If Writers are Necessarily Right...

Who are the "rongers", so necessarily wrong?

Introduction

This is a reflection on potential implications of particular vocabulary and pronunciation of English as the global medium of exchange. The purpose follows from the problem highlighted by *Edward de Bono* (*I Am Right and You are Wrong*, 1992). Clearly this title characterizes much global debate on every kind of issue. It is fundamental to the continuing difficulty of achieving strategic consensus, if that is indeed to be understood as meaning that everyone should agree on action to be taken, as separately questioned (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

The focus of this reflection is on the curious phonetic relationship in English between "writer" and "right". Is the exercise of "writing" surreptitiously assumed to be one which endeavours to make "right"? Can it be readily assumed to have this purpose, as in the sense of "setting things right" -- "putting the world to rights"? For a writer, is the product of the endeavour necessarily "right" -- however misleading this may then appear to others?

The obvious difficulty is that writers tend to consider that the writings of many others are inherently "wrong" -- although assumed to be "right" by their authors, as writers. This offers the sense of different parties endeavouring to make "right" in ways which are interpreted by others as variously "wrong". It can be readily assumed that every writer is considered to be inherently wrong by some others.

Curiously this ambiguity is not reflected in English usage. Writers who are wrong from some perspective are still considered to be writers. They are not framed as "wrongers" or "rongers", engaged in "making wrong" in some way. There is however widespread concern at the existence of wrongful writing, which might otherwise be expressed as wrongful "righting".

Whilst such considerations may be dismissed as mere wordplay, there remains the question of how influential this wordplay is in undermining aspirations to a more fruitful approach to collective strategy. The point is made by the complex subtitling of the book by de Bono. He argues that the discourse logic of "I am right, You are wrong" needs to be superceded. One part of the book's subtitle is: *From Rock Logic to Water Logic*. He sees this shift as being essential to the other portion of the subtitle: *From This to the New Renaissance*. The transition, or transcendence, features in his many arguments for new thinking (*New Thinking for the New Millennium*, 1999).

Righteousness of writers?

With respect to "setting things right", there is the further sense of making things "upright". One issue is the nature of the writer's identification with this sense of rightness.

*Righteousness* (or rectitude) is an important theological concept in Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It is an attribute that implies that a person's actions are justified. It can have the further connotation that the person has been "judged" or "reckoned" as leading a life that is pleasing to God. It is in this sense that, despite the apparent wordplay, the matter may be fundamental to strategies deriving their justification from sacred "writings" -- as in the variants of faith-based governance.

Clearly a major difficulty at this time derives from the sense for some that the sacred writings of other groups are simply "wrong" in some respects. Each religion has this perception of the writings of others to some degree. There is a tendency from a scientific perspective to see all sacred writings as "wrong", as exemplified by *Richard Dawkins* (*The God Delusion*, 2006). The phrase *not even wrong* is used by science to describe any argument that purports to be scientific but fails at some fundamental level, usually in that it...
contains a terminal logical fallacy. This is indicative of a scientific variant of religious sacredness.

Other variants exist in the ideological contexts typical of political discourse. The sense of "right", as a metaphor, is then associated with "normal" (from geometry) -- despite the sense in which this is now undermined (James K. Galbraith, The End of Normal: the great crisis and the future of growth, 2014). Hence the current association of abnormality with the deprecated sense of the radical and the extreme, as discussed separately (Radicalisation of Existence and Identity, 2015; Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism? 2005).

Again there is an ambiguity between the perception (from within) of being "right", and the perception (from without) of being "wrong". Curiously, science is also confronted by this issue in the assessment of scientific writings, readily criticized by other scientists as "wrong" -- possibly "not even wrong". This is despite any assumption of being "right" when producing a paper, an explanation, or a new theory.

**Wrongers or rongers -- as sinners?**

As noted above, for writers the product is normally held to be right, whether or not it is considered an act of righteousness. The relationship between writer and "righter", or between writing and "righting" -- even though primarily phonetic -- is not evident in an analogous relationship between "ronger" and wrong, or between "ronging" and wronging. Righter is indeed a recognized term, as a righter of wrongs. Righting is also recognized as restoration to a normal or upright position.

Wronging is understandable as misrepresentation, most notably in blaming others unjustly. Use has been made of "wronger" since 1375, but only as a deprecated indication of being "more wrong". The expression wronger than wrong is described as Isaac Asimov's axiom by Michael Shermer (Wronger Than Wrong, Scientific American, November 2006). This is a mistaken statement that equates two errors when one of the errors is clearly more wrong than the other, as discussed in a book of essays (Isaac Asimov, The Relativity of Wrong: essays on science, 1988).

In contrast to "writing" as a mode of action, any use of "wronging" is primarily in recognition of the action of others considered blameworthy. Many groups in society frame others, with whom they disagree, in this manner -- but rarely with use of the term. Whilst "writer" is a well-recognized profession, "wronger" is not used in this way. However, the role of those writing scripts for any form of negative campaigning or propaganda, involving deliberate misrepresentation, could usefully be recognized in this way. Deliberate introduction of bias can be understood in these terms, as discussed separately (Vital Collective Learning from Biased Media Coverage, 2014).

In all these senses the writer's effort is to associate wrong with another through a process of writing which could be understood as wronging. Some jargon use is made of "wronger" for those acting in a "bent" or "twisted" mode. It is appropriate to note that the issue of unrecognized concepts has been a preoccupation of the Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (COCTA), founded by the International Political Science Association, now a research committee of the International Sociological Association. It is also a feature of comparison of English with other languages (Howard Rheingold, They Have a Word For It: a lighthearted lexicon of untranslatable words and phrases, 1988; C. J. Moore, In Other Words, 2004).

With the phonetic contrast between "writer" and right", the question is whether more insight is to be derived from "wronger and wrong" or rather from "ronger and wrong". Ronger (derived from French) is infrequently used to indicate gnawing (as of the nails). Are writers engaged in deliberate misrepresentation better named as "wrongers" or as "rongers"? Curiously there is no accepted term for the activity of "negative writing" or the profession of "negative writers".

Religions, with their concern with righteousness, would recognize such activity as that of sinners engaged in sinning. In failing to subscribe uncritically to "sacred rightings", wrongers are necessarily condemned as blaphemers and heretics. Scientists would tend to frame their sense of righteousness in terms of pseudo-science as practiced by pseudo-scientists -- in failing to subscribe to the sacrosanct "rightings" of the icons of science. As with religion, this would tend to result in exchange of communication of some kind.

In the case of religion there is huge irony to early implication in a Flat Earth view of the world. Being "upright" then corresponded to a vertical position in conformity with local gravitation as perceived. This understanding has of course been undermined by the spherical sense of the world. Being "upright" then involves quite distinct orientations according to the position around the globe. Each sense of upright is then inconsistent with others elsewhere -- with those on the other side of the globe standing "upside down". It is easy to argue that there is a widespread tendency to assume a "Flat Earth" organization of global civilization in which there is only one orientation involved in being "right".

The curious tendency to think of global civilization as "flat" is evident in the award of the first Financial Times and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award to a much-celebrated book of Thomas L. Friedman (The World Is Flat, 2005). The award recognizes the business book that provides "the most compelling and enjoyable insight into modern business issues, including management, finance and economics." Does this imply some form of "delivery" of a "flat pack" civilization, as separately questioned (Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality -- in response to global governance challenges, 2008)?

In Flat Earth terms, wrongers are especially associated with those who live in a netherworld or an underworld -- a world of shadow. Hence a particular difficulty for Western Christianity to engage with ISIS -- or vice versa. Use of the metaphor frames various arguments for exploring the underside or netherworld (Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld, 2010). Understanding of the form of the Earth is the example specifically used by Asimov (1988), notably in distinguishing "sphere" as more wrong than "oblate spheroid", but less wrong than "flat".

However these distinctions raise the question as to whether, used metaphorically for a "global" civilization, there are not even more complex topological forms that better represent the comprehensible coherent connectivity of such a civilization. One intriguing candidate
is the orbifold, given the nature of cognitive engagement through such forms in music (Musical implications of orbifolds for comprehension of questioning dynamics, 2014). An orbifold is a generalization of a manifold. It is a topological space (an “underlying space”). Seemingly incomprehensible to most, orbifolds have been applied to music theory, notably by Dmitri Tymoczko (The Geometry of Musical Chords, Science, 2006; A Geometry of Music, 2011). As a key to the intuitive comprehension of music, such a form might result in “global” being recognized as wronger in the case of civilization.

Following Tymoczko, an orbifold may indeed be an appropriate mathematical description for how the brain organizes music -- and might therefore more fruitfully seek to represent the integrity of a knowledge-based civilization. More provocative is the possibility that any such sense would be perceived as “wronger” by the future, and perhaps necessarily so. Especially provocative, as an example, is the discredited Hollow Earth hypothesis -- if the future attached significance to forms of higher dimensionality (like the Klein bottle).

In such terms people might well be understood as dwelling “within” and “on” a knowledge-based civilization having a characteristic corresponding to an intuitive sense of “hollow”. Elements of this possibility are evident in debate within astrophysics regarding the shape of the universe -- for whose “global” structure one multiply-connected possibility is the torus (but of higher dimensionality). Imaginative discussion of a Dyson sphere offer another indication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toroidal animations indicative of why a sphere may constitute a &quot;wronger&quot; understanding of a &quot;global&quot; knowledge-based civilization in the eyes of the future (reproduced from Wikimedia)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A 4D flat torus seen in stereographic projection and projected into 3-dimensions and rotated on a fixed axis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A stereographic projection of a Clifford torus in four dimensions performing a simple rotation through the x2-plane.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such forms, necessarily meaningless in three dimensions, usefully frame the challenge of being "right", if this is associated with being "upright" at any point on the surface -- namely normal with respect to that surface (in geometrical terms). The forms suggest that so doing on a sphere is "even wronger" than in the higher dimensional understanding of globality which may pertain to the organization of civilization (or of individual identity). Especially challenging is the paradoxical manner in which an inside may be continuous with an outside (as with the Klein bottle) -- if it is a question of being "upright" with respect to either, and thereby framing those of the other orientation as "uprong". The paradox is discussed separately (World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside", 2013). There is the delightful irony that such considerations may be fundamental to the galactic understanding of hypothetical extraterrestrials -- and to meaningful communication with them. Talking "with the Taliban" then offers an interesting test of human capacity for alien communication.

Aspects of the matter have been explored otherwise with a degree of humour (Joe Donatelli, Why You Are Wrong, The Humor Columnist) and with a degree of realism (How to Win an Argument when You Know You Are Wrong, WikiHow). The latter notes: Winning an argument is not about being right. It is about proving your opponent wrong. By following a few simple techniques, you can decimate your opponent without letting on to the invalidity of your own argument.

In the absence of "ronger", an extensive literature (see references) exists in relation to "being wrong". This is usefully introduced by Maria Popova (5 Must-Read Books on the Psychology of Being Wrong, Brain Pickings, 4 April 2011). It notably includes Kathryn Schulz (Being Wrong: adventures in the margin of error, 2010) and Thomas Gilovich (How We Know What Isn’t So: the fallibility of human reason in everyday life, 1993). Surprisingly there are a number of references to the advantages of being wrong, especially as an aid to learning and creativity.

**Critical thinking as wronging?**

If writers readily assume themselves to be right, and this is especially the case with the sacrosanct writings of religion, science and political ideology, then how is criticism and critical thinking to be recognized? Should writers of critiques then consider themselves to be wrongers -- as they may be so considered by those they criticize? Or perhaps as rongers -- especially if they have to bite their nails in considering what it is appropriate to say in order to avoid condemnation of some form? Is Galileo Galilei an exemplary wronger?

Expressed otherwise, is a ronger someone who disagrees with a righter. Is this notably the case with a contrarian, namely a person taking up a contrary position, especially a position that is opposed to that of the majority, regardless of how unpopular it may be? Would this mean that revolutions, whether religious, scientific or ideological, are initially framed by contrarian rongers? The question may be posed otherwise, as in the case of climate change, in terms of the "inconvenient truth" represented by the perspective introduced by a critical thinker, as separately discussed (An Inconvenient Truth -- about any inconvenient truth, 2008).
Of particular interest is the value variously attached to critical thinking in questioning the product of a writer through reasoned critique. In the dynamics of the relationship with the original writer, the issue is how any critical thinking is then simply framed as negativity, in contrast with the positivity characteristic of what has been rightfully expressed. One articulation of this dynamic is offered by Barbara Ehrenreich (Smile or Die: how positive thinking fooled America and the World, 2010). In cybernetic terms it can be framed as the need for more appropriate understanding of the interaction between positive feedback and negative feedback, as discussed separately (Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative, 2005). Of some relevance, a positivity/negativity ratio (also known as the critical positivity ratio, or the Losada ratio) is a largely discredited concept in positive psychology positing an exact ratio of positive to negative emotions which distinguishes “flourishing” people from “languishing” people. Perhaps to be explored as the distinction between righters and rongers?

The matter can be viewed otherwise through the development of aesthetics and understandings of harmony. In the case of sculpture the recognition of contraposito (or counterpose) was an extremely important development through which the human body was used to express a psychological disposition for the first time in Western art. As noted by Wikipedia:

> It is used in the visual arts to describe a human figure standing with most of its weight on one foot so that its shoulders and arms twist off-axis from the hips and legs. This gives the figure a more dynamic, or alternatively relaxed appearance. It can also be used to refer to multiple figures which are in counter-pose (or opposite pose) to one another. It can further encompass the tension as a figure changes from resting on a given leg to walking or running upon it (so-called ponderation). The leg that carries the weight of the body is known as the engaged leg, the relaxed leg is known as the free leg.

In the case of music, an analogous function is recognized as counterpoint, namely as the relationship between voices that are interdependent harmonically (polyphony) yet independent in rhythm and contour. The term originates from the Latin punctus contra punctum meaning "point against point". Counterpoint may be associated with a counter-melody, namely as a sequence of notes, perceived as a melody, written to be played simultaneously with a more prominent lead melody: a secondary melody played in counterpoint with the primary melody.

With respect to notions of harmony, counterpoint may be perceived as a challenge to that of sacred music -- as with such devices as the tritone, long deprecated as diabolus in musica. Strictly defined as a musical interval composed of three adjacent whole tones, it is strangely reminiscent of the problematic nature of dialectic, however significant this may be held to be. The relationship of the tritone to the dialectic features in discussion of the work of Theodor W. Adorno (Negative Dialectics, 1966) and the psychosocial implications of contemporary music.

### From rock logic to water logic

In addition to highlighting the limitations of the simplistic framing "I am right, You are wrong", Edward de Bono uses metaphor as a means of reframing this in his reference to "from rock logic to water logic". Far less evident is the meaning to be attributed to the associated subtlety.

With respect to this distinction, there is a charming degree of irony to the fact that inscribed (at his request) on the gravestone of the poet's exponen of the second condition, namely John Keats, is the phrase: Here lies One Whose Name was Writ in Water (at his request). As Keats puts it: A man's life is a continual allegory - and very few eyes can see the mystery of his life - a life like the scriptures, figurative.

The extension of the classical dilemma to the quadrilateral reframes any constraining polarity: whether as rightness/wrongness, or wellness/disease (for the individual or the planet). Kinhide Mushakoji has drawn attention to the relevance of the quadrilateral (Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue, 1988). In a section on Alternation exemplified in 4-fold pattern (in Patterns Essential to Individual and Global Health? 2010) this was explored separately in the following form in relation to de Bono's distinctions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinction by de Bono</th>
<th>logic/truth</th>
<th>health/viability</th>
<th>judgement/evaluation</th>
<th>knowledge/certainty</th>
<th>states of matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rock logic'</td>
<td>A true</td>
<td>healthy</td>
<td>guilty/responsible</td>
<td>known certainty</td>
<td>solid (Earth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not-A false</td>
<td>unsustainable</td>
<td>not-guilty/responsible</td>
<td>unknown uncertainty</td>
<td>liquid (Water)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'water logic'</td>
<td>A and not-A true and false</td>
<td>both health and illness both sustainable and unsustainable</td>
<td>guilty and not-guilty success and failure</td>
<td>known and unknown certainty and uncertainty</td>
<td>gas (Air)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither A nor not-A true nor false</td>
<td>neither health nor illness neither sustainable nor unsustainable</td>
<td>neither guilty nor not-guilty neither success nor failure</td>
<td>neither known nor unknown certainty nor uncertainty</td>
<td>plasma (Fire)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two conditions (rows) correspond to the conventional binary logic -- notoriously given prominence in US foreign policy relating to terrorism by the declaration "You're either with us or against us", as previously discussed (Us and Them: relating to challenging others, 2009). Whether an individual is held to be suffering from a lifestyle disease (or a viewpoint which is wrong) may however also merit appreciation in terms of the last two conditions (rows). This may be equally true of the health of planetary ecosystems.
A finer distinction might regroup the categories to distinguish "air logic" and "fire logic". The notion of "negative capability" by Donald Rumsfeld (The Unknown, 2002) drew attention to the distinctions with regard to the "known unknowns" from a strategic perspective, as discussed previously (Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect, 2008). It is of course Keats who articulated the much-cited aesthetic importance of negative capability: that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysterie... ([Being] content with half knowledge. Could this be one characteristic of an ideal wronger? Is this a challenge for any righter? The question is how such subtlety might be associated with more appropriate responses to individual health and planetary ills in which the sense of right and wrong is a matter of continuing dispute. With respect to planetary ills, it has notably been reported by Deutsche Welle (February 2010) with respect to the UN Climate Change Conference that:

Professor Adil Najam from Boston University, one of the authors of IPCC's Fourth World Climate Report, the authors of which were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 along with Al Gore, said that Copenhagen was not a success and not a failure....

Individuals are perhaps most aware of this level of ambiguity in interpersonal relationships (eg she loves me; she loves me not; she loves me and she loves me not; she neither loves me nor does she not). Typically these conditions are recognized at various times in the dynamics of that relationship. In that sense, assessment of the relationship alternates between four conditions and may only be sustainable because of its resilience in being able to do so.

In relation to the environment, people expect to engage -- effectively to "dance cognitively" -- between the extremes of rocky-flat, wet-dry, windy-still, and hot-cold. This capacity is the essence of resilience and the appreciation of nature in all its forms, especially by deep ecologists.

The argument here is that there is scope for exploring beyond simplistic understandings of what "is", whether from a scientific or other perspective. The emphasis here is on the contrasting qualities of knowing and engagement with categories. What "is", however this is asserted to be so, might then be understood as having the quality of "rock logic" in contrast with what it is asserted "not to be", namely "not-A" as contrasted with "A" in the table above. The certainty of both what "is" or "is not" is then to be contrasted with the uncertainties (a la Rumsfeld) between what might "both be and not be" or might "neither be nor not be". The suggestion is that these distinctions are reminiscent or echoed by the quality of the encounter with earth, air, fire and water -- then to be understood as mnemonic cues or metaphors. Contemporary tendencies to deprecate such distinctions is indicative of a form of cognitive entrapment -- typically in rock logic.

With respect to deprecation of this argument as based on wordplay, it is appropriate to note the analysis by William S Huff (Homonym, Homonym and Homonym, and Other Word Pairs, Symmetry: Culture and Science, 1992). He has made creative use of the 8 trigrams of the Chinese Bagua system to distinguish 8 types of word pair (such as "peace" and "piece") according to meaning, pronunciation and spelling, as discussed separately (Discovering Richer Patterns of Comprehension to Reframe Polarization, 1998).

- Identity (in meaning, pronunciation, spelling)
- Heterophonic homonym (different meanings and pronunciation, same spelling: "rows")
- Homophonic homonym (different meanings and spellings, same pronunciation: "peace" and "piece")
- Synonym (same meaning, different spelling and pronunciation: "rows" and "tiers")
- Heterolog (different meanings, pronunciations and spellings: "rows" and "frogs")
- Homophonic synonym (same meaning, different pronunciation and spellings: "gray" and "grey")
- Polyphone (same meaning and spelling, different pronunciation: "the")
- Homographic homonym (different meanings, same pronunciation and spellings: "rose" and "rose")

Huff has extended his work to interlingual homophones

**Evolving dynamic between righters and rongers?**

Use of the dynamics of the planetary globe is helpful as a metaphor in transcending the difficulties of Flat Earth thinking. The latter's sense of two sides -- as with that of The Two Cultures (1959) -- is too simplistic in its implications that the righters are on the upper side and the rongers on the underside. The inhabitants of one side necessarily perceiving themselves to be righters (and "upright"), whilst perceiving those of the other as rongers (and "uprong"). Rather the world turns -- casting each righter into the shadowy condition of being ronger, and then progressively associating enlightenment with those previously so considered.

Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that, in addition to this static appreciation, writers are notably progressively transformed into wrongers over time -- by other writers effectively "setting them to rights". This transformation can be explored as the process of enantiodromia, through which extreme psychosocial positions eventually turn into their opposite. Understood in Jungian terms, a perception psychically transmogrifies into its Shadow opposite, in the repression of psychic forces that are thereby cathexed into something powerful and threatening.

Some sense of this is offered by the Christian understanding articulated in a tweet by Pope Francis: We are all sinners, We are all called to a conversion of heart (3 February 2015). With a sense of being upright dynamically related to that of being uprong, human identity then takes on the nature of a harlequin in chequered clothing. Being both righter and ronger, this ambiguity can be explored in terms of liminality (Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality, 2011).

A sense of this evolution from right to wrong in science is offered by developing understanding of the half-life of knowledge This has been discussed by mathematician Samuel Arbesman (The Half-life of Facts: why everything we know has an expiration date, 2012), and
appropriately reviewed (The Half-Life of Facts, The Economist, 28 November 2012; Truth Decay: the half-life of facts, New Scientist, 25 September 2012; Be Forewarned: your knowledge is decaying, Harvard Business Review, 5 November 2012; Half of the Facts You Know Are Probably Wrong, Reason.com, 2 October 2012). Due to the fact that scientific knowledge is growing by a factor of ten every 50 years, this means that half of what scientists may have known about a particular subject will be wrong or obsolete in 45 years.

Curiously this understanding of the half-life of knowledge is not framed in more general terms to include the life-cycle assessment of any artefact -- from "cradle to grave" -- and especially the life cycle of a building or other material construction (roads, dams, etc). Such a framework would include less tangible constructions as with project life cycles, organization life cycles, and those of (computer) languages. These are all suggestive of metaphors for structures of knowledge (models, theories, methodologies, etc). Especially relevant to this argument is the sense in which knowledge structures are associated with patterns of links which are subject to link rot in the hyperlinked environment of cyberspace.

On a macro-historical scale, this sense of a turning world is suggestive of the nature of the limitation on any imperial system framing itself as inherently right in Flat Earth terms. Civilizations may collapse in endeavouring to adhere to an essentially obsolete comprehension of what is right -- failing to adapt to other senses of right. It is curious to note how political revolutions have typically been the consequence of the actions of those framed by writers as terrorists -- rongers? -- prior to the successful seizure of power by the latter, allowing them to write a new constitution in their turn.

Writers are dangerously clear in their condemnation of "terrorists" when their own society may have emerged in earlier times as a consequence of such actions -- now framed as extremely wrong -- which may continue to be undertaken in other forms (as perceived by righters of a different persuasion). The point is strikingly made by current French abhorrence of beheadings by Islamic jihadists -- last formally undertaken by guillotine in (Christian) France as recently as 1977 with the execution of Hamida Dajdoubi, possibly of Muslim faith. Republican France of course emerged from The Reign of Terror at the onset of the French Revolution -- characterized by numerous beheadings of the aristocracy of that time. The death toll ranged in the tens of thousands, with 16,594 executed by guillotine (2,639 in Paris), and another 25,000 in summary executions across France.

Writers currently representing the views of the international community readily assume that their own culture is inherently right at the present time -- despite disagreements amongst their countries and a degree of token condemnation of each other's acts. This is remarkably evident in relation to capital punishment, now abhorred by some permanent members of the UN Security Council, but practiced by others. It then becomes difficult to consider beheading as especially evil and "wrong", given such hypocrisy at the core of the international community, as separately discussed (Beheading versus Befooting: in quest of the lesser evil for the greater good, 2014).

As an extension of the argument, you are either with us or against us, the implication is that we are always right, it is others who may be wrong. Thus it is claimed that there is no question of the moral equivalence between the acts of the righteous (engaged in capital punishment, for example) and those upheld by them to be rongers (and engaged in beheading, for example) [examples]. The argument had been notably developed by a US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick (The Myth of Moral Equivalence, Imprimis, January 1986) who concluded:

> It is necessary only to look at the sober discussion of human rights in such places as the Amnesty International Reports or the Helsinki Watch discussions to see that those organizations and most of the people who discuss the subject today are using a skewed vocabulary which guarantees the outcome of the investigation by definition. The "newspeak" of human rights morally invalidates the governments by definition and morally exculpates the guerillas by definition. (cited by James Peck, Ideal Illusions: how the U.S. Government co-opted human rights, 2011, note 92, p. 310)

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