



Torture and Dignity: An Essay on Moral Injury

By J. M. Bernstein

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In this unflinching look at the experience of suffering and one of its greatest manifestations—torture—J.M. Bernstein critiques the repressions of traditional moral theory, showing that our morals are not immutable ideals but fragile constructions that depend on our experience of suffering itself. Morals, Bernstein argues, not only guide our conduct but also express the depth of mutual dependence that we share as vulnerable and injurable individuals.

Beginning with the attempts to abolish torture in the eighteenth century, and then sensitively examining what is suffered in torture and related transgressions, such as rape, Bernstein elaborates a powerful new conception of moral injury. Crucially, he shows, moral injury always involves an injury to the status of an individual as a person—it is a violent assault against his or her dignity. Elaborating on this critical element of moral injury, he demonstrates that the mutual recognitions of trust form the invisible substance of our moral lives, that dignity is a fragile social possession, and that the perspective of ourselves as potential victims is an ineliminable feature of everyday moral experience.

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Editorial Review

Review

“For many years now Bernstein has been a leading voice in the evolving critical theory tradition, turning out impressive and influential work on Lukács, Adorno, the relation between art and philosophy, and social critique. *Torture and Dignity* is his most ambitious and systematic book. Taking his bearings from what are the clearest, most unambiguous cases of moral injury—torture and rape—he aims to develop a general account of the nature of moral wrong, and he does so without engaging the conventional (and, he argues, thoroughly misleading and distorting) problem of convincing the moral skeptic to refrain from such harm. What results is a book that is lucidly written, original, passionate, and compelling, with many moments of real brilliance. His ability to develop out of such a ‘negative ethics’ a positive account of our dependence on each other is no less valuable and challenging. The book is a major achievement.”

(Robert B. Pippin, author of *Interanimations: Receiving Modern German Philosophy*)

“There is a lot we can learn from topics most of us would rather avoid thinking about. Here, Bernstein does much of the difficult work for us, bringing rape and torture into the general discussions of human dignity, moral injury, and the nature of persons. A much-needed book, and brilliantly argued.”—

(Linda Martín Alcoff, author of *The Future of Whiteness*)

“This book has two topics, dignity and torture—each of which has assumed great importance in the last twenty years. Bernstein contrasts torture with the rule of law and human dignity with violation and degradation. I cannot imagine a better account of the affront to dignity posed by the terrible practice of torture.”

(Jeremy Waldron, author of *Torture, Terror, and Trade-Offs: Philosophy for the White House*)

“*Torture and Dignity* raises a number of important issues in moral philosophy and moral practice in a way that is original and highly engaging. Bernstein is a brilliant writer whose passion and conviction come across vividly and persuasively in a breadth of styles and approaches, which is so unusual in contemporary ethics. In this work we see a philosopher engaged in analysis and argument, but also with literature, phenomenology, memoir, law, the history of ideas, and public policy.”

(Robert Stern, author of *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*)

About the Author

J. M. Bernstein is University Distinguished Professor of philosophy at the New School for Social Research. He is the author of many books, including *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, *Against Voluptuous Bodies: Adorno’s Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting*, and *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*.

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you maybe will certainly update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you but the problems coming to an individual is you don't know what kind you should start with. This *Torture and Dignity: An Essay on Moral Injury* is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and wish in this era.

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