

Terrorism and the Politics of Social Change: A Durkheimian Analysis. By James Dingley. UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. pp. vii + 203.

James Dingley's *Terrorism and the Politics of Social Change: A Durkheimian Analysis* (2010) brings together sociology and terrorism, two academic disciplines that have been previously brought together by other scholars such as Blain (2009) and Vertigans (2011). It is Dingley's application of a Durkheimian methodology, specifically, to the study of terrorism that sets this book apart from those that have come before it. Dingley's experience of the subject at hand, gained from his time spent in Northern Ireland and Iraq, brings a tone of personal familiarity to the work (p. vii). The personable tone of Dingley's work will be admirable to some readers. However, this familiarity does cloud Dingley's argument. Further, the work relies too heavily on binary understandings and there are numerous generalisations made in the work that are troubling, preventing the widespread use of this work in differing academic contexts.

Comprised of six chapters, *Terrorism and the Politics of Social Change* is clearly, topically laid out, rendering the work accessible to both newcomers and those well-versed in the subject. The brief history of war and terror in the work will be of particular use to newcomers to the subject, being both factual and clear. With minimal errors, Dingley's work here is generally a comfortable read. However, the introductory chapter is not as foundationally sound as needed for a work of this kind. The introduction is overtly personal, with Dingley drawing upon his experience in Northern Ireland and Iraq. This focus on the personal renders the introduction overly general and anecdotal, inevitably impacting on the chapters that follow. No definition of 'terrorism' is given to situate the argument until chapter 2, the reader being forced to assume where the author stands on the controversial subject matter deep into the work. Further, Dingley's emphasis on the secular as non-violent and the religious as violent portrays religious cultures as less advanced and less 'human' (p. 3). There is some backtracking from this sentiment towards the end of the introduction, yet the opening pages undoubtedly establish an us-them binary through which the rest of the book is read.

It is important to note Dingley's use of the term man/men throughout the work when referring to people in general. This authorial choice is overtly exclusive and again narrows the scope of the work. While some many view this point as one of too-far-gone political correctness, from the outset the acts of women and female child soldiers are pushed to the side as irrelevant, despite female participation in violent and terrorist acts from ancient times to the present. As aforementioned, while the history of war and terror in the work is both factual and clear, the lack of focus on the violent acts of both women and children is perhaps an oversight.

The works of Sjöberg and Gentry (2011) and Rosen (2005) would have proved a good addition to this work. While one cannot expect any more to be completely exhaustive, this aspect of violence, war, and terrorism should be considered alongside the acts of men.

The applicability of Durkheim to the study of terrorism has been queried, particularly in Tore Bjørgo's edited volume of 2004. Interestingly, despite its centrality in the title of the work, the use of Durkheim only truly comes forth in the final chapter, 'Durkheim, Sociology and Understanding Terrorism' (pp. 141–168). The previous chapters feature little of Durkheim's work. This is perhaps most striking in relation to chapters two and three, 'Terrorism: Understanding the Heavens' and 'The Heavens Describes,' in which Durkheim's work on religion is neglected, particularly *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/2001). However, the use of Durkheim in chapter 6 provides a clear example of the implementation of a methodology, particularly for students. Dingley aptly explains Durkheim and his theories, clearly applying them to his chosen topic. While ongoing significant, perhaps unmerited, blame is placed on religion itself, Dingley accurately highlights the place of culture as a core consideration in the study and comprehension of terrorism. Some may argue that there is room for a more broad discussion and critique of Durkheim in this work, however this is not the intended core of the work.

Dingley's *Terrorism and the Politics of Social Change* delivers on the bringing together of sociology and terrorism in order to more comprehensively understand the connection between culture, society, and terrorist acts. The application of Durkheim is clear and provides a good example to students on the use of methodology. However, the work is afflicted by generalisations that stem from the introduction and thus weave through the work as a whole. Despite the drawbacks of the work, Dingley provides insight into the integral place of culture in the consideration of terrorism.

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