Pugnacity and Pacifism

Newton Garver

Pugnacity and pacifism are vying for our souls. Neither will ever win, but each vies to dominate our thought and our action. They are vying as much in their appeals to our idealism as to our sense of realism and practicality.

This great struggle, which is perhaps also the great struggle of all ages, is hidden from us as never before. It is right before our eyes, but we do not see it. Rather than see pugnacity or pacifism as issues at all, much less as centrally involved in our lives and our destinies, we see instead issues about rights and justice, or about crime and punishment, or about nations and their security, or about ethnic minorities and terrorism. Because these other issues are lively and urgent and fill our conscious concerns, they blind us to the struggle between pugnacity and pacifism. The subjective demands obscure the objective reality.[1] Most of the time, neither pugnacity nor pacifism is even called by its own name. The task for a cool philosophical realist today is to see pugnacity and pacifism for what they are, to recognize the sharp contrast between them, and to acknowledge the plausibility and pervasiveness of each as strategies for coping with life's challenges. Later, when our eyes are opened, it will be apparent that we need to move firmly and decisively in our public and our private lives away from pugnacity toward pacifism. For now, our passions generally keep this issue hidden from us.

If pugnacity and pacifism are to be contrasted as polar opposites, they must be put on the same scale; they must be different dimensions of the same thing. I take pugnacity and pacifism to be opposing strategies or dispositions, rather than opposing doctrines or rules of behavior.[2] A doctrine is either true or false, whereas a disposition or strategy is judged by its results rather than its truth. There are, no doubt, various propositions, true or false, that can be set forth in support of each opposing strategy, but a strategy is not another one. Nor is a strategy necessarily a rule that gives a definite decision in each situation, though there are strategies in the form of computer programs (for chess, for example) that have this algorithmic character. A strategy is a tendency to act or respond in a certain manner, which generally leaves a great deal of leeway for variation in details. Among pacifists, for example, Schweitzer, Gandhi, and King all exhibited a tolerance for such variation. No doubt doctrines can be articulated that express opposing principles that lie "behind" and "justify" the opposing strategies; but I am going to treat such doctrines as secondary rather than primary, and their relation to the dispositions as merely descriptive rather than justificatory.

By pacifism I mean a habit or strategy that might be defined as the disposition to respond to threats and challenges by attempting first to understand the obstacle, or the persons presenting the threat or challenges, and then to incorporate the initial obstacle, or the initially opposing interests, into a harmonious or mutually agreeable solution.[3] By pugnacity I mean a contrary habit or strategy which might be defined as the disposition to respond to threats and challenges by attempting first to knock the opposing persons or obstacle out of the way, and then to propose a solution that takes no account of the obstacle or of opposing interests.

Either of these dispositions may be backed with principles or even ideologies, but neither need be. It is because pugnacity and pacifism are primarily dispositions or habits rather than ideas that we can be so deeply committed to them without being conscious of them.

Pugnacity and pacifism are not often thought of as true opposites. Most people would more readily give gentleness as the opposite of pugnacity, and militarism as the opposite of pacifism. These common oppositions are, however, far too narrow. While

---

NEWTON GARVER is Distinguished Service Professor of Philosophy at S.U.N.Y. University at Buffalo. He is well-known for his essays on Wittgenstein and Derrida as well as on problems of violence. Most recently he co-edited Justice, Law, and Violence *with James B. Brady (Temple University Press, 1991).*

there is no doubt a sort of gentleness about pacifism, it may well be tough and persistent and lack the easy-going compliant character that 'gentleness' suggests. This was certainly true of Gandhi and King. On the other side, diplomats and statesmen can be quite as pugnacious as militarists, in spite of their courtesy and fine manners; and doctrinaire "pacifists" often exhibit a rather abrasive pugnacity.

Gandhi and King have taught us that the best alternative to pugnacious opposition is not capitulation but militant nonviolence, an alternative that makes little sense in terms of the popular traditional oppositions. Even if the words 'pugnacity' and 'pacifism' are not the right ones, they are as good as any to focus on the opposition between the two general dispositions or strategies defined. I will use these terms to get the discussion rekindled, knowing that most pugnacious people do not recognize their own pugnacity, and that most pacifistic people do not acknowledge their own pacifism. The problem is that the issues not discussed in these terms are left undiscussed in other terms as well. The momentous objective issue is largely ignored.

The opposition between pugnacity and pacifism is first made explicit by George Bernard Shaw in the Preface to *Heartbreak House*, written less than a year after the armistice that ended the first world war. Speaking of the war mentality that gripped even courts of law, he wrote:

> For Christians there was no mercy . . . . There was only one virtue, pugnacity: only one vice, pacifism. That is an essential condition of war.

Wartime is special, and the opposition is not usually so stark. It is, however, all too present, though none too visible. High time for a critique.

Pugnacity is more of an intellectual problem than one might think. My task is to make it more visible. We need to consider four topics: (1) what sorts of things can be called pugnacious or pacifist, (2) what are the characteristics of pugnacity and of pacifism, (3) what motivates each of the opposite strategies, and (4) what are the risks and benefits of each.

1. Objects

The things that are rightly called pugnacious or pacifistic belong to the human world rather than to the natural world. They are persons, nations and other groups, actions, and ideas.

[i] *Persons.* In the first place it is persons and their strategies and patterns of action that count as pacifistic or pugnacious. Pacifism and pugnacity are evidenced over time rather than at a single moment. It is not the single act that is pacifist or pugnacious, nor the passage of time by itself. It is rather the intention that guides actions over time. Such intentions are to be attributed primarily and paradigmatically to persons, and derivatively to groups, nations, strategies, policies, and patterns of human (intentional) behavior.

People usually know what they are doing. That is to say, they usually act knowingly and intentionally, even though some actions are inadvertent or unintentional. When a person's actions show the right sort of pattern over a reasonable period of time, we can on that basis call the person pugnacious or pacifist. The pugnacity or pacifism will, of course, be a matter of degree. The degree will depend partly on the intensity of the actions, partly on the degree of risk the person undertakes in the actions, and partly on the consistency of the actions (the clarity of the pattern they manifest).

One of the prior presidents of SUNY at Buffalo, Martin Meyerson, was a person notably lacking in pugnacity, though no one, to my knowledge, has called him the pacifist that he is. Because he was president in the mid-sixties, he had to confront student protests about the Vietnam war, as well as community protests about faculty and students. The community demanded a crack-down, and Meyerson failed to provide it. Many of the faculty also wanted him to be a fighter, though they were divided as to what they wanted him to fight for: Some wanted him to suppress campus unrest by suppressing radical students, some wanted him to fight for academic rights by suppressing forces of law and order. He withdrew from the fights and became president of the University of Pennsylvania, where he retired after two decades of considerable success. While withdrawal is not the only alternative to combat, and while Meyerson's performance at Buffalo left problems unresolved, his career as a whole demonstrates pacifism combined with success and high office.

Meyerson's successor at Buffalo, chosen over other qualified candidates because of his hard-line position against student activists, was Robert Ketter, a relatively pugnacious person. During his twelve years as president, Ketter's friends and foes alike agreed on his being both pugnacious and personally friendly. Wherever possible, Ketter tried to define issues in black and white, to stick to principles, to say who was right and who was wrong, and to identify the good guys and the bad guys. Understanding and accommodation were not his tools of choice. On the

other hand he rarely showed personal animosity or bore a grudge.[4]

University presidents cover a wide range on the scale of pugnacity and pacifism. Politicians, on the other hand, are almost uniformly pugnacious. That results in part, I think, from the role of the media in touting pugnacity in politics as well as in sports. It results in part, however, from the record of success politicians have had in winning with scare tactics. Whole generations of politicians have made their careers on red-baiting or some other form of xenophobia, in other countries as well as in the United States. Of Presidents of the United States, only Jefferson and Hoover clearly rank as more pacifist than pugnacious. Jefferson, though he expanded the territory of the nation (peacefully!) through the Louisiana Purchase (1803), is only President whose main claim to fame consists in having effectively limited rather than expanded the powers of the office. He did this through his work in Virginia on the precursors of the Bill of Rights. His manner of approach to crises is illustrated by his comment on Shays's rebellion, which took place while he was in France. Rather than raise a hue and cry about the danger to the republic, he wrote to Adams (*Writings* IV:363):

> This uneasiness has produced acts absolutely unjustifiable; but I hope they will produce no severities from their governments. A consciousness of those in power that their administration of public affairs has been honest may perhaps produce too great a degree of indignation; and those characters wherein fear predominates over hope may apprehend too much from these instances of irregularity. They may conclude too hastily that nature has formed man insusceptible of any other government than that of force, a conclusion which is not founded in truth, nor experience.

[ii] *Groups*. Nations, like persons, persist over time and exhibit patterns of behavior. So do religions, private associations or societies, professional organizations, and other sorts of human groupings. All of these can be characterized straightforwardly in terms of their pugnacity and pacifism--though we should remember that, as with persons, the opposing dispositions are likely to be mixed and their opposition unresolved. Japan, for example, is a relatively pacifistic nation, in spite of its militaristic past and certain harsh traditions, since its current prosperity depends on having prosperous neighbors who can afford to buy its products. Israel, on the other hand, is relatively pugnacious, partly because of its militarism and partly because of its intransigence about talking to Palestinians, and in spite of its religious and largely pacifistic inspiration. Such unresolved mixture of opposing dispositions should not surprise us. That, after all, is even the case with God, whose "jealousy" and wrath are clearly pugnacious and whose love and grace are clearly pacifistic.

[iii] *Actions*. Individual actions are often characterized as pugnacious or pacifistic, because they are taken to signify or stand for a pattern, the rest of which we cannot see at the moment. Such characterization of actions is derivative, being based on the character of the pattern that is seen or inferred in the single act. It must therefore be used with caution, for actions are not always what they seem. An action that appears pugnacious may occur by sheer accident, or inadvertently, or on stage, or in the course of some vigorous life-saving activity, or while clowning around. Similarly an action that appears pacifistic may have been unintentional, or have been done wholly out of fear, or be a ruse to buy time for a stronger attack. Such actions do not belong to the patterns they seem to signify. Nevertheless actions are often just what they seem, and, given suitable caution, there is nothing improper about characterizing single actions as pugnacious or pacifistic in this derivative sense.

Intentions go along with actions. We can never understand human actions apart from the intentions in them.[5] Instead of saying that actions are not always what they seem I could just as well have said that the intention of an act is not always what it seems. Intentions signify patterns more fully than individual actions do, and can therefore also be said to be pugnacious or pacifistic.

[iv] *Ideas*. Theories, ideas, ideologies, concepts, and other abstractions are neither pugnacious nor pacifistic in the primary sense, because abstractions do not act, do not exhibit any behavior at all. There is, however, clearly a secondary or derivative sense, based on their actual or intended effect on actions, in which abstractions can rightly be called pacifist or pugnacious. John Ladd, for example, in "The Idea of Collective Violence," has given a chilling account of the ways in which ideologies tend to make collective violence intransigent. Political and religious ideologies often urge people to violence and then "justify" the violence committed. Patriotism and conceptions of justice, as well as crude nationalism and racism,

are also examples of pugnacious ideologies. Humility, love, and forgiveness are examples of pacifist conceptions. Ideas which function this way still need to be considered for their truth; but insofar as they function this way they certainly deserve to be characterized as pugnacious, even though only in a derivative sense.

These examples of persons, groupings, actions, and ideas that can be said to be pugnacious or pacifist is partial and tentative. It is meant to be more suggestive than definitive. A firmer view of objects which possess these opposing dispositions depends on surveying their distinctive characteristics.

2. Characteristics

I shall describe the characteristics of pugnacity and pacifism by means of eight pairs of contrasting epithets. Each of these contrasts, like the opposition between pugnacity and pacifism itself, is a matter of degree, with the contrasting terms serving as the endpoints on a sliding scale. It is not to be supposed that the eight pugnacious characteristics always go together, nor that the eight pacifistic ones do so either. We live in a world of puzzles and paradoxes, one with very little purity of any kind, and it is hardly surprising that dispositions such as pugnacity and pacifism are rarely found pure and unalloyed in any person. The patterns are nonetheless real, common enough, and very human.

[i] *Worldview.* A worldview is one's general conception of the world and what is in it. Pugnacity and pacifism go along with worldviews that differ in two important respects. One has to do with the general character of the world in which we find ourselves, and the other has to do specifically with the people in it.

Pugnacious people view the world as hostile. They see it as fraught with danger, and their stories tell of innocent persons being brought to grief in this hostile world -- or being close to disaster when rescued by some hero. Comic books and films, the two most important forms of mass media, constantly reinforce this view of the world as hostile, and politicians have great success in playing on the fears that would be perfectly rational if the world were as hostile as the media make it seem.

Pacifists, on the other hand, view the world as friendly. Their stories are adventures in which being lost or confronting the unknown provides a rare and welcome opportunity. While there are dangers, they can be reduced by learning more about the world and what is in it. Understanding and involvement, rather than avoidance and isolation, are natural strategies for the worldview associated with pacifism.

Pugnacity is often directed against evil, and therefore it is no surprise that the associated worldview includes evil as a real component of the world. Some pacifists recognize evil in the world, so that belief by itself is not altogether decisive. Pugnacious persons and groups, however, identify the evil with particular persons; and since they see themselves as good, they see humanity as essentially divided between the good and the evil, between the children of light and the children of darkness. Such bifurcation of humanity is philosophically known as dualism, the most prominent medieval form of which was Manichaeism. The worldview of pacifism is monistic rather than dualistic, seeing all humans caught in the same dilemmas. Such a worldview has been articulated eloquently by Marcus Aurelius and Albert Camus, as well as by Simone Weil and Richard Rorty, and though it is largely absent from the mass media, it is occasionally found in novels and other literature.

I am not here going to try to say whether monism or dualism is true, nor even raise the question of whether they are coherent theories such that their truth can be assessed. The point here is simply that noticing signs of such worldviews helps one to recognize pugnacity and pacifism.

[ii] *Principles.* We all have principles, but our principles differ, and their standing in our lives differs, too. Pugnacity is moralistic. Its principles are simple and clear-cut, and pugnacious people expect compliance without exception and impose penalties for deviation from the straight and narrow. "Understanding" persons who deviate from the straight and narrow means simply seeing that they are evil, or have been seduced by evil motives. Principles are used pugnaciously when they lead to a division of humanity into the good and the bad.

Pacifism, on the other hand, tends toward accommodation and toleration. Even if the same principles or ideals are honored (as is the case with honesty, respect for persons and property, not stealing or murdering, etc.), they will figure differently into patterns of response to others. Virtues will viewed as more to be aimed at than to be enforced, vices more to be avoided than to be punished.[6]

[iii] *Success.* What is one to count as "success" or as "winning"? A mark of a pacifist is the estimation of success in terms of personal prosperity or well-being, rather than in terms of either luxury or superiority. What a person needs in order to live a decent

human life is enough to eat, together with a certain variety and a few spices; a comfortable home, with space for activities and storage and with walls or gardens that one can decorate or beautify; a job or profession or other generally respected main activity, together with recognition and appreciation by others of one's skills and talents; some regular income, or other source of money; reasonable access to markets, transportation, and government; support for one's character, or one's soul; and friends, and the means to share activities with them. No doubt needs vary; some persons have special needs, and different interpretations can be put on each of the needs mentioned.[7] The point is that satisfying needs need not be defined through comparison or competition with one's neighbors. Indeed, as Marcus Aurelius and Spinoza both remark, it a part of wisdom -- pacifistic wisdom, I should say -- to recognize that, other things being equal, one is likely to have a better life living among successful and happy people than among those one has beaten or bettered.

It is a mark of pugnacity that success is defined as doing better than others. This takes two forms. One is living in posh luxury, with the best car, the best house in the best neighborhood, vacation trips in distant lands, and so forth. While there is nothing wrong with living well, and nothing necessarily pugnacious about it, living at a level 100 times the level of others in one's own society does remove one from those other people. Such great disparities can never be maintained without a repressive political structure, operating so as in effect to exclude the lower classes from participation. I have no doubt that there are many wealthy people who believe in peace; but they are at best partial pacifists if they depend, even unknowingly, on pugnacious politics for their way of life.

The other form of doing better than others is simply beating them, dominating them, or excluding them. Everything about professional and amateur sports, including such intellectual sports as chess and go, encourages and reinforces this pugnacious conception of success. On this conception of success, it is perfectly possible to "do better" just by injuring others, or making them do worse than they might have. In university courses where grading is on a curve or where (as in France) only a fixed number or percentage pass, students sometimes attempt to succeed not by knowing more or achieving a higher level of skill, but by preventing other students from getting necessary books or having reasonable access to labs. Such activity is the academic equivalent of winning a race by injuring the other horse. The conception of success involved essentially comparative and competitive. While such a conception is not, I should say, a defining characteristic of pugnacity, it is a nearly universal concomitant of it.

Much useful light is thrown on what it means to win by Robert Axelrod in his book *The Evolution of Cooperation*. The background for Axelrod's work is unfortunately too complicated for me to explain here, so I will count on the reader to fill in the details. He is concerned with a paradox that arises from a game-theory matrix known as "The Prisoner's Dilemma." In the matrix each of two players has to choose either to cooperate or to "defect," and the matrix establishes payoffs for each of the four resulting combinations of choices. The paradox is that it is rational for each player to defect, even though that gives them the lowest joint payoff and both cooperating would give them the greatest joint payoff. Axelrod's contribution was to extend the game in time, so that each player must decide not on the next action but on a strategy or rule that determines (in the light of past actions of the players) each subsequent action. This extended game is known as "The Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma" (IPD). Axelrod then conducted two computer tournaments in IPD, and it is the outcome of these tournaments that throws interesting light on what is to be counted as success.

The winner of both tournaments was a strategy called "Tit For Tat." Tit For Tat began by cooperating and then did whatever the other player did on the previous move. It was impossible, given the matrix, for Tit For Tat ever to get more points than the other player. After 100 or 200 rounds Tit For Tat always wound up in a tie or having lost by a small margin. Therefore Tit For Tat never won an individual match. It did, however, win the tournament, in that it accumulated more points overall than any other strategy entered in either tournament. Other strategies often did well when they played opposite Tit For Tat -- which was just what was wanted, since the underlying idea is that it is possible to do well if others do well, too. Against pugnacious strategies -- those that attempted to exploit others by "defecting" -- Tit For Tat did not do well, and the pugnacious strategies did only slightly better. Tit For tat was more than willing to give up high scores in a pugnacious environment in order to be able to gain the benefits of cooperation from those who would cooperate. The idea was to do well, not to do better -- and it paid off handsomely when Tit For Tat won the tournaments without ever have beaten a single opponent.

Axelrod is further helpful when he distinguishes between two traits that are often identified: strength

and robustness. Strength is the ability to dominate, or to force one's will on others. Robustness is the ability to flourish in a variety of environments. The aggressive strategies were strong but not robust; Tit For Tat was robust but not strong. Pacifism advocates aiming at robustness rather than strength. Pugnacity favors strength over robustness, or refuses to acknowledge a distinction between the two.

[iv] *Economic Concomitant.* Hobbes, because he gave prominence to greed and security among human motivations, took humans to be naturally pugnacious. In Chapter 13 of his *Leviathan* he describes what human society would be like in a "state of nature" (that is, without government), and concludes that under such conditions human life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." It is the poverty that I want to focus on. Prosperity requires cooperation, because it depends on specialization and trade. Hobbes inferred that cooperation would never occur in the state of nature,[8] because of natural human pugnacity, and so people in that state would be bound to be poor as well as mean. An individual here and there could be well off by dominating others, but there could be no general prosperity.

Recent times have provided ample confirmation of the poverty of pugnacity. Dictatorships around the world have been faced with economic collapse. Not only is life poor in the former East Bloc countries, but the downfall of the authoritarian regimes revealed an astonishing lack of basic economic infrastructure. Albania perhaps qualifies for being both the most authoritarian and the poorest. In Africa the situation is much the same, with the promise of prosperity being ushered in by the new independence of the 50's and 60's having been nowhere achieved, and poverty accompanying authoritarian centralism in at least half a dozen African nations.[9]

Pacifistic nations, on the other hand, have prospered. Sweden and Switzerland are the traditional examples, Japan and Germany the newer and more striking ones. Forced to renounce militarism after their defeat in the Second World War, Japan and Germany learned to trade with others instead of trying to conquer them, and they have attained more power economically than was ever possible militarily. Their citizens, furthermore, enjoy a comfortable standard of living, free from the sacrifices that their more pugnacious history demanded.

It is difficult to apply these considerations to individuals and their standards of living. Nor should we forget that prosperous persons and groups are always vulnerable, not only to the ravages of fortune but also to plundering. Nonetheless, for societies, if not for individuals, prosperity is a natural concomitant of pacifism, and poverty of pugnacity.

[v] *View of the Strange and Unexpected.* One of the most useful marks of the difference between pugnacity and pacifism is a person's response to something strange or unexpected. For an aggressive person, it spells disaster; for a pacifist, an opportunity.

There are two reasons why this difference is particularly useful. The first is that a strange or unfamiliar person or object, or an unexpected event, presents just the sort of challenge that tests one's pugnacity or pacifism. The other is that the difference in response in such instances is indicative of a difference in one's whole attitude to the world around us.

[vi] *Response to Charges of Culpability.* One of the unpleasant and often unexpected events in the lives of each of us is being charged with some wrong, or with having caused harm or injury to another person. The problem at a such a point is to escape punishment and to avoid being painted as an outlaw, or as unworthy of human society. If outright denial (pleading innocent) is not a live option, there are two general strategies for avoiding punishment, justification and excuse, characteristic respectively of pugnacity and of pacifism. Although the distinction has been sharpened in recent philosophical discussions,[10] the difference is ancient and familiar to all of us as the difference between self-righteousness and apologizing or seeking forgiveness.

Justification is a response acknowledging full responsibility (claiming that I was fully in charge) but denying that the action was in any way wrong. If you have been hurt or injured because of an action of mine, by justifying my action I often imply that it is your own fault that you were hurt, even though it was my action that caused the injury. (I may have been a policeman acting in the course of duty, or a surgeon operating according to standard medical procedures.) One version of justification is therefore what is called "blaming the victim."

Excuse differs from justification in the two defining characteristics. Excuse acknowledges that the action was not all right, but denies responsibility for it. More specifically, in offering an excuse I acknowledge that the action done is one that would have been better not done, although I do not admit that it was morally or criminally wrong; and I reject moral or criminal blame for it, although I may well accept responsibility for actual damages or medical expenses. In order to make an excuse for some harm

or injury I have caused, I must acknowledge an imperfection in my action. I must say that the action was not what I intended, or that I did not know obviously relevant facts, or that I was very tired or under emotional stress, or that I was not myself that day, or that it was an accident (my foot slipped), and so on.

Patterns of justification are a reliable mark of pugnacity, just as excuse and apology are for pacifism. Patterns of justification exacerbate pugnacity. They not only not facilitate pugnacious action (by immunizing pugnacious persons against liability for the consequences of their actions), but also tend to stimulate a counter-action, which is itself likely to be "justified."[11]

Both bureaucrats and professionals achieve a well-disguised pugnacity through codes of "ethics." These codes have little or nothing to do with ethics (morality) but are rather rules whose main purpose is to serve as the basis for justifying bureaucratic or professional actions that hurt clients. The codes are normally administered by the bureaucrats and professionals themselves: police review boards by police, medical review boards by doctors, legal review boards by attorneys, academic review boards by professors, and so on. Where these codes apply, one often hears "regrets" but rarely apologies. The effect of the codes is not only to protect bureaucrats and professionals against charges and to silence critics but also to mark a separation of these elite groups from their public. In spite of the calm and rational manner in which the relevant proceedings are conducted, their character shares this and other marks of pugnacity.

[vii] *Intellectual Mode.* Simplification (denial of complexities) is a mark of pugnacity. Seeing complexities and exploring a variety of other angles is a mark of pacifism.[12] The 1980 Presidential election campaign turned in part on this point. Reagan was a much more pugnacious politician than Carter, and his election was due in part to his extraordinary ability simplify complex issues, sweeping aside in apparent sincerity all the real difficulties that the simple policy would encounter in execution. Reagan pointed to certain people and institutions and said that getting rid of them would get rid of the problem. Carter saw that many of those people needed to be part of the solution, and this acknowledgement of complexity was seen by much of the electorate as wishy-washy pacifism.

The electorate that preferred Reagan to Carter continues to insist on simplistic solutions to complex problems -- and they continue to fail. The Gulf War showed the U.S. government at its simplistic best, focussing all the blame on Saddam Hussein and all the effort on military action.[13] Closer to home, prisons provide a simplistic, and pugnacious, answer to a host of real problems. The simplistic view is that solution to these problems requires elimination of the trouble-makers, and long prison sentences are a form of elimination. At least nine-tenths of the prison population consists of ordinary people with ordinary motivations, led astray to be sure. Pacifistic alternatives, barely even whispered by politicians considering one of the strongest growth areas in the American economy,[14] begin by insisting that prisons are part of the problem, not a long-term solution, and that prison inmates must be part of the solution rather than being permanently removed from the scene.

[viii] *Negotiating Focus.* One of the reasons why oversimplification and denial of complexity are marks of pugnacity is that they impoverish one's negotiating options. Fisher and Ury, in *Getting to Yes*, argue persuasively that distinguishing between "positions" and "interests" is essential to successful negotiating -- even the informal sort of negotiating with friends and family. One's "position" is what one asks for; one's "interest" is the reason one has for asking for it. They illustrate the difference by a story, rather like the following "Case of the Disputed Lemon":

> Two men were preparing a feast, but with limited forethought. At a certain point each of them needed a lemon, but there was only one. Each wanted the whole lemon, but since neither had any rank or priority over the other, they compromised by cutting the lemon in half.
>
> Then one man squeezed the juice from his half to use in preparing the fish, and the other carefully slivered off the peel from his half to use in making the dessert. Each threw away what he did not use, and the meal was finished without quite the right tang in either dish.

Each cook had a clear-cut position: that he wanted the whole lemon. Each also had a *reason* for his position -- that is, a clear-cut interest -- but neither mentioned it. The compromise of their conflicting positions, which seems on the face of it fair and reasonable enough, is seen to be a miserable waste, once their respective, and *non*conflicting, interests are seen.

It is a mark of pugnacity to identify positions and interests, or to confuse them, or to fail to make a clear distinction between them. Since positions often clash whereas interests are generally compatible, such a tendency goes hand in hand with seeing others as opponents, and seeing one's own welfare as depending on others getting less. For analogous reasons, it is a mark of pacifism to distinguish sharply between positions and interests, to focus firmly on interests, with a view to finding nonconflicting means of satisfying them.

3. Motivations

A book could no doubt be written on motivational factors bearing on the contrast between pugnacity and pacifism, and I hope that more competent people than I will continue the studies that have been begun by Dean Pruitt and others. In this context I shall limit myself to two brief and unscientific observations.

[i] *Fear vs. hope.* Pugnacity is motivated by fear, pacifism by hope. Anyone wishing to move human society away from pugnacity toward pacifism is well-advised to find ways to allay fears and nourish the wellsprings of hope. This is never easy, since fears are sometimes altogether reasonable, and false optimism about this or that panacea is normally self-defeating. This motivational fact about the contrast between also helps to explain why nonviolent politics has been practiced most impressively by the impoverished followers of Gandhi and King: not having great possessions or privileges, they had little to lose and much to hope for.

[ii] *Self-doubt vs. self-esteem.* Pugnacity is motivated by self-doubt, and pacifism requires self-esteem. Fighting is popularly associated with courage, but that is a rather superficial view. It takes little courage to choose to fight over something, for even if one is beaten one will emerge with "honor." Even when one has a sense that one's position is untenable, it is easy to fight about it, since fighting puts the focus of attention on the fighting itself rather than the reasons for it. Hence the joke about the attorney, realizing that his case is hopeless, beginning to smear the opposing counsel. Negotiating, on the other hand, requires a sense that one's position and interests are worthwhile. A pacifist strategy entails appealing to another person, even one who is potentially or actually hostile, to recognize one's interests and one's position as worthy and reasonable. One needs considerable self-confidence to be able to do that, something that President Bush, for example, certainly did not have as he pushed the world toward the Gulf War.

Like hope, self-esteem must be realistic; mindless self-affirmation can be as destructive as childish optimism. It is nonetheless an important truth that both individual persons and groups can be weaned from patterns of violence and pugnacity by being taught that they do indeed have reasonable interests that they are indeed capable of furthering by skillful work, cooperation, negotiation, and exchange. One of the reasons for the high recidivism rate in American prisons is that prisons reinforce the self-doubt that got the inmates into trouble in the first place.

4. Risks and Benefits

[i] *Security vs. prosperity* . The promise of pugnacity is to enable us to hold on to what we have. It promises security against the potential ravages of nature and potential plundering of fellow humans. This promise was articulated by Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, when he argued for a powerful, authoritarian, political sovereign; the promise continues today in the privileged budgeting for "defense" and prisons. In our individual interactions there is an underlying assumption that we are already pretty well off, and that if we don't distrust others they will take away what we have.

The promise of pacifism is that life will hold many rich rewards if we cooperate with nature and with other people. It promises prosperity on the basis of trust and cooperation. Trust, as the initial response to others, is the key to the promise. We see such trust in operation in very many phases of our lives, and much of our actual prosperity is due to institutions that provide a basis for trust and make it other than blind and irrational trust.

[ii] *Poverty vs. vulnerability.* Here we have the risks that go hand-in-hand with the above promises. Hobbes spelled out how defensiveness leads to poverty, and Axelrod has shown how prosperity requires vulnerability. It is a fantasy to suppose that we can avoid both poverty and vulnerability, or that prosperity does not involve trust, or that trust does not entail vulnerability. Of course it is possible to choose a little of each, which is what each of us no doubt does in practice throughout our lives. That cannot, however, hide the fact that each of the choices is between the alternative competing strategies.

[iii] *Superiority vs. solidarity.* It is difficult not to

see oneself and one's group as better than others (some others), or at least as deserving to be superior to others. It is an advantage of pugnacity that it can often (not always, by any means) preserve or achieve such superior status. In a zero-sum situation, where there must be a winner for every loser and a loser for every winner, pugnacity pays off and pacifism does not. Sports, electoral campaigns, and power politics are three domains in which superiority (domination) is the only recognized goal and pugnacity therefore the preferred strategy.[15]

Pacifism, on the other hand, promotes a sense of solidarity with one's fellow creatures. A sense of solidarity was expressed eloquently by Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*. Since he was Roman Emperor, I find it moving that he privately denied any superiority over others, and his thoughts seem especially persuasive for that reason. At the time of the French Revolution the ideal of solidarity was expressed through the slogan, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," which is today faulted for being sexist and which was in any case tainted by the violence of the Revolution. In the nineteenth century Walt Whitman celebrated a solidarity with all sorts of others in his poetry. In more recent times solidarity has been a prominent value in the writings of Simone Weil, Albert Camus, Daniel Seeger, and Richard Rorty. In each case, other than that of the French Revolution, solidarity has been associated with pacifism.

[iv] *Justice vs. peace.* Justice often comes with a sword, and certainly often "justifies" the use of instruments of violence. Prisons and wars are instruments of violence regularly rationalized in this manner. It is even widely held that it is immoral to refuse to use violence to correct injustice.[16] Although calls for "Peace and Justice" and claims that "There can be no true peace without justice" have resounded from the lips of professed pacifists as well as from those of pugnacious militants, justice seems a characteristically pugnacious ideal, and one of the best and most hopeful fruits of a certain pugnacity. But it will never lead to peace. Justice demands that someone accept harm or deprivation as what is right and proper, and in practice what is justice to one party will be injustice to another, giving rise to retaliation and an upward cycle of violence.[17]

Peace results from pacifism rather than from war or pugnacity. That sounds trivial or paradoxical, for peace, perhaps, just is pacifism. That is what A. J. Muste had in mind when he once said, "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way." One consequence is that many claims for justice will need to be withdrawn or put aside for the sake of peace.[18]

[v] *Salvation.* Salvation is promised by both sides. Pugnacity is said to be necessary to save our civilization, and to save our homes and our grandmothers from attack; and pacifism to save our souls and the quality of our human relationships. We must listen to those siren calls, but listen with a good deal of scepticism.[19] There are two problems with the call to salvation. One is that we lack the purity that seems to be required. An underlying and inescapable fact is that not one of us, and not any group or society, can avoid being pacifist at some times and some ways and being pugnacious at some times and in some ways. The other is that the "necessity" never seems to be altogether necessary. Whenever I am pugnacious, I realize (only later, alas) that there were other gentler courses of action that never occurred to me at the time. Some cases are even worse than such familiar personal experience, as when the reasonable alternative of economic sanctions against Iraq was fully considered and nevertheless lost out to the bogus "necessity" of the Gulf War -- which, predictably, failed to result in the political solution (salvation) that had been promised.

Salvation is a mysterious matter. I doubt there is any such thing politically or socially, but souls can be either healthy or corrupt and lives can be either lost or saved. The difficulty is that we know so little, either about what will count or what will be the consequences of our actions and decisions. In the face of such momentous matters, the situation is perhaps that expressed by Simone Weil when she said that "victims and executioners are brothers in the same distress."[20]

Conclusion

Pugnacity and pacifism have a curious standing in American culture. Pugnacity is widely admired -- so much so that we sometimes seem to be perpetually in the state that Shaw described, where pugnacity is the only virtue and pacifism the only vice. The United States has for decades been at the mercy of a fashionable fallacy that might be called a "Pugnacity Syndrome," since its first response to a dissident or trouble-maker is to drive out and/or beat down (or beat up) the alien or unwholesome or opposing element. The pugnacity is normally moralized through a self-righteous indignation at the *evil* of the Other, but intractable opposition is the defining characteristic. We see this syndrome at work not only in Bush's refusal to talk or negotiate or compromise with Saddam Hussein, and Reagan's earlier

characterization of USSR as the "Evil Empire," but also in the epidemic of litigation and incarceration, the enormous popularity of zero-sum sports (both amateur and professional), the inviolability (practical undiscussibility) of the Pentagon budget, and the dependence on armed force as the mainstay of foreign policy and domestic order -- all of which consume vast resources, exclude dialogue, and reject cooperative or integrative strategies.

Although many people dislike being *called* pugnacious, they wish to *be* pugnacious: They wish to dominate, they equate power with domination, They admire domination, they believe that people who disagree with them are evil and need to be removed, they applaud military solutions in foreign affairs and long prison terms for domestic trouble-makers, and they believe that their welfare depends on getting more than the next person. Even many who count themselves as pacifists are pugnacious, because of their confidence about who the evil ones are that need to be removed. Our pugnacity is constantly reinforced by sports and comics and films as well as by political rhetoric. Even the churches contribute substantially to our pugnacious ideology.

At the same time there are certain elements of our culture which are strongly pacifistic. Among these are our commitments to the Bill of Rights, to democracy, to helping the down-trodden and the victims of misfortune, and to free markets. The Bill of Rights, together with its judicial enforcement, puts real limits to pugnacity by setting limits to the domination of one person by another. Adherence to the Bill of Rights and to judicial process is incompatible with the moralism and dualism that characterize pugnacity, and we therefore constantly see attacks on the courts and the Constitution by those who resent their protections being given to "evil" persons. Democracy and free markets, when their operation is not encumbered by extraneous powers and forces (such as monopolies, subsidies, tariffs, inside information, and the old school tie), are also incompatible with a Manichaeian outlook, or with a moralistic predetermination of which interests are most deserving and which powers most legitimate. Alternative dispute resolution, principled negotiation (as advocated by Fisher and Ury in *Getting to Yes*), mediation, and values clarification are four more popular pacifistic strategies. The American philosopher Richard Rorty eloquently advocates a liberalism based on gentle irony and compassionate solidarity, in the place of insistence on precise truth and rigid principles. --- None of these features or tendencies of our society is considered pacifistic, but they all encourage and support the habits and dispositions by which pacifism is defined.

In some ways the United States is as extreme in its pacifism as in its pugnacity. Few countries have such a variety of well-defined and institutionalized pacifist techniques. On the other hand, this nation is not unique in either its pugnacity or its pacifism. People everywhere realize that well-being depends on arranging not to kill one another, nor even to threaten to kill one another. And people everywhere consider some other people evil, they dream of domination, and they target the evil or alien ones for expulsion or exclusion.

Once pugnacity and pacifism are understood, some things are a bit clearer but the way ahead is neither clear nor easy. Virtues and vices, after all, appear in a very different light if one gives up the self-righteous moralism that pugnacity would endorse. Pugnacity needs to be identified through its various disguises, and seen as a vice; but not condemned. It is rarely a vicious vice, that is, one whose intention is to do evil. A little honesty, furthermore, will show each of us pugnacity within ourselves -- and *we* don't want to be condemned. What is misguided rather than vicious needs to be exposed, but condemnation of its practitioners would itself be pugnacious and can hardly be recommended. Pacifism needs to be acknowledged as such in those places where it already flourishes, and needs to be seen as a virtue. What needs to be done, once the vice and the virtue are recognized, is steadily and relentlessly to nudge persons (beginning with ourselves) and public policies (beginning with our own) toward pacifist responses. This will not be easy, and will require both vigilance and imagination. Much careful pampering of fears and nurturing of hope and self-esteem will be required to rescue the objective character of actions and institutions and cherished beliefs from the obscuring shadows of subjective anxiety. There are no easy solutions, for all the "easy" lines are pugnacious. As Spinoza once said,[21] all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

Notes

[1] Michel Serres recently called attention to this phenomenon, referring to wars and other human violence as "subjective" violence (since it depends on our human volition) and the violation and degradation of nature through the impact of human life as "objective" violence. See his *Le contrat naturel*.

[2] In this characterization of the *kind* of thing pacifism is, I depart from most of the recent philosophical literature.

See the articles by Narveson and the books by Cady, Dombrowski, and Teichman.

[3] This sort of solution has been called an "integrative solution" by Dean G. Pruitt in his work on negotiation and mediation. I shall adopt this useful terminology. The contrasting solution is manipulative, dominating, or oppressive.

[4] Lyndon Johnson also seemed to exhibit this combination of pugnacity and personal friendliness. I suspect it is rather common in many cultures, and I think of it as exemplified in the self-confident mastery characteristic of slave-holders.

[5] Both 'action' and 'intention' are extremely difficult concepts to get clear about, partly because they are so closely intertwined. For a thorough introduction to the difficult concepts, see Donagan's books, especially the later one.

[6] Punishment is a very difficult issue for pacifists to deal with. That is partly because punishment is really a very difficult issue in general, since it requires treating people in ways that seem to violate "inalienable" human rights, and to require justifying such action in terms of the past rather than the future. For a fine portrayal of how acute these dilemmas are, see the articles by Hugo Adam Bedau and by André Maury in Brady and Garver (1991).

[7] Jane Austen remarks on this variability in *Pride and Prejudice*, where what one of the Bennett sisters regards as comfort another regards as extravagance.

[8] Robert Axelrod, in *The Evolution of Cooperation*, gives empirical evidence to support the claim that cooperation does occur naturally, even if one accepts Hobbes's basic assumptions about human motivation. He states, I think rightly, that this refutes the gloomy conclusion Hobbes reaches in Chapter 13.

[9] Jack Powelson presents a stimulating study of this phenomenon in *Facing Social Revolution*.

[10] J. L. Austin and H. L. A. Hart are responsible for bringing the distinction to the attention of scholars in recent decades. See Austin's "A Plea for Excuses" (in his collected papers) and Hart's "Prolegomenon to the Principles of Punishment" (in *Punishment and Responsibility*). See also my essay, "Violence and Social Order." The difference is implicit in the emphasis on forgiveness found in Christian writings as well as in such Stoic writings as the work of Marcus Aurelius.

[11] Counter-violence is sometimes held not even to be a form of violence, on the grounds that it is justified as a form of self-defense. Two or three years after my article "What Violence Is" was published (1968), a colleague received a phone call from a philosopher in California: the philosopher's class had just read my essay and wanted to know whether, as the class surmised, I was a "black militant"! (I am, on the contrary, a white pacifist.) The article argues that "structural" or "quiet" violence is as real as the thief's knife, and the class, making the pugnacious assumption that counter-violence is of course justified, read tne article as a justification for the urban violence of the 60's.

[12] It might be asked whether this whole essay is not an oversimplification -- an unwarranted simplification of highly complex issues. That is a good question, one supported by a major tendency in contemporary philosophy. This tendency associates any general theory or uniform description, especially a simple one, with violence. See, for example, the works of Foucault, Derrida, or Rorty. According to such views, there is no question that this essay, as well as the rest of my work, counts as pugnacious.

My brief response is that simplicity is necessary in logic, with respect to concepts, for their clarity depends on a certain sort of simplicity. The rules of thought, as Wittgenstein said, constitute a realm where *simplex sigillum veri* (*Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, 5.4541). On the other hand, as Wittgenstein made clear in all his work, reality is enormously complex, with all sorts of differences that escape our first glance. The laws of motion are very general and relatively simple; but the motion of a tennis ball that is wholly determined by them is nonetheless highly complex, affected a variety of subtle circumstances, and different from the motion of that (or another) ball on another occasion. Similarly, it would be a mistake to suppose that the relatively simple and clear-cut distinctions set forth in this essay can be applied easily and simply in reality, or that any actual person can be definitively classified as either pugnacious or pacifist.

[13] I take the UN activity to have been designed from the beginning to justify and legitimize the military action. Certainly Bush at every stage rebuffed or undercut attempts at negotiation, and there was no significant coverage in the U.S. of the legitimate interests Iraq had in the dispute with Kuwait, nor of the legitimate interests advocates of democracy had (and continue to have) in an overthrow of feudal institutions in Kuwait. Bush held firmly to the simple, humiliating, demand for unconditional withdrawal, with no negotiations, partly out of fear of what might emerge from an honest look at the social and political complexities of the region. Thus the U. S. position was

simplistic pugnacity at its clearest: "The whole problem is Saddam Hussein. If only we can get rid of Saddam, ..."

[14] Inmate population in New York State grew from about 12,000 in 1971 to over 60,000 in 1990, with costs per inmate increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Leaving aside debt payments, tourism is the only other sector of the New York State.economy with a steeper growth rate.

[15] Therefore one goal of a pacifist will be to limit his or her own participation in zero-sum activities, and to work to reduce their importance in society at large. This helps to explain the near-disappearance of Quakers from electoral politics, although Quakers played a large role not only in the foundation of Pennsylvania but also in the settlement of the Midwest in the 18th and 19th centuries.

[16] See, for example, the articles by Jan Narveson, and the third chapter of Alan Donagan's *The Theory of Morality*.

[17] Two excellent essays that expand this point in very different ways are Elizabeth Wolgast's "Getting Even", and Bernhard Waldenfels's "The Limits of Legitimation", both in Brady and Garver (1991).

[18] I have argued this point at length in "To Build a Just Society?" and "The Pursuit of Ideals."

[19] The growth of scepticism about salvation, purity and panaceas is part of the "experience" Stuart Hampshire argues for in *Innocence and Experience*. I am much indebted to Hampshire's work, and think of this essay as an extension to it rather than a rebuttal of it.

[20] See "The *Iliad*, Poem of Might." The remark echoes the main theme of the essay by Camus as well as frequent thoughts expressed by Marcus Aurelius.

[21] *Ethics*, Fifth Part, Proposition 42, Scholium.

References

Aurelius, Marcus, *Meditations*.

Austin, J. L., *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York: Basic Books, 1984.

Brady, James B. and Newton Garver, eds., *Justice, Law, and Violence*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

Cady, Duane L., *From Warism to Pacifism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Camus, Albert, "Ni victime ni bourreau," *Combat*, November 19-30, 1946.

Derrida, Jacques, *La voix et le phénomène*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967. Tr. David Allison, *Speech and Phenomena*; Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

Derrida, Jacques, *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1967.

Derrida, Jacques, *Parages*. Paris: Galilée, 1986.

Dombrowski, *Christian Pacifism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

Donagan, Alan, *The Theory of Morality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Donagan, Alan, *Choice, the Essential Element in Human Action*, London/New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Fisher, Roger, and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1970.

Garver, Newton, "What Violence Is," *The Nation*, June 24, 1968.

Garver, Newton, "To Build a Just Society?", *Friends Journal*, February 15, 1983.

Garver, Newton, "The Pursuit of Ideals," in Brady and Garver (1991).

Garver, Newton, "Violence and Social Order," in P. Weingartner and G. Schurz, eds., *Proceedings of the XII International Wittgenstein Symposium*, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1988).

Hampshire, Stuart, *Innocence and Experience*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Hart, H. L. A., *The Concept of Law*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Hart, H. L. A., *Punishment and Responsibility*, London: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, London, 1651.

Ladd, John, "The Idea of Collective Violence," in Brady and Garver (1991).

Narveson, Jan, "Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis," *Ethics* 75:259-271 (1965).

Narveson, Jan, "Is Pacifism Consistent?" *Ethics* 78 (1968).

Powelson, Jack, *Facing Social Revolution*, Boulder: Horizon Society Publications, 1987.

Pruitt, Dean G., *Negotiating Behavior*, New York: Academic Press, 1981.

Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Seeger, Daniel A., *The Seed and the Tree: A Reflection on Nonviolence*, Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1986.

Serres, Michel, *Le Contrat Naturel*, Paris: Francois Bourin, 1990.

Shaw, George Bernard, *Heartbreak House*, London, 1919.

Teichman, Jenny, *Pacifism and the Just War: A Study in Applied Philosophy*, , Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Waldenfels, Bernhard, "The Limits of Legitimattion and the Question of Violence," in Brady and Garver (1991).

Weil, Simone, "The *Iliad*, Poem of Might," in George A. Panichas, ed., *Simone Weil Reader*, New York: David McKay, 1977.

Wolgast, Elizabeth, "Getting Even," in Brady and Garver (1991).

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Please See "To the Reader"

(page 4)