

Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited	
Journal Code: JAPP	Proofreader: Mony
Article No: JAPP12097	Delivery date: 11 Nov 2014
Page Extent: 3	

*Journal of Applied Philosophy*  
doi: 10.1111/japp.12097

## Book Review

---

### **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 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, supports 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 other 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.

2 *Book Review*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18  
19 JONATHAN PARRY

20 *Stockholm University*