

## *Punishment: Three Analytical Threads and the Violence They Produce.*

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IN so far as punishment is concerned, it appears to me that the main features are to be found in an examination of political dialogue; legal philosophy; and empirical research. It is as though the two cultures of Professor Snow have emerged into the three relatively isolated sub-cultures of punishment, that is politics, philosophy and research.

Crime, and the reaction to it—punishment, has always been political in the sense that legislation of criminal and penal laws is a political response to a social problem; but it has been the recent politicalisation of crime and punishment that has taken a more sinister twist. What has occurred, particularly in the middle classes, was the realisation that society is crime-ridden. What was thought to be primarily lower class behaviour has been uncovered among the spokesmen of public morality. The dramatic exposures of white collar crime among business, professional, and political leaders serves to call into question long held beliefs about who is the criminal, what is crime, and the validity of punishment as a means of social control. While we are discovering criminals in unexpected places, we hear our politicians calling for law and order which is seen by many people as a code phrase meaning keep the dangerous classes (minority groups) in their place through increased police activity and long prison detention. In the United States, the post 1968 political rhetoric has backfired with the forced resignation of “Mr Law and Order” himself. It may be in the politicians future self-interest to develop alternatives to punishment, and rewrite the criminal code of law. Perhaps the call for law and order which begins as a political manoeuvre will generate new sets of social investments to replace our conventional wisdom of punishment. The belief in punishment has survived and flourished in spite of

the historical experience of political corruption, disorder, violence, crime, and the unequal distribution of pain throughout society. The argument that the absence of punishment would make things worse has never been put to the social test, nor is it likely to be, as long as we clutch our punitive ideology and continue to elect politicians who pander to our prejudices.

Another aspect of the politicalisation of crime and punishment is the belief that social problems can be solved through the application of technology. Maintaining social control has been transformed into a technical problem of law and order culminating in the use of technical gadgets by the police and prisons. Applied engineering seems to be the main contribution of politicians who play it safe. The politically safe application of technology is, in my opinion, the reason for little progress in our understanding of crime and punishment, and more importantly reliance upon technology replaces the main problem of how we keep society going, with the obscuring minor concerns of which new gadget to use, so that there is no real or significant debate on the vital issue. With our politically neat technical newspeak we have replaced intelligence, compassion, and the ability to maintain relationships, with armoured cars, helicopters, and CS gas; we have replaced old buildings with new buildings; changed our words from prisons to correctional institutions . . . and yet, changed nothing.

There is an unthinkable element in the politics of punishment, and that is the problem of employment for the technicians of the legal and penal establishment, who like the rest of us, have a vested interest in the existing institutional arrangements and knowledge systems painfully acquired through practice. It remains to be seen if political decisions emphasising techniques will continue isolated from penal philosophies and research findings.

Reviewing penal philosophies, it appears that a discussion of punishment takes us through the field of ethics entering with an idea of value and departing in a theory of obligation. Plato regarded punishment as an instrumental value, the pain being beneficial and necessary, in the re-education of offenders. The publication of Beccaria's *Essay on Crimes and Punishment* in 1764 marks a shift to a deterrence theory of punishment which became a foundation for the rationalist views of Bentham, who wished to be the Newton of the moral world. Bentham's "felicific calculus" was the mathematics which drove the celestial mechanics of utilitarianism.

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne.<sup>1</sup>

Bentham's case is that punishment, as a technique of social control, is justified if it prevents more mischief than it produces. Bentham advocated revision of the

1. Quoted in Mitchell, W. C., "Bentham's Felicific Calculus", *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1918, Vol. 33, p. 164.

criminal law based upon his view of man as a hedonist who would be deterred from crime if punishment were swift, certain, and severe.

Although Bentham's intellectualistic psychology was called into question by the discovery of "sub-conscious factors" in human behaviour and the importance of custom, habit and convention in the social conditioning of humans, the pleasure-pain principle has not only remained as the basis of modern criminal law, it has been elevated to a way of life for organisms in the hands of experimental psychologists. Our failure to implement alternatives to a pleasure-pain conception of social and behavioural control indicates that we have not come very far in our thinking despite the admonitions of rationalistic absolutists such as Kant who said:

Every punishment is an affront to the dignity of the person being punished, for it contains a mere one-sided compulsion.<sup>2</sup>

The Kantian concepts of human dignity that persons must never be used as a means to an end extraneous to themselves has been emphasised in German ethical philosophy and stands as a powerful argument against utilitarian deterrence, which believes that punishment promotes the greatest good for the greatest number by deterring would-be offenders. Punishing individuals to promote social ends is unethical, because, in this sense it embarrasses human dignity. This is one of the dilemmas in philosophical discussions of punishment.

In 1939 Mabbot discussed the inadequacy of utilitarian justifications of punishment, and also rejected the retributive theories of Kant, Hegel, Bradley, and Moberly.<sup>3</sup> Mabbot rejected the twin touchstones of utilitarian punishment—deterrence and/or reformation—and stated that the main problem of punishment is legality, that is, punishment is justified as a legally authorised reaction taking place within a legal framework. Supreme Court decisions in the United States in the past 15 years reflect the recent American concern about cruel, unusual, extra-legal, or non-legal means of punishment within or outside of prisons. Furthermore, there are now pending numerous cases in American courts dealing with the convicted person's right not to be treated, rehabilitated, or corrected. Particularly pressing is the litigation about the use of prisoners in medical or psychological experiments.

It would seem that the reasonableness of a particular theory of punishment depends upon the assumptions made about human nature, the information accepted as useful knowledge, and the social implications of implementing particular theories. Rather than building upon first principles, we are groping our way towards them—an exasperating and exhilarating process in a democratically oriented society. Perhaps it is as Moberly suggests:

2. Kant, I., *Philosophy of Law*, translated by E. T. Hastie, T. Clark Ltd. Edinburgh, 1897, p.244.

3. Mabbot, J. D., "Punishment", *Mind*, Vol. 48, No. 190, April, 1939, pp. 152-167.

But the moralist may also be understood as one who is concerned with putting first things first; whose function it is to discover to what we all *should* and to which we all *do* attach supreme importance; to what, in the last resort, all else should give way; what is therefore the criterion by which all else should be assessed. Whether we conceive it as that object of endeavor which has supreme worth or as that obligation which as supreme and ultimate authority, we cannot make sense of our lives unless we have some fairly consistent hierarchy of ends. Hence, the need, the peculiar importance and the undeniable relevance of Ethics as an architectonic science of sciences.<sup>4</sup>

One wonders where utility ends and morality begins, or does morality end when utility begins?

I should like now to turn my attention to the third culture of punishment, the world of empirical research. I am intrigued to discover that a recently published book in England on punishment consists mostly of research results reported from the United States as it concludes:

Rather the evidence suggests that moderately intense, consistently administered punishment can be effective in suppressing undesired behaviour and that, as the work on discrimination learning suggests, side effects of punishment may even be facilitating via increments in attention to elements of the task at hand.<sup>5</sup>

I would like to suggest that the trend of American research findings is quite the opposite. Perhaps it is just as well that science is isolated from politics at least until we are able to resolve apparently contradictory conclusions.

A review of American experimental psychological research findings about punishment seems to begin and end with Skinner<sup>6</sup> who believes that unacceptable behaviour stems from a lack of balance between paired pleasures and pains. Although he distinguishes two kinds of conditioning; classical and operant, he sees both controlling behaviour by programming stimuli and/or anticipations of pleasure and pain. It is with Skinner's operant conditioning that we see clearly the application of reward and punishment. The belief that behaviour is maintained by reinforcement and attenuated by punishment has generated thousands of experiments geared to testing and elaborating learning theory, yet, conclusive evidence seems elusive.

Estes published a monograph in 1944 and concluded: "No evidence has been forthcoming to indicate that punishment exerts a direct weakening effect upon a response comparable to the strengthening produced by a reward."<sup>7</sup>

4. Moberly, W., *The Ethics of Punishment*, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1968, p. 369.

5. Walter, R. H., Cheyne, J. A. & Banks, R. K., *Punishment*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1972, p. 383.

6. The publications of B. F. Skinner extend from 1938 to 1972.

7. Estes, W. K., "An Experimental Study of Punishment", *Psychological Monographs*, Vol. 57, No. 3, whole No. 263, 1944, p. 36.

He believed that responses cannot be eliminated from an organisms repertoire by punishment. On the contrary, he felt that punishment increases the strength of a response which becomes suppressed rather than eliminated. The response "goes underground" and gets stronger.

A response can be permanently weakened only by a sufficient number of unreinforced elicitions and this process of extinction cannot proceed while a response is suppressed as a result of punishment. The punished response continues to exist in the organisms repertoire with most of its original latent strength. While it is suppressed, the response is not only protected from extinction, but it also may become a source of conflict. An emotional state, such as anxiety or dread, which has become conditioned to the incipient movements of making the response will be aroused by any stimuli which formerly acted as occasions for the occurrence of the response.<sup>8</sup>

Holz and Azrin found that severe punishment increased undesirable behaviour when it was selectively paired with reinforcement. For example after severely spanking a child, the parent may try to "make up for it" by some rewarding behaviour, this then pairs the spanking with a reinforcement and thus supports the child's behaviour which generated the spanking.<sup>9</sup>

Gwin found that punishment facilitated the punished act and this process increased with the intensity of the punishing stimulus.

Acts motivated by fear will not be inhibited but rather will be facilitated by punishment, when they are compatible with the responses to the punishing stimulus.<sup>10</sup>

A review of the literature in 1964 by Solomon which appeared in the *American Psychologist* pointed out some consequences of punishment.

Gantt's work on neurotic dogs (1944), Masserman's work on neurotic cats and monkeys (1943), Brady's work with ulcerous monkeys (1958) and Maier's work with rats (1949) show some of the devastating consequences of the utilization of punishment. . . . Yates believes that punishment creates conflicts and the outcomes of conflict due to punishment are rigidity, fixation, regression, aggression and displacement. . . . The most convincing demonstrations of neurotic disturbances stemming from the use of punishment are seen in Masserman's work (1953) with monkeys.<sup>11</sup>

There have been many experiments which have shown that punishment motivates an organism to flight.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

9. Holz, W. C., & Azrin, N. H., "Discriminative Properties of Punishment", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 4, No. 3, July, 1961, pp. 225-232.

10. Gwin, G. T., "The Effects of Punishment on Acts Motivated by Fear", *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 39, No. 2, April 1949, p. 268.

11. Solomon, R. L., "Punishment", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 19, No. 4, April, 1964, p. 250.

A person may be driven out of a situation involving punishment even though the punishment is relatively ineffective in suppressing the punished responses when no escape is possible. The advantages gained by the high degree of effectiveness of punishment on the specific punished response may be outweighed by the escape tendency. Punishing a child for undesired responses might succeed in reducing the frequency of the undesired responses, *but* reinforcement might be expected for any behaviour that resulted in escape from the situation in which the punishment took place. This tendency for the organism to escape a situation involving punishment may constitute one of the major disadvantages in the use of punishment for the practical control of behavior.<sup>12</sup>

The boomerang effect of punishment was explored in an article appearing in 1968:

After response rate decreases to a minimum following several punishments, recovery occurs even though the punishment conditions remain and the frequency of punishment continues to increase.<sup>13</sup>

The masochistic reaction to punishment was noted by several scientists:

It appears that human behavior can be maintained by punishment if the punisher has been given discriminative or conditioned reinforcing properties. These results provide an experimental basis for interpreting behavior wherein an individual seeks out punishment and does nothing to avoid it.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the clearest expression of the effects of punishment in the psychological conditioning literature is found in an article by Fowler published in 1971.

These findings and the others noted above indicate that whether shock-punishment will facilitate performance depends not only on the specific cue function of shock and the motor reactions elicited by it, but also on the function of shock in producing fear and the manner in which stimuli produced by this fear, on becoming anticipatory as the fear response does so, may themselves function as cues eliciting, maintaining and additionally intensifying behaviours that lead to punishment.<sup>15</sup>

Looking at other aspects, the author continues:

12. Azrin, N. H., Hake, D. F., Holz, W. C., & Hutchinson, R. R. "Motivational Aspects of Escape from Punishment", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1965, p. 44.

13. Bee, E. E., & Church, R. M., *Punishment: Issues & Experiments*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, N.Y., 1968.

14. Ayllon, T., & Azrin, N. H. "Punishment as a Discriminative Stimulus and Conditioned Reinforcer with Humans", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 9, No. 4, July, 1966, p. 419.

15. Fowler, H., "Suppression and Facilitation by Response Contingent Shock", in *Aversive Conditioning and Learning*, edited by F. Robert Brush, Academic Press N.Y., 1971, p. 581.

Murray and Nevin's (1967) findings provide the best evidence that shock punishment can function as a conditioned positive reinforcer. The results show that the suppressive effect of the punishing stimulus is not merely attenuated but actually altered to the point where it facilitates a response for which punishment could not have functioned as a discriminative stimulus.<sup>16</sup>

Ferster suggests:

. . . the effect of punishment . . . is more correctly described as the suppression of behavior rather than its elimination. Punishment therefore, cannot be considered the opposite of positive reinforcement. So long as an operant performance is still maintained by durable reinforcers, punishment is likely to reduce its frequency only temporarily, except under extreme conditions.<sup>17</sup>

And it is this observation that pleasure and pain are not polar opposites, and may not even be in the same operational network, that considerably diminishes the simplistic psychologising of utilitarian theorists. This point is driven home by Schaefer and Martin who conclude:

The effect of a punishment schedule is not analogous to the effect of a reinforcement schedule. The strength of the response is, indeed, not in the least affected by punishment. True, all responding, including the response which brought it about, ceases for a time after punishment. But when the punishing conditions no longer prevail, the response not only returns to its former rate but increases temporarily, as if to make up for time lost under the punishment schedule. Thus punishment can be used to suppress a behavior, but it cannot be used to change it.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps this review of American research findings has convinced you that an analysis of the cost/benefit ratio of punishment opens to question the supposed benefit of punishment, and exposes some of the costs incurred in using punishment. If you feel that I have overstated my case in opposition to your cherished conventional wisdom, then perhaps you will accept the conclusion of Yates who said:

Even more important, the review shows clearly the extraordinary complexity of the factors that determine the precise effects of a punishing stimulus in any given situation.<sup>19</sup>

Granted that punishment is a complex behavioural control technique that remains to be unravelled in the laboratory, we are interested in why it is so popular. Millenson suggests a reason:

16. *Ibid.*, p. 559.

17. Ferster, C. D., & Perrott, M. C., *Behavior Principles*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

18. Schaefer, H. H. & Martin, P. L., *Behavioral Therapy*, McGraw-Hill, N.Y., 1969, p. 35.

19. Yates, A. J., *Behaviour Therapy*, John Wiley, & Sons, N.Y., 1970, p. 30.

The punishment procedure appears to be frequently used, not because it works so well, but rather because (1) it has an immediate effect, and (2) its delivery and/or side effects are often positively reinforcing to the person administering the punishment. Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists speak of individuals who find positive reinforcement in punishing others as sadistic . . . the immediate effects of punishment are easily observed. A child giggling in church can be silenced immediately by being pinched; a dog that jumps on visitors can ordinarily be restrained by a swat with a rolled up newspaper. Both the child and the dog are not likely to be permanently cured of their undesirable behaviors through punishment. For the moment, however, the undesirable behavior is temporarily suppressed, and this suppression serves to give immediate positive reinforcement to the behavior of the punisher, thus making it more likely that he will punish in the future.<sup>20</sup>

Moving from the individual motivation to punish to a social explanation it has been proposed that the lower middle classes of a society are the guardians of morality to the extent that they are the code enforcers who support punishment. Ranulf believes:

As a result of the preceding investigation that the disinterested tendency to inflict punishment is a distinctive characteristic of the lower middle class, that is, of a social class living under conditions which force its members to an extraordinarily high degree of self-restraint and subject them to much frustration of natural desires . . . moral indignation is a kind of resentment caused by the repression of instincts.<sup>21</sup>

If these psychological and social explanations of punishment are valid, then our understanding of what to do about it would suggest an honest reappraisal of whether punishment solves the offenders problem or meets the needs of people who punish.

In the absence of positive benefits, let us examine the major negative consequence of punishment, that is, the production of aggression in both the giver and the receiver of punishment. Tharp's review of the American research literature indicates:

The appearance of counter-aggressive behavior is frequently observed to follow the punishment operation. This is characteristic of many delinquent and pre-delinquent children. Such children may have extensive repertoires of counter-aggression which have developed over the years in response to the various forms of punishment to which they have been exposed. Most children also have learned several undesirable responses to make to punishing stimuli; these responses have been reinforced at one time or another by termination of the punishment.<sup>22</sup>

20. Millenson, J. R. *Principles of Behavioral Analysis*, Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1971, p. 426.

21. Ranulf, S., *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology*, Levin & Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1938, p. 198.

22. Tharp, R. G. & Wetzel, R. J., *Behavior Modification in the Natural Environment*, Academic Press, N.Y., 1969, p. 107.



An inventory of scientific findings about human behaviour makes a related point:

The more severe the punishment for aggression in infancy and childhood, the more direct or indirect expression later (indirect through fantasy), and the greater subsequent anxiety about aggressive acts.<sup>23</sup>

Again:

Frustration, especially when produced by or coupled with punishment, may produce extremely rigid and non adaptive behavior, which may endure even when the barrier is removed to make the goal directly accessible.<sup>24</sup>

and again:

The less use of physical punishment in childhood and the more use of reasoning, the less likely the child or adolescent to engage in delinquent behavior.<sup>25</sup>

Berelson and Steiner also give us insight into the transmission of punishment from generation to generation in their view of punishment related to the formation of authoritarian personalities:

Case studies suggest that severe disciplinary treatment by parents with undue emphasis on morality, unquestioning obedience, and harsh punishment, tends to produce such 'authoritarian personalities', but the evidence on this score is by no means firm.<sup>26</sup>

. . . and this authoritarian personality disciplines through punishment his or her children into authoritarian personality persons who punish, and so on, generation after generation.

The American experimental literature clearly shows that pain produces aggression: "Reflexive fighting in response to pain shock have been obtained for mice, hamsters, cats, rats, and squirrel monkeys."<sup>27</sup>

Electric shock elicits aggression when administered to the tail of monkeys, or to the feet of rats, to the feet of cats, and to the feet of monkeys. Evidence was obtained that aggression also resulted from exposure to intense heat. Several writers have noted that physical injury or pain appears to induce aggressive tendencies even

23. Berelson, B., & Steiner, G., *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings*, Harcourt, Brace & World, N.Y., 1964, p. 81.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

27. Azrin, N. H., Hutchinson, R. R. & Hake, D. F., "Pain Induced Fighting in the Squirrel Monkey", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Oct. 1963, p. 620.

against animals or objects that played no role in producing the pain. This study confirms the phenomenon of general aggression following physical injury.<sup>28</sup>

These studies indicate that pain tends to provoke aggression in many different species, and possibly in man as well. It is provoked both by physical and by psychological pain; it is directed at animate and inanimate parts of the environment; it can serve as the basis for learning new behaviors; and it can be eliminated by providing animals with a non-aggressive means of escaping or avoiding pain. There is a direct relation between the intensity, duration and frequency of pain and the amount of aggression. Pain seems to create a changed state in the animals during which it is rewarding for him to injure or destroy.<sup>29</sup>

Looking more closely at the punishment-aggression connection, we find that:

Aggression appears to be a distinctive motivational state which is produced by aversive conditioning (i.e. punishment) which can be used to condition and maintain new behavior<sup>30</sup> . . . (more aggression?).

When physical punishment is administered by another organism, social aggression appears to result.<sup>31</sup>

When intense painful stimulation is delivered to an organism, then aggression or attack against nearby organisms results.<sup>32</sup>

We may conclude, therefore, that the disruption of social behaviour constitutes the primary disadvantage to the use of punishment. The changes in the punished response per se appear to be distinctly secondary in importance to the social products of the use of punishment.<sup>33</sup>

Scott notes that punishment is not a desirable method to control aggression, since punishment acts to stimulate fighting.

. . . punishing aggression has several drawbacks: it leads to long lasting fear responses which may create more trouble for the person than his original aggression; punishment tends to stimulate aggressive feelings which are likely to be displaced on someone else.<sup>34</sup>

28. Azrin, N. H., Hake, D. F., & Hutchinson, R. R., "Elicitation of Aggression by a Physical Blow", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1965, p. 57.

29. Azrin, N. H., "Pain and Aggression", *Psychology Today*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1967, p. 33.

30. Azrin, N. H., Hutchinson, R. R., & McLaughlin, R., "The Opportunity for Aggression as an Operant Reinforcer During Aversive Stimulation", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 8, No. 3, May 1965, p. 180.

31. Azrin, N. H., & Holz, W. C., "Punishment", in *Operant Behavior*, edited by W. K. Honig, Appleton-Century-Crofts, N.Y., 1966, p. 440.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 441.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

34. Scott J. P., *Aggression*, University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 127.

(Perhaps Arabs and Israelis will some day share this insight with other so-called liberators, revolutionaries, assassins, bombers, military establishments, police agencies and prisons).

Feshbach distinguishes between expressive aggression and hostile aggression with the illustration of a person desiring to hit (expressive) in contrast to a person desiring to hurt (hostile).

Hostile aggression is assumed to be a learned drive whose primary antecedents are past exposure to punishment and present threats to self-esteem.<sup>35</sup>

He goes on to say that:

More than fear is acquired when the child is punished. He also observes and imitates the behavior of the punishing agent. . . . Through a process of modeling he learns a norm or law which essentially states that the infliction of pain is the response made to the experience of pain. . . . He learns that it is appropriate, even required, to retaliate . . . that is, to inflict injury, under certain social circumstances. The cues of pain elicited in the source of frustration signify that the requirements of the situation have been met. It is not enough to hit; one must also hurt.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the motivation to injure others comes from the punishment a person has received, and particularly punishment meted out as a reaction to aggression.

The linkage of hostile aggression to threats to self-esteem generated by being punished, although an insight shared with us by Kant long ago, was not analysed by American behavioural scientists until 1961 when Worchel's article explored the process where threat to self-esteem implied devaluation and impotence of the individual requiring remedial action, usually successful retaliation. The aggressive reaction appears to remedy a faulty status relationship between the punisher and the person punished by demonstrating that the punished person is not impotent and helpless. Furthermore, the punished aggressor feels not responsible for his actions because he was reduced to the status of a victim, so his reactive behaviour is excusable.<sup>37</sup> This idea helps to explain the formations of inmate sub-cultures in total institutions such as prisons. In the United States, this rationalisation has been raised to the level of national policy—called protective reaction—by certain politicians.

This analysis also seems to suggest that the persons inflicting punishment are motivated by hostile aggression, but act under the guise of discouraging undesirable behaviour. Azrin points out:

Aggression will increase if the aggression results in favorable consequences. The

35. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

36. Feshbach, S., "The Function of Aggression and the Regulation of Aggressive Drive" *Psychological Review*, Vol. 71, July, 1964, p. 257.

37. Worchel, P., "Status Restoration and the Reduction of Hostility", *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology*, Vol. 63, 1961, p. 445.

increased aggression that results from these favorable consequences is in agreement with the Law of Operant Reinforcement (Skinner 1938).<sup>38</sup>

In this case the favourable consequences of aggression disguised as punishment are the social recognitions of "doing one's duty" . . . and on the other side the recipient of punishment "sees" aggression as the "solution" or appropriate mode of reaction. By punishing we communicate that aggression is an appropriate behaviour. In the absence of alternative modes of response to "undesirable behavior", the punishment-aggression syndrome is established and thrives, so that our grasp of other "solutions" or modes or reaction is non-existent. We have Gresham's law applied to behaviour—the bad drives out the good. Dollard made the point 35 years ago:

The mode of life of a society is defined by a culture which is for any one generation an arbitrary inheritance of problem solutions. Since aggressive responses of constituent members are a problem to every society, the culture includes patterned ways of dealing with these responses.<sup>39</sup>

A society attempts to control aggression by the use of punishment, which is in its effects, an exhibition of the use of aggressive force. It is as though a fire department uses blow torches to put out fires. Strangely, these torches seem to work by repressing in the immediate situation, but the end result has been a seething mass which explodes with dismaying frequency in both personal and social spheres.

Explosions have occurred in the United States, in cities, in prisons, and in universities, and on a lesser magnitude, Ireland has shared the American experience. The price Ireland has paid in violence as a consequence of steadfast adherence to the conventional wisdom of punishment is still perceived as remaining within the boundaries of social acceptability. The second half of the twentieth century, particularly as Ireland enters Europe, has found homogeneity and consensus dissolving under the impact of a society bathed in the harsh realities of long neglected social problems in sectarianism, housing, family living, employment, welfare, education, energy shortages, and the operation of social justice.

At this point, the pertinent issue is no longer the justification of punishment but rather the reduction of violence through the elimination of punishment and the elevation of human dignity. It is time for politicians, philosophers, and scientists to break out of their three isolated cultures and act on the ethical, social, and scientific issues. We must get beyond the hedonic calculus, pass through formalism, work out the pitfalls of humanism, and translate Aristotle's basic question from "What is it to be human?" to the more immediately pressing question—"What human is it to be?"

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38. Azrin, N. H., Hutchinson, R. R., & Sallery, R. D., "Pain Aggression Towards Inanimate Objects", *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Vol. 7, No. 3, May 1964, p. 228.

39. Dollard, J., "Hostility and Fear in Social Life", *Social Forces*, Vol. 17, 1938, p. 25.