

# The Disasters of War; On Inimical Life

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This talk takes as its point of departure Kant's stunning assertion that "the rights of a state against an unjust enemy are unlimited in quantity or degree" (170): an assertion that would seem to contradict Kant's stated desire to establish a condition of "international right."

Kant defines the "unjust enemy" as "someone whose publicly expressed will, whether expressed in word or indeed, displays a maxim which would make peace among nations impossible and would lead to a perpetual state of nature if it were made into a general rule."

Who precisely qualifies, by this definition, as an unjust enemy? What is this unjust enemy's place in the history of war, particularly the history of imperial war? What role has the unjust enemy been made to play in the long modern history of law-making and law-preserving violence? What connections might the unjust enemy, and the exceptional legal space surrounding this figure, have to those accounts of the state of exception through which writers like Giorgio Agamben have been attempting to make sense of our contemporary experiences of law, violence, and sovereignty?

What lines might there be running back from the appearance of this figure in Kant's late 18th-century text to earlier attempts to formulate a law of war and forward to the present appearance (or-reappearance) of the unjust enemy in the guise of the unprivileged, belligerent, and unlawful enemy posited within the framework of the current "war on terror"?