

## Book Review

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### **Routledge Handbook of Ethics and War: Just War Theory in the Twenty-first Century**

FRITZ ALLHOFF, NICHOLAS G. EVANS & ADAM HENSCHKE (eds), 2013  
Abingdon, Routledge  
ix + 418 pp., £140 (hb)

While recent years have witnessed a remarkable rise in scholarly interest in the ethics of war, much of this work focuses on a fairly narrow range of questions. Most obviously, how states and their agents may permissibly respond to physical aggression from other states. This contrasts with the empirical reality of modern conflict, which increasingly departs from this paradigm. This collection of twenty-nine essays aims to close the gap between the battlefield and the philosopher's armchair, providing both an overview of the discipline and an examination of the relevance of the just war tradition to the wars of today and tomorrow.

The collection is divided into three parts. The first focuses on recent developments within just war theory itself. Steve Viner and Bradley Jay Strawser each discuss aspects of a recent revisionist challenge to conventional just war theory, which holds that warfare should be primarily analysed in terms of individual rights and liabilities. In his essay, Jeff McMahan, a leading proponent of a revisionist view, offers support for this position, arguing that combatants may appropriately be held responsible for determining the justice of the wars in which they fight. This epistemic dimension of warfare is also the subject of Richard Werner's essay. The essays by Emily Pollard, Richard M. O'Meara, Brian Orend and Todd A. Burkhardt discuss extending the remit of just war theory from its traditional domains of *jus ad bellum* (justice in resorting to war) and *jus in bello* (justice in waging war) to that of *jus post bellum* (justice following war), a topic brought into sharp focus by the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. On a more general level, Jeffrey P. Whitman and S. Brandt Ford each consider the continuing relevance of just war theory, given the availability of alternative frameworks for evaluating the use of violence.

The second part of the collection looks at the changing nature of the agents who participate in armed conflict, beyond the traditional state actor. In her essay, Anne Schwenkenbecher discusses how the just war requirement of 'legitimate authority' — often interpreted to restrict justified war to recognised states — may be revised in order to accommodate the use of force by non-state actors. Several other essays then consider specific case of non-traditional agents in armed conflict, such as private military contractors (Ned Dobos), child soldiers (Tor Arne Berntsen and Bård Maeland), humanitarian interveners (Jennifer Ang Mei Sze), peacekeepers (Daniel H. Levine), and journalists and opinion-shapers (Michael L. Gross). The four remaining essays focus on perhaps the most high profile new agent in armed conflict: terrorist groups. Fritz Allhoff, Seumus Miller and Shawn Kaplan discuss the ethics of counter-terrorism while, conversely, Jason P. Blahuta considers the permissibility of terrorist tactics.

The third and final section shifts from the question of *who* engages in force to the question of *how* the use of force is changing in modern wars, in particular through the use of technology. Braden Allenby provides an overview of emerging technologies and their implications for just war theory, while Malcolm Dando summarises recent efforts to regulate the development of dual-use technologies. The remaining essays consider specific examples of how technological innovation impacts on the practice of warfare. Chris Mayer considers the ethics of developing and employing non-lethal weapons in war. The essays by Christian Enemark, Keith Abney and Heather M. Roff discuss the morality of using unmanned or autonomous weapons systems. The collection concludes with three essays on the emerging practice of cyberwarfare and the novel ethical problems it raises (George R. Lucas Jr., Leonard Kahn and Neil C. Rowe).

The chief virtue of the handbook is its wide-ranging discussion of timely and often highly novel topics. Some of this work represents the first sustained treatment of an issue that I am aware of, such as Gross' stimulating piece on the ethics of soft power, propaganda and media manipulation. In addition, the essays on cyberwarfare will provide an important resource for what is sure to be an expanding area of research.

As well as extending just war theory to a wider range of topics, the collection also includes a broader range of perspectives, as several of the contributors either come from outside philosophy departments or draw on resources other than philosophy. Werner's piece in particular — which uses psychological research on biases to build a sceptical argument regarding our beliefs about the permissibility of resorting to war — is a good example of how important philosophical conclusions can be drawn from premises that are partly empirical.

The handbook does, however, have some notable weaknesses. Firstly, several of the essays employ a rather 'checklist' approach to applied ethics, in which general principles are applied to specific cases in a top-down fashion. Since the most interesting and exciting recent work in just war theory concerns what the content of these principles ought to be, readers well versed in these debates may find some of the essays lacking in critical content.

Secondly, the essays are fairly short and, perhaps as a result, the most interesting arguments are often not as developed as they could be. For example, Mayer's paper on non-lethal weapons focuses primarily on the question of whether there is an obligation to use these weapons if (i) they are available and (ii) their use does not reduce military effectiveness. However, given these two stipulations, this seems hard to deny. Towards the end of his essay Mayer raises a more interesting second question, concerning whether there is an obligation to *develop* such weapons, when doing so involves diverting resources from other valuable goals. Given the variables and trade-offs involved, this is a fascinating issue, but unfortunately receives only a small proportion of the discussion.

Blahuta's essay on terrorism is also representative of the rather cursory level of argument often present in the collection. Blahuta argues that the intentional targeting of civilians in war can be justified because civilians may lack their normal immunity from attack. Blahuta offers several grounds for civilian liability in war, the most original being the claim that benefitting from injustice can render an individual a legitimate target in war, independently of their causal contribution to that injustice. This is an extremely interesting, but controversial, idea. It is notoriously tricky to derive much less serious normative consequences from the receipt of benefits (political obligations most

famously), so the claim that benefits can ground liability to *killing* will require some serious argument. However, barely a page and a half are devoted to doing so.

One of the key objections to Blahuta's claim is that it has counterintuitive implications. For example, that a hit-man's child could be liable to be killed in order to protect his prospective victims, since the child benefits from his earnings. Interestingly, Blahuta aims to defend the implication that children may permissibly be targeted. However, in order to do so, he relies on a complex and highly stipulative thought experiment, in which the child beneficiary will (i) shortly die anyway and (ii) depends on resources for their survival that can only be acquired by means of severe injustice. Since these conditions are not true of the vast majority of civilians in war (or indeed at any time), the example does not help demonstrate the permissibility of targeting civilians in wars, even if we are prepared to accept Blahuta's intuition that killing the beneficiary is permissible in this case (which I doubt many will be).

In my view, the collection could have been improved by including fewer essays, thus allowing the remaining to develop their arguments in more depth (particularly since four of the articles — McMahan, Allhoff, Allenby and O'Meara — are revised versions of work that has been published elsewhere.)

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