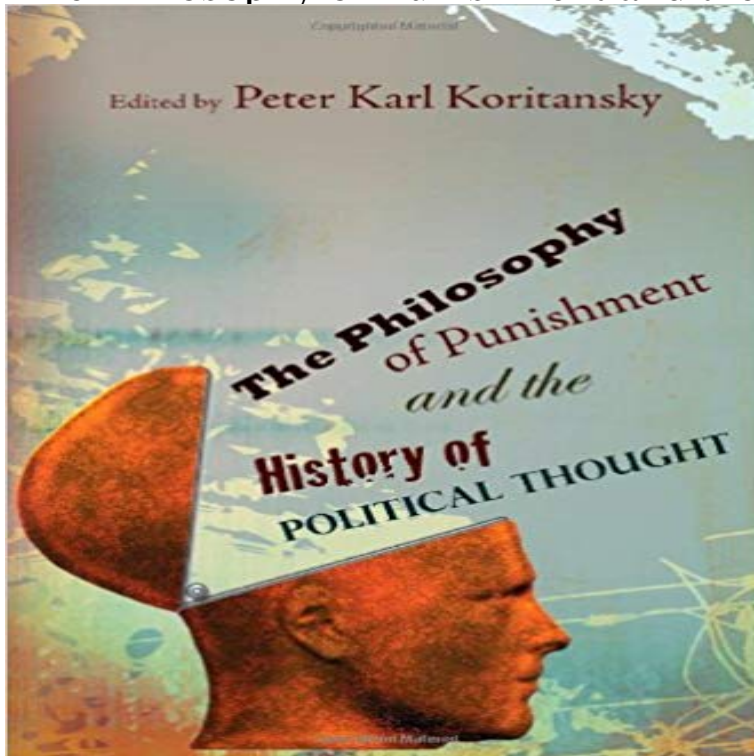


# The Philosophy of Punishment and the History of Political Thought



What does the institution of punishment look like in an ideal political system? Is punishment merely an exercise of violence of the strong against the weak? And what does the phenomenon of revealed religion add to the understanding of punishment? These are some of the many questions contemplated in *The Philosophy of Punishment and the History of Political Thought*, which provides a provocative exploration of the contributions of nine major thinkers and traditions regarding the question of punitive justice. For the last half century, the philosophical debates over punishment have been deadlocked at two schools of thought: Utilitarianism and Retributivism. In his introduction, Koritansky provides an overview of the stymied debate by analyzing H. L. A. Harts argument for a philosophy unifying the theories of Utilitarianism and Retributivism. While Koritansky allows that both theories have contributed substantially to the contemporary understanding of punishment, he points out that Harts lack of success in combining these theories proves that both are less than ideal. From this starting point, Koritansky urges transcendence from these two theories in order to respond to new developments and circumstances surrounding the enactment of punishment today. Conveniently divided into three sections, the book explores pagan and Christian premodern thought; early modern thought, culminating in chapters on Kant and classic Utilitarianism; and postmodern thought as exemplified in the theories of Nietzsche and Foucault. In all, the essays probe the work of Plato, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Cesare Beccaria, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault. These essays devoted to the philosophy of punishment from the perspective of political thought delve deep into key

contributions from thinkers of all eras to help further debates on punishment, provide the history of political thought in order to trace changes and effects on future theories, as well as expose the roots of the two prevailing schools of thought. This collection will engage all social scientists interested in the issue of punishment and energize the ongoing debate surrounding this complex issue.

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