

Dialogue 2

Weapons Research

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245 University Center

**Note Gables
Campus venue**

Those who design new weapons technologies sometimes make significant contributions to wars fought by their own country and, sometimes, by other countries as well. Are they responsible for trying to determine whether the products of their work will be used only in permissible ways? If they can foresee that those products would be used in fighting an unjust war, or otherwise be used in impermissible ways, ought they to abandon that research, even at significant personal cost? If they continue with their research, might they become morally liable to attack by those against whom the weapons would be used? Imagine, to take a fanciful example, that Japanese forces had had the ability to kill the scientists working on the Manhattan Project before they were able to produce the atomic bombs that were used to destroy the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Would they have been justified in killing those scientists, even though they were not combatants?

Dr. McMahan is Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University. Before joining Rutgers he was a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge University, and then taught at the University of Illinois. He is a Visiting Research Collaborator at the Center for Human Values at Princeton University. His principal interests are in medical ethics and international ethics. He is the author of *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* (Oxford University Press, 2002) and *Killing in War* (Oxford University Press, 2009). A collection of his papers, *The Values of Lives*, is forthcoming from Oxford, as is another book, *The Right Way to Fight*. His work has been supported by the MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Guggenheim Foundation.

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