

VII. DISCUSSION: THE MORALITY OF WAR

When is war morally permissible? For the **Kantian**, the decisive objection to war is that it involves the death of the innocent. Kant himself was a retributivist and so maintained the principle that punishment must be linked to desert; but in the killing of those who have committed no crime we see this principle denied. To that extent, war punishes without justification. Additionally, killing the innocent is contrary to two major elements in Kant's ethical teaching: first, in treating human life as an expendable commodity, it reduces human beings to the level of an object or thing and so denies them their unique status as rational human beings; and second, it contradicts the principle of universalisation: it condones a course of action which, if applied to everyone including myself, would create a world which I myself must condemn (namely, a world without justice, in which I am no longer protected by my own innocence). For these reasons, it is no less wrong and no more justifiable to kill innocent people in time of war than at any other time. Just as Kantians react with moral abhorrence to the judicial murder of an innocent man to quell a rebellion, so they react with equal outrage to the sacrifice of innocent men, women and children for military or political goals. Of course, in an age of thermonuclear weapons, when possible non-combatant casualties are numbered in millions, this is tantamount to condemning modern warfare as such. Suppose country A is attacked by country B, and that this attack is unprovoked and initiated for evil reasons. Suppose further that, in this situation, there is nothing wrong in A defending itself and even killing its attackers. If it should happen that, in retaliation, innocent lives are lost, then the defender has acted immorally. Since, therefore, it is inevitable that innocent people will be killed in any modern war, any war fought today must be condemned as unjustified.

The **utilitarian** approaches this situation very differently. Here the justification of military action is not based on whether war contravenes certain fundamental moral principles, like 'never kill the innocent', but on whether it produces certain results. If an act of war obtains a greater overall balance of happiness over unhappiness, then, as the principle of utility stipulates, that act is morally permissible. Thus, in estimating the morality of a defensive or offensive war against country B, everything depends on whether the benefit to be gained by country A will outweigh the pain of those who are killed, injured or bereaved in the process. However this benefit may be construed, the sacrifice of the innocent to obtain it is justified if it contributes to the greater collective happiness. In a nuclear situation, of course, this conclusion becomes less clear-cut. For while the possession of nuclear weapons may have the laudable utilitarian effect of deterring the enemy, the power of that threat depends on the real possibility of their use. Their use, however, destroys the utilitarian benefit, because there can be no gain obtained in a war of mutual destruction. The utilitarian can therefore be just as vehement in the condemnation of nuclear warfare as the Kantian. It is not the death of innocent people that is objected to – though regrettable, this can be excused in terms of 'military necessity' – but rather the use of a weapon which inflicts pain out of all proportion to the military or political advantages gained by its use.

A third and no less influential position, somewhere between the Kantian and the utilitarian, is adopted by the great medieval philosopher and theologian, **Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274)** in his *Summa Theologiae*. Here Aquinas sets out the conditions under which a 'just war' may be waged.

An aristocrat by birth, **Aquinas** joined the Dominican order in 1224, much to the disapproval of his family, and rapidly established himself as a student of extraordinary ability. From 1245 to 1252 he studied at Cologne under Albert the Great, where he encountered the work of Aristotle, the principal influence on his work. Aquinas subsequently taught at Paris and Rome, where he acted as adviser and lecturer to the papal court. His enormous philosophical output culminated in his unfinished *Summa Theologiae* (also known as *Summa Theologicae*, 'The Sum of Theology'. Later editions and translations also use the title *Summa Theologica* or 'The Theological Sum'). Begun in 1256 the *Summa* presents the most complete statement of his philosophical system, and includes his famous 'just war' argument. Aquinas was canonised in 1323 and proclaimed Doctor of the Church (Angelical Doctor) in 1567. His philosophy was recognised by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) as the official theology of his church and so made mandatory in all Roman Catholic education.



Aquinas

While accepting (with Kant) that warfare is essentially wrong in its shedding of blood, Aquinas believed that at least three conditions have to be met for a war to be 'just', the second and third of which are distinctly utilitarian in tone. These are: 1) right authority (*auctoritas principia*, i.e., the war must be declared and waged by the legitimate government of the nation concerned); 2) sufficient cause (*justa causa*, i.e., the war must be waged to prevent or rectify a real injury); and 3) right intention (*recta intentio*, i.e., the methods employed must be sufficient for victory and not disproportionately savage). Aquinas clarifies his position as follows:

Three things are required for any war to be just. The first is the authority of the sovereign on whose command war is waged. Now a private person has no business declaring war; he can seek redress by appealing to the judgement of his superiors. Nor can he summon together whole people, which has to be done to fight a war. Since the care of the commonweal is committed to those in authority they are the ones to watch over the public affairs of the city, kingdom or province in their jurisdiction. And just as they use the sword in lawful defence against domestic disturbance when they punish criminals, as Paul says, **"He beareth not the sword in vain for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil"**, so they lawfully use the sword of war to protect the commonweal from foreign attacks. Thus it is said to those in authority, **"Rescue the weak and the needy, save them from the clutches of the wicked"**. Hence Augustine writes, **"The natural order conducive to human peace demands that the power to counsel and declare war belongs to those who hold the supreme authority"**.

Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked are attacked because they deserve it on account of some wrong they have done. So Augustine, **"We usually describe a just war as one that avenges wrongs, that is, when a nation or state has to be punished either for refusing to make amends for outrages done by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized injuriously"**.

Thirdly, the right intention of those waging war is required, that is, they must intend to promote the good and to avoid evil. Hence Augustine writes, **"Among true worshippers of God those wars are looked on as peace-making which are waged neither from aggrandisement nor cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, or repressing the evil and supporting the good"**. Now it can happen that even given a legitimate authority and a just cause for declaring war, it may yet be wrong because of a perverse intention. So again Augustine says, **"The craving to hurt people, the cruel thirst for revenge, the unappeased and unrelenting spirit, the savageness of fighting on, the lust to dominate, and suchlike – all these are rightly condemned in wars"**.¹⁶

What sets Aquinas' argument apart from those of the Kantians and the utilitarians is his concept of political authority, revealed in his quotation from St Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* (13:4). Because the state, he maintains, has a divine authorization to rule, its political decisions possess a unique moral authority. This authority, derived from God, entitles it to resist by force those who attack it by force, and to punish those whom it considers wrong-doers. Thus Aquinas justifies both defensive and offensive warfare.

Aquinas' argument has been much discussed and criticised. A common complaint against him is that, even if all three conditions for a just war were satisfied, this would not automatically justify military activity, particularly if the aims of such action could be achieved by other means, e.g., through diplomacy. For our present purposes, however, what is of particular interest is the distinction Aquinas makes here between the justice of war (*jus ad bellum*) and justice in wars (*jus in bello*). The former refers to the morality of the war being waged, the latter to the morality of the methods adopted in waging it. As Aquinas makes clear, the excessive use of force in the conduct of a war – to inflict more suffering than is necessary to gain the military advantage – will undermine the justice of the war itself. This distinction has far-reaching implications. It raises questions about the treatment of prisoners, the taking of hostages, guerrilla warfare, saturation bombing, and, above all else, the use of nuclear weapons. How one resolves these questions depends very much on the general philosophical position one adopts.

16. *Summa Theologiae*, XXXV, 2a2ae, 40, Eyre and Spottiswood, 1972, pp. 81-82.

In the following three extracts the pacifist tradition is represented by Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948). Influenced primarily by the Hindu *Bhagavad-Gita* and by Tolstoy's interpretation of the *Sermon on the Mount*, Gandhi adopted the principle of 'passive resistance' and organised the *satyagraha* (literally, truth- or love-force) campaigns of non-violence which led to Indian independence in 1947. Gandhi's repudiation of war is absolute; and the practice of non-violence is, he maintains, the only practical and effective way of eliminating war altogether from human experience.

An entirely different approach is taken by the British philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001). For her the pacifist belief that it is necessarily wrong to fight in wars is both mistaken and dangerous. It is mistaken because it denies people the right to defend themselves; and it is dangerous because, in encouraging them to believe that *all* killing is wrong, it overlooks the important distinction between legitimate and illegitimate killing in war and so makes warfare even more murderous than it should be. Anscombe believes that there can be a justifiable war in which the sovereign authority, for the purposes of self-protection or in order to maintain the law of the land, does have the moral right to kill its enemies. What it cannot do is kill those who are innocent and not in any active sense party to the dispute. To do this is murder and cannot be justified.

This last point is taken up by Douglas Lackey and used to great effect in his rejection of the policy of 'deterrence' in a nuclear world. Although written in the days when international relations were polarised between the American and Soviet spheres of influence, Lackey's article remains relevant in its opposition to such a policy. Deterrence involves the *threat* to slaughter many millions of innocent people and thus increases the chances of their actually being killed: to that extent, it is morally abhorrent and should be abandoned. It is therefore the moral duty of the United States to reverse its present nuclear stance and to dismantle its nuclear arsenal forthwith, even if no other nuclear power should follow suit. Disarmament increases the risk of conquest but continued armament increases the risk of war. Of these two, Lackey argues, the latter risk is the more serious: it involves the welfare of the entire world and not the national interests of any one country.



Gandhi

Extract 1. Mohandas K. Gandhi: Non-violence¹⁷

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the *rishis* and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit.

I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For *satyagraha* and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The *rishis*, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realised their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration. . . .

I do justify entire non-violence, and consider it possible in relation between man and man and nations and nations; but it is not 'a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness'. On the contrary, the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. I contemplate a mental, and therefore a moral, opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him, and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him. It may be urged that this is an ideal state. And so it is. The propositions from which I have drawn my arguments are as true as Euclid's definitions, which are none the less true, because in practice we are unable even to draw Euclid's line on a blackboard. But even a geometrician finds it impossible to get on without bearing in mind Euclid's definitions. Nor may we . . . dispense with the fundamental propositions on which the doctrine of *satyagraha* is based. . . .

Q How could a disarmed neutral country allow other nations to be destroyed? But for our army which was waiting ready at our frontier during the last war we should have been ruined.

A At the risk of being considered a visionary or a fool I must answer this question in the only manner I know. It would be cowardly of a neutral country to allow an army to devastate a neighbouring country. But there are two ways in common between soldiers of war and soldiers of non-violence, and if I had been a citizen of Switzerland and a President of the Federal State, what I would have done would be to refuse passage to the invading army by refusing all supplies. Secondly, by re-enacting a Thermopylae in Switzerland, you would have presented a living wall of men and women and children, and invited the invaders to walk over your corpses. You may say that such a thing is beyond human experience and endurance. I say that it is not so. It was quite possible. Last year in Gujarat women stood lathi charges unflinchingly, and in Peshawar thousands stood hails of bullets without resorting to violence. Imagine these men and women staying in front of an army requiring a safe passage to another country. The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say, you will still have done your duty by allowing yourself to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women would not be able to repeat that experiment. You may, if you wish, refuse to believe in such courage on the part of the masses of men and women, but then you would have to admit that non-violence is made of sterner stuff. It was never conceived as a weapon of the weak, but of the stoutest hearts.

Q Is it open to a soldier to fire in the air and avoid violence?

A A soldier, who having enlisted himself flattered himself that he was avoiding violence by

17. *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1942.

shooting in the air, did no credit to his courage or to his creed of non-violence. In my scheme of things such a man would be held to be guilty of untruth and cowardice both – cowardice in that in order to escape punishment he enlisted, and untruth in that he enlisted to serve as soldier and did not fire as expected. Such a thing discredits the cause of waging war against war. The war-resisters have to be like Caesar's wife – above suspicion. Their strength lies in absolute adherence to the morality of the question. . . .

This non-violence cannot be learnt by staying at home. It needs enterprise. In order to test ourselves we should learn to dare danger and death, mortify the flesh, and acquire the capacity to endure all manner of hardships. He who trembles or takes to his heels the moment he sees two people fighting is not non-violent, but a coward. A non-violent person will lay down his life in preventing such quarrels. The bravery of the non-violent is vastly superior to that of the violent. The badge of the violent is his weapon – spear, or sword, or rifle. God is the shield of the non-violent.

This is not a course of training for one intending to learn non-violence. But it is easy to evolve one from the principles I have laid down.

It will be evident from the foregoing that there is no comparison between the two types of bravery. The one is limited, the other limitless. There is no such thing as out-caring or out-fighting non-violence. Non-violence is invincible. There need be no doubt that this non-violence can be achieved. The history of the past twenty years should be enough to reassure us.



Crowds at Gandhi's

Questions: Gandhi

1. Is Gandhi justified in calling himself a practical idealist and not a visionary?
2. Gandhi's non-violence may have worked against the British in India; but can you construct another scenario in which it would probably have failed?
3. Will non-cooperation and civil resistance always defeat an enemy?

Extract 2. G.E.M. Anscombe: *War and Murder*¹⁸

Since there are always thieves and frauds and men who commit violent attacks on their neighbours and murderers, and since without law backed by adequate force there are usually gangs of bandits; and since there are in most places laws administered by people who command violence to enforce the laws against lawbreakers; the question arises: what is a just attitude to this exercise of violent coercive power on the part of rulers and their subordinate officers?

Two attitudes are possible: one, that the world is an absolute jungle and that the exercise of coercive power by rulers is only a manifestation of this; and the other, that it is both necessary and right that there should be this exercise of power, that through it the world is much less of a jungle than it could possibly be without it, so that one should in principle be glad of the existence of such power, and only take exception to its unjust exercise.

It is so clear that the world is less of a jungle because of rulers and laws, and that the exercise of coercive power is essential to these institutions as they are now – all this is so obvious, that probably only Tennysonian conceptions of progress enable people who do not wish to separate themselves from the world to think that nevertheless such violence is objectionable, that some day, in this present dispensation, we shall do without it, and that the pacifist is the man who sees and tries to follow the ideal course, which future civilization must one day pursue. It is an illusion, which would be fantastic if it were not so familiar.

In a peaceful and law-abiding country such as England, it may not be immediately obvious that the rulers need to command violence to the point of fighting to the death those that would oppose it; but brief reflection shows that this is so. For those who oppose the force that backs law will not always stop short of fighting to the death and cannot always be put down short of fighting to the death. . . .

The same authority which puts down internal dissension, which promulgates laws and restrains those who break them if it can, must equally oppose external enemies. These do not merely comprise those who attack the borders of the people ruled by the authority, but also, for example, pirates and desert bandits, and, generally, those beyond the confines of the country ruled whose activities are viciously harmful to it. . . . The present-day conception of 'aggression', like so many strongly influential conceptions, is a bad one. Why *must* it be wrong to strike the first blow in a struggle? The only question is, who is in the right.

Here, however, human pride, malice and cruelty are so usual that it is true to say that wars have mostly been mere wickedness on both sides. Just as an individual will constantly think himself in the right, whatever he does, and yet there is still such a thing as being in the right, so nations will constantly wrongly think themselves to be in the right – and yet there is still such a thing as their being in the right. Palmerston doubtless had no doubts in prosecuting the opium war against China, which was diabolical; just as he exulted in putting down the slavers. But there is no question but that he was a monster in the one thing, and a just man in the other.

The probability is that warfare is injustice, that a life of military service is a bad life 'militia or rather malitia', as St Anselm called it. This probability is greater than the probability (which also exists) that membership of a police force will involve malice, because of the character of warfare: the extraordinary occasions it offers of viciously unjust proceedings on the part of military commanders and warring governments, which at the time attract praise and not blame from their people. It is equally the case that the life of a ruler is usually a vicious life: but that does not show that ruling is as such a vicious activity.

The principal wickedness which is a temptation to those engaged in warfare is the killing of the innocent, which may often be done with impunity and even to the glory of those who do it. In many places and times it has been taken for granted as a natural part of waging war: the commander, and especially the conqueror, massacres people by the thousand, either because this is part of his glory, or as a terrorizing measure, or as part of his tactics. . . .

What is required, for the people attacked to be non-innocent in the relevant sense, is that they should themselves be engaged in an objectively unjust proceeding which the attacker has

18. G.E.M. Anscombe, 'War and Murder', *Nuclear Weapons: A Catholic Response*, ed. Walter Stein, New York, Sheed & Ward, 1961, pp. 45-46, 48-49, 56-57.

the right to make his concern; or, the commonest case, should be unjustly attacking him. Then he can attack them with a view to stopping them; and also their supply lines and armament factories. But people whose mere existence and activity supporting existence by growing crops or making cloths etc., constitute an impediment to him – such people are innocent and it is murderous to attack them, or make them a target for an attack which he judges will help him towards victory. For murder is the deliberate killing of the innocent whether for its own sake or as a means to some further end.

The right to attack with a view to killing is something that belongs only to rulers and those whom they command to do it. I have argued that it does belong to rulers precisely because of that threat of violent coercion exercised by those in authority which is essential to the existence of human societies. . . .

Now pacifism teaches people to make no distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood. And in this way pacifism has corrupted enormous numbers of people who will not act according to its tenets. They become convinced that a number of things are wicked which are not; hence, seeing no way of avoiding ‘wickedness’, they set no limits to it. How endlessly pacifists argue that all war must be *à outrance* that those who wage war must go as far as technological advance permits in the destruction of the enemy’s people. As if the Napoleonic wars were perforce fuller of massacres than the French wars of Henry V of England. It is not true: the reverse took place. Nor is technological advance particularly relevant; it is mere squeamishness that deters people who would consent to area bombing from the enormous massacres *by hand* that used once to be committed.

The policy of obliterating cities was adopted by the Allies in the last war; they need not have taken that step, and it was taken largely out of a villainous hatred, and as corollary to the policy, now universally denigrated, of seeking ‘unconditional surrender’. (That policy itself was visibly wicked, and could be and was judged so at the time; it is not surprising that it led to disastrous consequences, even if no one was clever and detached enough to foresee that at the time.)

Pacifism and the respect for pacifism is not the only thing that led to universal forgetfulness of the law against killing the innocent; but its has had a great share in it. . . .



Elizabeth Anscombe

Questions: Anscombe

1. What are Anscombe’s arguments against pacifism as a justified moral viewpoint? What do you think of them?
2. Are there any circumstances which justify the killing of innocent people in time of war?
3. How do you think Gandhi would reply to Anscombe?

Extract 3. Douglas Lackey: Ethics and Nuclear Deterrence¹⁹

Suppose that for some reason or lack of reason the Soviet Union launches a nuclear first strike against the United States. Even under these conditions it would be clearly immoral for the United States to retaliate in kind against the Soviet Union, since retaliation by the United States would result in the death of millions of innocent people, for no higher purpose than useless revenge. The present policy of deterrence requires preparations for such retaliation and threats and assurances by us that it will be forthcoming if the United States is attacked. Indeed, if our deterrent is to remain credible, the response of the United States to attack should be semi-automatic. Defenders of armaments justify all the preparations on the grounds that they will prevent an attack *on us*; if retaliation is ever needed, they say, the system has already failed. Now, a Russian attack against the United States would be at least as immoral as our retaliation against the Russians. So one aspect of the moral problem of deterrence is this: Is one justified in *threatening* to do something which is immoral, if the reasoned intention behind one's threat is to prevent something immoral from occurring?

Let us consider some analogous situations:

1. It would be immoral to kill a man to prevent default on a debt, even if one had no intention of killing the man at all, so long as he paid the debt. Indeed, it is immoral to threaten to kill a man in order to pay a debt, even if one has no intention of killing him under any circumstances, including non-payment of the debt. In this case at least, threatening evil is not justified by good results or an increased chance of good results. Perhaps this lack of justification derives from the inherent wrongfulness of such threats of violence or from the bad results that would follow if everyone regularly made threats of this sort – whatever the cause. The good results that *actually* follow from the threat do not justify it; even, I would say, in a state of nature containing no judicial system.

2. It might be objected that this example is unfair because the stakes in question are not high enough. Would it be equally immoral to threaten to kill Jones if the intention of the threat is to prevent Jones from doing murder himself, and if the threat will *be* carried out only when Jones actually does murder? This, perhaps, is the way deterrence theorists view strategic *détente*. It must be admitted that in this situation the threat to kill is not immoral. Indeed, anyone who recommends capital punishment for convicted murderers is allowing that such threats, if tempered by due process of law, are *not* immoral.

The difficulty with this example is that it does not truly reflect the structure of our present nuclear policy. Our policy is not to threaten a potential *murderer* with death in order to prevent him from murdering, and to execute *him* when he actually does murder, but rather to threaten *someone else* with death to prevent a potential murderer from attacking and to execute *someone else* when the murderer actually strikes. An American counterattack would be directed against the Russian people, and it is not the Russian people who would be ordering an attack on the American people. Similarly, if leaders in the United States ordered an attack on the Soviet Union, the Russian counterattack would fall on the American people and not on the leaders who ordered the attack. . . . In the present *détente*, the leaders of each side hold the population of the other hostage, and threaten to execute the hostages if the opposing *leaders* do not meet certain conditions. The proper moral examples, then, with which to analyze the *détente* should be the examples of hostage-taking.

3. Suppose that the Hatfields and the McCoy's live in an area sufficiently rural that disputes cannot be settled by appeal to a higher authority. For various reasons, the two families take a dislike to each other. Each family, let us assume, possesses hand grenades that could destroy the other family completely; and against these hand grenades there is no adequate defense. Each family, in what it considers to be a defensive move, kidnaps a child from the family of the other and holds it hostage. Each side wires its hostage to a device which will explode and kill the hostage if there is any loud noise nearby – such as the noise of a grenade attack or, what is not likely, but still *possible*, the accidental explosion of the captors' own grenades or the sounding of a nearby clap of

19. Douglas Lackey, 'Ethics and Nuclear Deterrence,' *Moral Problems*, ed. James Rachels, New York, Harper & Row, 1979, pp. 437-442.

thunder. This example, I believe, fairly represents the present policies of deterrence.

A defender of Hatfield foreign policy might justify himself as follows: 'We have no intention of killing the McCoy child, unless, of course, we are attacked. If we are attacked, we must kill him automatically (or else lose the credibility of this deterrent); but we feel that it is very unlikely that, under these conditions, any attack will occur. True, there is some small chance that the child will die by accident, but this is only a *small* chance, and so we have good reason to believe that this will not happen. At the same time, the presence of the hostage reduces the chance that the McCoy's will attack, relative to the chances of attack if we had taken no hostage. If the child dies, we cannot be blamed, since we had good reason to believe that he would not, and if he lives, we are to be commended for adopting a policy which has in fact prevented an attack.'

The moral reply here is obvious: the Hatfields have no *right* to seize the McCoy child, whatever dubious advantages they gain by seizing him. True they only *threaten* to kill him, but threatening to kill him increases the chance of his being killed, and they have no right to increase these chances. The moral repulsiveness of the Hatfield policy derives from its abuse of the innocent for dubious ends. Deterring the McCoy's in this manner is like deterring one's neighbours from running into you on the road by seizing their children and tying them to the front bumper of your car. . . . If everyone did this, accidents might decrease and, on balance, more lives saved than lost. Perhaps it could be predicted that the chances of a single child dying on a car bumper are slight; perhaps, by a miracle, no child would die. . . . Whatever the chances and whatever the gains, no one could claim the right to use a single child in this way. Yet it seems that the present American policy continues to use the entire Russian population in just this manner. . . .

4. The key step in the preceding criticism is that the Hatfields have no right to increase the chances of the McCoy child dying, and analogously the United States has no right to increase the chances of the Russian population dying. The threat is illicit if the threat is real. This leads to the interesting possibility that the threat is licit if it is fraudulent. Suppose that the United States says that it will counterattack if the Soviet Union attacks and gives every indication that it will counterattack (missile silos are constructed, submarines cruise the oceans, etc); but, in fact, unknown to anyone except the highest officials in the government, all the American warheads are disarmed and simply cannot go off. In this case the United States does not threaten, but merely *seems* to threaten to counterattack. If the chance of Russian attack is decreased, such a plan would have good results without the intrinsic repulsiveness of the present policy.

But this plan has practical and moral flaws. The practical flaw is that the bogus threat will not serve as a deterrent unless the Soviet Union *does* discover that, according to the usual analysis, the chances of war will be greatly increased. So, it is not obvious that this plan gives good results, since one must balance the decreased chance of war (if the Soviet Union respects the deterrent) against the increased chance of war (if the Soviet Union discovers that the deterrent is bogus). Furthermore, if this plan is successfully put into effect and the Soviet Union does not have a similar plan of its own, the bogus-warhead plan will result in high and wasteful Soviet expenditures and in an increased chance of accidental or deliberate attack from the Soviet side.

The chances of nuclear war have diminished considerably since the early 1960s; . . . our policies now are safer than they were then. But these improvements should not blind us to the inherent abhorrence of the present policies and the dangers that they pose. Mutual deterrence is neither rational, nor prudent, nor moral, compared to other policies that are not beyond the power of rational men. . . .

Questions: Lackey

1. Consider the following argument: While our enemies have nuclear weapons, and will not disarm, we cannot disarm and place ourselves at a disadvantage. On the other hand, if our enemies choose to disarm, we cannot disarm and thereby lose the advantage. Thus whatever our enemies do, we should not disarm. How would Lackey respond to this argument? How do you respond?
2. Is Lackey correct in arguing that anyone who justifies nuclear weapons is justifying tying a child to a bumper to prevent accidents?
3. In a speech made in the House of Commons on 10 November, 1932, Stanley Baldwin said: 'The only defence is offence which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy (can) if you want to save yourselves.' In an age of nuclear weapons, does such a strategy make sense?

SAMPLE

Questions: The Morality of War

1. Aquinas argues that a 'just' war involves the use of proper means (*debito modo*) to achieve victory. What do you consider 'proper means' to be? Should a distinction be made between moral and immoral weapons?
2. 'A nation's right to wage war is justified on the same grounds as the individual's right to kill in self-defence.' Discuss.
3. What moral distinctions should be made between the arguments for unilateral and multilateral disarmament?
4. Do you agree with Sir Hartley Shawcross when he said, at the Nuremburg trials, that 'there comes a point where a man must refuse to answer to his leader, if he is also to answer to his conscience.' When would that 'point' be reached for you?
5. Comment on President Truman's justification of the atomic bomb against Japan. What kind of argument is Truman employing? How far do you agree with him?

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, in so far as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction.

I realize the tragic significance of the atomic bomb.

Its production and its use were not lightly undertaken by this Government. But we knew that our enemies were on the search for it. We know now how close they were to finding it. And we knew the disaster which would come to this Nation, and to all peace-loving nations, to all civilization, if they had found it first.

That is why we felt compelled to undertake the long and uncertain and costly labor of discovery and production.

We won the race of discovery against the Germans.

Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretence of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

The atomic bomb is too dangerous to be let loose in a lawless world. That is why Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, who have the secret of its production, do not intend to reveal that secret until means have been found to control the bomb so as to protect ourselves and the rest of the world from the danger of total destruction.²⁰



Harry S Truman

20. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 9 August, 1945 (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1961) pp. 212-213

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