

Brave New World 2023

Manchester Centre for Political Theory



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Schedule

Wednesday 28th June

11:00 – 12:00

Welcome & Lunch

12:00 – 13:00

Opening Keynote:

Marit Hammond

13:00 – 13:15

Break

13:15 – 15:15

Panel 1: Democracy and Dimensions of Discourse

Suzanne Bloks

Will Siegmund

Scott Arthurson

15:15 – 15:30

Break

15:30 – 17:30

Panel 2: Sustainability and the Politics of Place

Thomas Moore

Virginia De Biasio

Erika Brandl

17:30 – 18:30

Drinks Reception

19:00

Conference Dinner

Thursday 29th June

10:00 – 11:30

Panel 3: Challenges of Modern Technology

Joe Place

Nina de Groot

11:30 – 13:00

Panel 4: Positional Goods in Questions of Justice

Julian Omar Payne

Oriol Alegría

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch

14:30 – 16:00

Panel 5: War and Inevitable Wrong-doing

Gianni Sarra

Jessica Sutherland

16:00 – 16:15

Break

16:15 – 17:15

Closing Keynote:

Carl Knight

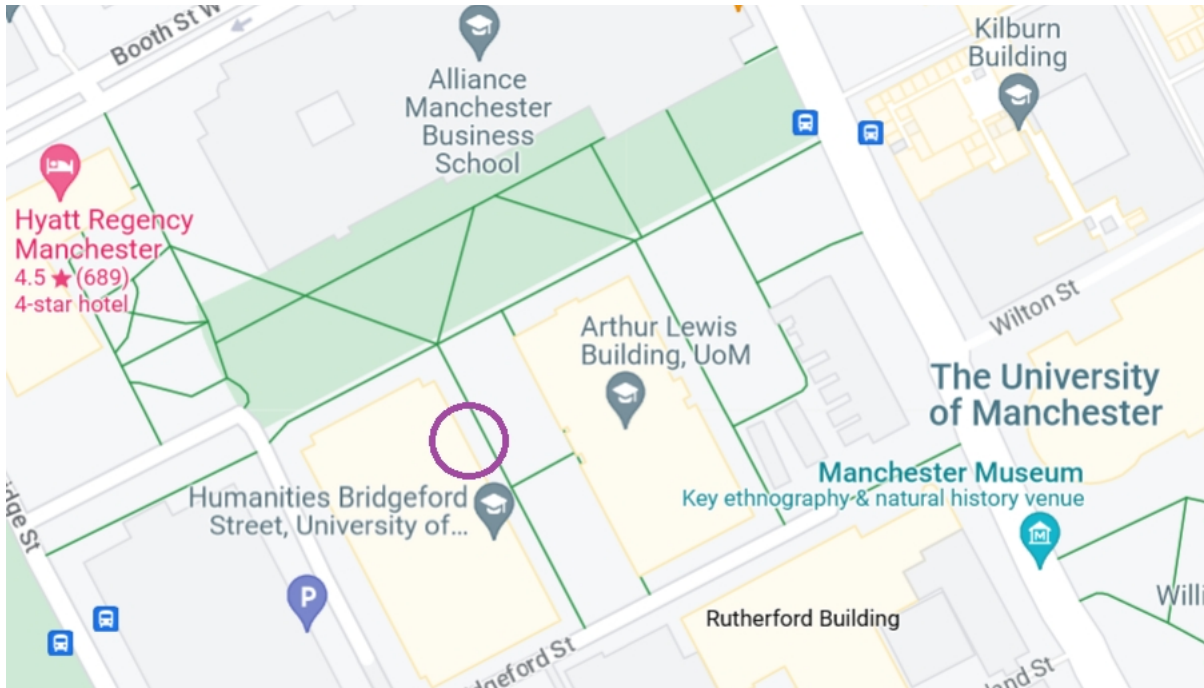
17:15-17:30

Closing Remarks

Rooms

Physical

The conference will happen in the **Hanson Room**, of the Humanities Bridgeford Street Building (encircled in purple).



Online

The conference will also happen on Zoom,
the links for each day can be found below:

Day	Day 1 – Wednesday 28 th June	Day -2 Thursday 29 th June
Link	https://zoom.us/j/99734747418	https://zoom.us/j/94169197864
ID	997 3474 7418	941 6919 7864
Code	access is only granted to registered attendants	

Keynote Speakers

Opening keynote

How political theory can help build a truly Brave New World – against the structural power that tries to prevent it

Marit Hammond
Keele University

Amidst the ecological crisis, a crisis of democracy, and the persistence of deep systemic injustice at the bottom of both, there is an urgent need for theorising to ward off the dystopian brave new world and to help create actual brave new worlds in a positive, meaningful sense instead. In this keynote talk, I reflect on the role of political theory in social change by theorising the impact of structural power on our understandings of and practical approaches to both environmental sustainability and democratic renewal, arguing that the pervasiveness of hegemony is precisely what inextricably links both together in the search for meaningful social change. As the need for sustainability implies the near-impossibility of societies' having to engender deep-seated transformation from within a socio-political space structurally set up to obscure and undermine it, it is only the very essence of a critical norm of democracy that could challenge structural oppression enough to achieve this. Besides substantive critical theorising, I argue this also implies the need for a particular methodological approach to political theory: humble and self-reflexive on the one hand, yet bold, diverse and dialogical on the other.

Short Biography

Marit Hammond is a Lecturer in Politics at Keele University, as well as Co-Investigator of the ESRC Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity. Her research interests span normative democratic theory, environmental political theory, and critical theory, as well as the links between politics and art. Recent work has appeared in the books *Power in Deliberative Democracy: Norms, Forums, Systems* (Palgrave Macmillan; with Nicole Curato and John Min) and *The Political Prospects of a Sustainability Transformation: Moving Beyond the Environmental State* (Routledge, edited with Daniel Hausknost) as well as numerous articles in journals such as *Contemporary Political Theory*, *Environmental Politics*, *Critical Policy Studies*, and the *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*.

Closing Keynote

Relative Spatial Justice

Carl Knight
University of Glasgow

This paper argues that larger people are, *ceteris paribus*, entitled to greater distributive shares. At its heart is a thought experiment that intuitively suggests that, the bigger people are relative to the space they occupy, the greater resources they need for a given level of well-being. The argument is then extended by relaxing the *ceteris paribus* clause, considering respects in which all else is not equal when it comes to body size. In particular, it tends to be advantageous to be tall, especially for men, whereas it tends to be disadvantageous to be obese, at least in current Western societies. The upshot is that the *pro tanto* greater entitlement of larger people is typically offset for the tall but not for the obese. The tall are less advantaged, and the obese more disadvantaged, than is usually supposed.

Short Biography

Carl Knight is a political philosopher working on theories of distributive justice (egalitarianism, prioritarianism, sufficientarianism) and applied topics in distributive justice (global justice, climate change, healthcare, discrimination). He also has interests in methodological issues in political philosophy, for instance concerning the method of reflective equilibrium.

Carl's articles have appeared in leading journals of moral and political philosophy (e.g., *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*) and political science (e.g., *Environmental Politics*, *Review of International Studies*). He is the author of *Luck Egalitarianism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), editor of *Responsibility and Distributive Justice* (co-edited with Zofia Stemplowska, Oxford University Press, 2011), and is currently completing a second monograph on luck and fairness.

Prior to his current position Carl Knight was British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow and then Lecturer in Political Theory at Glasgow. He holds a PhD from the University of Manchester. His affiliations are University of Glasgow and Aarhus University.

Panel 1: Democracy and Dimensions of Discourse

Diversity and Respect in Parliamentary Debate

Suzanne Bloks
University of Hamburg

According to the systemic approach to deliberative democracy, parliamentary debate should function as a partisan adversary process that brings out a diversity of intelligible reasons, perspectives and claims (cf. Goodin 2005; Leydet 2015). This paper questions whether sustaining the deliberative quality of the larger political system requires us to unrestrictedly tolerate partisan adversary rhetoric. This question goes back to a dispute between public reason and classic deliberative conceptions of political justification. Whereas the former restricts the range of views admissible in public debate to public reason, the latter endorses the incorporation in the political process of as many ethical reasons as possible, as long as these are reasons on matters of common concern. My account follows a recent trend to expand on the classic deliberative conception by endorsing the incorporation of reasons on common concern as well as self-interest in public debate (cf. Mansbridge et al. 2010). However, while accepting a diversity of reasons, values and opinions in public debate, I do not advocate an unrestricted toleration of any view or claim. Rather, I argue for furthering intra-party and intra-constituency deliberation to prevent the use of identity-based reasons in parliamentary debate.

My argument rests on the idea that an important function of a deliberative system is to promote mutual respect among citizens (cf. Mansbridge et al. 2012). Any restriction on partisan adversary rhetoric would be an expression of disrespect to those citizens whose voice is excluded. However, at the same time, identity-based reasons create 'non-falsifiable' and 'monolithic' demands that also hinder mutual respect among citizens (cf. Weinstock 2018). To overcome this dilemma, I explore the incentive structures that could increase representatives' engagement and responsiveness to adversaries' positions in parliamentary debate and suggest that furthering opposition and dissent in intra-party and intra-constituency debate is a promising way to prevent the use of identity-based reasons while upholding a presumption of equal consideration for each citizens' views in parliamentary debate.

The Psychological Preconditions of Epistemic Democracy

Will Siegmund
Brandeis University

Since Plato's arguments in *The Republic*, many philosophers have believed that democracy gives political power to those epistemically unfit to rule. Perhaps owing to those arguments' philosophical force, the most influential contemporary defenders of democracy appeal to the intrinsic, procedural fairness of democracy. But there is a strange disconnect between the Platonic criticisms and democracy's historical reality. Democracies have consistently emerged as centers of technological progress, cultural production, and economic prosperity despite their supposed propensity to the contrary. These facts need theoretical explanation, and I think a burgeoning literature on 'epistemic' conceptions of democracy provides that explanation. Epistemic democracy argues that a component of democracy's authority is its ability to arrive at correct answers to problems facing political life. If vindicated, epistemic democracy explains how democracies have succeeded and what they ought to work towards institutionally and culturally. Despite the promise of epistemic democracy, I disagree with how philosophers have argued for the position. The most influential theories have claimed that democracies have epistemic benefits because their conditions resemble the assumptions of mathematical theorems. The two theorems most commonly invoked are those I will scrutinize – Hong and Page's Diversity Trumps Ability and Condorcet's Jury Theorem. I argue that these theorems misconstrue how human beings reason and deliberate. In particular, they cannot accommodate a well-replicated phenomenon known as 'motivated reasoning', which I explicate. If epistemic democrats took motivated reasoning into consideration, they would have to forgo explaining epistemic democracy via those mathematical theorems and look elsewhere. Where should they look? I argue that motivated reasoning does not merely debunk previous attempts to explain epistemic democracy, but shows how epistemic democracy is possible. The diversity of view points that democracies facilitate counteracts their rationality motivated reasoning causes, which then allows decision-making groups to see the world more impartially. However, motivated reasoning also necessitates that people trust each other if their disagreements are to be epistemically productive, and the considerations needed for cognitive diversity may conflict with those for social cohesion. I conclude by characterizing the tension between cognitive diversity and social trust as the central challenge facing epistemic democracy.

The Wrong Kind of People: Theorizing Anti-Populism, Populism, and Elite Conceptions of the Popular

Scott Arthurson
University of Melbourne

The concept of populism is notoriously contested and pejorative. But unlike many contested political concepts, populism's main function is not to denote some value, relationship, tradition, ideology, project, identity, system, or historical process; rather, it usually serves as an abstract, diagnostic category of journalism and political science ascribed to others. This separates it, for instance, from such contested terms as freedom, justice, authority, power, liberalism, socialism, or even negatively-loaded terms like fascism. Those labelled populist have played little role in the contest for its meaning. Many of the political scientists and journalists using the term seem either unaware of its history and conflicting uses, or seek to carve a sharp, Sartorian definition from the term's tangled roots to ease its empirical application. Yet half-forgotten or actively excluded connotations persist, recombine with new meanings, and serve as tacit criteria of case selection, causing further confusion.

Several scholars respond that we should accept populism's denotative content as blurry, as in Wittgenstein's family resemblances. I agree, but argue a further implication must be drawn from this use of Wittgenstein's philosophy: the term's unity lies in the function it serves for the community using it, primarily elites and intellectuals. Hence, to theorize the term, we must unpack both the discursive purpose it serves for elites and intellectuals across the political spectrum, and trace how this has developed over time. As such, I advance the following: 1) a conceptual analysis synthesising methods from Sartori, Connolly, Freedman, and Wittgenstein, resulting in an open-textured definition of populism which accounts for the role of intellectuals' normative commitments in shaping its meaning; 2) an agenda for a Koselleckian conceptual history and pre-history of the term aimed at recuperating the functions it and its conceptual precedents have served for intellectuals from the long 19th century to the present – in particular, as asymmetrical counter-concepts used to pathologize democratic challenges to these intellectuals' preferred values, projects and ideologies.

Panel 2: Sustainability and the Politics of Place

The Value of Place and Climate Change: A Conservative Argument for Greater Climate Action

Thomas Moore
University of Sheffield

This paper will use Japanese philosophy to argue that the homo economicus conception of the human self, presupposed by most environmental economists, makes unjustified presuppositions that cause it to neglect a key argument that could motivate conservatives to be in favour of greater action on climate change. Homo economicus assumes people are individual atomistic units, and their environment is something to be manipulated to satisfy individual preferences. By contrast, the Japanese relational conception of the self regards someone's immediate environment as an inseparable part of who that person is, as much a part of their identity as their marriage or vocation. Thus, by pointing to the effects of climate change on people's places / local environments, climate activists can increase their chances of motivating conservatives to action on this crucial issue. To illustrate this argument within the confines of this paper, I will make use of Kasulis' (2002) intimacy and integrity heuristics, which respectively represent the cultural orientations of the Japanese and Americans. I make my argument in several steps. Firstly, I briefly outline in greater detail the context surrounding homo economicus and Kasulis' (2002) heuristics. Secondly, I show that homo economicus shares integrities' presuppositions regarding identity and epistemology, since it conceptualises people individualistically and only values well defined, publicly verifiable goals and preferences; this leaves it incapable of appreciating the value of a particular / local place to people. Finally, in part by drawing on conservative philosopher Roger Scruton's Green Philosophy (2012), I will show that by invoking these communitarian themes, centred around local environment, when advocating for climate action (for example emphasising the pain of not being able to enjoy a summer walk in your local park because of constant heatwaves), has potential to boost support for net zero among small-c conservatives, precisely because of their relational self-conceptions.

Not Just “Sinking Island”: Natural Resources and Climate Adaption in Kiribati

Virginia De Biasio
University of York

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Kiribati, are among the countries which are hit the most by the effects of climate change. In recent years, the (likely) possibility of entire countries disappearing due to sea-level rise has captured media attention, under the label of “sinking islands”. This topic has been increasingly considered by political theorists who have discussed the unprecedented case of a country’s complete loss of territory due to sea-level rise. Interestingly, the focus has mainly been on the future scenario of “inevitable relocation”. Scholars have been generally silent on the problem of scarce availability of natural resources, which is affecting the living conditions and the well-being of the local population, and which does not constitute only a future projection.

In this paper I argue that we should consider a different problem in addition to the scenario of permanent territory loss, since considering only territorial dispossession leads us to overlook the current challenging conditions in SIDS as well as any prospects for in situ adaption. In fact, focusing on a different temporal dimension (from the present to a future scenario where territory is already lost) as well as on a different spatial dimension (once their land is submerged, the discussion centres where populations of SIDS should be relocated) “normalises” the inevitability of territory loss, and obscures a different issue, which is that of how to manage resources that are growing scarcer and scarcer in the short to medium term. Therefore, I argue that political theorists should also consider the loss of ways of life and the problems of availability of natural resources as current pressing problems in SIDS, which should not be minimized regardless of future territorial dispossession.

The main aim of this paper is to prove that adaption efforts, which are systematically neglected in the political theory literature over SIDS, should be prioritised over relocation efforts, and to start casting light on the normative dilemmas raised by a close focus on adaption in SIDS.

Intergenerational distributive justice and the adequacy of dwellings: re-qualifying housing resources

Erika Brandl
University of Bergen

Philosophers ponder upon the futureproof sufficiency of breathable air, of feeding crops and fields, of rare metals or dry land – but they don't directly ask the question: will there be enough adequate, inhabitable infrastructure in the near and far future? To what extent may we use housing resources for our advantage, on the assumption that future people might access other resources and unpredictable technologies providing them with a similar level of housing welfare? What are the current patterns of housing distribution, and are they evolving towards justice and sufficiency? What housing arrangements are most desirable for a just distribution of housing, in present and future times? How different housing policies affect future individuals' right to an adequate dwelling will depend, of course, on what is the content of that right, and on how the standard by which the comparative allotment of receipts (in this regards housing in different quantities and qualities) among individuals or households (Cohen, 1987; Frankena, 1966) is morally judged. What is understood by a just outcome, however, often remains undefined or implicit, both in policy and philosophical research (Buitelaar, 2017). In effect, the emergent literature on intergenerational justice and basic needs (Meyer, Pözlner, forthcoming; Basic Needs and Sufficiency) discusses sufficiency in terms of needs such as drinkable water, food or health care (resource rights), but does not directly examine shelter or housing needs. In this context, I define the concepts of threshold, sufficiency (standard) and basic needs (metrics), clarifying the actual housing needs – as well as housing needs satisfiers – of present and future generations, and examining the social discounting of future housing needs and the moral implications of scarcity. My intergenerational account works towards the provision of concrete and realistic ethical guidance with regard to future housing crises, and so, to the protection of future individuals' right to an adequate house. It involves investigating how to best model the effects of "business as usual" and these measures on future generations' ability to meet their housing needs, and examining how to assess the empirical assumptions of arguments for discounting and from scarcity.

Panel 3: Challenges of Modern Technology

Can AI Concerns Be Acceptable To All? A Political Liberal Position on AI and Work

Joe Place

University of Nottingham

This paper presents a political liberal argument on the issues surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) and work. The paper argues that many of the problems associated with AI in the workplace can be overly perfectionist, however, some aspects of the issues are in fact relevant to the typical political liberal concerns of meaningful work and the "moral powers". The paper proposes a new line of argument that focuses on the moral powers and incorporates elements of workers' freedom, autonomy, and alienation. The moral powers refer to the Rawlsian conceptions of the means to pursue one's conception of the good and the means to develop a sense of justice, with the former being the main focus of this paper. The paper critiques the arguments that relate AI in the workplace solely to domination, autonomy, and alienation, as they can rely on perfectionist and comprehensive ideas that may not be acceptable to all. The paper proposes a fundamentally anti-perfectionist and political liberal argument that modifies the relationship of domination and alienation towards the moral powers. The paper stresses that AI and its use to automate tasks can be in accordance with worker preferences, and any proposal to oppose its use may violate political liberal commitments. It then argues that the issues of AI are an extension of pre-existing problems related to work, such as worker and employer dynamics, which are harmful to the moral powers, as well as the polarisation of labour, leading to a lack of opportunity and the inability to pursue one's conception of the good.

For-Fun DNA Tests, Investigative Genetic Genealogy, and its Impact on Social Privacy

Nina de Groot
Free University Amsterdam

Tens of millions of people have taken a 'for-fun' DNA test with a commercial company, wanting to learn about their genetic ancestry, distant relatives, or their athletic performance capabilities. Yet, this commercial genetic data can also be used for an entirely different purpose: to identify criminal suspects. With this so-called 'investigative genetic genealogy' (IGG), the police uploads a crime-scene DNA profile in a commercial DNA database to identify a distant relative of the unidentified suspect. To identify the suspect, one can examine where the family trees of the DNA test consumer and the suspect intersect. This method has been used in hundreds of criminal investigations, mostly in the US, but also in Europe. The debate on IGG tends to focus on individual rights and values, such as individual consent, individual control over information, and – perhaps most prominently – individual privacy. In this paper, I propose to approach IGG through the lens of privacy's social value, in contrast to merely its individual value. Approaching IGG from privacy's social value allows consideration of broader social-political issues, including the risk of a 'tyranny of the minority'. Social privacy is an effective foundation to explore the political, ethical, and legal desirability of this novel crime-solving technique because it allows for asking broader questions that extend beyond individual data control or consent. This social conceptualization of privacy is advantageous for evaluating the desirability of IGG, as the debate will not immediately be reduced into the narrow focus of balancing individual privacy versus security in society

Panel 4: Positional Goods in Questions of Justice

Inequality and Positional Goods

Julian Omar Payne

University of York

The problem of positional goods has received comparatively little attention in recent discussions of egalitarianism. The last forty years have seen a significant increase in income and wealth disparities across the affluent West (Piketty 2014). My thesis argues that positional competition in our capitalist societies plays an important role in explaining these developments. This is particularly so when the process of "marketisation" is applied to key life goods such as healthcare and education. Each of us individually exerts greater time, effort, and money to maintain our positions in a way that is collectively self-defeating, motivated not by selfishness, but as what Hirsch(1976, 51) calls a "defensive necessity". On the face of it, with no overall advantage to be had by any competitor, positional competition raises the costs for all. It is a collectively self-defeating strategy. The solution to the problem of positionality advanced in this paper is that our egalitarian goal should be strict material equality. I argue that with moral incentives, positionality can take on a positive role, with citizen's motivations directed towards the common good.

“For whoever has will be given more”: the issue of accumulation for equality of opportunity

Oriol Alegría
University Pompeu Fabra

This paper argues that certain resources pose a challenge to equality of opportunity because of their tendency to accumulation. To defend the claim, section I analyses some resources from the perspective of positional goods and introduces and develops an original concept coined ‘Cumulative Tendency’. Positional goods (positionality) are defined as those whose value relies on the relative position the possessor of the good has in relation to other possessors of the good (Brighouse & Swift 2006; Ben-Shahar 2017). On the other hand, Cumulative Tendency expresses the ability of some resources to increase future chances for acquiring more units of the same good in the future. An example is scholarships. The more someone has, the easier it gets in the future to acquire more, since a key factor to earn scholarships is the C.V., specifically focused on past scholarships or grants. The argument is that positional goods that have cumulative tendency damage equality of opportunity in the iteration of competitive processes. Section II provides two examples of non-positional resources that have cumulative tendency (self-esteem and knowledge) and two examples of positional resources that have cumulative tendency (money and scholarships/grants). The paper focuses, however, on positional resources. Section III focuses on two counterarguments that could be made: the intermediary argument and the incompleteness argument. The intermediary argument criticises that the resource money does not accumulate itself but through intermediaries (goods) in commercial transactions. The incompleteness argument criticises that there are many other factors that intervene in the process of accumulation and, hence, that cumulative tendency does not give a ‘complete’ overview of the phenomena that is used to justify the claim.

Panel 5: War and Inevitable Wrong-doing

Dirty Hands and the Just War Tradition: Who is Fair Game in Political Mudslinging?

Gianni Sarra
King's College London

The Dirty Hands (hereafter DH) view posits that sometimes correct political action can entail accruing real and tangible moral dirt. Under this view, important moral norms and deontic constraints can in extreme situations be justifiably broken, yet a genuine moral remainder is created. A course of action is both wrong and right. As well as more dramatic examples, this can include quotidian cases such as noble cause corruption, mudslinging, and dishonest attacks.

DH theory owes much to the discussion of similar situations in the ethics of war. I seek to explore these connections further to address a lacuna in the DH literature, and that is a comparative paucity of action-guiding content. To do this, I examine how applicable adapted versions of the just war principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, and more broadly the ethics of defensive harm, are to the questions of political morality that occupy DH theorists.

While there will be some utility to this endeavour, there are some issues that need to be considered. I consider these issues from two angles. Firstly, there is a long-standing criticism of the DH framework that it conceptualises moral dilemmas within politics in too static and episodic a manner. An exclusive focus on individual acts can aggravate this problem.

Secondly, I examine the applicability of specific tenets of just war theory. Some, such as proportionality and just cause, can be applied rather readily (though not completely without issue). Others, such as the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, are far more problematic. This leads me to consider who is a valid “target” of political manipulation and mudslinging within modern liberal democracies. Who is a fair target for DH behaviour on the part of politicians?

The Spectrum of Liability to Defensive Harm and the Case of Child Soldiers

Jessica Sutherland
University of Birmingham

We typically see child soldiers as not morally responsible because of their age and/or because they are victims of adult exploitation. Work on child soldiers and their moral responsibility is relatively sparse within just war thinking and political philosophy (Thomason, 2016a, Thomason, 2016b), and instead focuses mostly on whether child soldiers are liable to attack (McMahan, 2010, Vaha, 2011). This paper brings these two areas together. Many of us have the intuition that combatants should exercise at least some constraint when fighting against child soldiers. I will argue that, contra McMahan (2010), exercising restraint in this way is a requirement of justice. I will argue that agents can be more or less liable to attack (liability to attack is on a spectrum) in defensive killing cases depending on how morally responsible they are for the threat they cause. I will outline how, whilst child soldiers are not wholly responsible for the threat they cause to combatants, their responsibility is also not completely diminished. I will argue that child soldiers are therefore liable to attack, but to a lesser extent than fully responsible agents. I will show that combatants fighting against child soldiers are therefore required, as a matter of justice, to use the most proportionate method of attack which may not always be to kill the child soldier. I will conclude that combatants are therefore required, as a matter of justice, to exercise a degree of restraint when fighting against child soldiers.

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