

# Yeoh Tiong Lay Centre for Politics, Philosophy & Law

News Archive

## Symposium on Professor John Tasioulas' Work on Minimum Core Obligations in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

*3rd July 2018*

An online symposium has been organised on the reports written by YTL Centre Director Professor John Tasioulas for the World Bank on minimum core obligations and their relevance to the human right to health. Minimum core obligations are those obligations associated with economic, social and cultural rights that must be *\*immediately\** fulfilled by all states. The doctrine of progressive realization, which enables states to realize human rights obligations by means of reasonable steps over time, does not apply to this particularly urgent class of obligations.

Seven commentators, coming from a wide variety of disciplines, made thoughtful and probing comments on Professor Tasioulas' work, including the eminent Australian jurist the Hon. Michael Kirby, and the leading philosopher and public intellectual, Professor Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago. In an extensive reply, Professor Tasioulas dealt with many of the interesting issues raised by the commentators, including the place of feasibility in shaping human rights obligations and the sense in which minimum core obligations are obligations of 'immediate effect'.

[Read the symposium](#)

## 'Political Authority and Unjust Wars' by Dr Massimo Renzo

*7th June 2018*

Congratulations to Dr Massimo Renzo, whose paper has recently appeared in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

Dr Renzo's paper "Political Authority and Unjust Wars", discusses what 'Just war theory' is currently dominated by two positions. According to the orthodox view (Walzer), provided that jus in bello principles are respected, combatants have an equal right to fight, regardless of the justice of the cause pursued by their state. According to "revisionists" (McMahan, Fabre) whenever combatants lack reasons to believe that the war they are ordered to fight is just, their duty is to disobey. Dr Renzo argues that when members of a legitimate state acting in good faith are ordered to fight, they acquire a pro-tanto obligation to obey which does not depend for its validity on the justice of the cause being pursued. However, when the war is unjust, this obligation may be overridden, under certain conditions, by the obligation not to contribute to the unjustified killing of innocents. This is because (contra Raz) the pro-tanto force of the duty to obey the law is best understood in terms of "presumptive", rather than "exclusionary" reasons for action. This approach captures the insights of both the orthodox and the revisionist view, while avoiding the problems that afflict each of them.

The full paper can be found [here](#).

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research (PPR) is a bimonthly philosophy journal founded in 1940. It considers itself open to a variety of methodologies and traditions. No specific methodology or philosophical orientation is required in submissions." It is published by the International Phenomenological Society based at Brown University in Rhode Island, United States.

## Big Questions: Philosopher John Tasioulas on Justice, Privilege and What People Get Wrong About Human Rights

*20th February 2018*

On the 16 February 2018, Professor John Tasioulas was interviewed by [Dylan Brethour](#) for the RightsInfo website. The RightsInfo builds knowledge and support for human rights in the UK by producing engaging, accessible and beautifully-presented online human rights content.

Moral and legal philosopher John Tasioulas has spent years asking what human rights are and where they come from. It's a subject, he says, that benefits from everyone getting involved.

"One of the most encouraging developments in philosophy is that it's becoming increasingly respectable for serious philosophers to try to engage with a public audience," he tells me. "I think it's changing the conversation. It means that you're having to take on board a broader array of perspectives..."

Broadening the conversation about law and philosophy is clearly a project close to his heart. John has spent decades exploring international law, crime and punishment, and human rights. He's the Director of the [Yeoh Tiong Lay Centre for Politics, Philosophy and Law](#) at King's College London and has recently worked with the World Bank [on minimum core obligations in human rights](#).

Please find Profesor John Tasioulas's full interview, 'Big Questions: Philosopher John Tasioulas on Justice, Privilege and What People Get Wrong About Human Rights', [here](#).

## Professor John Tasioulas Hosted by Radio ABC, Australia

*19th February 2018*

During the summer of 2017, Professor John Tasioulas was a guest on the ABC radio programme The Minefield on August 30, discussing ['the Ethics of Presidential Pardons'](#). The Minefield is a Australian radio programme that helps its audience to negotiate the ethical dilemmas, contradictory claims and unacknowledged complicities of modern life.

Professor John Tasioulas was also one of the guests on the ABC's 12 part series "Ethics Matters". He contributed to the episodes on rights and on punishment. The series started airing August 31, [Episode 2 - 'My Rights'](#). The presenter Dr Dan Halliday talks with philosophers, and helps place their ideas in a real world context. All episodes are 12 minutes long.

## 'Duties of Citizenship and Just War' by Dr Massimo Renzo

*26th July 2017*

Congratulations to Dr Massimo Renzo, whose paper has received an honourable mention at the Frank Chapman Sharp Memorial Prize, which is awarded biennially by the American Philosophical Association to the best unpublished essay or monograph on the philosophy of war and peace.

Dr Renzo's paper 'Duties of Citizenship and Just War', discusses what 'Just War' theory is and how it is currently dominated by two positions. According to the orthodox view (Walzer), if jus in bello principles are respected, combatants have an equal right to fight, regardless of the justice of the cause pursued by their state. According to "revisionists" (McMahan, Fabre, Rodin, Tadros, Frowe) whenever combatants lack reasons to believe that the war they are ordered to fight is just, their duty is to disobey. Dr Renzo argues that when members of a legitimate state acting in good faith are ordered to fight, they acquire a pro-tanto obligation to obey which does not depend for its validity on the justice of the cause being pursued. However, when the war is unjust, this obligation may be overridden, under certain conditions, by the obligation not to contribute to the unjustified killing of innocents. This is because (contra Raz) the pro-tanto force of the duty to obey the law is best understood in terms of "presumptive", rather than "exclusionary" reasons for action. This approach captures the insights of both the orthodox and the revisionist view, while avoiding the problems that afflict each of them.

The Frank Chapman Sharp Memorial Prize, is awarded to the best unpublished essay or monograph on the philosophy of war and peace. This prize honors Frank Chapman Sharp, who was president of the Western Division of the APA in 1907–1908.

Founded in 1900, the American Philosophical Association promotes the discipline and profession of philosophy, both within the academy and in the public arena. The APA supports the professional development of philosophers at all levels and works to foster greater understanding and appreciation of the value of philosophical inquiry.

Dr Massimo Renzo joined The Dickson Poon School of Law in July, 2015 as a Reader in Politics, Philosophy & Law. Previously he was an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick and before that, a Lecturer at the York Law School. He has held visiting appointments at the Australian National University, the universities of Virginia and Arizona, the Centre for Ethics and Public Affairs at the Murphy Institute (Tulane University) and Osgoode Hall's Nathanson Centre for Transnational Human Rights, Crime & Security. Dr Renzo is an affiliated researcher at the Stockholm Centre for the Ethics of War & Peace and the Honorary Secretary of the Society for Applied Philosophy. He is also one of the editors of the journal *Criminal Law and Philosophy*.