

[Published in: Georg Meggle (ed), *Ethics of Humanitarian Interventions*. (Frankfurt/Lancaster: Ontos Verlag, 2004), pp. 57–60].

Reconstructing Pacifism

Different Ways of Looking at Reality

Olaf L. Müller (Humboldt University, Berlin)

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ABSTRACT. Pacifists and their opponents disagree not only about moral questions, but rather often about factual questions as well—as seen when looking at the controversy surrounding the crisis in Kosovo. According to my reconstruction of pacifism, this is not surprising since the pacifist, legitimately, looks at the facts *in the light of her system of value*. Her opponent, in turn, looks at the facts in the light of an *alternative* value system, and the quarrel between the two parties about supposedly descriptive matters never ceases, as there is no objective reality about the war in question that could settle the issue.

In my view, the pacifist's value-laden way of looking at reality implicitly obeys three epistemic imperatives. First, the *Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature* ("Resist demonizing the other side; always try to understand the case from the other point of view"). Second, the *Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives* ("Always search for non-violent alternatives to military action"). Third, the *Epistemic Imperative concerning Uncontrolled Escalation* ("Hone your senses to the uncontrolled, irreversible side effects of military action, particularly to the danger of military escalation leading to another world war"). Objective reality has no way of telling us how far we should go in following these imperatives. Rather, *we* have to make the decision about how far we are going to take them *ourselves*. In this way, the pacifist's epistemic imperatives are comparable to Kant's regulative principles.

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Reconstructing Pacifism

Different Ways of Looking at Reality¹

In this paper I aim to offer a reasonable reconstruction of pacifism. I shall neither attempt to *prove* pacifism, nor do I wish to provide arguments capable of convincing every reasonable person of pacifism and its merits. My aim is less ambitious. I wish to spell out a respectable version of pacifism, that is to say, a version of pacifism which is no longer vulnerable to the well-known suspicions of being hysterical, sentimental or blind to the hard facts.²

If I can prove my point that there is in fact a more attractive pacifist position than the positions usually associated with this title then this would be of great interest not only to declared pacifists but to their opponents as well. My result might even go so far as to help the pacifist's opponent see more clearly what position she has to make her case against. In short, my paper aims at contributing towards a better understanding of the very issue at stake between the pacifist and her opponent.

The main idea behind my reconstruction of pacifism stems from the metaethical insight that factual claims are often impossible to disentangle from claims about values.³ I shall apply this insight to what appear to be factual disagreements about war; and I shall use the NATO intervention in Kosovo as my model example. If I am right, the pacifist has a specific way of looking at situations involving war. She looks at such situations *in the*

¹ This paper includes in part considerations from my talk "Kosovo and Consequentialism, *or* How to Evaluate Humanitarian Interventions from a Non-Consequentialist Perspective", presented at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF), Bielefeld (Germany), on January 11th, 2002. (More considerations will follow under the title "Was wissen Sie über Kosovo? – Fallstudie über Pazifismus, Propaganda und die Verquickung von Fakten mit Werten" [WWSü]). I am grateful to Rüdiger Bittner, Dagmar Borchers, Uwe Czaniera, Anthony Ellis, Johan Galtung, Eckard Jantzen, Martina Herrmann, Dieter Lutz, Georg Meggle, Stephan Schlothfeldt, Thomas Schmidt, Matthias Schote, Rudolf Schüssler, Bojan Todosijevic, Sibylle Tönnies, Sylwia Trzaska, and Truls Wyller for criticism, discussion, and encouragement. Many thanks to Cynthia Myers, who helped me to improve the English of the text.

² Johan Galtung has suggested that I drop the word "pacifism" in order to free the debate from unhappy ideological associations. I am not sure, however, whether the word is really completely lost for serious discussion. There are indications that high-ranking politicians want to benefit from the word: Even some proponents of war try to claim that their position is truly pacifist. The most bizarre attempt of that sort was published by Ludger Volmer, Minister of State in the German Foreign Ministry. Volmer belongs to the Green Party (BUENDNIS 90 / DIE GRUENEN) which used to be pacifist and which still wishes to be *called* so, come what may. See Volmer [WBvP].

³ See Williams [ELoP]:140-141; Murdoch [IoP]:22-23, 42; McDowell [AMRH]:21; Putnam [RTH]:139-141; Putnam [CoFV].

light of her system of value, and in so doing arrives at descriptions differing from those of her opponent (who judges in the light of a competing system of value). None of the resulting descriptions have any legitimate claim to objectivity. And if it is true that the proponents of war are neither more nor less realistic than their pacifist opponents, then the claim that the pacifist way of looking at things is an objective illusion loses credence. In my view, it is impossible to overcome the limits of objectivity when describing conflicts such as the one in Kosovo. I find nothing alarming about this. Rather, I believe that we should learn to restrain our habitual appeal to objectivity and lead our moral lives in the face of value-laden facts. Whether this is easier for the pacifist or easier for her opponent, I shall not try to decide.

I. Moral Disapproval of War: Some Varieties

Let us start by taking a look at different forms of pacifism that immediately appear ill-founded. First, there is the position fairly popular in post-war Germany (which of course is not to say that this position has not been tempting to people from other countries and epochs as well):

Elitist Pacifism—for moral reasons *we* shall abstain from war; but alas, there have to be wars, which are, fortunately, carried out by others.

It should be obvious that this is quite a dubious position. It makes a moral difference between its proponents and all others—without providing any reason for making such a difference. Elitist Pacifism cannot be universalized, and thus, cannot claim to be a moral position at all.

If we extend the pacifist ban on war such that it addresses everyone, not only the pacifist elite, we obtain a position far stronger than Elitist Pacifism:

Pacifist Rigorism—participation in any war is, *eo ipso*, morally wrong.

Apparently Pacifist Rigorism forbids too much. It runs counter to a conviction which most of us do not want to give up. It runs counter to the conviction that there was at least one war in history which was morally justified: the Allied war against Nazi Germany. And even if you do not happen to share this conviction (perhaps because you find that too many lives were sacrificed in the course of that war) you will nevertheless have to find a convincing response to the following thought experiment:

Let us imagine a counterfactual course of events from 1939 to 1945 in which the German side committed the same crimes against humanity as they did in actual history, but in which the Allied military action against Nazi Germany resulted in *far fewer* victims (on both sides). Would you insist that even this hypothetical war is morally wrong—simply because of its being a war? (And would you hold to this verdict even in the limiting case of an Allied military action producing almost no victims while at the same time putting an end to the human catastrophe which Nazi-Germany brought upon Poland, millions of Jews and the rest of Europe?)

You leave the grounds of Pacifist Rigorism as soon as you admit, at least in theory, that morally justified wars are conceivable. Of course, even then it is possible to insist that there are no real cases where the theoretical possibility (of *bellum iustum*) becomes actual. Nevertheless, it does not suffice to simply modify the Pacifist Rigorist's position and call all *actual* warfare morally wrong without further ado. We want to be told what it is that forbids all actual (but not all conceivable) war. This challenge cannot easily be met *tout court*. Rather it must be met by looking at the individual characteristics of actual cases.

If this is right, pacifism can be understood as generalizing about individual, actual cases, paying special tribute to the logical priority of the case's verdict. This version of pacifism is grounded in something like:

Case-by-Case Pacifism—given the facts about the individual case at issue, this or that specific war is morally wrong,

and proceeds from there to generalizations such as:

Pacifism of the Century—due to its actual characteristics, modern war is morally wrong. (But it is theoretically conceivable that even in modern times a just war might occur).

Of course, pacifism can be extended much further so as to cover, for example, all war from ancient times onwards.⁴

⁴ It would go beyond the scope of this discussion to look at the historical details of such options. — Notice that Pacifism of the Century can also be *limited* a little without losing the title of pacifism; for example we could restrict it to all war which was led in the 20th century, with the exception of the war against Hitler's Germany.

It should be noted that our characterization of Case-by-Case Pacifism (and all its various generalizations) is not yet complete. We still have to spell out what it is that makes a given war morally wrong. We have to annex a criterion for an individual war's being unjust. There are several reasonable alternatives; I want to mention only two of them.

Example 1 (from a point of view in which consequentialist and humanitarian elements are essential): A war is morally wrong if it is not intended to put an end to crimes against humanity; and even if it is intended to do this, it is still morally wrong if it risks sacrifices of such and such dimension.

Example 2 (from a utilitarian point of view): An individual war is morally wrong if it is likely to produce greater harm than its peaceable alternatives.

In the case of example 2, you may rightly ask: Is it not a little odd to speak of pacifism if nothing more is involved than, say, good old utilitarianism? (Couldn't the utilitarian be in favor of war now and then?)

If what I have said so far is right then the answer to this is that pacifism can be understood to consist of *two* claims—an evaluative claim and a factual claim. The pacifist's evaluative claim is the very criterion that differentiates between just and unjust war, for example the criterion of utilitarianism. And the pacifist's factual claim states in addition that non-military alternatives produce less harm than the war under consideration (Case-by-Case Pacifism); or than any war from our century (Pacifism of the Century); or than any war from ancient times onwards; or than any actual war whatsoever.⁵

Due to such factual claims, pacifism can no longer be accused of being silent about the facts. Our latest versions of pacifism are committed to certain factual claims; therefore they are vulnerable to empirical criticism and open to rational discussion. We have found options for the pacifist that are less dogmatic, and thus, more attractive than Elitist Pacifism or Pacifist Rigorism.

Unfortunately this achievement has a negative aspect. If you cease to be silent about the facts you can still be blind to the facts: It may well be the case that the factual claims in our latest versions of pacifism turn out to be *false*. And it seems quite risky indeed to be

⁵ And of course, a similar list can be produced by abandoning utilitarianism and appealing to other criteria for an unjust war, such as the one from example 1.

committed to factual claims of the sort I have been quoting. In the next section we'll take a first look at the risks and dangers involved in the pacifist's factual claims. Later (in sections III and IV) we'll see that it has been quite misleading to factorize the pacifist position into an evaluative and a factual component. My point will be that these two supposed components cannot be disentangled—neither in the pacifist's position nor in the position of her opponent.

II. A Problem Concerning Facts: The Case of Kosovo

Let us restrict our attention to Case-by-Case Pacifism. (Should it turn out that the difficulties concerning factual claims are already insuperable when Case-by-Case Pacifism is at issue, then the situation would be far worse for its more ambitious cousins such as Pacifism of the Century). Let us look, for example, at NATO's Kosovo war. Below is a representative factual claim the pacifist must defend when applying Case-by-Case Pacifism to the case of Kosovo:

- (*) If the Western countries had not bombed targets in Serbia and Kosovo, less Albanians and Serbs would have been killed, injured, or have lost their homes.⁶

Question: Is this claim about most recent history true? When you look at the furious disputes which our question has triggered again and again, it seems very hard to imagine an uncontroversial way of answering this question. Why is this so?

The influence of propaganda immediately comes to mind; truth is the first victim of war, says a well-known proverb. The critics of NATO's intervention in Kosovo tended at the time to be quite sensitive to the dangers of Albanian and Western propaganda⁷—but they were easy victims of Serbian propaganda (or so their opponents claimed). And the supporters of the intervention exhibited the same kind of bias, only the other way

⁶ I call this a *representative* claim because different versions of Case-by-Case Pacifism may employ different criteria for unjust war, see examples 1 and 2 from section I. The factual claim in the main text derives from the utilitarian criterion (example 2), but it can be taken to represent similar claims that enter the game when the Case-by-Case Pacifist chooses to ground her position in alternative criteria. Most (if not all) criteria of unjust war embrace at least consequentialist *elements*. (In the utilitarian criterion from example 2, section I, consequentialist considerations do the whole job—whereas in example 1 they do part of the job with additional appeal to humanitarian *intentions*).

⁷ A good example for this are reports about well-organized Albanian lobbyism in the United States (see, e.g., *Die Woche*, April 23rd, 1999, p. 19).

round. (I hasten to add that on both sides there were few people who were *considerably* freer from such biases).

Now you may say that with a little intellectual honesty and discipline it should be possible to free yourself of the biases stemming from your own side's propaganda. Naturally this leads to the proposal of withholding one's judgment concerning all controversial factual issues. Even so, some (undisputed) facts will remain in the game; couldn't we derive our moral verdict on the grounds of these? Sometimes this can be done. It may happen that one party can win the quarrel by appealing to facts which the other side does not dispute.⁸

In the quarrel over Kosovo, however, as in most other actual cases, we would not have come to any decision at all if we had simply suspended judgment on all controversial issues. And this is true not only from an *ex ante* perspective (the perspective we had to take during the process of Western decision making). It is also true from an *ex post* perspective. Although we now know, without a doubt that the greatest Serbian crimes against humanity in Kosovo—atrocities, mass deportations, destruction of whole villages and so forth—were mainly committed *after* the NATO had begun dropping bombs,⁹ we still do not know what would have happened if the NATO had tried peaceable alternatives.

Critics of the war were claiming at the time that the increase in brutality on the Serbian side was a causal consequence of the NATO-intervention, while their opponents were claiming that the actual course of events proved what the Serbian authorities had been planning all along, and also, what "the" Serbian people were willing to do.¹⁰

⁸ In my opinion, this would have been a promising strategy for critics of the 1991 US-war against Iraq, see Müller et al [LSGE].

⁹ Here is what we read in the official report by the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM): "*Further escalation after 24 March 1999*. Summary and arbitrary killing became a generalized phenomenon throughout Kosovo with the beginning of the NATO air campaign" (OSCE (ed) [KKaS]: Chapter 5, p. 4/13; emphasis in the original). "Once the OSCE-KVM left on 20 March 1999 *and in particular after the start of the NATO bombing* of the FRY on 24 March, Serbian police and/or VJ [i.e., the army of Yugoslavia—O.M.], often accompanied by paramilitaries, went from village to village and, in the towns, from area to area threatening and expelling the Kosovo Albanian population" (OSCE (ed) [KKaS]: Chapter 14, p. 1/23; my emphasis).

¹⁰ Which side you take in this quarrel will of course depend on your interpretation of what happened in Kosovo prior to NATO's intervention. I have argued elsewhere that there is no objective way to decide whether the Albanians were, already then, innocent victims of ethnic cleansing or whether they were fighting a civil war, perhaps even a terrorist war, against the Serbs. See Müller [WWSü], sections III - VI.

Who is to decide what is true in this dispute and what not? Is this really a dispute that can be settled empirically, at least in principle? Is it a dispute which allows for scientific consensus? And if so, why are we not able to come to the projected consensus?

I submit that the lack of consensus we are facing here is not only to be blamed on propaganda and lack of knowledge about remote facts. The reasons for the disagreement are deeper. They are connected to the very nature of the contested claim, which (it will be recalled) is the following counterfactual:

- (*) If the Western countries had not bombed targets in Serbia and Kosovo, less Albanians and Serbs would have been killed, injured or have lost their homes.

In the next section, I want to convince you that there is no objective, value-free reality which corresponds to such claims.

III. Counterfactuals

Let us observe first that it has been misleading to say that the pacifist's claim (*) is factual rather than evaluative. The claim is not a claim about the facts; it is a *counterfactual*. Now there has been a lot of philosophical controversy as to the nature (and respectability) of counterfactuals. The radicals in this controversy want to forbid counterfactual idiom from serious speech altogether.¹¹ To follow these radicals, however, would not be a good idea in our context because it is difficult to see how reference to—counterfactual—alternatives of behavior can be avoided within moral discourse and because we certainly do not wish to put an end to our moral enterprise at the present juncture.

In our context it appears more attractive to listen to those who insist that counterfactuals do not have value-free content.¹² We do not have to wonder whether this is true *tout court*—even in the simplest, unsuspecting cases (such as "The bomb would not have exploded, had it been filled completely with cinnamon instead of dynamite"). For us it suffices to see that highly complex counterfactuals such as those which are at issue

¹¹ See, for example, White [AS]:279, 284; Goodman [PoCC]. Skepticism about counterfactual idioms is just a part of skepticism about modality, whose champion was Quine; see, for example, Quine [RM].

¹² See, for example, Putnam [RP]:54-55.

between the pacifist and her opponent, for example claim (*), do not have value-free content.

Let me elaborate. When proponents of the NATO-intervention in Kosovo dissent from the pacifist's counterfactual (*) they often appeal to quite general claims concerning Serbian or human nature. They say for example that the Serbian crimes against humanity, which were committed during the NATO-attacks, reveal an alarming readiness for brutality and cruelty; and they interpret such cruelty as a constant (or anyway, long-term) disposition of the Serbian population.

But it is simply not true that one can establish a certain Serbian readiness for brutality (already present prior to the Western intervention) by looking at the *actual* course of events. To the contrary, those who speak that way about the Serbian people express an interpretation or evaluation. For example, their claim might derive from looking at the actual course of events in the light of Anti-Serbian resentment. (Or should I say: in the *darkness* of Anti-Serbian resentment?)

One does not necessarily have to be prejudiced against the Serbian people to arrive at the belief that in the spring of 1999 the Serbs were prepared for the worst. Anti-Serbian resentment is perhaps the simplest but certainly not the only type of evaluation which could have led the war's proponents to believe in the Serbian readiness for cruelty against the Albanians. Another evaluation to the same effect may be grounded, more generally, in pessimism about human nature. The evaluation I have in mind flatters itself for being realistic, but of course, it cannot be meant to seriously constitute a branch of realism resting on all and only hard, objective facts. Rather it is a negative evaluation of these facts, presumably deriving from a one-sided simplification of human history.¹³ According to a typical nuance of this negative world view, we should expect the worst from our fellow-humans—unless they are controlled by brute force.

I admit that I may be exaggerating in my characterization of the evaluations that I attribute to proponents of the NATO-intervention, in order to explain their dissent from the pacifist's counterfactual (*). Suffice it to say that, for the sake of clarity, I am

¹³ The nexus between simplification and evaluation is a general phenomenon. I say more about this in Müller [WWSü], section VI.

characterizing a position at an extreme end of a certain scale which allows for less extreme positions similar in kind.

It is high time for another *caveat*. True, I have thus far spotted evaluations as one source of what made the war's proponent dissent from the pacifist's counterfactual. But I have been pointing out the impact of values not because I take this to be sufficient for criticizing the proponent of war. To the contrary, I have no objection to the impact of values when discussing counterfactuals such as (*). Only, I insist, we should be aware that we cannot determine the counterfactual's truth value independently of genuine evaluation. If this is right then the opponent of NATO's war in Kosovo must be committed to certain values as well—when she argues *in favor of* her counterfactual:

- (*) If the Western countries had not bombed targets in Serbia and Kosovo, less Albanians and Serbs would have been killed, injured, or have lost their homes.

What values could be behind the pacifist's belief in this counterfactual? One possibility—which I only wish to mention before putting it aside—is Anti-American, Anti-Albanian, or Pro-Serbian prejudice. (I want to put this sort of evaluation aside because it becomes irrelevant as soon as the pacifist not only criticizes military action in the case of Kosovo but also extends her position into something more general, such as Pacifism of the Century).

Another possible type of evaluation, which may be involved in the pacifist's counterfactual (*), is optimism about human nature—the very mirror-image of the bellicose pessimism we sketched a short while ago.

You may ask: How can one earnestly keep an optimistic attitude about human nature when one looks at ethnic conflicts such as the one in Kosovo? My answer: One-sided simplification again (as much as in case of the pessimistic attitude we have ascribed to the pacifist's opponent). In the light of a typical pacifist's simplification, the ethnic conflict in Kosovo appears to be another example of an eruption of violence which *could have been avoided non-violently*. In this view it is, sadly, true that violence leads to still more violence (that much seems a proven fact from the war in Kosovo); but it is also true that the bloody circle of violence and counter-violence can be interrupted—at any moment! (And of course the pacifist can cite *well-chosen* examples from history in favor of her view).

IV. Facts in the Light of Values

Where do we stand? The situation between the pacifist and her opponent seems symmetrical. Neither side can ground the verdict concerning counterfactual (*) on objective, value-free facts. The facts about human nature are too complicated and undecided to make an objective counterfactual possible; only in the light of values will we be able to simplify and decide the matter. As the values are controversial between pacifists and their critics, the counterfactual itself will remain so, too.

Couldn't we leave the facts complicated as they are, avoiding simplification in either direction, pessimist or optimist? Couldn't we just be *realistic*? We might, but we shouldn't. If we tried to look at the facts without evaluation and simplification, we would have to suspend judgment about all (or anyway, nearly all) counterfactuals relevant to our moral decision about the war in question. But typically we cannot suspend our decision. (If we do nothing we have made a decision as well).

Neither can we resort to tossing a coin in order to determine our moral decision about the war. Such procedure might be reasonable when gambling at the stock market, betting or playing poker. It is not a procedure to be recommended when it comes to matters of war and peace. To be sure, decisions about war are risky. But if we delegated decisions so important to an oracle of coins we would damage our self-understanding as moral agents.

Then what? I urge that we learn to lead our moral lives in the presence of value-laden counterfactuals—particularly when we are dealing with war and peace. As soon as we become fully aware of the values that inform our judgments on the relevant counterfactuals, we will be able to decide, consciously, in the light of which values we *want* to look at reality. And it may well be that the values behind the pacifist's counterfactuals are more attractive than the values her opponent appeals to when looking at reality.

You may wonder whether this won't lead us back to where we started; you may ask: When the pacifist decides to opt for values that support counterfactuals such as (*)—won't this be tantamount to a decision in favor of Pacifist Rigorism?

Not quite. The Pacifist Rigorist does not have to look at reality at all when she thinks about war; she can close her eyes and say: *No to war*, period. Such dogmatism does not

seem attractive. And so we developed a position more sensitive to the facts. This was the juncture where Case-by-Case Pacifism and its generalizations (grounded for example in utilitarianism) entered the discussion. But these attempts went too far in the direction of the facts. They became hostage to "facts" that were beyond reach. To put it more perspicuously, the mistake in these attempts was to divide the pacifist position into an evaluative component and an unreachable factual component—two components separated by a canyon.

Now we see that there is a third option for the pacifist. Instead of *overlooking* the facts altogether, and instead of *overloading* her boat with facts totally independent of and, as it were, foreign to her values, she can sponsor an intimate wedding between facts and values: and then take the value-laden children on board. For a change of metaphor we may also say: When the pacifist follows my suggestion she must be in close contact with the facts—although this will be a different kind of contact than the one we know from the empirical sciences. In the sciences we try to look at reality without presupposing values that are controversial¹⁴—the pacifist and her opponent, by contrast, may look at reality in the light of controversial values.

Now looking at reality in the light of controversial values need not only lead to controversial counterfactuals such as claim (*); the phenomenon extends to other sorts of claims, which are also relevant to the moral decision about war. In the next sections I'll provide more examples of this. If I am right we can characterize the way pacifists look at reality by saying that they follow certain epistemic imperatives (which might be compared to Kant's regulative principles).

V. An Epistemic Imperative, and Kant's Principle of Homogeneity

The pacifist's first epistemic imperative is connected to an issue which we have already touched on—the issue of human nature:

Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature—resist against demonizing the other side; always try to understand the case from their point of view.

¹⁴ The emphasis here is on "controversial", not on "values". As we'll see later, even in the sciences we have to presuppose certain values before we can start the scientific enterprise. The point is that these values are not controversial among scientists. See section V, footnote 23.

What does it mean in pacifist practice to follow this imperative? For example, what does it mean in the case of Kosovo? One way to follow the Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature is to try and learn as much as possible about the people and point of view of the country being targeted by military action. In the case of Kosovo this meant being informed about what Serbian citizens and members of their government were thinking about the conflict at the time. The proponents of war did not of course want to invest much effort into this. That explains, for example, why during the conflict there were almost no interviews with Milosevic in the Western mass media.¹⁵

To prevent misunderstandings, the Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature does not suggest that we believe everything Milosevic might have wanted to tell us; but according to the imperative we should have at least *listened* to him. And, still more important, we should have listened to critical Serbian intellectuals.

I think it is obvious that those who tried all this do not deserve to be called "blind to the facts". (If anyone is to be charged with this it should be the proponents of NATO's war, who typically did not know much about Serbian interpretations of the conflict).

What would have been the result of taking into account the Serbian point of view? I think one result would have been greater reluctance against hasty simplifications. Obeying her Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature, the pacifist might not have been so easily brought to abandon claims such as these:

It is not yet proven that Milosevic is a monster.

What the Serbian security forces were doing (prior to the NATO-attacks) may still be explained without saying that they are racists full of hatred.

How much evil has to happen before a revision of pacifist claims such as these becomes inevitable? My answer is that it never exactly becomes *inevitable*. It is a matter of personal decision, or evaluation, at what point you feel forced to revise such claims. The pacifist will resist the pressure to revise her claims much more persistently than her opponents. But she does not have to resist at any price; she does not have to resist *crazily*.

¹⁵ There was one exception: The interview of Milosevic to the American TV network CBS on April 22nd, 1999.

A comparison to a piece from Kant's philosophy of science might help to clarify the situation. According to Kant the scientist needs to follow certain epistemic imperatives—imperatives which he calls "regulative principles". These regulative principles play a role in the scientist's system of belief comparable to the one that our Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature plays in the pacifist's system of belief. Both sorts of imperative regulate the direction of further investigation.¹⁶ One of Kant's examples is the Principle of Homogeneity:

Do not rest satisfied with an excessive number of different original genera; always try to give an explanation of the manifold by detecting common *deep structure*.¹⁷

The motivation behind this Kantian principle is that even when the scientist has not yet found a common structure underlying the superficially manifold, it is still rational to orientate further research towards the assumption of such structure. One might say, slightly exaggerating matters, that scientists, who cease to follow Kant's Principle of Homogeneity, give up the scientific enterprise altogether. In the same fashion we might say, again slightly exaggerating, that pacifists, who cease to follow the Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature, give up the pacifist world view.

In Kant's system regulative principles lead to a certain branch of apriori knowledge. For example, in the light of his Principle of Homogeneity, the following judgment holds apriori:

The manifold can be subsumed under higher genera;¹⁸ differences in appearance (for example in chemistry) can be explained by appeal to one and the same sort of underlying structure (for example, to the number of electrons from the outermost orbit).

Kant does not claim to be able to *prove* this.¹⁹ He claims that to *assume* the statement's truth is necessary for the very rationality of the scientific enterprise itself. The statement gives a direction to the scientific enterprise; without it, the scientific enterprise would lose its point. If this is so, the scientist is, by rationality, entitled to hold firm to the

¹⁶ See Kant [CoPR]:532 ff (A 642 ff / B 670 ff), particularly p. 533 (A 644 / B 672).

¹⁷ The first half of my formulation is taken almost literally from Norman Kemp Smith's translation (Kant [CoPR]:543 (A 660 / B 688)); the second half is my attempt to assimilate Kant's principle to modern idiom. As our main point does not concern exegesis proper, I shall not elaborate on arguments in favor of my interpretation.

¹⁸ See Kant [CoPR]:542 (A 657 / B 685).

¹⁹ See Kant [CoPR]:535 (A 647 / B 675).

statement, no matter what recalcitrant experiences may tell against it. The statement is immune to scientific revision, which is just another way of attributing an apriori status to the statement—it is *prior* to the scientific enterprise. (Could it still be wrong? Yes, it could be wrong, should it ever turn out that what we call empirical science is impossible).

If there is a parallel between these pieces from Kant's system and our Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature then we should be able to develop it in two directions.

First, having spotted *apriori judgments* that derive from the scientist's obedience to the Principle of Homogeneity we should expect similar effects from the pacifist's obedience to our Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature. Here too we should expect to find something that we may grant an apriori status. And indeed, those who obey most persistently the

Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature—resist demonizing the other side; always try to understand the case from their point of view,

can be said to hold firm to the following statement come what may:

No human being is a monster, that is to say, morally degenerate through and through; it is always possible to understand a person from inside, as if that person were me.

The pacifist does not recommend sticking to these statements blindly. She recommends opening our eyes when evil seems present—and seeing the human inside.²⁰ Sometimes this is difficult, but it can be done. Call it a "focus imaginarius", if you will.²¹

So much for the first direction in which the parallel between pacifism and the sciences may be extended. The second direction leads to the question of values in the sciences. That we should be able to detect values in the sciences-à-la-Kant becomes plausible in the light of the following reasoning. If the pacifist's epistemic imperative can be seen to represent her system of value, and if her epistemic imperative can be compared to

²⁰ This is a very special example of the perception of *aspects* which Wittgenstein was the first to philosophize about. See [PU]:518-533 (part II, section xi).

²¹ Kant's expression, see [CoPR]:533 (A 644 / B 672).

Kant's epistemic imperative for the scientist, then the latter imperative too has to be seen as representing values.

Which values? My answer is that when Kant's scientist orientates herself towards the Principle of Homogeneity, she does so because she values a certain property of scientific theory—the property of ontological economy: Everything else being equal, she prefers a scientific theory with the smallest number of independent entities and categories. According to contemporary philosophy of science this is just one of the criteria which guide the scientist's choice between competing theories. Other criteria appeal to values such as simplicity, elegance, generality, exactness²²; and, of course, to empirical adequacy.

The value of empirical adequacy is responsible for the special claim to objectivity that the empirical sciences certainly deserve. The other values I mentioned appear more subjective because they seem to reflect, less about how reality exists independently of us, and more about how *we want* to look at reality. If I am not mistaken those values can be compared to certain pacifistic values, which also reflect certain wishes as to how one wants to look at reality.²³

VI. Non-Violent Alternatives

In the preceding section we saw that the pacifist's way of looking at the facts can be understood as obedience to what we have called the Epistemic Imperative concerning

²² Duhem was one of the first philosophers who emphasized how crucial indeed criteria like these are in the development of the sciences. See [ASoP]:216-18 (chapter VI, §10). For a more recent discussion along similar lines, see Quine et al [WoB]:66-80.

²³ The values of simplicity, elegance, generality, exactness, and ontological economy are indispensable for the scientific enterprise; even there, then, the impression of *complete* objectivity rests on an illusion. For the sake of brevity, however, I shall continue to speak of "facts", "reality", "objectivity", and so forth, when I want to refer to respectable results from the sciences. This is less misleading than one might think, because with respect to objectivity there is still an important difference in degree between the scientific and the pacifistic enterprise. The values and imperatives which guide the scientist's scrutiny of reality are much less controversial than their counterparts on the pacifist's side. (Let me add a comment to philosophers who are defending what they call "moral realism": I do not intend here to make a decision against moral realism or against objectivity in ethics; rather my dialectical ambition is directed against those who believe in a strict science/ethics distinction and claim that ethical statements deserve less respect than scientific statements. I submit that the gap concerning objectivity between ethics and the sciences is far less serious than they claim. Since I do not see any reason as to why we should disrespect value-laden factuality, their opponents—including the moral realists—might welcome the observations from my discussion. By the way: Nothing what I

Human Nature. In the present and in the next section, I want to name two more epistemic imperatives that may also be taken to guide the pacifist's investigation of reality. They concern non-violent alternatives and the danger of uncontrolled escalation. (Although I shall not develop the argument, they too can be compared to Kant's regulative principles; they too yield certain judgments apriori). Our subject for the present section is the

Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives—always search for non-violent alternatives to projected military action.

We all know that pacifists tend to assign stronger emphasis than their opponents to the search for non-military alternatives. If they do so with good sense they have to look carefully at reality because in order to design alternative courses of action you need to know a lot. Now, the more desperate the search for non-violent alternatives becomes in a given situation, for example due to the alarming increase of brutality on all sides (as in Kosovo, March 1999), the less realistic that search will appear from a non-pacifist point of view; it will appear illusionary and hopelessly idealistic. But I want to stress that Reality Itself does not tell us when TINA's notorious words are in place:

There Is No (non-military) Alternative.

At what moment we submit ourselves to Margaret Thatcher's slogan depends not only on the objective situation but also on our personal decision, or more accurately, on our system of values. It is therefore legitimate, not a sign of objective illusion, when the pacifist orientates herself towards the Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives, and thus, dissents persistently from TINA's slogan. The slogan does not carry more realism than its pacifist counterpart—it carries different values (and I dare say, not the most attractive ones). What is worse, the slogan's adherent not only shows lack of political fantasy but, often, lack of contact to reality as well: If you do not see any alternative to military action then this might be because your eyes are closed. (Having said this I have not expressed an objective claim either; rather I have exhibited another example of what the pacifist may say, given her system of values).

am claiming in this paper is meant to preclude the very possibility of moral objectivity in areas where we are not concerned with war and peace. About this see my paper [FH]).

In the case of Kosovo, the pacifist's system of values led to a number of concrete proposals for the non-violent de-escalation of an extremely dangerous situation. The most important among these proposals urged the strengthening and improvement of the Kosovo Verification Mission, KVM (that had been sent to the region by OSCE). It will be recalled that the opposite course of action was chosen: The evacuation of the KVM on March 20th, 1999, was a clear sign that the Western countries had decided in favor of war. Although there is some evidence—dating from the time when KVM was operating—that the presence of the mission in Kosovo would have been apt to relieve the tensions between the ethnic groups in the conflict,²⁴ we do not know objectively what *would have happened*, had the mission been continued in even more decided fashion.

Now we are led back to our earlier considerations concerning counterfactuals. And this is not a coincidence because those considerations are intimately connected to the present subject (to the Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives). If doing nothing is the only alternative to military action that comes to your mind you may well dissent from the pacifist's counterfactual in our earlier discussion:

- (*) If the Western countries had not bombed targets in Serbia and Kosovo, less Albanians and Serbs would have been killed, injured or have lost their homes.

But the more non-violent and attractive alternatives to military action you have present in your mind, the more willingly you will agree on the counterfactual. The chances for the counterfactual being right will grow proportionally to the number of possibilities which make the antecedent true. When you are obedient to the Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives then you see many different possibilities for making the counterfactual's antecedent true; *ergo*, belief in the counterfactual and obedience to the epistemic imperative are both expressions of the very same system of values. (And this not only applies to the case of Kosovo; an equivalent nexus can be established in all other cases of projected war).

In the next section we'll unfold another epistemic imperative for pacifists. As we shall see, it is complementary to the Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives.

²⁴ See, for example, Loquai [KKiV]:56-67.

VII. The Danger of Uncontrolled Escalation

The Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives (which was our subject in the previous section) was, optimistically, meant to sharpen our eyes for what could be done when we opt against war. To complement this the pacifist formulates her next epistemic imperative. Now she aims, pessimistically, at sharpening our eyes for what may happen when we wage war. The imperative in question is the

Epistemic Imperative concerning Uncontrolled Escalation—hone your senses to the uncontrolled, irreversible side effects of military action, particularly to the danger of military escalation leading to another world war.

The pacifist's fright of *uncontrolled* escalation may appear hysterical to people with good nerves. It may remind them of Cassandra—tragically old-fashioned.²⁵ And indeed, doesn't the actual course of history, for example in Kosovo, provide an objective refutation of the pessimistic pacifist position, which predicted as much as the danger of the Third World War?²⁶

Not quite. True, the NATO-intervention did not lead to another big European war; this much is objectively proven. But this does not tell us anything about the danger with which the NATO was gambling. A danger can exist even if it does not become actualized. (Think of a tiger sneaking into your children's room while they are happily playing in the bathroom). Again, it is a matter of personal attitude, or evaluation, a matter of the quality of nerves (if you prefer), at what point a situation is interpreted as being dangerous. Even if objective probabilities are given (which they are not, in the case of war), even if we know the likelihood of a certain evil happening, it is still not always a matter of objectivity whether a real danger in fact lurks. Pacifists are pacifists, partly because they find the prospects of another world war so disturbing that they see this danger earlier than others.

²⁵ See Wolf [K]. I shall say more about Cassandra's pessimism concerning atomic war in my paper [BB].

²⁶ In this paper I want to restrict attention to the danger of escalation to another world war because this is the worst danger I can think of. (I do not mean to indicate that the intervention in Kosovo did not carry the potential to any other escalation). By the way, not only pacifists were afraid of escalation to catastrophe. Even the conservative Minister President of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, referred to the danger of World War III when he warned the West against sending ground troops to Kosovo: "Der Einsatz westlicher Bodentruppen würde zu einer Eskalation führen, die den dritten Weltkrieg heraufbeschwören könnte" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 13th, 1999, p. 7).

In the case of Kosovo they saw this danger alarmingly present in the night from May 6th to May 7th, 1999, when the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed mistakenly. They claim, it was the sort of mishap whose consequences cannot be controlled vigorously enough. To speak of collateral damage in this context is in their view irresponsible because playing it down like that may well amount to overlooking the very possibility of a catastrophic chain reaction. China is an atomic power, after all, and its political elite has not always exhibited the desirable portion wisdom.

The possible effects of the situation on Russia were another source of alarm to pessimist pacifists. Following the Epistemic Imperative concerning Uncontrolled Escalation they were alarmed, and feared the worst, when on April 16th, 1999, the members of Russian parliament (led by pan-Slavic radicals) voted in favor of making Yugoslavia a third partner in the Treaty of Union between Russia and Belarus—by which they clearly intended to indicate that NATO's war against Serbia was considered a war against Russia as well. Luckily the Russian government proved more reasonable than that, but even so, another dangerous confrontation between Russia and the West lurked when their troops met at a surprising moment at the airport in Pristina, which had been captured by Russian troops on June 12th, 1999 without prior consultation with NATO.

How safe was all this, the pacifist wants to know, and this again is not a question concerning facts only—but a question connected to attitudes, evaluations, and quality of nerves. *All's well that ends well*, the pacifist's opponents will reply,²⁷ thus expressing *their* personal way of looking at things: a way which the pacifist finds preposterous when the danger of atomic confrontation is in the game.²⁸

And so the quarrel between the two positions goes on and on. We'll have to leave it at that because we must try to come to some conclusions.

²⁷ See, for example, the German minister of defense, Rudolf Scharping, in [WDNW]:209.

²⁸ And to support her pessimism she will suggest to the optimist to study the transcripts of the presidential recordings of what the US-government was discussing, and risking, in the course of the Cuban Missile Crisis. (John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, President's Office Files, Presidential Recordings, Transcripts, Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings, October 27, 1962). These transcripts are partly published in Greiner [KK]:335-379, 383-391.

VIII. Conclusion

I have tried to reconstruct the pacifist world view by appealing to three epistemic imperatives: An imperative concerning human nature, an imperative concerning non-violent alternatives, and finally, an imperative concerning uncontrolled escalation. If you follow these imperatives you may be said to look at reality in the light of the pacifistic system of value. If you do not follow these imperatives you do not simply disagree about the so-called hard facts but exhibit adherence to an alternative system of value. Admittedly it often appears as if pacifists and their opponents disagree about factual claims. But if my diagnosis is right, these appearances are often misleading—often the disagreement about relevant claims, which are supposed to be factual, has its roots in controversial values.

Following the Epistemic Imperative concerning Human Nature, the pacifist will try much longer to find non-monstrous interpretations for enemy behavior than her opponent will; she will resist longer supposed factual claims such as

This is a government full of racists and murderers.

Following the Epistemic Imperative concerning Non-Violent Alternatives, the pacifist will try much longer to find non-military courses of action for ending dangerous conflicts than her opponent will; she will resist longer supposed factual claims such as

We have no other choice than to start a war.

And finally, following the Epistemic Imperative concerning Uncontrolled Escalation, the pacifist will be much more sensitive than her opponent to the slightest signs of escalation towards catastrophe; she will resist longer supposed factual claims such as

Everything is under control; we have calculated all possible consequences of our military action, and although there will be some *collateral* damage, we can surely prevent the worst.

Three times over I have said now that the pacifist will resist longer than her opponent certain claims (which are used by her opponent to justify war). How, and particularly, how long does the pacifist have to resist these claims?

To the first part of this question I reply that the pacifist shouldn't resist with closed eyes. If she wants to avoid blind dogmatism, her negative reaction to the three bellicose

claims should not come like the conditioned reflex of Pavlov's dog. ("Whenever anyone says something in favor of war, say no!") Rather she should try to look for good evidence, which speaks against the three bellicose claims. Our three epistemic imperatives are supposed to guide her scrutiny of reality; they give direction to the pacifist's search for evidence in favor of peace—a search that would not make much sense if it were not pursued under the assumption that the desired evidence can be found. When it comes to the worst, the assumption may fail. It may happen that the pacifist is no longer able to follow our three epistemic imperatives without betraying reason. In such a desperate case she will have to give up her resistance of the war in question (and also, of course, her resistance towards her former opponent's three claims).

How bad does a state of affairs have to become before the pacifist despairs of her position and ceases to follow our three epistemic imperatives? It will be recalled that this is the second part of our earlier question—to which I cannot give any general answer. I cannot give criteria, or a decision procedure, or an algorithm, which could take the question off the pacifist's shoulders. The only advice I can give is to use good judgment: The pacifist should follow the three imperatives persistently but not crazily.

From history we know an example where many declared pacifists—Bertrand Russell among them—felt forced to leave the path of peace: They supported England's and France's declaration of war against Hitler's Germany; and rightly so. But if we judge this (as I think we must judge it) to be the limiting case where obedience to our three imperatives would have been crazy, we have still not found an *objective* limit to the pacifist's world view. The judgment in question is not forced upon us by independent reality; rather it is a judgment which reflects—at one and the same moment—both our moral *self*-conception and our moral conception of an evil part of world history.²⁹

Pacifists who do not subscribe to Pacifist Rigorism can embrace the judgment in favor of the war against Hitler's Germany. Such a judgment does not lead to giving up the pacifist world view altogether; when you open your eyes to other parts of reality, past, present, or future, you can still view events in the light of the pacifistic system of values—and you can do this most persistently.

²⁹ I have tried to say more about the very function of this example in moral discourse, see Müller [WWSü], section IX.

No objective reality will be objective enough to refute your epistemic obedience to our three imperatives. The decision to follow these imperatives is no more irrational than the scientist's decision to look for common deep structure behind the chaotic differences in appearance. And it is no more irrational than the opposite decision to give up earlier: to give up the scientific enterprise in favor of non-scientific approaches to chaotic reality—or to give up the pacifist enterprise in favor of the chaos of war.

I have argued that in questions of war and peace we cannot avoid looking at reality in the light of some system of value or other. Different systems will yield controversial claims about the war in question. In this, I claimed, there is nothing irrational.

Does this mean that the pacifist's world view and the world view of her opponent are equally good? No. We can still compare the two opposing views to find out which is superior. For this we have to see whether the pacifist system (which consists of general claims, concrete claims about actual cases, epistemic imperatives, criteria of unjust war, rules of non-violent conduct, and so forth) will lead to an adequate moral life—that is, to a moral life more attractive than the one resulting from opposing world views. For lack of space we cannot even begin to engage ourselves in the details of such a comparison. Suffice it to say that this is an enterprise which calls for being in close contact with both reality and ourselves.

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