

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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Political argument is sometimes purely strategic, with advocates of opposing positions differing only on the best means to achieve shared objectives. But political debate can often also involve competing claims about appropriate objectives, as well as the means by which we may legitimately pursue them. Insofar as political disagreement involves differences about appropriate aims and means, it requires moral argument and debate.

Moral argument is distinctive because it goes beyond simpler disagreements concerning power and interests, demanding analysis and assessment of underlying principles. Typical political debate over alleviating poverty might focus on the incremental institutional reform of global financial markets, or the actions of governments, corporations, and philanthropies. Moral debate, by contrast, engages the issue of poverty at a deeper level, questioning the fairness of alternative institutional arrangements and the conduct of the powerful actors that influence and shape them.

Genuine moral argument is especially necessary in a political environment that is shaped by heated moral rhetoric and moral myth. As I write, political debate is defined by President Bush's phrase "the axis of evil." While this idea may serve as an organizing principle for the Bush administration and its foreign policy, there is surely a need to examine the considerable distance between this rhetoric of certainty and genuine moral argument. Moral myths are always a part of political culture. Moral argument should always be a corrective to these myths, questioning them and subjecting them to tests of fact and reason.

Moral argument can challenge us to examine assumptions, entrenched beliefs, and conventional wisdom. It can also force us to confront our own painful choices as well as what we consider to be the wrong-headed choices of others. Ethical debate—as opposed to moral exhortation—rarely settles. And unlike moral mythmaking, it seldom soothes. Yet such debate is an essential force for social change. The purpose of this journal is to analyze the choices we are making and the values that underly those choices, and to ask whether such choices and values can be adequately defended.

The articles in this issue present a broad range of views on matters including: approaches to ending terrorism; the use of the term "evil" in policy-making; the relevance of just war theory before, during, and after conflict; corporate social responsibility; and global poverty relief. Each author engages in detailed reflection on his or her own position and careful consideration of the positions of others, thereby opening up new possibilities for creative problem solving.

This issue of *Ethics & International Affairs* introduces two innovations in our format. The first is a Roundtable section that allows for an exchange of views among several commentators on a common theme. The second is a Debate section in which specific policy proposals—however speculative and imaginative—can be presented and discussed.

These new features, available on our Web site, offer expanded opportunities for collective learning and new possibilities for discussion and debate. For an immediate connection, visit us at [www.carnegiecouncil.org](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org). Let us hear from you.