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2, Immanuel Kant

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Morality And Reality: Will They Unite Someday?

“Mankind has to put an end to war, before war puts an end to mankind”

John F. Kennedy

## **1. Introduction**

War is a very controversial issue in philosophy. In this essay I am going to find out the relation between morality and human war practice, divide morality in two parts according to the issue, define types of war, investigate in their character and state their attitude to morality and justice. Then I would invite the jury to follow the path of my thought on modern problems of war and peace, look back in history to find the causes for contemporary problems and ask questions which demand an urgent answer in order to save our race.

## **2. War In The Views Of Our Predecessors**

War seems to be inseparable from human life for thousands of years. Since the appearance of the necessity in food and shelter a human being started fighting with nature and with the animal world. This kind of struggle was a cause of the instinctive part of the body. The appearance of other tribes gave birth to the contradiction as the first type of war. The consciousness of human absorbed the idea of war. It pushed nations to die and kill to get the wishing prize. There are not many reasons which sanctified war of our predecessors: curiosity, new lands, new trade ways and so on. Entire nations existed due to war: nomadic tribes lived in the state of war conflict with their neighbours.

So many people around the globe famed war as their source for living. Scandinavian, Greek and Roman myths show us the belligerent Gods always wearing weaponry and not suffering from the lack of cruelty. Peaceful Chinese myths also contain elements of

contradiction between peasants and robbers. Main Indian Gods also wear armour. The historical memory brought the idea of war in our blood. As Jung said, the archetype of war lives in Homo sapiens. The question which I dare to ask now is of great importance. The answer on it is a key to our future and has no more choice than life or death: If the archetype exists in us, can we escape from it or totally destroy?

### **3. The Most Powerful Conflict: Morality and Practice**

To investigate into the issue, I should firstly say about the notion war and the way I'm going to explore it in this essay. From the political philosophy, war is understood as the contradiction between states. Rousseau also defined it as the relation between State and State. This view on the issue comprises the notions of combatants, orders and subordination. From a more broad view, war can be explained as bellum or polemos, which can be understood as a conflict or fight of two different ideas and, to be exact, people who are the carriers of these two positions. If I wanted to explore the problem from the first state, I would say about K. Walzer and the traditionalism approach in war philosophy. It says about permission of defensive wars and humanitarian help to a state which is involved in the conflict. Another approach is called revisionism and it objects to any kind of war. In their point of view, morality and war cannot coexist because they are two categories of different spheres: peace and war. Traditionalists separate war into just and unjust. Revisionists vote for pacifism movement.

In this essay I am going to write from a second viewpoint. I. Kant also explores morality and war in this position. He comes to the pessimistic conclusion: humanity has a broad war experience but dealing with problems by 'iron and blood' is not a way out. It is not only appropriate to States which don't follow the international Law but also to a human nature. War deprives of rights.

My own moral position votes for saving lives and coping with problems by peaceful means. Humanity is an entire world and if one element is absent, it is less than it was. These thoughts bring me to the poem of Jhon Donne: we are involved in mankind and therefore any man's death diminishes us. When the bell tolls, it will toll for all of us. That is why the war has a relation to all of us. At the same time the contemporary experience is more than just disappointing: the refusal to lead a defensive war will in any way mean the end of human rights. No man is an entire island and therefore he won't be able to defend himself. I. Kant is against all possible wars. I state that the defensive war is the only just war because it appears as the reaction on aggression. Speeches and conventions cannot stop the aggression, it follows its benefit without any wish to surrender. There is to be no war but when it is impossible the defensive war is the most just of all. Firstly, let me investigate a first part of the contradiction: how is morality a contrast to war?

### **4. "How can one live quietly if one suffers morally?" L. Tolstoy**

'War and peace' as a philosophical novel explores the question of war philosophy on the example of life in the Russian Empire in the times of Napoleon wars. Heroes there are looking for the happiness, for the place in life. Their attitude to war is different: it is a wide range of viewpoints from admiring Napoleon to the wish to die for the native land. Russian philosopher L. Tolstoy shows his own attitude to war in the episode on the battlefield. Prince Bolkonsky was wounded and was lying among the dead. He looked into the blue clear sky. This symbol of peace stroke his soul. He finally understood the rudeness and the stupidity of war. Morality of the person rejects the war while still the idea lives in the consciousness.

State leaders always tried to put war into moral frames. Belgium was attacked and almost totally occupied by German combatants during WWI. The relation of soldiers to civilians was one of the first examples of war crime in the new history. The country with the population of about 8 millions lost 20 per cent of its inhabitants who became refugees. About ten thousand of noncombatants were intentionally hurt and killed. There were examples of cruel relation to the women in the monastery. These war crimes were lying out the moral sphere.

What can be added about morality in war philosophy? Some philosophers say that we can speak about moral discrimination and war crimes. In the contrary, others say that the entire war is a crime. Are we permitted to take away any human life? Do we have such a right? Or are there no rights in war? There is no exact answer. What I personally reckon is that morality can be used to define the results of the attacks, the attitude to noncombatants and captives. In my opinion, it can be called the morality in bello but there is no morality that gives right to kill in general. So the defensive wars are also unmoral in their meaning but still they are just in their character.

I state that morality gives us no right to kill independent of circumstances, but sometimes we have to in order to defend our lives and our state. Now I should show in the practical sphere that the defensive war is appropriate and has no threat to mankind only if it does not become an aggression.

## **5. New Threats And Old Problems**

Christian philosophy in its origins says that if someone hits your right cheek, you should let him hit you in the left one. This ideal of kindness will never exist in our world anymore. What has changed since 1<sup>st</sup> century AD? Humanity has faced a threat of special type of people. As S. Kierkegaard said, there are three types of human: esthetic, ethic and religious. Special type of people has appeared when the deeply religious person started being manipulated. He was given a new idea and someone who has his own goals and is absolutely no fanatic made him believe in it and die for it. We cannot live vulnerable and defenceless with terrorists because one day they will destroy not only

Palmira but all the culture of mankind: material and ideal. The defence from them is the necessity because they see us as victims. In addition to that, we cannot change their viewpoint because they do not consider us as equal people. Any word from a person of other belief is a lie for them.

The defence from our common enemy is obvious and it demands all our power. The consequences of useless struggling against each other while ignoring the threat may be disastrous. For instance, in the XXth century the USA and the USSR couldn't see that very threat from the nationalistic groups in Afghanistan. The results of the actions of both states are felt nowadays all around the world. Such a conflict demanded a defence straightly and urgently.

What else has the modern world prepared for us in the sphere of war? There is a unique type of war which is an invention of historical period and human actions. After Berlin convention in 1945 the world started to dive slowly but inevitably into the contradiction of two systems: capitalism and communism. It meant the race of weaponry, the invention of weaponry of mass destruction and local conflicts. The amount of weaponry became immensely huge, so that the world could have been destroyed several times. The local conflicts caused thousands of deaths. People lived in the fear of being attacked. But what should I ask you is whether the consequences of WWII can be compared with the ones of the cold war? I am completely concerned that these are two different wars to compare. Moreover, many states were free from any military conflicts and were in a peaceful state. The investigation of whether the cold war is just is out of my goals in this essay. Perhaps, nowadays we live in the conditions of the cold war (a kind of war which is not on the surface but is not entirely concealed) and it is the best alternative to WWII. The entire world started living by the ancient Roman rule: "Si vic pacem, para bellum"

## **6. Conclusion**

My conception of morality in war was constructed on two main positions: morality in general denies killing people independent of the circumstances but there is a special morality in bello which make some regulations of killing and also stays relation to the special categories of people. I feel that these two moralities are opposite to each other but this opposition is evident for me as the opposition of war and peace. We have to put an end to war but we cannot: the archetype which I talked about in the beginning cannot be deleted. If we cannot put an end to war, we should choose the most just and the peaceful variant of all possible. I. Kant is full of humanistic ideas but now the world without war is an utopia. We cannot claim the modern war to be 'a father of everything' but we cannot refuse of taking part in a war conflict if its aim is to deprive us of freedom and life.

In no sphere of life morality and war are standing so far from each other as in war and peace. Our modern aim is to preserve the morality and not to permit its changing. Morality is against war. But there is a great paradox: morality pushes to make good to people and we have to make good to anyone, even to terrorists. What is good for them and what means do we have to use to make them good? If it is going to be a war, what war should we be prepared for? The humanity faced one of the greatest challenges in its history. It should be solved as fast as possible for not to face WWIII and WWIV "which will be fought with sticks and stones".