

## revenge

as objections to revenge, the above points are nevertheless contingent or suggestive of individual or collective vengeance.

The desire for revenge is grounded in notions of SELF-ESTEEM and reputation. HONOR is frequently identified as the source of the desire for revenge. Particular conceptions of honor can of course mitigate against revenge where, *e.g.*, in CHRISTIAN ETHICS turning the other cheek is considered the more honorable course. Nonetheless, such conceptions require that a very real and understandable desire for revenge be curbed and controlled. So, why is restraint *eo ipso* the better course? An instrumentalist-inspired answer is the claim that greater satisfaction is gained by keeping one's temper in the face of insult or injury. A virtue-oriented perspective will condemn the resort to violent revenge as a form of incontinence. However, both these replies primarily address retaliation in anger and violence; they are not principled rejections even of malicious revenge. (Consider "Revenge is a dish best eaten cold.")

Arguably the motivation of all revenge can be characterized as morally shabby insofar as it derives satisfaction from another's suffering, not for any instrumental value of the suffering but just for the sake of suffering. Even so, people do not invariably consider even malicious revenge shameful. On the contrary, they sometimes boast of taking revenge or (where PRUDENCE dictates secrecy) wish that they could do so. Some revenge stories can be very amusing. Some instances of revenge can evoke the kind of empathy and vicarious satisfaction that would be highly morally inappropriate responses to, *e.g.*, envious or spiteful acts. However, we need to recognize that revenge often gains positive moral impetus from its close association with vengeance; and that it is the desire to avenge a wrong, and not the desire for revenge, that is grounded in moral indignation and a sense of injustice. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) remarked that the "most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy." It is noteworthy that this degree of moral SYMPATHY derives from the association of revenge with avenging a genuine wrong. In contrast, there is nothing intrinsically morally appropriate about repaying an indignity or injury in kind. Some such acts are relatively harmless; but many are harmful or unjust.

*See also:* AMNESTY AND PARDON; ANGER; CORRECTIONAL ETHICS; DETERRENCE, THREATS, AND RETAL-

IATION; FORGIVENESS; GUILT AND SHAME; HARM AND OFFENSE; HATE; HONOR; INTERESTS; JUSTICE, RECTIFICATORY; MERCY; MOTIVES; PACIFISM; PRIDE; PROPORTIONALITY; PUNISHMENT; REASONS FOR ACTION; RESENTMENT; SELF-DEFENSE; SELF-ESTEEM; STRATEGIC INTERACTION; SYMPATHY; TERRORISM; VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE; WAR AND PEACE; WEAKNESS OF WILL.

## Bibliography

- Aeschylus. *The Oresteian Trilogy*. Translated by Philip Vellacott. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956. Dramatic representation of murder and vengeance within the royal family of Argos, revolving around the question of the relation of justice to vengeance.
- Bacon, Francis. "Wild Justice." In his *Essays Civil and Moral*. London: Ward, Lock, [1597]. Argues that revenge is inferior to pardon; self-destructive; anti-social; usurps the law's role.
- Elster, Jon. "Norms of Revenge." *Ethics* 100 (1990): 862–85. Discusses proximate and ultimate causes of social norms of revenge.
- Hamlin, Alan P. "Rational Revenge." *Ethics* 101 (1990): 374–81. Reply to Elster.
- Kleinig, John. *Punishment and Desert*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973. Distinguishes revenge and vengeance; revenge and punishment.
- Murphy, Jeffrie G., and Jean Hampton. *Forgiveness and Mercy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. See especially chapter 3. Discussion of revenge and "retributive hatred."
- Njál's Saga*. Translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960 [c. 1280]. Sections 122–29 of this medieval Icelandic saga starkly illustrate the dynamics of a violent blood feud and the duties imposed by a code of revenge.
- Smith, Adam. *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. London: H. G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]. Discusses resentment and its relation to the desire for revenge.
- Wallace, Gerry. "Wild Justice." *Philosophy* 70 (1995): 363–75. Clear analysis of the nature and morality of revenge.
- Weldon, Fay. *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983. Tale of relentless revenge.

Suzanne Uniacke

## revolution

Revolution—in the sense that is relevant here—is an attempt at a thorough transformation of a society or cluster of societies (the Russian Revolution), ini-

tiated by the seizure of state POWER from the old regime, and carried on by deliberately implementing measures designed to yield social INSTITUTIONS and practices radically distinct from those that obtained prior to the seizure of power.

Is any revolution justified if it uses violence—if it involves killing or injuring people or forcing them into submission to attain the revolution’s ends? Setting aside the question of whether PACIFISM is justified, the only right answer is both answers: sometimes revolutions are justified and sometimes not. It depends on the ends of the revolution, on whether nonrevolutionary options are genuinely viable and are less harmful than the alternatives, on the extent and level of violence involved, on the evilness of the old order. Revolution is sometimes morally justified and may even in certain circumstances be justified in regimes that are in some sense democratic (Nielson 1982).

What will be discussed here is not that broad question, but whether individuals, and most particularly workers, are justified in engaging in revolutionary activity (sometimes violent) with the end-in-view of making a socialist revolution where such a revolution is feasible and where the replacement of capitalism by socialism is, everything considered, a desirable thing, not likely to be obtainable except by revolution. If an individual is aware of these circumstances and if she is a person of moral INTEGRITY, must or (more weakly) should she be a revolutionary when she is in a position to so act to any good effect? On the admittedly contentious assumption that socialism is very desirable, can it be shown that individual workers, or individuals sympathetic to their cause, should struggle for socialism when it is not likely to come through resolute electoral politicking, and when its attainment, however desirable, is fraught with risks for the individuals who engage in such a struggle (Elster)? When, if ever, are the risks of revolution morally and rationally justified?

Some philosophers claim that the socialist revolution presents a “collective action” problem. Suppose we are a group of workers thinking about whether we should struggle for a socialist transformation of society. Suppose we conclude that the revolution, if successful, will have benefits that clearly outweigh the losses, on balance; and further, let us assume that the revolution is necessary to bring about these general benefits. But we can also see that the benefits (the goods) coming to the working class

are collective goods. Each member of the working class will enjoy these goods, regardless of whether or how much he contributed to the revolution and regardless of whether he incurred any costs through participating in it.

The standard free rider problem arises if workers are for the most part rational egoists whose overriding concern is to protect and pursue their own personal INTERESTS. What would motivate workers into not being free riders on the revolution when the revolution promises, and reasonably so, results that they would genuinely like? Beyond that, what reasons, if any, can be given them to be rationally so motivated (Miller)?

Suppose it is agreed that socialism would improve the life of workers. Even if that is so, the triumph of socialism might benefit individual workers even though they take no active part in the struggle. In revolutionary struggles, the risks for workers are predictable and considerable; and most workers (plain people who are neither saints nor heroes) might well say that, while they strongly agree with the ends of the revolution, they will stand aside from revolutionary action. They will refuse to become revolutionaries out of individual self-interest, for it is not literally true that they have nothing to lose but their chains. They, as well as members of their families, could lose their jobs; they could be blacklisted; they could be ostracized; they could be beaten up and—when things get really tough—they could be tortured or even killed. To publicly join the working class in a revolutionary situation, one risks a lot and needs very good reasons indeed, even if a worker, for taking that risk.

Karl MARX (1818–1883) thought that to become revolutionaries, workers need a certain CHARACTER, a character that he believed was repeatedly exemplified by workers in their struggles and was reinforced by these struggles. The most dramatic exemplification of this sort of character was produced by the workers in the Paris Commune of 1871. The character that was needed, one that was admired and encouraged by Marx, was the character that united hatred of oppressors with concern for the oppressed; truculence, where their interests are basically opposed, with a positive desire to cooperate elsewhere; discipline with creativity and a tolerance for risks (Miller). Having such a cluster of character traits is especially valuable; when workers know their own class interests, such traits will motivate a

## revolution

commitment to a course of active support for a socialist revolution, even when the motivation is not a distinctively moral motivation. But such support does require an extensive subordination of (at least immediate) self-interest. Suppose a rational person asks himself: why should I so sacrifice my self-interest? Why should I take such a risky course? If there were some magical way of bringing about socialism without RISK I should indeed welcome it, but why should I risk my neck and my family's neck to achieve it, particularly when participating is a very risky business indeed?

Where the risks are considerable, the reliance on *purely moral motivations* is indeed unstable. For that reason Marxists have generally been reluctant to rely on them. However, given the situation above, what could revolutionaries do but *moralize* by telling workers it is their duty to fight for the revolution? But such an appeal is not only foreign to the Marxist tradition, it provides, psychologically speaking, a very weak and unstable motivation for revolutionary activity.

### A Marxian Motivation for Revolution

The underlying problem is how or whether we can make such risk-taking acceptable to workers. It has been argued that Marx sought a stable motivation for revolution that is rooted neither in personal self-interest nor a broadly based ALTRUISM, but rather in the kind of limited reciprocal altruism that accompanies class solidarity (Miller). The fight for socialism might not be motivated by justice—an equal concern for the interests of all—but by a desire to uphold working class interests as the interests of, if not all, then at least the vast majority of humankind. Such a motivation is also powerfully rooted in a hatred of oppressors and in a determination not to be degraded and abused or to allow others close to one to be abused or forced into an impoverished life.

*Revolutionary mechanisms.* What mechanisms are at work that produce class-conscious concerns strong enough to support a socialist revolution? The way in which productive forces develop as capitalism evolves makes labor increasingly cooperative and interdependent. Workers are no longer isolated. Differences in ethnic background, race, and social affinities slowly break down as workers with different backgrounds are thrown together. Moreover, in

modern industry, there are far fewer highly differentiated skills that set some workers apart from (and not infrequently against) other workers. As capitalism develops, according to some arguments, it becomes increasingly apparent to workers that they must sink or swim together. Industrial development creates new forms of interaction among workers that lead to broadened and more determined cooperation in resistance. In time, this cooperation could very well lead to a revolutionary combination.

Modern capitalism develops in such a way that there is an ever greater concentration of power—the ownership and control of the means of production—in fewer and fewer hands. Moreover, there is a growing trend toward an international corporate capitalism. As Marx argued in *Capital* (1867–95), the way the industrial revolution progresses both helps and compels the working class to cooperate. That notwithstanding, it is at least arguable that, in most major Western industrial societies, the capitalist classes are now in better control than they were in Marx's time. They now possess more highly efficient means of surveillance and are better coordinated. When the situation is seen in global terms, the struggle will be multifaceted and sometimes disguised, but it will also be both prolonged and bitter. Backed only by moral motivations, workers may be beset by cynicism and world weariness. But workers, especially in emerging countries, will have been palpably and unrelentingly harmed. This harm, when combined with some victories or partial victories in their struggles with the capitalist class, will strengthen their will to struggle. They will also come to see the capitalist class as their class enemies and resolve to resist and fight them. These attitudes must be strong if the workers are to win. In seeing the bourgeoisie as their enemies rather than as objects of equal concern and respect, the working class will be drawn together in a common struggle against what it perceives to be the foe (and indeed *is* the foe, if Marxist class analysis is accurate). It is easier to rally people to a common struggle against an enemy than to appeal to distinctively moral conceptions. Humanitarian motives will not carry the psychological punch that is necessary to make and sustain a revolution.

*Sources of revolutionary motivation.* If the foregoing argument is accurate, we do not (*pace* Allen Buchanan) need to show that individual rational self-interest is necessary to motivate workers for the risky business of fighting for socialism (Buchanan

1979). When people traditionally help one another, perhaps initially in ways that involve little or no self-sacrifice, they will typically come to care for each other. As the RECIPROCITY continues and becomes more deeply embedded and more extensive, the goals of community and fraternity will grow more important and the caring will deepen and extend. When that community and fraternity is attacked, it is plausible to expect that that caring will motivate more substantial sacrifices and that the effect will be cumulative.

Marx thought that a certain understanding of the world, a thorough class consciousness and its accompanying class solidarity, is essential for a firm revolutionary motivation. He believed that this class consciousness will be widespread among workers only under certain circumstances. To have the proper revolutionary motivation, people must have a well-developed hatred of OPPRESSION and an angry contempt for oppressors. They should still be, as most revolutionaries are, caring people who engage in reciprocity naturally and uncalculatingly. They should, of course, take note of what is going on. And they should not continue to cooperate no matter what others do. Their capacity for caring and reciprocity must be strong enough for them to be able to make sacrifices, even for those who are outside the circle of their personal acquaintances. But their caring must not obliterate their capacity to hate and to act resolutely against oppressors. Marx predicted that these are the people who have stable revolutionary motivations. Without such people, there will be no socialist revolution.

### Causes and Reasons: The Moral Basis for Revolutionary Activity

The account above has at least roughly specified the kinds of things that are stable *causes* of people's coming to have revolutionary motivations. To revolt, one need not act out of respect for the moral law, or respect for persons, or because one knows that certain moral principles are true. What *makes* people have concern for others and what, under certain circumstances, *makes* some people capable of sustained and dangerous revolutionary activity is much more mundane. To assess the moral relevance of this we need to distinguish between *causes* and *reasons* (Peters; Toulmin). It is important to make this distinction even if all reasons are also causes. (Another

way of putting it would be to refer to a distinction between *explanatory* reasons and *justificatory* reasons. See Baier and Bond.) It is one thing to say that a person keeps his PROMISES because he was taught to do so. It is another thing again to say that he keeps his promises because he believes in universalization and that a world in which no one kept promises would be a dreadful world indeed.

The previous sections show the conditions that would produce staunch socialist revolutionaries. But these conditions are *causes* only; what is needed to *justify* revolutionary motivation is to give *reasons* sufficient to justify such activity. We want to discover not only what *makes* people revolutionaries, but what would *justify* their actions. These reasons are also likely to be causes, even though the conceptual and moral distinction between causes and reasons remains. What reasons would be *justifying* reasons?

Assuming socialism rather than capitalism is justifiable, it does not follow that individual workers would be justified in putting themselves at considerable risk by struggling for socialism. *Three* questions arise: (1) what justifies the set of practices that constitute socialism; (2) what will justify the claim that an individual should fight for socialism; and (3) what *makes* individuals fight for socialism? Some skeptics think that there is insufficient motivation for revolutionary struggle. They believe that there *can* be justifying reasons for socialism, even though there are no reasons that will be decisively justifying reasons for individual workers to struggle for socialism.

It may be true that the struggle for socialism is supererogatory. If so, there can be no obligation to engage in revolutionary struggle. Revolutionary acts may well be supererogatory acts, but there can still be justificatory reasons for supererogatory acts. One is not obliged to do everything one has reason to do or is justified in doing (HART). Not everything we ought to do is something we have an obligation or duty to do. There are supererogatory acts we ought to do that we have no obligation or duty to do. Thus, it may be the case that a worker ought to struggle for a socialist revolution even though she has no duty or obligation to do so.

The question remains what *justificatory* reasons, as distinct from purely *explanatory* reasons, can be given for a worker to actively struggle for socialism. Miller has given us reasons for *predicting* that, as capitalism develops, more and more workers will

## revolution

struggle for socialism. But these reasons are *explanatory* reasons.

If the justificatory reasons are meant to show a worker, as a rational egoist, that he should struggle for socialism, then Allen Buchanan is right in that no such justification can be given (Buchanan 1982). Under these assumptions, to show a worker who is a rational egoist that he should struggle for socialism is like trying to show him that he should be moral. If a person does not care for others and has no commitment to FAIRNESS, then in some circumstances we cannot show him that acting as a person of principle must be the prudent thing to do (Nielsen 1989). We can hardly give the proletarian rational egoist, on grounds *he* would deem relevant, justifying reasons to engage in the struggle for socialism, for in many circumstances PRUDENCE would not dictate such a course of action. Moreover, if the individual's rationality is to maximize his expected utility, then rationality does not require him to join the struggle, either.

There is no trick at all, however, in showing someone why she should respond as a person of moral principle *if* she is resolved to be fair. Similarly if we (where that 'we' includes most workers) care about others, have a strong sense of solidarity and reciprocity, are courageous and resolute, and indeed value these things, then we can give justificatory reasons for individual workers to struggle for socialism when the workers see that socialism is desirable. In such circumstances, what explains revolutionary motivation can also be used in justifying it.

If we believe that caring, solidarity, honoring and engaging in reciprocity, COURAGE, and resoluteness are VIRTUES greatly to be prized, then, on some perfectly reasonable empirical assumptions, we can justify the socialist revolutionary activity of workers or indeed of anyone else. Workers who struggle for their own emancipation and the emancipation of others are justified in so acting.

*See also:* CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE; COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY; COOPERATION, CONFLICT, AND COORDINATION; DEMOCRACY; DETERRENCE, THREATS, AND RETALIATION; ECONOMIC SYSTEMS; FAIRNESS; GROUPS, MORAL STATUS OF; MARX; MARXISM; MORAL POINT OF VIEW; MOTIVES; OBEDIENCE TO LAW; OPPRESSION; PACIFISM; POLITICAL SYSTEMS; POWER; PRUDENCE; REASONS FOR ACTION; REVENGE; RISK; SUPEREROGATION; VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE; WORK.

## Bibliography

- Baier, Kurt. *The Moral Point of View*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958. See chapter 6.
- Bond, Edward J. *Reason and Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. See chapter 2.
- Buchanan, Allen E. *Marx and Justice*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982. Passages noted, see pp. 86–102.
- . “Revolutionary Motivation and Rationality.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9 (1979): 59–82.
- . “Marx, Morality, and History.” *Ethics* 98 (1987): 104–36.
- Cohen, Gerald A. *History, Labour, and Freedom*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Elster, Jon. *Making Sense of Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Important work in analytical Marxism, containing a discussion of revolutionary motivation. Passages noted, pp. 100–1.
- Hart, H. L. A. “Legal and Moral Obligation.” In *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, edited by A. I. Melden, 82–107. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958.
- Holmstrom, Nancy. “Rationality and Revolution.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 12 (1983): 305–26.
- Miller, Richard. *Analyzing Marx*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. Central discussion of revolutionary motivation; cuts against the stream. Passages noted, pp. 65–76.
- Nielsen, Kai. “On Justifying Violence.” *Inquiry* 25 (1982): 16–35.
- . *Why Be Moral?* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1989. Limits of justification, reasons, and causes.
- Peters, R. S. *The Concept of Motivation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958. Reasons, causes, and motivation.
- Shaw, William. “Marxism, Revolution, and Rationality.” In *After Marx*, edited by T. Ball and J. Farr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Taylor, Michael, ed. *Rationality and Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Classic articles on revolutionary motivation and rationality.
- Toulmin, Stephen. “Reasons and Causes.” In *Explanation in Behavioural Sciences*, edited by Borger and Cioffi, 1–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Kai E. Nielsen

## Ricoeur, Paul (1913– )

The work of Paul Ricoeur in ethical theory marks the passage of classical PHENOMENOLOGY in this area toward an account both more metaphysically and more institutionally oriented. *Philosophie de la*