

## On Justifying Violence

Kai Nielsen

University of Calgary

I discuss the justification of political violence even within democracies. I define 'violence' and indicate how its evaluative force sometimes has conceptually distorting effects. Though acts of violence are at least *prima facie* wrong, circumstances can arise where, even in democracies, some of them are morally justified. To establish this, three paradigm cases of non-revolutionary political violence are examined. The question is then discussed whether revolutionary violence is ever justified as a means of establishing or promoting human freedom and happiness. I state the conditions which must be satisfied for such violence to be justified and argue that sometimes these conditions have been satisfied. Finally I argue that discussions of violence are frequently confused by ideological mystification and attempt to go some way towards revealing the sources of that mystification.

Die rächende Hand des Terroristen kann die Desorganisation und Demoralisation des Absolutismus hie und da beschleunigen. Den Absolutismus stürzen und die Freiheit verwirklichen kann – mit dem Terror oder ohne den Terror – nur der Massenarm der revolutionären Arbeiterklasse . . .

Rosa Luxemburg, 1905

### I

I shall say more about the justification of violence than about its meaning. As a reading of the literature should drive home, there are indeed puzzles about its meaning and about the meaning of related terms such as force and coercion.<sup>1</sup> About this I shall say something which is hopefully reasonable but still tolerably superficial. But I shall not dwell on these matters for to do so would, I believe, be a distraction deflecting our attention from what I take to be the central issue about violence, namely a hard-nosed consideration of when, if ever, violence is justified. We, without conceptual analysis, understand the concept 'violence' well enough to come to grips with that question.

I shall also be concerned exclusively with political violence and the violence closely associated with it and I shall place my discussion about the justification of violence in the context of arguing about a socialist revolution and about counter-revolutionary activity against socialism. I do this both because of its intrinsic interest and because in such a live

context general questions about how and under what circumstances violence might be justified become clearer.

I am tolerably confident that in some deep way many will disagree with what I am going to say. Indeed, some may even think that I am being partisan. I shall face that issue directly at the end of this essay when I discuss the role ideology plays here. What I want initially to plead is that when you come across things that you are inclined to disagree with, and perhaps will not even want to hear, you try not to dismiss these considerations from your minds immediately, but ask yourselves these two quite distinct questions: first, if I have got the facts roughly right, shouldn't I draw the moral conclusions I in fact do draw? And then ask yourselves, as well, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, have I not got the facts roughly right? The first question is perhaps easier to answer, for it can be answered by reflecting carefully on how my arguments hang together and on your own considered moral responses. I believe that the second question can hardly be answered in the course of a day or a week but only after prolonged study. Much of this study will be historical, sociological, and economic. The understanding we need here requires more than moral sensitivity, an understanding of the functions of moral concepts and what it is to take the moral point of view. I do not mean by such a remark arrogantly to insinuate a superior 'know it all' posture. We all, and I feel this acutely myself, suffer from a kind of professional deformation here. But I do assert that to resolve with any firmness the fundamental moral questions I raise we need something of this knowledge. I do not say that meta-ethical expertise counts for nothing here, but I do think that it does not carry us very far in such contexts.<sup>2</sup> A philosopher complacent about his society and ignorant of such work will not, even if he exercises clearly the standard philosophical expertise, help us very much when we wrestle with such questions.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Mass-media talk of the role of terrorism and violence generally in human affairs tends to be emotional talk with a high level of ideological distortion. I shall try to clear the air here and establish that we cannot, unless we can make the case for pacifism, categorically rule out in all circumstances its justifiable use even in what are, formally and procedurally speaking, democracies. However, we must keep in mind that defending the thesis that sometimes the employment of violence is justified is not at all the same as defending terrorism, for terrorism is a particular tactic in the

employment of violence to achieve political ends. Moreover, socialist revolutionaries, as we shall see, have not generally regarded it as a good tactic. Yet, as Rosa Luxemburg – who wrote sanely and perceptively on this subject – realized, terrorism is a minor tactical weapon for revolutionary socialists, which *sometimes* may rightly be employed to achieve the humane ends of socialism but typically is counter-productive and often very harmful to a revolutionary movement. When and where it should be employed is a tactical question which must be decided – though not without some general guidelines (rules of thumb) – on a case-by-case basis. Soberly it should be viewed like the choice of weapons in a war. It cannot reasonably be ruled out as something to which only morally insane beasts or fanatical madmen would resort. In the cruel and oppressive world in which we find ourselves, it, as various other forms of violence, can find morally justifiable employments, though, typically, but not always, its use is a sign of weakness and desperation in a revolutionary movement and thus, in most contexts, but not all, it is to be rejected at least on prudential grounds.

It should hardly be necessary to add that a humane person, who understands what it is to take the moral point of view, will deplore violence, but – unless he thinks that pacifism can be successfully defended – he will recognize that *sometimes* the use of violence is a *necessary* means to a morally worthwhile end and that moral persons, while hating violence in itself, must, under these circumstances, steel themselves to its employment. Such morally committed human beings will, of course, differ as to when those occasions will occur and will often differ over what constitutes a morally worthwhile end.

I shall *assume* here that pacifism is not a rationally defensible moral position and that the achievement of a truly socialist society, consisting in a genuine workers' democracy with full workers' control of the means of production and the conditions of their lives, is a desirable state of affairs, a morally worthwhile end to achieve.<sup>4</sup> These assumptions are, of course, challengeable but on one occasion we cannot argue about everything. Given these assumptions, I shall first, after some preliminary clarifications, attempt to show under what conditions violence, even in a democracy, is justified, and then I shall, with the minor adjustments necessary, apply this analysis specifically to the problem of terrorism. I shall return in the latter sections to what I take to be a series of plausible objections to my account and I shall end by a discussion of what I take to be the central ideological mystifications that bedevil our talk of violence.

### III

Beginning at the beginning let us contrast 'violence', 'force', and 'coercion'. The OED characterizes them as follows:

1. 'Violence': The exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on or damage to persons or property. (However, the OED to the contrary notwithstanding, violence can also take psychological forms as when someone so tortures one mentally as to drive one mad.)
2. 'Force': To exert physical or psychological power or coercion upon one to act in some determinate way.
3. 'Coercion': Government by force; the employment of force to suppress political disaffection.

It is often said that it is important to distinguish between force and violence. And it is indeed true that 'violence' and 'force' are often not substitutable terms. They have different referents and a different sense. The OED to the contrary notwithstanding, violence is not just physical or psychological force (direct or indirect), but is, given its ordinary use, *by definition* illegal or unjustified force and indeed it is taken in many but not all contexts to be the unauthorized or the illegitimate use of force to effect decisions against the will of others. When 'violence' is so used, violence becomes immoral by definition. I think our language tricks us here and inclines us to view the world in an ideologically distorted manner. We should recognize that 'violence' generally has a negative emotive force. Indeed, it often functions normatively. To use it with respect to an action is to give to understand – as in 'acts of violence' or 'a violent era' – that the acts or periods in question are being disparaged or disapproved of. In the following sample utterances, we have standard employments of 'violence' and if 'force' were substituted for 'violence' in these utterances, there would be a change both in the emotive force and in the meaning of the utterances in question. To see that this is so, test out the substitution on (a), (b) and (c) below.

- (a) Bend every effort to prevent violence.
- (b) Do not allow well-considered goals to be obliterated by the passion of irrationality and violence.
- (c) There have been acts of violence against the administration.

Where 'force' is substituted for 'violence' in the above sample sentences there is a change in emotive force and a change in meaning. Moreover, with such substitutions, (a), (b) and (c) would become to a certain extent conceptually problematic; that is to say, they would be rather indeterminate in meaning; with such substitutions the above utterances will become deviant utterances. Native speakers would balk at them, and in many contexts be in some perplexity about what was being said.

In a similar vein, consider the fact that 'legal coercion' is quite unproblematic while 'legal violence' is not, though where the law was being used in a certain very oppressive and unfairly discriminatory way, we could come quite naturally to speak in that way. Coercion, like force, is something which is in a whole range of standard circumstances morally justified, but the very meaning of 'violence' – 'something which extremists do' – is such that there is a strong presumption that an act of violence is wrong. At least it is, like breaking a promise or lying, something which, everything else being equal, ought not to be done. And while there are contexts in which 'violence' is used in a commendatory way, it is not the case that we – except in rather unusual circumstances – employ 'violence' in morally neutral descriptions.

Let us come at our distinction between 'force' and 'violence' in a somewhat different way. Anarchists apart, everyone agrees that in certain circumstances a state has not only *de facto* authority (essentially power) but also *de jure* (legitimate) authority to coerce one's behaviour, to force one to comply with its laws. That is to say, states not only have a commanding position by virtue of their power and their ability to mould social opinion to get people within their territories to accept their authoritative claims – their laws, demands, and regulations – but they have – it is also generally believed – the *right* to command and to be obeyed. The claim to have a right to command and to be obeyed is the claim to have legitimate authority.

Where (if ever) a state uses *legitimate* authority and forces one to act in the ways prescribed by that authority, this use of force is plainly not violence. And the citizens of that state, committed to its fundamental principles, have a *prima facie* obligation to obey the laws of that state. I say '*prima facie* obligation', for no citizen has an absolute obligation to obey any law.<sup>5</sup> There may arise circumstances about particular laws or about the application of certain laws in certain circumstances in which obeying them would violate one's conscience or in which in some other way it would be plainly a grave mistake to obey the law. In such circumstances

one's prima facie obligation – which is an *ever-present* but still *conditional* obligation – is overridden by more stringent moral considerations. But one, at least in most circumstances, does have a prima facie obligation to obey the laws of the state if that state has established its *legitimate* as well as its *de facto* authority.

A very central question in political philosophy – a question which I shall not try to answer here – is when, if ever, does a state have legitimate authority over us? *Assuming* that anarchism is mistaken (an assumption which should not be easily made), and assuming, as well, that in certain favoured circumstances a state has, generally speaking, *legitimate* authority over us, the question then becomes when, under what circumstances and with what limitations, does it have the right to exercise such authority? That is to say, when does it have the *right* to force our compliance and when has it exceeded its legitimate authority?

When it has exceeded its legitimate authority and still exercises force on people, then, where that force causes or threatens grave harm, the force is a form of violence. Thus, there is a legitimate point in speaking, as Marcuse does, of 'institutionalized violence' to characterize the use of state force in such circumstances. And here this violence, though it uses the coercive arm of the state, is also something to be disparaged and to be called 'illegitimate'. However, it is reasonable to maintain, as John Rawls and Marshall Cohen have, that as citizens of a constitutional democracy, we have a duty to support constitutional arrangements on which others in our society have relied 'so long as it is reasonable to believe that these arrangements are intended to implement, and are capable of implementing, the principles of freedom and justice'.<sup>6</sup> But when the state takes measures which repress the principles of freedom and social justice it is engaging in institutional violence and we have no obligation to follow such dictates, though prudence may require that we accept for the time being at least certain of its arrangements.

Our inspection of the very connotation of the term 'violence' indicates that 'acts of violence' are acts which are usually taken by the people who *so label them* as not only illegal acts but also as morally unjustified acts; but it does not follow that under *all circumstances* 'acts of violence' – even under that description – are unjustified. Surely they are prima facie unjustified, for to inflict harm or injury upon persons or their property is always something which needs a careful rational justification or else it is plainly wrong. For to be injured or harmed is plainly to have something done to one which is bad. However, what is prima facie wrong need not be

something which is wrong everything considered. We need to consider the circumstances in which such acts would not be acts which are acts which are everything considered wrong.

There are two diverse types of circumstances in which questions concerning the justification of violence need discussing. We need to discuss (1) revolutionary violence – the violence thought necessary to overthrow the state and to bring into being a new and better or at least a putatively better social order – and (2) violence within a state when revolution is not an end at least in the foreseeable future, but violence is only being used as a key instrument of social change within a social system which as a whole is accepted as legitimate or at least as established and with a *de facto* authority. It is often argued that in the latter type of circumstance, particularly when the authority of the state is taken to be legitimate, a resort to violence is never justified, when the state in question is a democracy.

Let us first try to ascertain whether this is so. Consider first a situation in which a democratic state is engaging in institutionalized violence. Suppose, for example, there is heightened trouble in the Black community. It takes the form of increased rioting in the Black ghettos, and suppose further that it is not adequately contained within the ghettos, but that sporadic rioting, not involving killing but some destruction of property, breaks out into White middle-class America. Suppose further that there are renewed, ever more vigorous cries for 'law and order' until finally a jittery, reactionary but still (in the conventional sense) 'democratically elected' government begins systematically to invade the Black ghettos and haul off Blacks in large numbers to concentration camps (more mildly 'detention centres') for long periods of incarceration ('preventative detention') without attempting to distinguish the guilty from the innocent. Would not Black people and their allies plainly be justified in resorting to violence to resist being so detained in such circumstances if: (a) they had good reason to believe that their violent resistance might be effective, and (b) they had good reason to believe that their counter-violence would not cause more injury and suffering all round than would simple submission or non-violent resistance to the violence directed against them by the state?

It might be replied that even in such appalling circumstances the Blacks should non-violently resist and fight back only through the courts, through demonstrations, through civil disobedience and the like. They should not meet this institutionalized violence with violence. Perhaps initially they should do something like that, but if the counter-violence continues and the camps begin to fill up without the above non-violent efforts producing any

effective countervailing forces then the employment of violence against these repressive forces is morally justified if the conditions described at the end of the previous paragraph obtain.

In such circumstances there would be nothing unfair or unjust about violently resisting such detention. Violence and not just force has been instituted against the Blacks – the state having exceeded its legitimate authority – and the Blacks are not behaving unfairly or immorally in resisting an abuse of governmental authority – democracy or no democracy. In deliberation about whether to counter the institutional violence directed against them, the Blacks and their allies should make tough and careful utilitarian calculations, as difficult as they are to make. They need, to utilize such calculations, to try to ascertain as accurately as they can, both their chances of effectively resisting and the comparative amounts of suffering involved for them and for others from resistance as distinct from submission or passive resistance. If in resisting police seizure some police are likely to be injured or even killed, and if this means massive retaliations in the form of the police gunning down large groups of Blacks, and if the concentration camps are not modelled on Auschwitz, but on American or Canadian war-time camps for Japanese North Americans, it would seem to be better to submit and to live to fight another day. However, if instead the likelihood was that even in submitting, extensive brutalization and indeed death for many, if not all, would be their lot, then violent resistance against such a ‘final solution’ is in order if that is the most effective way to lessen the chance of seizure. Indeed, that is a move of desperation, but then the situation is itself a desperate one. What people faced with such morally obscene government behaviour should actually do is plainly something that cannot be rationally resolved by conceptual analysis. What we need to do here is to go carefully case by case. A clear understanding of what in each situation are the empirical facts is of central importance here. But what is evident – to put it minimally – is that there is no principled reason in such circumstances why even in a democracy counter-violence in response to institutionalized violence cannot be justified. (To say ‘If such basic liberties are being so denied we no longer have a democracy’ is to make ‘democracy’ very much an honorific term, for there still under such circumstances could be majority rule and some constitutional legalistic claims that liberties, in such an emergency, given the clear and present danger, were not being unjustly restricted. I shall return to this problem in my next section.)

Let us turn to a somewhat more complicated situation. Suppose a



democratic superpower is waging a genocidal war of imperialist aggression against a small underdeveloped nation. Suppose this superpower has invaded them without even declaring war; suppose further it pursues a scorched earth policy destroying the land with repeated herbicidal doses, destroys the livestock, pollutes the rivers (killing the fish), and then napalms the people of this country, civilian and military alike. Suppose within the borders of the superpower repeated protests and civil disobedience have no effect on the policies of this superpower. It goes right on rolling along with its genocide and imperialist aggression. Suppose, further, in such a situation some conscientious and aroused citizens – but still non-revolutionary citizens – of this superpower turn to acts of violence aimed in some small measure at disrupting and thus weakening this institutionalized violence. Specifically, suppose they burn down draft offices and officers' training offices and thereby in some small way hamper the power's war effort. It does not at all seem evident to me (to put it conservatively) that they have done what in such circumstance they ought not to do, provided that the circumstances are as I have described them and that the effects of their actions do hold some reasonable promise of hampering the war effort. (Even if their actions were mainly symbolic and in reality did little to slow down the violent juggernaut, they might still reasonably be thought to be admirable provided they had a clear moral intent and did not in effect enhance the power of the juggernaut.)

Clearly there is nothing unprincipled about the resort to such violence in such a circumstance. Again the centrally relevant considerations would be for the most part, but not necessarily decisively or exclusively, utilitarian ones. We would need in the particular circumstances to weigh carefully what would be the probable consequences of resorting to such violence. If, on the one hand, only more suffering all round would result, then resort to such violence is wrong; if, on the other hand, such acts of violence are likely to lessen the sum total of human suffering and not put an unfair burden on some already cruelly exploited people, then the violence is justified.<sup>7</sup>

The agonizing and frightening thing is that in many situations it is exceedingly difficult even to make an educated guess concerning the probable consequences of such actions.<sup>8</sup> But this is not always the case, and again it is evident that there is no principled reason why a committed democrat in a state with a democratically elected government might not be justified in certain circumstances in engaging in violence even though no violence had been directed against him or his fellow citizens.

Let me now turn to a less extreme situation as my third and last example. Suppose a small, impoverished, ill-educated ethnic minority in some democratic society has its members treated as second-class citizens. They are grossly discriminated against in educational opportunities and over jobs; they are segregated in specific and undesirable parts of the country; they are not allowed to marry people from other ethnic groups or to mix socially with these other groups. Their living conditions are such that their very life expectancy is considerably lower than that of other citizens in that democracy. For years they have pleaded and argued their case but to no avail; moreover, working through the courts has always been a dead-end, and their desperate and despairing turn to non-violent civil disobedience has been tolerated – as the powerful and arrogant can tolerate it – but still utterly ignored. It isn't that such demonstrations have been met with violence; they have simply been non-violently contained and then effectively ignored. And finally suppose that this small, weak, desperately impoverished minority has no effective way of emigrating; they cannot in reality exercise the choice of 'Love it or leave it'. In such a circumstance is it at all evident that they should not act violently in an attempt to attain what are in effect their human rights?

It is again evident that there is no principled reason why it should not be true that certain acts of violence on their part are justified. The strongest reasons for their not so acting are the prudential ones that since they are so weak and their oppressors are so indifferent to their welfare and dignity, it makes it the case that the chance of their gaining anything by violent action is rather minimal. But again the considerations here are pragmatic and utilitarian. If there were good reason to think that their human rights might be secured and to think that human welfare – a justly distributed human happiness, the satisfaction of needs and the avoidance of suffering – would be enhanced by their acts of violence, then they would be justified in so acting. (Perhaps they would be justified in so acting just to secure their human rights, but, if the latter condition obtained as well, it would be even more evident that their actions were justified.)

From what we have done so far, we can draw the following conclusions. Though violence is something which is *prima facie* to be avoided, there are no adequate grounds for believing that a conscientious citizen committed to democracy and living in a democratic society must always, no matter what the situation in that society, commit him- or herself to non-violent methods.

#### IV

There are several quite perfectly natural objections to make at this juncture.

1. It might be expected that where there actually are such situations as those characterized in my examples we would not be living in a democracy, but either in a tyranny or, as in the last example, in something approximating a tyranny or at least an unbenevolent despotism. However, if we take anything like a descriptive view of democracy, and if we consider all the forms of democracy that C. B. Macpherson describes in *The Real World of Democracy*, or even the varieties he counts under 'liberal democracy', it is not so evident that societies with the features I characterized would not count as 'democracies'. Democracies in bad shape no doubt, but still democracies.<sup>9</sup>

'Democracy' like 'science' is frequently an honorific label, and where it is, we will be inclined to say – at the same time showing that we are in effect utilizing a *persuasive* definition of 'democracy' – that such societies surely would not be *real* democracies. But here democracies which are not 'real democracies' are still democracies. We are saying in effect, in utilizing such a manner of speaking, that those democracies, which we refuse to call 'real democracies', lack certain features that we regard as very precious and as crucial in a democracy. But 'democracy' is also a descriptive, open-textured term with a range of different applications. And within the range of such standard applications societies with features such as I have described would be properly called 'democracies'. Finally, it is a mute point whether or not some industrial democracies of the recent past or the present actually have at least most of these features.

2. It is also natural to object that while I may have shown that it *could* be the case – if certain conditions were to obtain and certain consequences to follow – that, even in a democracy, violence would be justified, still, *as a matter of fact, the consequences* of acting violently in such situations would not be such as to justify violence of any sort. That is to say, it is *conceivable* that such violence would be justified but in reality it never is justified.

To this it needs in turn to be replied, that once this much is admitted, there can no longer be any general *principled* moral objection to all acts of violence in a democracy. Rather, if the above claim about violence in fact never being justified is true, it only establishes the very weak conclusion that, even in those situations in which one would be tempted to resort to

violence, *in fact* it so turns out that violence would be counter-productive. But the facts – plain empirical facts – could well have turned out to be otherwise. And indeed in our complex changing world it might have turned out to be otherwise. There is no deep moral impediment to such violence. What we should or should not do rests on our very fallible estimates of the probable results of various alternative courses of action.

It is surely the case that if violence becomes a frequent thing, something threatened or engaged in routinely, it would have the terrible consequence of undermining human liberty and even a minimal kind of security. In a genuinely democratic community (if there are any such yet), resort to violence can only be justified in extreme situations and can never be justified as something we should do as a matter of course. It may be the case that violence is as American as cherry pie and as pervasive in America as racism, but this is hardly something to make even more extreme by the casual use of violence. Such a resort to violence would, among other things, clearly be counter-productive.

However, in arguing that violence – including acts of terror – may sometimes be justified, it would not be reasonable to take the position Sidney Hook arbitrarily sets up as a strawman and then proceeds – predictably enough – to demolish, namely that ‘violence and the threat of violence are always effective in preparing the minds of men for change’.<sup>10</sup> That is indeed not a reasonable position, but it does not at all follow from this, as Hook gives to understand, that it is never the case in democracies, and for democrats, that violence is justified. It does not even – as Hook suggests – follow from his above argument, nor is it in any other way justified by his argument, that resort to violence in a democracy is always or almost always counter-productive. Pointing out, as Hook does, that there have been many instances in which significant social changes have been gained without violence, the threat of violence, or even the fear of violence, is (by contrast) to make a relevant comment, but it does little to establish that in a democracy violence is never, or even hardly ever, justified, either prudentially or morally. That would be like trying to establish that one was never justified in taking radiation treatment as a cure for cancer by pointing out that people have been cured of cancer by less drastic methods of treatment. That would only be a good argument if there were good reasons to believe that the kind of cancers that people have are all of a type. If Hook could show that there were significant similarities between the types of cases where significant social changes occurred within a reasonable length of time without resort to violence or

the threat of violence and my above cases and the many other at least putatively justified cases that could be mentioned where violence occurred, then his argument would be a strong one. But he has done nothing of the kind. What Hook needs to do is to show us that in situations – such as the ones I described – where violence appears at least to be required or appears at least to be the best alternative (the lesser evil), appearances are deceiving and in reality its employment is always very likely to be counter-productive.

We need not be hypothetical in our cases here. Among the bourgeois democracies Sweden is one of the most stable and probably the most thoroughly liberal and progressive; yet in 1931 a key bit of labour violence was critical in its progressive political evolution. There was an extended strike in portions of Sweden's lumber industry when workers were actually threatened with a wage cut. Finally, some factory owners brought in strike breakers. In a factory at Aladen, where this strike-breaking was going on, the workers attacked the strike breakers in the factory and drove them out. No guns or weapons were used. The factory owners brought in more strike breakers and persuaded the government to send troops to protect them. The workers then marched peacefully to the factory where the troops were on guard. The troops opened fire on the demonstrating workers. Many innocent people were killed and this triggered a general strike across Sweden and provoked widespread indignation against the business-dominated conservative government. The conservative government fell and Sweden's social democracy began.

Perhaps such a progressive achievement would have come about anyway without the violence but it is not at all evident that it would have, and very likely it would have been slower. Here violence furthered human welfare and social justice generally, though I do not think that we should go so far as to claim it was indispensable to its achievement. But it did crack a reactionary government supporting rigid class divisions. Hook tells us that violence breeds violence and starts an endless cycle of violence. But here in a crucial case nothing like this obtained and freedom, as Hook also alleges, was not imperilled but was extended and enhanced, and orderly and democratic procedures remained fully exemplified in Swedish life.

Chronic and pervasive violence is, of course, destructive of social stability and the fabric of confidence and trust essential for civilized society. But it is at least reasonable to believe that this is not the result of the kind of in-the-extreme-case-utilization of violence of the committed democrat in an imperfectly democratic society. The above example of

violence in Sweden serves to support my point.

If, by contrast, things had so deteriorated that reasonable, properly informed people found it necessary or even strongly tempting to engage repeatedly in violence, the society in question would have already so badly crumbled – so rent its social fabric – that talk of protecting social stability and orderly procedure would in effect come to a recommendation to support a rotten regime. Violence is not something that sane men will lightly engage in, particularly when it is directed against the government. Things must be in a very bad way indeed for reasonable people seriously to consider such acts. They must grow out of a desperation about the quality of life in such a society. Social tranquillity and stability have already fled. In a situation which has grown so repressive it is utterly mistaken to argue, as Hook does, that we must resist violence in order to promote stability and social harmony. It is more likely in such a chaotic and repressive situation that only after the social order has been transformed by a social revolution building on violence, will social stability and a civilized life be part of that society. If the fight to radically transform the power structures in place is a protracted one, social tranquillity and an absence of all repressiveness will not be quick in happening or easy to maintain. But the processes have been set in motion and the aim remains to attain a non-repressive society.

## V

I shall now turn to a discussion of the justifiability and use of violence to attain a revolutionary transformation of society. The central question I want to ask is the question posed in Herbert Marcuse's essay, 'Ethics and Revolution'.<sup>11</sup> The question is this: 'Is the revolutionary use of violence justifiable as a means for establishing or promoting human freedom and happiness?' The answer I shall give – and it is also the answer Marcuse gives – is that under certain circumstances it is justified.

To discuss this question coherently, we need first to make tolerably clear what we are talking about when we speak of 'revolution'. In speaking of revolution we are speaking of 'the overthrow of a legally established government and constitution by a social class or movement with the aim of altering the social as well as the political structure'.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, we are talking of a 'left revolution' and not a 'right revolution', where the revolutionary aim is to enhance the sum total of human freedom and happi-

ness. (I think in this context it is well to remind ourselves of a point made by Marcuse in 'Liberation from the Affluent Society', namely, that 'without an objectively justifiable goal of a better, a freer human existence, all liberation must remain meaningless'.<sup>13</sup> If there are no objectively justifiable moral principles, all talk of progress, social evolution, justifiable revolution and justifiable revolutionary violence becomes senseless.)

It is also worth stressing again these general points. Reasonable and humane human beings will be against violence generally, but this does not mean that in some circumstances they will not agree that violence is justified. However, to be justifiable the violence must be publicly defensible. That is to say, it must be such that in appropriate contexts the person advocating or defending the violence in question would be prepared to publicly advocate it and accept that, if it is indeed justified, it must be so justifiable to rational persons committed to humane and universalistic moral ends. (The appropriate circumstances are surely not those in which the state has, in effect, set its police and legal forces to trap and destroy the advocat e.)

We should also remember that violence, like rationality, is something that admits of degree, and again of kind. It is, for example, extremely important to distinguish between violence against property and violence against persons. The sacking of an ROTC office is one thing; the shooting of an ROTC officer is another. And it is surely evident that violence of any considerable magnitude – particularly when it is against persons – is not justified as a purely symbolic protest against injustice. (This is even more evident when the persons in question are innocent.) There must be some grounds for believing this protest will have an appropriate beneficial effect. It is – concentration-camp-type circumstances apart – both immoral and irrational to engage in violence when all is in vain, for this merely compounds the dreadful burden of suffering. Bernard Gert is surely right in saying that 'neither purity of heart nor willingness to sacrifice oneself justifies violence, and it is even clearer that attempts to ease one's conscience do not do so'.<sup>14</sup> Rather, for violence, revolutionary or otherwise, to be justified, it must be reasonably evident that the evil being prevented by the violence is significantly greater than the evil caused. That is to say, on the plausible assumption that we want life to continue, and continue in some optimal way, we need adequate reasons for believing that, everything considered, the violence will prevent more death, pain, misery, servitude, and degradation than it causes. Though sometimes, when much violence is involved on either side and we have no way of

tallying up the consequences, we will have to act rather blindly on what we expect and hope will be, everything considered, the most humane course. In defending engaging in revolutionary violence, reasonable and humane persons will require, for the situation in question, specific good reasons for believing that in that situation more evil will be prevented by violence than by refraining from such violent revolutionary acts. As Marcuse stresses, a revolutionary movement, in advocating the use of violence, must 'be able to give rational grounds for its chances to grasp real possibilities of human freedom and happiness and it must be able to demonstrate the adequacy of its means for obtaining this end'.<sup>15</sup> If there are equally adequate alternative non-violent means, it must use them. Surely the American Marxist, Daniel De Leon, was plainly right in declaring that if it were possible, a peaceful and constitutional victory for socialism, provided it was still the same kind of socialism, is preferable to a victory achieved through violence. Whether this is at all achievable, is another matter. The experience of the Allende experiment can hardly make us sanguine. But it is a commonplace that, everything else being equal, non-violence is preferable to violence. However, it should also be a commonplace that 'everything else may not be equal'. Indeed typically it is not. It is rather improbable, given the stakes between the contending classes, that there is any very considerable likelihood of a non-violent transition to socialism. For socialists to build a political strategy around that possibility would be Utopian. The ruling class is not likely to relinquish its privileges and control of society without a fight.

Marcuse remarks that traditionally the end of government 'is not only the greatest possible freedom, but also the greatest possible happiness of man, that is to say, a life without fear and misery, and a life in peace'.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not this is, as Marcuse thinks, 'a basic concept of political philosophy', is less important than the fact that, classical or not, it is of critical importance. In asking whether the revolutionary use of violence is a justifiable means for establishing or promoting human freedom and happiness, we must, Marcuse points out, ask ourselves the difficult question whether there are 'rational criteria for determining the possibilities of human freedom and happiness available to a society in a specific historical situation'.<sup>17</sup> Can we ever establish in any historical situation that revolutionary violence would further human freedom and happiness more adequately than any of the other available alternatives?<sup>18</sup> We must ask ourselves, given the technical and material progress at a particular time, what is the likelihood that the future society, as envisioned by the re-



volutionaries, will come into being, sustain itself in a form which is distinct from the already existing society, and utilize the technical and material advances available or reasonably possible in such a way as to substantially increase human freedom and happiness. We must make rough historical calculations here. We must (1) consider 'sacrifices exacted from the living generation on behalf of the established society', (2) 'the number of victims made in defense of this society in war and peace, in the struggle for existence, individual and national', (3) consider the resources of the time – material and intellectual – which can be deployed for satisfying vital human needs and desires, (4) consider whether the revolutionary 'plan or program shows adequate promise of being able to substantially reduce the sacrifices and the number of victims'.<sup>19</sup>

If we turn, with such considerations in mind, to the great revolutions of the modern period, namely the English and French revolutions, and if we keep in mind how impossible it would have been for modern conditions to have come into existence without those revolutions, it is evident that 'in spite of the terrible sacrifices exacted by them' these revolutions greatly enlarged the range of human freedom and happiness. As Marcuse well puts it:

Historically, the objective tendency of the great revolutions of the modern period was the enlargement of the social range of freedom and the enlargement of the satisfaction of needs. No matter how much the social interpretations of the English and French Revolutions may differ, they seem to agree in that a redistribution of the social wealth took place, so that previously less privileged or underprivileged classes were the beneficiaries of this change, economically and/or politically. In spite of subsequent periods of reaction and restoration, the result and objective function of these revolutions was the establishment of more liberal governments, a gradual democratization of society, and technical progress.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, as Marcuse continues:

these revolutions attained progress in the sense defined, namely, a demonstrable enlargement of the range of human freedom; they thus established, in spite of the terrible sacrifices exacted by them, an ethical right over and above all political justification.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, when it is the case – as sometimes it has been the case with revolutions – that, everything considered, the sum total of human misery and injustice has been lessened by a violent revolution more than it could have been in any other achievable way, then that revolution and at least some (though very unlikely all) of its violence was justified, if not, not.<sup>22</sup>

## VI

In this context, we should view terrorism as a tactical weapon, which may or may not be employed, in achieving a socialist revolution. 'Terrorism' and 'terrorist', we should not forget, are highly emotive terms. Burke referred to terrorists as hell-hounds and the word 'terrorist' is often, when used in ideological dispute, simply a term of abuse. Partially emotively neutralizing the terms, we shall, as Marxists generally do, confine the notion of a terrorist to someone who attempts to further political ends by means of coercive intimidation. We shall view terrorism as a systematic policy designed to achieve such ends in such a manner. On that OED definition of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist', the American government and its minions in Indo-China, Nicaragua, and Chile were, and in Chile still are, prime examples of terrorist organizations because this is exactly what they did. (Recall that in Chile some ten thousand to twenty-five thousand people have been killed by the Junta. There were, even as late as 1974, six thousand political prisoners some of whom have been brutally tortured. Slums were bombed during the counter-revolution and even potential socialist leaders are still being hunted and rounded up in the remote villages.) But terrorism has typically – revealingly enough – been talked about in reference to Left revolutionaries such as the Jacobins during the French Revolution, certain extreme revolutionary groups in Russia during the late nineteenth century and the Red Brigades in contemporary Italy.<sup>23</sup> I shall view terrorism here in the context of socialist revolutionary activity and not consider it in the theoretically less interesting but humanly more distressing (to put it mildly) context of the truly massive terror and violence of conservative counter-revolutionary activity. (Argentina, Indonesia, and South Africa are good current examples of what I am talking about.) I want, rather, to get clear about the place of terrorism in a socialist revolution.

It is rarely the case, in such a context, that terrorist acts of assassination – as distinct from the massive acts of terroristic repression utilized by brutalitarian governments – can make any serious difference to the achievement of a revolutionary class consciousness and finally the achievement of a socialist society. Rather – as happened after the terrorist assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 – reaction sets in even more fiercely. In the abortive Russian revolution in 1905 terrorists took an active part. But they were hardly a major instrument of it; rather, they were, in Rosa Luxemburg's apt phrase, merely some shooting flames in a

very large fire. Their presence neither made nor broke the revolution. By contrast, the terrorist acts of the Milan Anarchists in March of 1921, after the disillusioning failure of the general strike, are perhaps characteristic of the futility of many terrorist actions – actions which typically result from desperation and weakness. They bombed a theatre, killing twenty-one people and injuring many more without achieving anything in the way of revolutionary or even progressive ends. Rather, this act alienated many workers from the anarchists and provided Mussolini's Fascists with still a further excuse to take action against the Left.<sup>24</sup>

Like all acts of violence in a political context, terrorist acts, if they are to be justified at all, are to be justified by their political effects and their moral consequences. They are justified (a) when they are politically effective weapons in the revolutionary struggle, and (b) when, everything considered, we have sound reasons for believing that, by the use of that type of violence, there will be less injustice, suffering, and degradation in the world than if violence were not used or some other form of violence was used. Surely, viewed in that light, terrorist acts are usually not justified, though in principle they could be and in some circumstances perhaps are, e.g. in the Algerian revolution against France, in the South Vietnamese resistance to American invasion and occupation, and in the revolutionary struggles of a few years ago in Mozambique and Angola. They are perhaps justified today in the struggles in Southern Africa. At the very least, these are the type of circumstances in which such questions become very real indeed.

However, even here we must be careful to keep distinct, on the one hand, individual or small group acts of terror to provoke revolutionary action or to fight back against a vicious oppressor – the paradigm terrorist actions – and, on the other, terrorism as a military tactic in an on-going war of liberation. For any army, vastly inferior in military hardware but with widespread popular support, terrorism in conjunction with more conventional military tactics, might very well be an effective tactic to drive out an oppressor. It is in this context that we should view such acts in South Vietnam during the American occupation and in Algeria. Where we have a less extensive struggle it may still very well be justified. But the terrorist tactics of the F.L.Q., the Weathermen, or (probably) the Irish Provisionals are something else again. They seem in the grossest pragmatic terms to have been counter-productive. We have the horror and the evil of the killings without the liberating revolutionary effect – an effect which would be, morally speaking, justified, where all human interests and other viable

alternatives are considered, if the likelihood would be of preventing on balance far more human suffering and oppression in the future. (In these last cases it is very unlikely.)

Generalizing more extensively, but making a similar point, the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm writes:

The epidemic of Anarchist assassinations and bomb-throwings in the 1880's and 1890's, for instance, was politically more irrelevant than the big-game hunting of the period. In all likelihood, the last ten years' political killings and shootings in the U.S.A. have not substantially changed the course of American politics; and they include the two Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, the Nazi George Lincoln Rockwell and Governor Wallace. I don't claim that political assassination cannot possibly make a difference, only that the list of 20th century acts of this kind, which is by now extremely long and varied, suggests that the odds against its doing so are almost astronomical. And if we take the case of the 250 or so aircraft hijackings of recent years, what these have achieved is at most some financial extortion and the liberation of political prisoners. As a form of activity, hijacking belongs to the gossip column of revolutionary history, like 'expropriation', as it's called – that is to say, political bank robbery. So far as I am aware, the only movements which have systematically used hijacking for political purposes are sections of the Palestine guerrillas; and it doesn't seem to have helped them significantly.<sup>25</sup>

The best case to be made for the effective use of terrorist tactics – apart from their use in an on-going war of liberation where there are actually opposed forces in the field – was in their rather extensive use in the latter part of the nineteenth century against Tsarist autocracy, though even there, as we have already noted, the case, at least in the early phases, is not very good. The Tsar had absolute power and was very much of a father-figure in Russia. Russian Absolutism was vicious in the extreme and some of the Tsar's ministers and police chiefs were particularly vicious. It was against this autocratic brutalitarianism that the Russian revolutionary anarchists directed their terror. (It should be noted here in passing that not all anarchists are terrorists.) One could see the point in assassinating the Tsar or his hangmen, but nonetheless even under such circumstances such terrorist activity did little to hasten the fall of Russian Absolutism. The relevant criteria for judging terrorist activity are its consequences – consequences in achieving the lessening of suffering, degradation, injustice, and in achieving liberty and a decent life for oppressed people. By these criteria even these Russian terrorist acts, directed against such a brutal and oppressive regime, may not have been justified.

There is no doubt, with many people at least, that there occurs a sense of moral satisfaction – a sense of justice having been done – when some

thoroughly tyrannical brute has been gunned down by revolutionary terrorists or money for the poor has been extracted from the ruling class through political kidnappings, but again, as Rosa Luxemburg coolly recognized, this sense of moral satisfaction has been harmful to the cause of a socialist revolution. It tends to lull people into inaction through a sense of satisfaction that justice has been done. People are very likely to be deceived by such actions into believing that something effective is being done. In finding some hope in such terroristic activity, people are less likely to come to see the absolute necessity (*absolute Notwendigkeit*), in making a socialist revolution, for building up a mass proletarian base of class-conscious and committed workers.

We must be careful here not to overstate – as Hobsbawm is on the verge of doing – the case against revolutionary terrorism. Writing in 1905 and speaking of Russian terrorism, Rosa Luxemburg very judiciously observed that, while terrorism could not by itself bring an end to Russian Absolutism, it did not at all follow that therefore it was a morally pointless and pragmatically unjustified activity. Luxemburg contended that in Russia the attaining of bourgeois liberties was an essential stage on the way to a *Volksrevolution*. And in turn it is crucial to recognize that without such a mass movement, emerging after the revolutionary activities initiated by the terrorists, the downfall of Russian autocracy would not have occurred. But even after such a mass movement was in place, this does not mean, in such a situation in Russia, that terrorist acts were always, or even typically, senseless or useless – that they could not have been a causal factor in bringing about the downfall of the Tsar's oppressive regime. Terrorism can serve the rather minor role, once mass revolutionary activity has started, of helping the proletariat to fight back in their on-going struggle with their oppressors and, in such a situation, it can also be used appropriately as a tactic to force such a brutal Absolutism into making concessions to the proletariat. It is one way, and a way which sometimes may be effective, in which the proletariat can fight back in their day-to-day struggles with their oppressors. Here terrorism is a weapon in the struggle to meet attempts to suppress 'the revolution with blood and iron'.<sup>26</sup> However, as Rosa Luxemburg goes on to say, as soon as Absolutism recognizes the ineffectiveness of such a use of force and, no matter how vacillatingly and indecisively, enters the road of constitutional concessions to the proletariat, then, just to that degree, terroristic tactics will lose their effectiveness and their rationale. Indeed, when considerable concessions are made, its role will be altogether finished and a second phase of the revolution will have begun.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, while Rosa Luxemburg recognizes that 'the avenging [*rächende*] hand of the terrorists can hasten the disorganization and demoralization or Absolutism', it remains the case that 'to bring about the downfall of Absolutism and to realize liberty – with or without terror – can only be accomplished by the mass arm of the revolutionary working class'.<sup>28</sup>

It seems to me that here she has perceptively seen the proper role and function of terrorism. In an on-going revolutionary struggle, where workers are already struggling against an overt and brutal oppressor, who will not make significant concessions or give them any significant parliamentary rights, it can in certain specific circumstances be a useful and morally justified tactic. We can see this exemplified – as I have already noted – in Algeria and South Vietnam, and it *may* very well be the road to take in Chile for some years to come. But once significant democratic concessions have been wrung from the ruling class, it is not only a useless tactic, indeed, in such a circumstance, it is positively harmful to the cause of a socialist revolution, though it should also be recognized, as my three hypothetical examples evidenced, that where these democratic guarantees are being seriously overridden, situations can arise where a violent response on the part of the exploited and oppressed is justified.<sup>29</sup>

## VII

I recognize something which I have tried to confront at some length elsewhere, namely that arguments of the type I have been giving will with many people cut against the grain.<sup>30</sup> They will feel that somehow such calculative considerations conceptualize the whole problem in a radically mistaken way. They will say that we simply cannot – from a moral point of view – make such calculations when the lives of human beings are at stake.

My short answer is that we can and must. We, not wishing to play God, sometimes must choose between evils, and in such a circumstance a rational, responsible, and humane person, who does not have a certain kind of distinctive religious belief, must choose the lesser evil. This does not commit me to utilitarianism, for such an account is also compatible with a Rossian pluralism, the conception of justice as fairness powerfully articulated by John Rawls, and even with a Kantian conception of morality. (We should remember that Kant did not say that we must never treat human beings as means, but rather that we must never treat them as means

*only*.) Sane men capable of making considered judgments in reflective equilibrium will realize that judgments about the appropriateness of the use of revolutionary violence are *universalizable* (generalizable) and they, without being moral fanatics, will be prepared to reverse roles, though of course a member (particularly an active member) of the ruling class, placed as he is in society and with the interests he has, is in certain very important respects one kind of person and a proletarian is another. Their social consciousness and their self-images will typically not be the same. (This, of course, is not to say that one is a 'better person' than the other, but that their positions in society are such that they will tend to see the world differently, live differently, relate to people differently and have, in certain important respects, different values.)

The thing to keep vividly and firmly before one's mind is this: if anything is evil, suffering, degradation, and injustice are evil and proletarians and the poor generally are very deeply inflicted with these evils. Even their life expectancies, as Ted Honderich has vividly brought to our attention, are by no means the same. Even there, in such a vital part of their lives, the working class and even more so the thoroughly impoverished, get the short end of the stick.<sup>31</sup> At least some of these evils are avoidable evils, indeed some we already know how to avoid and some of these latter flow from the continuation of an imperialistic and repressive capitalist system. If the use of revolutionary violence in the service of socialism were to lessen this suffering, degradation, and injustice more than would any other viable alternative, then it is justified, if not, not.

The thrust of my argument has been to claim that, in the past, revolutionary violence has been so justified and that in the future it may very well be justified again even in what are formally democracies. Terrorism, by contrast, has a much more uncertainly justifiable use. There are extreme cases – as with a leader such as Hitler or Amin – where a terrorist assassination of that leader is very likely not only a good political tactic but, from a socialist and humanitarian point of view, morally desirable as well. More significantly and more interestingly, terrorist tactics may very well be justified in the liberation struggles in Chile, Guatemala, and Uruguay. Morally concerned rational human beings must go case by case. However, in the bourgeois democracies where concessions have been made to the working class and certain vital civil liberties exist, it is not a justifiable tactic, but is rather a tactic which will harm the cause of revolutionary socialism.

## VIII

I want now to say something about the current compulsive concern with violence. I shall argue that there is a considerable amount of ideological mystification at work here. The use of force and coercion is pervasive in all extant non-primitive societies and often violence will go with it. When the harm or injury that goes with this violence is involuntarily suffered the violence most certainly requires justification. My essential point has been that sometimes it is justified and sometimes it is not, and that this includes violence used as a political weapon to start turning an unjust, repressive social order into a decent social order which will provide the conditions for the free creative development of every individual, an order of social life where people will be able to sustain their self-respect and develop their potentialities. I have argued that there are sometimes ways of ascertaining, though typically with a not inconsiderable degree of fallibility, when this violence is justified and when it is not. However, there are many very morally difficult situations in which, even after careful reflection, we do not know what to say but must act on our rather subjective impressions. This is, of course, morally very worrisome, for terrible consequences may very well flow from our actions or indeed from our refraining from acting. Being in this trying circumstance does not, as many have thought, justify rejecting a resort to revolutionary violence in such situations, though it does not warrant it either. Those who think that the morally responsible thing must, in such a circumstance, consist in not taking a revolutionary turn must also face the fact, if they would be non-evasive, that not so striking against the repressive and destructive established power has its costs too. Since we cannot in such a circumstance reliably count the costs, tell, or tell with any confidence, where the greater evil lies, the idea that we must *not* meet that force with force is also without justification.<sup>32</sup> As Sartre and Camus recognized and dramatized, in such a circumstance we are, whatever we do, in a tormenting moral dilemma. We just have to act on those convictions we continue to have, after we have non-evasively reflected and taken the matter to heart. There is an unavoidable measure of subjectivity here. But this is so whichever way we go. It is not just a problem for the socialist revolutionary. Finally, in such a circumstance, we must just make a decision of principle.

Given that this is the reality of the situation, it is an ideological mystification to take the usual conservative and liberal dodge and conclude that because of this element of uncertainty and subjectivity we must reject the



use of violence in such situations. And it is another bit of ideological mystification to regard this as a distinctive issue of principle raised by 'the violence of the Left'. What we have here instead is a particular application of a common moral problem, i.e. sometimes it is hard to calculate or otherwise ascertain the consequences of morally significant acts, and sometimes tragic moral dilemmas arise where, even when we are being thorough and conscientious, we do not know what to do. But that doesn't mean that we are always in such a situation and it would take some considerable showing to establish that we are always in such a situation with respect to revolutionary violence.

The point about ideological mystification should be made more broadly. Class societies are unavoidably coercive and the capitalist system with its authoritarian control and structuring of labour is necessarily coercive. Most people must work to live and in its most essential aspects the Capitalist owners with their managers (who are also often owners) determine who shall work, how they shall work, what they shall make and the like. There is coercion here and, in struggling against that coercion, violence can result. What is as plain as can be – particularly when we look at things in global terms – is that there is coercion and violence all around us and that it deeply affects our lives. This violence is characteristically done against the will of those to whom it is done. Most of us are not masochists, boxers, or hockey players. In varying degrees – indeed in importantly varying degrees – and, depending on what our position in society is, in more or less direct forms, harm, injury, and the violation of our autonomy are our lot. It is a pervasive fact of our cultural lives, though – showing how important the degree is – it has a far greater reality for a commodity production worker, a secretary or a dish washer, than for a doctor, a university professor or a lawyer.

The real issue about violence is the issue about the conditions under which people are entitled to use coercion on each other or on the government, and the conditions in which the government is justified in using it on people. Repeatedly to raise and remain preoccupied with the issue of violence as a separate issue neatly deflects concern with the coercive and repressive nature of our present society. Indeed it tends to conceal that fact and thus, like all properly functioning ideology, distorts our understanding of social reality and gives us a false perspective on our very human condition in such societies. Attention is directed to the fact that some political violence, particularly certain acts of terrorism, are at best misguided and at worst senseless bits of brutality. This becomes the focal

point of attention and, because this is so, our attention is turned away from the manifold and pervasive ways in which the capitalist order with its essential control of state power coerces, stunts, and generally harms the lives of countless individuals. People provocatively talk about violence. The mass media exploit it and sometimes, as recently in West Germany, grow hysterical about it, while that repression and destruction of human potential which is endemic to the capitalist social order is lost sight of. It is not even usually noticed that the acts of violence focused on are often desperate acts of counterforce against this repressive order. The ideological suggestion is that the actions of radicals are different in kind from that of the state and that the real problem is to end or contain their violence when in reality the real problem is to transform the repressive order that creates it. ('Real', in both of its above occurrences, tips us off to the fact that persuasive definitions are at work here. But, as Stevenson stressed, persuasive definitions are not always arbitrary and pointless.)

## IX

I want now essentially to recapitulate and, in recapitulation, to clarify and extend certain points I have made, and also to consider and perhaps go some way towards meeting, certain objections to the general thrust of my argument.

I attempted a defence of the justifiability of the use of revolutionary violence under certain conditions even within what, formally speaking, is a democracy. I did not, of course, intend it to have the character of an in-house party tract. I do not, of course, want to assume a *parti pris* posture and I do not think that I have; though self-deception here is by no means impossible. My empirical claims, like all empirical claims, are open to intersubjective assessment, and my normative claims and arguments are open to the quite general rational assessment that all justifiable normative claims can be given. (Here I am assuming the falsity of a certain kind of non-cognitivism.)<sup>33</sup> In those important ways my contentions are not partisan, though they are 'partisan' in what I would take to be the perfectly harmless way that they argue for a distinctive normative ethical point of view and a certain conception of society. Only if it is correct to believe, as some have (Ryle, for example), that philosophy must always be normatively neutral, will it be the case that, simply in setting to argue in the way I have, I will *eo ipso* fall from philosophical grace into partisanship, where

that notion connotes (as it does in ordinary usage) bias and irrational, or at least non-rational, commitment. I have argued elsewhere against such a neutralist conception of philosophy and it is a conception which, rightly or wrongly, is no longer widely held, though its unacknowledged influence still lingers on in actual philosophical practice.<sup>34</sup> I have assumed its falsity here. But my claim is only in a damaging sense partisan if such severe neutralist restrictions on what constitutes proper philosophical activity are justified. Its acceptance does not require an act of faith and if one, for example, thinks socialism is not a morally justifiable form of social organization, one could still in a hypothetical form ask if socialism were a rationally and morally superior form of social organization in the way I claim, whether violence, under the circumstances elucidated by me, would be justifiable to achieve this order. I argued that there are circumstances in which it would be. This is a perfectly general argument which can be assessed in the same general way that arguments for mercy killing, abortion, and the rightness of always doing what God wills can be argued for; at no point in my argument is there the need for any non-rational commitment to a certain ideological point of view. Moreover, my arguments can be generalized. If some kind of rightist authoritarianism or bourgeois liberalism could be known or reasonably believed to be the most morally and humanly appropriate choice among the various forms of life, then we could ask questions, in the same general way as I did, about the justifiability of using violence (including terrorist tactics) for achieving or – which is the more likely situation with such forms of life – sustaining such a social order. Where the contrast is between moral and non-moral and not between moral and immoral, I agree that the rightist position is a moral one.

There are immoral moral codes or doctrines, e.g. the Roman Catholic teaching on abortion and South African doctrine on race. There is nothing in my account which commits me to what I have elsewhere argued is false, namely the claim that all morality is class morality or that there are no general moral conclusions.<sup>35</sup>

I agree with those who contend that there is such a thing as institutionalized violence and who further contend that in societies such as ours, particularly when we consider our relation to the rest of the world, it is pervasive and pernicious. (We have Marcuse to thank for driving this point home.) Assuming that, I tried to show concerning such matters, that even if such talk involved some minor adjustments in the connotation of 'violence' it is still quite in order.

I did not commit myself concerning the claim that any of the *de facto* states have *de jure* legitimate authority.<sup>36</sup> My claim is only that *if* there is a legitimate state or social order – morally legitimate and not just legally so – the force used by it will in certain circumstances not be violence but a legitimate use of force. (Here, again, I do not take legitimacy to be simply a legal concept.) If there is no such thing as a legitimate social order then, of course, there can be no genuine distinction between force and violence and the concept of violence, as Wolff consistently argues, becomes an utterly ideological one.<sup>37</sup> I did assume that there could be such a thing as legitimate authority and indeed that in a socialist order, such as I characterized, there would be rules and regulations expressive of that authority. This is all, of course, arguable as the disputes turning around Wolff's *Defense of Anarchism* attest.<sup>38</sup> One cannot argue everything at once and if legitimate authority is a Holmesless Watson, my distinction between force and violence would indeed collapse and my argument about the justifiability of violence would have in certain respects – but only in certain respects – to be recast. But I see no good grounds for taking legitimate authority to be such a Holmesless Watson.

My concern with the justifiability (or lack thereof) of terrorism in particular and political acts of violence more generally, fastened neither on the agent's nor the sufferer's point of view, though role reversal and universalizability was assumed. It turned rather on what could be justified from a morally concerned but dispassionate general point of view, i.e. what a rational moral agent with a sense of justice would be prepared to commit himself to in a position of reflective equilibrium.<sup>39</sup> In trying to consider general social policies from such a point of view, would the use of violence, including acts of terror, ever be justified and if so under what circumstances would they be justified? Any justification here would have to meet the test of an acceptance by rational moral agents where they would be prepared to accept a role reversal between a sufferer and a revolutionary who does something which involves violence. For the act to be morally justified the moral agent would have to be prepared to acknowledge that, if he were the sufferer instead of the revolutionary and could still sustain impartial reasoning in such a circumstance, he would still be prepared to acknowledge that the act was justified. A moral agent, that is, must also recognize that, for the revolutionary act to be morally justified, if he were the sufferer, he must in a cool moment be prepared to acknowledge the rightness of the revolutionaries' action, though this does not at all mean or imply that he or she must *want* this to happen to him –

that he or she must want to be victimized. That most people, understandably enough, rationalize here is irrelevant. In asking justificatory questions we need to know what would be accepted by rational moral agents – agents with a sense of justice – in a position of reflective equilibrium; that is, in a position where they could not be rationalizing. My argument was that from that vantage-point – the vantage-point of the moral point of view – there are conditions under which acts of revolutionary violence and sometimes perhaps even terrorist acts are justifiable.

I agree – and indeed would stress – that there are circumstances involving the use of revolutionary violence which are genuinely tragic. However, in reflecting on the justifiability of violence, we cannot avoid, if we would do it responsibly, reflecting on the underlying cause or ideal in the name of which some people will be victimized. Victimizing people is always at least *prima facie* wrong; indeed that may appear to a non-philosopher, unfamiliar with the use of ‘*prima facie*’ in philosophical argumentation, to be a crass understatement, for such acts are indeed terribly wrong. In most circumstances they are vile, totally without justification or excuse. Because of this, I argued that such actions, even in these very special circumstances, require very strong justification indeed, and this involves considering very carefully the underlying cause or ideal involved and the chances of its attainment. In that respect there is no sensible examination of the justifiability of violence in the abstract. Here the insights of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are essential.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes there is, morally speaking, no avoiding these terrible evils and we must just choose, with all the agony this brings, what we honestly take to be the lesser evil.

If the ‘end of ideology’ theorists are near to the mark, there are grounds for suspicion of such causes and ideals. Indeed there are grounds for being suspicious of any over-all social orientation, of anything that looks like a world-view. If that account is accepted, then arguments attempting to justify revolutionary violence will seem radically mistaken and in some circumstances even dangerously irresponsible. But this very end-of-ideology stance is itself very problematic and could very well be irresponsibly conservative. Georg Lukàcs’s powerful arguments to establish that such end-of-ideology arguments are being used here ideologically to reinforce an idea of the bourgeois order as ‘the only rational point of view’ should not be forgotten.<sup>41</sup>

What we need to recognize, as Alasdair MacIntyre has well argued, is that such an end-of-ideology stance fits hand in glove with the world-view

of the secular liberal – a world-view that is usually not even acknowledged or recognized by its participants to be a world-view.<sup>42</sup> In such a view of the world, as MacIntyre points out, ‘there are only individual lives and history has no meaning’; instead secular liberals see themselves as people in various circumstances with rival and competing preferences and alternative and conflicting valuations. We are, on such a world-view, finally just faced with arbitrary choices between alternative evaluations. Good and evil, for such secular liberals, ‘have to be weighed on a scale the balance of which is in the end arbitrary’.

To our western bourgeois societies such a view of the world is so pervasive and has such a hold that it is hardly seen by most people in such countries as a world-view to which there are alternatives, but is typically taken simply as what it is to be reasonable and realistic. When this claim is baldly stated like that, there is typically the reluctant admission that, after all, there are alternatives. But they are not thought of as reasonable competitors for our allegiance. The operative assumption is that they are total ideologies and that our own non-ideological liberal outlook is inescapable for the reasonable, informed man. Where this way of thinking has such a hold, any argument attempting to justify revolutionary violence is easily dismissed as ‘dangerously Utopian’ and/or irrational without ever getting its day in court.<sup>43</sup> One important aspect of MacIntyre’s critique of ‘the end of ideology ideology’ is to show that to be such a secular liberal is not just to take what is incontestably ‘the point of view of reason’, but is to take a contestable point of view which is only one point of view among quite different contestable alternatives. Moreover, what is also not generally recognized – though again MacIntyre’s account has done something to bring this to consciousness – is that this liberal point of view is itself ideological and a pacifying ideology at that.

I have assumed, as over against the secular liberal, another of those not uncontentious alternatives (to use MacIntyre’s apt phrase). For a deeper and more fundamental justification of what I have argued, such a case for such an alternative view of the world would need to be made out. I do not believe that it is unreasonable to think that such justification is possible. I cannot undertake this here, even if it were in my power to do so, but must remain content, for the nonce, with the reminder that the principled philosophical rejection of all such general normative arguments also rests on a not uncontentious view of the world, e.g. the world-view of secular liberalism with its end-of-ideology myth.

I do not, however, want to end on such a sceptical sounding

methodological note. I want rather to close by first remarking again, though this time from a different perspective, on how frequently talk of terrorism, particularly in right-wing and liberal circles, is ideological mystification, often, wittingly or unwittingly, politically inspired. I then want to return to some fundamental moral issues that remain, I believe, tolerably clear in spite of the methodological difficulties I have discussed above.

When conservative political theorists such as Sidney Hook play down the notion of institutional violence, stress the importance of the distinction between force and violence – the government, of course, using legitimate force and Left revolutionaries engaging in violence – and lament the way violence in our society ‘undermines the democratic process’, they are in effect arousing the emotions of many people in such a way that their thinking is deflected from raising questions about who really is justified in using coercion in a society, given that on all sides there actually exists violence.<sup>44</sup> In the work of such conservative theorists, the manifold forms of violence of the capitalist order, with the state as one of its instruments, gets neatly concealed or re-described as a legitimate use of force – begging all the central issues about what is and is not legitimate and how this is established. Counter-force against institutional violence is simply ruled out as a morally defensible move by linguistic legerdemain and the central *practical normative problem* concerning violence becomes, as it is for Hare, how to *prevent* it, and deep problems about justification here get trivialized, as Searle has trivialized them, by diversionary talk about ‘dramatic terrorism’ or ‘theatrical terrorism’.<sup>45</sup> We all know that violence is an evil not lightly to be engaged in, but we all also know, or at least ought to know, that violence is extremely pervasive and is inflicted by many different sources. What we need to know is when, if ever, it is justified. Are we to applaud – to go back for a moment to our recent history – Kissinger-inspired terror in Chile while condemning its use by the National Liberation Front? Or should we make the reverse judgment? Or should we cry a plague on both houses and reject all claims to the justified use of violence to attain social ends or protect political commitments? And if we do that, is that not in effect to acquiesce in the acceptance of a repressive *status quo* with its massive and diverse forms of institutional violence? (When we consider this last question it is crucial to consider not only the bourgeois democracies but the whole world and particularly the relation of these democracies to the rest of the world.)

In this essay I have come down definitely on one side of this issue

concerning the justification of the use of violence. Starting with the moral truism – though I take it to be a truism which is true – that, other things being equal, non-violent means are preferable tools of social change to violent ones, I argued that there are certain determinate circumstances, even in what at least formally speaking are democracies, where the use of such violent means for humane social ends is justified. This argument seems to me rather straightforward. It seems to me that what is not generally seen and thus not faced is the not inconsiderable possibility that ‘the problem of violence’ (including problems of terrorism) raises no distinctive moral problems of *principle*. What needs to be examined is the possibility that making it appear that there are such problems of principle is the work of ideological apology. It is important to defuse this problem and to consider whether those who do think there is some great issue of principle are either confused or are being wilfully mystificatory. What much of the popular and semi-popular talk about violence does is to avert attention from the pervasive coerciveness of society and to insinuate falsely that the, in some cases, violent actions of revolutionaries and radicals are different in *kind* from those of the government and are, simply because they are the kinds of acts they are, unprincipled and morally unacceptable. This has the effect of distracting attention from any actual consideration of the merits of the revolutionary socialists’ or radicals’ cause and their actions to support that cause. Again we have ideological mystification that needs to be unmasked.

Escaping such ideological mystifications, we should not let the complexities I previously discussed, in remarking on MacIntyre’s views, obscure the following moral *cum* factual point. If one travels through Latin America (for example) and is even a tolerably careful observer and one supplements one’s own observation with the reading of (say) Sven Lindqvist’s perceptive and in-depth factual account of conditions there, and reads as well the interpretative writings of Salvador Allende and Carlos Marighela, the conclusion is unavoidable that the level of violent oppression of masses of people in Latin America is such as to make – as Marighela would put it – a commitment to revolution to achieve socialism the moral duty of a humane and informed human being, where there is some reasonable chance of its success.<sup>46</sup> This is a strong claim, but I think a study of the facts about Latin America, together with an understanding of the kind of socialist goals and society Allende (for example) was trying to implement by peaceful and constitutional means, makes such a conclusion inescapable. I agree with MacIntyre that there are complex and



unresolved issues about assessing world-views, that it is often quite impossible to weigh complexes of good and evil in terms of some uncontested criterion, and that often we have to make what at least appear to be arbitrary choices. But, as Falk makes us see *vis-à-vis* Sartre, *often* is not *always*.<sup>47</sup> There are cases where the suffering and degradation is so extensive and the interests causing and sustaining that suffering so inconsequential morally speaking, and certain alternatives so palpably morally superior, that there is no deep moral or conceptual problem of principle about what to do.<sup>48</sup> Such is the case about social revolution in Latin America, Africa, and in parts of Asia as well. Neither ideological mystification, concern for the inadequacies of straight utilitarian consequentialism, nor philosophical sophistication should obscure this from us. Conceptual sophistication is, of course, important but we must beware of the cultivation of a kind of 'oversophistication' which keeps us from acknowledging what is morally speaking evident. We must avoid a cultivated incapacity to see what is there plainly before us.<sup>49</sup>

NOTES

- 1 See here Jerome A. Shaffer (Ed.), *Violence*, David McKay Inc., New York 1971; Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., New York 1969; John Harris, 'The Marxist Conception of Violence', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 1974), pp. 192-220; Robert Paul Wolff, 'On Violence', *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXVI (Oct. 1969), pp. 601-16; and J. M. Cameron, 'The Ethics of Violence', *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2 July 1970), pp. 24-32.
- 2 I think something of the right mix here occurs in Ted Honderich, *Three Essays on Political Violence*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1976; and his 'Four Conclusions About Violence of the Left', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (June 1979), pp. 211-46.
- 3 Roy Edgley, like Honderich, has a fine sense of the proper balance here. The complacency I mentioned above is revealed in the responses of some, but not all, of his commentators. See Roy Edgley, 'Reason and Violence: A Fragment of the Ideology of Liberal Intellectuals', in Stephan Körner (Ed.), *Practical Reason*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1974, pp. 113-35. See the remarks of his commentators pp. 135-69 and Edgley's reply, pp. 169-88 in the same volume.
- 4 Tom Regan has convincingly argued both that pacifism cannot readily, if at all, be refuted on conceptual (logical) grounds alone and that pacifism is not a very compelling or plausible moral doctrine. Tom Regan, 'A Defense of Pacifism', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. II, No. 1 (Sept. 1972). I have attempted to argue directly for socialism in my 'A Defense of Radicalism', *Question 7* (Jan. 1974). For a summarizing and synthesizing contemporary argument for socialism see Michael P. Lerner, *The New Socialist Revolution*, Dell Publishing Co., New York 1973.
- 5 Richard Wasserstrom, 'The Obligation to Obey the Law', *U.C.L.A. Law Review*, Vol. X (1963), pp. 788-90 and Marshall Cohen, 'Civil Disobedience', *The Great Ideas Today*, 1971; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chicago 1971, pp. 239-78. In his *In Defense of Political*

- Philosophy*, Harper & Row, New York 1972, Jeffrey H. Reiman, in the context of developing a devastating critique of Robert Paul Wolff's 'philosophical anarchism', convincingly develops this traditional notion that a citizen has no more than a prima facie obligation to obey the law. Wolff, I should add, has responded to Reiman in the 2nd ed. of his *In Defense of Anarchism*, Harper & Row, New York 1976. Reiman, in turn, has responded to Wolff in his 'Anarchism and Nominalism: Wolff's Latest Obituary for Political Philosophy', *Ethics*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (Oct. 1978), pp. 95–110.
- 6 Marshall Cohen, 'Civil Disobedience in a Constitutional Democracy', *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 1969), p. 218.
  - 7 The relevant sense of 'unfair' here and its role in ethical theory is approximately captured by John Rawls in his 'Justice as Fairness', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXVII (1958) and in his *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1971. I do not mean to suggest by this that I am committed to his *difference* principle. I only mean that Rawls captures approximately what we are talking about here.
  - 8 Ted Honderich brings this out convincingly in his 'Four Conclusions about Violence of the Left', *op. cit.*
  - 9 On Ted Honderich's rather stronger, but still reasonable, criteria for democracies, these democracies in bad shape might not count as democracies. But then some states that are conventionally taken as paradigm democracies would not count as democracies. See Ted Honderich, *Three Essays on Political Violence*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 3.
  - 10 Sidney Hook, 'The Ideology of Violence', *Encounter*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (April 1970), p. 34, italics mine. This article is reprinted in his *Revolution, Reform and Social Justice*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1976.
  - 11 Herbert Marcuse, 'Ethics and Revolution', in Richard T. DeGeorge (Ed.), *Ethics and Society*, Doubleday & Co., New York 1966, pp. 133–47.
  - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 134. See also my 'The Choice Between Reform and Revolution', *Inquiry*, Vol. 14 (1971), No. 3. A revised and expanded version occurs in Virginia Held *et al.* (Eds.), *Philosophy and Political Action*, Oxford University Press, New York 1972.
  - 13 Herbert Marcuse, 'Liberation from the Affluent Society', in David Cooper (Ed.), *The Dialectics of Liberation*, Penguin Books Inc., Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1968, p. 175.
  - 14 Bernard Gert, 'Justifying Violence', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXVI, No. 19 (2 Oct. 1969), p. 627.
  - 15 Herbert Marcuse, 'Ethics and Revolution', *op. cit.*, p. 135.
  - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 134. It should be remarked that here Marcuse makes a rather pardonable overstatement, for it is at least arguable that some kinds of fear give a certain spice and zest to life and thus might be desirable. What Marcuse has in mind is the persistent and massive kind of fear that goes with gross economic insecurity, powerlessness, and political repression.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 135.
  - 18 Ted Honderich in the latter part of his 'Four Conclusions about Violence of the Left' (*op. cit.*) makes us aware how difficult it often would be to determine this.
  - 19 Herbert Marcuse, 'Ethics and Revolution', *op. cit.*, p. 145.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 143.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4. It is not clear whether Marcuse recognizes that it is not enough to justify a revolution to establish that it produced desirable results; we must also show that without the revolution the desirable results would not have occurred as rapidly and with (everything considered) as little suffering and degradation. What I think he should be claiming is that when we examine the French and English revolutions that is just what we should conclude. In referring to the English revolution, I am referring to a series of revolutionary happenings that went on in the seventeenth century.
  - 22 In the horrors of an extended civil war which might be linked with a revolution, it is very likely that on all sides there will develop indiscriminate and pointless terror. We need, in

- our historical calculations, to take account of these possibilities, but this does not at all give to understand that we are justifying them. We can accept their likelihood while condemning such acts and recognizing, as Marcuse does, that 'there are forms of violence and suppression which no revolutionary situation can justify because they negate the very end for which the revolution is a means. Such are arbitrary violence, cruelty, and indiscriminate terror' (ibid., p. 141). I have developed my arguments about revolution in a more extended way in my 'On the Choice Between Reform and Revolution', op. cit., pp. 17-51, my 'On the Ethics of Revolution', *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 6 (Winter 1973), and my 'On Justifying Revolution', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4 (June 1977).
- 23 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Raids and Reconstructions*, Pluto Press, London 1978, pp. 136-9; and Thomas Sheehan, 'Italy - the Theory and Practice of Terror', *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXVI, No. 13 (16 Aug. 1979), pp. 20-31.
  - 24 George Woodcock, *Anarchism*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1962, pp. 333-4.
  - 25 Eric Hobsbawm, 'An Appraisal of Terrorism', *Canadian Dimension*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Oct. 1972), pp. 11-12.
  - 26 Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke, Band I 1893 bis 1905, Sweiter Halbband*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1972, p. 521.
  - 27 Ibid., p. 521.
  - 28 Ibid., pp. 521-2. In this context the balanced discussion of the activities of the Symbionese Liberation Army by the editors of *Ramparts* shows, much in the manner of Rosa Luxemburg, political good sense. See 'Terrorism and the Left', *Ramparts*, Vol. 12, No. 10 (May 1974), pp. 21-27.
  - 29 Luxemburg's arguments should make it evident that the terrorist activities in present-day Western Germany and Italy are very questionable indeed. The moral motivations of those terrorists may be exemplary but their theory leaves much to be desired.
  - 30 See my 'On Terrorism and Political Assassination', in Harold Zellner (Ed.), *Political Assassination*, Schenkman Publishing Co., New York 1974, Sects. III and IV.
  - 31 See here his two essays previously cited.
  - 32 Ted Honderich, 'Four Conclusions about Violence of the Left', op. cit.
  - 33 I have argued for what I assume here, in my 'On Looking Back at the Emotive Theory', *Methodos*, Vol. XIV (1962); and in my 'The Problems of Ethics', *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Paul Edwards (Ed.), Vol. III, Crowell-Collier, New York 1967.
  - 34 See my 'For Impurity in Philosophy', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Jan. 1974); my 'Philosophy and Ideology: Programmatic Remarks for a Radical Philosophy', *Radical Philosophers' News-journal*, No. 3 (Aug. 1974); and my 'On Philosophic Method', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (Sept. 1976), pp. 349-68.
  - 35 See my 'Moral Truth', in Nicholas Rescher (Ed.), *Studies in Moral Philosophy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1968; my 'Class Conflict, Marxism and The Good Reasons Approach', *Social Praxis*, Vol. II (1974), No. 2; and my *Reason and Practice*, Harper & Row, New York 1971, Ch. 26.
  - 36 I articulate and indicate the importance of that distinction in my 'Norms and Politics', *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. XIX (1970). Robert Paul Wolff has done much to articulate the importance of drawing that distinction and to express it clearly and show some of its implications. See his introduction to his *Political Man and Social Man*, Random House, New York 1966, pp. 3-16. See also Robert Paul Wolff, 'On Violence', *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXVI (Oct. 1969), pp. 601-6 and his *In Defense of Anarchism*, op. cit., Ch. 1. One could accept much of this without accepting his 'philosophical anarchism'.
  - 37 Robert Paul Wolff, 'On Violence', op. cit. See the response by Bernard Gert in the same issue and see also Robert L. Holmes, 'The Concept of Physical Violence in Moral and

- Political Affairs', *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1973).
- 38 Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, Harper & Row, New York 1970 and (among others) Jeffrey H. Reiman, *In Defense of Political Philosophy*, Harper & Row, New York 1972; Tom L. Beauchamp and Ken Witkowski, 'A Critique of Pure Anarchism', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. II, No. 4 (June 1973); Rex Martin, 'Two Models for Justifying Political Authority', *Ethics*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (Oct. 1975); and the references in Note 5.
- 39 This conception is articulated in John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, op. cit., Ch. 1, and in his 'The Independence of Moral Theory', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. XLVIII, 1974-75, pp. 5-22.
- 40 I have discussed this in my 'On the Ethics of Revolution', *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 6 (1973); my 'On Terrorism and Political Assassination', in Harold Zellner (Ed.), *Assassination*, Schocken Books, New York 1974; and in my 'Remarks on Violence and Paying the Penalty', *Proceedings of the Center for Philosophical Exchange* (Summer 1970).
- 41 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1971 (German original 1922).
- 42 Alasdair MacIntyre, 'On the Limits of the Use of Force in Modern Warfare' at the Newark Conference on Morality and International Violence, 24 April 1974; and in his *Against the Self-Images of the Age*, Gerald Duckworth, London 1971.
- 43 Anthony Arblaster and Steven Lukes have perceptively captured and exposed the ideological and apologetic use of 'Utopian' in their masterful introduction to their anthology, *The Good Society*, Methuen, London 1971. The use of the term 'perfectibilist' by Professor John Passmore has a similar negative emotive force. (See his *The Perfectibility of Man*, Gerald Duckworth, London 1971 and the article cited below.) Such linguistic manoeuvring, whatever its intent, in reality functions as conservative apologetics against the Left. It insinuates through the emotive force of words what has not been established by argument. This comes out clearly in John Passmore's 'Second Thoughts on a Paradise Lost', *Encounter*, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (Aug. 1974), pp. 46-48. Social revolutionaries are, Professor Passmore tells us, men committed to taking 'the perfectibilist way'; that is to say, unlike sensible reformers (realistic men with a sense of reality), the dissatisfaction of revolutionaries is not just with this or that social defect, or this or that social system, but 'with the human condition as such'; with 'its responsibilities, its uncertainties, its insecurity, its troubles' (p. 48). Anyone familiar with the work and activities of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg or Trotsky - classical paradigmatic revolutionaries - will not recognize Passmore's characterization of social revolutionaries. They did not seek to escape from such uncertainties or tell men there would be a heaven on earth in which they could escape human ills and uncertainties; they did not even condemn capitalism in all historic circumstances, for they clearly recognized that under certain circumstances it was progressive. They did, however, analyse and criticize a certain social system and argue that in certain historical circumstances it was an inhuman social system that should and indeed would be replaced by a more humane form of society. But this is not to say that human beings will become perfect and all human ills will come to an end, though it is to say that things can become better than they are now and have been in the past. But such a modest belief in progress, though it may be mistaken, in no way justifies seeing these revolutionaries as apocalyptic figures inveighing against *the human condition* as such. Indeed the very conception of the human condition is not one of their conceptual categories, for they see human beings in historical terms as being deeply influenced by different historical conditions. We may be able to speak of what is distinctively human but this distinctive humanness needs always to be understood in terms which are partially historical. (See here Gajo Petrovic, *Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, Doubleday & Co., New York 1967. See also his article on alienation in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.)
- 44 I am much indebted to Professor Richard Schmitt for certain aspects of the argument I make here and in the next two paragraphs.

- 45 R. M. Hare, 'On Terrorism' at the Newark Conference on Morality and International Violence, 24 April 1974. John Searle's remarks were made in comments at the conference. Roy Edgley nicely captures the embedded conservatism in Hare's thinking about these matters in his response to Hare in Stephan Körner (Ed.), *Practical Reason*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1974, pp. 185–8.
- 46 Sven Linqvist, *The Shadow: Latin America Faces the Seventies*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland 1972; Salvador Allende, *Chile's Road to Socialism*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland 1973; and Carlos Marighela, *For the Liberation of Brazil*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland 1971.
- 47 W. D. Falk, 'Moral Perplexity', *Ethics*, Vol. 66 (1956), pp. 123–31.
- 48 See here Allen W. Wood, 'The Marxian Critique of Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1972), pp. 275–82; and my 'Class Conflict, Marxism and the Good Reasons Approach', *Social Praxis*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1974).
- 49 See here Noam Chomsky, *Language and Responsibility*, The Harvester Press, Sussex 1979, Ch. 1; and Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1969, pp. 10–12. I would like to thank Jack MacIntosh for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.