

The Ignobility of Strict Pacifism



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Pacifism is an interesting philosophy. As a voluntarist, I am pacifistic in many different ways. There is, however, one school of pacifism that I wholeheartedly reject, and consider ignoble, dishonorable, and cowardly.

Pacifism

Pacifism is the philosophy of pacific behavior, or "tending to make peace". It comes in many different flavors. Pacifists range from those who only oppose the initiation of violence to those who oppose the use of violence at all. There are both consequential and moral reasons for aligning yourself anywhere on the spectrum of pacifism.

Voluntaryism

As a voluntarist, I believe that all human relations should happen voluntarily, or not at all. There is a strong pacifistic element in this voluntary principle. Voluntary relations are necessarily non-violent, and thus peaceful, or pacific. Though the voluntarist recognizes the many virtues of voluntary relations, we also recognize the value of life.

Life

The protection of life and the preservation of everything that makes life worth living is the purpose behind the voluntary principle. Though one might hold values greater than their life, their life is what makes it possible to hold values at all. For that, I don't understand the pacifist that refuses to use violence in the protection of his own life.

Pacifism to a Fault

But being pacifistic even to the sacrificing of your own life for your values is not as ignoble, dishonorable, or cowardly as the pacifism that won't use violence in the defense of those unable to defend themselves. When such a pacifist stands between a predator and his

children, for example, and chooses instead to lay down his life, he does so at the cost of the lives of his children. To me, that is despicable, and is akin to forcing your beliefs, your pacifism, onto others. By all means, hold true to your values as they concern your own life, but to sacrifice the lives of others makes you no more noble or honorable or courageous than those who seek to do you harm.

Final Thoughts

Pacifism has its place, as any consistent voluntaryist will tell you. But being pacific in the face of imminent danger to those unable to defend themselves is to support that danger and the destruction that it creates. Perhaps it could also be said that to do so is to violate one's own commitment to peace, as the refusal to be a barrier to destruction guarantees that peace will only return once it's return becomes meaningless.

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