

## BOOK REVIEW

### ***WAR AND MORALITY. CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND DUTIES***

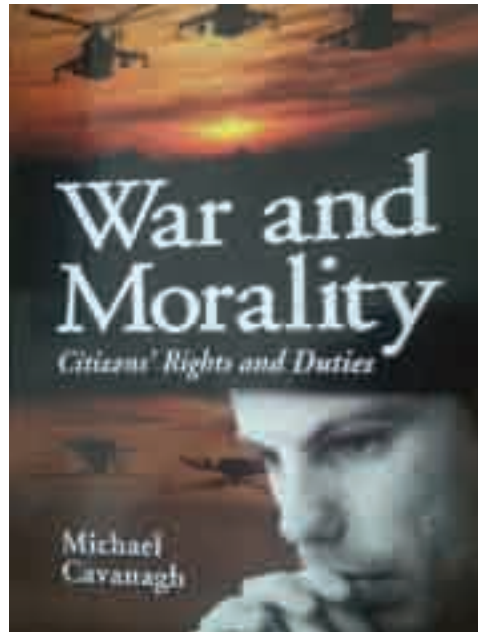
**Author:**

**Michael CAVANAGH**

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### **REVIEWER:**

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*War and Morality citizens' rights and duties* by Michael Cavanagh is an informative and thought provoking book that ought to be read by politicians, military leaders, and the public large in democratic societies. As the title suggests this book is about more than war and morality. It reminds citizens that they too have responsibilities and obligations to their society especially in times of armed conflict. Armed conflict extends far beyond war as we tend to define it. It includes, among other thing, interventions, humanitarian operations, and other situations involving the military forces of their nation.

Michael Cavanagh is a Professor of Mt. Olive College in the United States. He states "The purpose of this book is to help today's citizens make decisions with regard to whether war in general or a specific war can be a moral enterprise based on core constitutional and humanitarian values." (p. 2). Before discussing an overview of the book the reader should understand that Cavanagh does not provide the reader with a check list to determine whether a war is either moral or just. It is war neutral.

The author shares his thoughts not only about war, morality, and ethical decision-making. But he also notes that citizens have an obligation to inform themselves as to why their national political and military leaders should to commit their armed forces as well as why they ought not to commit them. Citizens, Cavanagh contends must hold these leaders accountable for whichever decision they decide to pursue.

The book is divided into eight chapters plus the introduction, five pages of notes, and an index. The author uses the notes to properly credit sources of some of his material, and not to make the book overly academic in nature. The text is both clear and concise.

Cavanagh uses his eight chapters to take the reader on a well thought out and well reasoned journey. In chapter one Cavanagh discusses conscience and moral decision-making. He talks about ethical theories and moral decision-making in easy to understand terms. This chapter alone is worth the cost of the book.

In the second chapter he focuses on the principles of Just War. This reviewer considers it one of the best summaries of these principles that he has read. Unlike many discussants of the Just War tradition, Cavanagh talks about the just termination of conflict or *just post bellum*. Why commit one's armed forces if the result is not a lasting peace?

Pacification and Realism are the topics of chapter three. Cavanagh does a good job in helping the reader understand these two concepts and the value of each.

Chapter four was quite interesting because he explains what virtue is and then compares it to values. A diligent reading of this chapter carefully will have you begin thinking reflectively. A question to ask is does my society believe in virtues? Does it reflect a set of core values, or are values merely transient depending on the situation? Values do not translate into moral behavior nor do they encompass virtues. To fully understand the difference the reader must do a lot of reflecting.

The fifth chapter is quite interesting in that the author talks about the cognitive dimension of moral decision-making. As with the previous chapter, this one encourages the reader to think reflectively.

Cavanagh begins Chapter six with: "National political and military leaders often claim civilians and soldiers are not in a position to make informed conscience decisions about war because they are not privy to important information about war." (p. 125) That statement ought to grab the reader's attention. He explains why they make such statements. Next he addresses the issues of propaganda and deceit by political and military officials. He explains the difference between persuasion and propaganda. He talks about misleading and lying to the people ultimately leads to public cynicism. The long term impact of cynicism does not serve democracies well.

In the last two chapters of the book the author focuses on the theoretical and practical issues of morality and war. Particularly interesting is his ten page discussion concerning preemptive and preventive force. The future implications for a nation that does either may reveal itself in unexpected ways.

The author concludes the book with discussions about terrorism, unmanned aerial vehicles, cluster munitions, economic sanctions, and the use of depleted uranium in munitions. There is much to think about as one reads these five sections. They are well written.

Unfortunately the author did not write a summary or concluding chapter. This is the only criticism this reviewer has about the book. If the author writes a second edition perhaps he will add a conclusion.

This book is informative and well worth reading. It ought to be mandatory reading in all military ethics courses. Politicians and military leaders are advised to read this book as well. Finally, citizens of all democratic societies would be well served by reading this book. Politicians and military leaders need to be held accountable whenever they employ their nation's armed forces.