

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION OR ANCIENT BATTLES: WHAT IS MORE
ETHICAL?

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Weapons of Mass Destruction or Ancient Battles: What is More Ethical?

Discussing the utilization of weapons during wartimes, the ethics of killing people is the primary concern. The controversy of the act of killing is undeniable and cannot be justified even by the good intentions of one side over another. Nevertheless, with the occurrence of a weapon of mass destruction, the ethical concerns around these weapons became even more evident because of the inability to defend oneself or react in a timely fashion to an oncoming attack. Unlike ancient battles that utilized cold-steel weapons in fights, weapons of mass destruction imply ethical controversy due to inevitable mortality; hence, they are considered to be an unethical means of war compared to weapons in ancient battles.

The ethics of any weapon is a complicated issue, as it is difficult to define what type of killing is ethically right or wrong. However, there is a legal document that provides particular examples of weapons and ammunition that can be considered as unethical. According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the utilization of poison or poisoned weapons is a war crime that can be considered unethical. Also, the statute includes a list of forbidden weapons other than asphyxiating gases and ammunition that causes the extreme suffering and incapacitation of an individual (UN General Assembly, 1998, Article 8). These methods of war are regarded as war crimes, being an excessively violent way of neutralizing an enemy. Although the ethical consideration of poison is in the unnecessary suffering of a victim, a weapon of mass destruction implies much more moral controversy—mainly for the fact that the decision of one side leads to the inevitable death of particular individuals. This way of conducting war is unfair and one-sided. Hence, one may admit that the ability of a side in war to defend is the only factor that may define the ethics of a weapon.

Notably, the ethics of a melee weapon is also a controversial topic, being the cause of severe injuries and a higher chance of fatal consequences. Nevertheless, the use of swords, spears, axes, and other weapons in ancient battles was more ethically fair, as soldiers had the opportunity to evade attacks or resist. Therefore, melee weapons imply equal chances of a soldier to win in battles and participate in one's own defense. Additionally, ancient warriors were aware that death or injuries could result only from the direct engagement with enemies. This consideration justifies the application of a weapon to obtain the opportunity to avoid fatal injuries. Also, since the operation of a melee weapon requires specific skills and practice, not every individual was able to use it effectively. Even though these weapons can be used stealthily and without the awareness of a victim, there are still much more chances for defense. In this regard, it is crucial to more precisely analyze the disturbing ethical aspects of weapons of mass destruction and their negative implications for victims.

The utilization of weapons of mass destruction is known to be unethical due to them being an unfair means of war and has long-term consequences for the environment. For instance, a nuclear weapon is one of the most devastating and unethical ways of neutralizing an enemy, primarily because victims do not have an opportunity to avoid instant death. Another important consideration is the fact that nuclear attacks leave radioactive traces which can lead to horrible health issues for the people who live near affected areas. Thus, by using a weapon of mass destruction, one side of a conflict consciously dooms not only targets, but also the environment and the future of the particular area. For instance, the after-effects from the first atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had horrible consequences on the health of survivors. Namely, after the exposure to the radiation, the rate of cancer and leukemia among survivors and their children

increased significantly (Listwa, 2012). These health issues are particular only to weapons of mass destruction and atomic bombs.

Consequently, one may agree that any means of killing cannot be regarded as ethically right. However, there are considerations of fairness and dignity in the utilization of different types of weapon. A melee weapon in ancient battles was a method to challenge an enemy and win in a fair battle with equal opportunities. Meanwhile, the use of modern weapons of mass destruction leads to the inevitable death of targets. In addition, there are horrible consequences for the survivors of these attacks. Therefore, from an ethical perspective, ancient battles are the lesser of two evils compared to weapons of mass destruction.

References

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