

# Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

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Volume 4 | Issue 2

Article 1

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4-1-1987

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J. Kellenberger

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### Recommended Citation

Kellenberger, J. (1987) "A Defense of Pacifism," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil19874219

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol4/iss2/1>

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# A DEFENSE OF PACIFISM

J. Kellenberger

In this article, after providing a preliminary characterization of pacifism, the author first argues that pacifism sensibly articulates with the concepts of force and rights and then critically discusses the just war position, the correctness of which would entail the wrongness of pacifism in a strong construction. The author goes on to argue that a primary moral obligation of justice is sufficient to make it wrong to resort to war and that, moreover, utilitarian ethics, deontological ethics, and the religious ethics of love, on their own separate grounds, arguably should agree on a repudiation of war, but, finally, religious ethics repudiates war best because it sees best the heart of the matter.

Part of the issue of pacifism is a philosophical issue. This part of the issue relates to the conceptual propriety and coherence of pacifism. Part of the issue of pacifism is a moral issue. This part relates to our moral duty regarding war, without a special appeal to religious duty. And part of the issue is a religious issue. This part relates to our religious duty and to the implications of regarding human beings in a religious light. In what follows, after providing a preliminary characterization of pacifism as I understand it, I shall argue, against certain philosophical critics of pacifism, that pacifism is quite coherent and sensibly articulates with the concepts of force and rights. I shall then discuss the just war position, the correctness of which would entail the wrongness, the moral wrongness, of pacifism in a strong construction. After this I shall go on to argue that a primary moral obligation of justice is sufficient to make it wrong to resort to war. And, moreover, as I shall then try to show, utilitarian ethics, deontological ethics, and the religious ethics of love, on their own separate grounds, arguably should agree on a repudiation of war. However, finally, I shall maintain, religious ethics repudiates war best because it sees best the heart of the matter.

## I

The term “pacifism” has been applied to many different views. Pacifism may be understood as an opposition to war on grounds that range from moral to economic to idiosyncratic and whimsical, or as a moral opposition to current and threatening wars but not necessarily to all warfare, or as the moral repudiation of all violence. Pacifism, as I treat it here, simply put, is a moral repudiation



of all war. Given only the character of war, it repudiates war as presumptively wrong, or, in its strong construction, as unqualifiedly wrong. Thus, as I understand the term, pacifism is a corollary of the moral repudiation of violence in all human relations. It is distinguishable from the moral rejection of violence in one's immediate relations with other persons, however, so that a pacifist can morally reject violence at the state level and then, rightly or wrongly (wrongly, I would argue), not reject it at the personal level. Pacifism, along with the rejection of personal violence, may be regarded as the moral acceptance of nonviolence.<sup>1</sup> In Christianity the acceptance of nonviolence has a long heritage, going back to the first centuries of the Common Era. Origen, Justin Martyr, and Lactantius, among others, regarded Christ's teachings to be at odds with war. Today, while it is not in the mainstream of Christian acceptance, nevertheless many Christian (rightly, as it seems to me) regard war as incompatible with the message of the Gospels. However pacifism is not limited to Christianity. Nor is pacifism limited to the religious.

There are several moral positions often imputed to pacifism that are not implied by pacifism as I understand the view. For one thing pacifism does not entail passivity or the passive acceptance of moral evil. It allows the denunciation of evil and the recognition of the duty to actively oppose injustice when it is encountered. Similarly pacifism does not require an utter renunciation of force. Pacifists without violating their pacifism may for instance forcibly interrupt an assault: the rejection of violence does not require one to refrain from staying the hand of a person who is beating another. Such forceful action remains nonviolent in the relevant sense. Here we encounter a distinction that I take to be crucial for pacifism: the distinction between morally allowable force and violence, which is not morally allowable. About this distinction I shall have much to say later. For the present, however, I shall observe only that some general distinction between violence and allowable force is heeded in common practice and parlance, where in certain contexts "violence" has a negative connotation, while "force" does not. (Police violence, as opposed to forceful action by the police.) Admittedly the line between violent action and allowable forceful action is in practice hard to draw at times, but at other times I think it is abundantly clear where it lies. That there is such a distinction is, for Christian pacifists, shown by Jesus' compatibly preaching peace in the Sermon on the Mount and driving the money changers from the temple.

## II

Pacifism has always had its critics. No state that regards itself as having the right to declare war and to require its citizens to fight on its behalf can concede the truth or rightness of pacifism. All those who believe that at least some of

the wars engaged in by their respective countries were just wars properly undertaken must reject pacifism in its strong construction. Here, in this section, I want to consider three distinct reasons for rejecting pacifism. Each, I shall try to show, fails.

One reason that pacifism has been rejected is that it is held to be internally confused or incoherent. Jan Narveson in his "Pacifism: a Philosophical Analysis"<sup>2</sup> develops and argues for this reason. Narveson construes pacifism as the view that "it is morally wrong to use force to resist, punish, or prevent violence."<sup>3</sup> But, he argues, "in saying that violence is wrong, one is at the same time saying that people have a right to its prevention, by force if necessary. Whether and to what extent it may be necessary is a question of fact, but, since it is a question of fact only, the moral right to use force on some possible occasions is established."<sup>4</sup> And, he maintains, the amount of force justified by the right to the prevention of violence is whatever is necessary to prevent an infringement of that right, as with rights generally. I have two comments to make on Narveson's argument. First, I think that he misconstrues both pacifism and nonviolence, or at least construes them in a way that open them to objections by a conceptual rendering more alive to their strengths. Pacifism and nonviolence, need not be so construed that they utterly rule out one's use of force. It is true, though, that pacifism and nonviolence cannot allow force in every degree and form. This brings me to my second comment on Narveson's argument. Narveson may be correct that if one has a right to something, then it is implied that one may take steps to prevent an infringement of that right. But surely, contrary to Narveson, we are not morally justified in using whatever force is necessary to enforce our rights. If someone steals some item I own—an ordinary pencil, say—he violates one of my rights, but I am not therefore justified in stopping him by taking his life or seriously harming him, even if this is the only way of stopping him open to me. Thus, on the one hand the enforcement of our rights may allow force, but not unlimited force; while on the other hand pacifism and nonviolence, properly understood, though they do not allow unlimited force (which can amount to violence), can and do allow the use of force.

A second criticism of pacifism may be put this way: pacifism destroys the distinction between less objectionable and more objectionable acts in warfare, and it must regard the most horrendous warfare as no worse than the least objectionable. Richard Purtill seems to imply as much without quite saying it when he observes that people in general, unlike pacifists, "always have and perhaps always will make a distinction between Genghis Khan invading the peaceful village to pillage and rape, and the villagers who spring to their own defense."<sup>5</sup> Purtill is of course right that there is a moral distinction here. However pacifists need not deny the distinction. While pacifists see all war as wrong, it does not follow that they must see all war or all engaging in warfare as equally

evil. They need not and do not. They can recognize that a defensive war-action is less heinous than an unprovoked attack. Similarly pacifists can recognize that a barbarous war is more evil than a limited war in which both sides restrain themselves. This is not to say that the limited war is not objectionable morally, only that it is less objectionable. In the same way not all wrongs are equally serious, but all wrongs are wrongs.

Thomas Nagel too suggests this criticism, although he stops short of actually making it. He says, "if hostile, aggressive, or combative treatment of others always violated the condition that they be treated as human beings, it would be *difficult* to make further distinctions on that score *within* the class of hostile actions" (the first emphasis is mine, the second his).<sup>6</sup> Since what is difficult is not impossible, he does allow that pacifists can consistently draw such distinctions, as indeed they can. Thus for pacifism, while all war is wrong, some forms of hostility are worse than other forms. Nor is it especially difficult for the pacifist to draw such distinctions. It is no more difficult for the pacifist than for the nonpacifist, although for the nonpacifist some of the less hostile forms of warfare may be counted as justified, while for the pacifist none will.

Nagel goes on to draw to our attention the distinction between "clean fighting" and "dirty fighting," which, he points out, we apply to encounters ranging from fist fights and political campaigns to philosophical argument. But, he says, "if the concept is general enough to apply to all these matters, it should apply to war—both to the conduct of individual soldiers and to the conduct of nations."<sup>7</sup> Here, however, Nagel is making a stronger claim than earlier. This is especially so given his analysis of *fighting clean* as directing one's hostility or aggression "at its proper object" and *fighting dirty* as directing one's hostility or aggression at an improper object so as to attack the proper object indirectly. An example he gives in another context illustrates his distinction: in warfare firing a machine gun at someone who is throwing hand grenades at one's emplacement would qualify as clean fighting; machine-gunning his wife and children who are nearby would not, even though it would effectively stop him. I think that all would agree that a combatant's family is an improper object of hostility in warfare. But, the pacifist would observe, it does not follow that the soldier is a proper object. True, he is a conventional object, but, contrary to what Nagel implies at one point,<sup>8</sup> what is conventional in combative exchanges may still be morally wrong. While the distinction between clean fighting and dirty fighting may well apply broadly, it—unlike the distinction between wrong and worse—does not apply to a number of confrontations involving human beings. For instance it does not apply to rape, or to rapine. And it is rape, and more clearly rapine, as the pacifist sees it, that are the analogues of war, not a political campaign. In these confrontations there is no "proper object" for the kind of hostility or aggression involved.

Finally in this section let us consider G. E. M. Anscombe's double criticism of pacifism. Pacifism is false, she argues, because it denies the right of rulers to use violence, and it is perverse because of its effects.<sup>9</sup> The reply to the first part of her criticism is by now evident: while pacifism, or the moral repudiation of violence of which it is a corollary, would reject the state's use of violence, neither rejects as wrong the state's use of force, or "coercive power" (Anscombe's term), through its police agencies.<sup>10</sup> The second part of Anscombe's criticism is that pacifism is pernicious because it leads to the killing of innocents. People become corrupted by pacifism and begin to think that "a number of things are wicked which are not." But they cannot refrain from war and so, seeing no way to avoid evil, "they set no limits to it." Behind this criticism there may be the idea that for pacifism all wars are equally evil, and this mistaken notion I have spoken to already. However, whether or not this notion is part of the genesis of Anscombe's criticism, I find the criticism itself to be rather curious. Analogously one might argue that strict morality is perverse because it tempts people to give it up as unattainable and so to indulge themselves. True, people might respond this way to pacifism and its repudiation of war. Also, though, they might respond by not supporting at least some wars.<sup>11</sup>

### III

Beyond whatever criticisms of pacifism there are, there is an entire tradition of moral reflection on war that stands opposed to pacifism in its strong construction, the just war tradition. In this tradition those wars that meet certain necessary and sufficient conditions are deemed to be morally justified. Typically those in this tradition regard many wars as unjust, but they allow that at least some wars may be justified. This way of regarding war is as ancient as pacifism. The tradition reaches back through Aquinas to Augustine, and from Augustine to Cicero. Although the just war view is often regarded as a Catholic view, in fact it is represented in Protestant thought as well.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, if the just war doctrine were true, since some wars could be morally justified, pacifism in its strong construction, which sees all wars as unqualifiedly wrong, would be false.

The criteria for a just war espoused within the tradition vary somewhat and over time have become more stringent. Aquinas' three conditions—that the war be declared by a sovereign, that it have a just cause, and that those who wage it have just intentions<sup>13</sup>—are now thought to be insufficient by those within the just war tradition. For one thing, if "just cause" is broadly construed, these conditions allow as just a war to redress a wrong or to retake territory, however ancient and forgotten the wrong may be and however many times the territory may have changed hands. For another, no limit is set upon the means of war that may be employed. An expanded set of criteria offered by Joseph McKenna

includes four other conditions: that the seriousness of the damage inflicted on the enemy be proportional to the injury suffered, that there be a reasonable hope of winning the war, that war be turned to only as a last resort, and that the means of war that are used themselves be moral.<sup>14</sup> And some in this tradition explicitly limit the scope of a just war to self-defense or defense of another state under attack, as does Richard Purtill.<sup>15</sup>

It is worth observing, I think, that in its recent, demanding forms the just war view may, in practice, agree with pacifism; for it may well be that henceforth no war will meet these conditions. Nevertheless there remains a significant moral difference between the two positions, which, from the pacifist's perspective, arises from the just war theorist's failure to recognize the evil nature of war itself. Moreover, there remain particular difficulties with the just war position regarding its various conditions. To begin with, it may be, as Donald Wells argues, that the conditions of McKenna's expanded set do not sensibly apply to modern war.<sup>16</sup> Wells argues that, given the broad-spectrum weaponry of modern war—e.g., nuclear bombs and biochemical devices—it makes no sense to speak of proportionality, right intention, or limitation. Another problem relates to establishing the conditions named as the proper conditions. Purtill, who advances a set of conditions very like McKenna's, argues that the conditions in his set are in fact used by reasonable persons of good will to justify certain wars and to reject as unjustified other wars. But Purtill is mistaken if he thinks that the bare fact that reasonable people argue over whether a war meets the conditions he names shows that some wars can be just. For, after all, those pacifists who believe that no conditions are sufficient to justify war can consistently argue with just war proponents that, on their own grounds, a particular war (say, the Vietnam War) is not just. And even if it is true that often people argue the justifiability of a particular war under the assumption that it or some war could be justified in certain circumstances, this proves nothing; for at issue is the correctness of the assumption, however conventional it may be.

Additionally there is to my mind a very great problem with the just war doctrine relating to the place that it must give to sovereignty. However the set of conditions for a just war is formulated, one condition is that the war be declared by the sovereign, or, what comes to the same thing, the duly constituted authority. This condition is one of Aquinas' three conditions and it is present in the contemporary formulations of conditions for a just war offered by McKenna and Purtill. The just war view, that is to say, must assume that there is a duly constituted authority that can properly and by right declare war. But why should we think that this is true? I am not calling into question the *de facto* ability of states to arrogate to themselves the power to declare and initiate war. Nor am I here calling into question the right of the state to pass laws relating to internal regulation, which are of course legally, but also morally, binding on its citizens.

If “sovereignty” means only this—the rightful power to govern its citizens—then there is no objection. But “sovereignty” in the sense needed by the just war doctrine includes the right not only to commit and distribute the resources of those within the state, but to affect, indeed destroy, those outside the state. And this is another matter. Certainly we need not concede that states have sovereignty in the second sense if we concede that they have it in the first sense.

Many of course do believe that states have sovereignty in a supreme and absolute sense that includes the right to declare war. However, as Paul Schilpp points out, such a sovereignty is in contradiction with binding international law.<sup>17</sup> Either the relations among nations are subject to international law or nations have absolute sovereignty. But not both. To the extent that we believe there can properly be binding international laws governing nations we must deny the absolute sovereignty of states, and to the extent that we believe there can be a properly binding international law against engaging in war we must deny the right of any state to declare war. And of course if no state has the right to declare war, then no war between states<sup>18</sup> can meet one of the necessary conditions for a just war postulated by the just war theory.

However these are also positive reasons for holding that pacifism is morally correct and that no nation or person ought to engage in war. One reason, which I shall examine in the next section, is that war, by its nature, violates justice.

#### IV

If there were a paramount duty of justice that required us not to engage in warfare, then even though a war might be fought for just ends, still this paramount duty of justice would be overriding. Arguably this is just the case.

Sometimes the rights of individuals come into conflict and then it must be decided which right takes moral precedence, that is, which of them justice requires us to respect in our actions. In such cases we should respect the more basic, if one of the conflicting rights is more basic than the other. That is, in cases where one right derives from another we should respect the more fundamental, underlying right. It is not always clear when this is so. In fact, I will allow, it is rarely clear. When it is clear, though, the more basic right takes moral precedence. Now one right in particular can make a fair claim to be the most basic right, namely the right of persons to be treated as persons. This right, it seems, is *the* underlying right of human beings, upon which the others rest.

Engaging in war, though, is at odds with respecting this basic right of persons. It is so because, while all that this right entails may not be clear, it is clear that it entails not dismissing the humanity or worth of others. It entails not viewing and treating human beings merely as obstacles in our path to be got around or climbed over. War, unlike staying the hand of an assailant, involves viewing

and treating the enemy with hostility and, often, even as being dehumanized. But these ways of viewing and treating other human beings render them as objects, as mere obstacles, and so these ways of viewing and treating others are in themselves a violation of the right of human beings to be treated as persons.

This is so whether or not the war is fought according to rules and efforts are made to keep it “gentlemanly.” Though certain rules are followed and civilities exchanged, even before the fighting begins, but especially after it has begun, the tendency of those engaged is to view the enemy with hostility. Or worse, after the civilities, the enemy may be treated, not with hostility, but as so many dehumanized targets. For combatants this tendency is deepened by the use of weapons that do not require face-to-face contact. For the opposed civilian populations the process is encouraged by each side’s propaganda effort. Perhaps the violation of the right of human beings to be treated as persons is clearest when the enemy is dehumanized and treated as material objects to be obliterated or neutralized. But treating the enemy with utter hostility also violates this right.

Some, however, it must be admitted, would challenge this last claim. For, they would argue, to treat persons with hate is still to treat them as persons. In a sense this is true. Hate of another is a personal attitude, as opposed to one’s attitude toward the chilliness of the day or the grayness of the sky. And being someone’s enemy can be an intensely personal relationship in that the relationship can feed on knowledge about the other’s personality or the history of his actions. However, acting with hate toward another person does not entail respecting any of that person’s rights, let along his or her basic right to be treated as a person. If anything, it is in tension with respecting his or her rights. A related point is that hostility can be personally directed and, as Nagel argues, in warfare we would in a sense treat individuals as persons if we would intentionally direct our hostility toward them as subjects with the intention that they receive it as subjects (as opposed to a dehumanized “bureaucratic operation,” as he puts it).<sup>19</sup> But, again, to direct hostility toward individuals as subjects is not therefore to treat them as persons in the way required by their fundamental right to be treated as persons. True, it is to treat them as knowing, conscious beings, as opposed to material objects or dehumanized targets. But still it is to treat them as mere obstacles in one’s path—conscious, knowing obstacles, though they are regarded to be—whose removal or neutralization is a means to one’s end. It is possible to view persons with contempt, even a kind of hate, and to respect their rights, even their basic right to be treated as persons, let us allow, as when rights are grudgingly respected. But to view and treat others with utter hostility—to allow hostility to be the crystallizing focus of one’s regard for others—is to regard them as mere obstacles or objects who by virtue of being mere obstacles have forfeited their basic right to be treated as persons.

Thus, since war requires treating the enemy as dehumanized or at least with

this kind of overriding hostility, even though a particular war may be fought for just ends (to oppose atrocities, say) of necessity it will violate the underlying right of those designated "the enemy" to be treated as persons. And since war requires us to violate this most basic right of persons it requires us to violate the paramount duty of justice, and so our engaging in war is incompatible with our practice of justice.

If we allow that treating persons in accord with their right to be treated as persons is a primary good, then we can put what we have just seen, or what in practice would be close to it, in utilitarian terms: even if in some instance a war were to maximize other goods, no war can maximize the primary good of treating persons as persons. And this will hold true even for a war against a nation that is oppressing individuals, provided only that the number of those oppressed is less than all those in the nation plus those on the other side, that is, all those who would be designated "the enemy" by one side or the other. If we are not constrained by utilitarian thinking, then we can say that even if, after considering all the goods we were to conclude that some war would maximize goods, it would remain that that war is a truly evil means to a good end; and truly evil means are not justified by good ends. Again, even if there were a *prima facie* duty to engage in certain "just wars," given that war finally always violates justice, it would be overridden. In fact, though, it seems to me that the inevitable opposition between war and the right of human beings to be treated as persons defeats the claim that there is such a *prima facie* duty in the first place. Rather there is at times a *prima facie* duty to use force. However war requires, not force, but violence.

Earlier I said that the line between allowable force and violence may in practice sometimes be hard to draw. Conceptually is the line any clearer? Several ways of understanding the distinction press forward for consideration. One way is to understand violence as wrongful force. Such a construction, while it has the appeal of simplicity, surely counts too much as violence. It would, for instance, count a negligent use of force as violence, and while a negligent use of force is morally deficient the moral deficiency of violence is of a different magnitude. It is not sufficient for the occurrence of police violence that officers, though they ought to have known better, miscalculate the degree of force required to subdue a lawbreaker. Such an instance stands in contrast to the police beating lawbreakers after they are subdued, which clearly is an instance of police violence. Again, violence might be understood as force that violates the rights of individuals. But once more this way of understanding violence construes the category far too broadly. When someone enters my house and steals from me an item of property that he has reason to believe I will never miss he violates one of my rights, but he has not thus far treated me with violence. Both of these ways of understanding the difference between allowable force and violence have the

virtue of not construing the difference as one of mere degree, so that lesser force is morally allowable and greater force is violence. Both, however, leave out of consideration the intentional element of action.

When we use allowable force, I suggest, we continue to have the intention to respect the underlying right of persons to be treated as persons, which is to say that we continue to regard their good; when we resort to violence we do not. When the police through negligent miscalculation use more force than is necessary to subdue a lawbreaker they still may have the intention to respect his right to be treated as a person; and a housebreaker, though he is stealing my property, may not yet have abandoned all thought of my good. This way of understanding the distinction also explains why, say, one person's slapping another may or may not be an act of moral violence. It explains why what ostensibly is an innocent remark, if it is designed to make someone suffer, can be a violent act. And it explains why forcibly stopping one person's assault on another may not be a violent act. In stopping an assault not only is the victim aided but the perpetrator is stopped from doing that which he ought not to do, which hurts him and alienates him from his fellow human beings. In Plato and in Proverbs we find the idea that evil harms the evil doer. If so, consideration of the good of a person can be sufficient to require us to prevent him from doing evil.

Are there as well cases where taking someone's life is not a violent act? Yes, I think so. In certain cases of euthanasia neither force nor violence may be used, as when a person who is terminally ill, in accord with his or her wishes, is not put on a life-support system or is taken off one. Some may wish to go further. Some may say that there are cases where it is a morally nonviolent act forcefully to take the life of another against his or her will, as when someone is threatening the life of an innocent victim, and there is no other way to save the victim's life. This is a difficult case, however, and I can imagine intuitions being divided on it. In such a case the choice is between not acting and so allowing the aggressor to take an innocent life, and taking action that saves the innocent life but only by taking a person's life against that person's will. The important question here, as far as violence is concerned, as I see it, is this: What course of action considers the good of each person equally? And I can imagine different individuals giving different answers to this question.

Let us allow that at times forcefully taking the life of another in such circumstances is not a violent act. How does this affect my claim that war involves, not force, but violence? It leaves the claim intact, I believe. It does because it remains that in war the enemy are viewed with hostility or even as dehumanized, which is *not* to consider their good. Even though in war it may be possible, in principle, to respect some of the rights of the enemy—e.g., their right not to be tortured or gassed—it remains that war by its nature requires each side to treat the other with at least hostility, which is at once not to act out of consideration

for their good and to violate their right to be treated as persons.

There is, then, a close moral and conceptual connection between respecting the basic right of persons to be treated as persons and not treating persons with violence. When we do not consider the good of those affected by our actions we fail to respect their right to be treated as persons and thereby we treat them with violence. However, as Michael Walzer observes, we can surrender our rights if we choose. He argues that while no one can morally be forced to fight or to risk his life, an act of war is legitimate if those who go to war and those who are warred against have by their own act surrendered their rights.<sup>20</sup> But, we might ask, can one surrender one's basic right to be treated as a person? The answer is that one cannot, even though one can surrender other, less basic rights. While I can give up my right of ownership regarding some item of property and so my status as owner of that item, and while I can by surrendering to internment give up my right to liberty for some period of time and so my status as a free individual for that period of time, I cannot give up my right to be treated as a person since that would be tantamount to giving up my status as a person. The right to be treated as a person is, for persons, truly inalienable. Accordingly the requirement of justice that this basic right of persons be respected is unalterably at odds with engaging in war.

But some have detected what they regard as a darkling confusion of obligations within morality itself as it relates to war, which, counter to what I have been maintaining about the requirements of justice, would make both engaging in war and not engaging in war wrong. Nagel, reflecting on war, has suggested that there is an irresolvable moral dilemma between following absolute prohibitions and respecting the obligation to prevent evil.<sup>21</sup> In a wartime situation we may be presented with a dilemma between following the absolute prohibition against murder and preventing a stronger nation from enslaving a weaker nation. In such a case, Nagel suggests, it may be that we cannot escape doing what is wrong. Neither course may be right, even though one must be chosen. The dilemma is acute because it may be, Nagel says, that we find ourselves in such a dilemma through no action of our own—as opposed to the familiar case in which one, through one's own actions, gets into a situation where whatever one does one acts wrongly, as when one makes incompatible promises. In such familiar cases we could have avoided the dilemma, and so the principle that ought implies can is preserved. But in a wartime situation, since events beyond our control may present us with a choice between two evil actions, the principle is overthrown.

Now if Nagel were right, then pacifism as well as the appeal to any basic and overriding right of persons to be treated as persons would be in error. In at least some cases, it could turn out that if we followed the prohibition against war we would be doing what is wrong, just as in violating the principle we would be doing what is wrong although perhaps in neither cases would we be blameworthy.

But I think that Nagel is open to emendation on two counts. First, he has underestimated the role of moral complicity and the failure to act. Contrary to what Nagel suggests, it may be that if we find ourselves faced with the wartime dilemma Nagel cites, we do so because we through our contributory actions, or through our failure to take action, have helped to bring it about. I believe that a strong case can be made for this being so, especially in countries where citizen protest can influence foreign policy. If this is correct, then what Nagel sees as the wartime moral dilemma is one that we have helped to bring about by our own actions or non-action, and so it is more like the familiar kind of moral dilemma for which we are responsible. However, more importantly, Nagel may be wrong, I believe, in seeing the wartime moral situation as an instance of his kind of moral dilemma in the first place. Nagel has, rightly, identified a situation where whichever course of action we pursue we will cause and feel pain and can proceed only with fear and trembling; and then he has, wrongly, concluded that in such situations both courses of action may be wrong. This does not follow. (It would not follow even if in such a situation inevitably we were to *feel* guilty.) Very often when we make a moral choice we make someone unhappy, and often we will bring down upon ourselves condemnation and even wrath. This, though, does not mean that it may be that any course we choose is wrong. It is closer to the truth to say that whatever we might do there will be cause for regret, and that what we ought to do is something that we wish we were not called upon to do. I think that very often in wartime we are faced with just this kind of moral situation. But we need not conclude that in wartime it may be there is no morally right course. Rather we, the pacifist and the nonpacifist, are faced with a hard moral choice. And, if I am right, the grounds, or at least one set of adequate grounds, on which pacifists can base their repudiation of war is a consideration of justice and the basic right of persons to be treated as persons.

## V

However, the moral rejection of war need not rest directly on an appeal to justice. Utilitarian, deontological, and religious ethics must or arguably should condemn war on their own grounds.

Consider utilitarianism. Utilitarians, I think, would agree that war is wrong on their view *if* treating persons as persons is counted as the primary good. But even if we limit utilitarianism to the traditional goods, or even to only happiness, it can be argued that utilitarianism should condemn war. Nagel presents the relevant considerations in his "War and Massacre."<sup>22</sup> In the first place, he points out, utilitarianism justifies *some* limitations on the means of war. In addition, utilitarian considerations militate against a nation's use of devastating weapons even though such use may give a nation a temporary advantage or even lead to

victory; for, given utilitarianism, long-term effects beyond the war's termination, on all those affected, are to be considered. Also it is arguable that, given utilitarianism, war itself should be repudiated; for it is arguable that in every instance the effects of refraining from military action, even if they include allowing atrocities to be committed, will be less bad than the results of resorting to war. It is not surprising that Jeremy Bentham did in fact reject war and in a short work developed a plan for international peace.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as Nagel points out, using a rule-utilitarian rationale we can reason that, even if in a specific instance the results of resorting to war were less bad than the results of not doing so, still consistently following a pacifist policy would in the long run produce the least bad results.

Kant's deontological ethics too can be marshalled in defense of pacifism. True, Kant in *The Metaphysic of Morals* maintained that "free states in the state of nature," as he called them, have a right to wage war, provided they have the consent of their citizens.<sup>24</sup> However, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, where Kant develops his foundational thinking about morality and its basic principles, the case is different, it can be argued. The categorical imperative notoriously is hard to apply, but a fairly clear case can be made that it would be, in Kant's language, "contradictory" (that is, self-defeating), to make nuclear warfare universally permissible. And the same can be said of any prolonged or greatly devastating war.<sup>25</sup> Also it seems that in Kant's full conception of the moral law it implies a positive and general obligation to maintain peace, even though Kant himself did not argue this. A second expression of the moral law is the principle of ends, or the practical imperative, which says: treat others, and yourself, never merely as means, but also as an end. And war—all war—it is arguable, brings us to the point where we treat the enemy merely as means and not as ends.

Finally I would consider religious ethics, that is, the ethics of love that is found in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The ethics of love may not strictly be a *theory* of obligation; yet it does generate obligations in that acting in accordance with love, and out of love, carries implications for internal and external behavior.<sup>26</sup> The ethics of love is closely associated with Christianity, but it is not only Christians who may practice an ethics of love. For Christians, of course, and for some who are not Christians, the guidelines of love are contained in the scriptural accounts of the life and sayings of Jesus. To many it seems quite clear that the life and teachings of Jesus are not compatible with the approval of war. He who gave the Sermon on the Mount and spoke the Beatitudes, in rejecting all violence of thought and action, rejected the mass violence of war. Even if war is not explicitly rejected in the Gospels, it is at odds with love of neighbor, which is the second great commandment. As Coleridge wrote, "War is not forbidden by the Gospel, but only the Passions whence alone come Wars among

men.”<sup>27</sup>

Earlier I noted that in the first centuries of Christianity Jesus’ teachings were regarded as at odds with engaging in war. There are, however, other constructions of the requirements of Christian love. There is within Christian moral reflection the just war tradition, as we have seen. Anscombe, whose thought on war is within this tradition, would say that I have presented a false image of Christianity.<sup>28</sup> It is true that I am inclined to give to the Sermon on the Mount and Christ’s words to Simon Peter when he drew his sword the sort of central importance that she thinks is misguided. She believes that other passages in the New Testament support a nonpacifist reading of the Christian message. She mentions two. One is the passage that contains Christ’s commendation of the centurion (Matthew 8.5-10). But it seems to me that Anscombe’s interpretation of the passage is forced. Contrary to what she implies, it is not the centurion’s military vocation that is commended; it is precisely his faith that Christ has healed his servant. The other passage she mentions is the one in which St. John the Baptist tells soldiers what they ought to do. He says: “Do violence to no man; neither calumniate any man; and be content with your pay.” (Douai-Reims, Luke 3.14)<sup>29</sup> This is the same passage cited by Augustine in Letter 138, where he reasons that if the Christian religion condemned all war St. John would have counseled soldiers to cast away their arms and quit the military.<sup>30</sup> It seems to me noteworthy that St. John does say that soldiers should “do violence to no man.” Does he mean *only* civilians and have in mind extortion directed against civilians? Perhaps, for this may have been a prevalent evil. But if this is his meaning, still we should not conclude that war is condoned, it seems to me, for obviously St. John’s list of items is incomplete: covetousness and adultery are not condoned by their omission. And when we look at other passages in the Gospels, such as John 15.12 and Luke 6.27-29, we find that nonviolence in thought and action is required of those who would follow Christ’s teaching.

There is another problem with Anscombe’s construction of religious ethics. Anscombe, in accord with the Augustinian tradition that she seems to be following, asserts that intentions are all important for the morality of actions. Still, she is rightly suspicious of the idea that interior-act intentions determine rightness, a view she associates with Cartesian psychology. On this view, Anscombe observes, in order to act morally one needs only to “ ‘direct [one’s] attention’ in a suitable way,” which in practice means no more than saying to oneself “what I mean to do is . . . .”<sup>31</sup> And then something innocuous-sounding, like “trying to defend freedom,” is named while one proceeds to do mayhem. For Augustine too it is intention, or inward disposition, and not outward action that determines the rightness of action. Thus, for Augustine, while Christians have a duty to fight in defense of the state when the ruler requires them to, in doing so they are to maintain benevolence in their inmost hearts. If they do they violate

no Christian precept.<sup>32</sup> What Augustine, unlike Anscombe, fails to see is that one's intention or disposition is not something that exists in absolute isolation from one's outward actions. And it seems to me that both Augustine and Anscombe fail to see that certain actions have at least a prima facie incompatibility with right intention or benevolence: realistically, there is no benevolent imposition of starvation conditions, and no torture is benevolently bestowed. It is such a view as that apparently shared by Augustine and Anscombe that Erasmus must have had in mind in the *Praise of Folly* when he ridiculed the idea that love of neighbor is compatible with plunging a sword into him.<sup>33</sup> Nagel in a similar quasi-Augustinian vein calls up the image of "a morally pure conscript who [is] driving a tank towards us with the profoundest regrets and nothing but love in his heart."<sup>34</sup> Driving a tank down on people, even if they are combatants, may be done with regret but not "with nothing but love in [one's] heart." One might as well allow that an SS officer who condoned torture loved his victims if he worked up enough warm emotion. Two points should be noted here. First, intention, or inward disposition, is important for morality, and especially for religious morality. But, second, it must be allowed that intentions are expressed in our actions and so related to action that certain actions conceptually are at odds with certain intentions. Both of these points are heeded by religious pacifism—this second point being important for understanding the distinction between force and violence (a distinction that seems to me to be crucial for pacifism, religious or not) because, if my analysis in Sec. IV above is correct, that distinction is essentially intentional.

What emerges, then, is that a coherent view of a religious ethics of love, and of Christian ethics in particular, is pacifistic. However, as I have tried to show, utilitarian and deontological theories of obligation also repudiate war, or arguably should. Are all three on a par then? No, I think not. It seems to me that religious ethics is basic to the other two, for it sees deeper into the essential reason why war is to be repudiated. I shall try to bring out how it does in the next and concluding section.

## VI

One way to see how religious ethics is more penetrating than utilitarianism is to reflect on how the two consider one nation's threatening another. It seems to me to be a clear principle of morality that if one recognizes the evil of a certain action, then one ought not to threaten to employ that action. State authorities or individuals may threaten to use certain kinds of force consistently with this principle precisely because they regard that force as morally allowable. But if what is threatened is evil and seen to be evil, then the threat itself is evil. Thus, so far as this principle is concerned, it is morally tolerable for the state to threaten

potential lawbreakers with incarceration, but it is not tolerable for the state to threaten to torture their relatives. Now, as we have seen, it is arguable that utilitarianism and religious ethics agree that war is wrong. But it does not follow from this that they agree that threatening war is wrong. And, in fact, for utilitarianism, if the results are good enough, threatening war is justified and even a duty. Neither for an ethics of love nor for Kant's ethics is this so.

Douglas Lackey, who discusses the morality of threatening evil, helps us to identify two distinct reasons why threatening evil is wrong.<sup>35</sup> His concern ultimately is with nuclear deterrence policy, but the case he uses for illustration is the case of a man's defaulting on a debt. In such a case, Lackey observes, one's threatening the man with death in order to get him to pay the debt, even though one has no intention to kill him, is not morally justified by the good results that follow. Lackey gives two possible causes of the wrongness of threatening evil in this case. First, it may be that the inherent evil of the threat makes it wrong. Second, it may be wrong because of the "bad results that would ensue if everyone regularly made threats of this sort." The first cause or reason is important for religious ethics, for the inherent nature of threatening evil puts it at odds with acting out of love for the person threatened and so makes it itself a form of evil. The second is important for Kant's ethics—if we change the "bad results" language to language about the self-defeating nature of such an action if everyone were to do it regularly. Despite Lackey's slight reluctance unequivocally to apply his reasoning to threatening war (where the stakes are higher), we should note that either cause justifies and requires a moral renunciation of threatening war, as well as of war itself. It is a strength of religious ethics and of Kant's ethics over utilitarianism that they are clear on the wrongness of threatening war.

A similar strength comes out if we consider certain conceivable wars that are rigorously confined to strict limitations. Historically wars have not been limited in scope. In warfare generally the weapons of war engulf civilians, and, in modern war, are sometimes aimed at civilians, so that the death of noncombatants is not an unfortunate and inescapable side-effect of conflict, but a deliberate and intentional way of gaining victory. Because wars historically have had this character I was able to argue earlier that utilitarianism should reject every war. Let us allow, though, that there may be possible wars between small disciplined mercenary armies engaged in a limited way, in which noncombatants are not in danger. Such a war, unlike modern total war, would be analogous to gladiatorial contests, which, though to the death, do not threaten the lives of noncombatants. I doubt that there have been such wars, or that today there could be such a war. But that is beside the present point. Given such a war, if the benefits outweighed the harm, utilitarian ethics—or at least act-utilitarian ethics—seems committed to sanctioning the war. For religious ethics, even such a war as that imagined is at odds with the internal and external requirements of love, as they relate both

to the gladiatorial soldiers and to those who would put them into the field. Religious ethics sees clearly the violation of the worth of persons in even such a limited war situation. We should note, however, that here too, as in the cases of threatening war, Kant's ethics has a similar strength. Why religious ethics is more penetrating than deontological ethics we have yet to see.

Both religious ethics and Kant's deontological ethics give a place to the worth or dignity of persons as persons. However Kant's ethical thought is often understood as grounding ethics in respect for the moral law, as opposed to moral respect for persons. Where Kant rejects the moral worth of the inclination to do good and insists upon the priority of a sense of duty he suggests this (as in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*). I do not think that Kant meant that actions done from inclination or sympathy for another person were necessarily lacking in moral worth, only that they would be if a sense of duty were not sufficient to move one in the absence of inclination or sympathy. In his *Lectures on Ethics* Kant says that "a man may act kindly towards his wife from love, but if his inclination has evaporated he ought to do so from obligation."<sup>36</sup> Also we should bear in mind that for Kant both the categorical imperative and the practical imperative, or ends principle, are expressions of the moral law. And the ends principle requires us to treat persons as ends and never merely as means. Moreover it is possible to understand Kant as saying that in "the kingdom of ends" "every human being is worth doing things for, just because and only because he is human."<sup>37</sup>

Yet the ends principle itself, like the categorical imperative, can be followed solely out of respect for the moral law, as opposed to respect for persons as persons. One can regard it as a moral duty to treat persons as persons and never merely as means and unfalteringly do so out of respect for the moral law without respect for any person as a person. Kant's ethics seems to allow one—some would say encourages one—to hold dear the ends principle as a principle and to act for its sake, judiciously respecting the rights of persons while maintaining a mild antipathy toward individuals as persons. For this reason—because Kant's ethics is open to such an understanding—religious ethics *more clearly* sees the underlying personhood of human beings. St. Paul said that if he delivers up his body to be burned but without love he gains nothing (1 Corinthians 13.3). In the religious ethics of love one great commandment is to love others, and if we but respect the right of persons to be treated as persons without the inward disposition of love, we fail to keep that commandment. In this way, within an ethics of love, what is required is not merely respecting the rights of persons, but instead the basic perception and appreciation of the worth of persons as persons, reflected in the response of love, that underlies the right of persons to be treated as persons, reflected in the response of love, that underlies the right of persons to be treated as persons. It is in this sense that a religious ethics of

love sees deeper into the moral basis for a repudiation of war.

It is worth noting, I think, that while religious ethics sees best the underlying reason for the moral rejection of war, a spark of the informing perception of the worth of persons is found not only in Kant's ethics but in utilitarian ethics as well. The perception is evident, of course, even if not primary, in Kant's ethics. But it is also detectable in John Stuart Mill's utilitarian ethics. Mill insisted that each person has a claim or right to happiness and that each person's claim is equal. True, Mill reduced this to the purely utilitarian principle that equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable. However, without this reduction (which Mill adds in a footnote),<sup>38</sup> there is an aspect of universal utilitarianism that recognizes the worth of persons, if only because persons are repositories of happiness.

If I am right there is more than one reason that can be given for the moral repudiation of war. At one level we can argue that if we engage in warfare we violate justice, for war violates the basic right of persons to be treated as persons. At another level, it can be argued that both utilitarianism and deontological ethics should repudiate war on their own grounds. Thus merely acting in accord with justice, or following consistently either utilitarianism or deontological ethics, arguably requires us to repudiate war. However what underlies and gives persons the basic right to be treated as persons is their worth as persons, and, it seems to me, religious ethics with its absolute requirement that we respond to others with love, sees most clearly the deep place that the worth of persons as persons has in ethics.<sup>39</sup> And hence religious ethics sees best the underlying moral basis for pacifism.<sup>40</sup>

*California State University, Northridge*

## NOTES

1. I shall not take up the question of violence in our treatment of sentient creatures that are not human, except to observe that, in my view, a thoroughly consistent acceptance of nonviolence would also reject violence in their treatment.

2. Reprinted in a rewritten and expanded version in James Rachels (ed.), *Moral Problems* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

3. Narveson, "Pacifism: a Philosophical Analysis," *Moral Problems*, p. 408.

4. Narveson, "Pacifism: a Philosophical Analysis," *Moral Problems*, p. 421.

5. Richard L. Purtill, "On the Just War," reprinted in Tom L. Beauchamp (ed.), *Ethics and Public Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 195.

6. Thomas Nagel, "War and Massacre," reprinted in *Ethics and Public Policy*, p.222. Nagel's essay also appears in his *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

7. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 222.
8. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 223.
9. G. E. M. Anscombe, "War and Murder," reprinted in *Moral Problems*, pp. 393-94 and 402.
10. The distinction between the state's use of allowable force and the state's use of violence is, like the general distinction between allowable force and violence, in concrete situations sometimes easy and sometimes very hard to draw. However I think that in general the intentional use of force beyond what is necessary to subdue a fugitive is one thing that would qualify as police violence.
11. While some nonpacifists, like Anscombe, find pacifism to be morally repugnant, it is not unheard of for nonpacifists to respect the moral conscience of pacifism. For an instance of this see Karl Shapiro's poem "The Conscientious Objector," which he wrote from the perspective of his own service in the U. S. Army.
12. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli allowed that there are just wars, as, more recently, does Paul Ramsey in his *The Just War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).
13. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 40, a. 1.
14. Joseph C. McKenna, "Ethics and War: a Catholic View," reprinted in *Moral Problems* as "The Just War," pp. 382-92.
15. Purtil, "On the Just War," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p.19.
16. Donald Wells, "How Much Can 'The Just War' Justify?" reprinted in *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 188.
17. Paul Arthur Schilpp, "National Sovereignty and International Anarchy," *The Critique of War*, ed. Robert Ginsberg (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1969), pp. 152-61.
18. Just as it may be questioned whether states have a right-of-sovereignty to declare and engage in war, so it may be questioned whether they have a right-of-sovereignty to empower a body consisting of member states, like the United Nations, to resort to war on their behalf. The fact that such wars may be called "police actions" or "international enforcement" does not change their character. Michael Walzer in *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 41, refers to the United Nations' avoidance of the word "war," but he is making a different point.
19. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 224.
20. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 135.
21. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, pp. 229-30.
22. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 215.
23. Jeremy Bentham, *Plan for an Universal and Perpetual Peace*.
24. *The Metaphysic of Morals*, Pt. I, "The Law of Nations."
25. Barrow Dunham in "The Categorical Imperative and the Cold War," *The Critique of War*, p. 196, suggests that the Cold War is a breach of the categorical imperative.
26. A point not lost on Kant. See *The Metaphysic of Morals*, Pt. II, "Duties of Love to Other Men."
27. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Notes Theological, Political and Miscellaneous*, ed. Derment Coleridge (London: Edward Moxon, 1853), p. 222.
28. Anscombe, "War and Murder," *Moral Problems*, pp. 399-401.
29. The SRV is a little different. It says: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation." Anscombe, who is a Catholic, would presumably prefer the Douai-Reims version.
30. Letter 138, II, 15.

31. Anscombe, "War and Murder," *Moral Problems*, p. 404.
32. Letter 138, II, 13.
33. *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 181.
34. Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 227.
35. Douglas Lackey, "Ethics and Nuclear Deterrence," *Moral Problems*, p. 438.
36. "Duties towards Others," *Lectures on Ethics*.
37. Dunham, "The Categorical Imperative and the Cold War," *The Critique of War*, p. 194.
38. J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, n. 4 to chap. V, "On the Connection between Justice and Utility."
39. It is true that not all religious thinkers give a *primary* place in religious ethics to the worth of persons as persons. Some emphasize covenant-fidelity and regard respect, or love, for persons as derivative. Paul Ramsey takes this approach according to Donald Evans, who differs with Ramsey. See Donald Evans, *Faith, Authenticity and Morality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 193-95. Evans, I of course think, has the better part. For one thing, if covenant-fidelity alone were primary and respect and love for persons were derivative, then we would find within religious ethics the same kind of rift that we found in Kant's ethics and one could treat persons as persons for the sake of covenant-fidelity.
40. I am grateful to Narayan Champawat, William Forthman, William Tomlinson, Silvio Nardoni, Wanda Teays, and Allyn Axelton for their comments in a discussion of this paper, and I owe special thanks to Alyce Vrolyk and Lance Stell for their extensive comments on an earlier draft.