

Forgiveness and Revenge

Trudy Govier



Forgiveness and Revenge

“Splendid . . . cogently and persuasively argued, it makes out the case for forgiveness and reconciliation on sound philosophical and secular grounds. I am very impressed.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Forgiveness and Revenge is a timely and powerful exploration of our attitudes to serious wrongdoings and a careful examination of the values that underlie our thinking about revenge and forgiveness.

From adulterous spouses to terrorist factions, we are surrounded by wrongdoing—yet we rarely agree which response is appropriate. The problem of how to respond realistically and sensitively to the wrongs of the past remains a perplexing one. Trudy Govier aims to clear up some of our thinking on this subject by examining the moral and practical impact of revenge and forgiveness, both personal and political.

Govier argues that revenge is objectionable for practical and moral reasons. She explores the relationship between revenge and retribution, and the distinction between vindictiveness and a desire for vindication. Crucially, Govier poses the question: Are some crimes unforgivable? She argues that forgiving does not require condoning, excusing or forgetting, using the political forgiveness of Nelson Mandela as an example. She also defends the idea that the notions of revenge and forgiveness can be applied to groups of people, not just individuals, and looks at the repercussions of this on the politics of peace and reconciliation.

Illustrated throughout with examples ranging from the Balkan wars and the purge of Nazi collaborators in France after World War II to fictional cases such as Fay Weldon’s *She-Devil*, *Forgiveness and Revenge* offers much-needed clarity and reason where emotions often prevail. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the ethics of attitudes to wrongdoing.

Trudy Govier is former Associate Professor of Philosophy at Trent University, Ontario. She is the author of eight books, including *A Practical Study of Argument*.

Forgiveness and Revenge

Trudy Govier



London and New York

First published 2002
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2002 Trudy Govier

Typeset in Perpetua by
The Running Head Limited, Cambridge
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-415-27855-4 (hbk)
ISBN 0-415-27856-2 (pbk)

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
1 Revenge and retribution	1
2 Some political horrors	23
3 Resentment and forgiveness	42
4 One-sided forgiveness?	62
5 Can groups forgive?	78
6 The unforgivable	100
7 Monstrous deeds, not monstrous people	119
8 Forgiveness and reconciliation	141
Appendix I Religious traditions on forgiveness	158
Appendix II Respect for persons as an ethical foundation	164
<i>Notes</i>	169
<i>Bibliography</i>	193
<i>Index</i>	201

Preface

Archbishop Tutu preaches forgiveness in politics, offering his own country's astoundingly non-violent transition from apartheid to democracy as an example. People appear on talk shows and in chronicles of therapy to announce that they have forgiven those who wronged them and the mental health benefits of forgiveness are a prominent theme in "pop psych." At the same time, newspapers print tales of people pursuing lurid forms of revenge against ex-spouses and former lovers. We read frequently about truth commissions, war crimes trials, and victims' efforts to obtain compensation and restitution. Victims and survivors of the Holocaust take the Swiss government to court to retrieve lost assets. Jewish leaders complain that the Pope's apology for anti-Semitism did not go far enough. Kosovar Albanians returning to their country after the 1999 NATO intervention on their behalf seek violent revenge against Serbs, as discouraged peacekeepers discover the difficulty of reconciliation or even co-existence. The problem of how to respond realistically and sensitively to wrongs of the past remains a perplexing one.

My interest in forgiveness in politics was stimulated by a trip to South Africa in March 1997. I was deeply moved by this "rainbow nation," in which victims, perpetrators, and the nature of forgiveness were daily topics in the popular media. Could something as deeply personal as forgiveness have a plausible application to the domain of politics? I had developed an earlier interest in inter-personal forgiveness when writing about the subjects of trust and distrust. Could reconciliation be interpreted as the restoration of trust after a break in a relationship? Was forgiveness an essential aspect of such reconciliation? My interest in revenge arose in part from those reflections but also from reading newspaper accounts of Northern Ireland and the Middle East, and seeing the popular movie, *The She-Devil*, derived from a novel by Fay Weldon.

In the present book, I seek to examine some of the fundamental attitudes and values that underlie our responses to wrongdoing. My perspective is a secular one, grounded on an ethic of respect for persons; reasons for this approach are offered in two appendices. My focus is on revenge and forgiveness and, as a corollary of the latter, on the notion of the unforgivable. Revenge and forgiveness do not, of course, exhaust the possibilities in terms of attitudinal responses to wrongdoing. They mark ends of a spectrum. An agent who does not seek revenge cannot, in virtue of that fact alone, be said to forgive. Victims of wrongdoing may

respond with a variety of attitudes, including the quest for various forms of legal justice and redress. Arguments against revenge do not amount to arguments in favor of forgiveness, and arguments for forgiveness do not amount to arguments for the relinquishing of legal responses. In this book, I argue that seeking revenge is objectionable for both practical and moral reasons; that the desire for revenge is not deeply “natural” in the sense of being an elemental, culturally independent feature of human nature; and that even if revenge were to be natural in that way, such naturalness would not constitute a moral argument in its favor. In the course of this discussion, I explore the relationship between revenge and retribution, as understood in several accounts of the retributive theory of punishment. I distinguish between vindictiveness and a desire, on the part of victims, for vindication, arguing that the latter quest, understood as a search for justification and the restoration of self-respect is entirely justified, while the former is potentially dangerous and open to serious moral criticism. The case of Auschwitz survivor Samuel Pisar serves as a powerful illustration of this crucial distinction. To reassert one’s own moral status it is not necessary to injure and assault the moral status of others.

I conceive of forgiveness as a process of overcoming attitudes of resentment and anger that may persist when one has been injured by wrongdoing. Forgiving should be distinguished from condoning, excusing, and forgetting; some common sayings such as “to understand all is to forgive all” and “forgive and forget” are misleading if they encourage us to ignore those distinctions. Reflections are also assisted, I argue, by distinctions between bilateral, unilateral, and mutual forgiveness. In contexts of bilateral forgiveness, the wrongdoer acknowledges his wrongdoing and apologizes or in some other way indicates remorse, so that the person who forgives does so in a context where the wrongdoer has indicated that he renounces what he did. In contexts of unilateral forgiveness, this is not the case; the victim undertakes to forgive in the absence of any such acknowledgement. Wrongdoers may be absent or dead or, though present, unrepentant. From a moral point of view, unilateral forgiveness is clearly more controversial than bilateral forgiveness. Interestingly, however, the political forgiveness of Nelson Mandela must be understood, in the first instance, as unilateral, and is discussed here in that frame of reference. Mandela was not responding to apologies or other forms of acknowledgement from the Afrikaner National Party. As with some other cases of unilateral forgiveness, his may be understood as constituting a unilateral initiative towards bilateral forgiveness.

Reflections on both bilateral and unilateral forgiveness presuppose a framework of perpetrator/victim, and the stark contrast between the two is too simplistic to characterize many real situations in which both parties have done wrong and suffered wrong. Indeed, the very terms “victim/perpetrator” seem inadequate for these latter cases; yet our language provides no ready substitute. The mixture of doing and suffering wrong which is a feature of parties in so many real relationships lends considerable interest to the subject of mutual forgiveness, which involves forgiveness and acknowledgement by both parties. This topic is barely mentioned in philosophical works on forgiveness.

It has been my experience that many who speak without hesitation of groups hating each other, resenting each other, or seeking revenge against each other tend to become sceptical when they are told that groups might be characterized by more positive attitudes such as compassion, understanding, trust, or forgiveness. Despite the general admiration for Mandela and Tutu as visionary spokesmen and models of forgiveness in politics, many observers readily express scepticism on hearing that forgiveness might assist processes of national reconciliation and sustain peace in the wake of a violent conflict. Can *groups* forgive? Does it even make sense to think of groups having, and managing attitudes? To offer a plausible interpretation of the idea that one group could forgive another—which would seem an obvious requirement of a conception of forgiveness as significant for the politics of peace and reconciliation—we must be able to claim three things. Attitudes and dispositions can be attributed to groups; groups can suffer harm; groups can be responsible agents of wrongdoing. I seek to defend these presuppositions. In Chapter 2, I describe in some detail a number of political contexts in which revenge has been sought, seeking to show that observations couched in terms of group attitudes and actions make sense in application; in effect, the moral conclusions of Chapter 1 remain relevant when we shift to the group level. In Chapter 5, I face more directly the issue of attributions of attitudes, dispositions, and actions to groups as distinct from individuals and argue that such attributions can be defended from a logical point of view.

In an attempt to make my work accessible to a broad range of readers, I have tried to write in an accessible manner, keeping technical details and intricacies of philosophical debates within bounds. Believing that the prolonged abstractness of many philosophical works has cost them readers, I have sought to describe, document, and explore a large number of examples. In cases where I have invented examples for purely expository purposes, I have sought to make them as realistic as possible. The sole exception to this policy is the example of *The She-Devil*. This illustration, which I find provocative and irresistible, has inspired varying responses from readers. To those who object to some of its lurid details I can only offer the reassurance that my arguments do not depend on them.

I was in the final stages of editing this book when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11 2001. These appalling attacks provided a new and gross example of wrongs to which people would have to respond. I thought as well as I could about these attacks, the vulnerability they showed, and the enormous challenges of responding to them. Understandably, there were early calls for revenge and retaliation, and the eradication of the evil people who had perpetrated these atrocities. Those speeches led me to rethink my own account of revenge. But hard as I thought, I could not overcome my fundamental conviction, expressed here in Chapters 1 and 2, that violent retaliation was open to fundamental practical and moral objections. The practical objection is that acts of revenge would be far more likely to provoke more hatred and violence than to deter it. That objection seemed entirely applicable to a world in which rampant anti-Americanism has often been based on what many interpret as a willingness on the part of the United States to tolerate deaths of poor people in

Islamic countries. The moral objection to revenge is that to respond “proportionately” or “in kind” to a wrong will, in the end, entail committing a wrong of equal magnitude. After initial calls for revenge and retaliation, concerns about civilian deaths in a campaign against Afghanistan, and the potential for such a campaign to inspire further waves of anti-American hatred were soon expressed by many others. After undertaking a variety of non-military initiatives against terrorism and expressing their concern about the survival and wellbeing of the Afghani people, the United States and Britain began bombing Afghanistan on October 7 2001.

Despite frequent comments to the effect that the events of September 11 2001 changed the world, I decided in the end not to attempt to rewrite this book in the wake of these attacks. The story of responses to these attacks was clearly far from its end, I did not wish to exploit tragedy, and I felt I had no better claim than other worried people to understand what was going on. International terrorism is an enormous and difficult problem, and the fall-out from September 11 is likely to alter social life and international relations quite fundamentally. And yet the problems of national reconciliation that provided the original context for my work have not disappeared and retain some urgency. I hope that the concepts and theories explored here can be used by others to reflect on the tragedies of September 11 and responses to them, and I will be content if this is so, even if the conclusions reached differ from my own ideas.

While researching and writing this book, I have benefited enormously from conversations and correspondence with Wilhelm Verwoerd, who kindly shared with me his experience with the South African Truth Commission and reflections on his country’s situation. Thanks are also due to Judith Baker, Anton Colijn, David Crocker, Peter Fitzgerald-Moore, Sarah Goard-Baker, Risa Kawchuk, Janet Keeping, Larry May, George Melnyk, Jeffrie Murphy, Carol Prager, Janet Sisson, Desmond Tutu, Margaret Walker, Robert Ware, and two anonymous reviewers for Routledge. Comments from audiences at Calgary’s Apeiron Society for Practical Philosophy, Brock University, Rhodes University (Grahamstown, South Africa), the University of Cape Town, and the University of Utah helped to shape my views. So too did presentations and discussions at the Dilemmas of Reconciliation Conference held under the auspices of the Calgary Institute for the Humanities in June 1999. In addition, I have been assisted by the Final Report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the 1996 Canadian Government Report on Aboriginal Peoples, and the writings of Timothy Garton Ash, Roy Baumeister, Ian Buruma, Margaret Falls, Jean Hampton, Margaret Holmgren, Michael Ignatieff, John Kekes, Jeffrie Murphy, Robert Solomon, Desmond Tutu, Vamik Volkan, and Elie Wiesel. Those with whom I disagree have helped me as much as those with whom I agree. For any misunderstandings that remain here, I apologize in advance.

1 Revenge and retribution

If everyone took an eye for an eye, the whole world would be blind.

Gandhi

In January 2000 a Pakistani man gave himself up to police, introducing himself by saying, “I am Javed Iqbal, killer of one hundred boys.” He had lured the boys to his apartment in Lahore, given them food and entertained them, taken snapshots, and then suffocated them, dissolving the bodies in large vats of acid which he poured into an alleyway sewer. Iqbal was proud that he had committed these killings after having made a pledge to himself that he would take the lives of one hundred children as an act of “revenge against the police.” He had two young servants who had beaten him badly. When he took a complaint to the police, they ignored him and instead accused him of sodomy, something he had been charged with before.

He decided that the killing of children would be his means of retribution. “In this way I would take revenge from the world I hated,” he said of his six-month homicidal binge. “My mother cried for me. I wanted 100 mothers to cry for their children.”

He succeeded. Early in December, as news of the crimes became public, parents lined up by the thousands to rummage through huge piles of rumpled clothes and old shoes that had been found in Mr. Iqbal’s apartment. Some found items that belonged to their missing sons. Others merely saw their children’s photos spread across wobbly wooden tables at the police station. Or they read the morbid details in Mr. Iqbal’s diaries.¹

In March 2000 Iqbal was sentenced to death by Judge Allah Baksh Ranja, who ordered that he should be strangled in front of his victims’ parents and his body cut into 100 pieces and dissolved in acid. This was taking to extremes the retributive idea that the punishment should fit the crime, because the state would be involved in the same level of barbarity as the criminal himself. Pakistani human rights advocates complained that the sentence was barbaric and intended to support its appeal.²

What is revenge?

When others hurt us, we suffer. Usually humiliation accompanies and aggravates that suffering, and in response, we feel rage. Seeking revenge is one way to reassert ourselves, to attempt to get relief from the hurt and humiliation of being wronged. If one person or group has wronged another, it is common for the victim, the injured party, to feel rage and resentment, leading to a desire to “get one’s own back,” or “get even.” When we seek revenge, we *seek satisfaction by attempting to harm the other (or associated persons) as a retaliatory measure*. We expect to feel better if we can somehow express our negative feelings in actions intended to “get back” at those who have harmed us.

Acting from revenge is not the same as acting in self-defense. The person who acts in self-defense is seeking to protect himself or herself from harm, whereas acting from revenge, a person acts after he or she has been harmed, in an attempt to harm the wrongdoer in retaliation. Nor is revenge a necessary corollary of victory. When we are victorious over our enemies, we may be tempted to seek revenge, but we need not do so. In South Africa, the African National Congress achieved victory in its struggle against the apartheid government and its supporters. It chose not to use its victorious position to seek revenge. Renouncing revenge, Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, “Revenge is atavistic, the law of the jungle.”³

We may feel a desire for revenge without ever acting on it, suppressing that desire because we tell ourselves that acting on it would be nasty or imprudent. If we act on our desire for revenge, we try to bring harm to the person who wronged us. We set out on a course of action intended to express and relieve our rage and frustration and “even the score.” Consider a case less lurid than that of the serial murderer of children. Suppose that a man, Michael, does some harm to a co-worker, Ann. Ann may try to get her own back and settle accounts by doing something that will hurt Michael at least as much as Michael hurt her. Ann is then out for revenge, seeking revenge against Michael. If this is the case, Ann’s feelings and attitudes to the wrong Michael inflicted on her are *vindictive*. Ann seeks revenge and if she gets it, Michael will come to suffer too, as a result of something she does to “get even” or “get back” at him. For Ann to get revenge on Michael it will not suffice that he come to harm; what is required is that she must be the one who causes that harm, for it is in her own agency that she expects to find satisfaction. If, for example, Michael breaks his leg skiing, loses out on an important company training opportunity, and thereby fails to get an expected promotion, Ann may feel happy about that turn of events and gloat about Michael’s bad luck. But that will not amount to avenging herself or getting even, because it was not she who caused Michael to break his leg. Michael was hurt and it adversely affected his interests, but Ann played no role in bringing this about.

Suppose that Ann tries to harm Michael by telling his wife he is having an affair; unbeknownst to Ann, he really is having an affair. But he has for some time been looking for a way to tell his wife about it and end his marriage. In this case,

Ann was the agent; she has tried to harm Michael in a quest for revenge, but she does not succeed in doing so because contrary to her intent, her gossip accomplishes something that Michael actually wanted and found helpful. She has not achieved revenge in this case either, for no harm was done. To satisfy our desire for revenge, we must be agents in bringing harm to others who have harmed us, and we must act with the intent to cause this harm in order to “get even” or restore a balance.

In defense of revenge

In a recent article, Jeffrie Murphy defends the moral appropriacy of revenge, and the related emotions of vindictiveness and hatred. Murphy’s case for revenge is in part grounded on his claim that people naturally approve of the quest for, and achievement of revenge. He cites responses to western movies as part of his argument.

I recently resaw [with some equally civilized and equally liberal friends] the movie *Silverado*. In this classy Western, we are presented with four honest and decent men [and their friends and families] being subjected to unspeakable injuries by thugs of unspeakable evil. When, in the closing moments of the movie, these men take—and, indeed, gleefully take—their violent revenge on those who have wronged them, all who watched cheered them on and found this outcome not only aesthetically pleasing but morally satisfying.

Murphy concludes, “I think that most typical, decent, mentally healthy people have a kind of commonsense approval of some righteous hatred and revenge,”⁴ assuming that these audience responses indicate moral approval. He goes on to argue from this apparent approval that there is something morally satisfying and right about heroes getting revenge on villains. In this essay, Murphy maintains that “common morality” deems the quest for revenge to be legitimate, and thereby establishes a *prima facie* moral case for revenge. Because this is so, he says, the onus of proof is on those who object to state their case and show their reasons. Anyone who *in principle* opposes hatred, vindictiveness, and the desire for revenge, must show that something is fundamentally wrong with these desires. Murphy argues that victims’ hatred and the desire for revenge should be respected and acknowledged—not de-legitimized—and they should be related in some important way to penal institutions and the administration of criminal justice. He points out that revenge is not to be identified with vigilante action or vendettas; it need not be sought by illegal means; and it need not be wildly and grossly excessive. Extreme cases, while of great dramatic interest and thus prominent in literature, can mislead us into thinking that revenge is by its nature obsessive and excessive—but to base our understanding on this kind of literature would be a mistake. Murphy claims that this basic approval of revenge is related to what he takes to be the correct justification of punishment: the

4 *Revenge and retribution*

retributive theory that punishment is justified because it gives to wrongdoers the suffering or hard treatment that they deserve.⁵

Murphy is not the only author to have taken up the moral cause of revenge. In *Wild Justice*, Susan Jacoby argues at length that Western cultures have gone too far in seeking to de-legitimize the desire for revenge, which she sees as deeply natural to human beings. She argues that in advising us to “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,” the Christian Sermon on the Mount sets forth an ideal which may be morally beautiful but is humanly unrealistic. Contrary to these Christian tenets, Jacoby maintains that the “vindicative impulse” should be accepted as natural and legitimate—and then it should be suitably restrained and contained within legal systems that provide for fair trial and justly administered punishment of convicted offenders.⁶

Robert Solomon takes a similar position, seeking to defend not only the human desire for vengeance but other “negative” emotions such as resentment and anger. Solomon argues that certain negative and “nasty” passions underlie our sense of justice and in this way play a fundamentally important role in morality and social institutions. We live in an unjust world: terrible things happen. According to Solomon, it is our anger, resentment, and desire for vengeance against the injustices that provide us with the insight that this world is unjust and something should be done about it.

Justice begins not with Socratic insights but with the promptings of some basic emotions, among them envy, jealousy, and resentment, a sense of being personally cheated or neglected, and the desire to get even.⁷

As Solomon understands it, the desire for vengeance is the desire to *pay back* the offender, thereby (somehow) *putting the world back in balance*. We need legal institutions to prevent rage, hatred, and vindictiveness from getting out of hand—but these and other negative passions are fundamental in establishing our sense of justice and supporting those very institutions. Rhetorically, Solomon asks:

Can one have a sense of justice without the capacity and willingness to be personally outraged? Can one fight evil without being motivated by hatred? Can one care without being protective? Can we, then, really understand distributive justice, without any appreciation of envy, jealousy, and resentment? Indeed, would there be any call for redistribution of goods [beyond basic, vital needs] if no one envied the rich, or felt cheated by life and resentful?

On this account, resentment has its place and “vengeance may be primitive, but it is still the conceptual core of justice.”⁸ Solomon believes that we have an almost instinctive sense that we should not be violated, and when we are violated, we naturally feel anger, rage, a conviction that this was wrong or unjust, and a desire to *get even*. From this personal resentment, we generalize, perceiving similar wrongs to others and gaining a sense of how things should be and the beginnings of a sense of justice. When bad things happen, our anger and resentment lead us to a sense of

injustice and the desire to act to make things right, to get a kind of balance by bringing harm to the one who harmed us. So defined, *justice requires retribution*. Solomon defends the desire for revenge on moral grounds, arguing that the quest for revenge is never, as such, illegitimate. “Getting even is just an effective way of being angry, and getting angry typically includes a lively desire for revenge.”⁹ Furthermore, revenge is not necessarily violent and it does not necessarily lead to interminable cycles of violence, not even involve illegal means and pre-empting the role of the courts. Literary tales about revenge tend to be violent and lurid, but in real life, revenge does not always work this way. One might achieve revenge, Solomon suggests, by casting a negative vote at a meeting.¹⁰

But more questionable elements appear in Solomon’s account.

If resentment has a desire, it is in its extreme form *the total annihilation, prefaced by the utter humiliation, of its target*—though the vindictive imagination of resentment is such that even that might not be good enough.¹¹

For some, alarm bells will be ringing at this point.

A moral case for revenge?

Let us say that a victim sets out to get revenge against an offender, who brought serious harm to him. Suppose that the victim succeeds in this campaign. The other harmed him; now he has succeeded in retaliating and hurting back; he has harmed the other. He did something; he acted out his rage, personally making himself the agent of justice and achieving a kind of justice by “getting even.”

It might seem that there are some worthy effects. First, the villain has been harmed, punished in a sense. He did not simply get away with wrongdoing: the wicked one was made to suffer and “pay” for his wrongdoing. So apparently *Justice* has been done. Second, the victim has transcended passivity and suffering to assert some power; he has taken action and has “stood up for himself,” indicating that he is aware that what was done to him was wrong, and he deserved better. Thus, the victim has acted out his anger and demonstrated his own conviction of *self-respect*. He has acted to restore his honor and pride, communicating to others his ability to stand up for himself. Third, it appears that the victim has restored a kind of *equality of agency and stature* between himself and the villain. We might think of a victim who stands up and hurts the wrongdoer in retaliation as asserting in this way that he, the injured one, does count, that he is not one to be ill-treated. Contrary to what the offender implied, he is a proud and morally considerable being, and he has shown this by the fact that he has been able to impose pain on the offender. Fourth, the victim will have a certain feeling of *satisfaction* at having settled accounts and “got even,” “got his revenge.”

Are not these good effects—justice due to the suffering of the villain, improved self-respect, restored moral equality, and satisfaction for the victim? Is it not then quite appropriate if we feel a sense of moral satisfaction when revenge is accomplished?

One might add to the above an argument from deterrence. If people seek revenge and undertake to ensure that wrongdoers pay for their misdeeds, one might suppose that their doing so will serve as a deterrent to wrongdoing. Suppose, for example, rape victims were to rather frequently track down and castrate their rapists; if this were known, perhaps rapes would decrease in frequency because rapists would be fearful of the likely vindictiveness and retaliatory power of their victims.¹² Along such lines, one might seek to defend revenge by appealing to its prospective deterrent consequences, arguing that if prospective criminals came to regard prospective victims as vigilantes with the power and intent to get back at them, they would be deterred from committing crimes in the first place. The same sort of argument might be used to justify taking revenge against terrorist acts; the idea would be that prospective terrorists, having seen the terrible pain that victim groups had been able to inflict, would hold back from future acts of terrorism.

Wild fantasy: revenge of the she-devil

Fay Weldon wrote a feminist fantasy about revenge called *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*. This novel became the basis for a film called, simply, *The She-Devil*.¹³ In this story, Ruth, a deserted wife, goes to elaborate lengths to get revenge against Bob, her philandering husband. Bob has deserted her and her children for Mary Fisher, a blond, rich and beautiful writer of romantic fiction. Bob is a good-looking shallow chap who counts his wife, two children and suburban home as “assets” in his life. Early in the story, Ruth seems to be a dumpy and unattractive household drudge, subservient to her inattentive and selfish husband. Bob moves in with Mary, leaving Ruth with the children.

But Ruth is no passive victim of male betrayal. She sets out on a campaign for revenge. Bob told her their home was one of his assets: she determines to wreck it and does so by blowing it up (household chemicals in a microwave oven). She dumps the two children on him and his mistress, telling him they cannot stay at home with her, because there is no home any more. Their presence disturbs the love nest. Such burdens and the attendant exposure to the gritty mundane details of domestic life eventually spoil the mood and ruin the romantic novel Mary is writing. Ruth finds out that Mary’s mother is in a home for the aged. She gets a job there, and manipulates a situation in which Mary’s mother seems incontinent and is deemed ineligible to stay in the home. As a result, Mary’s mother goes to live with her, further disturbing the “love nest.”

This achieved, Ruth leaves her post at the home for the aged and moves to the city where, with a former nursing home colleague, she establishes a highly successful employment agency. The clients are women who have been grossly unappreciated, typically because they are regarded as unattractive. By helping them find good positions, Ruth has ensured that she has allies in various powerful institutions—including Bob’s office. With help from such allies, she finds evidence of Bob’s dishonesty, plants further evidence against him and then

arranges for the ensuing court case to come before a tough judge. In the end, Bob is in jail. Ruth is looking attractive, has her children, many friends and allies, and is running a successful employment agency.

This plot seems to nicely illustrate aspects of the moral case that might be stated in favor of revenge. The victim acts to assert herself and transcends her victimhood. Through skillful planning she has got her revenge and has triumphed over the “villain.” Sympathies of the movie audience are likely to be with her: for women, such a plot will be far more satisfying than westerns. The husband, we will instinctively judge to be a “cad” who “got what was coming to him.” As the story line develops, our sympathies are naturally with Ruth, who is a stand-in for so many deserted wives, left with the children and a house to care for by husbands who have no loyalty to their families. The film elicits a simple moral response: Ruth is in the right, Bob is in the wrong. He is getting what he deserves, getting his comeuppance, and she has taken admirable and clever initiatives to arrange all this. The film seems to confirm the views of Murphy, Jacoby, and Solomon: revenge quite “naturally” seems right.

But there are significant omissions in the story line.¹⁴ Ruth’s actions—several of which are illegal—do not have the dire side effects they would be likely to have in real life. When she burns down her house, there is no damage to neighboring houses; nor is there any police inquiry as to the cause of the fire. When she leaves the children with Bob and Mary, there is apparently no damage to them. There is no suggestion that they feel abandoned by her, no illness or disruption of schooling as a result of the fact that they are being ineptly cared for by this substitute mother with little interest in them. When Ruth manipulates the circumstances of Mary’s mother, no harm comes to the elderly woman. Her campaign does not seem destructively obsessive; in fact, she is fulfilled and satisfied by her various activities. Bob and Mary do not discover that Ruth is the author of their misfortune, and do not undertake a campaign of counter-revenge. Nor are third parties harmed by the extensive and violent campaign. Amazing luck!

Even for the villain-victims of Ruth’s campaign, her revenge has a morally unusual character. Ruth is taking out revenge mainly on Bob, and on his lover, Mary Fisher. Yet despite all she does to harm these two, as the story is portrayed in the film, *they are eventually morally improved by the process*. As the film ends, Bob is shown learning to bake cookies in jail, and humbly serving the products of his labor to his children, whom he is delighted to see when they come to visit. In addition to developing an improved relationship with her mother, from whom she had been estranged, Mary has been so matured by the events that she has written a serious book and is getting excellent reviews for it.

This film makes revenge look good. The audience is encouraged to feel the satisfactions of the innocent victim who “got even.” One deceptive aspect of the tall tale is that Ruth’s successful quest for revenge is linked to other important themes—injustice to women, the vulnerability of housewives, the unappreciated work done by so many women, and the special and unjust difficulties unattractive women face in life. The linking of revenge with this theme of injustice to women and latent female power may make Ruth’s quest for revenge seem justified. But

such reasoning would, in effect, infer virtue from association, and would be fallacious.

In the end, Ruth is satisfied. Onlookers will tend to feel satisfied too—until we think further about the implausible details of the tale.

Doubts about righteous revenge

Most people do not regard *vengefulness* or *vindictiveness* as attractive or sympathetic attitudes or attributes. Both Solomon and Murphy acknowledge that such feelings do not generally enjoy a favorable reputation. A person who seeks revenge may be called “vindictive” or “vengeful,” and these adjectives are seldom used sympathetically. People who angrily insist that those who have wronged them should suffer intensely do not generally appear to observers as being especially noble or meritorious—though one may be reluctant to criticize them for their hatred when they have been grievously wronged and are suffering as a result. One reason for doubts about the merits of revenge is that people often become obsessed with thoughts of revenge and may bring great harm to themselves and others in their quest for it. Another is that campaigns for revenge often escalate.

Solomon claims that the desire for vengeance may be satisfied with a single, discrete act of a bland and non-violent nature, and he argues accordingly that acts of revenge are not, by definition, violent.¹⁵ Similarly, Murphy offers the apparently innocuous example of a nasty remark: a person can “get even” with someone who has insulted him by making a nasty remark in return. Citing personal experience, Murphy claims that getting even in this way can be quite satisfying, is not obviously immoral, and does not generate anything like a cycle of violence.¹⁶ Clearly, such claims are correct. Acts of revenge can be small and apparently trivial; they need not involve violence or law-breaking; and they do not in every case launch cycles of violent hostility.

Nevertheless, vengeance and revenge are strongly associated with vendettas, feuds, and escalating cycles of violence—as any reader of daily newspapers can discover. Although urging the legitimacy of some desires for revenge, Susan Jacoby acknowledges that such desires have to be carefully contained. She cites a case in Exu, Brazil in which military police had to take over a town in which nine people had been killed after the resumption of a thirty-year vendetta.¹⁷ In their understandable passion and rage about being hurt, revenge-seekers may make mistakes about the identity and motives of those branded as villains, direct their vindictiveness at innocent third parties, fail to understand injuries against themselves in context, and bring considerable harm to themselves and others. We may take out revenge against the wrong people, mistaking identities or aiming at whole groups only loosely affiliated with the original offense. We may direct our passionate efforts against individuals who have harmed us not at all, or only inadvertently. We may fail to understand that we ourselves have engaged in acts that inspire hatred or have been agents of harm as severe as what we ourselves have come to suffer.

The exaggerated, unreliable, and anarchic tendencies of personal revenge as a

strategy of retribution are a major reason why human societies develop legal systems and seek to establish the rule of law.¹⁸

Though they do not always do so, acts taken in revenge frequently lead to further retaliation, resulting in spiralling wrongdoing. In fact, this can even be said for the apparently innocuous examples offered by Solomon and Murphy. One negative vote taken in revenge may lead to further voting for personal and non-substantive reasons; one nasty remark in response to another may very well lead to further nasty remarks from both parties and the intensification of a conflict. Those who have wronged us and against whom we get our revenge are unlikely to concur in our perception of wrongs and retaliations.¹⁹ We think they wronged us, but they are unlikely to think of themselves as wrongdoers who deserve to be made to suffer at our hands. Thus, if we bring harm to them in revenge, they will think that we wronged them and feel in response a desire for revenge themselves. A cycle of wrong and retaliation, revenge and counter-revenge, begins. Serbs in Kosovo sought revenge against Muslims for oppression in past centuries; they abused Muslims, who were then defended by NATO, which bombed Serbs and made it possible for exiled Muslims to return; these Kosovar Muslims then sought revenge against Serbs, some of whom were still resolved to seek revenge against them. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians depicts the same cycle of attack and counter-attack, with escalating and apparently interminable violence.²⁰ In a society with strong traditions of the blood feud, seeking revenge is regarded as obligatory, it is a matter of honor for people to take out revenge on their enemies, and cycles of revenge are hard to stop.

Ruth, Fay Weldon's avenging heroine, was portrayed in the film *The She-Devil* as cool and collected and not harmfully obsessed—although she committed all her energy and resources to her campaign of revenge. Real life is not the movies, and in real life, people often become irrational and entirely disproportionate in campaigns for revenge. We are likely to lose our control and harm ourselves or innocent others. We may be so enraged that we misunderstand situations, seeking revenge against innocent parties or unnecessarily endangering ourselves. We may be too furious and hateful to get things straight and may be disproportionate in the penalties we seek to impose on others.

How satisfying is revenge to the person who achieves it? Does it soothe the wounds of insult and bring a sense of satisfaction and contentment? Some may remember that wonderful joy of revenge, the feeling that we did get even, we did succeed in humbling the persons who hurt and humiliated us. Indeed this feeling can be a joy delicious and sweet—but it is often short-lived and achieved at a high cost. One successful in achieving revenge can enjoy the satisfaction of seeing his cause victorious, and the personal pleasure of knowing that it was he himself who brought about the vindication. These feelings may be “truly enjoyable” according to one author.²¹ In the movie, Ruth the she-devil was satisfied with the results of her schemes of vengeance. Yet such satisfaction is lacking in many cases; instead, there is a kind of flatness and revenge does not bring the anticipated joy. Discussing revenge, Jean Hampton argues that hatred, in the form of either malice or spite, is a poor strategy for showing up one's own self-worth.²² In

seeking revenge, she says, one tries to “get even” by diminishing someone else, and thereby elevating oneself by “winning” over someone one hates. Hampton finds a self-defeating dynamic in the whole process, a dynamic rather like that of the Hegelian Master and Slave. In Hegel, the Master needs recognition from the Slave, but he cannot meaningfully get that recognition because he has diminished the Slave who, lacking autonomy, is in no position to grant authentic recognition. If the Master asks the Slave whether the Master’s creations are worthy, the Slave has no choice but to say that they are—but then, for precisely this reason, the Slave’s recognition carries no weight. Just because he is a Master, the Master is deprived of any real recognition from another.

By diminishing or degrading an opponent, we can at best achieve higher status over another whom we have reduced to a lower status than ourselves. We may seem to have “lowered” the other. But how great is this accomplishment? How can the conquest of this now-lowered other be worth so much of our energy? Victory over a diminished opponent will seem empty, because he will be lowered to the point where he no longer seems worth conquering. And that consideration, Hampton argues, applies to the satisfactions of revenge. Hampton sees this theme emerging even in the movies.

[A]s he looks upon the wretched and pathetic figure of the wrongdoer, the avenger invariably [*sic*] finds that he is getting no pleasure from his victory. He has shown that the wrongdoer is nothing, so that now he is lord of nothing.

Hampton contends, then, that when we suppose that revenge will satisfy us, we make a fundamental mistake: we have forgotten Hegel’s dialectic of the Master and the Slave. To just the extent that we succeed in diminishing or conquering the other, we will be unable to elevate ourselves by comparing ourselves to him or her.²³ Hampton argues that this frustrating dialectic is inevitable in the pursuit of the revenge, rendering its satisfactions unreal, and that we would not be forgoing anything of value to us were we to relinquish the supposed pleasures to be yielded by our quests for revenge. To do so would not be saintly, she says, merely “sensible.”²⁴

Another argument against revenge is that it is harmful to the one who pursues it. To scheme for, to hope to achieve, revenge is to work out a plot in which we will be the avenging conquerors—to see ourselves as those who will bring harm to others. Campaigns for revenge can easily become obsessive. Rather than proceeding with her own life and projects, and enjoying relationships and projects for their own sake, the vindictive person concentrates energies on past grievances, rage, hatred of an offender, and destructive plots. The tall story of Ruth’s revenge really is a tall story, a wild fiction and an unrepresentative one, because her extensive and highly focused campaign does bring her satisfaction and yet does not, in the final analysis, result in lasting harm to her.²⁵

But issues of obsessiveness, violence, escalation, and satisfaction are all empirical in nature; the most central issue is the moral question about revenge. Would a

quest for revenge be morally right under just the right circumstances? Suppose it were non-obsessive, non-violent, kept proportional and within bounds, applied to those who really were the wrongdoers and not inflicted on innocent third parties, and satisfying in the end. In such a case, could revenge be right? In other words, is there anything wrong with the desire for revenge or the quest for revenge *as such*, considered apart from its consequences?

Moral arguments about revenge

Successful revenge might be argued to be a good thing because there is justice in the suffering of the wrongdoer and the victim has restored self-respect, restored a kind of equality of status, and gained satisfaction. But this case, apparently supportive of revenge, is plausible only superficially. From a moral perspective it can be rebutted.

Hampton's argument against the satisfactions of revenge may be criticized as too *a priori*; it is, perhaps, open to question on empirical grounds. A further consideration about such satisfactions is not empirically vulnerable, and this is that any satisfaction an avenging party might feel would be morally objectionable because it would amount to *satisfaction at having brought about the suffering of another human being*. A campaign for revenge amounts to a deliberate effort to damage and diminish another person. Behind even the most apparently successful case of revenge is the desire to deliberately bring harm to another human being, with a view to delighting in, or rejoicing about, that harm. Whatever the offender did to the victim, at its base this desire is spiteful and malicious. The victim has responded by scheming to bring harm to another and has put his or her moral and psychological energies into scheming to achieve that harm. He or she has done this instead of rallying to recover a sense of self-esteem or working to reassert moral principles and instead of attempting to gain understanding and a perspective on the broader conflict situation and the motivation and capacities of the wrongdoers.

Consider the suffering of the wrongdoers. One who brings this about may think that it constitutes a positive achievement. But why? We might begin by saying that imposing suffering on an offender does not have a point if the *only* reason for it is the spiteful or malicious hatred of the victim who has managed to "get revenge." However, one wishing to defend revenge might reply that after all *this* is the point, to pay for one wrong with another. One person's suffering makes another feel better; a moral balance has been achieved because those who wrongly caused pain have rightly been made to suffer it. But the problem is that even granting the wrongness of the original offense, what must happen in any case of revenge is that the offender is made to suffer in order that another may take satisfaction in that result. In other words, the suffering of the offender is used to soothe the feelings of the victim. A fundamental moral objection here is that using the suffering of a person or persons to satisfy oneself is morally objectionable, because it amounts to the treatment of the wrongdoers as means only, failing to respect their human worth and dignity. This response to wrongdoing repeats it.

Secondly, consider the power of the victim. In acting out her desires for revenge, the victim shows that she has power and can assert herself, and these manifestations would seem to be morally positive. But it is the essence of the case that the injured person will have achieved them by carrying out plans to intentionally harm someone else. Seeking and achieving revenge against an offender is not the only way to show one's power. A victim can transcend passivity and show her awareness of her own moral status in other ways. For example, a rape victim need not organize a feminist vigilante squad to beat up rapists or in some other way seek revenge against her rapist. Instead, she might help raise funds for a women's shelter, try to get her case before the courts, or campaign for better lighting in unsafe areas.

Revenge is often rationalized as a means of restoring a kind of moral equity, but there is a fundamental problem here. If moral equity, or "balance," is achieved, it is achieved at the wrong moral level. In plotting and carrying out a campaign for revenge, the victim puts herself on the same level as the offender, because she responds to the fact that she has suffered one wrong by committing another.²⁶ *In her pursuit of revenge, she has become willing to deliberately harm another human being for her own satisfaction, implying that that other human being is fit to be an instrument for her own satisfaction.* If Party A commits the grievous wrong of murdering civilians in Country B, and Country B seeks revenge against Party A by murdering civilians who are (in some sense) its supporters, then both A and B will have committed serious wrongs. Wrongs have been multiplied by B's response, not cancelled out. There is no way to argue that what B did is morally acceptable while what A did was terribly wrong. In fact, one could only "get even" for one wrong by committing another of equally serious magnitude.²⁷ One might insist on a moral distinction between A and B at this point on the grounds that when the scenario started, B was an entirely *innocent* group while A was not so. One might argue that the innocence of B gives B the right to respond in this way. But the reply is implausible for it assumes innocent parties are entitled to commit wrongs. The fundamental fact is that the act that is "done back" and is supposed to "restore a balance" and "make things right" or "bring justice" is still, in the end, *wrong*. B was wronged, wronged grievously; B deserves every sympathy because the killing of civilians is a terrible wrong. But B's status as victim does not give it the right to commit, itself, a terrible wrong. If the acts undertaken are immoral, as they must be if the original act to be avenged was wrong, then the avenging party will have descended to the level of the wrongdoer.

Underlying the moral case for revenge is the assumption that *it can sometimes be right for a person to be the agent of deliberately bringing harm to another person, for the sake of enjoying having brought that harm.* It is this assumption that must be questioned—and when we reject it, we are led to the conclusion that the quest for revenge is fundamentally immoral. Morality is based on obligations to respect other persons and to seek, so far as it is reasonably possible, to further human welfare and limit human suffering. There are profound moral reasons to honor the worth of persons, and to act with due consideration for their moral autonomy and their wellbeing. To deliberately seek to bring suffering and harm to another

person, to cultivate and indulge one's desire for that end, planning one's actions accordingly, violates this fundamental tenet of morality. From a moral point of view, the desire to bring harm to another so that one may contemplate with satisfaction that harm and one's role in bringing it about is an evil desire. When we seek revenge, we do so in order to take pleasure in the fact that *the offender has been made to suffer* and *it is we who have brought this about*, as a response to the fact that this person once wronged us. What is wrong with revenge is that *to act as agents of revenge, we have to indulge and cultivate something evil in ourselves*, the wish to deliberately bring suffering to another human being and contemplate that suffering for our own satisfaction and enjoyment.

Setting out to achieve revenge is frequently dangerous, bringing harm to oneself and innocent bystanders and leading to ongoing feuds or vendettas. It is often unproductive from a psychological point of view: the expected satisfaction simply is not felt. Still more seriously, the quest for revenge morally diminishes the victim, who though initially innocent has committed himself or herself to maliciousness and hate in the campaign against the other. But none of this is quite the core of the matter. The fundamental objection to revenge is that it is founded on the cultivation in ourselves of a desire which is morally evil.²⁸ Hatred that goes so far as to include joy at the evil meted out to another person is a morally unworthy emotion; we should not feel positive joy in the fact that we have caused the suffering of another person.²⁹

Counter-arguments considered

"The desire for revenge is natural and therefore legitimate"

It might be argued that the desire for revenge is deeply *natural* to human beings and for that reason should not be deemed evil. This argument is implicit in the accounts of Jacoby, Murphy, and Solomon.

Physical pain is at root a natural phenomenon. If one is kicked, beaten, wounded, or tortured, this will hurt and there will be literal wounds, which take time to heal. A desire to protect oneself from physical pain is arguably natural too; so also, perhaps, is the instinct to strike back on the occasion of injury. An impulse to strike back in self-defense might plausibly be regarded as natural, being understood as an instinctual gesture to protect ourselves from harm. But *instincts* are very different from the desire for *revenge*, which is a highly complex emotion, involving as it does notions of agency, wrong, responsibility, and rightful suffering. The desire for revenge is more tied to our concepts of right, wrong, and justice than are the anger and pain we feel when we are wrongfully hurt. For these reasons alone, the claim that the desire for revenge is simply *natural* is rather implausible; it is too conceptually complex. Although there are cultures in which practices of seeking revenge are strongly entrenched, as in those featuring dueling or blood feuding, there are others in which wrongdoing is understood as a violation of a basic community harmony that needs to be restored. While the former make it plausible to think that vindictiveness is natural, the latter do no such

thing. In them, the tendency to seek revenge against a member of one's own community will appear as dangerous.³⁰

But suppose, for the sake of argument, that the desire for revenge *is* natural. Grant for the moment that we *naturally* want to strike back to hurt those who have injured us, and we *naturally* seek the kind of satisfaction we *naturally* suppose that we will get when we succeed in doing so. We want to strike back; we think we can properly respond to wrongs committed and satisfy ourselves by doing so. On this hypothesis, the desire for revenge is a genuine aspect of human nature, one that cannot be eliminated. It would follow from such an account that we should acknowledge the presence of such desires within ourselves and seek to understand them and accommodate them in our picture of the moral life. But such an account would not imply that those desires were morally legitimate.³¹ Nor would it imply that we should cultivate them, plan our daily actions or political lives around them, or give them a pivotal role in our social and legal institutions.

We can re-examine the argument from naturalness at the level of group behavior. Consider, in this context, the claim that a group that seeks revenge against those who injure its members will tend to triumph over contentious neighbors. One might allege, on such grounds, that the desire for revenge has survival value in the long run because eventually revenge-seeking groups will have done enough harm to their neighbors to have established more territory and resources for themselves than non-revenge-seeking groups.³² Accordingly, revenge-seeking groups will be favored in an evolutionary sense, and the tendency to seek revenge will come to have a genetic basis. On such grounds, it could be argued that seeking revenge is advantageous and comes, by a kind of evolutionary selection, to be natural within human groups. It is easy to construct the scenario.³³ But even if we were to grant these premises and allow some evolutionary naturalness to revenge, such evolutionary naturalness would not entail moral legitimacy.

In *The Rage Within*, an exploration of anger in modern life, Willard Gaylin argues that arousal to flight or fight was useful during most of human history but has become counter-productive in modern societies. Gaylin maintains that human beings instinctively respond when we are hurt or insulted. We are aroused; we feel rage and anger, and that response, on his account, is a deeply *natural* element of a survival system inherited from primitive ancestors. But it does not serve us well in the modern world, where it leads to health problems such as high blood pressure and depression. Our biological heritage leaves us the challenge of managing and re-directing our anger. Thus an anger that is biologically natural and was useful in our evolutionary past has become counter-productive in the contemporary world, in which there are few productive outlets for it.³⁴ A similar point could be made for vengefulness. Our world is very different from the distant primordial world in which (according to the naturalness hypothesis) revenge-seeking groups might be thought to have gained their hypothetical survival advantage. In the contemporary world, acts of revenge might culminate in the use of nuclear weapons, threatening all human life on the planet.

“The desire for revenge is good because it is the foundation of our sense of justice”

Robert Solomon claims that feelings of vindictiveness and vengeance are basic to our sense of justice: it is our anger and resentment that provides insight into what is wrong with the world and gives us our understanding of injustice, and from that, our understanding of justice. In making these arguments, Solomon seems to ignore the fact that seeking *justice* is profoundly different from seeking *vindictively to injure* those who have been in charge until now. If one sets out to “fix the world,” there are many approaches more promising and less dangerous than seeking revenge against “the establishment.” Resentment is seldom the basis for a fair and balanced attitude towards the world; cultivating anger, malevolence, resentment, and a sense of grievance are unpromising grounds for a more just social order. The riskiness, obsessiveness, negativity, and inhumane character of many campaigns for revenge make them unlikely foundations for rectifying injustice.

Solomon’s exposition relies heavily on rhetorical questions. For instance, he asks, “Where would our reasoning about punishment begin if not with our emotional sense of the need for retaliation and retribution?”³⁵ and appends no argument to support his implied conclusion. In this context, the rhetorical question avoids the real question because it invites us to *assume* that reasoning about punishment must begin with the emotional need for retaliation and retribution. This exposition encourages us not to ask whether such an emotional need provides a morally legitimate basis for reasoning about punishment. Similarly, Solomon asks, “And what would our emotion be if it were not already informed and cultivated by a keen sense of its object and its target, as well as the mores and morals of the community in which the offense in question is *deserving of revenge*?”³⁶ Again, the question posed assumes that *an offense deserves revenge*—that enlightened community morality correctly supports the quest for revenge as a morally righteous response to wrongdoing. But a rhetorical question is not an argument. Solomon does not show that retributive emotions are *rightly* those of a community, that wrongs *should* be met by actions of revenge, or that the latter claim follows from the former.

“Revenge is morally acceptable because it lies at the core of retributive justice, which really is justice”

There is a conviction in many circles, often a very powerful one, that when wrongdoers are punished, justice is done. Justice, capital-J-Justice, is served. If revenge is linked to punishment through concepts of retribution, and punishment, retributively construed, is essential for Justice, then revenge would seem to have a moral justification after all.

The idea of retribution is that someone who has done wrong should suffer some penalty *as a result of what he has done* because that suffering is the appropriate consequence to him of the wrongdoing for which he is responsible. The retributive

theory of punishment is a theory of legal punishment, and legal punishment is the deliberate infliction, under the auspices of the law and after due process, of harm and suffering—ranging from the imposition of fines to loss of liberty, hard labor, or even death. In undergoing some form of hard treatment, the wrongdoer is said to be *paying a debt to society*, *annulling* a wrong, redressing or restoring a *balance*, or re-establishing some kind of *reciprocity*. The distinctive feature of retributivist theories is that it is not such consequences as deterrence that justify punishment. Rather, *it is the wrongdoing of the offender, making him deserving of punishment, that morally legitimates and requires his suffering*.

Some decades back, retributive theories of punishment stood in considerable disrepute with moral thinkers. Retributive theories were identified with harsh sentiments of vengeance and vindictiveness and the primitive claims of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (*lex talionis*). During the 1970s and 1980s, strong criticisms of alternative theories of punishment made retributivism seem a more attractive option. There was a shift in thinking, and the idea that punishments could be imposed to *bring about results* such as the *deterrence of further crimes*, or the *moral improvement of the offender* came to be seen as potentially exploitative and manipulative. In the shift back to retributivism, one powerful argument was that if punishment were to be justified on the grounds of its consequences or likely consequences in deterring crime, then its justification could legitimize *using* an offender—or even an innocent accused person—as a means to achieve desired consequences. Such practices would be exploitative and fundamentally unjust. As for rehabilitation, if punishment is to be justified as reforming or rehabilitating the offender, it is potentially manipulative, and potentially indefinite in duration since some people may not be appropriately reformed.³⁷ Such criticisms led theorists to a renewed interest in retributive theories. Given its claim to treat offenders undergoing punishment as *responsible* moral agents who undergo hard treatments because they *deserve* to pay a penalty commensurate with their wrongdoing, retributivism gained moral credibility.

Positive retributivism may be distinguished from negative retributivism. Positive retributivism is the claim that anyone who is guilty ought to be punished, whereas negative retributivism is the claim that anyone who is not guilty ought not to be punished. Few would dispute negative retributivism, which amounts to an insistence that only the guilty should be punished. Positive retributivism is more controversial. What are the grounds for this apparently instinctive and deeply rooted claim that a wrongdoer should *suffer* something as a result of his wrongdoing? Writing about retributivism, J.L. Mackie claims that the concept of a morally wrong action has three elements: “its being harmful, its being forbidden, and its calling for a hostile response.”³⁸ When we think of actions as being *wrong*, Mackie says, we are, in so doing, thinking of them as *not-to-be-done*. And that, he believes, means that when wrongful actions are done “a *hostile* response from somewhere is needed. The situation is somehow generally unsatisfactory if the wrong action gets by without any proportional response.” On Mackie’s view at this point, the proper response to wrongdoing is that the wrongdoer should *suffer* as a consequence of what he did. He should suffer because he deserves to

suffer—and he deserves to suffer because he has been responsible for wrongdoing. The appropriate social and institutional response to human wrongdoing is punishment, in which a penalty properly proportionate to the offense should be imposed.³⁹

Though he defends retributivism, Mackie admits to finding a deep moral paradox within it. Here is the problem as he sees it. First there is the fundamental moral belief that *to deliberately and avoidably impose suffering on another human being is wrong*. But second, there is the further fundamental moral belief that *because wrongdoing should be met by the proportionate infliction of suffering, to impose such suffering is obligatory*. The problem is that what is first defined as wrong is later claimed to be obligatory. This, for Mackie, is the paradox of retributivism.

Mackie seeks to resolve the paradox by appealing to *natural selection*. He claims that creatures who spontaneously retaliate against offenses will have a survival advantage over those who do not. For this reason, he alleges, emotions and tendencies associated with such retaliation will have survival value and will become part of our genetic inheritance. Mackie claims, then, that human beings *naturally* have spontaneous retributive tendencies and he then claims that the naturalness of these retributive tendencies can resolve the paradox of retribution. But the move is unhelpful in the end, for the familiar reason that moral legitimacy cannot be inferred from naturalness.⁴⁰ The paradox Mackie has so clearly described is one of ethics and logic—and a hypothetical genetic explanation will not make that paradox disappear.

A different account of retributivism, put forward at one time by Jeffrie Murphy, appeals to norms of reciprocity.⁴¹ The fundamental idea underlying this theory is that people who live together in a society have implicitly agreed not to commit actions forbidden by law, in return for having the benefits of safety and security. A person who disobeys the law and commits a crime nevertheless still benefits from the existence of a legal order. For example, a bank robber who steals money is only able to possess that money if other people do not take it from him. The robber breaks the law, and yet benefits from it; thus he is a moral free-rider, benefiting from a system without doing his share to make it work. The imbalance of benefits and costs makes the situation unfair or unreciprocal, on this account. Retributive punishment is claimed to restore the balance of costs and benefits, and such restoration can be justified in the name of fairness.

But there are problems with this account, despite its intuitive appeal. The general supposition underlying it is something like the social contract model of society, according to which the benefits and costs of laws and social arrangements are, at some initial and fundamental level, shared equally. That model is insensitive to the realities of socio-economic life, because those in lower socio-economic strata tend to receive fewer benefits than others while paying great costs. Furthermore, the cost/benefit framework is not plausible for all crimes. Compliance with the law is not always a *cost*: sometimes we want to do just what the law requires. Many people do not wish to commit rape, sexual abuse, kidnapping, blackmail, murder, or even bank robbery—and for them, there is no *cost* in not doing so. And for wrongs such as sexual assault or

wife-beating, the idea that such actions *benefit* the offender is implausible on close analysis.⁴²

Further developments of retributivism have been put forward by Margaret Falls, who emphasizes the fact that legally imposed punishment expresses a moral message to an offender, who is rightly held accountable for what he has done.⁴³ Society must communicate to offenders and others that criminal acts cannot be tolerated. Holding a wrongdoer accountable requires imposing suffering on him or her, and that imposition is a way of communicating that the act in question was *wrong*. What justifies retributively imposed suffering, according to Falls, is that it is essential to the communication of this message.

Justified punishment, for a retributivist, is not the blind balancing of suffering, nor the heartless revenge of adding suffering to suffering, nor even the removal of unfair benefits. It is an unequivocal insistence upon moral accountability, on appeal to the best that is within us, our ability to act as moral agents.⁴⁴

With this conception of retributivism, we seem to be moving away from rage and revenge⁴⁵ to a view of persons as moral agents who can understand why some kinds of acts are wrong. For Falls, retributive punishment is justified because it communicates to wrongdoers the understanding that what they did was wrong. Punishment must always be compatible with *the offender's coming to reflect, to understand, and accept the communication that what he did was wrong and must not be repeated*. On this account, punishments in the form of execution and torture could never be justified, because they could never appeal to the reason and understanding of the offender. Punishment must allow for the possibility of remorse, repentance, and moral reform.

Given its emphasis on moral education, Falls' theory could not provide a justification for revenge based on retributivism. But in any event, retributivism as a theory of institutionalized, legal punishment cannot plausibly justify revenge, understood as the vindictively motivated "punishment" of an offender by his victim. Such revenge is something quite distinct from the punishment of a criminal offender under the law. Legal punishment requires due process and legal authority, aspects strikingly absent when we embark on a private quest for revenge. *Legal punishment carries no implication that the point of the offender's suffering is to satisfy the victim, and the victim is not the agent of legally authorized punishment*.

Retributivism is by no means a single doctrine. Furthermore, retributivism is a theory of legally imposed punishments, and such punishments are clearly different from acts of revenge. Nevertheless, arguments linking revenge and retribution are many and may seem superficially plausible. Such arguments move in two directions. First one may seek to derive some version of retributivism from the naturalness and claimed legitimacy of revenge, as in Argument A.

Argument A

- 1 Revenge is natural.
- So:
- 2 Revenge is legitimate.
 - 3 Retributive punishment is a proper legal expression of revenge.
- Therefore:
- 4 Retributivism is the correct theory of legal punishment.

Alternatively, one may seek to ground the legitimacy of revenge on the correctness of retributivism, as in Argument B.

Argument B

- 1 Alternatives to the retributive theory of punishment are incorrect.
- So:
- 2 Retributivism is the correct theory of punishment.
 - 3 The emotion of revenge is the core of retributivism.
- Therefore:
- 4 The emotion of revenge is based on morally correct insights.

To arguments like A, we may respond by rejecting both the first premise and the inference to the second. As has been argued, it is not plausible that the desire for revenge is natural, and even if it were, the moral legitimacy of that desire would not follow. To arguments like B, we may respond by denying the third premise, because there are interpretations of retributivism which do not incorporate theories about vindictiveness and the quest for revenge. Revenge cannot inherit moral credibility from retributivism; nor can it lend credibility to that doctrine—though retributivism may be credible for other reasons.⁴⁶

**Vindictiveness distinguished from vindication:
the story of Samuel Pizar**

As Falls' interpretation of retributivism indicates, the punishment of an offender may be understood as carrying a *moral message* connected with validating or vindicating the victim of wrongdoing. When one person wrongs another, he implies that her interests and needs may simply be disregarded and communicates the deeply insulting message that she merits no moral consideration. At one point, Jean Hampton suggests that punishment imposes a kind of defeat on the offender, denying his false claim to superiority over the victim and thereby *vindicating* the victim's relative worth.⁴⁷ Punishment strikes a blow for morality by the *legal imposition of a penalty on one who deserves it because he has offended* and by asserting or *vindicating* the victim's value.

What is vindication, and how is it related to vindictiveness and revenge? In *Wild Justice*, Susan Jacoby says:

Vindication suggests the process of clearing oneself of a false charge or of overcoming injury and humiliation by proving oneself to the world . . . Some men and women aim at vindication by attempting to build themselves up, others by tearing down their enemies.⁴⁸

To vindicate someone is to clear that person of suspicion, a charge of wrongdoing, or dishonor, or to successfully defend him or her. It is to uphold, or justify.⁴⁹ A victim of wrongdoing will be vindicated if it is shown that she did nothing to deserve her ill-treatment or dishonor, if it is asserted or reasserted that she is a worthy human being who merited better, and that in the conflict between her and the wrongdoing, she was right. To vindicate oneself is to show that one was right all along, that one did not deserve the bad treatment one received.

A person who is *vindictive* bears a grudge, is spiteful, or seeks revenge, whereas one who is *vindicative* is one who tends to vindicate someone (himself or another). The words “vindictive” and “vindicative” have a common Latin root (*vindicare*) and a superficial similarity. But there has come to be a crucial difference in meaning between these terms. Because of the perpetrator’s implied message that it is really quite all right for his victim to be mistreated and abused, *vindication* in the sense of justification is likely to be especially important to most victims of wrongdoing. After wrongdoing, things must somehow be put right, and a central dimension of that putting-right is the *vindication* of the victim, the showing that the victim did not deserve to be treated in this way, that this person had human dignity and was worthy of respect. One way of seeking to vindicate oneself is seeking to diminish or put down one’s opponent. Another is to seek to build oneself up and assert or reassert one’s own self-respect.⁵⁰ If the former path is chosen, vindication will be avenging or vindictive, including efforts to achieve revenge or some form of retribution, on the assumption that “He is down because I have put him down; I am up compared to him; so I am up.” There are fundamental ethical problems with this approach, as we have seen. It reduces to doing something wrong in order to inflict suffering on another for one’s own satisfaction. And, again as has been argued, the associated pragmatic problems are more than incidental here. Side effects are likely to be negative and long-lasting, campaigns easily become obsessive and harmful, and the person seeking vindication may feel little satisfaction in the end. Better and more promising for victims than vindictive actions that would put the other *down*, are vindicating actions that bring the victim *up*, through self-development and worthwhile accomplishments.

A moving story of such self-development and vindication in the sense of justification is that of Samuel Pizar, who was one of the youngest survivors of Auschwitz. A Belorussian Jew, Samuel Pizar entered Auschwitz at the age of 12, to emerge at 16. He went on to be adopted by relatives in Australia, excel at university, and win a scholarship to Princeton, where he obtained a doctorate in

international law. Pisar spent much of his professional career arguing for economic contacts between East and West during the Cold War. He sought through his whole adult life to *vindicate* himself in the sense of proving that he had deserved to survive the camps. The message of Auschwitz and Nazi Germany had been that the lives of Jews and other prisoners, including himself, were worth nothing. Determined to disprove this degrading message, Pisar sought to prove himself by professional attainments in international law, using law as a tool for peace and the prevention of future concentration camps. His writings suggest that he seldom acknowledged or deeply explored his feelings about the camp. Yet he seems to have interpreted his whole adult experience in the context of this brutal background. The unimaginable harshness of the camp set the background for his efforts and achievements, his evaluations of character, and his understanding of people and events.

There was a sense in which Samuel Pisar never left the past. Yet he did not seek revenge against Germans and never lumped them into one solid “enemy” group against which he cultivated hatred. His entire adult life was an ongoing attempt to vindicate himself, to prove that he was a worthy human being, fit to be alive, and capable of making an important contribution to the world.⁵¹ Samuel Pisar said that a normal healthy creative existence would be his *revenge* and his victory over the past. His victory against Hitler, his *vengeance*, would be the undoing of Hitler’s destructive work. Citing this life and work as an example, Susan Jacoby claims that it poignantly illustrates the sentiment that “the best revenge is a life well-lived.”

Perhaps it is because this saying expresses a beautiful moral sentiment that it has become a cliché. Yet in this context the word “revenge” must be understood metaphorically, not literally. A striking fact about Samuel Pisar is precisely that he was not vindictive and did not seek revenge. Rather, his was a life of vindication. This life brought him honor and demonstrated his moral worth and intellectual capacities. This was a *vindicative* life, not a *vindictive* one. Pisar did not plot to bring harm to former Nazis or to Germans in general. He did not cultivate hatred, resentment, and a sense of grievance, or render himself an agent of other people’s punishment and suffering, seeking to put down those who had been against him. Rather, he sought to vindicate himself and assert his own self-respect and sense of worth by educating himself and working, through his chosen field of international law, for world peace and against the suppression of individuals.⁵² A life well-lived is not literally a life of revenge, and cannot in any literal sense be the best revenge. Samuel Pisar’s life was his own self-justification or upholding of his own honor against the brutal challenge of Nazi wrongdoing. He sought to prove himself a worthy and capable human being, with pride and self-respect, one who deserved to live. And he succeeded.

Commenting on Pisar, Jacoby says that it was not so much his urge to high achievement that was unusual, but rather his having the emotional intelligence to express and then transcend his injuries by work of individual merit and social importance instead of expressing them in a vindictive rage.⁵³ Although Jacoby initially drew a firm line between vindication and revenge, she strangely abandons

the distinction when she comments that Pizar's life shows a "constructive use of vindictiveness." Given the terrible circumstances of his adolescence, Samuel Pizar might easily have become vindictive. But he did not. Instead, he chose to uplift himself. This moving example suggests that if vindication is what is wanted, working to elevate the self is a more worthy path than seeking revenge against others.

Bibliography

- Acton, H.B. (ed.), *The Philosophy of Punishment*, London: Macmillan, 1969.
- Adams, Jeff, "A Kinder, Gentler Taber Emerges," *Calgary Herald*, May 16 1999.
- Annan, Kofi A., "The Peace-Keeping Prescription," in Kevin M. Cahil (ed.), *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars before They Start*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1996.
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1993, first published 1963.
- Ash, Timothy Garton, *The File: A Personal History*, London: HarperCollins, 1997.
- "True Confessions," *New York Review of Books*, July 17 1997.
- "The Truth about Dictatorships," *New York Review of Books*, February 19 1998.
- Asmal, Kader, with Asmal, Louise and Roberts, Ronald Suresh (eds), *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance*, Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1996.
- Augsburger, David, *Helping People Forgive*, Louisville, KS: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Co-operation*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1984.
- Baier, Annette, "Secular Faith," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 9, 1980, pp. 131–48.
- Baron, Marcia, with Pettit, Philip and Slote, Michael, *Three Methods of Ethics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Barry, Vincent, *The Dog Ate My Homework*, Andrew McMeel Publications, 1997.
- Baumeister, Roy R., *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*, New York, NY: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997.
- Benn, Piers, "Forgiveness and Loyalty," *Philosophy*, 71, 1996, pp. 369–84.
- Biko, Ntsiki, "Amnesty and Denial," in Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (eds), *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, Cape Town: Zed Books, 2000, pp. 193–6.
- Boehm, Christopher, *Blood Revenge: The Anthropology of Feuding in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1984.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *The Cost of Discipleship*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1963. Translated from the German by R.H. Fuller.
- Boraine, Alex and Levy, Janet (eds), *The Healing of a Nation?*, Cape Town: Justice in Transition, 1995.
- Borneman, John, *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice, and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Brown, Scott and Fisher, Roger, *Getting Together*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
- Browning, Christopher, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York, NY: Aaron Asher Books, 1992.

- Buruma, Ian, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, London: Penguin, 1995.
- “The Joys and Perils of Victimhood,” *New York Review of Books*, April 8 1999, pp. 4–9.
- Cahil, Kevin M. (ed.), *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars before They Start*, New York: Basic Books, 1996, pp. 174–90.
- Calhoun, Clare, “Changing One’s Heart,” *Ethics*, 103, 1992, pp. 76–92.
- Camus, Albert, *Œuvres Complètes d’Albert Camus*, Paris: Regir Grenier, Gallimard Press, 1983.
- Cayley, David, *The Expanding Prison: The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives*, Toronto: Anansi, 1998.
- Chagani, Parinda, “Forgiveness,” publication of the Ismailia Association Teacher Training Program, 1977.
- Chandler, David, “Dig a Hole and Bury the Past,” in Carol Prager and Trudy Govier (eds), *Dilemmas of Reconciliation*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, forthcoming (2002).
- Coleman, Paul W., “The Process of Forgiveness in Marriage and the Family,” in Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (eds), *Exploring Forgiveness*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, pp. 75–94.
- Crocker, David, “Reckoning with Past Wrongs: A Normative Framework,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, 1999, pp. 43–64.
- Danieli, Yael (ed.), *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1998.
- Deeken, Alfons, *Process and Permanence in Ethics: Max Scheler’s Moral Philosophy*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1974.
- de Kock, Eugene, *A Long Night’s Damage: Working for the Apartheid State* (as told to Jeremy Gordin), Saxonwold, South Africa: Contra Press, 1998.
- Diehl, Paul F., *International Peacekeeping*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Downie, R.S., “Forgiveness,” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 15, 1965, pp. 128–34.
- Dwyer, Susan, “Reconciliation for Realists,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, 1999, pp. 81–98.
- Elder, Joseph W., “Expanding Our Options: The Challenge of Forgiveness,” in Robert D. Enright and Joanna North (eds), *Exploring Forgiveness*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, pp. 150–61.
- Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publications, 1971.
- Enright, Robert D. and North, Joanna (eds), *Exploring Forgiveness*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.
- Etzioni, Amitai, *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1996.
- Falls, Margaret, “Retribution, Reciprocity, and Respect for Persons,” *Law and Philosophy*, 6, 1987, pp. 25–41.
- Fisher, Roger, and Brown, Scott, *Getting Together*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
- Flanigan, Beverly, *Forgiving the Unforgivable: Overcoming the Bitter Legacy of Intimate Wounds*, New York, NY: Collier Books/Macmillan, 1992.
- *Forgiving Yourself*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1996.
- Gandhi, M., *Selections from Gandhi*, Nirmall Kumar Rose (ed.), Ahmadabad, India: Mavajivan Publishing House, 1948.
- Gaylin, William, *The Rage Within: Anger in Modern Life*, New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York, NY: Random House, 1997.
- Golding, Martin P., "Forgiveness and Regret," *Philosophical Forum*, XVI, 1985, pp. 121–37.
- Gorr, Michael J. and Harwood, Sterling, *Crime and Punishment: Philosophic Explorations*, Boston, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 1995.
- Gourevitch, Philip, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, New York, NY: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998.
- Govier, Trudy, *Social Trust and Human Communities*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.
- *Dilemmas of Trust*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.
- "Forgiveness and the Unforgivable," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 36, 1999.
- "Review of Knud Logstrup, *The Ethical Demand*," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 33, 1999, pp. 267–72.
- "Acknowledgement and Forced Confession," *The Acorn*, 2000–2001, pp. 5–20.
- "What Is Acknowledgement and Why Is It Important?," in Carol Prager and Trudy Govier (eds), *Dilemmas of Reconciliation*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, forthcoming (2002).
- Govier, Trudy and Verwoerd, Wilhelm, "The Promise and Pitfalls of Apology," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Spring 2002.
- "Taking Wrongs Seriously: A Qualified Defense of Public Apology," *Saskatchewan Law Review*, Winter 2002.
- "Forgiveness: The Victim's Prerogative," *South African Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming.
- "Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, forthcoming.
- Haber, Joram Graf, *Forgiveness*, Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991.
- Hampton, Jean, "The Moral Education Theory of Punishment," in Michael J. Gorr and Sterling Harwood, *Crime and Punishment: Philosophic Explorations*, Boston, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 1995, pp. 356–67.
- Harvey, Jean, "Forgiveness as an Obligation of the Moral Life," *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies*, 8, 1993, pp. 211–21.
- "The Emerging Practice of Institutional Apologies," *International Journal of Applied Ethics*, 1995, pp. 57–65.
- Havel, Vaclav, *Living in Truth*, London: Faber and Faber, 1986. Translated from the Czech by Paul Wilson.
- *The Art of the Impossible: Politics and Morality in Practice*, New York, NY: Knopf, 1997. Translated from the Czech by Paul Wilson and others.
- Hayslip, Lely, with Wurts, Jay, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace*, New York, NY: Penguin, 1990.
- Henderson, Michael, *The Forgiveness Factor: Stories of Hope in a World of Conflict*, Salem, OR: Grosvenor Books, 1996.
- Hersh, Seymour, "The Missiles of August," *New Yorker*, October 12 1993, pp. 34–41.
- Holmgren, Margaret, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 30, 1993, pp. 341–51.
- "Self-Forgiveness and Responsible Moral Agency," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 1998, pp. 75–91.
- Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbours*, New Haven, CN, and London, UK: Yale University Press, 1995.

- Hunt, Leslie, "Character and Thought," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1978, pp. 177–86.
- Ignatieff, Michael, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, Toronto: Viking Penguin, 1993.
- "Articles of Faith," in *Index on Censorship 1996, Wounded Nations, Broken Lives*, pp. 110–22.
- *The Rights Revolution*, Toronto: Anansi, 2000.
- Isaacs, Tracy, "Cultural Context and Moral Responsibility," *Ethics*, 1994, pp. 291–309.
- Jacoby, Susan, *Wild Justice*, New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1983.
- Johnson, Janis Tyler, *Mothers of Incest Survivors: Another Side of the Story*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Johnson, Yvonne and Wiebe, Rudy, *A Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, Toronto: Knopf, 1998.
- Jones, David H., *Moral Responsibility in the Holocaust: A Study in the Ethics of Character*, Lanham and New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999.
- Jones, Gregory L., *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Kant, Immanuel, "Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone," in Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (eds and trans), *Religion and Rational Theory: The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- *Lectures on Ethics*, Peter Heath and J.B. Schneewind (eds), Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Translated by Peter Heath.
- Kaplan, Robert D., *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Kennedy-Pipe, Caroline, *The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland*, London and New York, NY: Longman, 1997.
- Kekes, John, *Facing Evil*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Klain, Eduard, "Intergenerational Aspects of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia," in Yael Danieli (ed.), *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1998.
- Kogawa, Joy, *Obasan*, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennis, 1981.
- *Itsuka*, Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1992.
- *The Rain Ascends*, Toronto: Knopf, 1995.
- Kolnai, Aurel, "Forgiveness," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1973–4, pp. 91–106.
- Korsgaard, Christine, "The Reasons We Can Share: An Attack on the Distinction between Agent-Relative and Agent-Neutral Value," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 10, 1993, pp. 24–51.
- *Creating a Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kronendorfer, Bjorn, *Remembrance and Reconciliation: Encounters Between Young Jews and Germans*, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Kupperman, Joel, *Character*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Kymlicka, Will, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Kupperman, Joel, *Character*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Lamb, Sharon, *The Trouble with Blame: Victims, Perpetrators, and Responsibility*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Lang, Berel, "Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 31, 1994.
- Larmore, Charles E., *Patterns of Moral Complexity*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

- Llewellyn, Jennifer and Robert Howse, "Restorative Justice: A Conceptual Framework," working paper, Law Commission of Canada, Fall, 1998.
- Logstrup, Knud Ejler, *The Ethical Demand*, translated by Rosemarie Logstrup, Introduction by Hans Fink and Alasdair MacIntyre, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.
- Lottman, Herbert R., *The People's Anger: Justice and Revenge in Post-Liberation France*, London: Hutchinson, 1986.
- Louden, Robert B., *Morality and Moral Theory: A Reappraisal and Reaffirmation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Mackie, J.L., "Morality and the Retributive Emotions," *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 1982, pp. 3–10.
- Magawa, Sindiwe, *To My Children's Children*, Cape Town: Africasouth New Writing, David Philip, 1990.
- Mandela, Nelson, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1994.
- Margalit, Avishai, *The Decent Society*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- May, Larry, *The Morality of Groups*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.
- *The Socially Responsive Self: Social Theory and Professional Ethics*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- McCullough, Michael E., Pargament, Kenneth I., and Thoreson, Carl E. (eds), *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000.
- McGary, Howard, "Forgiveness," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 25, 1989, pp. 343–51.
- McKenzie, Glenn, "Old Surgical Technique Gives Hope to Amputees," *Globe and Mail*, January 13 1999.
- McKim, Robert and McMahan, Jeff (eds), *The Morality of Nationalism*, New York, NY, and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- McLaren, Leah, "Does an Eye for an Eye Make the Whole World Blind?," *Globe and Mail*, March 25 2000.
- McNamara, Robert S., *Argument without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy*, New York, NY: Public Affairs, 1999.
- Mellema, Gregory F., *Collective Responsibility*, Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1997.
- Meiring, Piet, "The Baruti versus the Lawyers," in Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (eds), *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000.
- Midgley, Mary, *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay*, London: Routledge, 1984.
- Minow, Martha, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998.
- Moody-Adams, Michele, "Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance," *Ethics*, 1994, pp. 291–309.
- Moore, Kathleen Dean, *Pardons: Justice, Mercy and the Public Interest*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Morris, Herbert, "Persons and Punishment," in Jeffrie Murphy (ed.), *On Guilt and Innocence*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976.
- Muller-Fahrenholz, Geiko, *The Art of Forgiveness*, Geneva: World Council of Churches publication, 1997.
- Murphy, Jeffrie and Hampton, Jean, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Murphy, Jeffrie G., "Kant's Theory of Criminal Punishment," in Jeffrie Murphy (ed.), *Retribution, Justice, and Therapy*, Boston, MA: D. Reidel, 1978, pp. 82–92.

- Murphy, Jeffrie (ed.), *Punishment and Rehabilitation*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995, third edition.
- Nelson, Mariah Burton, *The Unburdened Heart*, San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2000.
- Newman, Louis, "The Quality of Mercy: On the Duty to Forgive in the Judaic Tradition," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 15, 1987, pp. 155–72.
- Norman, Richard, *Ethics, Killing, and War*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- North, Joanna, "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness," *Philosophy*, 1987, pp. 499–508.
- Novitz, David, "Forgiveness and Self-Respect," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58, 1998, pp. 299–315.
- Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy State and Utopia*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1974.
- Nussbaum, Martha, *Sex and Social Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- O'Neill, Onora, *Towards Justice and Virtue: A Constructive Account of Practical Reasoning*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Oster, Kenneth, *Islam Reconsidered*, Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1979.
- Parker, Emmett, *Albert Camus: The Artist in the Arena*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Pauw, Jacques, *Into the Heart of Darkness*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1997.
- Pisar, Samuel, *Of Blood and Hope*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1979.
- Prager, Carol and Govier, Trudy (eds), *Dilemmas of Reconciliation*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, forthcoming (2002).
- Rhode, David, "Macedonian Villages Typifies, a) Peaceful Coexistence, b) Dormant Hostility," *New York Times*, May 30 1999.
- Roberts, Robert C., "Forgivingness," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 32, 1995, pp. 289–306.
- Rorty, Amelie (ed.), *The Identities of Persons*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976.
- Rose, Nirmall Kumar (ed.), *Selections from Gandhi*, Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948.
- Rosenberg, Tina, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts after Communism*, New York, NY: Random House, 1996.
- Ross, Lee and Nisbett, Richard, *The Person and the Situation: Perspectives of Social Psychology*, Toronto: McGraw Hill, 1991.
- Ross, Rupert, *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality*, Toronto: Octopus Publishing Group, 1992.
- Rotberg, Robert and Thompson, Dennis, *Truth v. Justice: the Morality of Truth Commissions*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Rye, Mark S. *et al.*, "Religious Perspectiveness on Forgiveness," in Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoreson (eds), *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000, pp. 18–40.
- Sabini, John and Maury Silver, *Moralities of Everyday Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Sampson, Anthony, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Sapstead, David, "Terrorist Chief Renews Call for Holy War: Osama bin Laden Seeks Retaliation against US, UK," *The Calgary Herald*, January 4 1999.
- Scheff, Thomas, *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism, and War*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.

- Shriver, Donald W., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- "Is There Forgiveness in Politics? Germany, Vietnam, and America," in Enright and North (eds), *Exploring Forgiveness*, pp. 131–49.
- Sichone, Owen, *Current Anthropology*, 41, 2000.
- Simon, Thomas, "Group Harm," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, XXVI, 1995.
- Smith, Anthony D., *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996.
- Solomon, Robert, *A Passion for Justice: Emotions and the Origins of the Social Contract*, New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 1990.
- Stewart, Frank Henderson, *Honor*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Tavuchis, Nicholas, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Taylor, Charles, "Responsibility for Self," in Amelie Rorty (ed.), *The Identities of Persons*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 281–99.
- Thomas, Laurence, "Moral Deference," *Philosophical Forum*, XXIV, 1992–3, pp. 233–50.
- Thompson, Janna, *Justice and World Order: A Philosophical Inquiry*, London, UK, and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992.
- "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa," report, five volumes, Cape Town: Juta, 1998.
- Tutu, Desmond, "It Is the Deed that Is Evil, Not the Doer," *Cape Times*, April 14 1997.
- *No Future without Forgiveness.*, New York, NY: Doubleday-Random House, 1999.
- Ugresic, Dubravka, *Have a Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream*, London: Random House, 1994. Translated from Serbo-Croatian by Celia Hawkesworth.
- Ung, Loung, *First They Killed My Father*, New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000.
- Verwoerd, Wilhelm, "Forgive the Torturer, Not the Torture," *Sunday Independent*, Cape Town, December 6 1998.
- "Towards the Truth about the TRC: A Response to Key Moral Criticisms of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process," *Religion and Theology*, 6, 1999, pp. 303–24.
- Verwoerd, Wilhelm and Mabizela, "Chief" Mhlabi (eds), *Truths Drawn in Jest: Commentary on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through Cartoons*, Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2000.
- Villa-Vicencio, Charles and Verwoerd, Wilhelm (eds), *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000.
- Volkan, Vamik, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Peace to Ethnic Terrorism*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
- Warren, Mark E. (ed.), *Democracy and Trust*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Weldon, Fay, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Wiesenthal, Simon, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, New York, NY: Schocken Press, 1998.
- Wilson, Richard A., "Reconciliation and Revenge in Post-apartheid South Africa," *Current Anthropology*, 41, 2000, pp. 75–98.
- York, Geoffrey, *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*, Toronto: McArthur and Company, 1989.
- Young, William, "Resentment and Impartiality," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, XXXVI, 1998, pp. 103–30.

