

*Justice:
Restorative vs. Retributive*

Retributive justice clamors:
“an eye for an eye;”
restorative justice substitutes
a heart for a fist.

Retributive justice pushes for
punishment of one side;
restorative justice hopes for
healing of both parties.

Retributive justice is based on
a legal and judicial process;
restorative justice comes out of
an interpersonal encounter.

Retributive justice relies on
accusation and confrontation;
restorative justice looks for
reconciliation.

In retributive justice
the defense tries to
dismiss or diminish culpability;
by admitting guilt for the offense
restorative justice begins to
conquer the consequences.

Retributive justice cannot
undo the crime;
restorative justice can
redeem the criminal.

Restorative justice works
if by showing
sympathy for the offender,
one can develop
empathy for the victim.

Retributive justice
imposes punishment
leading to resentment;
restorative justice
proposes a penalty
leading to rehabilitation.

Restorative justice tries to
eliminate the malice
of the offender
and assuage the anguish
of the victim.

Retributive justice too often
increases the malaise
of the offender
and fails to eradicate
the torment of the victim.

Capital punishment
under retributive justice
can neither bring back
the victim’s life
nor compensate for
the survivors’ pain.
Appropriate punishment
under restorative justice
can revivify the dead spirit
of the perpetrator
and alleviate the tortured souls
of the survivors.

The dynamic of death
is latent in retributive justice;
the longing for life
is the guiding principle
of restorative justice.

In restorative justice
the criminal recognizes
the depth of the evil
and the victim fosters
the action of grace.

In retributive justice
the community can only re-act
by protest and demonstrations;
in restorative justice
the community is pro-active
by searching for solutions.

Retributive justice
builds walls even higher;
restorative justice
constructs windows and doors.
Retributive justice
exacerbates separation and opposition;
restorative justice
erodes division and conflict.

Retributive justice
is portrayed as blind,
but that only increases
the darkness;
in the light of love
restorative justice seeks
sight and clarity.

In retributive justice
the criminal’s abode
is the prison
and his new acquaintances
are the jailer and inmates.

In restorative justice
the criminal experiences
the violation
of the victim’s home
and the devastation
of his family and friends

In the retributive justice system
it is possible that
criminals “get off the hook.”
By restorative justice, however,
nothing proceeds
without an admission of guilt.

Retributive justice
is an example
of worldly “wisdom.”
Restorative justice
is an instance of
gospel “foolishness,”
which shows that
vendetta and vengeance
can only lead to death,
whereas life comes from
forgiveness.

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