

Introduction: The Quest for Justice and Restorative/Transformative Justice

Wayne Northey has been dedicated to the decades-long attempt to bring to the fore the significant role of both restorative and transformative justice as a means of birthing and being a midwife to a healthier and more mature culture and society. The varied and various essays and reflections in this book (and previous ones — each should be read) offer a time-tried and integrated, historic and incisive approach to the larger tensions and clashes as versions of retributive, rehabilitative, transformative and restorative justice articulate their vision and reasons for it. But, is the quest for justice larger, older and more comprehensive than the way it is understood within the crime and punishment ethos and tradition?

The language of justice is embedded in the Classical Western Tradition as it is in other heritages and Traditions, justice essential to the four cardinal virtues,¹ the three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity crowning the cardinal virtues).²

I have taught political philosophy for decades, and virtually all political philosophers have reflected on the meaning of justice when focused on economic, ecological, legal, political, military, social and life in the public square.

We can note and scarcely miss the misguided use of the language of justice by both our trendy liberal progressives and reactionary conservatives in our much-heated and polarized culture wars. The Greek, Roman and Jewish traditions that Christian political philosophers and theologians synthesized and threaded together articulated a vision of justice and who/how it should be administered. Is it the role of the state or society or some discerning combination of both as agents of applied justice?

The larger question we face in our ethos is whose definition of justice and where, within this much larger discussion, does retributive, rehabilitative, restorative and transformative justice find its place?

The deep and thick roots of justice have a sturdy and robust trunk, and from such a solid trunk many are the branches (some older, some newer) that have grown from such centuries: roots deep, trunk strong. But, to ask again, whose version of justice and how is such a version to be justified in an age that is torn between conflicting notions of justice? The larger philosophical and theological issues do need to be heeded and listened to for the simple reason that grander issues of justice are contested.

The much-admired Canadian political philosopher, George Grant,³ was held much of his life in thinking, writing and educating about what it meant when we think of justice. We are enfolded, in the West, within the principles of a liberal ideology and many of our ethical, social and political decisions merely reflect an unfolding of such an enfolding. The classic lectures by Grant, done in 1974 at Mount Allison University, was published as *English-Speaking Justice*. The dives do go suggestively deep, yet deeper still is the fuller tome, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) by Alasdair MacIntyre.

The quest to understand the layered meaning of justice in a fuller manner does bring us to Wayne's essential vocation and life journey.

The longing and cry for justice is often the child of the oppressed, marginalized and those whose rights have been violated. I worked for Amnesty International for fifteen years and so, for example, the language of "Peace is not the absence of tension, but the presence of justice," was the legitimate voice regularly heard. There are, therefore, the demanding philosophical and theological attempts to understand the meaning of justice (which does have decided practical implications in the culture wars of

¹ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_virtues.

² See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theological_virtues.

³ See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Grant_\(philosopher\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Grant_(philosopher)).

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our time), and there is the equally significant in-the-trenches quest for justice from those who live in dehumanizing and unjust conditions. It is in the living of this perennial tension that the intellectual events and historic events meet and challenge one another. There are intellectuals who think and act little, and activists whose thinking lacks a certain depth and reach. But what is the branch that Wayne sits on and has reflected meaningfully on?

There is a sense in which Wayne's eyes and soul are focused on a narrower approach to the language of justice. But the deeper ideas back of restorative and transformative justice stretch far beyond, all too often, a long lingering with victim-offender, crime and punishment, prison reform/abolition etc. issues. Restoration and transformation in these areas are but metaphor and icon into the much larger questions of restoring relationships and society; or transforming society at a more structural and soul-shaping level, so that the meaning of peace can be realized in an interior, interpersonal, society, political and international level. So, there is much more to Wayne's book(s) than might at first read appear.

I do urge one and all to sit with this and the previous books and see where the ship might take you. A healthy breeze, good sails and discerning sailing skills ever needful on the cross-water journey of life.

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