

Banning the Bomb: Four Decades Too Late?

To make its research readily available to a broad audience, the Center for Philosophy and Public Policy publishes a quarterly newsletter: *QQ—Report from the Center for Philosophy and Public Policy*. Named after the abbreviation for “questions,” *QQ* summarizes and supplements Center books and working papers and features other selected work on public policy questions. Articles in *QQ* are intended to advance philosophically informed debate on current policy choices; the views presented are not necessarily those of the Center or its sponsors.

* * *

In this issue:

Four decades into the nuclear age, we may wish nuclear weapons could be uninvented. They can't be. But is there any way we can back away from the bomb without “banning” it altogether? p. 1

From the Center's Workshop on Teaching Philosophy and Public Policy:

Controversies over “restoring traditional American values” as a tool for teaching citizenship p. 5

An argument for politicizing the college classroom—and six guidelines for how to do it p. 8

How worried should we be about what our children are watching on TV—and about what's being sold to them as they watch? p. 11

Publication of *The Moral Foundations of Civil Rights* is announced p. 15

For forty-one years we have lived in “the shadow of the bomb,” and as nuclear arsenals multiply, the shadow lengthens. That nuclear holocaust would be an unspeakable catastrophe requires no argument. As the bumper sticker reminds us, “One nuclear bomb can ruin your whole day.” But the present state of nuclear deterrence, in which the superpowers aim tens of thousands of warheads at each other, is viewed by many as a nightmare in its own right, and a moral abomination.

In *The Abolition*, Jonathan Schell argues that by consenting to live under the doctrine of deterrence, “we bear responsibility not only for the lives of the people whom ‘we’ may kill but also for the lives of those whom ‘they’ would kill; namely, our families, our friends, and our other fellow-citizens. . . . Our acceptance of nuclear weapons is in that sense a default of parenthood, of love, of friendship, of citizenship. . . .” Quoting Khrushchev's remark following the Cuban missile crisis, that the smell of burning flesh was in the air, Schell observes, “in truth, that smell is never far from our nostrils now.”

Of course vast numbers of people carry on with their daily business for the most part oblivious to the realities of nuclear deterrence, giving little thought to the weapons targeted against them, less to the weapons their government targets against others. If this is so, then, according to Australian philosopher C.A.J. Coady, so much the worse, morally, for them. He likens those who avert their noses from the threat of nuclear incineration to those good German burghers who failed