"Retributivism, Buddhism, and the Moral Emotions"

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Michael Moore’s appeal to guilt in “The Moral Worth of Retribution” is the most powerful and influential defense of desert-based retributivism yet advanced. Recent critiques of retributivism offered by Martha Nussbaum and Victor Tadros, though insightful and important, do not fully respond to Moore’s argument. This paper offers a new critique of this argument through a discussion of South Asian Buddhist normative perspectives, especially as found in the writings of Śāntideva, that reject both the cognitive appropriateness of anger and Moore’s crucial premise that guilt is a virtuous emotion. Instead, Śāntideva advances an unfamiliar conception of remorse, describing an emotion that may be morally preferable to guilt. This comparison also adds weight to the long-standing concern that desert-based retributivism may be incompatible with liberal neutrality.

Friday, March 22, 2019

Room: 202 Tory
Time: 1:00 p.m.

All are welcome!