



**Violence for Equality.**

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as an intelligent and sophisticated exposition of an unfashionable doctrine. Many of the historical insights (such as the discussion of the change in Thomism after Cajetan) are original and compelling in the extreme. As an example of the interaction of historical and philosophical reflection at a high level it should be on the shelves of every philosopher and historian of ideas.

RICHARD TUCK

*Violence For Equality.* By TED HONDERICH. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980. Pp. 223. Price pa. £1.95.)

*Violence for Equality* might be regarded as a paperback edition of Honderich's earlier book, *Three Essays on Political Violence* (Blackwell, 1977); except that the original three essays have now increased to five, and there is a consequent gain in the comprehension and coherence of the work as a whole.

Readers of *Three Essays on Political Violence* will know that Honderich's concern is with the moral justification of violence. Though he does not write from a Marxist perspective, nor from the committed point of view of any revolutionary ideology, Honderich finds a stronger case for the use of violence than most of us are willing to allow. That is what makes the book challenging.

Much of the interest comes from Honderich's skilful mustering of facts to support his case. The opening essay of the book, "On Inequality and Violence, and the Differences We Make Between Them", begins with a defence of the need for empirical premises if political philosophy is to be able to guide our decisions on political issues. Honderich deals with the issue briskly, assuming that his readers will need little convincing either of the need for facts in political philosophy, or of the claim that political philosophy should be able to guide our political decisions. In this he is probably — and happily — right. Quite recently it was daringly radical for academic moral and political philosophers to write normative works drawing on empirical data; now it is almost the established orthodoxy.

The particular data Honderich uses are those of life expectancy — a wise choice since, as Honderich points out, while the time one has alive is not all that matters, it obviously does matter a good deal. Moreover, they are about as objective as data on inequality can get. Honderich's tables show that people living in less developed countries, comprising about half the world's population, have lifetimes about 29 years shorter than the best-off quarter of the world's population, who live in developed countries. This information serves to put the shortening of lives inflicted by political violence into an unconventional perspective.

One might, of course, argue that those whose lives are shortened by poverty are not killed; they are at most not saved by those who have the resources to help them, or the political power to change the system that keeps them in poverty. In the first of the two new essays in the book, Honderich argues, along lines made familiar by writers like Jonathan Glover and James Rachels, that at least some of our omissions are as bad as some awful acts. Thus while Honderich — unlike the writers he generally follows in this area — is not concerned to deny the acts and omissions distinction any intrinsic moral significance, he does show that it is not only against those who use violence that the charge of "atrocious" can be laid. If the *status quo* is one in which the lives of hundreds of millions of people are many years shorter than they would be under a different social and economic system, those who could end this situation, but do not, are also responsible for an atrocity.

After an essay criticising Robert Wolff and John Rawls, Honderich then goes on to suggest that some "democratic violence" may be justified. By 'democratic violence' he means violence which serves the ends of freedom and equality, which attempts to

"coerce by persuasion" rather than by force, which seeks equality of influence instead of dominance, and the effects of which are likely to be a fuller realisation of democracy.

That is all very well, but one might wonder whether in the long run violence ever does serve the ends of freedom and equality, and whether it ever does lead to a fuller realisation of democracy. Honderich addresses these doubts in the final essay — the other new essay — of the book. This essay is promisingly entitled "Four Conclusions about Political Violence of the Left", but the reader who expects definite, clear-cut conclusions will be disappointed, for Honderich couches his conclusions either negatively, or in the vaguest terms. While no doctrine provides an effective argument against all violence (first conclusion) we cannot have any general assurance that a campaign of violence will turn out well (second conclusion). On the other hand we may be able to make lesser judgments, about particular campaigns of violence, which can be of value as guides to action (third conclusion). Unfortunately, Honderich does not say much about *how* to make such judgements. Finally we are told (fourth conclusion) that an increasing perception of the obligation of governments to end misery, and of their great failure to do so, "will be a recommendation of much violence". Not really much of a reward for more than two hundred pages discussing the moral justification of political violence.

Apart from the vagueness of his conclusions, Honderich might also be criticised in respect of the ethical basis of his argument. He does little to indicate the ethical foundations on which his justification of violence rests. Much of the argument is consistent with utilitarianism, yet Honderich goes out of his way to reject utilitarianism. He does so on the grounds that we can have no guarantee that utilitarianism will not sometimes lead us to act unjustly (p. 51). This seems to imply that we ought never to act unjustly in order to bring about good consequences. If this is Honderich's view however, it is hard to see how he can use the fact that political violence may end the atrocities of the *status quo* to justify political violence. For political violence typically involves the killing, or maiming, of the innocent, and hence is, I would have thought, clearly unjust. If Honderich is not saying that such injustice may sometimes be justified by its good consequences, I have totally failed to grasp what his argument is.

PETER SINGER

*Just and Unjust Wars: A moral argument with historical illustrations.* By MICHAEL WALZER. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980. Pp. xx+361. Price pa. £2.95.)

This remarkable book purports "to account for the ways in which men and women who are not lawyers but simply citizens (and sometimes soldiers) argue about war, and to expound the terms we commonly use" (Preface). But it is no essay in the sociology of ideas. Instead of attempting to elicit common assumptions from a variety of documents, it makes an often ingenious and provocative review of a rich diet of examples. It makes good reading both as an impassioned expression of Walzer's judgment of particular cases and as an exercise in political theory.

According to Walzer, "we want to live in an international society where communities of men and women freely shape their separate destinies. But that society is never fully realised; it is never safe; it must always be defended" (72). The picture is Lockean in that communities normally live at peace unless attacked by an aberrant aggressor and nationalist in that the destinies of individual, social loyalty and state are inseparably bound up to such an extent that "in most cases . . . fighting is the morally preferred response" to aggression (51). Walzer opposes the "legalist" insistence that one should never strike the first blow: pre-emption, intervention to support representative secessionist movements and attempts to rescue peoples facing genocide are all in his view justi-