

Department of Philosophy
Speaker Series

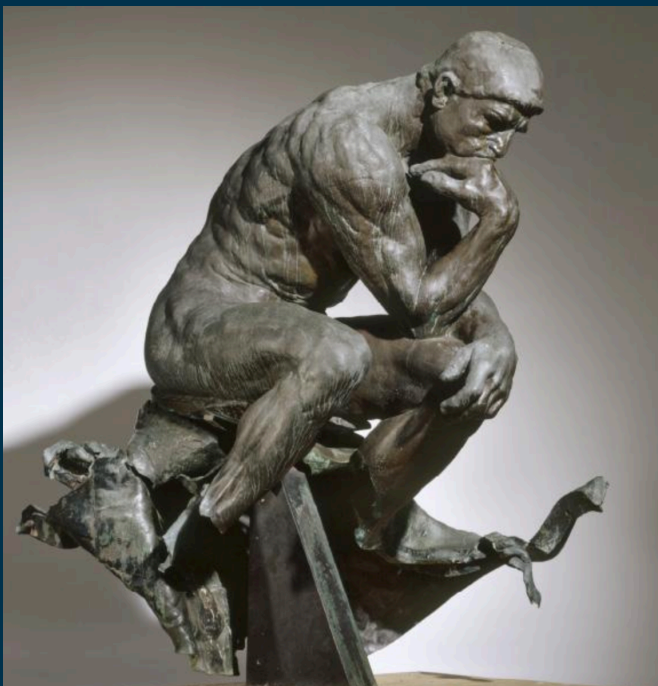
Defining Torture and Terrorism Without Intention

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In this paper, I propose a victim-centered definition of torture and defend (with some caveats) David Rodin's moral definition of terrorism without intention. The definitions I defend in this paper are victim-centered because they prioritize the perspectives and experiences of the victims of torture and terrorism, rather than perpetrators' intentions and purposes. The aim of a victim-centered definition of torture and terrorism is to enable the identification of acts of torture and terrorism for the purposes of a) recognizing and naming the distinctive moral harms inflicted on victims of torture and terrorism, (b) to give voice to victims whose experiences and suffering are routinely ignored, minimized, and silenced and, (c), to assist in developing strategies for reforming institutions and practices that inflict forms of torture and terrorism.

One of the consequences of my approach is that, when we understand the nature of the moral wrong inflicted on victims by clear cases of torture and terrorism, we are forced to recognize that some widely accepted practices and institutions in US society inflict the same degree and kind of suffering on those subjected to them. Far from diluting the significance of the concepts of torture and terrorism, expanding the range of cases to which these terms apply reveals the existence of severe harms that have not been adequately recognized or addressed by social, political, or legal institutions. Recognizing this fact highlights the need for urgent action, and the need for recognition and repair for the victims of these practices.



Friday, March 3

4:00 p.m.

Seminar Room 280F

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