



On the Ethics of Torture

Uwe Steinhoff

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A detailed, clear, and comprehensive overview of the current philosophical debate on torture.

The question of when, and under what circumstances, the practice of torture might be justified has received a great deal of attention in the last decade in both academia and in the popular media. Many of these discussions are, however, one-sided with other perspectives either ignored or quickly dismissed with minimal argument. In *On the Ethics of Torture*, Uwe Steinhoff provides a complete account of the philosophical debate surrounding this highly contentious subject. Steinhoff's position is that torture is sometimes, under certain narrowly circumscribed conditions, justified, basing his argument on the right to self-defense. His position differs from that of other authors who, using other philosophical justifications, would permit torture under a wider set of conditions. After having given the reader a thorough account of the main arguments for permitting torture under certain circumstances, Steinhoff explains and addresses the many objections that have been raised to employing torture under any circumstances. This is an indispensable work for anyone interested in one of the most controversial subjects of our times.

"...[a] provocative and pugnacious book ... this is bold and robust work, which should be engaged with by anyone with a serious interest in these issues ... [Steinhoff] has thrown down a gauntlet to which absolutist critics of torture must respond." — *Criminal Law and Philosophy*

"...an important book ... This is not the first book to make a right-based defense of torture, but it makes the case powerfully and rebuts in detail the major anti-torture authors." — *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

"Replete with well-crafted thought experiments designed to make his points, and taking his opponents' arguments seriously in addressing their objections to his view, Steinhoff's *On the Ethics of Torture* is a study in how applied ethics should be done ... Highly recommended." — *CHOICE*

"*On the Ethics of Torture* is superb. It is by far the best treatment of the topic." — Allen Buchanan, author of *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination: Moral Foundations for International Law*

"This is a controversial work and while I don't agree with its main positive conclusion, there is no denying that Steinhoff demolishes many of the influential arguments of those who believe that torture can never be justified. For this reason alone, the book warrants attention." — Seumas Miller, author of *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Ethics and Liberal Democracy*

"*On the Ethics of Torture* is the single best discussion of the moral status of torture. It is outstanding. Steinhoff's book is powerfully argued, organized, concise, and highly readable. This is essential reading for anyone who wishes to think seriously about the topic." — Stephen Kershnar, author of *For Torture: A Rights-Based Defense*

Uwe Steinhoff is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Hong Kong and Senior Research Associate in the University of Oxford Programme on the Changing Character of War. He is the author of several books, including *On the Ethics of War and Terrorism*.

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