



# Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War

By Robert Emmet Meagher

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**Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War** By Robert Emmet Meagher

Armies know all about killing. It is what they do, and ours does it more effectively than most. We are painfully coming to realize, however, that we are also especially good at killing our own "from the inside out" silently, invisibly. In every major war since Korea, more of our veterans have taken their lives than have lost them in combat. The latest research, rooted in veteran testimony, reveals that the most severe and intractable PTSD-fraught with shame, despair, and suicide-stems from "moral injury" But how can there be rampant moral injury in what our military, our government, our churches, and most everyone else call just wars? At the root of our incomprehension lies just war theory-developed, expanded, and updated across the centuries to accommodate the evolution of warfare, its weaponry, its scale, and its victims. Any serious critique of war, as well any true attempt to understand the profound, invisible wounds it inflicts, will be undermined from the outset by the unthinking and all-but-universal acceptance of just war doctrine. Killing from the Inside Out radically questions that theory, examines its legacy, and challenges us to look beyond it, beyond just war.

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Armies know all about killing. It is what they do, and ours does it more effectively than most. We are painfully coming to realize, however, that we are also especially good at killing our own "from the inside out" silently, invisibly. In every major war since Korea, more of our veterans have taken their lives than have lost them in combat. The latest research, rooted in veteran testimony, reveals that the most severe and intractable PTSD-fraught with shame, despair, and suicide-stems from "moral injury" But how can there be rampant moral injury in what our military, our government, our churches, and most everyone else call just wars? At the root of our incomprehension lies just war theory-developed, expanded, and updated across the centuries to accommodate the evolution of warfare, its weaponry, its scale, and its victims. Any serious critique of war, as well any true attempt to understand the profound, invisible wounds it inflicts, will be undermined from the outset by the unthinking and all-but-universal acceptance of just war doctrine. *Killing from the Inside Out* radically questions that theory, examines its legacy, and challenges us to look beyond it, beyond just war.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Elegantly written and easily accessible to lay readers--his prose unburdened by any military jargon or acronym-soup--*Killing From the Inside Out* is an ideal read for anyone curious about American adventurism abroad, the future of civil-military relations, and the human--and moral--toll of war."

--Lionel Beehner, founding editor of *Cicero Magazine* and member of the Council on Foreign Relations, New York City, NY

"Meagher has written the essential rebuttal to Just War theory. This book should be read by scholars, warriors, clergy, politicians, and anyone caring for those suffering from moral injury related to military service."

--Kimberly P. May, MD, Col (retired), USAF and the Veterans Administration, Leeds, MA

"Bob Meagher's seminal and timely work, with its reach from antiquity to today, shows that there never was a just war that would leave its participants unscarred."

--Rev. Michael Lapsley, director, the Institute for Healing Memories, Cape Town, South Africa

"I found this book gripping, illuminating, and prophetic. In a so-called civilized world, where we continue to accept all too easily the killing of innocents in war, and the sometimes devastating long-term impact on those young people we send into battle to kill on our behalf, it is utterly timely."

--Rev. Ruth Scott, BBC broadcaster, international mediator, London, UK

"Meagher combines his own practical wisdom from many years of working with combat veterans with decades of high quality scholarship. As a reflective practitioner, I strongly recommend this book to anyone truly interested in transforming the human cost of war."

--Wilhelm Verwoerd, international peace and reconciliation worker, Beyond Walls, Cape Town Area, South Africa

"Another fundamental truth this bold, beautifully written, and erudite work powerfully conveys is the following: war kills not only those it buries in the ground; it just as surely kills those souls who march home, heads held high while the music plays and their loved ones cheer, yet feeling inside they are forever lost."

--Lieutenant Colonel Douglas A. Pryer, US Army Intelligence, the Pentagon, USA

"Killing wounds the soul. But what if it's a 'just war?' Meagher argues convincingly that to put the adjective 'just' in front of the word 'war' is self-deception."

--Jim Forest, co-founder, the Orthodox Peace Fellowship, South Bend, IN

"This is a thoughtful, timely, and needed book. . . . Read this book. Then ponder it. Then act on it. It just might save a soul--your soul."

--Thomas C. Fox, publisher of the *National Catholic Reporter*

"For more than 10 years I have been working with former combatants in different parts of the world, grappling with the profound human cost of their involvement in war/violent political conflict. The dominant discourses of 'post traumatic stress disorder' and 'just war' really do not capture the deep wounding, the soul fragmentation, and inner darkness that many of them continue to be haunted by, especially those who come

from religious backgrounds. Meagher's book comes like a much needed breath of fresh air--shining sensitive light on this darkness; pointing with nuanced language to the depth of human wounding in war; highlighting in particular the complicity of the 'just war' tradition in this inner injuring and the difficulties of healing. In this really important book, Meagher combines his own practical wisdom from many years of working with combat veterans with decades of high quality scholarship. As a reflective practitioner I strongly recommend this book to anyone truly interested in transforming the human cost of war."

--Wilhelm Verwoerd, international peace and reconciliation worker, Beyond Walls, Cape Town Area, South Africa --Wipf and Stock Publishers

"Under the skilled hand of this master of the classics, the ancient Greeks cross the eons to bring their wisdom into our time, on issues of vital importance--war and its trail in the souls of killers and their communities. This is the resource for understanding how the religion of the Prince of Peace came to support war. Meagher brings us leaders of the early Christian church, showing us how Christianity came to excuse, if not promote, the industrialized and anonymous killing that war has become. The able professor also weaves in the struggles of current military veterans who struggle for inner peace having done what they were told to do. He manages all this in a manner that gives not despair, but life!"

--Amy Blumenshine, diaconal minister, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Minneapolis Area Synod, Minneapolis, MN

"In the field of conflict transformation and peace-building there is a recognized gap between grassroots practitioners who have lived through violent conflict and are working with its legacy, and academics who are considered to be 'experts' while lacking significant on-the-ground experience. Bob Meagher is one scholar who bridges this gulf with integrity, clarity, compassion, and challenge. *Killing from the Inside Out* is a brilliant example of his ability to chart the development of Just War Theory and consider it in the light of the lived experience of human beings sent into battle across the centuries. He doesn't swamp the reader with the vast scope of his personal knowledge but helps us trace easily and engagingly the attitudes to violent conflict and its moral status from the time of the wars of ancient Greece, via the emergence and rise of Christianity during the time of Imperial Rome and forward through the writings of key figures to the present day. He draws fascinating, thought-provoking, and some might say, disturbing parallels between war-making and love-making from a male perspective. He takes seriously the understanding of service personnel deployed as combatants to conflict zones across the world, whose experience illustrates why Just War Theory is dead. I found this book gripping, illuminating, and prophetic. In a so-called civilized world where we continue to accept all too easily the killing of innocents in war, and the sometimes devastating long-term impact on those young people we send into battle to kill on our behalf, it is utterly timely."

--Ruth Scott, an Anglican priest, a producer and presenter for the BBC in London, a renowned international peace and conflict resolution worker, and the author of many books, including one on the conflict in Northern Ireland that was made into a feature film starring Liam Neeson.

"Truth often hides, Robert Meagher reminds us, in *Killing from the Inside Out*, especially when the truth challenges our myths, for example, the myth that one can kill another human being and not be damaged by so doing. The truth is no one leaves the battlefield unwounded. Killing wounds the soul. But what if it's a 'just war?' Meagher argues convincingly that to put the adjective 'just' in front of the word 'war' is self-deception."

--Jim Forest, co-founded the Catholic Peace Fellowship in 1964 and from 1977 through 1988 was Secretary General of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. Currently he serves as International Secretary of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship. His books include *The Road to Emmaus: Pilgrimage as a Way of Life*, *Ladder of the Beatitudes*, *Praying with Icons*, *Living With Wisdom: A Biography of Thomas Merton*, *All Is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day*, and *Loving Our Enemies: Reflections on the Hardest Commandment*. -Wipf and Stock Publishers

"Bob Meagher lays out a provocative argument: That 'just war,' as a theory and set of principles to guide us in battle, is effectively dead. He tangles with the perverse assumption, passed down through the ages, that there is a just way of taking another person's life, that killing in wartime is somehow different from murder in peacetime. That just war originates in Christian theology, and invoked in a speech by an American president accepting a Nobel Peace Prize, is even more puzzling. Meagher grapples with not just the collective moral crisis nations go through when they use violence to achieve political ends, but also how ex-soldiers grapple with their own consciences over their actions in the heat of battle, or what he calls 'moral injury.' He comes at the subject not as a pacifist but as an ethicist, marshaling impressive evidence, from the works of St. Augustine to Camus, to make his case. The book recounts the harrowing stories of soldiers who struggle to cope with what they've done in combat, what they've seen, and the scars that stay with them in their postwar lives. Elegantly written and easily accessible to lay readers--his prose unburdened by any military jargon or acronym-soup--*Killing From the Inside Out* is an ideal read for anyone curious about American adventurism abroad, the future of civil-military relations, and the human--and moral--toll of war." --Lionel Beehner, founding editor of *Cicero Magazine* and former senior writer at the Council on Foreign Relations

"Specialists in the field will welcome this book, not only because of its provocative argument, but because there are gems that will enrich even advanced readers's knowledge or thinking. Those who are mostly familiar with international law and secular Just War Theory will find the brisk, sound survey of developments in chapters 4-6 informative; those specializing in the Christian-ethical approach to war will find provocative thoughts in the discussion of Greek literature in chapter 1-3. Even for specialists in Christian ethics or history, the way the author brought out the connections of love and war in Greek literature, and then looked at developments in early Christian thought, should prove stimulating. I am not aware of other works that have explored this so well. I think the book will appeal to people who think about the problem of war from any angle, including philosophical, theological, historical, political, and literary. The book has an accessible style married to serious content that will work well for both beginning and advanced readers. I can see many professors who teach about war and peace--again, from a number of disciplinary angles--procuring the book for their own edification, and then many adopting it for courses. The book will definitely work for both undergraduate and graduate student audiences in any courses that touch on war. The introduction and conclusion and chapters 2 and 3, in particular, are rich with conversation topics. As someone who teaches a basic undergraduate religious-ethics course on war and peace, I would be very interested in assigning this book for the way it puts the charge against Just War Theory so pointedly and for how it could set an ongoing problem for such a course. I can also see courses from philosophy and political-science angles using the book."

--Brian Stiltner (Ph.D., Yale) is Chair of Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies, Sacred Heart University, and coauthor of *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War*. --Wipf and Stock Publishers

#### About the Author

Robert Emmet Meagher, Professor of Humanities at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts, has directed and participated in many events and programs concerned with understanding and healing the spiritual wounds of war in veterans, their families, and their communities. He served as an invited Commissioner for the National Truth Commission on Conscience in War and facilitates an ongoing MassHumanities/NEH VA Literature and Medicine seminar. His most recent book is *Herakles Gone Mad: Rethinking Heroism in an Age of Endless War*.

#### Users Review

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**Juan Moses:**

This Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is definitely information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. That Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War without we know teach the one who looking at it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War can bring whenever you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even cellphone. This Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War having excellent arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

**Jennifer Joseph:**

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**Steven Perez:**

This Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War is fresh way for you who has intense curiosity to look for some information because it relief your hunger of information. Getting deeper you on it getting knowledge more you know or you who still having little bit of digest in reading this Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War can be the light food for you because the information inside this particular book is easy to get through anyone. These books acquire itself in the form which can be reachable by anyone, sure I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in reserve form make them feel drowsy even dizzy this e-book is the answer. So there isn't any in reading a publication especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for you. So , don't miss the item! Just read this e-book variety for your better life along with knowledge.

**Jack Jackson:**

As a scholar exactly feel bored to reading. If their teacher questioned them to go to the library or even make summary for some guide, they are complained. Just small students that has reading's spirit or real their interest. They just do what the educator want, like asked to the library. They go to generally there but nothing reading significantly. Any students feel that reading through is not important, boring along with can't see colorful pics on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for yourself. As we know that on this period, many ways to get whatever we would like. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore , this Killing from the Inside Out: Moral Injury and Just War can make you feel more interested to read.

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