

PACIFISM AS AN ETHICAL RESPONSE TO WAR AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

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Abstract. *An early perception of pacifism was known even in Latium, a small area in Ancient Rome. Its meaning, in the language then spoken, arose from the word (ficus) that personifies the very coming into being of harmonious relations between nations (pax). In other words, the term portrays creation of peace on a continuum from complete to moderate resistance to armed conflict while different arguments of abstract, spiritual and scriptural nature defend its core. Pacifism maxim that war is wrong as killing is wrong belongs to the primary theory virtues that the paper will attempt to visualize in sections of absolute, deontological, and consequentialist conviction as well as that of contingent belief and civil rights movements. Another hallmark refers to pacifists' belief in nonviolence as what only defends the innocent or prevents breaking out the conflict. The theory disapproves armed dispute; it simultaneously means moderate opposition and denial of cruelty in building peace. It is concentrated on overruling war and represents, at the core, a moral attitude calling upon political philosophy to uphold the principled negation of war. Violence nowadays is an inevitable part of life, but insisting that taking up arms is not a part of the solution is what permeates discourses too.*

Key words: *pacifism, absolutist, deontological, consequentialist, contingent.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The theory focuses on separating right from wrong, and that is where its power rests. One of the oldest interpretations stresses that pacifism foundation denies armed conflict as a means of resolving controversies. Besides this, ethics and moral reject force, which under no circumstances is a match for pacifist conviction (Richmond 2008, 30). Passiveness cannot be ascribed to pacifism as it clearly differs from courage to suffer for ideals of peace. Huge was moral of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr whose idea of nonviolence is still very alive showing why pacifism is withstanding time. Being pragmatic means an acknowledgment that negative attitudes towards the theory exist as well as suggestions that the belief opposes the right of those whose lives are in danger to self-defend.

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2. INFLEXIBILITY OF ABSOLUTIST THOUGHT

Followers of the doctrine's more stringent strand lean against the absolutist approach as a stronghold when justifying the view that war has no moral ground. Absolute pacifists claim that principles of justice do not recognize the use of force, not even force in defense of life. In their vision being is of paramount value spirit defends and not physical strength. Ethically, in absolute pacifism Heaven is frequently envisaged as a sanctuary of human personality, as dying, even violently, is a greater pleasure than physically opposing death. That is a basic misapprehension between how absolute pacifists define the domination in thinking and immature interpretation of life. These are important criteria of absolute objection which prevail over the consequentialist theory that war and its violence, although ethically inadmissible, in the imaginary setting are perhaps justifiable. The thought, in similar form, reincarnates through the Two Greatest Commandments, well known in Christianity.

Nonetheless, the credence found its place also in human assumption, somewhat separated from religious belief. One may build integrity of absolute pacifism on Kant's unambiguous thinking that life has actual value; it is never a resource of achieving objectives. Of course, the aim is not questioning Kant's potential arguing in support of absolutism in this regard, but only heralding a possibility that one, attempting to apprehend Kant's inflexible approach, might become a follower. Moreover, Dower points to the essential value of pacifist doctrine that figuring out what naturally follows from fighting in armed conflict is unacceptable understanding of the issue as being in war to kill or only fight is wrong (Dower 2009, 120). This opposition expands further into another, characteristically very similar, resistance to war and armed violence.

3. DEONTOLOGICAL PACIFISM

Basic principles of deontological pacifism focus primarily on defining ethical obligations which refer to war. Responsible behavior is one of the essential categories of deontology. Defining the core of the objection refers to *raison d'être* resting on categorical imperatives such as in the first place morality in law grounded in rationale. Their interconnection¹ excludes violence a priori in interpersonal affairs generating so moral course that prohibits physical force effecting injuries of another person. When directing attention to pacifist theory, deontological integrity approach to conflict is pretty inflexible. The meaning of the intransigence in somewhat more concise interpretation refers to opposing war and violence assuming certain features of absolutist thought. It is closely related to absolutist approach although deontology does not profoundly identify with absolutism. However, both schools of thought underline momentousness of duties or principles that, deontology suggests, everyone should value depending on the setting. Absolutist apprehension points to respecting certain tenets the circumstances should not influence justifying so unacceptability of taking life irrespective of the *mise en scène*. On the other hand, deontologist teaching points to Kant's categorical perspective legitimizing killing if circumstances allow (self-defence). Worth noting is that philosophical and pragmatic discrepancies separating deontological and absolutist view might in some conditions be intricate in nature as "...even distinguished ethicists disagree and debate over the meanings of deontology, absolutism, and Kant's categorical imperative" (Barsky

¹ Interconnection between morality , rationale and law.

2010, 234). The armed encounter is fully unreasonable, both theologically and secularly, and in a similar way, absolutist doctrine rejects violence. Comprehensive pacifist idea rests, at least partially, in the inner deontological ground in which holiness of life excludes conditions that could legitimate its exposure to danger. Political philosophy, for instance, points out that humanitarian opposition to war destruction rests on both ethical and moral postulates such as a general objection to taking human life or the use of devastating force.

Right to living and other human natural entitlements, indeed refer to a moral law disapproval of violence irrespective of intention, and that in deontological doctrine reaffirms untouchability of human rights (Dower 2009, 182). Deontology points to behavior, awareness of doing and perception of the outcome. The answer to what the devotee would do if asked to confront the imminent danger of death still seems to be marked by distinguishable controversies, apart from being open to a variety of interpretations. In discourses on moral principles deontological pacifist finds war everywhere and always impermissible as no circumstances exist fictional or genuine justifying launching armed conflict that in its nature would be the lesser immorality (Tiechman 1986, 110).

4. CONSEQUENTIALIST PACIFISM

The relation between peace and conflict to a great extent forms the basis of consequentialist thinking. Killing and destruction of property is understood as persuasive ethical and also an economic argument against war. In rule utilitarianism, an action generating the good is justifiable only within the frame of standards all follow. It consequently excludes dissecting whether what individually happens creates happiness putting an emphasis on the wider image. Virtuous conduct represents only an established course of action whose objective should be making the most of the possible, and the maximizing is what justifies the correctness of acting. Indeed the core of rule-utilitarian approach reflects in determining the formulation of directions that embrace functional principles such as action choice the community benefits from. Its inflexible branch points out untouchability of rules and the need that they must always be obeyed while the so-called weak utilitarians stress the significance of the universal acceptability of the dictum excluding, however, indefinite adherence.

On the other hand, the separate utilitarian theory claims action is justifiable only if in the wake of it no morally wrong consequences come into being. In act utilitarianism, the outcome represents one of the central points. It intrinsically rests on, like all other utilitarian branches, the principle of utility that is properly formulated in Bentham's axiom *it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong* (Bentham 1823, vi). Having in mind Bentham's axiom worth noting is the consequentialist attitude of morality that in its inner transforms into overall generating of right end results. Rectitude understood as the view of extending peace, stability, and societal prosperity, alleviating hardship, view of spreading liberty and view of advancing conditions of a living being survival mutually determine the meaning of consequentialism. Although these views might disagree on the interior sequence of consequences, they certainly do not deny their² significance acknowledging so the right of consequentialism

² Significance of consequences.

to exist. What imposes itself is that Bentham's utilitarianism is only a form of consequentialism, unlike non-consequentialist Kant's and Lock's theories. In rule utilitarianism commitment should not be to bringing about the most favorable sequels, as it is very hard to foretell these; the best possible solution is a practice that might generate upshots suitable to all.

The rule in every sense prohibits war regardless of a potentially more favorable result, as it (war) ignores ethics of such a principle. It is where the adherents of consequentialist objection to armed conflict violence find vindication while suggesting that evading everything which leads to killing deserves to be an ethical criterion, as a negation of such an approach inevitably produces more suffering. Richard Norman, in his article 'Consequentialist Justifications', describes war as almost malignant tissue in material means and physical and psychological survival. He is skeptical whether the gain that war potentially produces is sufficiently powerful to overcome affliction as the inevitability of crucifying human body and spirit impose a conviction that waging war and the possible long-term benefits it may lead to are the risks which certainly cannot justify themselves (Norman 1991, 176-177).

Consequentialists are naturally cautious when reflecting on the aftermath of conflict or how passiveness might prove irritating for others. On the one end, consequentialist theory suggests that people cannot determine whether war and violence are defensible but certainly exclude them as what in any circumstances is capable of generating not the greatest but any good. Technological development is what makes conflict peculiarly armed clash inadmissible.

5. CONTINGENT PACIFISM AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

The moral law provokes deeper reflection as followers of contingent pacifism could acquiesce to the theoretical justification of war, especially if it means withstanding the assault. The only scenario they might be able to understand is that of 'justifiable tactics' being used when a conflict of this sort breaks out. The permissible strategy allows no desecration of human rights and therefore principles of opposing violence in the idea are more contingent than those under absolutist judgment. By the same token, Martin Ceadel, while clarifying a more cautious attitude, points to adherents who affirm this conception. They admit war can be defended only in theory but not in praxis. The approach justifies a low-cost clash, which is hardly convincing term, pointing out that even the favorable but unlikely conditions cannot negatively influence the relatively certain principle that all armed conflicts should be unconditionally opposed (Ceadel 1989, 146). A distinguishing trait of rejection of taking life forms the basis of contingent pacifists' renouncing war. Its core has undoubtedly developed into what ethically eliminates violence and what inescapably follows from it. In the last half century in theoretical discourses emerged proponents of principled objection to brutality on the continuum from war to individual physical bestiality. Some philosophical directions accept the view that these proponents³ do not uphold principled objection but suggest all war violence is contrary to human conscience and reasoning.

³ Contingent pacifists.

Followers of contingent disapproval are not unconditionally against war. In a wider sense, it is a determination of a modifying opposition irrespective of its exceptions potentially embracing self-defense or civil war. Real occurrences that in other circumstances could be different from what they are, effecting a change in a conviction on war violence as indefensible is what makes contingent pacifism 'contingent'. If the setting that brought about the materializations did not come into being then, certainly, an adherer of the conditional objection would not unavoidably reject the war. It is not inconceivable for the followers of the opposing violence to accept the exemplary hypothetical case of a just war and be at the same time a proponent of contingent objection on the condition that the theoretical context remains theoretical.

The conviction is to an extent due to contingent pacifism having little if anything in common with the absolute opposition (Crookston 2005, 73-84). In the century that has just passed Gandhi and Martin Luther King were and are known to have signposted the road to extensive non-violent transformation. The innermost part of Gandhi's teaching upholds nonviolent response to destruction. An individual bearing no malice causes no bodily injuries and calmly accepts evil others impose. Nonviolence in Gandhi's interpretation is a complete innocence and lack of animosity. In other words, it is respecting every form of life, one of the perfection states and the objective humanity should be moving to. Nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence as forgiveness is more courageous than punishment. Condonation adorns a fighter who, although having the power to punish, refrains from using it. Indeed, proponents of contingent pacifism refer to the Scriptures writings calling for what primarily features pacifist thought when Son of God asking for mercy for His crucifiers says "...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..." (Luke 23:34). Mahatma's follower Vinoba Bhave, in the early second half of the 20th century, preached non-violent change in society; his ambition, in the beginning, was talking those who had more land into giving one-sixth of their tillable fields to the poor.

In the United States around the same time, Martin Luther King Jr, influenced by Gandhian ideology, started his struggle in defense of civil rights. One of the first events in which he played the notable role was the boycott sparked by Rosa Parks who was asked to get up out of her seat on the bus just because she was black and she did not want to. In the end, the judicial authorities confirmed the boycotters who dissented from established policy and decided that segregation was unconstitutional were correct (Brock and Young 1999, 232) bearing so witness on pacifism as a practical philosophy. Religiosity has often permeated Gandhian objection to violence, and his writings. He refers to who called him a saint wandering about politics while he saw himself as a politician doing the best to become a saint (Cortright 2009, 21). The only way to reach hope were truth and nonviolence that Gandhi understood win when everything else fails and he, whether in minority or majority, has to follow God's visible road (Brown 1977, 16). Gandhi further writes "I saw that I was utterly defeated and humbled. But defeat cannot dishearten me. It can only chasten me. My faith in my creed stands immovable. I know that God will guide me. The truth is superior to man's wisdom."⁴ Religious belief for Gandhi was a fundamental nature of an all-incorporating teaching enabling in its inner self-extirpation

⁴ Gandhi Sevaghram Ashram (2015) *Gandhi Literature: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume Twenty-eight: (May 22, 1924 – Aug. 15 1924), pp. 252

of human suffering bestiality leads to. Apart from being in pain, imperfection and weakness feature humans too and that in some conditions may result in non-availability of nonviolent alternative and impose having to opt for what might look like the second best resolution.

Although pacifism with the absolute inner neither Gandhian (Cortright 2009, 27) nor King Jr (Allman 2008, 64) approach materialize in a form significantly dissenting from moderate deontology. Hence the need to note both similarities and differences of heterogeneous restrictions and define action complying with as many as possible moral limitations. In praxis, the distinguishable disaccord between absolute and moderate deontological forms in Gandhian reflection refers to disrupting the continuity of limitation of nonviolence which, although in forgivable setting, still requires a confession that violation of the constraint is fallible.

6. ARGUMENTS AGAINST PACIFISM

Opposing the pacifist doctrine, critics point out the notion is an illusion that only the human rights movement in the States striving for racial equality see as non-violent. Although it is true that King Jr defended abstaining from abusing physical force, many used various strategies while disseminating civil rights culture. To some degree, King's noteworthy achievement might have casually connected with political surroundings that, at the time, were promising for an approach renouncing violence. Portraying black people as occasionally destructive was why by behaving quite contrarily to it and being peaceful, they influenced a social response which was becoming increasingly appreciative of humanity.

Other than that, opponents of pacifism stress the circumstances that could justify violence. They [opponents] arguing against the theory claim that stabilization of the pacifist integrity within societal norms failed to give evidence of any benefits pacifism produced (Zampaglione 1967, 10). Notable is a justification of this attitude which those denying pacifism stand up for when saying that the disciples support the theory solely due to their being apprehensive of what violence might generate. A stronger argument against the doctrine accuses pacifists of being devoted only to their irrational thoughts, interests and of ignoring the very foundations of decency. When it comes to the innocent's right to life decency of the objection becomes irrelevant as "Pacifism, as a method of avoiding the moral guilt of violence, is selfish. The pacifist claims, as a primary duty, the right of saving his own skin."⁵

6.1. Conscientious objection and the deficiencies

The social transformation was a characteristic of pacifism in the last century, and since the late 1910s, intellectual reflection concentrated more on ineffectuality of war than on scriptural teaching. In addition, some change-oriented social movements in pursuit of reformulation of state practice have found anchorage in pacifism. More importantly, the consequence of mandatory serving in the army in the twentieth century brought about moral (conscientious) non-acceptance of such a liability. Pacifism in that

⁵ Caudwell, C. (1960) *Pacifism and Violence: A Study in Bourgeois Ethics*, Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/caudwell/1935/pacifism-violence.htm>, Accessed on 17th December 2016

form seems to be similar or even identical to what mainly determines structural characteristics of absolutist thought and it, above all, encompasses rejection of physical assault and taking life.

It is partially attributable to the re-affirming inner voice which is uncompromisingly against killing irrespective of circumstances. 'Complete elimination' is only one side of the Christian answer to whether armed violence or war is at all acceptable. However, all (including pacifists whose approach of rejecting responsibility is well known) avail of social aid that often armed forces provide. Another objection questions pacifists' patriotism, as they not only leave defending of the country to others but by doing so help adversaries. What occasionally happens is criticizing the very pacifism in a broader sense rather than challenging the core of its conception as a deviation from pragmatic norms composes partly the privileged defending of renouncing war. The remonstrance often directs at those who are not vulnerable; their justifying non-violence, solely due to the social position, refers to a means of increasing the repression of lower social classes who oppose force in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms. Assuming that war is an issue mainly controlled or directed by the state authority, it is at the same time an affair of and has to do with all who live within its boundaries. War cannot be, in any setting, the problem of only a smaller or larger group of militant policy advocates or, on the other side, those conscientiously denying it as a means of negotiating obstacles. Therefore, moral and every other obligation to decide whether armed conflict is right or wrong belongs to all the state's subjects.

Equally important is unavoidable choice which an individual has to make when facing a question of whether to approve or disagree with the way the political establishment have acted. It refers to ethical convictions and actions that incontestably point to what substantially burdens conscientious objection. In other words, it reflects the conflict between personal scruple and social norms requesting maintaining the solid military component (Moroi 2008, 29). Termination of military-related services certainly has a negative impact on the more vulnerable and of course on subjects that are not in the immediate danger. For that reason, conscientious objectors cannot be at the forefront, which could entitle them to search for the abolition of conscription.

7. IN DEFENCE OF THE THEORY

Disagreeing with the teaching of conscientious objection, thinkers, known for pledging their work to ethical principles, have adopted values of pacifist approach, which essentially defends peace and the inviolability of life. They see intellectual conviction as being loyal to societal criteria and naturally ingrained in feeling of belonging to the community. The reasoning of pacifism opponents, to a great extent, is not a match for reliable interpretation of real world occurrences, and very often arguments are not at the disposal of skeptics who doubt the authenticity of pacifism. It is, therefore, important to show that respecting philosophical thought is something the theory deserves, or that opponents' arguments are frequently dubious. Pacifism is distinguishable due to its pragmatic awareness of what violence could produce. It became, at least morally, a more powerful mechanism than instruments of authority in the form of compulsion, coercion or any other means of oppression. Its energy and motive strength are conspicuous all around

the world, showing their values to peoples in the struggle for a better future. What reflected massive dissatisfaction with violence, destruction, killing, and suffering were protests millions of people staged across the world against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Pointing to pacifism power David Cortright writes

“On February 15, 2003 in hundreds of cities across the world an estimated 10 million people demonstrated against war on Iraq. It was the largest single day of anti-war protest in human history. More than a million people jammed the center of London, and huge throngs marched in Rome, Barcelona, Berlin, Madrid, Paris, Sydney, and hundreds of other cities. An estimated 400 000 braved bitter cold in New York, and tens of thousands demonstrated in San Francisco. The people of the globe spoke out as never before in one unified voice against the planned invasion of Iraq. ‘The world says no to war,’ was the slogan and the reality. The February 15 demonstrations were the high point of a vast and unprecedented mobilization of public opposition to war” (Cortright 2008, 201).

On the other hand, not all in the protests were prone-to-pacifism participants. The anti-war groups and movements pointed to the implausibility of the campaign the elites defended. Anti-globalists excluded the violation of UN resolutions as the cause of war but believed other reasons stood behind it. Platforms of peace organizations range from those of principled opposition to temporary coalitions objecting a particular conflict that is, for instance, the Declaration of Peace, the grassroots campaign that called for the end of war destruction in the Gulf. Factors influencing intensity and visibility of the protests are certainly the power of the organizational scheme, technological and means of transferring information and lasting of the conflict or war in particular. These determinants create form, depth, and uniqueness of the protest having in mind, for instance, that war in the Gulf began with the invasion that extended well into the following years. Technological advancement significantly contributed to developing of anti-war movements generating so the dominance of what was happening in Iraq across the world. In these circumstances only several months of campaigning produced mobilization that in earlier times would take years to reach similar power and that at least partially determines the severity of a protest. Massiveness, persistence, public support, anti-war media were and are the strength of pacifist (and other peaceful movements and groups) opposing violence. Recollecting events of 2003, a participant stressed the utter ignorance of voice of the millions irrespective of how far and how wide it resounded pointing out two million people of the biggest protest in history thought what they called for could not have been ignored but it was.⁶ Even such the strength did not stop what happened in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and other places illustrating so the practical constraint of nonviolence power. It was a dry season of 1930, and Mohandas Gandhi led the peace protest against the British rule prohibiting Indians to collect or sell salt. The peaceful protesters Gandhi lead walked more than 200 miles to the Arabian Sea drawing so the world's attention. The Kent State demonstrations were organized in 1970 with the objective of ending the Cambodia invasion and the Vietnam war. These were not the only campaigns as many more have taken place. Non-violence certainly has its place in international relations; it is notable for its intense questioning of deeply-rooted practice that paved the way for

⁶ Fishwick (2017) “‘We Were Ignored’: Anti-war Protesters Remember the Iraq War Marches,” *The Guardian*, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/08/we-were-ignored-anti-war-protestors-remember-the-iraq-war-marches>, Accessed on 6th January 2017