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Serial Killer Bundy's Execution Stirs Death Penalty Controversy

What does Ernest van den Haag mean by a "net gain in justice" to be found in the executions of 23 of the 350 Americans wrongfully sentenced to death from 1900 to 1985?

He must know that a system that mistakenly executes some of the innocent will also fail to punish some of the guilty (and not only those whose places are taken by the innocent). The blanket application of the death penalty does not ensure an increase in the number of criminals who will be caught and punished for capital crimes.

Van den Haag's "net gain in justice" really means nothing more than relief for his own frustration with the knowledge that, without the death penalty, heinous criminals will not be executed. The "very acceptable" execution of the innocent along with the guilty translates as "*any* eye for an eye, *any* tooth for a tooth" here. But what does satisfying Van den Haag's emotional needs have to do with justice?

I can almost hear recently executed serial killer Ted Bundy's own words, as if in approval: "It shouldn't be a problem. What's one less person on the face of the earth, anyway?" (Part I, Jan. 25).

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