

THE MISAPPLICATION OF
THEORETICAL DOCTRINE IN
THE VALLADOLID DEBATE

by

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ABSTRACT

The Misapplication of Theoretical Doctrine in the Valladolid Debate

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For my thesis, I studied the famous Valladolid Debate to understand how scholar Juan Ginés Sepúlveda intentionally misapplied Aristotle and Augustine's natural slavery and just war theories to justify Spain's colonial ambitions in the Americas. I propose that distortion of the doctrines' original context and purpose had lasting, and harmful effects on the legal mandates that governed social and cultural relations between the Spaniards and Amerindians. Lastly, I concluded that the use of Aristotelian and Augustinian doctrine demonstrates the relevance of Greco-Roman ideology in shaping societal attitudes to unfamiliar cultures.

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

Aristotle's theory of natural slavery and Augustine's doctrine on just war has had profound influence on scholarship and cultural ideology. Both philosophers critiqued social attitudes to legal slavery and military conquest in their respective societies and provided theoretical explanations in response to traditional ideology. In his discussion of the polis in the *Politics*, Aristotle argued against conventional attitudes to slavery and concluded that legal slavery of conquered peoples was unjust; only groups of people naturally created to be slaves were fit for bondage. Ancient and modern historians have continually reapplied Aristotle's original theory to defend enslavement and bondage of different peoples around the world.

Augustine, a Christian philosopher, wrote his book, *City of God*, after barbarians had sacked Rome in the 5th century AD. Romans were upset and asked why God allowed the horrific events to transpire. Augustine's brief overview of just war was a response to Roman attitudes to imperial conquest. Similarly, there have been numerous discussions on how just war doctrine applied to historical military conquests, particularly in regards to European colonialism in the Americas.

The conquest of the New World was a dangerous, yet profitable enterprise undertaken by the Spanish Empire. The Spanish conquistadors and Catholic missionaries encountered different religions and cultures from their own. Lewis Hanke, a prominent Latin American historian, commented on the interaction between the Spaniards and Amerindians. As the desire for colonial expansion grew in the sixteenth century, so did the need to govern relationships between Spain and the New World: "Even before the first decade had passed, these plumed and painted peoples—so

inevitably and erroneously called Indians—had become the principle mystery which perplexed the Spanish nation, conquistadores, ecclesiastics, crown, and common citizens alike.”¹ As Spaniards confronted the Indians, and marked them as decidedly different from themselves, new questions began to surface: “Who were they? Whence came they? What was their nature, their capacity for Christianity and European civilization? Most important of all, what relationship would be the right one for the Spaniards to establish with them?”² As the colonialists increased interaction and presence in the Americas, perceptions of the Indian race emerged, “that of a hostile continent peopled with armed warriors rushing out of the tropical forest or strange cities to resist the advance of the Spanish soldiers and the missionary efforts of their companion friars.”³ Why this negative, and undermining image of the Indian race?

The Spanish World was challenged and conflicted on how to deal with the unfamiliar race of people. They were also compelled to justify their desire for dominion and Christian conversion of the Indian people. Spain prided itself as a fervently Catholic and civilized nation, and perceived their culture and faith as superior to the Indians. They tried to enact laws to justify imposition of Spanish rule in the Americas. The *encomienda*, established in 1503, was a labor system employed by the Spanish King. The Spanish officials would grant people, mostly Spanish conquistadors and soldiers, responsibility for a group of conquered Indians. The grantees, commonly referred to as *encomenderos*, “were assigned Indians for their own profit [and] were expected to provide for the

¹ Hanke, Lewis. *Aristotle and the American Indians; a Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970, p. 6

² Hanke, p. 7

³ Hanke, p. 9

Indians' religion instruction".⁴ Following the introduction of the Catholic faith, colonists were responsible for helping Indians learn the Spanish language. In return, they could exact tribute from the natives in the form of labor and material wealth (i.e. gold). The *encomienda* functioned as Spain's tool for sustaining control over the Americas in the first decades of the conquest and helped further colonial expansion in the New World. The *encomienda* also systematically enslaved the Indian race, and shaped negative social attitudes about the Indians, who were considered barbarians. However, this system was viciously attacked by both soldiers and missionaries who protested the colonists' abusive treatment toward the Indians.⁵ Protests intensified until the New Laws, established in 1542, limited the power of the *encomenderos* and prohibited the exploitation of the Amerindians. In a brief overview, the laws forbid the enslavement of the Amerindians, discontinued the practice of hereditary succession for *encomienda* grants, and called for the gradual abolition of the *encomienda*. The laws were largely unsuccessful (and arguably strengthened the *encomienda* system) due to the *encomenderos*' refusal to abide by the stipulations (which were not strongly enforced by Spanish officials). The *encomienda* and other issues of slavery and justifiable war against the Indians were hugely debated in the Spain years before the Valladolid debate.

Scholars and Spanish officials joined the discussions and shared their opinions on the treatment of the Indian race. Past treatises and laws only led to further disputes on how to defend Spain's colonial pursuits and Christianization of the Indians: "Kings and the Council of the Indies instituted prolonged and formal enquiries in both Spain and America on their nature. Few

⁴ Hanke, p. 4

⁵ Hanke, p. 60

significant figures of the conquest failed to deliver themselves of opinions on the Indian's capacity for Christianity, ability to work, and general aptitude for European civilization."⁶ The discussions and proposals led to support on both sides: some cared about the protection and welfare of the Indians, while others were more concerned with acquiring land and property in the New World. By the mid sixteenth century, conflicting opinions grew in fervor and strength: "As the conquerors and clerics moved forward into America in the uneasy partnership which the crown's double purpose of political dominion and religious conversion enjoined upon them, stubborn facts and theological convictions clashed resoundingly."⁷ Colonists, ecclesiastics, soldiers, scholars and theologians were offering their opinions and recommendations to the Spanish King: "Each man, each faction held a profound conviction about the nature of the Indians ... each made his own view on the Indians the basis of a recommendation for a government policy which he urged upon the power in Spain as the one true solution which would ... set the enterprise of the Indies on a firm and unassailable foundation."⁸

The debate at Valladolid in 1550 was greatly concerned with the treatment and governance of Indians in the conquest of the Americas, and took into account the conflicting recommendations and opinions of the Spanish Court. How were the Indians supposed to be incorporated into the Spanish kingdom? The King, Charles V, ordered a council of jurists and theologians to hear arguments presented by two opposing men, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Sepúlveda, a Spanish humanist, theologian and philosopher was heavily schooled in Aristotelian doctrine and promoted forcible Christian conversion and war against the Indians. Las Casas, a

⁶ Hanke, p. 9

⁷ Hanke, p. 10

⁸ Hanke, p. 10

Dominican Friar who lived and worked in the Americas for over forty years, argued against the application of Aristotelian and Augustinian doctrine to the Amerindians and advocated for their general welfare and peaceful conversion. Dialogues about the conquest had previously been discussed, but the Valladolid Debate was the culmination of years of discussion. Sepúlveda began the debate, presenting a three hour long speech on his treatise, *Democrates secundus, sive de iustis causis belli apud Indios*, and incorporated Aristotelian, Augustine (and Aquinas) doctrine into his arguments. The next day, Las Casas, armed with his manuscript, *Apologia (Defense)*, read his proposal. He included excerpts from his earlier work, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account)*, a harrowing look at the atrocities and punishments to which the Indians were subjected, horrors that Las Casas personally witnessed and documented.

Sepúlveda used theories of natural slavery and just war to present his arguments to the council at Valladolid, and Las Casas argued against his proposals, citing the same philosophies introduced by his opponent. The results of the debates were not conclusive, and the jurists on the Council never reached a collective decision. Although there was never a declared victor, 1573 ordinances concerning Spanish conquest in the Americas were influenced by the opinions discussed at Valladolid.

Aristotle and Augustine condemned conventional attitudes to slavery and imperialism in their respective societies, yet the Spanish applied these theories to reinforce their legal enslavement of the Indian race and to defend their imperial ambitions. This paradox is incredibly interesting, particularly when one considers how Greco-Roman philosophy has shaped cultural ideology in contemporary society.

The 1550 Spanish Debate at Valladolid provides a classic example of how misinterpretation and distortion of theoretical texts can negatively impact social and political interactions with and responses to different cultures and peoples.

Chapter 1: Theories of Aristotle and Augustine

In order to fully understand Sepúlveda and Las Casas' application of Aristotelian and Augustinian doctrine, I will briefly outline the philosophies. The purpose of this paper is not to provide a full overview of each theory; rather I will highlight specific points in each doctrine that were relevant to the Valladolid Debate.

Aristotle was arguably against legal slavery; victims of war were not fitted to be slaves. He conceived a theory natural slavery; conquered peoples should not be forced into slavery, rather there existed a class of people who were naturally selected to be slaves, theoretically. Why would Aristotle endorse such an idea? Slave institutions won deep acceptance from the aristocracy, particularly because it provided freedom for the ruling class to engage in political affairs.

It is therefore clear from these considerations that in the most nobly constituted state, and the one that possesses men that are absolutely just [...] the citizens must not live a mechanic or a mercantile life – for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue; nor yet must those who are to be citizens in the best state be tillers of the soil – for leisure is needed both for the development of virtue and for active participation in politics.⁹

The institution of slavery served both an economic and political function: slaves handled the economic activities of the household, which allowed the elite to conduct the political affairs. Peter Garnsey comments on this justification to slavery:

Slaves are indispensable to the polis, but indirectly, as a byproduct of their services to the master and the household...By performing essential bodily labours for masters, slaves free those masters for the pursuit of the best life within the framework of a polis. For those who take part in politics must be a leisured class, and the end of politics and the polis is the best life that is possible, and the greatest good, happiness.¹⁰

⁹ Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Charles David Chanel Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998. Print., p. 31

¹⁰ Garnsey, Peter. *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 37

Aristotle protested that this hierarchal system was natural, and that there existed a class of people naturally suited to be slaves: “It is manifest ... that some men are free men ...and others slave by nature.”¹¹

First, Aristotle defined the natural slave: “The master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him ... he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a human being, is also a possession.”¹² Those who were incapable of self governance needed to be governed by others: “For he is by nature a slave who is capable of belonging to another ... and who participates in reason so far as to apprehend it but not to possess it.”¹³ Natural slaves could not make decisions in respect to their own life circumstances, but could follow the directions of their superiors.

After providing a definition of the natural slave, Aristotle defended his logic. His philosophy rejected the slave as a wholly rational being; they were somewhat deficient in reason, and guided by their emotions. Slaves were insufficient beings in and of themselves, and therefore must be property of their master's household. He used the analogy of the body/soul relationship to explain the natural relationship between master and slave:

Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's and he who participates

¹¹ Aristotle, p. 3

¹² Aristotle, p. 21

¹³ Aristotle, p. 18

in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature.¹⁴

Aristotle's ideology assumed that the soul, which was inextricably linked to the capacity for rational thought, governed our very being in the most natural, productive way. Natural slaves did have a soul, and therefore a degree of reasonable thought, but they lacked sufficient rationality to govern themselves. How was this possible? Aristotle's answer was simple. Slaves must possess some degree of rational thought in order to effectively perform their bodily tasks: "A question may indeed be raised, whether there is any excellence at all in a slave beyond and higher than merely instrumental and ministerial qualities ... Now we determined that a slave is useful for the wants of life, and therefore he will obviously require only so much virtue as will prevent him from failing in his duty through cowardice or lack of self-control."¹⁵ Natural slaves required only a degree of virtue to complete the tasks demanded by their master. Moral and intellectual virtue was only perfected in the master, an elite male. Aristotle's natural slave theory is notoriously difficult to understand, and upon further inspection, grows weak with contradictions.

Inconsistencies in Aristotle's theory undermine his argument. First, his definition of natural slavery is contradictory. We are considered human because of our souls, which have the ability to rationalize the world around us. If a slave is devoid of rational thought, then he is without a soul, therefore he is not human. Aristotle did not convincingly or logically explain away this contradiction in his text. Peter Garnsey challenges the concept of the "natural" slave.

Aristotle described what a natural slave was like, but he did not identify a group of people who are natural slaves: "The function of the natural slave theory was to distract attention from the existence

¹⁴ Aristotle, p. 24

¹⁵ Aristotle, p. 25

of these unnatural slaves by promoting a paradigmatic image of the ‘real’ slave, whom all could agree to be properly enslaved. All was well, so long as one stayed within the context of the thesis, wherein modal slaves replace actual slaves.”¹⁶ Aristotle lived in a society that valued legal slavery. Many Greek poleis had acquired slaves through violence and war. Aristotle condemned legal slavery, but his theory end up justifying the legal slave institutions: “Aristotle ... refutes the assertions of unnamed persons that slavery rested on man-made convention and brute force. In my view it was precisely those criticisms which provoked him into setting out his natural slave theory ... [he] redefined slavery and freedom as properties of the mind or soul, thereby removing at a stroke the ‘need’ to justify or question legal slavery, or investigate its origins.”¹⁷

Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery is impractical, a theoretical idea without a practical application. He tried to apply his theory to victims of war who were legally forced into slavery, or barbarians, thereby denying the *naturalness* of their enslavement: “Natural slave theory offered ideological support to slaveowners rather than prescriptions or descriptions of actual master/slave relationships.”¹⁸ Yet, despite the many inconsistencies, Aristotelian doctrine was continually reapplied in later periods. Juan Sepúlveda combined Aristotelian philosophy with Christian doctrine in his discussion of the Spanish conquest.

Aristotle considered two important points in his discussion of natural slavery that were discussed in Sepúlveda’s presentation at Valladolid. First, he theorized about a group of people who were not quite human; they possessed a soul, which held only a degree of rational thought. They were naturally inclined to be slaves because of their limited rationality, an argument used by

¹⁶ Garnsey, p. 126

¹⁷ Garnsey, p. 12

¹⁸ Garnsey, p. 127

Sepúlveda to describe the American Indians. Moreover, Aristotle explored a deeply paternal attitude about slaves; it is the duty and responsibility of the superior to care for the weak and inferior. Sepúlveda explored the theme of paternalism in his own arguments to defend Spain's responsibility to care for the culturally inferior Indians. Natural slavery was not the only theory analyzed and discussed in the Valladolid Debate; questions of justifiable war against Indian tribes were heavily explored and discussed by Sepúlveda and Las Casas.

Saint Augustine of Hippo has strongly influenced Western philosophy; the questions that he raised about Christianity are deeply rooted in Western thought. His theory of just war has puzzled and fascinated ancient and contemporary scholars. His famous work, *City of God*, explored the relationship between Christian spirituality and Roman politics in light of barbarian attacks and declining control over the Roman Empire. After the sack of Rome in the 5th century AD, Romans viewed Christianity as responsible for bringing about the foreign invasions, and Augustine addressed the accusations in his text. Christianity was not responsible for Rome's decline; Rome was not even the Christian kingdom that it pretended to be. The book presents a conflict between the City of Man and the City of God. The City of God is characterized by people who forgo earthly pleasures and dedicate themselves to the promotion of Christian faith. John Mattox reflects on Augustine's attitude to the Christian Rome: "Augustine also rejects the implicit equation of 'Roman; with 'Christian'. Rather, he finds Rome to be 'a kind of second Babylon.' In fact, Augustine admits to the true presence of Christians among the Romans, but 'he seems never to have considered true Christians to be true Romans.'"¹⁹ Inhabitants of the Roman Empire were not promoting God's cause, but furthering their own agenda for imperial power. Moreover, Rome

¹⁹ Mattox, John Mark. *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*. London: Continuum, 2008, p. 30

was *not* the Christian kingdom on earth: “While Augustine doubtless holds that it is better for Rome to be Christian than not, he clearly recognizes that embracing Christianity does not automatically transform early states into the City of God; nor does it transform unjust wars fought by those states into just ones.”²⁰ In Augustine’s opinion, “the [Roman] state differs from a band of robbers only in point of size and immunity from consequences ... the state is the institutionalization of man’s most characteristic and destructive weaknesses: greed, vanity, the lust for power, possession and glory ... the pagan state cannot be a commonwealth, a moral community ... it can achieve only a semblance of justice.”²¹ Rome’s crusades for Christ were nothing more than opportunities to conquer new nations and territories. Their objective was not to administer justice in the name of God, but to satisfy a deep hunger for power, greed and wealth. With this negative commentary on Roman imperialism, Augustine spelled out his theory of just war and concluded that war was acceptable only under certain conditions.

Augustine believed all war was sin; but sometimes war was necessary, but it had to be conducted under appropriate circumstances: “I know the objection that a good ruler will wage wars only if they are just. But, surely, if he will only remember that his is a man, he will begin by bewailing the necessity he is under of waging even just wars.”²² War must be fought for a just cause that is separate from self-profit and exercise of superior control. It should only be waged to promote God’s cause, not man’s own political agenda. All wars should be directly authorized by God, and just war must not be fought outside of His will and command. Augustine questioned rulers who were excited and expecting war, since “a good man would be under compulsion to war

²⁰ Mattox, p. 31

²¹ Augustine. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Trans. R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998., p. XXIV

²² Augustine, p. 447

no wars at all, if there were no such things as just war.”²³ Wars, including international wars or civil conflicts, were disastrous and devastating to the defeated and the victorious. They should only be waged when necessary because of their dangerous effects and casualties.

How did you determine just cause for war? Augustine answered that nations who defended social and political injustices were eligible to wage just war: “A just war, therefore, is justified only by the injustice of the aggressor, and that injustice ought to be a source of grief to any good man because it is human injustice.”²⁴ At times, it was the Christian responsibility to engage in violent action in defense of others. War, in Augustine’s opinion, was a godly service rather than an opportunity for self-gain.

Just war must be fought with the ultimate objective of peace: “War themselves, then, are conducted with the intention of peace, even when they are conducted by those who are concerned to exercise their martial prowess in command and battle. Hence it is clear that peace is the desired end of war.”²⁵ War, should help spread the message of Jesus Christ, which is love and peace. A war fought for any other objective (greed, power, social status) was both unnecessary and unjust.

Augustine’s overall theory promoted just war as serving a godly purpose for the obtainment of peace on earth. It was imperative that nations engaging in war had just cause and promoted objectives of peace. The imposition of Roman rule on conquered nations was advertised as obedience to God’s will by forcing Christian religion (and political domination) to pagan nations. Augustine was deeply offended by this rationale; Rome’s imperial ambitions did not coexist with the Christian mission to spread the gospel and peace of Christ. Instead, he argued that “You were

²³ Augustine, p. 447

²⁴ Augustine, p. 447

²⁵ Augustine, p. 934

depraved by the prosperity of your affairs, but you could not be corrected by adversity; and the security that you seek is not a peaceful commonwealth, but unpunished luxury.”²⁶ Rome was never inherently good; in fact, *City of God* was a condemnation of imperialism and Augustine criticized the Roman Empire for their wickedness. Augustine presented a theoretical doctrine of just war that has been reused by countless scholars, Sepúlveda and Las Casas included, in their discussion of the Americas at Valladolid.

Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic priest and philosopher in the 13th century, added to Augustine’s theory of just war. He acknowledged that war must be fought for a just cause and with the right intent: “Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil ... For it may happen that the war is declared by the legitimate authority, and for a just cause, and yet be rendered unlawful through a wicked intention.”²⁷ Just war must be fought with noble intentions, which is pursuit of peace and reconciliation *while engaging in the war*. Peace was not only the objective at the end of the war. Lust for power and greed during battle completely invalidated the war as “just.” Aquinas did not add much to Augustine’s theory of just war, but his doctrine is relevant to the Valladolid debate given that Sepúlveda cited Augustinian *and* Aquinian doctrine to justify Spain’s colonial pursuits in the Americas. Similarly, Las Casas applied Augustinian and Aquinian doctrine in his rebuttals against Sepúlveda’s treatise.

²⁶ Augustine, p. 47

²⁷ Aquinas, Thomas. *Aquinas Ethicus: The Moral Teaching of St. Thomas ; a Translation of the Principal Portions of the Second Part of the "Summa Theologica" with Notes*. Trans. Joseph S.J. Rickaby. 2nd ed. London: Burns and Oates, 1892., p. 408

Their discussion of the conquest and treatment of the Indians created controversy as Sepúlveda used theories of natural slavery and just war, incorrectly, to advocate for European colonialism in the Americas.

*Chapter 2: Debate at Valladolid and Sepúlveda's
Treatise*

The presentation at Valladolid was the result of years of intellectual and theoretical discussions about the Indians: “Then, for the first time, and doubtless for the last, a colonizing nation organized a formal enquiry into the justice of the methods used to extend its empire. For the first time, too, in the modern world we see an attempt to stigmatize a whole race as inferior, as born slaves according to the theory elaborated centuries before by Aristotle.”²⁸ By the time the debate took place in the mid sixteenth century, the Spanish Court was divided about the rationality of the Indians and their ability to be Christian disciples: “It seems clear, however, that some Spaniards—even ecclesiastics—held an extremely low opinion of the character and capacity of the Indians for whose salvation they had left their homes and travelled thousands of miles.”²⁹ Indians were not regarded favorably by many and “it is certain that the question of the true nature of the Indians agitated and baffled many Spaniards throughout the sixteenth century, and that it became a prime issue of the Spanish conquest ...divided and embittered conquistadors, ecclesiastics, and administrators alike.”³⁰ Both Sepúlveda and Las Casas presented their treatises before the council, and the jurists then deliberated on the arguments presented. Sepúlveda’s discussion on the Amerindians illustrates the misapplication of Aristotelian and Augustinian theoretical doctrine.

Sepúlveda was the first proponent to present before the Council at Valladolid. Due to the unpopularity of his arguments following the debate, his treatise, *Democrates secundus*, was never

²⁸ Hanke, p. X

²⁹ Hanke, p. 24

³⁰ Hanke, p. 24

published in English (it took four centuries for his work to be published in Spanish). Instead, our evidence for his arguments in the original debate is mentioned in Las Casas' rebuttals, which responded to individual arguments presented by Sepúlveda, and through secondary sources. For the purpose of this thesis paper, I will use Lewis Hanke's text, which provides a comprehensive overview of Sepúlveda's arguments. Sepúlveda began his treatise by applying Aristotle's doctrine to the Spanish relationship with the Amerindians. He argued, "The natural rudeness and inferiority of the Indians ... accorded with the doctrine of the philosophers that some men are born to be natural slaves. Indians in America, he held, being without exception rude persons born with a limited understanding and therefore to be classed as *servie a natura*, ought to serve their superiors and their natural lords the Spaniards."³¹ Like Aristotle, Sepúlveda argued against Indians as "legal slaves" and concluded that "the jurists refer to another kind of slavery, which had its origins in the strength of men, in the law of nations, and at times in civil law. Natural slavery is a different thing."³² Sepúlveda elaborated on Indian character to demonstrate how they were inferior, limited beings: "Indians were given over, he wrote, to all kinds of passions and abominations and not a few of them were cannibalism ... they waged war among themselves almost constantly, and with such fury that they considered a victory empty if they were not able to satiate their prodigious hunger with the flesh of their enemies."³³ His description of Indian character left no doubt as to why Indians lacked rational thought. Indians were portrayed as wild savages who could not care for themselves or their families. Sepúlveda's definition of Indian nature was very characteristic of colonial attitudes to foreign cultures: "these inferior people 'required' by their own nature and in

³¹ Hanke, p. 44

³² Hanke, p. 44

³³ Hanke, p. 46

their own interests, to be placed under the authority of civilized and virtuous princes or nations, so that they may learn, from the might, wisdom, and law of their conquerors to practise better morals, worthier customs and a more civilized way of life.”³⁴

Sepúlveda also explored a paternalistic attitude in his discussions of the Amerindians. Indians lack the rationality to rule themselves and would therefore benefit from governance by superior Spanish power: “Men rude and backward in understanding are natural slaves and the philosopher [Aristotle] teaches us ... that prudent and wise men have dominion over them for their welfare as well as the service given to their superiors.”³⁵ Indians were deficient in reason, and in their ability to understand Christian faith and Spanish culture, which were sophisticated and civilized. It was now the responsibility of the Christian king to impose his superior faith and culture to the Indians, as the relationship was for their own benefit. Aristotle argued that natural slaves had some reason, and Sepúlveda also suggested that Indians possessed a degree of rational thought, however, it was insufficient for governing themselves and their kingdoms: “the mere fact that Indians lived under some form of government by no means proved that they were equal to Spaniards. It simply showed that they were not monkeys and did not entirely lack reason.”³⁶ Sepúlveda used Aristotelian doctrine to defend his paternal and racist attitude of the American Indians. Moreover, his theory of natural slavery directly related to subsequent arguments of just war: “these inferior Indians may be justly warred against and enslaved if they do not recognize that the Spaniards are their natural superiors.”³⁷

³⁴ Hanke, p. 47

³⁵ Hanke, p. 45

³⁶ Hanke, p. 48

³⁷ Hanke, p. 59

Sepúlveda modeled his second argument of justifiable war in the Americas on Augustine and Aquinas' theoretical doctrines, and defended Spain's responsibility to forcibly Christianize (and civilize) the Amerindians: "The central issue at Valladolid in 1550 was the justice of waging war against the Indians, and Sepulveda made plain in his treatise ... he considered the Indians to be natural slaves according to the Aristotelian concept and the Spaniards amply justified in carrying out a war against them as an indispensable preliminary to Christianizing them."³⁸ Sepúlveda began his argument by admitting that some of the wars against the Indians were not just: "those who wage war with cruelty he characterizes as impious and criminal."³⁹ However, a few unjust wars, he argued, did not invalidate the overall Spanish mission as just: "certain accounts ... show that not all wars in the New World have been motivated by greed and waged cruelly ... of course the fact that some individuals err does not mean the enterprise as a whole is wrong or the king of Spain unjust."⁴⁰ What was the just cause for war against the Indians? War in the Americas was necessary because the Indians would greatly benefit from Christian conversion, which was facilitated by political domination. He even based his arguments on Roman examples: "In order to overcome the serious vices of many peoples, God granted the great and most illustrious empire to the Romans ... that is, in order by means of the excellent laws they observed and the virtue in which they excelled they might abolish and correct the barbaric customs and vices of many peoples."⁴¹ As the Romans imposed rule to promote God's truth to pagan nations, Sepúlveda

³⁸ Hanke, p. 73

³⁹ Hanke, p. 62

⁴⁰ Hanke, p. 62

⁴¹ Lupher, David A. *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-century Spanish America*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, p. 115

argued that the imposition of Spanish rule in the New World was needed in order to properly spread the message of Jesus Christ to the Indian “pagan” race.

Sepúlveda’s next argument concerned the treatment of the Indians and detailed how the Spaniards should wage just war: “First the barbarians are to be invited to accept the great benefits the conqueror proposes to bestow, to permit themselves to be instructed in the ‘true religion and the best laws and customs’, and to recognize the rule of the king of Spain. If they are thus approached and admonished ... they will submit themselves and their possessions to the Spaniards.”⁴² Sepúlveda argued that peaceful acquiescence was rare, and “if [Indians] reject the Spanish proposal, they are to be conquered and their goods confiscated as the property of the conquering prince, and they are to be punished by the usual procedure with the vanquished, that is, by enslavement. If these conditions are fulfilled, the war against the barbarians will be just.”⁴³ This section of Sepúlveda’s argument was bit challenging; he needed to explain how war could be justly waged if the Indians submitted and repented to Christian faith upon initial contact.

In his correspondence to Alfonso Castro, Sepúlveda concluded that preliminary warning of Christianization was not necessary; forcible conversion was desired: “*Pero añade v. m. una condición y es que primo [h]an de ser amonestadores que se aparten dela idolatría, lo qual me haze mucha dificultad porque esta admonición ni la hizieron loas judíos a los amorrheos y a los otros moradores de las ti[er]ra de promisión.*”⁴⁴ In this section of the letter, Sepúlveda complained about His Majesty’s decree that the Indians must be warned before the colonialists could attack. He cited biblical examples from the Old Testament, where the Amorites (*amorrheos*)

⁴² Hanke, p. 63

⁴³ Hanke, p. 63

⁴⁴ Hanke, p. 117

and other inhabitants (*otros moradores*) of the Promise Land were not warned before being attacked by the Israelites. He furthered argued against preliminary warnings, and concluded, “*en todos lugares pareció que la amonestación sería muy difícil o no aprovecharía nada porque está claro que ninguna gente dexara la religión que le dexaron sus pasados sino por fuerça de armas o de milagros.*”⁴⁵ Any effort to warn the Indians beforehand was futile because they would not give up the religion of their ancestors (*pasados*) without force of arms (*fuerça de armas*) or a miracle (*milagros*). Although this letter was written after the debate, Las Casas’ rebuttal to Sepúlveda’s treatise included comments about interactions with the Indians upon initial contact (cited in the next chapter), which suggests that Sepúlveda’s arguments against preliminary warnings were also found in his arguments at Valladolid: “Sepúlveda is convinced that the Indians will ordinarily receive the new religion only when the preaching of the faith is accompanied by threats such that will inspire terror.”⁴⁶ Sepulveda’s argument tried to establish just cause and proper conduct in the Spanish dealings with the Indians. However, Sepulveda’s position, while certainly rooted in Augustinian doctrine, heavily distorted and misinterpreted Augustine’s intended purpose for the just war theory.

Sepúlveda’s argument reflects the misapplication and distortion of Aristotelian and Augustinian texts. Sepúlveda directly applied his discussion of natural slavery to the American Indian, despite some scholars’ objections and concerns with Aristotle’s theory. Lewis Hanke admits that “some sixteenth century scholars attempted to ‘modernize’ Aristotelian doctrine and others made an effort to bring it into consonance with Christian thought by judicious adaption. Not

⁴⁵ Hanke, p. 117

⁴⁶ Hanke, p. 67

so Sepúlveda . . . he knew his Aristotle and applied the natural slavery doctrine directly.”⁴⁷ The scholar’s proposals reflect some dishonesty and loose application of Aristotle’s doctrine. First, Sepúlveda targeted Indians as natural slaves; a race of people that he never personally encountered: “Sepúlveda, having drawn up this dismal judgment of Indian character without ever having visited America . . . may have seen an Indian lurking about the royal court, he never mentioned this fact, and had depended on the knowledge of others for his views on Indian capacity and achievement.”⁴⁸ The scholar was willing to categorize an entire race of people for his own political purposes without personally experiencing their culture. Sepúlveda faced a huge dishonesty; how could he classify Indians as natural slaves without fully understanding their natural environment and way of life? Lastly, Aristotle argued against legal slavery; that is, victims of war forced into slavery through military conquest. Yet, Sepúlveda used Aristotle’s theory to justify the military and political conquest of the Indians. He then cited examples of previous Spanish *military* triumphs to legitimize his argument: “For example did not the brave and resourceful Cortez, with a handful of Spaniards, subdue Montezuma and his Indian hordes in their own capital?”⁴⁹ Sepúlveda’s use of Aristotelian doctrine to defend Spain’s lust for power completely distorted the original purpose of Aristotle’s natural slave theory.

Sepúlveda’s use of Augustinian doctrine was also hugely misleading, and a complete distortion of the text’s original meaning. Like the Romans, Sepúlveda tried to package Christian conversion and political dominion as inseparable. First, Sepúlveda tried to establish just case in Spain’s war against the Indians, yet his application of Augustine’s theory was wrong. Augustine

⁴⁷ Hanke, p. 60

⁴⁸ Hanke, p. 48

⁴⁹ Hanke, p. 47

argued that just cause for war excluded self-gain and profit, and Sepúlveda admitted that the Spaniards would personally and politically benefit from the conquest. Augustine also argued that just war was based on the injustice of the aggressor, and Christians participating in a just war were coming to the aid of victims of injustice and oppression. However, the Indians never posed a threat to the Spanish Empire until the Spaniards encroached on their land. In reality, the Indians were the ones defending themselves against the forward and unjust Spanish attacks, and they were ultimately the victims of enslavement and oppression during Spanish colonization. Secondly, peace was not the ultimate objective of the war; rather, the conquest of Indian property and wealth was highly valued and sought after. In order for the Indians to be Christian and have peace with the Spaniards, they had to be controlled by Spanish power. Lastly, the war was not fought for the right intentions. Sepúlveda remarked that the war is just “even though the individual soldiers or leaders may be moved by greed and the booty they win need not be restored as would otherwise be the case.”⁵⁰ This attitude was a completely distortion of Aquinas’ original meaning. A just war was completely invalidated by wicked, greedy intentions; therefore the Spanish War against the Americas was not just, as Sepúlveda claimed.

Sepúlveda used examples from the Romans to defend his application of Augustinian doctrine to the Spanish Conquest, however Augustine’s theory argued against traditional Roman justifications of war. David Luper, professor at the University of Puget Sound, recognized this contradiction: “While Sepúlveda did accurately reproduce Augustine’s passing reference to God’s use of the Romans as scourges to punish the sins of other peoples...he suppressed the fact that Augustine’s main emphasis here... centered squarely upon the sinfulness of the Romans

⁵⁰ Hanke, p. 63

themselves, in particular their addiction to the vice of the pursuit of worldly glory.”⁵¹ It is ironic that Augustine, who condemned Roman imperialism, was cited by a scholar who sought to justify Spanish imperialism in the Americas. Sepúlveda egregiously distorted Augustine’s argument to justify Spanish control and domination over the New World. Ultimately, the war of Christian faith was, in reality, a convenient excuse to defend imperial greed and desired material wealth.

Bartolomé Las Casas rebuttal to Sepúlveda’s treatise highlighted the misinterpretation of Aristotle and Augustine’s doctrines, and his comments demonstrated that misapplication of texts could have harming effects on the social, cultural, and religious interactions between the Spanish colonialists and the Amerindians.

⁵¹ Lopher, p. 115

Chapter 3: Las Casas Rebuttal

Bartolomé Las Casas arguments against Sepúlveda's treatise were very simple, but effective. As a man of the cloth, he went up against a popular and learned, scholar: "It was a bold step for Las Casas to engaged such a scholar as Sepúlveda in a learned combat, for this humanist who stepped forward to give comfort to Spanish officials and conquistadors possessed one of the best trained minds of his time, supported his views with many learned references, and enjoyed great prestige at court."⁵² Las Casas vehemently opposed Sepúlveda's conclusions and use of theoretical doctrine against the Amerindians. He was a champion for Indian rights and preached a message of peace and justice. After Sepúlveda presented his arguments on the first day of the debate, "Las Casas appeared, armed with his own monumental *Apologia* which, as he himself stated, he proceeded to read word for word. This verbal onslaught continued for five days until the reading was complete."⁵³ Though the *Apologia* was a vast and somewhat redundant work, Las Casas principal arguments on natural slavery and just war were very clear. The priest used Aristotelian doctrine and Scripture to challenge his opponent's interpretations on natural slavery.

Las Casas challenged Sepúlveda's opinion of the Amerindians as natural slaves to which Aristotle referred in the *Politics*. Sepúlveda argued that the Indians lacked sufficient reason to govern themselves, though their government and culture suggest that they possessed a limited degree of rational thought. Las Casas reacted to the statement, concluding that "[Sepúlveda] admits and proves, that the barbarians he deals with ... have a lawful, just, and natural government

⁵² Hanke, p. 31

⁵³ Hanke, p. 39

... they are not wanting in the capacity and skill to rule and govern themselves, both publicly and privately.”⁵⁴ Repeatedly, Las Casas defended the character of the Indian race: “They are not ignorant, inhuman or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom ... wisely administered the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours.”⁵⁵ Las Casas then added, “We have no choice but to conclude that the rulers of such nations enjoy the use of reason and that their people and the inhabitants of their provinces do not lack peace and justice ... therefore, not all barbarians are irrational or natural slaves or unfit for government.”⁵⁶ Las Casas stated that the Indians were capable of self governance outside of Spanish rule; even fact, they had established, functioning political institutions way before the Spaniards arrived in the Americas! Sepúlveda’s conclusions about the character of the Indians were wrong, and “Reverend Doctor Sepúlveda has spoken wrongly and viciously against peoples like these, either out of malice or ignorance of Aristotle’s teaching, and, therefore, has falsely and perhaps irrevocably slandered them before the entire world.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, Sepúlveda remarked that Spain’s cultural and religious superiority gave them the responsibility to impose rule on the inferior and cultural deficient Indians. Las Casas’ position that the Indians’ established systems of government and cultural sophistication surpassed Spanish culture completely undermined Sepúlveda’s argument.

⁵⁴ Casas, Bartolomé De Las. *In Defense of the Indians: the Defense of the Most Reverend Lord, Don Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas, of the Order of Preachers, Late Bishop of Chiapa, against the Persecutors and Slanderers of the Peoples of the New World Discovered across the Seas*. Trans. Stafford Poole. DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1992, p. 42

⁵⁵ Las Casas, pp. 42-43

⁵⁶ Las Casas, p. 42

⁵⁷ Las Casas, p. 42

Las Casas further weakened his opponent by criticizing his methods of acquiring information about the Indians: “Now if Sepúlveda had wanted, as a serious man should, to know the full truth before he sat down to write with his mind corrupted by the lies of tyrants, he should have consulted the honest religious who have lived among those peoples for many years and their endowments of character and industry, as well as the progress they have made in their religion and morality.”⁵⁸ Las Casas scolded Sepúlveda for looking at academia and the Spanish court for his statements on Indian character, rather than study the truth behind Indian culture from men and soldiers who lived and worked in the Americas. Las Casas proved that Sepúlveda’s use of Aristotelian doctrine was misguided. He challenged Sepúlveda’s application of Aristotelian doctrine to the Amerindians and demonstrated how distortion of the facts bred ignorance and undeserved bias toward an unfamiliar and misunderstood culture.

Las Casas then reacted to Spain’s “just” war in the Americas. First, he attacked Sepúlveda’s just cause for war against the Indians. He quoted from the Book of Deuteronomy and Genesis in the Old Testament to undermine Sepúlveda’s argument: “There is just cause for war if the people of some province blaspheme God by worshipping idols ... but we understand it to be true only when a nation worships idols after embracing the faith. Indeed, if they are warned and told to stop those impure sacrifices and their sacrilegious worship, yet refuse to repent and acknowledge the truth, then it is just to wage war against them.”⁵⁹ Sepúlveda argued that just war was a prerequisite for Christianization; Las Casas commented that waging was just only if the Indians refused to accept Christian faith upon initial contact. The argument was very compelling,

⁵⁸ Las Casas, p. 45

⁵⁹ Las Casas, p. 107

considering Sepúlveda's letter to Castro, which rejected the need for preliminary warnings of attack. Las Casas then added, "The venerable Doctor Sepúlveda makes a slip here. . . . he has not diligently searched the Scriptures . . . he seeks to apply those rigid precepts of the Old Law that were given in special circumstances and thereby he opens the way for. . . cruel invasion, oppression, spoliation, and harsh enslavement of harmless nations that have [never] heard of the faith."⁶⁰ Las Casas disagreed with Sepúlveda's assessment for just war against the Indians, and instead criticized his opponent for misapplying just cause in war to defend Spanish imperialism. Furthermore, as I had discussed before, Augustine argued it was the responsibility of Christians to sometimes come to the aid of victims of injustice and oppression. However, the Indians were the victims of war and enslavement by Spanish authority, and Las Casas noted that "pagans, therefore, must be treated most gently and with all charity. Nor should any trace of evil be visible in our actions."⁶¹ The idea that physical enslavement and conquest of Indian land was needed to free the pagan Indians from the bondage of sin and idolatry was a convenient excuse for the Spanish officials. Las Casas chastised Sepúlveda (and the Spanish Court): "shame shame on those who in violation of Christ's law greedily lay waste to Indian realms, which are filled with innocent persons, like most rapacious wolves and ferocious thieves under the pretext of preaching the gospel! But the Lord lives, and they shall not escape his hand."⁶²

Las Casas also used Augustinian and Aquinian doctrine to respond to Sepúlveda's comments on Spain's noble intentions toward the Amerindians. Las Casas debated how war should be justly waged against the Indians, if it should be waged at all. He recognized that the

⁶⁰ Las Casas, p. 110

⁶¹ Las Casas, 287

⁶² Las Casas, 289

ultimate objective of just war was peace, and war could be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ if waged incorrectly or fought with the wrong intentions: “War against unbelievers can be just when only the rulers of kings maliciously prevent the spread or preaching of the gospel. But if both the rulers and the all their peoples . . . refuse to hear or admit Christian preachers, then, under no circumstances, can they be forced by war to let them come in . . . do not force those who do not want to listen.”⁶³ Sepúlveda argued that imposing Spanish rule on the Indians was necessary for their Christian conversion, however, Las Casas recognized that spreading the peace of Christ also meant the peaceful persuasion of Christ: “Christ said, ‘Go . . . and make disciples of all nations,’ that is, those who want to listen,. Do not force those who do not want to listen. You will not find any statement, either in the Sacred Scriptures or in the writings of the holy doctors . . . without blame, [to] compel the unbeliever who does not want to hear the teaching of Christ to do so.”⁶⁴ Therefore, in Las Casas’ opinion, just war against the Indians would do more harm to the Christian witness than good. In addition, there was a difference between unbelievers and heretics. Just war was fought against heretics who rejected Christian faith after having previously been exposed to it. Wars fought with non-believers were wrong, and a kingdom’s motive for waging war on such a nation was questionable: “The words of Saint Augustine that we have quoted show clearly that the Church does not use force on pagans, in accord with the passage ‘It is not my business to pass judgment on those outside,’ but forces only those who have already become guests through baptism to come into the feast.”⁶⁵ Therefore, heretics were disloyal to Christ and were rebellious enemies who needed to be punished, however, unbelievers, like the Amerindians, posed no threat

⁶³ Las Casas, p. 173

⁶⁴ Las Casas, 173

⁶⁵ Las Casas, p. 309

to the kingdom of God, and their punishment was solely justified by man's political agenda, not God's. Although the Spanish Empire modeled itself as advancing the kingdom of God, Spain's true desires centered on colonial expansion and wealth. Even Sepúlveda admitted in his argument that individual leaders were encouraged to the Americas by dreams of power. In fact, the greed of Spanish colonialists prevented the missionaries from witnessing about Christ to the Indians: "From the beginning to the present time the Spaniards have taken no more care to have the Faith of Jesus Christ preached to those nations than they would to have it preached to dogs . . . instead, they have prohibited the religious from carrying out this intention . . . because such preaching would, they deemed, have hindered them from acquiring the gold and other wealth they coveted."⁶⁶ Therefore, the motivations of the Spanish conquistadores were very impure, thus war against the Indians was completely unjust, and even shed Christian religion in a negative spotlight: "Why is it that Christ's sacred name is brought low by these blasphemies? The reason lied in the lives of the Christians and their atrocious wars, which surpass all barbaric ferocity?"⁶⁷

Las Casas heavily criticized Sepúlveda for his misapplication of the Aristotelian and Augustinian doctrine. His reasons for just cause and rightful intentions were incorrect and a reason to excuse Spain's unjustified war and claim to Indian land. Las Casas' rebuttal highlighted the consequences of misapplied and distorted theoretical doctrine. Sepúlveda used Aristotle and Augustine's theories incorrectly, and his arguments, if used by the Spanish court, could further harm the Christian witness in the Americas and create a system of mass enslavement (i.e. the *encomienda*). The debate at Valladolid demonstrated how the misapplication of theoretical texts

⁶⁶ Casas, Bartolomé de Las. *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*. Trans. Herma Briffacult. New York: Seabury, 1974, p. 139

⁶⁷ Las Casas, p. 286

could have lasting effects on Spain's interactions with the New World. Moreover, the debate also highlighted the relevance of Greco-Roman philosophy to negotiating social and political relationships between the Spaniards and the Amerindians.

C o n c l u s i o n

Sepúlveda ignored the original context of the theoretical texts to justify his own social and cultural bias (attitudes reflected by many in the Spanish court). The debate demonstrated how theoretical doctrine was incorrectly and intentionally misinterpreted to hide presumptions of cultural superiority over the Amerindians. Sepúlveda used Aristotle, Augustine, and bits of Aquinas to justify his narrow-minded and racist view of the Indians, and Las Casas corrected his assumptions, noting that the willful misreading of the philosophies and Holy Scriptures could have dangerous consequences on the relationship between Spain and the New World. Lewis Hanke admits that “unjust wars continued to be fought in the Americas, and were justified by doctrines similar to those of Sepúlveda.”⁶⁸ Misinterpretation led to ignorance, which spelled slaughter and devastation for millions of innocent, native people. The blatant distortion of theoretical text had lasting effects for the Indians, particularly since the debate partially influenced legal mandates years following the Valladolid debate.

The Council at the Valladolid debate never reached a consensus, yet, in the years that followed, new regulations were presented by the Spanish King. The debate had an indirect effect on the Laws enacted in 1573. Hanke summarizes the law, stating that “the law decreed particularly that the word ‘conquest’ no longer be used; the new authorized term was ‘pacification.’ The vices of the Indians were to be dealt with gently at first, ‘so as not to scandalize them or prejudice them against Christianity.’ If, after all explanations, the natives still opposed a Spanish settlement, and

⁶⁸ Hanke, p. 82

the preaching of Christianity, the Spaniards might use force' ... no license was given to enslave the captives."⁶⁹ The laws also abolished the *encomienda*, a system that Las Casas, a former *encomendero* himself, bitterly fought against when campaigning for peaceful relations with the Indians. However, the laws automatically assumed superiority of European culture and religion, and Spain continued to feel entitled to impose sovereignty over the Indians. Both Sepúlveda and Las Casas influenced the New Laws that governed relationships between Spain and the New World.

Why were Aristotle and Augustine relevant in Spanish society, and still relevant to contemporary ideology? "The problem discussed at Valladolid over four centuries ago concerning the proper relations between peoples of different cultures, religions, customs, and technical knowledge has today a contemporary and sonorous ring. Sepúlveda and Las Casas still represent two basic responses to the question posed by the existence of people in the world who are different from ourselves."⁷⁰ The Spanish colonialists and cultures used theoretical doctrines to explain and respond to changes around them: "it is sometimes asserted that these questions of legal and theological justification had no connection with the real world, and the fine-spun theories elaborated in the council chambers and monasteries of Spain had no influence in America. Yet the historical documents available for a study of the conquest prove the contrary."⁷¹ Spain tried to enact laws and regulations on how to interact with the people they encountered based on theoretical doctrine, and failure to understand the context and purpose of those theories had lasting effects on European colonialism.

⁶⁹ Hanke, p. 121

⁷⁰ Hanke, p. 95

⁷¹ Hanke, p. 65

The use of Aristotle and Augustine in the sixteenth century highlights the positive reception of the classical past into the New World. Spanish philosophers held a special fascination with Greco-Roman history, and their decision to apply Aristotelian and Augustinian doctrine was direct evidence for their love of the Classical World. David Lupher comments that “the Greeks and Romans ... were, in fact ... packed securely in the mental baggage of both conquistadors and critics ... as an exemplar of imperial motives and behavior fit for Christians to emulate, and as a yardstick against which to measure the cultural level of the natives in the New World.”⁷² Even in present day, ancient theories and philosophies have shaped contemporary ideologies and cultural attitudes. Joseph B. Casagrande’s, former anthropologist at the University of Illinois, observed Indian Highland communities in Ecuador, and his findings illustrate how Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery still has profound effects on cultural attitudes about the Indians:

In the universal dialectic of racism, the Indian is endowed with the very traits disesteemed by his white superiors. Even the kindest among the latter tend to look upon the Indian as a child perpetually held at a developmental stage less than that of a full adult human being, or they regard him simply as a brute little better than any other animal capable of carrying a heavy load. Perhaps most insidious of all is the attitude of benevolent condescension that characterizes the patron of classical mold and many would be benefactors.⁷³

Although no longer in physical slavery, the racist and paternalistic attitudes found in Aristotle’s text persist in contemporary society, particularly in some parts of the Americas. Similarly, just war is continually discussed in modern day debates and discussions. Just war theory has been revised and expanded, although, “The just-war argument has taken several forms in the history of Catholic

⁷² Lupher, p. 1

⁷³ Casagrande, Joseph B. "*Strategies for Survival: The Indians of Highland Ecuador.*" In *Contemporary Cultures of Latin America*, 2nd ed., Dwight B. Heath, Ed. New York: Random House and Alfred A. Knopf. 1974, p. 96

theology, but this Augustinian insight is its central premise.”⁷⁴ The famous 1983 Catholic document, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*, discussed the role of justice and just war in the midst of nuclear warfare:

Both the just-war teaching and non-violence are confronted with a unique challenge by nuclear warfare. This must be the starting point of any further moral reflection: nuclear weapons particularly and nuclear warfare as it is planned today, raise new moral questions. No previously conceived moral position escapes the fundamental confrontation posed by contemporary nuclear strategy ... The task before us is not simply to repeat what we have said before; it is first to consider anew whether and how our religious-moral tradition can assess, direct, contain, and, we hope, help to eliminate the threat posed to the human family by the nuclear arsenals of the world.⁷⁵

The nature of war has changed since the time of European colonialism, and new attitudes to just war have been raised and challenged in the Catholic Church and in global politics. Yet and still, the use of Augustinian doctrine in forming contemporary religious ideology is notable.

The Valladolid Debate highlighted one key theme; there will always be a need to govern and understand the “relations between peoples of different customs, capability, color, religion, and values.”⁷⁶ People look to ancient philosophies to negotiate and explain these differences, and the question is raised: “Will not both the American reality of the sixteenth century as it affected the clashing ideas of Las Casas and Sepúlveda be of unquestioned meaning to our troubled age, and can we not see in the Valladolid dispute yet another illustration of the fact that some of the past history is still contemporary history?”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response: A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, May 3, 1983*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983.

⁷⁵ National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response: A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, May 3, 1983*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983.

⁷⁶ Hanke, p. 160

⁷⁷ Hanke, p. 146

Contemporary scholars, politicians, and ecclesiastics' attempts to connect and respond to memories of the ancient history have profound implications on the ever-changing social, political, and cultural relationships that emerge between different cultures.

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