

Contending with Wrongdoing without Retribution: Compassion, Protest, and Hope

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Retributive Anger and Skepticism about Free Will

Chapter 2: Blame as Moral Protest

Chapter 3: Defensive Harm and Measured Aggression

Chapter 4: Contending with Criminal Wrongdoing

Chapter 5: Forgiveness as Renunciation of Moral Protest

Chapter 6: Love and Free Will

Chapter 7: Religion and Hope

To be subject to retribution is to deserve harm or pain on account having done wrong. The first chapter of the book sets out objections to retributive justifications that derive from skepticism concerning the control in action – the free will – required for such justifications, and from general moral considerations. Chapter 2 asks how we might conceive of blame without retribution, and proposes an account of blame as moral protest, whose function is to secure forward-looking goals such as the moral reform of the wrongdoer and reconciliation in relationships. Chapter 3 asks whether it's possible to justify effectively dealing those who pose dangerous threats if they do not deserve to be harmed, and contends that wrongfully posing a threat, by contrast with deserving harm for posing the threat, is the core condition for the legitimacy of defensive harming. Chapter 4 provides an account of how to treat criminals without retributive justifications for punishment, and argues for an account in which the right of self-defense provides justification for incapacitation accompanied by rehabilitation. Chapter 5 considers how we might forgive if wrongdoers don't basically deserve to be recipients of the retributive emotion of moral resentment, which forgiveness would renounce, and proposes instead that forgiveness be conceived as renunciation of the stance of moral protest. Chapter 6 considers how personal relationships might function without the retributive emotions of moral resentment and indignation having a central role in responding to wrongdoing, and contends that the stance of moral protest, supplemented with non-retributive emotions such as disappointment and sadness, is sufficient. Finally, Chapter 7 surveys the options for theistic and atheistic attitudes regarding the fate humanity in a deterministic universe, and the attitude defended is hope.