worse possible fight. "See here," his argument runs, "the examples I have chosen (the Russian Populists, the early IRA, the Stern Gang, and the Viet Cong assassination campaign) show that even in a political conflict there should be certain limits; these limits are analogous to those of the war convention." Indiscriminate terrorists are thus cast beyond the pale; they are the war criminals of political struggle.

A moral denunciation of terrorism aimed at innocent persons is certainly in order, but is it really necessary to make political assassination look so benign by comparison? In war it is legitimate for me as a combatant to kill an enemy combatant because he may also kill me; political assassination is not justified in this way. Nor is it enough to say, as Walzer does, "Assuming that the regime is in fact oppressive, one should look for agents of oppression and not simply for government agents." A great deal more than that needs to be said about the justification and limits of revolutionary political activity. Though his argument on terrorism is a creative one, it is a bad one.

The sections on "Dilemmas" and "Responsibility" address some of the hardest questions that have come up in recent wars regarding the justification of war and how it should be fought. They are well thought out, persuasively argued, and full of good moral sense. The question of military necessity is a principal concern in both sections, and Walzer's appeals to military necessity deserve careful scrutiny. The claim that a particular action forbidden by the war convention is necessary disguises what is really being argued: namely, that to take this action rather than a permitted one increases the odds in one's own favor. Having seen through the claims of military necessity in this way, Walzer is unsympathetic toward them. His skepticism toward such arguments from necessity is healthy indeed.

But here Walzer is only scraping the surface of a deeply complicated matter. It is not at all clear, for example, that all claims of military necessity are disguised statements of self-interest. The problem is that, though appeals to necessity are often made in war, a general definition of military necessity is impossible. It appears that the validity or nonvalidity of such appeals can be recognized only in a particular context and perhaps only after the fact—as in the Nuremberg Trials or in the aftermath of the decision to undertake obliteration bombing of German and Japanese cities in World War II. If one restricts the question to what is the relation between the laws of war and military necessity, one encounters conflicting interpretations. At one extreme the hegemony of the law is asserted; that is, the laws of war take into account military necessity. At the other extreme the hegemony of military necessity is established: war is hell. Georg Schwarzenberger has avoided either extreme by describing a spectrum along which the laws of war are ranged, with some provisions (e.g., the prohibition of wanton destruction or sadistic torture) absolute or nearly so and others (e.g., those relating to air warfare) full of loopholes allowing for claims of necessity (A Manual of International Law).

I am inclined to believe that the moral difficulty with the concept of military necessity is that it is hard or impossible to know at the time of decision what is, in fact, necessary. The decision is thus reduced to an exercise in utilitarian calculus, where too many of the terms in the equation are often unknowns. Walzer's discussion of military necessity is not a comprehensive one; a book needs to be written on this concept alone. But Walzer provides a sensitive and well-reasoned analysis of the problem within the context he has chosen. In particular, though his examination of the decision to bomb German cities during World War II is relatively brief compared to all that has been written on that topic, Walzer's is the best moral analysis of the decision I have read.

It is difficult to praise Just and Unjust Wars too much. Though it has faults, they are minor ones and are far outweighed by its extraordinary value as a contemporary contribution to the ongoing tradition of just war. Walzer persuasively reminds us that sometimes the course of war must be chosen; at the same time, he shows how that decision must be restrained, and he argues tellingly that there are limits to fighting war that must be observed even by those parties guilty of aggression. And he establishes a case that moral values are based in historical experience. Any of these accomplishments alone would be worthwhile; together they make a superb book.

Lifeboat Ethics: The Moral Dilemmas of World Hunger
edited by George R. Lucas, Jr., and Thomas W. Ogletree
(Preface by Daniel Callahan. Harper & Row; 162 pp.; $4.95 [paper])

Arthur Simon

Scientist Garrett Hardin tells us that the earth is a lifeboat, not a spaceship. We affluent Westerners had better protect our advantages in it from the world's hungry people, because they are reproducing beyond the earth's ability to sustain them. In this metaphor the great sin is compassion. Helping them means pulling more people into the lifeboat and, therefore, more human suffering in the long run because the boat has provisions for only so many.

Hardin's metaphor is the wrong one for many reasons. It would seduce us into playing the role of God with the lives of others on a massive scale. It espouses a we-they division of the world, when "haves" and "have-nots" need instead to recognize their common humanity. It assumes that the United States has done just about everything possible to wipe out world hunger and poverty, and, since that hasn't worked, we'd now better concentrate on reducing population growth in order to keep the lifeboat afloat.

The nine essays in this book, including one by Garrett Hardin, represent a stimulating cross section of views on the lifeboat-ethics debate. Arguments in support of a lifeboat-type approach, as well as arguments against it, are in-
cluded, with several essayists locating themselves somewhere in between. In that respect the book offers, along with many other sharp insights, a well-balanced introduction to the debate.

Unfortunately most of the essays seem to orbit around the question of whether or not food aid is an appropriate response to famine. They tend to neglect the question of whether or not development that is oriented toward justice could overcome some or all of the poverty that lies behind chronic malnutrition. The lifeboat metaphor (along with “triage,” which is also discussed) lends itself to such treatment because it is a crisis-and-doomsday idea. So, probably, does the fact that these essays were prepared, not during the 1977 grain glut, but on the heels of the global food crisis that peaked earlier.

An error has done some mischief in editor George Lucas’s introductory essay. He says that “fertility rates (which are the number of viable pregnancies per unit of population) never have varied to any significant degree anywhere at any time in recorded history, regardless of nutritional or socio-economic levels” (emphasis his). If that is true, how could so many of the world’s developed countries, including our own, and a number of poor countries such as Chile, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan, reduce so substantially both the mortality rate (especially infant mortality) and the population growth rate? The error is not marginal because it touches on a central point at issue in the lifeboat debate. Lucas appears to build on the mistake in reaching his own conclusion that in the future there must be “an overall reduction of world food demand, accomplished through a cessation to population growth in all nations and of excessive consumption in affluent countries” (emphasis his). If I understand what Lucas means, he tilts perilously toward a conclusion that Hardin might embrace.

Even Donald W. Shriver, Jr., in an otherwise outstanding response seems misled on this point when he says: “The case for population controls as the reciprocal of development aid is especially convincing.” But the evidence so far shows that such a one-sided use of aid is apt to be futile. As I write this, the day’s New York Times summarizes the point in its lead editorial:

“Recent studies suggest that programs giving high priority to land reform, greater food production and improved rural nutrition have been more effective than birth control in reducing family size. Better nutrition dramatically reduces infant mortality and, paradoxically, population growth as well. Farm parents who can realistically expect their first two or three children to survive turn away from having seven or eight as insurance."

This being the case, lifeboat ethics fails the test of realism by turning us aside from the most effective (perhaps the only effective) and acceptable way of reducing high population growth rates. Therefore it would exacerbate the very problem it so desperately aims to solve.

Speaking of realism, Hardin takes what I consider to be an excessively pessimistic view of the earth’s carrying capacity, and therefore of the potential for developing better food production technologies and a lot of other technologies, including those having to do with alternate sources of energy. He grossly underestimates the human abil-

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ity to adapt. Of course there is a lot of guessing on these matters. Still, consider by contrast a conclusion of the World Food and Nutrition Study (June, 1977) commissioned by President Ford and carried out under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences: "If there is the political will in this country and abroad...it should be possible to overcome the worst aspects of widespread hunger and malnutrition within one generation." A big "if," to be sure. But it serves notice that there are solutions to hunger that are not diametrically opposed to the biblical moral traditions.

Food First
by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins
(Houghton Mifflin; 466 pp.; $10.95)

Luther Tweeten

I applaud the authors for depicting so vividly the problems of world hunger. They properly give priority in developing economies to agriculture (Food First!), to labor-intensive enterprise, to the low-income farmer, to institutional (especially land) reform, to redistribution of wealth, to curbing of monopoly power, and to primacy of the person. If asking the right questions is half the solution to a problem, the authors have gone far. With such a superb start one anticipated a compelling analysis of world hunger problems by authors with soft hearts and hard heads. I was right only about their hearts. The analysis is seriously flawed and capable of much mischief. Unloving critics who are turned off by the authors' excesses will likely reject even the worthwhile parts of the book. Uncritical lovers, principally counterestablishment types, will err by accepting the whole.

The book is written as a utopian melodrama. Corporations and landlords, the villains, can do no right. The formerly hungry peasants of Cuba and China, the heroes, can do no wrong. Such naïveté afflicts the intellect throughout.

To illustrate I will focus on the authors' treatment of American agriculture. They use output per unit of land as their measure of efficiency, even after conceding that land is not the limiting resource. By this measure they conclude that small farms are more efficient than large farms. But in fact labor and capital, as well as land, are scarce and must be included when measuring efficiency. If we use output per unit of all production resources to measure efficiency, small farms in the U.S. are far less efficient than large farms. In 1970 efficiency on small farms (sales of $2,500 or less) averaged 37 per cent of that on large farms (sales of $100,000 or more). Efficiency on farms with sales of $2,500-$5,000 averaged 47 per cent of that on large farms the same year. Actual farm production in 1970 could have been produced with $58 billion invested in family farms with sales of $40,000 to $100,000 per year, or with $153 billion invested in family farms with sales of less than $2,500 per year.

Though small farms are inefficient, their operators are not necessarily poor. Net income from farm and nonfarm sources averaged $17,551 in 1967 on farms with sales of $2,500 or less, compared with average net income for all farms of $19,059. Because small farms have a higher equity in their land and a higher ratio of off-farm to farm income, they are far less vulnerable to instability from weather or markets than are large farms.

The American "Food Power" policy (using food in an international power play) depicted by the authors is a myth—its only reality an illusion created by the authors. Farm commodity legislation from 1973 to 1977 was essentially the same as from 1961 to 1973, and the new Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 makes no real change. Circumstances, not policies, were different for Earl Butz than for other recent secretaries of agriculture. The different circumstances arose mainly from poor weather and increased demand for U.S. farm exports. Most of the variability in exports and world food prices came from unstable year-to-year purchases by the Soviet Union and China. (The latter did not purchase directly from us but affected world markets by purchasing from Canada, Australia, and others.)

The authors criticize the call for freer trade in the so-called Flanigan Report. Implementing free trade, however, would reduce the level and variability of consumer prices in the U.S. as well as other countries and would not result in the "belt tightening" depicted by the authors. Trade barriers aimed at protecting American farmers, which the authors support, are inconsistent with their recognition of the need to remove barriers to imports from less developed countries. The authors are quite wrong in contending that most of the profits from trade end up with export corporations. The gains accrue largely to farmers and consumers at home and abroad. The authors' assertion that "every item has a price and that price, in large part, is determined by what the world's better-off customers are willing to pay" ignores supply entirely. It also ignores the massive impact on prices by the world's not-so-better-off customers. It makes a big difference if these countries buy nothing or double purchases.

The authors contend: "We cannot look at technology in agriculture as freeing people from labor when productive work is what people need and want more than anything else." But productive work can be found in other U.S. industries that do not have excess capacity and massive surpluses—if we will remove the barriers to employment in these industries. If we will not remove the barriers, then I suggest a wage-earnings supplement that is nationwide in scope, not just for agriculture.

The authors contend that money-lenders should not board a crop until it brings a better price and that the price should remain constant throughout the year—a position that ignores the cost of storage and the value of holding food until it is most needed. They also say that 100 per cent of parity implies a satisfactory return, but in fact only 77 per cent of parity is required to bring returns equal to all costs of production (including family labor) on farms with sales of over $100,000, whereas 209 per cent of parity is required to cover all production costs on small farms. Assuring 100 per cent of parity would speed consolidation and eliminate many small farmers.