Re-visiting Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*: A Consequentialist Approach

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> Political correctness is the natural continuum from the party line. What we are seeing once again is a self-appointed group of vigilantes imposing their views on others. It is a heritage of communism, but they don't seem to see this.
>
> Doris Lessing

Abstract

The present study attempts to interpret communist activism in *The Good Terrorist* (1985) by Doris Lessing (1919-2013) from a consequentialist perspective. The two main principles of the ethical theory of consequentialism, namely: "negative responsibility" and "impartiality" are investigated. By tackling the principle of negative responsibility, the study scrutinizes its influence on the attitude of Alice Mellings, the protagonist, towards her family, and the community at large. Likewise, by scrutinizing the consequentialist principle of impartiality, the study aims to decide how far adhering to this ethical theory has influenced the protagonist's moral choices as well as her sense of justice. The study zooms in on these choices to show whether the protagonist and her fellow communist activists are driven by a genuine desire to alleviate the suffering of the poor. The study, moreover, explores two kinds of alienation entailed by the consequentialist principles of negative responsibility and impartiality, and how far these alienations affect the characters' decisions and actions. It also attempts to decide whether these alienations affect the characters' personal projects and their familial obligations. The rule of consequentialism in changing the characters' strategy and action from peaceful to terrorist is also assessed. Finally, the study aims to decide whether the political

beliefs of the characters are grounded or are a sheer self-delusion and fantasy.

Keywords: consequentialism, negative responsibility, impartiality, alienation, communism, squat

قراءة مغايرة لرو اية دوريس ليسنج "الإرهابي الصالح": مقاربة عو اقبية

يهدف هذا البحث الى تقديم قراءة تحليلية قائمة على نظرية العواقبية الفلسفية لرواية الإرهابي الصالح للكاتبة الإنجليزية دوريس ليسنج. يهدف البحث الى تبيان مدى تأثير الفكر الأخلاقي العواقبي على علاقات الشخصيات الأسرية ومن ثم الاجتماعية. ويلقي البحث الضوء على مبدئين رئيسين لهذه الفلسفة وهما المسؤولية السلبية والحيادية وذلك للوقوف على مدى تأثيرهما على الخيارات الأخلاقية للشخصيات ومدى استيعابها لفكرة العدالة. كما يفحص البحث مدى تأثير سمات العزلة والتي تقتضيها مبدئا المسؤولية السلبية والحيادية على أفعال وقرارات تلك الشخصيات. ويقوم البحث أيضا بالنظر في مدى اخلاص شخصيات الرواية في رغبتها لرفع المعاناة عن الفقراء وفقا لفكرها الشيوعي. ويختتم البحث بتتبع دور وتأثير الفلسفة العواقبية على تحول سلوك الشخصيات من سلوك سلمي الى سلوك إرهابي يودي بحياة المواطنين السلميين. وأخيرا فإن البحث يهدف لمعرفة مدى تطبيق الشخصيات للمبادئ الشيوعية التي تعتنقها وتدافع عنها.

كلمات مفتاحية: فلسفة العواقبية – المسؤولية السلبية – الحيادية – الانعزالية - الشيوعية

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Doris Lessing (1919-2013) is a prolific English writer whose literary career spanned about fifty years. Her publications include novels, short story collections, poetry, drama, comics, and multiple non-fictional writings. She was awarded plenty of notable literary prizes, so, when she was informed of her winning of the Nobel Prize for literature her reaction was rather muted. Mat Cowan (2007) describes her first reaction as follows.

> "Oh Christ!" she said in an exasperated tone that I certainly was not expecting.
>
> "It's been going on now for 30 years, one can't get more excited than one gets," she said, referring to the decades of speculation that she would win the prize. …

"Look I have won all the prizes in Europe, every bloody one. I'm delighted to win them all, okay?" she responded testily.

Lessing did not seem to be impressed by the news of receiving the prestigious award. Her dismissive tone indicates a loss of enthusiasm for receiving the latest award, likely due to the numerous literary accolades she had already accumulated.

Lessing's works tackle diverse political issues such as communism, colonialism, racism, and feminism, some of which she draws on her personal experience. The writer was born in Iran, and when she was three years old her family moved to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), but though she spent more than four decades there, she never supported colonialism. She was introduced to Communism in the late 1930s, then joined the Communist Party in England in the 1940s and 1950s. Lessing, like many people at the time, believed that Communism offered solutions to the Western

world crises. She believed that the future is for Communism which will prevail in a matter of few years, and everyone will be happy (Thomson 180). While living her Communist dreams, the Soviet Union people suffered the brutality of Joseph Stalin's rule. Lessing experienced the myth that "the things going on in the Soviet Union had nothing to do with true Communism" (Rousseau 155). It was a strong belief in the soundness and just cause of Communism that made her adhere to it, no matter what. However, the turning point was marked by the attitude of Nikita Khrushchev, the new Soviet leader, to the atrocities of his predecessor. Khrushchev was contended with a mere denunciation of Stalin's crimes against the Russians, an attitude which shocked Lessing, as she told Francois-Olivier Rousseau. She expected a more positive reaction that would, even if partly, compensate the Russian victims. Lessing lost faith in communism and decided to leave the Communist Party (155).

The Good Terrorist is a novel about Alice Mellings, a middle-class English woman, who believes that Communism is the ultimate resolution to the socio-economic and political crises in England. Alice is convinced that justice will be achieved when fascism and capitalism are replaced by communism. Though she has a degree in Politics and Economics, she refuses to get a job and chooses to live in squats with her fellow revolutionary communists. They all live on social security. A great part of the novel represents her exerted efforts to make the unliveable squat a liveable one where she and her comrades can live and plan for their revolutionary activities. The novel tracks the comrades' shift from nonviolent to terrorist activities, culminating in their construction of a deadly bomb that kills innocent people and causes some injuries. The shock of this incident leads this little commune to break up and leave the squat. Alice is the only one who does not abandon the house because of the effort and money she has spent on it.

The Good Terrorist was shortlisted for the 1985 Booker Prize, the leading British literary award, and received a range of critical reviews and opinions. In reviewing the book, Judith Freeman (1985) sees it as "graceful and accomplished," she refers to its brilliant account of "the types of individuals who commit terrorist acts." Clare Hanson (1990) notes that its reception was "fairly stormy," she also opines that the novel does not give us "a literature but a language of exhaustion" (71). Robert Boschman (2003) explores the issue of excrement or kitsch. He explains how the protagonist wavers between what she considers to be two kinds of kitsch: the middle class with its decency and cleanliness and the terrorist intention to destroy this class. Boschman analyses the contradictory conduct and the distortion of facts when the protagonist commits terrorist offences. Elain Martin (2007) examines the representation of terrorism in the novel and some other literary European works, she points out that often these works humanize the terrorists and contextualize acts of violence (3). Selcuk Senturk (2020) focuses on the concept of family in the novel. He explores the characters' attempt to replace their biological families with a commune that shares communist goals and terrorist activities. Beatriz Lopez (2023) addresses the psychology of terrorists; she explores the grief of the terrorist protagonist which is caused by what she believes to be unfair social and economic norms. Lopez also considers the influence of gender and social class on constructing the identity of the terrorist.

The present study explores Lessing's implicit rejection of the communist values, in which she once strongly believed. The study is more concerned with revealing the consequentialist principles used to pursue communist goals than it is with the protagonist's disillusionment. The main consequentialist principles of negative responsibility and impartiality, and what they entail of alienation, are what the present study aims to investigate. Their influence on the protagonist's commune, social attitude, and conduct, are all

scrutinised. The moral choice of the protagonist and its influence on her actions are also tracked. The study concludes by referring to Lessing's way of targeting the disillusioned communists who follow consequentialist practical guidance that eventually proves to be not only harmful but also futile.

The Good Terrorist is dominated by a limited omniscient point of view; the reader is allowed access to the internal perspective of the protagonist. Lessing's choice of this specific point of view facilitates accessing Alice's emotional and psychological realm while maintaining a distance between her and the reader. In addition, though in some situations Alice seems to have different views and attitudes from those of her comrades, gaining insight into her psyche informs the reader of the real motives of her decisions and actions. Hence, the underlying nature of her attitude is exposed to the reader. These expositions elucidate her consequentialist stance, as the present study aims to explore.

Consequentialism is an ethical theory that judges the rightness and wrongness of actions by their consequences. The term consequentialism is first coined by the American philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe in her article "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958). Utilitarianism is "one sort of consequentialism" (Smart and Williams 79), both are ethical theories that emphasize the outcome of actions rather than their nature. The basic difference between utilitarianism and consequentialism is that utilitarianism, as David Cummiskey (2020) states "aim[s] to maximize the happiness of all people" (1), it attributes the rightness of actions to producing the greatest good, which is identified as happiness and pleasure, to the greatest number of people. Concerning consequentialism, it focuses on the consequences of actions, as Barry Dainton and Howard Robinson point out "the rightness or wrongness of a particular course of action depends not on the action itself, but on the consequences of that action" (170). These two theories relegate

moral values of actions to a secondary position, only the good consequences are prioritised.

Examples are often provided to illustrate the ethical framework of consequentialism. One of these is that if the killing of one innocent man will save the life of five innocent men, then, it is deemed to be the right thing to do. In addition to solely focusing on maximizing good results, this example engages the issue of intrinsic moral values. Consequentialism holds, as Shelly Kagan (1998) notes "that goodness of outcomes is the only morally relevant factor in determining the status of a given act … in any given choice situation, the agent is morally required to perform the act with the best consequences" (60-61). This stance reduces the moral value of actions, or anything, to producing the best consequences. Hence, consequentialism sacrifices intrinsic moral values such as honesty, integrity, kindness, etc. for the maximization of good results. It is noteworthy that philosophers often defy the moral notions of consequentialism. For instance, Anscombe argues, as Duncan Richter explains, that "No one can know what the consequences of any particular action and the manner in which it is performed will be. Nor can we know in advance what possibilities of action will be suggested by particular circumstances" (354). Interestingly, consequentialism, as Paul Hurley notes, is rarely used beyond philosophy, yet spheres such as economics and public policy usually implement its principles (2).

One of the principles of consequentialism is negative responsibility. According to this principle, if we do not act to prevent bad actions, we are held morally responsible for them. This consequentialist principle entails, as Bernard Williams explains "that if I am ever responsible for anything, then I must be just as responsible for things that I allow or fail to prevent, as I am for things that I myself, in the more everyday restricted sense, bring

about" (Smart and Williams 95). We are held responsible even if we do not directly contribute to these bad actions. So, if there is a political, economic, or social welfare crisis, everyone, according to the principle of negative responsibility, is responsible for it. Whether individuals take part in decision-making or not, they are held responsible both for creating the crisis and its outcome. Liam Murphy expresses doubts about the moral demands of consequentialism and its principles which do not decide limit beneficence. He asks, "When do we act wrongly for not promoting someone else's interests? (5). This question refers to consequentialism that requires "optimizing" efforts to help others without deciding limits for these efforts. He sees this moral demand as "excessive'' for it burdens us with unlimited responsibility. In addition to the obvious impracticality of consequentialism, J. R. Lucas notes that "What is the general responsibility of all becomes the responsibility of nobody in particular" (p. 38). The burden of personal responsibilities hinders the human propensity to volunteer to share other responsibilities. This over-demandingness, as Tanyi emphasises, is "unfair" and makes consequentialism "insensitive to the contribution of others" (507).

In *The Good Terrorist*, the comrades, driven by the principle of negative responsibility, hold the community at large responsible for the suffering of the poor. Everyone takes part in this negative responsibility, even if they do not share in shaping the state's social and economic policies. The over-demandingness of this consequentialist stance shapes the societal and familial attitudes of Alice and her comrades. They attribute the suffering of the working poor not only to the government and capitalists but also to the community at large. Anyone who is not a communist, or a member of their revolutionary commune, is perceived as responsible for the suffering of the working poor. Thus, non-communist individuals who act to alleviate hardships are not exempted from negative responsibility. The story of Jim provides a case in point. Jim, who is victimized by others because of his blackness, is unemployed.

Alice, willing to help him, writes to her father, Mr Mellings, a letter asking him to hire Jim on his small printing business. The father positively responds to her request and instantly hires Jim who "could start tomorrow. By chance someone was leaving. By chance, Jim would suit Cedric Mellings very well. Jim could look forward, too, to training in the new technical mysteries" (Lessing 191). The father's decision to hire Jim could be motivated by parental affection for Alice, a desire to help an unemployed black man, or even for both reasons. For, as mentioned earlier, since the narrative is dominated by a limited omniscient point of view, that is Alice's, the father's motive is not explicitly mentioned. On his part, Jim is deeply moved and feels exalted for this rare opportunity. His exaltation is shown in telling Alice the good news, he

> could not settle, but got up and stumbled about, laughing helplessly, or sat and laid his head on the table and laughed, sounding as if he wept, then, in an excess of happiness and gratitude, banged his two fists on either side of his head. . . Next he sat up and flung wide his arms in the same movement, his eyes rolling, his black face smiling wide, white teeth showing. (191-2)

Jim's gestures, his non-verbal expression of exaltation implies the deprivation and lost opportunities he has suffered because of his colour. It also refers to Mr. Mellings' philanthropy manifested in hiring a black man to alleviate his plight. However, Alice undervalues her father's positive response; she "sharply" says to Jim "Guilty conscience. That lot—it's all guilt with them" (191). She is determined to find a negative rationale for his positive conduct and insists on holding him responsible for the suffering of the working poor. Further, while Jim exuberantly celebrates his new job, Alice feels eager to tell him and her other revolutionary comrades about "a thousand terrible things … about her father" (192), but she stops short from doing that, not out of gratitude for her father, but because she does not want to spoil the moment. Her stance further aligns her with consequentialism which, as J. R. Lucas points out "rubbishes the deliberations of others by not

allowing that they can rationally attach weight to tenuous entities such as moral principles or reasons" (39). Consequentialists show disregard for others' reasoning of moral principles. Since actions are only judged and weighed by their consequences, they ignore the process through which a moral decision is made. They, as Lucas notes, diminish people's moral principles and relegate them to weak, possibly non-existent entities.

On the other hand, Jim's exaltation does not last for long. Alice, driven by the need for money and the persistent conviction that her father is one of those "shitty rich," steals a sum of money from his office. Alice's crime has a devastating effect on Jim. As he is recently hired, Jim takes the blame for her theft, and he is immediately sacked. Jim's powerlessness is evident when he tells Alice about losing his job, "What's the point?" demanded Jim, of the heavens, not of her, and it sounded histrionic, but was not; for the question had behind it his whole life" (Lessing 212). His question indicates his life-long suffering, lost opportunities, and victimization by the whites because of his colour. It also suggests that this is not the first time he has lost a job because of racism and that his whole life is determined by such injustice. His consequent abrupt desertion of the squat is his way of expressing his frustration with this injustice. However, though Alice bears direct responsibility for his loss, she neither acknowledges her crime nor regrets it. Owing to her consequentialist stance, she persists in holding her father responsible for the poor's hardship, while overlooking her role in ruining Jim's opportunity.

The sacking of Jim is not the only evidence of Alice's taking direct responsibility for the suffering of others, especially the vulnerable. Her mother, Dorothy Mellings, moves from her spacious warm house to a tiny cold flat because her ex-husband, Alice's father, has decided to stop paying her bills. The reason for his decision is that Alice and her communist friend, Jasper, have lived at her mother's house for over four years. This long stay has

led to an increase in the expenses of the place, which eventually leads the father to withhold financial support for the mother. Thus, Alice is held accountable for her mother's suffering, yet she is never moved by the latter's financial crisis. Further, though Mrs. Mellings is now divorced, unemployed, and financially dependent on her ex-husband, Alice still sees her as a member of the corrupted bourgeoisie and holds her responsible for the suffering of the poor. Her consequentialist mindset links "criteria of rightness… to maximal contribution to the good, whenever one does not perform the very best act one can, one is "negatively responsible" for any shortfall in total well-being that results" (Railton 171). This principle which perceives individuals as morally responsible for the suffering of the deprived does not exclude Mrs. Mellings. She, regardless of her financial dependence, is seen by her daughter as an "old fascist." Alice even threatens her "But you just wait. Everything is *rotten*. It's all *undermined*. But you're so dozy … you can't even see it. We are going to pull it all down" (355, emphasis in original). Alice is oblivious to her mother's late financial needs. The daughter's political idealism leads to treating her mother in a way that suggests that the latter can contribute to society's welfare. Thus, she is unable to feel sorry for her mother's fall into poverty, and her main concern is about the latter's inability to provide material support. Her filial affection is numbed by her conviction that the community at large, including her parents, is fully responsible for the misery of the working poor.

Alice's consequentialist attitude which makes her insensitive to the acts of goodness of her parents extends to that of the government. The plan to pull down old council houses aims to replace them with new buildings, as part of the government's effort to tackle the problem of the housing crisis. Alice is unable to acknowledge this decision; she considers these buildings as sheer "nasty block of flats" (Lessing 63). The adjective "nasty" is irrelevant to the aesthetic value of these intended buildings. It

expresses her antagonism toward this project which will hinder her squatting plan. Her unsupportive attitude reflects Tanyi's view that the over-demandingness of consequentialism implies "lack of information, lack of clear thinking, lack of imaginative empathy . . . or that it tracks something entirely different from issues of excessive demands" (510). Alice's squatting for these long years, which often involves manipulating the law to avoid eviction suggests a lack of information on the council's housing plans that target the homeless and the poor. Her condemnation of the council indicates a limited vision and inability to sympathise with the poor and the homeless who are desperate for proper housing. Instead, she continues starting squatting communes which disrupt housing provision plans. Alice and her comrades are convinced that squatting and planning for communist revolutionary activities are far more efficient in ridding the country of its housing crisis.

On the other hand, the consequentialist notion of negative responsibility entails alienation; it alienates individuals from their life projects. Tanyi points out, a personal project is not prioritized by utilitarians, for they do not consider it "as in any particular sense *his or her own*, but as only one among many others that matter only to the extent that when satisfied, pursued, accomplished, and so on, they produce valuable states of affairs." (504, emphasis in original). Life projects, the core projects, are devalued; they can be easily discarded for the sake of a good outcome. What matters is the valuable consequence; it is a conviction which eliminates interest in one's projects. Thus, professional careers which require a university degree and higher education, are liable to be discarded for the sake of what consequentialists believe to be the common good. Alice gets a university degree in Politics and Economics; however, she has never had a job since she left university as she tells comrade Andrew (Lessing 179). Motivated by her revolutionary communist aspirations of ridding the country of the "rich shits," she chooses to squat in different parts of England: Manchester, Birmingham, and London. However, this sort of

alienation does not have a positive influence on Alice's life. Choosing to discard a career, and rather live on social security leads to endless financial crises, which sometimes triggers contemplating on her financial status.

> I've been living like this for years. How many? Is it twelve, now? No,
> fourteen—no, more … The work I've done for other people, getting things together, making things happen, sheltering the homeless, getting them fed—and as often as not paying for it. Suppose I had put aside a little, even a little, of that money, for myself, what would I have now? Even if it were only a few hundred pounds, five hundred, six, I wouldn't be standing here sick with worry.…(Lessing 164)

Alice's constant need for money causes her indignation at making wrong decisions. It provokes a sense of regret for not saving money over these many years of her life, which she has been spending on helping others. She is aware that squatting, which she believes would help in achieving her communist goals, needs funding. But Alice willingly overlooks the fact that following a career would have privileged her with financial independence, even facilitate taking part in political decision-making. However, this form of consequentialist alienation from a personal project which, as Tanyi emphasises, leaves no place "for respecting particular persons' particular projects or welfare" (505), and creates in her a sense of loss as her contemplations reveal. Further, her abandonment of a career identifies her with those who are not given better educational opportunities.

Alternatively, Alice's mother is one of those women who are deprived of the privilege of good education. She tells Alice of her missing the opportunity for a good education, which often triggers both sorrow and a sense of nonentity. She also tells her about her motherly keenness to provide her daughter with a better education, which reflects her way of trying to compensate for something she

had missed out on her own education. Mrs. Mellings' poor education has resulted in depriving her of career opportunities and devoting her life to looking after her children, including the mundane tasks of buying food and cooking it (Lessing 350). Further, her financial dependence on her husband has persisted even after their divorce. Ironically enough, Alice, despite her university degree, follows her mother's path. Ever since her graduation, she has been spending her life as "a servant, wasting her life on other people" (17) as comrade Jasper tells her. The difference between Alice and her mother is that the latter has devoted her life to parenting her dependent children, who, in their early childhood, are her responsibility. Alice offers her services to strangers to advance the communist cause, which often makes her impecunious. She is also oblivious to the fact that they are independent grownups who, after living some time in squats, always leave for one reason or another.

However, Alice's decline to have a professional career is not the only sort of alienation prompted by her consequentialist attitude. She and her fellow revolutionary squatters alienate themselves from the society at large, including their families. The commune has created a world of its own, which, both psychologically and socially, alienates them. Their families are rarely mentioned, and if Alice maintains her familial bond, it proves far from a worm-filial one. She considers her family, especially her father, part of the corrupted capitalist system. Her alienation further leads to an adamant insistence on rejecting their views regarding her communist political affiliation. So, when she tells her mother that "when we have abolished fascist imperialism, there won't be [poor] people like that" (Lessing 58), the mother only replies with Friedrich Schiller's "Against—stupidity—the gods—themselves—contend—in vain" (58). The phrase suggests the difficulty of combating or arguing with stupidity; its irrationality, ignorance, and poor critical thinking are all resistant to whatever power aims

to correct and enlighten them. It also suggests that Mrs Mellings understands that her daughter is self-delusional, therefore, the futility of arguing her views.

Alice's condemnation of the economic and social policies of her country is often evoked when she faces one of her everyday problems. When she cannot have hot water in the squat, she is furious at the rich who can afford it, her mother included, and mutters to herself "They don't know what it costs . . . It all comes from the workers, from us.…" (61). Time and again Alice alienates herself from her family and ascribes to a working-class identity despite her voluntary unemployment. Her anger also echoes her communist tendency to divide the community into the haves and have-nots, and the intention to rid the country of its economic inequality.

That said, consequentialists adopt an impersonal standpoint which they believe to be helping toward fulfilling their goals. Paul Hurley points out "the consequentialist claim that the impartiality central to the evaluation of actions as right and wrong is the impartiality of impersonal rankings of overall states of affairs (and that there is no rationale for any alternative conception of impartiality)" (141). The morality of actions, as judged by consequentialism, is based on their outcomes; seeing actions as right or wrong is determined by the scale of their utility. To determine the morality of an action is to objectively consider its consequences, thus, consequentialism excludes personal assessment as partial and biased. To demonstrate impartiality, only the results of actions are to be taken into consideration. This claim to impartiality decides the comrades' evaluation of their actions regardless of how they affect others. Their judgement of the moral values of their actions is based on how far these actions help them achieve their communist goals.

The integrity of the comrades is often affected by the peculiarity of their moral judgement and the principle of impartiality. This is

foreshadowed early in the novel. In their first meeting, they are keen to adopt, if not forge, characteristics of the working class. Though some of them are middle-class, they tend to forge their identity. Alice's companions affect cockney voice "with the intention of sounding working-class" (Lessing 29). This signifies a tacit agreement on posing as members of the working class to which some of them do not belong. One of the comrades, Bert, modifies "the posh tones of some public school" (Lessing 29) to sound working-class. For her part, Alice's childhood and adolescence have never been exposed to the hardships of the working class. Her childhood is characterised as a typical bourgeoisie in its lifestyle of throwing parties and living in a suburban neighbourhood. The comrades' pretence does not target the larger community in which they live, rather, it is intended for the members of their commune. This collective forged identity helps them believe in their qualification for adopting the cause of the working class. Both belief and practice, though, undermine their integrity as well as indicate their delusion.

The comrades' adoption of the consequentialist principle of impartiality further affects their treatment of their families. The consequentialist claim to an impersonal standpoint makes Alice a source of harm to her family. She denies them any privileged treatment which blinds her to filial obligation to protect them against any harm. Alice, for no obvious reason, throws a stone at her father's house window, jeopardising the life of her half-baby sister. This is a step forward toward her eventual total alienation from her family. In fact, money is Alice's sole motive for maintaining family relationships. Indeed, as Lessing notes, the preoccupation of squatters is "money all the time . . . most [of their] conversations are about money" (Thomson 185). If it is not money, it is some other help that the squatters seek to avoid eviction from the squat. Hence, because of the scarcity of money, Alice is ready to get it by any means. Alice twice steals her father's money and never feels guilty. When he reproaches her for her thefts, she

neither apologizes nor reflects on her crime. She considers her father a bourgeois who deserves punishment for his capitalist identity. Further, visiting her mother's house and seeing that it is put up for sale, while her mother is not there, she steals into it, tears down all the curtains, and carries them to the squat. Alice tells herself that these curtains are hers, she even wonders "How dare her mother give these away without even asking her…" (Lessing 197). She overlooks the fact that the curtains now belong to the new ownership. So, by committing these robberies, she never admits betraying her parents because she sees them as part of the corrupted system. It is noteworthy that when she is desperate for money, she never considers robbing strangers. Possibly she is deterred by fear of imprisonment. Knowing at heart that her parents will not report her crime to the police, she boldly proceeds with her robbery as she aligns them with the corrupted society whose members deserve to have their properties vandalized. Alternatively, her vandalization of public property is almost limited to spraying it with slogans, a crime which she knows receives a light sentence. Such an attitude is dictated by what she believes to be in the interest of her revolutionary communism.

The comrades' alienation from the society at large is based on their communist principles and conviction of the absence of social and economic justice. Their slogans, occasional arrest, and taking part in pickets and demos, all are intended to alleviate suffering. This belief is represented in Alice's reflection when she sees people going to work, she tells herself, "Building or road workers, perhaps even self-employed; it wasn't these men who would save Britain from herself!" (47). She is convinced that the comfortable life of the bourgeoisie, her parents included, is built on the exploitation of these workers. She also believes that her communist fellows, rather than these suffering people, will rid England of the fascist capitalism.

However, when Alice and her comrades deal with the exploited proletariat and "the have-nots," they act exactly like the bourgeoisie. Their treatment of Philip, a proletariat, is a case in

point. Philip is "a slight, pale young man … not strong enough (Lessing 39-40). Because he is slightly built, Philip is often cheated by his employers. As a result, they often reduce his already agreed-upon payment on the pretext that the work is badly finished. To avoid this injustice, Philip decides to be his own master by starting a business of decoration. Philip, who is now homeless because his girlfriend has thrown him out, is looking for a shelter. So, he asks the comrades to host him in return for his free repairs for the squat. Philip represents the working poor, whom these revolutionary communist squatters fight for. Yet, except for Alice, the comrades are reluctant to accept his offer. They do not give a specific reason for their negative response, as such, they suggest taking a vote on his stay. Since the reader is given insight only into Alice's internal perspective, the reason behind her apparent support for Philip is revealed. Waiting for the return of the comrades from some picket, Alice is apprehensive about the vote, she "wept a little, aloud, snuffling and gulping, as she stood swabbing the floor. If *they* decided that Philip could not stay here, then … those tiles on the roof, those tiles …" (86). Alice's care for Philip seems to be strong enough to affect the physical response of weeping, sniffling, and gulping. The first impression is that her concern for his shelter and well-being is what moves her to tears. The use of the adverb 'then' further indicates her fear of the consequence of not agreeing to host him. However, this consequence is implied; namely, if they do not agree to host him, he will refuse to fix the tiles on the roof. Meanwhile, hiring someone else to do the job will cost money, which they are always desperate to have. Thus, it is a sheer economic motive, rather than empathy, that drives her to support Philip's stay. Fortunately for her and the squat, she succeeds in persuading the comrades to accept hosting him. For his part, Philip, as he later tells Alice, is convinced that she "didn't care about him … once she had got all she could out of him, got him working day and night for peanuts, and now she'd got her house,

he—Philip—could go to the wall for all she cared about him" (293). Though Philip's accusation is directed to Alice, it suggests that the conduct of these communist squatters identifies them with capitalists whose economic practices are condemned by Karl Marx for their alienation of people from their human essence (91).

If hosting Philip is motivated by the deal of free repair of the squat, dealing with the homeless poor family of Monica is yet another example of the alignment of Alice and her comrades with the society from which they alienate themselves. Monica is a young mother with a baby and a drunk husband. The council house where she lives is a dreadful place; even its memory brings to Alice's mind "an image of concentrated misery" (Lessing 146). The constant wailing of Monica's baby and her begging Alice to host her, all suggest the horridness of the place where she already lives with her family and her desperation for a better place. Compared to Philip's, her situation is worse because of her responsibility both for the baby and the drunk husband. Thus, Monica represents the harsh reality against which the comrades fight to obliterate. Yet, the notion of hosting Monica is rejected on the pretext that "there are hundreds, thousands of them" (147). Unlike Philip, hosting Monica will not be of any use to the comrades or the squat; she is crippled by her family and does not offer any service in return for hosting her. This means that the hosting is a sheer act of charity. Only Alice feels sorry for her, but she does not make enough effort to interfere in the comrades' decision thinking that "If you did find her a place, she'd muck it all up somehow" (148). Peter Railton refers to the alienation triggered by consequentialist ethics as "resulting in some sort of loss" (151). The examples of Philip and Monica represent the loss which these comrades suffer. It is the self-delusion represented in the stark contrast between what they believe to be fighting for, and their unwillingness to help victims of what they brand as fascist capitalists.

However, being motivated by self-interest is not the only sign of the comrade's adoption of consequentialism. They employ the consequentialist concept that the rightness of an action is attributed

to its outcome. In his analysis of consequentialists' evaluation of acts, David Cummiskey notes that "no action is ruled out as a matter of principle alone" (2). The rightness of an act is attributed to its outcome rather than the methods pursued to achieve this intended outcome. Consequently, if the moral values of acts are based on their outcomes, then the inherent moral rules agreed upon by the majority are discarded by consequentialists.

Accordingly, the comrades' decision-making is not tuned in to the legality of the means they follow to achieve their goals. Thus, in a further step towards fulfilling their communist goals of helping alleviate the suffering of the poor, they resort to terrorist action. Their revolutionary method of propagating their cause by merely taking part in peaceful demos and spraying public buildings with revolutionary slogans develops into terrorism. They decide to use explosives to make headlines that will eventually attract people to their cause. They are convinced that bombing a building will better serve their cause. The location the comrades choose for setting their bomb is outside one of London's luxurious hotels where the place is "crowded with thronging shoppers and tourists" (Lessing 365), and the choice of the place is made "regardless of possible casualties" (372). Their choice of this location is based on their conviction that they "would prove themselves here, in this shameless, luxurious scene" (365). They turn a blind eye to the criminality of the act which will claim innocent lives, whether in great or small numbers. They also ignore the high probability that the potential victims have nothing to do with the policy-making of the country. Alice is almost the only voice which asks for consideration of the innocent casualties of their terrorist plan. She asks for setting the bomb "to go off in the middle of the night, not when people are around" (371). But because the moral value of their actions is rarely considered, Alice's voice is ignored. The logic of the comrades is, as stated by Jocelin, the bomb maker, "… it's a question of how to make the greatest impact. A few windows in the

middle of the night—and so what? But this way, it'll be front page in all the papers tomorrow, and on the news tonight" (371). Another squatter, Bert, emphasises this consequentialist attitude by quoting Linen's "'Morality has to be subdued to the needs of Revolution" (371). Approval of this principle is shown in the laughter of the comrades at hearing the quote of the communist political theorist. Having decided on their plan and the scene of the operation, the comrades feel elated and even celebrate by going to the movie and dining at an Indian restaurant (368).

If Alice is almost the only one who is worried about the casualties, this does not exclude her from responsibility. She expresses her worries about casualties, but, as already indicated, her voice is too feeble to be obeyed. The only positive action she makes is calling the police, intending to report the operation minutes before setting off the bomb, but she stops short before identifying her comrades. Instead, she claims that it is an IRA-intended terrorist operation. The narrator is keen on describing Alice's apprehensions and her wish to have the operation intercepted. However, she does not take serious action to stop the terrorist operation, which makes her an accomplice, though a silent one. In addition, after the bombing, which causes the death of several innocent people, she never reports her comrades to the police. Her moral conflict, being torn apart between loyalty to her comrades, the communist cause, passivity, and sorrow for the innocent casualties does not exempt her from condoning terrorism. Thus, Lessing's reference to Alice as a good terrorist is ultimately her way of ridiculing the narrative of these communists' self-delusion.

Lessing's conviction of the futility of communism is evident in *The Good Terrorist*. It is represented in the means utilized by the comrades to fulfil their communist goals which prove to be ruinous rather than constructive. They are so intent on fulfilling their goals that they adopt consequentialist ethical principles. These principles

are proven to have their grave drawbacks shown in their attitudes and actions. The influence of the two principles of consequentialism, namely, negative responsibility and impartiality, together with the resultant alienations is proven to create a peculiar world of these communists. The consequentialist principle of negative responsibility leads the comrades to bear animosity towards the society at large; people who never take part in political decision-making are treated as bourgeoisie and fascist capitalists. This consequentialist principle affects two forms of alienation. First, it alienates these communists from their life projects, they intentionally reject their university degrees, and respectable jobs, and choose to live on social security. The second form of alienation is both familial and societal. They alienate themselves from their families, even though these families do their best to help those in need. On the other hand, the communist squatters' adoption of the consequentialist principle of impartiality, which promises equal treatment for all, further affects their familial bonds and integrity. This principle not only leads them to forge workers' identities but also turns them into a source of harm to their families.

The similarity between the manipulative and careless attitude of the comrades and the bourgeoisie towards the poor is further demonstrated. The examples of Philip and Monica prove that these communists are indifferent to their suffering and driven by sheer self-interest. These communist squatters demonstrate inability to identify with these two victims despite their claims of devoting their lives to rid the country of the injustice done to the working poor by fascist capitalism. Since these comrades fail to contemplate the moral values of their actions, they neither regret nor improve them. This moral deviation turns them into terrorists who target the innocent merely to achieve publicity. Finally, by exploring the drawbacks of their adopted consequentialist principles, it is made clear that the belief of these communist squatters in the ability to enact political change is sheer self-delusion.

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