

John FINNIS, Joseph M. BOYLE and Germain GRISEZ, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

This truly remarkable book, written by three Christian moral thinkers, has much to say to us all, Christians and non-Christians alike, who think and argue about the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence. It also challenges every ethical philosopher: Indeed, this reviewer would claim that ethical systems which have no definite point of view with regard to the military policies of those states that have enough power to endanger the survival of humanity may be neglected by all. The thesis of the book is simple: "one acts to deter when one threatens to do something which another wants one not to do, so that the other will not do something one wants to prevent" (p. 3). The case under discussion is that of the governments of France, England and the United States, all three of whom (France most clearly, being weakest) threaten the Soviet Union with the infliction of "unacceptable losses" in human lives of non combatants to prevent the Soviet Union from endangering what these governments define as "their essential interests". In part I, a knowledgeable discussion of the evolution of the strategies of the USA is presented. It is shown beyond reasonable doubt that even after the introduction of supple and limited weapon systems, the "second strike" capability of destroying the larger part of Soviet population is always presupposed by the less severe threats added in the last fifteen years.

This "second strike" capability (and intentions) entails the conditional intention to kill innocents. An innocent is a person whose actions can by no means be construed as "proving that

the enemy society is at war". The book presupposes the common Western convictions: 1. Soviet Society is an evil society. 2. The Soviet Union is able and willing to impose its rule on the West. 3. Every person or group whose legitimate interests are attacked by force, have the right to defend themselves by force. 4. Consequently, the West has the duty and the right to defend its values by means of military power. 5. However if the enemy society, whose reign would be a very great evil, contains a large number of "non combatants" (children, elderly, workers in non military institutions etc.) these "non combatants" are innocents. 6. The conditional intention to kill innocents is absolutely prohibited by "common morality". 7. The nuclear deterrent is morally excluded by common morality's norm forbidding "intentional killing of the innocent" (p.96). 8. In consequence unilateral nuclear disarmament eliminating the "second strike capability" is an unconditional ethical duty.

Part II of the book is dedicated to spelling out this argument, defending it against objections. The foundation of the whole is "one may not intend what one may not do". One may not kill innocents; so one may not either unconditionally or conditionally intend to kill innocents. And not being permitted to intend killing them one may not, sincerely or insincerely (most probably sincerely), proclaim one's intention of killing them. Neither is one allowed to take such steps that may inevitably lead oneself or the enemy to the belief that one has the intention of killing innocents. What makes their case impressive is not just the fact that they are convinced of the dangers of Soviet Society and that they are non-pacifists. But it is also their awareness of all the "excuses" given in defence of nuclear deterrence: announcing intent will liberate one from the obligation of carrying it out; preparing the second strike makes it superfluous in all probability (or even with near certainty); the intent to do q, if p becomes true, entails a willingness to do q *now*, which would not be entailed by the statement "if p is true then we *would* carry out q.

However, it presupposes one basic datum: the existence of a clear and uncontested common morality. (Compatible with Jewish and Christian morality, but independent from it.)

Part III examines the attempts to justify the strategy of deterrence and the strategy of non deterrence by its consequences. Its presence here is probably due to the work of Gregory Kavka. To a large extent, he accepts "the common morality" of the present authors but argues that, in certain cases, it should not be applied because of general utilitarian principles. Nuclear deterrence is, according to him, one of these

cases. (Although it would be wrong to carry out the threat, the excellent consequences of having the arms available and making the threat justify present arms policy.) The reader will learn much from this discussion because it goes into the details of applying various decision making rules (e.g., maximin or maximize expected utility) to the arms race. The authors (p. 252) give clear reasons explaining why technical rationality calculations (exemplified by the various consequentialist arguments) cannot apply here. These reasons are of general importance for the ethical philosopher: "Cost-benefit analysis ... cannot settle the moral issue between unilateral disarmament and the maintenance of the threat of final retaliation. The relevant values and disvalues - e.g., liberty, life, death, slavery - are diverse in kind. They are not quantifiable, partly because both options bear not upon definite goals but upon the indeterminate future which involves incalculable contingencies. And none of the ends sought is independent of all features of the means used other than their efficiency, measurable costs and benefits". This remark (if true) entails among others the consequence that the principle used by "just war" theorists (e.g., Walzer) "the evil of the means must be proportionate to the prospective good effects of their use" can never be meaningfully employed because the proportionality cannot be calculated (p. 263-264).

One would have expected, after this long and competent discussion of teleological ethics as applied to nuclear deterrence, an equally long and detailed study of deontic ethics applied to the same problems. Obviously the hold of Kant on the anglo-saxon public is not strong enough, in the authors' judgment, to warrant such an undertaking. They dismiss deontic ethics rather briefly - too briefly according to this reviewer - stating (p. 275-276) that Kantian ethics must reject parts of "common morality" because the balance of terror can obviously (according to them!) "be willed as a universal law". If this is true, it reveals an important weakness in formalist deontic ethics and a serious weakness in Kant (who is well known as defender of "eternal peace"). Stronger arguments than those given are needed to show this.

Finally, part IV offers the authors' own account of the foundations of "common morality" that condemns the intention to carry out the nuclear threat. They develop a theory of *basic human goods*, obviously based on *basic human needs*, deriving it from *human nature as such*. This is obviously Aristotelean. (Their references to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, itself close to Aristotle, leave no doubt about this.) Given the basic needs (and goods) doctrine, the first principle of morality is (p. 283):

"one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with *integral human fulfillment*". From this basic norm other concrete norms are derived (e.g., the Golden Rule "Do not unto others what you do not want others to do unto thee", and "Do not do evil that good may come"). The deductive derivation of the rejection of nuclear deterrence follows (ch. XI, p. 299):

"the deterrent strategy necessarily involves the choice to destroy many instances of the good of human life, for the sake of the ulterior end of protecting many other instances of that good and of other goods, such as liberty, decent community and justice.

Therefore, assuming that human life is a basic good or that the choice to destroy it is a choice to destroy other goods that are basic, the deterrent strategy is morally wrong".

This reviewer, who fundamentally agrees with the conclusions of the authors and is certainly not inclined to attack the latter, still feels that arguing on the basis of "basic human needs", founded on "a historical human nature" should be buttressed by a more thorough defense of it. It must take into account the arguments that reject both the concept of "basic needs" and the related one of "invariants in human nature". Part III of the book (criticizing consequentialism) is sophisticated and detailed, but part IV runs all too fast. I certainly do not claim that no defense of the contentions of part IV could be set up. Quite the contrary. But, as things stand here, defenders of the nuclear deterrent could all too easily overthrow the whole building of the book.

I hope that I have said enough to encourage the study of this deeply felt, clearly written and precisely argued book about fundamental issues.

Only two remarks as side comments: one should like to consult philosophical works written from the point of view of the Soviet Union about the same matters. Is it not evident that "the West" can also be considered as a society dominated by evil (clothed in the garments of the 'good', or similar in that aspect to authors' description of the East). What would be the reaction of the Soviet writer, on the basis of *his "common morality" buttressed by the official dialectical materialism, to this "common morality", which is after all only Christianity in one of its interpretations, barely laicized? Only if, from the other side of the wall, similar books could reach us; if such works could cross the ideological abyss on other foundations could a small contribution be made by intellectual efforts in favor of the survival of man.*

Finally one should like proof for the consistency both of "common morality" and of "basic human needs". Hegel's view about the necessary contradictions between both is precisely what led him, in his *Phenomenologie des Geistes*, to the dialectics of the master and the slave. In the context of twentieth century foreign affairs, this might (or might not!) be construed as an implacable defense of nuclear deterrence.

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