

Introduction

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The papers on pacifism in this issue of *Philosophia* were presented at an international conference in Belgrade in June 2012. Out of the twenty papers presented, Asa Kasher, Editor in Chief of *Philosophia*, and the two of us have chosen seven to be published, after due double-blind peer review, in *Philosophia*.

The Belgrade conference was the 12th installment of ILECS (International Law and Ethics Conference Series). It was not conceived as a call for global war, as some might have feared—conferences on pacifism have at times been a sign of looming world wars—but arose from a need to see how the idea fits within the context of rethinking the issues of war and increased violence and hypocrisy we witness in the world today. Indeed, in times when the concept of war is facing radical changes, from attempts at its criminalization, its instrumentalization in humanitarian interventions, its usage in “asymmetric” and anti-terrorist warfare, to the ever growing privatization of warfare—pacifism might seem to be quite obsolete and redundant. Could it mean that pacifism is not an issue anymore? Or, on the contrary, is it one of those issues which are always with us, looming from the mist of unstable reality as a promise, or false promise, or as a refuge or escape? Could it even be a long awaited, even final, response to our ever increased sensitivity to many injustices around us, offering a solution which should guard us from pitfalls and predicaments of our uncertain and non-transparent future, full of threatening conflicts?

Two points mentioned here seem to be of special interest: stability and transparency of the future. Those are precisely what peace should accomplish: the control of our future time. Are pacifists concerned with peace? Putting aside the problem of conflation of meanings of several close issues like civil disobedience, non-violent resistance, conflict resolution activism, or vigilance on civil rights, the problem with pacifism always seemed to be the direction of their interest. Namely, pacifism seems to be anti-political, interested not in peace as valid and legitimate control of future time but in avoiding certain specific means (as morally wrong and forbidden), i. e. use of power and violence, to attain that state of affairs, the peace. In this sense they violate, or rather

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distort, the Kantian Principle of Rational Willing (that willing an end necessarily means willing the sole means for that end). It seems as if they confuse wishing and willing, which might sound Manichean in not allowing interference of good and bad causes (and consequences).

However, there are now new, more promising, kinds of pacifism, labeled “War Pacifism” and “Contingent Pacifism”. These may, as Narveson would say, be “tactical,” but also closer to the moral requirements of real life, especially life in extreme circumstances. This new pacifism certainly has its appeal. It remains to be seen if it will be relevant as well. In either case, in the situation where vast amounts of literature on war and its many variations are produced, pacifism certainly deserves to be revisited and explored in much more detail than we are used to do. If not for any other reason than to produce an effort to refocus our attention, theoretically and hopefully also practically, from our righteous anger to at least some attempt towards salvation of our souls, and possibly forgiving as well. The strategy towards peace in this might be rather indirect, and still seem to be tactical in the Narvesonian sense; but it is also laden with some probability that growing sensitivity to the biggest injustices in our ever more interconnected and interdependent world might lead to diminishing, or at least more humane articulation of wars and cardinal violence in times ahead of us.