions that states have found it in their collective interest to adopt. Or to put it in a more explicitly utilitarian way: Given that wars will be fought, whatever philosophers say, then the task is to identify those rules that, given the world as it is and governments and people as they are, will bring about the most good, taking into account, among other things, the likelihood of states being brought to accept and comply with them.

This is not the only possible way of thinking about the rules of war, of course, but whatever view we take of these rules is not a question of what is right, but rather, of what is feasible. To the extent that businesses have an interest in avoiding international disputes, one plausible view, is analogous to those that govern business in being norms or conventions that states have found it in their collective interest to adopt. Or to put it in a more explicitly utilitarian way: Given that wars will be fought, whatever philosophers say, then the task is to identify those rules that, given the world as it is and governments and people as they are, will bring about the most good, taking into account, among other things, the likelihood of states being brought to accept and comply with them.

The Contrasting Responsibilities of Managers and Officers

On views 2 and 3, managers obviously have broad responsibilities; by definition, in running a company they must have goals other than or in addition to maximizing profit. View 1, in contrast, seems to entail that profit is a manager’s only concern. But this is incorrect. Even if the sole purpose, point, or economic role of a corporation is to make money for its owners, it does not follow that maximizing a company’s returns is the only responsibility not prescribed by its social utility. Thus, there are legal restrictions and moral side-constraints on what corporations can do in the pursuit of profit. Economists differ about what those legal restrictions should be, and what is the best set of rules and rules to provide adequate guidance to the moral manager. Similarly, the rules of war do not provide clear answers to every moral problem an officer might encounter, and when they do provide answers, it is possible that morality might require more or, conceivably, less, than the rules of war.

To summarize the discussion schematically, if A = producing some socially useful good or service, and B = making a profit, then there are three positions:

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from the moral coarsening that so often accompanies war; that is, they have a duty to help them retain their moral compass and preserve their identity as moral agents. There is nothing analogous to this in the world of business. All companies and all managers are concerned with how their employees act, but only very rarely with what kind of people they become, or risk becoming, as a result of working for the company.

Second, although the military ethics embraces sacrifice, it also stresses the importance of loyalty to one’s comrades. This can sometimes lead to military personnel being too concerned with “force protection,” that is, to fight within the -like responsibility. But I know no one who actually holds this position.

Conclusion

For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, study ethics was to study metaethics.\(^{28}\) That has changed for the better. Work on normative theory and on concrete or applied ethical problems now flourishes as it never has before. Indeed, a number of areas of applied ethics can be considered distinct, semi-autonomous academic fields, complete with professional societies, journals, conferences, undergraduate courses, and graduate students writing on cutting edge topics. But there have been few comparative studies of different fields in applied ethics. In the belief that such studies can teach us something, this essay has compared and contrasted business ethics and military ethics along several different dimensions. After responding to skepticism about whether ethics is even possible in these areas, I examined their origin and development as academic fields, some pedagogical issues that arise in these areas, and the contrasting goals and responsibilities of the military and its officers, on the one hand, and of corporations and their managers, on the other.

The emergence of business ethics as a specialized academic subject was largely a spin-off of the fact that so many universities began offering business ethics courses in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Now seen as an important aspect of their curriculum and of the mission of their schools of business, business ethics offerings expanded so rapidly, I believe, because of a perceived social need to instill a greater sense of ethical responsibility among America’s future business leaders. In the case of the military academies, the emergence of academic instruction in ethics probably reflected more internal developments as these institutions evolved into genuine undergraduate universities with an expanded liberal-arts view of officer education. With more military and civilian professors involved in teaching ethics, the community of those interested in issues in military ethics grew. Although a number of professional philosophers have been writing about the ethics of war since the 1970s, the growth of this community has stimulated more research and writing in the field, especially on applied or specialized topics. Both fields face similar pedagogical questions in finding the appropriate classroom balance between theoretical and practical or applied issues. Because it is much larger, the field of business ethics offers instructors a much wider range of possible pedagogical materials. The military academies, on the other hand, are more likely to have to put together their own materials. More significantly, ethics instruction in the two fields takes place in quite different institutional environments. The service academies take it seriously and the ethical dimension of military leadership and place a high priority on developing the character and ethical reasoning ability of those in their charge. The seriousness and broad, institutional nature of this commitment is not something that secular universities have been able to match. On the other hand, Socratic reflection and independent thinking about ethical matters fit more easily and naturally into a traditional university context.

Several intriguing contrasts between the two fields stem from the fact that whereas service to country is at the heart of the military’s identity, the purpose or proper social role of business is a contested matter, with conflicting views about the responsibilities of corporations and their managers. As we have seen, there is no consensus whether or to what extent business is required to do anything other than to make money within the rules of the game. To be sure, business managers have duties to the organization just as military officers do, and on any view of the social role or function of the corporation, managers have responsibilities that restrict what they may do on behalf of the organization.

Nevertheless, although all those who teach business students wish them to act morally, morality is not usually thought to be at the core of what it is to be a good manager. By contrast, military ethics takes it for granted that the military is a service calling, which has a goal or purpose that is noble and transcends self-interest, and those who teach it emphasize that morality—upright conduct, the acceptance of moral responsibility, and the exercise of moral judgment—lies at the very heart of what it is to be an officer.\(^{31}\)

\(^{28}\) This is not to imply that all questions of loyalty in the military involve dramatic or high-stakes situations. For example, should a soldier help cover up a buddy’s minor malfeasance?

\(^{29}\) For rival perspectives, see Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars and Jeff McMahan, Killing in War.

\(^{30}\) Roughly speaking, from Moore’s Principia Ethica (1903) to Rawls’s A Theory of Justice (1971).

\(^{31}\) An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Sixth International Conference on Applied Ethics, held on October 28-30, 2011, at the Center for Applied Ethics and Philosophy, at Hokkaido University (Sapporo, Japan). I thank conference participants for their helpful comments.