

Ping-cheung Lo and Sumner B. Twiss, editors. *Chinese Just War Ethics: Origin, Development, and Dissent*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2015. xxii, 298 pp. Hardcover \$xxx.xx, ISBN 978-1-138-82435-5

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To the question of whether or not ancient philosophy still speaks to us today, one significant answer is presented in the volume of collected papers, *Chinese Just War Ethics: Origin, Development, and Dissent*. Its collection of eleven pieces written by six authors directly confronts the question of the relevance of ancient Chinese philosophy in one specific area of inquiry, just war ethics. In the three sections of the book are analyzed the major philosophical traditions of ancient China: Part 1 on the Military Strategy tradition in which Sunzi's *Art of War* is prominent; Part 2 on the Confucian tradition, focusing on Mencius and Xunzi as well as on the neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming; and Part 3 on the traditions of Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism. But this book is not just another introduction to ancient Chinese philosophy (although it does an excellent job of that as well); rather, each of the chapters mines these foundational thinkers through the analysis of their specific ideas on just war ethics.

In his Introduction to the volume, Ping-cheung Lo notes that writings about war in ancient Greece mostly centered on narrative accounts of significant wars and battles, but ancient China was different, particularly in the Warring States period (475-221 BCE) during which each of the ancient Chinese schools formed; he writes:

Most thinkers in the Warring States Period in China urgently engaged the topic of war. The cruel reality of unrelenting wars was reflected in poems, recorded in historical writings, and, above all, intensely discussed and debated by thinkers of that age. Concomitant with the struggle for supremacy as well as for survival of the warring states, competing schools of thought, especially on statecraft, arose to meet the needs of the day. Because warfare was a part of statecraft, the role of warfare was sharply debated, ranging from its aggressive use to its condemnation. Hence there were heated and extensive debates on the need to distinguish justified from unjustified wars in ancient China, as there were not in ancient Greece. (4)

These collected contributions bring ancient Chinese thinkers into discussion and debate with modern just war theories. Most of them share a body of technical terminology developed from Western just war ethics, and they also share the conviction that these ancient Chinese ideas, taken altogether, demonstrate a powerful “just war tradition in China” (29) that has not been adequately treated in previous scholarship and, thus, has not been sufficiently accounted for in contemporary just war theories.

The coverage and authorship of *Chinese Just War Ethics* is somewhat unusual for a collected volume of this sort. Each of the chapters has been developed by their authors throughout a series of conferences (listed in the “Preface”) on just war ethics, four of which were sponsored by Hong Kong Baptist University. Of its eleven chapters, nine have been previously published, the two exceptions being the “Introduction” by Lo and Chapter 10 on Mozi by Hui-chieh Loy. In addition to the “Introduction,” Lo has written the two chapters on the Military

Strategists and the final chapter on the Legalist tradition, Three of the four chapters on the Confucian tradition were co-authored by Sumner B. Twiss and Jonathan K. L. Chan, and Ellen Zhang authored the chapters on the Daoist tradition. Thus, most of the chapters appear to have been developed through direct and extensive dialogue with each of the others, and this explains the structural similarities, the shared approaches, and the shared technical terminology from contemporary just war theory that characterizes each of them. This provides the volume its own distinctive identity that gives each of the ancient Chinese thinkers an individual position within their own tradition yet also places them in clear relation with the thinkers of the other traditions. The volume holds together in a way very different than if each paper had been independently written on its own.

Most of the chapters adopt a similar structure of introducing the main points of the ancient Chinese thinkers' notions of what constitutes a "just war," normally designated by the phrase *yizhan* 義戰, and this is the starting point for the deeper "moral hermeneutics" that each goes on to explore. The separate chapters then typically conclude with a final section that brings the given ancient Chinese thinker's ideas into dialogue with contemporary just war theory, which each one does a fine job of representing. The chapters also share a common approach to the ancient Chinese philosophies on just war by analyzing them in terms of *ius ad bellum* (justice in starting a war), *ius in bello* (justice in conducting a war), and *ius post bellum* (justice after ending a war). Their primary concerns, as the authors show and as is also typical of most Western just war theory, center on ideas about the justifiable conditions and moral appropriateness for starting a war, but they also had much to say about different notions of justice applicable during and then after the conclusion of war. In brief for the Chinese tradition of just war theory, just war is morally appropriate when at least one of the following conditions is met: the moral obligation to

restore proper and stable social and economic order to a ravaged populace, to relieve a populace of a tyrannical ruler, and/ or to stop the warfare aggressions of another army bent of invasion.

Central to the ancient Chinese conceptions of just war are notions that should be familiar to readers of Chinese philosophy generally, “benevolence” *ren* 仁 and “righteousness” or “justice” *yi* 義. These are two of the cardinal virtues at the heart of the Confucian tradition represented by Mencius and Xunzi, but they also hold important positions in the philosophies of Laozi, Mozi, and Han Feizi, as well as for members of the Military Strategist school. One of the great contributions made by the volume is that they offer perspectives on these notions in action, in real-world debates about just war that had real consequences in ancient China. These perspectives radically differ from their more familiar context of individual moral cultivation. Readers will also be surprised to recognize that a third central notion from early Chinese philosophy, ritual propriety *li* 禮, has next to no role in any of these ancient Chinese discussions about just war.

Because the compilation of *Chinese Just War Ethics* is the product of deep group collaboration among its several contributors, each successive chapter builds on the previous as it moves through the traditions of ancient Chinese thought while maintaining a secure reading of the ancient texts from the perspective of just war theory. If there is any single weakness to the volume, it is that there is a good deal of repetition, particularly in the separate chapters written by the same authors. We might, however, recognize this as a necessary feature of the collaborative nature of the chapters taken altogether as each one resets its own theoretical starting points taken from modern just war theory calibrated to each of the ancient Chinese philosophers one to the next.

As there is insufficient space in this review to note how the authors manage the different

nuances of each separate ancient Chinese thinker, I might point out some of central characteristics of each. In his examination of the Militarist tradition, Lo does an excellent job of showing its primary representatives, actual military generals or other top-level military leaders, were by far the most realist of all ancient thinkers on warfare due to their lived battlefield experience; still, they were among the least excited to directly engage in war. In their three chapters, Twiss and Chan superbly show that one special feature of the Confucian tradition's ideas about just war devolve on the proper legitimacy of the single ruler with the supreme moral qualifications to launch a war, and Aaron Stalnaker's contribution of Xunzi follows the same lines.

Zhang's two chapters on how the Daoist tradition thought of war pays special attention to the *Daodejing* attributed to Laozi, and she does a marvelous job of bringing out the ways in which that short text understands warfare in deeply cosmological terms that speak to the disruption of natural harmonies of life. Loy's chapter on the Mohist tradition, with its commitment to defensive war, is extremely valuable because it demonstrates that it played a dominant role throughout the course of the Warring States but essentially disappeared thereafter, and few scholars, at least until recently, have shown an interest in examining it. Lo's chapter on Legalism, finally, does not say terribly much about its foundational thinkers, Shang Yang and Han Feizi, focusing instead on the famous Han dynasty debates between pro-war Legalist voices and anti-war Confucian voices, and it provides an in-depth demonstration of the Chinese just war tradition debating with itself.

This volume will hold an important place in the history of Chinese philosophy and ethics and particularly in the tradition of Chinese just war theory. Its lasting impact will be due to the fact that it stands first in line with bringing the ancient Chinese tradition of just war theory into

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dialogue with Western and contemporary just war theory and with military studies more generally. This is an excellent addition for undergraduate courses and lay readers alike.

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