

begin to work toward a political ethics in which “a morality of ends...exerts control over the role of force in world politics through a combination of disarmament, demilitarization, and an ethos of non-violence” (221).

The strength of this book stems from Falk’s willingness to address issues of justice, economic globalization, international law, and human rights in a complex way. To be sure, Falk covers considerable ground as he demonstrates the interconnectedness between global economic regimes and international political policies. Paradoxically, this approach may leave him open to charges of superficiality. Such critiques, I would suggest, would have more to do with him diverging from the prevailing lines in human rights literature than with the substance of his sweeping argument. For example, unlike many of his colleagues, both liberal and progressive alike, he is not necessarily opposed to nationalism, religion or culture becoming apart of global governance. Indeed, Falk thinks these elements are inevitable in any discussion of international justice and must, therefore, be handled by scholars in a way that demonstrates the complexity of their interplay. For scholars of religion, in particular, this book is significant because it represents an attempt to take seriously the role of religious and cultural difference in the development of a humanitarian moral politics.

Scott Kline

McGill University

*Human Rights in an Information Age: A Philosophical Analysis.* By Gregory J. Walters. Toronto: University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8020-3583-3. Pp. 335.

In this book, Gregory Walters presents a philosophical consideration of the ethical challenges posed to Canadian society by electronic communications and information technology at the start of the 21st century. Walters situates North America’s role in the information revolution within the broader context of the post-industrial economy and the development of global capitalism in late modernity. He contends that North America has moved from an economy which was based primarily upon mass production and industry to one that is currently structured around digital information, robotics, and human labour which is primarily service oriented. In many ways, he finds, the “information age” tends to exacerbate the class divisions in North America, whereby an elite minority prospers, while the vast majority of humans suffer from poverty. Walters observes that recent technological developments represent a potential threat to the basic cultural, economic, physical, and social conditions of human well being. The primary task of the philosopher in the current social situation is, he infers, to make hope practical, rather than despair convincing.

Walters intends for his book to be “more visionary than programmatic” and he “offers no explicit policy agenda” (10). His vision could be characterized as a hope for a more just, liberal democratic community and society. The book explores the meaning of today’s historical and technological situation, on

the assumption that such reflection must be informed by data drawn from empirical social studies. Walters' book is thus interdisciplinary, since its central concern is to "situate the information age within the broader historical and technological situation of modernity and to illuminate, from a human rights framework, IT [information technology] practices surrounding the Internet, e-commerce, public safety and health, and security and military concerns" (10). In seven chapters, Walters examines current Canadian and global policies and practices regarding the Internet, information warfare, the information economy, and privacy rights. His reflection upon these policy issues is guided by the work of Alan Gewirth, who stresses that human rights should be conceptualized within an "action-based" framework.

Walters draws from two of Gewirth's influential books, *Reason and Morality* and *The Community of Rights*. As Walters explains, the "essential element" in Gewirth's human rights framework resides in "the primacy of human action, and the conditions of freedom and well-being that ground human rights and condition the realization of human communication and mutuality" (Walters 35). Gewirth defines action as "behavior undertaken voluntarily in order to achieve a freely chosen goal; action is voluntary and intentional behavior" (35). Walters follows the 'ethical rationalism' of Gewirth and holds that "human rights are a species of moral rights held equally by all persons simply because they are human" (35). He agrees with Gewirth that human rights are always situated in human communities. Gewirth has argued that human rights and community have a relation of mutual support. "Human rights require community for their implementation, while community requires human rights as the basis of its morally justified economic, political, and social operations and enactments" (48). Walters situates Gewirth's philosophical framework within the historical developments that led to the expression "human rights" at the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations in 1945. He observes that "the community of rights was difficult to attain in the post World War II period, and it may prove even more difficult to attain them in the new information economy, where states have far less control in redistributing social goods and services" (48). Overall, Walters' main argument is that the values of mutuality, trust, and social solidarity are vital to the protection of human rights in the information age. Many groups, such as the World Association of Christian Communicators share his concerns about ethical problems related to information technology.

Most of this book's research was completed during Walters' tenure as the Gordon F. Henderson Chair holder in Human Rights at the Human Rights Research and Education Centre, the University of Ottawa. He participated in discussions with the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development and the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies. Currently, he is professor of ethics in the Faculties of Theology and Philosophy at Saint Paul University. Professor Walters' study of human rights in the information age represents an informed and comprehensive example of scholarship, which addresses the important ethical issues and topics related to social justice in contemporary North American society. Very few authors have en-

deavoured to study the rise of the information age from a human rights perspective in this way. It is a bold book also because the concept of "information society" challenges fundamental assumptions in scientific disciplines such as sociology and economics, and thus is generally dismissed by many of its critics as trendy postmodern rhetoric.

In general, Walters' book revives ideas promoted by critical theorists during the 1970s in the discipline of international communications. Scholars such as Armand Mattelart wrote about the need for a new, world order of information and communication. Mattelart and his peers argued that the international information system perpetuated and strengthened inequality in development, with serious implications for the countries of the South. This political theme was further advanced by UNESCO and culminated in a United Nations Commission chaired by Sean MacBride, the founder of Amnesty International. After the commission issued its report and policy recommendations in a text entitled "Many Voices, One World," both the United States and Britain promptly exited from UNESCO for political reasons. While the UNESCO report is much more socialistic and radical in its tone, it still resembles in substance many of the basic ideas presented by Walters. Both Walters and the UNESCO report address human rights issues from a cultural, economic, and political standpoint.

Walters' text on human rights in the information age will be of some interest to practical theologians and religious scholars concerned with social issues. In a manner similar to the 'correlational method' of Paul Tillich and David Tracy, his study initiates a conversation between the social issue at hand: information technology and the wisdom of the human rights philosophical tradition. Readers will find that this book re-affirms the World Council of Churches' observation that "the interaction between technology and social justice is a crucial issue of our time" (paragraph 46, section 3, Uppsala, 1968). This book offers the reader few answers, but it does help raise our awareness about some issues that often are ignored.

Warren Kappeler

McGill University

*Death Talk: The Case against Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide.* By Margaret Somerville. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. ISBN 077352245X. Pp. 433.

Margaret Somerville's latest book, *Death Talk*, represents over twenty-five years of research on euthanasia. This enormous project comprises almost five hundred pages of argumentation, legal documents, personal accounts, poetry, responses, and responses to responses to support her position as stated in the title. It is a relevant and timely study, as there has been an international surge of movements to legalize euthanasia.