

War Conflict and Ethics: A Journey from Cicero to the 21st Century

War, an abhorrent yet persistent aspect of human existence, has always been accompanied by questions of morality and ethics. From the time of ancient philosophers like Cicero to the present day, scholars, military leaders, and policymakers have grappled with the difficult question: how can we wage war ethically?



Just War Thinkers: From Cicero to the 21st Century (War, Conflict and Ethics) by Ronnie Malina

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5



In his influential work, *De Officiis*, Cicero laid out the foundation for ethical warfare, arguing that war should only be undertaken as a last resort, and that it should be conducted with restraint and humanity. These principles, known as the *jus in bello*, have formed the basis of international law governing the conduct of war ever since.

Just War Theory

Over the centuries, Cicero's ideas were further developed into the concept of Just War Theory, which provides a framework for ethical decision-making in situations of armed conflict. Just War Theory holds that war is only justified if it meets certain criteria, including:

- **Just cause:** The war must be fought for a legitimate reason, such as self-defense or the defense of others from aggression.
- **Right intention:** The war must be fought with the intention of achieving a just outcome, not for personal gain or conquest.
- **Proportionality:** The harm caused by the war must not be disproportionate to the good that is expected to be achieved.
- **Discrimination:** The war must be fought in a way that distinguishes between combatants and non-combatants, and that minimizes harm to civilians.
- **Last resort:** War must only be resorted to after all other peaceful means of resolving the conflict have been exhausted.

Modern Challenges

In the 21st century, war has become increasingly complex and challenging. The rise of asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction has blurred the lines between combatants and civilians, making it difficult to apply traditional ethical principles. Moreover, technological advancements have raised new questions about the ethics of autonomous weapons systems and the use of drones.

Despite these challenges, Just War Theory remains a valuable framework for ethical decision-making in war. By carefully considering the criteria of

just cause, right intention, proportionality, discrimination, and last resort, we can strive to wage war in a way that minimizes harm and promotes justice.

War is a tragic and unavoidable part of human history. However, by adhering to ethical principles, we can strive to mitigate its horrors and ensure that it is only waged as a last resort, with the intention of achieving a just outcome.

From Cicero to the 21st century, the quest for ethical warfare continues. By understanding the history and principles of Just War Theory, we can make informed decisions about the use of military force and strive to create a more just and peaceful world.



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