Convergence Of Civil Law And Common Law In The Criminal Theory Realm

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I. Western Legal Tradition

The theory and practice of criminal law in common law and civil law jurisdictions have been traditionally viewed by scholars as distinctive and fairly diverse. Each belongs to a tradition that has been regarded as quite different from each other. However, in several areas, common law and civil law have been increasingly moving toward convergence. The purpose of this article is to show that the prevailing theories of offense in these two legal systems constitute an area of convergence between civil law and common law. Underlying this premise is the conception that, despite the view of the majority of authors, common law, especially as applied in the United States, and civil law should be considered as one legal tradition—the so-called

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1 See generally H. Patrick Glenn, Are Legal Traditions Incommensurable? 49 Am. J. Comp. L. 133 (2001) (examining the idea that distinct legal traditions can be compared using their diverse characteristics); John Henry Merryman, The Civil Law Tradition: An Introduction to the Legal Systems of Western Europe and Latin America (2d ed. 1985).


western legal tradition. The similarities between civil law and U.S. common law, compared to other legal traditions, outweigh their differences. Even in those areas where there are still striking differences, both systems are slowly moving toward convergence.

This article starts by examining the evolving convergence of civil law and common law. It briefly addresses the history of the theoretical and philosophical perspectives that contributed to evolution and change within these two systems. Then, the article analyzes general features of the central aspects of criminal law theory in the civil law (Goal-oriented theory) and common law jurisdictions. Finally, this article briefly focuses on the analysis of crimes against life, highlighting the common features of their treatment in civil law and common law criminal law theory. This work intends to pave the way for future research on other areas where civil law and common law also present a certain high degree of uniformity.

II. Convergence

Comparative law has long been concerned with the convergence phenomenon among legal traditions. Convergence constitutes the evolution of legal institutions within different legal systems where the institution of one system resembles the other; and, the legal norms, principles, and scholarly comments of both are used in equal measure, "even regarded as authoritative as each other." Unlike harmonization, which implies "a [deliberate] and negotiated process" aimed at producing a legislative or other conventional act, convergence constitutes a natural

6 See GORDLEY, supra note 3, at 1.
9 Peter de Cruz, A MODERN APPROACH TO COMPARATIVE LAW 34 (1993).
(unconscious) "common development" of legal institutions "through mutual interest." Natural convergence is the result of a "tendency [in similar nations] . . . to have similar problems and to arrive at similar legal ways of perceiving and dealing with them." Convergence is not an isolated instance, but rather the natural route that civil law and common law have been taking.

Convergence between areas of common law and civil law is not new. It traces its roots to the Enlightenment and has been a slow and gradual process. In England, the innovative thinking in the Inns of Court in the period between 1490 A.D. and 1540 A.D. planted the first seeds of the process of integration between common law and civil law. Inspired by Roman law concepts, Lord Mansfield, Blackstone, and other comparative scholars produced seminal works that also prompted the gradual development of convergence. As emphasized by Glenn, "[b]y the nineteenth century English thought had developed a large measure of compatibility with that of the continent," which was later reinforced with the advent of the European integration.

In the United States, this process has been more remarkable and radical. Glenn suggests that "US law represents a deliberate rejection

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15 Schadbach, supra note 13, at 342.
16 GLENN, supra note 14, at 226.
18 Raj Bhala writes:

An interesting dimension of the convergence between common and civil law systems is the apparently increasingly common practice of American appellate courts to publish slip opinions with a warning that the opinions are not to be cited. This behavior, viewed systemically, might represent a retreat
of common law principle, with preference being given to more affirmative ideas clearly derived from civil law." While this affirmation may seem rather extreme, the United States was undoubtedly greatly influenced by civil law sources in the nineteenth century, especially by German scholars, whose influence molded the shape of U.S. common law. As Glenn notes, "[t]his was evident in substantive law, [especially] in the reception of the ideas of rights," virtually unknown at the time in the United Kingdom, but even more evident in terms of structures and sources of law. Civil law has also influenced legislation in the United States. Apart from the obvious adoption of codes, courts often interpret legislation by resorting to civilian methodologies under a civil law philosophy.

At the same time, common law ideas, styles, and conceptions have greatly influenced civil law. As Tetley notes, "[c]ivil law jurisdictions often have a statute law that is heavily influenced by the common law." Entire legal areas, such as the regulation of securities, commercial papers, and even constitutional law, have been extrapolated from the United States to several civil law countries around the world. Additionally, a mosaic of common law institutions- such as from stare decisis, and perhaps even a movement toward continental-style adjudication.


GLENN, supra note 14, at 230.

More recent German scholars, such as Kessler and Prausnitz, played an important role in the development of U.S. contract law. Siegelman v. Cunard White Star, Ltd., F.2d 189, 204-05 (2d Cir. 1955).

GLENN, supra note 14, at 230.


See, eg., On Securities and Stock Exchanges, No. 1512-XII (March 12, 1992) (Belr.).

See, e.g., On Financial Papers, Res. 701 (November 13, 1991) (Kaz.).

probation as an alternative to punishment for criminal conduct,\textsuperscript{28} cram down procedures for the approval of bankruptcy plans,\textsuperscript{29} class actions for collective litigation,\textsuperscript{30} and transfer pricing for the taxation of related companies\textsuperscript{31} have been introduced in civil law countries directly from the United States. Furthermore, the United States also greatly influenced the structure and organization of the legal profession; and, more and more countries now have a bar that looks like the U.S. model. This is especially notable among lawyers practicing international business law in Western Europe and major Latin American countries.\textsuperscript{32}

Aside from the criminal law theory of offense analyzed below, common law and civil law have been moving toward convergence in several other areas, particularly in the commercial and contractual realms.\textsuperscript{33} For example, contract law in both civil law and common law shares a common history\textsuperscript{34}; and, some aspects of contract formation are remarkably similar in both jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, contract law in Anglo-


\textsuperscript{30} See Ada Pellegrini Grinover, Da "class action for damages" à ação de classe brasileira: os requisitos de admissibilidade, REVISTA IBEROAMERICANA DE DERECHO PROCESAL, Año I, N° 2, 126 (2002).

\textsuperscript{31} See JUAN MARTIN JOVANOVICH, CUSTOMS VALUATION AND TRANSFER PRICING: IS IT POSSIBLE TO HARMONIZE CUSTOMS AND TAX RULES? 1 (2002); VICTOR UCKMAR, IMPUESTOS SOBRE EL COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL 1 (2003).


\textsuperscript{33} See Kalvis Torgans & Amy Bushaw, Some Comparative Aspects of Contract Law in Civil and Common Law Systems, 12 INT'L LEGAL PERSP. 37, 47, 72 (2002).

\textsuperscript{34} GORDLEY, supra note 3 at 1.

American states traces its origins to primitive Roman law concepts. The forefathers of contract law—Comyn, Chitty, Story, among others—"systematize[d]" the doctrine of contracts in common law, based on the works of French scholars such as Jean Domat and Robert Pothier, who directly influenced the French Civil Code of 1804. These also influenced other natural law jurists, such as Hugo Grotius and Pufendorf, who in turn had been influenced by the Spanish school of natural law, also known as the late scholastics. As Gordley clearly delineated, common law lawyers illustrated these civil law doctrines with English cases which the courts certainly did not have in mind when

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37 1 Samuel Comyn, A Treatise of the Law Relative to Contracts and Agreements Not Under Seal: with Cases and Decisions Thereon in the Action of Assumpsit (Riley 1809).


41 See Gordley, supra note 3, at 4. Natural law influence can be seen, inter alia, in the idea of consent and agreement embedded in the notion of contracts.


44 Hugo Grotius, De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri Tres (Francis W. Kelsey trans., 1925).


46 Gordley, supra note 3, at 4.

47 The "gist of the action" of debt, that is, the defendant owes the plaintiff and wrongfully withholds it, which derives entirely from German Law, constitutes a clear example of this borrowing. See J. Ames, The History of Assumpsit, 2 Harv. L. Rev. 1, 16 (1888). Much of the debate around cause and consideration originated in the fact that Blackstone, and several 19th century
they decided those cases.\textsuperscript{48} In turn, all civil law theory has its origin in Roman law, as codified in the \textit{Corpus Juris Civilis} of Justinian, and as subsequently developed in Continental Europe and around the world.\textsuperscript{49}

The formation of contracts in civil law jurisdictions is based on an agreement by the parties\textsuperscript{50} which must extend to all essential terms of the contract: consent of the parties; their capacity to contract; the existence of a certain object forming the matter of the contract; and, a lawful cause. However, in some civil law states, such as Argentina\textsuperscript{51} or Louisiana,\textsuperscript{52} the civil code expressly states that consent must be given in the form of offers or proposals from one party to the other, which must be accepted by the other; and, it regulates the offer and acceptance in a way that resembles U.S. common law contract theory.\textsuperscript{53} For example, in Argentina the rules dealing with the offer prescribe that offers may be

\textsuperscript{48} See GORDLEY, supra note 3, at 5.
\textsuperscript{49} However, unlike common law, civil law developed from the most modern Roman law solutions. See ALTERINI, supra note 36, at 15.
\textsuperscript{51} See CÓD. CIV. art. 1144 (Arg.).
\textsuperscript{52} See LA. CIV. CODE ANN. art. 1927 (West 1987) ("A contract is formed by the consent of the parties established through offer and acceptance").
\textsuperscript{53} See RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF CONTRACTS §§ 50-70 (1981). Since a contract is formed when the offer is accepted, common law developed a series of important rules dealing with when, how, and by whom an offer may be accepted. These rules indicate that an acceptance is effective for bilateral contracts when the acceptance is sent in accordance with the forms prescribed by the offeror. \textit{Id.} § 50. This shows that "the offeror is the master of his offer," that is, the offeror may prescribe the method by which the offer may be accepted. \textit{Id.} § 30 cmt. a. If not sent by an authorized medium, acceptance is effective when it is actually received by the offeror. \textit{Id.} § 50. If the offeror does not prescribe a form for the acceptance, the acceptance may be given in any reasonable method. \textit{Id.} § 65. For unilateral contracts, acceptance is effective when the offeree has begun to perform. \textit{Id.} § 54.
revoked as long as they have not been accepted, except when the offeror has waived his right to revoke them, or, he has obliged himself to maintain them for a certain period of time. Also, for the acceptance of the offer, like in the United States, Argentine law follows the "mailbox rule," whereby the contract is formed once the offeree sends acceptance of the offer.

Another example of convergence takes place in the space field. Space launch agreements share a very high degree of uniformity in their main elements, structure, and organization in both common law and civil law jurisdictions. The structure, as well as the wording, of these contracts follows the organization, structure, and language of the contracts generally used in common law practice. In launch services contracts in civil law and common law states, the most important clauses

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54 See Cód. Civ. art. 1150 (Arg.).
55 Id.
57 However, unlike U.S. law, the offeree may revoke his acceptance before it is received by the offeror even if the acceptance has already been dispatched. In U.S. contract law, if the acceptance is sent before the revocation of the acceptance, the contract is formed and the revocation of the acceptance has no legal effect. Id.
58 The requirements for contract formation in civil law are greater in quantity and more complex than in common law, such as the object requirements. However, some of these requirements—or at least similar ones based on the same underlying policy—are also present in common law, albeit in a different aspect of and with a different role in contract law, with slightly similar consequences, such as the civil law lesion exception and the common law unconscionability defense. See ARTHUR TAYLOR VON MEHREN, THE CIVIL LAW SYSTEM: CASES AND MATERIALS FOR THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LAW 529 (1957). The lesion defence may be invoked when a party, exploiting the need or inexperience of the other, obtains disproportionately advantageous terms. See, e.g., CÓDIGO CIVIL DE CHILE [Cód. Civ.] art. 1888 (Chile).
60 See VALERIE KAYSER, LAUNCHING SPACE OBJECTS: ISSUES OF LIABILITY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS 244 (2001).
are the ones embodying the risk management system. This includes "a complex system of reciprocal waivers of liability, indemnification granted by the states, commitments to obtain insurance, limitations of liability, sole contractual remedies in the event of default, exclusion of liability clauses, [and, the inclusion of the best efforts principle, or] obligations de moyens, . . . among other [contractual clauses]."\textsuperscript{62} The risk management systems included in these contracts derive from remarkably similar prescriptions in the law of these states,\textsuperscript{63} with the consequent result that risk management clauses in most of these agreements throughout the civil law and common law realms are virtual carbon copies.\textsuperscript{64}

Additionally, the doctrinal analyses on these agreements are also analogous in the civil law and common law worlds.\textsuperscript{65} Civil law authors freely base their analysis and doctrinal comments on U.S. and other common law works\textsuperscript{66} and U.S. authors rely heavily on civil law


\textsuperscript{64} Hermida, \textit{supra} note 62, at 9.

\textsuperscript{65} JULIAN HERMIDA, \textit{COMMERCIAL SPACE LAW: INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND CONTRACTUAL ASPECTS} 129 (1997).

\textsuperscript{66} See, e.g., LEOPOLD PEYREFITTE, \textit{DROIT DE L'ESPACE} 102 (1993) (examining launch service contracts); KAYSER, \textit{supra} note 60, at 150; Anibal H. Mutti, \textit{Contrato de transporte especial}, 6 \textit{REVISTA DEL INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE
treatises, especially since judicial decisions in the United States are marginal due to the existence of legislatively mandated contractual waivers of liability, which bar the possibility of making claims to the contract counterpart, as well as its contractors and subcontractors and the special characteristics of the space industry.

Another illustration of this phenomenon lies in the nature of the obligations of the space launch carrier. In the United States, the nature of the services rendered by the carrier are given by the best efforts principle, whereby the launch services provider limits its obligations to make its best efforts instead of warranting the actual placing of the satellite in orbit. In other words, by means of the best efforts principle, the parties refrain from promising the accomplishment of their respective obligations, committing themselves only to making their best efforts to achieve success. This coincides with the obligations de moyen nature, which these agreements have in French law, where the object of the

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DERECHO AERONÁUTICO Y ESPACIAL 73 (1986); MIREILLE COUSTON, DROIT SPATIAL ÉCONOMIQUE 241 (1994)(examining launch service contracts).


68 49 U.S.C § 70112.


71 See KAYSER, supra note 60, at 150.

72 HERMIDA, supra note 65, at 17.


74 HERMIDA, supra note 65, at 17. This principle is associated with both a reduction and a waiver of liability and is one of the techniques used for the contractual allocation of risks among the participants in a commercial space transaction.

75 Under French law, Arianespace launch services agreements have been categorized within the scope of article 1779 of the French Civil Code, which governs industry and services leases, thus stressing the obligations de moyen as one of its central features. In French law, the obligations de moyen entail a duty
contract is not the carriage of the payload from one site to a certain orbit but, rather, the efforts to place it in orbit.76

This process toward convergence does not mean that civil law and common law are one and the same.77 On the contrary, as will be analyzed below, there are still important differences virtually in every area of these two systems. However, these differences mainly deal with a different order of priority in sources, i.e., civil law gives predominance "to doctrine (including the codifiers’ reports) over jurisprudence, while the opposite is true in the common law."78 The style of judicial decisions is also different, e.g., "civil law judgments [use] a more formalistic [discourse] than common law [decisions]."79 The style followed by scholarly authors also differs in both systems.80 According to Tetley, the
to do one's best as opposed to the obligations de resultat, which require a duty to achieve a particular outcome. CIVIL CODE [C. CIV.] art. 1779 (Fr.). It read as follows: "there are three principal species of hiring of labour and industry: (1) the hiring of workmen who engage themselves in the service of any one; (2) that of carriers, as well by land as by water, who are charged with the conveyance of person, or commodities; (3) that of persons who undertake work by estimate or by contract."

76 For this reason, French authors, as well as some Argentine commentators, postulate that the nature of the agreement does not fall within the traditional category of transportation agreements in the strict sense. See Mutti, supra note 66, at 73.
77 Merryman, supra note 11, at 357, 359. For Merryman, there is a process of convergence and divergence taking place at the same time. Merryman sees the root of divergence in the redistribution of local power and major separatist movements in the Western world.
78 Tetley, supra note 24, at 701. Tetley explains "this difference in priority through the role of the legislator in both traditions. French civil law adopts Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers, whereby the function of the legislator is to legislate, and the function of the courts is to apply the law. Common law, on the other hand, finds in judge-made precedent the core of its law," id.
79 Id. at 702. "Civil law decisions are indeed shorter than common law decisions, and are separated into two parts—the motifs (reasons) and the dispositif (order). This is because civil law judges are especially trained in special schools created for the purpose, while common law judges are appointed from amongst practising lawyers, without special training," id.
80 See Gwenaëlle Postic, Comparaison of the sources of Law in the French Civil law system and in the Australian Common law system 19, Actualite Juridique
common law author "focuses on fact patterns . . . [and] analyzes cases presenting similar but not identical facts, extracting from the specific rules, and then, through deduction, determines the often very narrow scope of each rule, and sometimes proposes new rules to cover facts that have not yet presented themselves."\textsuperscript{81} Tetley states that the civil law author "focuses rather on legal principles . . . [and] traces their history, identifies their function, determines their domain of application, and explains their effects in terms of rights and obligations . . . [to deduce] general and exceptional effects."\textsuperscript{82} The differences also encompass diverse interpretation methods.\textsuperscript{83} As Tetley points out, "[i]n civil law jurisdictions, the first step in interpreting an ambiguous law . . . is to discover the intention of the legislator by examining the legislation as a whole,\textsuperscript{84} including the [preparatory works], as well as the provisions more immediately surrounding the obscure text."\textsuperscript{85} Tetley notes that "[i]n common law jurisdictions . . . statutes are to be objectively constructed according to certain rules\textsuperscript{86} standing by themselves" against a case law background.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{81} Tetley, supra note 24, at 701
\textsuperscript{82} Id. at 702.
\textsuperscript{84} See Shael Herman, The Fate and Future of Codification in America, 40 AM. J. LEGAL HIST. 407, 413 (1996).
\textsuperscript{85} Tetley, supra note 24, at 704.
\textsuperscript{86} KONRAD ZWEIGERT & HEIN KOTZ, AN INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE LAW 265-68 (3d rev. ed. 1998).
\textsuperscript{87} Tetley, supra note 24, at 704. However, when analyzed in light of the other traditions, such as Talmudic, Islamic, Hindu or Asian, it is easy to observe that the similarities between civil law and common law outweigh their differences. For example, Talmudic and Islamic traditions are rooted in the word of God as revealed in sacred books. See GLENN, supra note 14, at 87. Hindu law is wrapped in Hindu philosophy and theology. GLENN, supra note 14, at 160. The differences between common law and civil law are, as seen above, mainly in style, terminology, interpretation, conception and emphasis on certain elements over others rather than on their structure or fundamental philosophical conceptions. The comparisons between civil law and common law, on the one hand, and the rest of the legal traditions, on the other, exceed the scope of this article. Reference to some of these differences have been included here only as
Both civil law and modern U.S. common law share similar fundamental social objectives, which include the protection and encouragement of individual and personal rights, and are both enrolled in a liberal philosophy and conception of the world. Thus, each of their doctrinal structures is based on similar legal concepts. They both divide private law into large legal fields, such as property, tort, and contracts, among others, and analyze these fields in a similar way. Their organization of the law, and its larger concepts, are also alike even if particular rules are not.

III. Criminal Law in Civil Law Jurisdictions

Unlike common law, where, despite some substantive differences in various jurisdictions, there is a somewhat uniform understanding of offenses, in civil law jurisdictions, there are two competing schools that dispute the monopoly on the interpretation of criminal offenses: the Causalist school and the Goal-oriented school. The Causalist school, which traces its origins to the works of Franz von Liszt, Gustav Radbruch and Ernst Beling, is centered on the disvalue of the caused result. The causal explanation of crime departs from an ideal or idealized concept of conduct. It conceives the action as a

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91 In a very loose sense, their debates resemble those of common law’s retributivism vs. utilitarianism, but the main difference is that both Causalist and Goal-oriented schools focus primarily on the theory of offense rather on the theory of punishment. In the modern civil law world, the debate has a clear victor in both academic and judicial circles: the Goal-oriented school. In common law, both retributivists and utilitarians deeply influence different aspects of criminal law.
voluntary physical movement that causes a result that is captured by the definitional terms and it relegates the analysis of its goal to the analysis of blameworthiness, i.e., both dolus (will) and culpa (negligence) are treated as part of the reproach. It has been widely criticized because it ignores and negates the constitutive function of the will as a factor for directing the action, and because it understands the act as a mere causal process triggered by any voluntary act. It fails to recognize that every act is a work where human will directs its external causal happening.

The Goal-oriented, also known as the Final Conduct, school departs from Hans Welzel’s work. It is premised on a different conception of conduct, which is considered a goal-oriented and voluntary act. Its analysis is intrinsically intertwined with both its external manifestation and the actor’s goals. While the emphasis of the Causalist school is on the disvalue of the result, the Goal-oriented school’s stress is on the disvalue of the action. For Welzel, “crime should be viewed teleologically, in other words, in terms of [its] purpose or [goal].” A crime is an action that falls within the definitional terms of the offense and is wrongful, unjustified, and blameworthy, and may be attributed to the actor for not having conformed to the norm.

In practice, an action analyzed in light of the Causalist and the Goal-oriented schools will have different consequences. The Causalist school, for example, understands attempted crimes as a mere causal process that does not produce a result. The Goal-oriented school analyzes it as an action that aims at a desired result where the will still plays a primordial role even if the intended result does not take place.

Both schools have in common the fact that they attempt to explain all crime phenomena in an abstract and comprehensive fashion. Civil law jurisprudence places a considerably higher importance on general theories and abstract principles than its common law

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94 See Id.
95 See du Plessis, supra note 92, at 309.
96 See ENRIQUE BACIGALUPO, DERECHO PENAL: PARTE GENERAL 80 (2d ed. 1999).
97 Du Plessis, supra note 92, at 310.
98 See WELZEL, supra note 93, at 97.
99 See id. at 52.
counterpart. This difference stems from the origins of both systems. Civil law has emerged as "reason's instrument," based on the Greek tradition of "rational enquiry," the Aristotelian concept of the "excluded middle," deductive thought, and "constructions [with a great] normative and explanatory force." It is, therefore, "highly systematized and structured and relies on declarations of broad, general principles, often ignoring the details." The theories of offense in civil law jurisdictions reflect the origin and methodology of civil law. Since the goal-oriented theory permits a better understanding of the offense, and has increasingly been adopted in the civil law world in Germany, Italy, Spain, Latin America, the analysis of the theory of offense in civil law is done through the lens of this theory.

Action

The Goal-oriented theory of offense departs from a real and teleological concept of act, which is conceived as a voluntary and end-oriented doing. It is centered on the notion that an action may only be understood as far as the agent's goal is perceived. Derived from Welzel's conception, the notion of act is the backbone of the theory of offense. It constitutes a reaction to the causal mode of understanding that prevailed in Continental criminal law at the beginning of the last century. It constitutes a premise upon which the whole theory of offense has been built. Hence, if there is no act, there may not be an offense. For Welzel, human action is the exercise of a goal-oriented activity, which is based on the fact that the human being may foresee,

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101 Glenn, supra note 14, at 132-135.
102 Tetley, supra note 24, at 683.
105 "Hans Welzel and his followers advanced an even more radical thesis: that objective harm to legally protected interests is only of marginal importance. It is rather the negative societal quality of the conduct itself, as colored by the wrongful state of mind, that makes conduct antisocial." Stanislaw Pomorski, On Multiculturalism, Concepts of Crime, and the "De Minimis" Defense, 1997 B.Y.U. L. REV. 51, 71-72.
within certain limits, the possible consequences of his conducts and
direct his activities towards a certain goal. Thanks to his causal
knowledge, he may orient the external causes in accordance with his
objectives and dominate these causes completely. Thus, a goal-oriented
activity is conceived as an activity consciously aimed at the fulfillment
of objectives according to a plan. As these objectives are based on the
capacity of the will to foresee – again, within certain limits- the
consequences of its intervention in the causal course and on its capacity
to direct and redirect this course, according to a plan; the nucleus of the
action is the will. It constitutes the factor that configures and directs the
causal course.

In civil law jurisdictions, for analytical purposes, the act is
divided into internal and external aspects. The internal aspect of the
act consists of the goal and the selection of the means to achieve the
goal. The external aspect of the act is the actual materialization or
exteriorization of the act. For example, in a murder, the defendant first
represents her goal, i.e., the death of a person, and the means to achieve
the death, including all concomitant results. This ontological
conception of the act derives from an Aristotelian view of conduct, for
whom, every activity has an end or goal. Criminal law in civil law
jurisdictions departs its analysis of the offense from this ontological
conception of action.

Therefore, absence of act- and thus the end of the need to
continue the inquiry about whether there is a crime or not- involves
those situations where there is no voluntary human act. These situations
include irresistible physical force, whether arising from a third person
or from a natural force, or from an involuntary state, which includes the
state of unconsciousness and the incapacity to direct one’s actions, such

106 See WELZEL, supra note 93, at 51.
107 See id.
108 See id.
109 See BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 245.
110 See E. R. ZAFFARONI, MANUAL DE DERECHO PENAL: PARTE GENERAL 339
(2003).
111 See id. at 339.
112 ARISTOTLE, THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS 153 (R.W. Browne trans., 1853)
(Book VI, Chapter II of The Nicomachean Ethics).
113 See, e.g., CODE PENAL [C. PÉN] art. 122-2 (Fr.).
as in the case of a neurological defect that impedes the control of one's movements.\(^{114}\)

In common law jurisdictions, the concept of action has been reduced to a mere movement generated by the will, which "minimizes the importance of the desires... of the actor."\(^{115}\) This notion reminisces many of the elements of the causal theory of acting which Welzel and his followers reacted against.\(^{116}\)

**Definitional terms of the offense**

The definitional terms are a legal and logically necessary device, of a predominantly descriptive nature, whose main function is to individualize the actions that are criminally relevant.\(^{117}\) The inquiry of the existence of a crime consists of analyzing whether a particular conduct falls into the criminal definition of the offense.

Contingent on the goal of the conduct, there are willful and negligent definitions. Depending on the way in which the prohibited conduct is individualized, there are active and omissive definitions. These categories can, of course, be combined.\(^{118}\) Basically, the active definitional terms contain the description of the prohibited act, such as the prohibition to kill another human being.\(^{119}\) Its omissive counterpart describes the due act, and thus all other acts are prohibited.\(^{120}\)

**Willful definitional terms**

The willful and active definitional terms have a dual objective and subjective nature, where the definitional terms individualize conducts according to the circumstances which are both in the external and internal, psyches, of the individual. While the willful definitional terms always imply a result– objective aspect of the definitional terms– it is characterized by the will of this result, i.e. the subjective willful aspect.\(^{121}\) Thus, for example, the definitional terms for simple homicide,

\(^{114}\) See, e.g., CÓDIGAL PENAL [CÓD. PEN.] art. 34 (Arg.).

\(^{115}\) FLETCHER, *supra* note 104, at 440.

\(^{116}\) See WELZEL, *supra* note 93, at 51.

\(^{117}\) See ZAFFARONI, *supra* note 110, at 355.

\(^{118}\) See BACIGALUPO, *supra* note 96, at 314.

\(^{119}\) See, e.g., KRIMINÁLKLUMS [KRIM.] § 116 (Lat.) (Latvian Criminal Code).

\(^{120}\) See, e.g., CÓDIGO PENAL [BOL. C.P.] art. 13 (Bol.); CÓD. PEN. art. 108 (Arg.).

\(^{121}\) See ZAFFARONI, *supra* note 110, at 355.
theft and sexual assault state that whoever causes the death of another human being,\(^\text{122}\) takes away another's property,\(^\text{123}\) or engages in sexual conduct without his or her partner’s consent,\(^\text{124}\) is, respectively, criminally liable.

The objective aspect of the willful definitional terms includes the result, the descriptive elements, the normative elements, the agents or actors—both active and passive—and a causal connection between the act and the result.\(^\text{125}\) The result of the act implies a physical mutation, or change in the outside world, as there is no act without a result. Similarly, as in common law, the result is the negation or endangering of a legally protected interest, such as life,\(^\text{126}\) national defense,\(^\text{127}\) or consented adult relations.\(^\text{128}\)

Descriptive normative elements in the definitional terms refer to other circumstances included in the definitional terms that resemble the common law concept of attendant circumstances. Examples of descriptive normative elements include age in statutory rape\(^\text{129}\) or the concept of eligible voter in electoral crimes.\(^\text{130}\) The causal connection between the act and the result implies an analysis that is similar to the "but for" test used in common law jurisdictions.\(^\text{131}\)

The subjective aspect comprises the *dolus* and other subjective elements.\(^\text{132}\) The *dolus* is the central element, and it connotes the will to realize the subjective definitional terms.\(^\text{133}\) It also necessarily

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\(^{122}\) C. Pén art. 221-1 (Fr.).

\(^{123}\) Krim. § 175 (Lat.).

\(^{124}\) Códigal Penal [C.P.] art. 181 (Spain).

\(^{125}\) See Bacigalupe, supra note 96, at 244.

\(^{126}\) Codice Penale [C.P.] art. 575 (Italy).


\(^{128}\) Cód. Pen. art. 116 (Arg.).

\(^{129}\) C.C.C art. 236 (P.R.C.).

\(^{130}\) § 107b Strafgesetzbuch [StGB] (F.R.G.) (Germany).


\(^{132}\) See Bacigalupe, supra note 96, at 314.

presupposes knowledge.\textsuperscript{134} Thus, its structure consists of two aspects: cognitive and volitional.\textsuperscript{135} The cognitive aspect requires the effective knowledge, and a somewhat present knowledge, of the objective elements of the definitional terms, i.e., the descriptive and normative elements, the result and causal connection.\textsuperscript{136} In turn, the volitional aspect includes the direct dolus, i.e., when the defendant directly wants the result, first degree, or when the result is the necessary consequence of the chosen means,\textsuperscript{137} second degree, such as when a defendant plants a bomb in an airplane to kill one passenger and ends up killing all passengers and crew,\textsuperscript{138} and the eventual dolus or dolus eventualis - when the defendant imagines the possibility of a concomitant result and includes it within the dolus of the chosen act.\textsuperscript{139}

The direct dolus of first degree equates to the intentional or purposeful mens rea of common law.\textsuperscript{140} Second degree direct dolus is equivalent to the mens rea of knowledge and the eventual dolus counterpart in common law is recklessness.\textsuperscript{141} So, despite a difference in terminology and some minor differences in the application and views, the general principles and conception of crimes requiring a willful state of mind are essentially the same in both common law and civil law jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{Absence of dolus}

In those cases where there is no dolus, there are no willful definitional terms; therefore, unless the crime is susceptible to being committed negligently, there is no need for further inquiry and thus no

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{135} See, e.g., 33 P.R. LAWS ANN. § 3062 (2001).
\textsuperscript{136} BACIGALUPO, \textit{supra} note 96, at 316.
\textsuperscript{137} ZAFFARONI, \textit{supra} note 110, at 415.
\textsuperscript{138} Id.
\textsuperscript{140} HENDLER, \textit{supra} note 7, at 142.
\textsuperscript{141} Cifredo Cancel, \textit{supra} note 134, at 69.
\textsuperscript{142} See HENDLER, \textit{supra} note 7, at 142.
\end{flushleft}
The goal-oriented theory of offense is also concerned with the case where behavior does not coincide with any or all of the elements of the willful definitional terms. A behavior is not considered to fall within the willful definitional terms if an objective or subjective aspect is missing. For example, there is absence of objective aspect of the definitional term if there is no wrongful result, such as in the case of contraband if a person does not actually exit the country or does not even go through customs with prohibited goods. In this case, there may be an attempted crime of contraband, but not contraband.

Another situation is when there is no causal link between the conduct and the result, i.e., when, using common law terms, the "but for" test is not satisfied. Other situations include the absence of attendant circumstances, when, for example, speeding does not occur in a public street but in a closed course in a private estate, or where the actor or the victim does not possess the requirements set forth in the definitional terms, such as in a case of bribery where the person who receives money is not a public officer or a person with special public service obligations.

The absence of subjective aspects gives rise to an error or mistake, namely, there is dissonance between the objective facts and the actor's subjective perception of the facts. The mistake may be over the descriptive elements of the definitional terms. In the crime of sexual assault, there is a mistake if the defendant thinks he is raping a

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144 BACICALUPO, supra note 96, at 325.

145 See, e.g., KRIM. § 190 (Lat.) (smuggling provision).

146 See, e.g., C.C.C § 153 (P.R.C.) (smuggling provision).


148 See, e.g., KRIM. § 260 (Lat.) (traffic safety provision).

149 § 332 StGB (F.R.G.).

150 See, e.g., C.P. arts.14.1, 14.2 (Spain).

151 FLETCHER, supra note 104, at 683.
doll when in fact he is having un-consensual sex with a woman.\textsuperscript{152} A mistake may also arise from the normative elements of the definitional terms. This would be the case, for example, when a person who believes he is a juror, but is not, discusses a criminal case he believes he is trying with another person, when in fact he has been called only as a witness and no such prohibition exists.\textsuperscript{153} The mistake may also be about the causal links. The common law doctrine of transferred intent\textsuperscript{154} has also been analyzed in civil law under the Latin name of aberratio ictus.\textsuperscript{155} The majority of authors that subscribe to the goal-oriented theory tend to dismiss this doctrine as irrelevant, and thus, the missed target will give rise to any inchoate crime and the unintended target may originate a negligent crime, if such a crime may be committed negligently.\textsuperscript{156}

**Negligent definitional terms**

The "negligent" definitional terms individualize the act because of the way the result is achieved. The conduct is not penalized on account of its targeted result but on account of the causal chain selected to achieve the proposed result.\textsuperscript{157} This way of achieving a result violates a general duty of care.\textsuperscript{158} However, the degree of care that is required for each crime varies significantly according to the circumstances.\textsuperscript{159} Thus, for example, the defendant’s targeted result may be a legitimate one, such as arriving early at work, but the conduct to achieve that result, speeding, may violate the required duty of care.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{152} See, e.g., CÓDIGO PENAL DE PUERTO RICO [P.R.] § 99 (P.R.) (rape provision).

\textsuperscript{153} See KRIM. § 295 (Lat.) (interference in a trial of a matter).

\textsuperscript{154} See 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law § 135 (1998).


\textsuperscript{156} See SANTIAGO MIR PUIG, DERECHO PENAL PARTE GENERAL 101 (6th ed. 2002).

\textsuperscript{157} BACIGALUPO, *supra* note 96, at 344.

\textsuperscript{158} ZAFFARONI, *supra* note 110, at 425.

\textsuperscript{159} *Id.*

\textsuperscript{160} See C.P. art.382 (Spain) (traffic provision).
Traditionally, some civil law jurisdictions had created a negligent offense, called *crimen culpae*,161 which was an omni-comprehensive crime that caught virtually all criminally negligent conduct, or directly admitted that any willful crime could be committed negligently.162 Now, the majority of criminal codes in civil law countries have resorted to the creation of some specific crimes which may only be committed negligently.163

There are both objective and subjective aspects of the negligent definitional terms. The objective aspect includes: the violation of the duty of care, the causal connection, the result, and the determinant relation between the violation of the duty of care and the result.164 The test used is, again, the “but for” test,165 where the result would not have occurred but for the violation of the duty of care.166 The subjective aspect includes the will to carry out the conduct in the selected manner and the foreseeability that the conduct will cause the result.167 This permits two degrees of knowledge: conscious negligent,168 where defendant foresaw the result and rejected that possibility, such as when defendant while driving a car at high speed considered that his speeding may cause the death of a pedestrian, but he trusted that he would be able to prevent the death by dodging the pedestrian or stopping the car169; and, unconscious negligent,170 where defendant could have foreseen the result but did not

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161 See STS, July 16, 2002 (R.J., No. 1330) (Spain).
162 CÓDIGO PENAL PARA EL DISTRITO FEDERAL [C.P.D.F.] art. 60 (Mex.) (Mexico) (repealed January 10, 1994).
164 ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 428.
165 1 WITKIN AND EPSTEIN, supra note 147, at § 35.
166 ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 426.
167 Id. at 428.
168 BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 344.
169 See Krim. § 260(2) (Lat.) (traffic provision).
170 BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 344.
Conscious negligence equates to a reckless state of mind whereas unconscious negligence compares to negligence in common law.  

**Absence of negligence**

As in the willful definitional terms, the goal-oriented theory also admits situations where there is absence of negligence. First and foremost, there is no negligence if there is no violation of a duty of care, such as in the case where an aircraft pilot abides by all air navigation rules and an accident still takes place. Like in the willful definitional terms, lack of causal connection entails absence of negligence. Take, for instance, an aircraft pilot who neglects to switch off the automatic pilot when required, and the aircraft crashes to the land. If the plane, in fact, crashes because of a bomb explosion in the cabin, there is no negligence on the part of the pilot. Absence of negligence also occurs if there is no wrongful result, such as when a car driver runs over a corpse believing that it was a human being. The same applies if there is no determinant relation between the violation of the duty of care and the result, such as if a negligent vessel captain runs over a swimmer who is suicidal. Here, even if the captain was negligent, there is no determinant relation, as the wrongful suicide would have taken place even if the captain had not been negligent.

Additionally, there is an absence of negligent definitional terms if there is no subjective aspect of negligence. This situation includes lack of will to carry out the conduct in the selected manner. This would be the case where an aircraft pilot lands her aircraft negligently due to deliberately wrongful instructions given by terrorists who usurped a

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172 Civil law jurisdictions do not differentiate among degrees of negligence, as some common law states do.
173 SANDOVAL, *supra* note 143.
175 See, e.g., CÓDIGO AERONÁUTICO [CÓD. AERO.] art. 218 (Arg.) (Argentina).
176 Cuban criminal law permits the conviction of the offender in the case of these so-called impossible crimes if the offender is considered to be dangerous. CÓDIGO PENAL [CUBA C.P.] art. 14, Ley No. 62 de 29-12-1987 (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Gaceta Oficial Especial No. 3 de 30-12-1987, pág. 51) (1987) (Cuba). This is a characteristic of Soviet law rather than civil law.
177 ZAFFARONI, *supra* note 110, at 431.
control tower, and the pilot believes she is making the right maneuvers to land. The other situation involves the unforeseeability of the possibility that the conduct will cause the result. This would take place, for example, if a person turned his car on and a bomb planted by another person exploded, killing the driver and the passengers.

Omissions

Civil law countries distinguish two types of omissions: proper and improper. The proper omission is characterized by the fact that any person can be held criminally liable for conduct that deviates from the one stated in the definitional terms. In this respect, action and omission are merely two different legislative techniques to prohibit conduct. While the active definitional terms single out the prohibited conduct, its omissive counterpart defines the due conduct, and thus all other acts remain forbidden. The Argentine Criminal Code, for example, holds criminally liable whoever fails to help a minor that is lost, or any individual that is injured or threatened by an imminent danger, when assistance can be safely rendered. Here, the due conduct is the obligation to help the lost minor or the injured individual respectively, and any other conduct, such as walking by or driving on, or even just watching the minor or injured person without doing anything, are forbidden behaviors.

The other type of omission is the improper omission. In this case, only those individuals who have special characteristics may be held criminally liable. The main requisite is that the defendant be in a

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178 See Legislacion Aeronautica y Espacial 23 (1989) (Section 78 of the Paraguayan Aeronautical Code).
181 Bol. C.P. art. 13 (Bol).
182 Zaffaroni, supra note 110, at 449.
183 Id.
184 Cód. Pen. art. 108 (Arg.).
185 See, e.g., § 13 Nr. 1 StGB (F.R.G.). The German Penal Code states that "whoever fails to prevent a harm which is part of the constitutive elements of a
guarantor position that obliges him to protect, or repair, the legal interest protected by the norm. Like in common law, this position emanates from the law: the obligation to feed one's children; a contract, such as the case of a nurse hired to take care of a patient; or, from a previous conduct, such as when someone urges another to swim across a river promising that he will follow her in a boat in case she needs help. In these cases, there are no express omissive definitional terms, but the court must read into the active definitional terms the due conduct. Thus, for example, if a patient dies because his nurse reads a book instead of watching and taking care of him, the nurse commits murder. The court is obliged to interpret that the due conduct in such a case is to take care of the patient, and any other act, such as reading a book, is considered prohibited.

Absence of omission

In the proper omission, there is absence of omission if the situation described in the definitional terms is not present, such as the absence of danger in the obligation to render assistance to people that are threatened of an imminent danger. There is also absence of omission if there is an impossibility to perform the due conduct. This is the case if the person in question may endanger her own life if she provides help.

crime may be punished under this Code only if he was under a legal duty to prevent the harm, and if his failure to act was equivalent to an affirmative act for purposes of establishing the statutorily defined constituent elements of the crime."

See Puig, supra note 156, at 181.


See C.P. art. 11(a) (Spain); § 13 StGB (F.R.G.); CODE PÉNAL [C. PÉN] art. 223-6 (Fr.); BOL. C.P. art. 178 (Bol.).

See C.P. art. 11(a) (Spain).

See id. art. 11(b).

ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 450.

See, e.g., BOL. C.P. art. 251 (Bol.).

Like its active counterpart, the omissive definitional terms may be either willful or negligent.

See López, supra note 180.

See C.P.D.F. art. 15(V) (Mex.).
or when there is no causal link, also referred to as avoidance link, i.e., when the wrongful result would have taken place even if the defendant had carried out the due conduct. For example, when a person fails to help a lost minor return to her parent’s custody, but it may be proved that the minor would not have accepted help in any case.\textsuperscript{196}

There is absence of omissive definitional terms in the proper omission type if the defendant is not the guarantor, i.e., it is not legally obliged to act.\textsuperscript{197} There may also be absence of omission due to the non-presence of any of the subjective elements of the omission, such as mistake over the person in the proper omission. An example of this is when a person ignores a child that needs feeding, which is her own child or, when there is a mistake on the causal link or the possibility of providing assistance.\textsuperscript{198} This would take place if a person is sinking in a pond, and a passerby who does not know how to swim does not think he will be able to provide assistance without himself sinking, but it turns out that the pond was shallow and the passerby never would have sunk.

\textbf{Wrongfulness}

The second analytical component of the criminal action is its wrongfulness.\textsuperscript{199} This implies a contradiction of the act with the entire juridical order. The action that falls within the definitional terms of the crime is considered to be anti-normative; but, it is not anti-juridical if it is based on a permissive precept, justification, which may emanate from any part of the juridical order.\textsuperscript{200} In other words, these conducts have some of the characteristics of the crime but their anti-juridical aspect is missing.\textsuperscript{201} Only when the action that falls within the definitional terms is not excused by any justification is it also considered anti-juridical.

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\textsuperscript{196} See CÓD. PEN. art. 108 (Arg.).
\textsuperscript{197} See C.P.D.F. art. 16 (Mex.).
\textsuperscript{198} See ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 455-57.
\textsuperscript{199} WELZEL, supra note 93, at 97.
\textsuperscript{200} ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 451.
\end{flushright}
In civil law, the causes of justifications do not derive only from criminal law, but they may emanate from any aspect of the whole juridical order. These causes of justification depend on each jurisdiction. In most civil law jurisdictions, generally, these include self-defense, which may be used for the defense of life, bodily integrity, and both personal and real property; necessity, and, legitimate exercise of a right.

In general, like in common law, self-defense always constitutes a justification. Certain requirements need to be met for there to be self-defense. Generally, these are: the existence of an illegitimate conduct, lack of provocation on the part of the defender, and the use of rational or proportional means to repel the conduct. Additionally, since the goal of this justification cause is the defense, it presupposes knowledge of the aggression. The illegitimate conduct implies a wrongful act on the part of the aggressor. In Spain, the Penal Code differentiates the types of goods that are being attacked to determine the illegitimacy of the attack. In the case of personal goods, an illegitimate attack is only a crime that endangers those goods or a crime that may imply the imminent loss of those goods. In the case of

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202 See, e.g., C. PÉN art. 122-4 (Fr.) (‘A person is not criminally liable who performs an act prescribed or authorized by legislative or regulatory provisions. A person is not criminally liable who performs an action commanded by a lawful authority, unless the action is manifestly unlawful’) (translated from original French).
203 See, e.g., § 32 StGB (F.R.G.); C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain); CÔD. PEN. art. 34 (Arg.); C. PÉN art. 122-5 (Fr.).
204 See, e.g., § 34 StGB (F.R.G.); BOL. C.P. art. 11(2) (Bol.); C. PÉN art. 122-7 (Fr.).
205 See, e.g., C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain); CÔD. PEN. art. 34 (Arg.); BOL. C.P. art. 11(3) (Bol.).
208 See, e.g., KRIM. § 29 (Lat.) (listing requirements for self-defense to apply, such as use of force proportionate to the force one is repelling).
209 See, e.g., C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain).
210 BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 359.
211 See, e.g., CODIGO PENAL COLOMBIANO [COD. PEN. COLOM.] art. 32(6) (Colom.).
one's own dwelling house, the mere illegitimate entrance constitutes an attack, which may be repelled.\textsuperscript{212} The lack of provocation implies that the defender must not have initiated the aggression. If he did, and defends his life by killing the aggressor, his action will not be justified, but may result in a diminution of his blameworthiness.\textsuperscript{213} The means by which to repel an illegitimate aggression are not generally defined in the codes but are subject to the courts’ interpretation. The codes generally limit themselves to enunciate general rules. For example, the French Penal Code determines that the relationship between the means used for the defense and the seriousness of the attack must be proportional.\textsuperscript{214}

The defense of third parties is also generally considered another justification. It has the same elements of the self-defense.\textsuperscript{215} However, if the defended has initiated the illegitimate attack, the third party may defend him, provided the third party has not participated in the attack, even if that third party is aware of the fact that he is defending someone that started an illegitimate act of aggression.\textsuperscript{216}

Another justification is necessity, where the law justifies a defendant who commits an act that falls within the definitional terms with the intent to avoid a greater evil. Unlike in common law,\textsuperscript{217} this

\begin{quote}
A person is not criminally liable if, confronted with an unjustified attack upon himself or upon another, he performs at that moment an action compelled by the necessity of self-defence or the defence of another person, except where the means of defence used are not proportionate to the seriousness of the offence. A person is not criminally liable if, to interrupt the commission of a felony or a misdemeanour against property, he performs an act of defence other than wilful murder, where the act is strictly necessary for the intended objective the means used are proportionate to the gravity of the offence
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{212} See, e.g., C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain).
\textsuperscript{213} See ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 477.
\textsuperscript{214} See C. PÈN art. 122-5 (Fr.), which states:

A person is not criminally liable if, confronted with an unjustified attack upon himself or upon another, he performs at that moment an action compelled by the necessity of self-defence or the defence of another person, except where the means of defence used are not proportionate to the seriousness of the offence. A person is not criminally liable if, to interrupt the commission of a felony or a misdemeanour against property, he performs an act of defence other than wilful murder, where the act is strictly necessary for the intended objective the means used are proportionate to the gravity of the offence

\textsuperscript{215} See, e.g., C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain).
\textsuperscript{216} See ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 479.
\textsuperscript{217} See generally 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law § 158 (2004) (listing cases in the United States addressing necessity as a defense).
justification is widely accepted in most civil law jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{218} The analysis of what constitutes a lesser or greater evil depends on the hierarchy of the goods involved, the degree of the harm, and the degree of the proximity of danger. However, in general, when human lives are in conflict, the necessity defense is not available, even if one life is sacrificed to save several others.\textsuperscript{219}

Finally, another general cause of justification is the legitimate exercise of a right, i.e., where a person exercises a legitimate action authorized by the legal order.\textsuperscript{220} In other words, absence such authorization, the exercise of that action would constitute a crime. For example, the Argentine Civil Code authorizes a creditor to exercise a right of retention to withhold a personal good of his debtor which has been given to the creditor under contract.\textsuperscript{221} In Dutch law, “under strict conditions a right of retention can be exercised also to withhold immovable property..., [such as when] a building contractor [that] remains unpaid... refuse[s] access to the building.”\textsuperscript{222} The exercise of the right of retention does not constitute a crime even when the retention falls within the definitional terms of a crime.

Blameworthiness

Blameworthiness, or culpability, is the criminal attribution of the wrongful act to the actor because he did not conform to the norm when, according to the specific circumstances of his action, he was required to do so.\textsuperscript{223} This notion of blameworthiness is based on normative grounds, which determine the reasons for holding people accountable for their deeds.\textsuperscript{224} There are two general requirements for the attribution of a wrongful act: first, the fact that the actor was required to comprehend the wrongfulness of his act; and second, that the circumstances of his act

\textsuperscript{218} See BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 132.
\textsuperscript{219} See ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 481.
\textsuperscript{220} See CÓD. CIV. art. 3245 (Arg.).
\textsuperscript{221} Id.
\textsuperscript{223} See WELZEL, supra note 93, at 149.
\textsuperscript{224} See FLETCHER, supra note 104, at 457.
have not reduced his self-determination capacity below a certain threshold.\textsuperscript{225}

There is no culpability where there is no possibility of understanding the wrongfulness of the act or when the threshold of self-determination is not met.\textsuperscript{226} The former takes place when the actor lacks mental capacity to comprehend the wrongfulness of his action, as well as when there is a prohibition mistake.\textsuperscript{227} This comprehension includes both the knowledge of wrongfulness and its internalization; comprehension entails appropriating the norms and making them part of one's own psychological apparatus.\textsuperscript{228} To a certain extent, whoever commits a serious crime has not internalized the norms. But criminal law does not demand an actual and effective comprehension of the wrongdoing but rather the possibility of understanding it.\textsuperscript{229} The degree of effort the actor used to internalize the legal values and conform to them is inversely proportional to the degree of culpability.\textsuperscript{230} The threshold of self-determination is not met when the actor cannot orient his actions according to his understanding of the wrongdoing or when a conduct other than the one contemplated in the norm is not required.\textsuperscript{231}

\section*{IV. Criminal Law In Common Law Jurisdiction}

Unlike civil law,\textsuperscript{232} in common law there is no general theory of the offense.\textsuperscript{233} In common law jurisdictions, courts and scholars are not concerned with the elaboration of a theory that is capable of explaining the existence, or nonexistence, of crimes and their components in a general and comprehensive way.\textsuperscript{234} Nonetheless, all crimes have some

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{225} \textit{Bacigalupo}, supra note 96, at 423.
\item \textsuperscript{226} \textit{Welzel}, supra note 93, at 150.
\item \textsuperscript{227} \textit{Zaffaroni}, supra note 110, at 509.
\item \textsuperscript{228} \textit{Bacigalupo}, supra note 96, at 232.
\item \textsuperscript{229} \textit{Zaffaroni}, supra note 110, at 512.
\item \textsuperscript{230} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{231} \textit{Welzel}, supra note 93, at 151.
\item \textsuperscript{232} \textit{See Tetley}, supra note 24, at 702.
\item \textsuperscript{233} \textit{See Arthur Taylor von Mehren, Law in the United States: A General and Comparative View 3} (1988).
\item \textsuperscript{234} L. A. Zeibert asserts:
\end{itemize}
basic common elements and common doctrinal structures, which permit their description and analysis from a general perspective. The basic common elements of a crime in common law jurisdictions are *actus reus* and *mens rea*, together with the absence of justifications and defenses.

However, two opposing schools of thought dominate criminal law policy in common law countries: utilitarianism and retributivism. While these schools are primarily concerned with theories of punishment, their main ideas affect most areas of criminal law and criminal justice policy and have shaped many substantive aspects of the theory of offense. Utilitarianism in criminal law emerges from the

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[T]he neglect of philosophical analysis in the Anglo-American criminal legal tradition is apparent at two different levels. The first is at the general level and regards the very definition of crime. Within the Anglo-American legal tradition, systematic attempts to present the set of necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be a crime are rare.
works of Italian civil law scholar Cesare Beccaria, whose ideas changed the existing criminal justice landscape throughout an Enlightened Europe. On the British Isles, Jeremy Bentham enthusiastically embraced his ideas. The main tenets of utilitarianism are that criminal and deviant behavior occurs when an offender decides to risk violating the law after balancing the potential value of the criminal enterprise against the potentiality of being apprehended, as well as the severity of the punishment. For utilitarians, criminals have control over their behavior, they choose to commit crimes and they can be deterred by the threat of punishment. Thus, deterrence becomes the central purpose for punishment, which is conceived as a tool and not an end in itself. To help prevent crime, punishment, and adjudication, should be swift, severe and certain. A severe punishment, however, is only that which is severe enough, but not more so, to outweigh the personal benefits derived from crime commission. Although widely received in modern common law legislation, utilitarian ideas have been criticized—especially in the academe— for their potential consequences when taken to the extreme. Pure utilitarianism can be used "to justify

246 Id. at 250.
punishment of the innocent in [those rare instances] where, on balance, greater general deterrence or other social good can be achieved.”

The retributive criminal justice school puts forward the idea “that punishment is justified when it is deserved.” They believe that “[r]etribution is essentially the infliction of harm on offenders on the basis that they deserve it as a result of their crimes.” For Kant, who together with Hegel pioneered retributive thinking in the criminal justice sphere, civil society has a moral duty to restore the balance of justice when it is affected by a crime. The only way to restore justice is by punishing the criminal by giving him what he deserves. When analyzing the extreme case of this postulate, Kant himself made it very clear that:

even if a Civil Society resolved to dissolve itself with the consent of all its members... [.] the last Murderer lying in the prison ought to be executed before the resolution was carried out. This ought to be done in order that everyone may realize the desert of his deeds, and that blood-guiltiness may not remain upon the people; for otherwise they might all be regarded as participators in the murder as a public violation of Justice.

Unlike utilitarianism, “retributivism looks backward and justifies punishment only on the voluntary commission of a crime.” The primordial criticism of retributivism is that it promotes an eye for an eye

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251 JOSHUA DRESSLER, UNDERSTANDING CRIMINAL LAW 16 (3d ed. 2001).
255 DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 16.
philosophy and that it advocates punishment even in those situations where there is no social benefit. 256

Both schools of thought have greatly influenced criminal jurisprudence in the common law world, particularly in North America, 257 and consequently, criminal law does not adhere uniformly to one of these theories, 258 but rather "some of [its rules] are [fundamentally] retributive in nature, 259 whereas others are utilitarian." 260 Thus, for example, "it is [common] to find partially utilitarian justifications" emphasizing the deterrent value of legal sanctions, which are retributive "in their justification of the content" of the prohibition. 261 This is so because both theories have been "dominant... at [different] times [without winning] the ultimate debate... [and] both... have attracted [the attention of the criminal] lawmakers [and society]." 262

**Actus reus**

The substantive theory of *actus reus* 263 emerged along similar lines in both civil law and common law. In both systems, it originated in the evidentiary requirement of the presence of *corpus delicti* for the criminal conviction. 264 When this procedural rule turned substantive, the

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256 Hart advanced the idea that a theory of punishment must incorporate both utilitarian and retributivist principles since pure utilitarian or retributive notions alone are not satisfactory enough to conform an adequate and pluralistic theory of punishment. Hart's ideas shaped contemporary criminal justice debate and greatly influenced modern criminal law in the common law world, particularly in North America. H.L.A. HART, PUNISHMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY 234-235 (1968).

257 See Bradley, *supra* note 239, at 113-14.

258 See Cotton, *supra* note 241, at 1314-15. The Model Penal Code fundamentally relies upon a utilitarian understanding of the purposes for the criminal law, but it has not divested itself of retributive elements. *Id.* at 1319, 1324.


262 DRESSLER, *supra* note 251, at 22.

263 See People v Shaughnessy, 319 N.Y.S.2d 626, 628 (N.Y. Dist. Ct.1971) ("[T]he physical element requirement has been designated as the *Actus Reus*").

264 H. SILVING, CRIMINAL JUSTICE 293 (1971).
issue was expressed “in terms of... whether the concrete occurrence corresponded to an abstract crime description,” with common law and civil law taking separate doctrinal paths.\textsuperscript{265}

\textit{Actus reus} is defined as “the physical act specified in the crime.”\textsuperscript{266} The \textit{actus reus} is comprised of “a voluntary act... that causes... social harm”; causation is the nexus between the act and the social harm.\textsuperscript{267} The act constitutes the physical element of a criminal act.\textsuperscript{268} It must be voluntary, which excludes reflexes and convulsions, as well as acts performed during a state of unconsciousness.\textsuperscript{269} Typically, the \textit{actus reus} requirement is met when an agent acts voluntarily.\textsuperscript{270} Holmes states that “[t]he reason for requiring an act [as a precondition for the existence of an offense] is, that [it] implies a choice, and that it is [considered unfair] to make a [person] answerable for harm, unless he might have chosen otherwise.”\textsuperscript{271} Interestingly, the debate between retributive and utilitarian schools of punishment has not directly influenced the concept of act in the common law. Utilitarian and retributive arguments supporting the concept of voluntary act are nonetheless imaginable.\textsuperscript{272} Utilitarians would see little social benefit in punishing a person who does not carry out a voluntary act.\textsuperscript{273} This

\textsuperscript{265}\textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{267} \textit{Dressler, supra} note 251, at 81.
\textsuperscript{268} \textit{Shaughnessy}, 319 N.Y.S.2d. at 628.
\textsuperscript{269} \textit{See} State v. Mishne, 427 A.2d 450, 458 (Me. 1981) (“[T]o be voluntary an act must be the result of an exercise of a defendant’s conscious choice to perform them, and not the result of reflex, convulsion, or other act over which a person has no control”). However, a self-induced state of involuntariness will deprive the defendant of the “involuntary” defense, for he will be liable of placing himself knowingly put in a position where the act may result. \textit{See MODEL PENAL CODE [MPC] § 2.01 note 2 (1985).}
\textsuperscript{270} \textit{See} State v. Case, 672 A.2d 586, 589 (Me. 1996) (“a person commits a crime ‘only if he engages in voluntary conduct’”).
\textsuperscript{271} \textit{Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., The Common Law} 54 (Little Brown 1949) (1881).
argument is not based on an idea of intrinsic justice, but on the belief that punishing an involuntary offender would not effectively deter the offender or other members of society who many commit similar involuntary acts.274 Retributivism’s major tenet is that the offender deserves punishment when he “freely chooses to violate society’s rules.”275 An offender who does not act voluntarily— even if he produced social harm— does not deserve to be punished.276

“Social harm” has been “defined as the ‘negation, endangering, or destruction of [a socially valuable and legally protected interest, whether] individual, [societal] or state.”277 It may adopt the form of a wrongful result, wrongful conduct, or “attendant circumstances.”278 Social harm is expressed as a wrongful result when the offense is defined in terms of a prohibited result.279 For instance, murder is a result crime because the social harm is the death of another human being.280 Social harm takes the form of wrongful conduct when the offense is described in terms of injurious conduct, and no harmful result is required, such as the case of possession of illegal firearms.281 In this case, the social interest— to live peacefully without perils that may be triggered by the


274 DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 14-15.
275 Id. at 16. See also Golash & Lynch, supra note 252, at 710.
276 DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 16.
277 Id. at 110.
278 MPC § 1.13(9).
279 See Paul H. Robinson, Reforming the Federal Criminal Code: A Top Ten List, 1 BUFF. CRIM. L. R. 225, 235 (1997). Paul Robinson asserts: [T]he Model Penal Code drafters invented a useful system for the precise definition of offenses. [It] distinguishes between (i) conduct, (ii) attendant circumstances, and (iii) a result of conduct. These are the objective building blocks for offense definitions. Each offense definition typically has at least one conduct element, which satisfies the requirement of an act. Most offense definitions include one or more circumstance elements as well, defining the precise nature of the prohibition—for example, having intercourse with a person under 14 years old—or the precise nature of a prohibited result... Some of the potential benefits of the Model Penal Code’s insight on categories of objective elements is lost by its failure to define those categories.”
280 40 AM. JUR. 2D Homicide § 1 (1999).
281 Robinson, supra note 279, at 235.
use of firearms— is endangered by the possession of illegal firearms.\textsuperscript{282} The definition of an offense may include other elements defined as attendant circumstances. An example of attendant circumstances is common law burglary,\textsuperscript{283} which requires “the breaking and entering [in the dwelling house of another at] night.”\textsuperscript{284} In this case the dwelling house is the attendant circumstance, whose breaking and entering constitutes social harm.\textsuperscript{285}

The causal link requirement implies that for criminal liability to arise, the act must cause the social harm.\textsuperscript{286} An act can cause harm when the “but for” test is satisfied,\textsuperscript{287} or when the act is a substantial factor. The former takes place when a particular result would not have occurred but for the act.\textsuperscript{288} The substantial factor test is satisfied when there are “two [or more] causes, each alone sufficient to bring about the harmful result, operat[ing] together to cause it... [and the defendant’s] conduct is a substantial factor in bringing about the result.”\textsuperscript{289}

Additionally, the \textit{actus reus} requirement means that there is no criminal liability for an omission\textsuperscript{290} to act,\textsuperscript{291} save for the exceptional

\setlength\parindent{0em}282 See 20 TEX. JUR. Criminal Law § 1460 (discussing prosecution of unlawful firearm possession by a felon).
\setlength\parindent{0em}283 WAYNE R. LAFAVE, CRIMINAL LAW § 1.2(c) (4th ed. 2003).
\setlength\parindent{0em}284 See Tahir v Lehmann, 171 F. Supp. 589, 590 (N.D.Ohio 1958).
\setlength\parindent{0em}285 DRESSLER, \textit{supra} note 251, at 111.
\setlength\parindent{0em}286 “[T]he defendant’s act must be the legally responsible cause (“proximate cause”) of the injury, death, or other harm that constitutes the crime.” 1 \textsc{Witkin \\ & Epstein}, \textit{supra} note 147, at § 35.
\setlength\parindent{0em}287 California Jury Instructions: Criminal No. 3.40 (West 7th ed. 2003).
\setlength\parindent{0em}288 MPC §2.03.
\setlength\parindent{0em}289 Paul H. Robinson, Criminal Law 155 (1997). 1 WAYNE R. LAFAVE, \textsc{Substantive Criminal Law} § 6.4(b) (2d ed. 2003). As in tort law, “the [act] must also be the legal (proximate) cause of the... harm,” \textit{id.} at § 6.4(a) n.10. The criminal courts have borrowed the concept of “proximate cause” from tort law. To find proximate cause a court must find that a person of ordinary prudence could have reasonably foreseen that such a result, or some similarly injurious result, was probable under the facts as they existed, the doctrine of proximate cause was extrapolated to the criminal law context. Under the Model Penal Code, the defendant’s act will usually be the proximate cause of the harmful result if the result is “not too remote or accidental in its occurrence to have only a bearing on the actor’s liability or on the gravity of his offense.” MPC §2.03(2)(b).
\setlength\parindent{0em}290 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law § 32 (1998).
situations where "a 'legal duty' to act" exists. Similar to the civil law situations, there is a duty to act when there is a special relationship: the relationship between a parent and a child; a contract which creates a duty to act, such as when a patient hires a nurse for obtaining and rendering care; when the defendant himself caused the danger; or, when the defendant undertook to render assistance to the victim.

**Mens rea**

The *mens rea*, or guilty mind, implies that the actor's mental state coincides with the mental state required by the law for a particular

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291 See Nicholson v. State, 600 So. 2d 1101, 1104 (Fla. 1992) (mother held criminally liable for intentional deprivation of food to her child); People v. Stanciel, 606 N.E.2d 1201, 1211 (Ill. 1992) (mother held criminally liable for allowing her boyfriend to beat her daughter to death); People v. Gladden, 462 N.Y.S.2d 115, 116 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1983) (holding that state must show that mother intentionally failed to feed her child).


293 ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 449.


295 59 AM. JUR. 2D Parent & Child § 14 (2002); Muehe v. State, 646 N.E.2d 980, 983-84 (Ind. Ct. App. 1995) ("A parent's failure to take appropriate steps to protect his or her child from the abuse of the other parent is tantamount to neglect of the child").

296 Wittgenstein, and other authors, criticizes the amalgamation of the concept of voluntary act and intention. For Wittgenstein, "as the general doctrine of the voluntary act posit the existence of acts of willing, then it would be possible to have an act of will for another act of will, [which] is inconsistent," Zaibert, supra note 133, at 483. This inconsistency is solved if, as in civil law doctrine, the act is considered separately from the definitional terms or *actus reus*. In such case, the concept of act is only concerned with voluntariness or its absence. In other words, there is an action when it is the result of a voluntary movement, regardless of the mental state or intention of the agent who performs such voluntary action. See Id. at 489-92. In Hart's words, "[c]onduct is 'voluntary'... if the muscular contraction which, on the physical side, is the initiating element in what are loosely thought of as simple actions, is caused by a desire for those same contractions," id. at 485.
offense. 297 It has been noted that "[t]he [notion] of mens rea... expresses the principle that it is not conduct alone but conduct accompanied by certain specific mental states which concerns... the law." 298 In other words, this requirement is met when, at the time the agent committed the crime, she had the legally requisite mental state that the law requires for the existence of criminal liability. 299 "Except [for] minor offenses..., [common law jurisdictions generally require] that there be a specified [mens rea] for every element of an offense[,] which includes the act itself, and the social harm. 300 The purpose of the inclusion of the mens rea component is to describe the mental state in blameworthy, or culpable, conduct that leads to criminal liability, as distinguished from conduct that causes harm but is unaccompanied by the mental state necessary to impose criminal liability. 301

Both retributivists and utilitarians favor the mens rea requirement albeit for different reasons. Utilitarianism embraces the mens rea requirement, mainly on deterrence grounds. An offender cannot be deterred from the commission of a criminal act unless he appreciates that his conduct will lead to punishment. 302 Furthermore, "the 'higher' mental states [such as purposefulness and knowledge] reflect the greater probability that the defendant will [cause social] harm." 303 Thus, "the severity and certainty of punishment" should also

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297 1 CHARLES E. TORCIA, WHARTON'S CRIMINAL LAW § 27 (15th ed. 1993). The courts have encountered extreme difficulty in resolving problems of "merger," "concurrence," and "multiplicity," i.e., in determining when acts or transactions give rise to a single offense, and when they amount to several offenses. There is also a problem in determining when one offense is deemed included within another. The different situations in which the problems arise, and the several distinct reasons for making the determination, account for the absence of any single governing principle or test. See generally id. at §§ 25-28.

298 1 WITKIN AND EPSTEIN, supra note 147, at § 2.

299 Some crimes admit of only certain mental states. For example, some crimes cannot be committed negligently or recklessly.


301 The policy purpose underlying the mens rea requirement is to filter out those agents who unintentionally engage in bad conduct since they are not considered dangerous to society.

302 DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 15.

303 Simons, supra note 261, at 505.
increase as the need to deter the offender, "and others with similar [guilty] mind [,]" is "greater."

From this, it is easy to infer "why knowing and intentional killers are punished as murderers, [whereas] those who are 'reckless'... are punished only for manslaughter." Retributivists also favor the mens rea requirement, arguing that persons who are blameworthy deserve to be punished. Those who lack a guilty mental state do not deserve any punishment. The strongest arguments condemning crimes without mens rea have come from retributivists, particularly culpability-based retributivists, who do not advocate "punishing the blameless." The mens rea requirements have been traditionally grouped into two categories. The first category is crimes requiring general intent, whereby the defendant simply desires to commit a criminal act. The second category is crimes requiring specific intent, where the defendant, in addition to desiring to bring about the actus reus, wants to do something further. An example of a specific intent crime is a burglary where the intended breaking and entering of another's dwelling must be with the intention to commit a felony, or, where the defendant objectively desired a specific result to follow his act or failure

304 Id.

305 Id.

306 For a discussion of different forms of retributivism, see Darryl K. Brown, Third-Party Interests in Criminal Law, 80 TEX. L. REV. 1383, 1399 (2002).

307 Simons, supra note 272, at 1076.

308 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law § 127 (1998) ("'General intent' is the term used to define the requisite mens rea for a crime has no stated mens rea... Where a particular crime requires only a showing of general intent,... the criminal intent necessary to sustain a conviction is shown by the very doing of acts which have been declared criminal; the element of intent is presumed from the actions constituting the offense"). See also Watson v. Dugger, 945 F.2d 367, 370 (11th Cir. 1991) ("In general intent crimes, the element of intent is presumed from the actions constituting the offense"); Kohler v. Kelly, 890 F. Supp. 207, 212 (W.D.N.Y. 1994), aff'd, 58 F.3d 58 (2d Cir. 1995) ("If the crime charged requires only a general intent, intent will be presumed from the intentional completion of the act"); State v. Campos, 921 P.2d 1266 (N.M. 1996) ("[A] general-intent crime is one for which no additional intent to accomplish a further goal is specified").


This classification has been considered primitive and confusing, and has marginal utility in practice.\footnote{See, e.g., People v. Garland, 627 N.E.2d 377, 380-81 (Ill. App. Ct. 1993) ("Specific intent exists where from the circumstances the offender must have subjectively desired the prohibited result"); State v. Corley, 703 So. 2d 653, 659 (La. Ct. App. 1997), \textit{writ denied}, 712 So. 2d 875 (La. 1998) ("Specific intent is the state of mind which exists when the circumstances indicate that the offender actively desired the prescribed criminal consequences to follow his act or failure to act"); State v. Pierce, 488 S.E.2d 576 (N.C. 1997) ("Specific-intent crimes are 'crimes which have as an essential element a specific intent that a result be reached'"); State v. Esters, 927 P.2d 1140, 1142 (Wash. Ct. App. 1996), \textit{appeal denied}, 131 Wash. 2d 1024, 937 P.2d 1101 (1997) ("Specific intent is 'an intent to produce a specific result, as opposed to an intent to do the physical act' that produces the result").}

More importantly, \textit{mens rea} is considered to comprise four distinct states of mind.\footnote{See \textit{FLETCHER, supra} note 104, at 23 (looking at the subject of larceny)} These states are: (i) \textit{purposeful}, when a defendant desires his conduct to cause a particular result;\footnote{TEX. PEN. CODE ANN. \S 6.03(a) (Vernon 2003).} (ii) \textit{knowing}, when a defendant is aware that his conduct is practically certain to cause a particular result; (iii) \textit{reckless}, when defendant \textit{is} aware of a risk—which for the Model Penal Code\footnote{MPC \S 2.02(2)(c).} must be "substantial and unjustifiable"—that his conduct might cause a particular result;\footnote{See, e.g., People v. Deskins, 927 P.2d 368, 371 (Colo. 1996) ("[A] person acts recklessly ‘when he consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that a result will occur or that a circumstance exists’"); People v. Figueroa, 625 N.Y.S.2d 839, 842 (N.Y. Crim. Ct. 1995) ("A person is chargeable with ‘recklessness’ when he is aware of designated risk and consciously disregards it").} and (iv) \textit{negligent}, when defendant \textit{should} be aware of a risk that his conduct might cause a particular result.\footnote{See, e.g., Green v. State, 887 S.W.2d 230, 233 (Tex. Ct. App. 1994) ("A person acts with criminal negligence when he should be aware of a substantial and unjustifiable risk he has created"); State v. Brooks, 658 A.2d 22, 26 (Vt. 1995) ("[C]riminal negligence occurs when the actor should be aware that a substantial and unjustifiable risk exists or will result from his conduct").}

These states of mind are also primitive and confusing, as they are not mutually exclusive and they refer to cognitive aspects in some cases,
and to volitional ones in others. Thus, "intention" and "knowledge" make reference to different categories, and although they have been artificially assigned some differences, they still refer to different aspects of the mental process. More importantly, these categories cannot account for all types of situations. For example, under the doctrine of transferred intent, the actor is artificially assigned intent for a result he causes where there is obviously no such intent. However, both courts and legal scholars have widely accepted these mental states without much criticism. Similarly imprecise is the mens rea fiction created for the felony-murder rule. With felony-murder, criminal liability is assigned to the defendant when he engages in certain dangerous felonies, (such as bank robbery), and certain deaths occur, even if they are not intended or even caused by the defendant. Therefore, whenever a defendant carries out a certain felony, such as kidnapping or aircraft hijacking, and a death occurs— even if that death is caused by an unrelated third person or by the victim herself— that death is attributed to the perpetrator of the felony who is considered to have intended it.

The purposeful or intentional mental state implies a purpose or willingness to commit the act, or the omission referred to. A person acts intentionally "when it is [the person's] conscious objective or desire to engage in the conduct or cause the result." Further, "willingness . . .

319 See Susan L. Pilcher, Ignorance, Discretion, and the Fairness of Notice: Confronting "Apparent Innocence" in the Criminal Law, 33 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 1, 9 (1995) (noting that these categories are the "modern American approach").
320 See, e.g., People v. Washington, 402 P.2d 130, 134 (Cal. 1965) ("The felony-murder rule has been criticized on the grounds on the grounds that in almost all cases in which it is applied it is unnecessary and that it erodes the relation between criminal liability and moral culpability").
321 In Texas, for example, a person commits the offense of felony murder if the person "commits or attempts to commit a felony, other than manslaughter, and in the course of and in furtherance of the commission or attempt, or in immediate flight from the commission or attempt, [the person] commits or attempts to commit an act clearly dangerous to human life that causes the death of an individual." TEX. PENAL CODE ANN. § 19.02(b)(3) (Vernon 2003).
322 Furthermore, there are an increasing number of crimes, particularly those created by legislation, where the actor's mental state cannot be explained by one of these traditional four categories of mental state.
323 TEX. PEN. CODE ANN. § 6.03(a) (Vernon 2003).
implies that the person knows what he is doing, intends to do what he is doing, and is a free agent.\textsuperscript{324} It does not require any intent to violate law. The U.S. Supreme Court held in \textit{Morrissette} that:

\[ \text{the contention that an injury can amount to a crime only when inflicted by intention is no provincial or transient notion. It is as universal and persistent in mature systems of law as belief in freedom of the human will and a consequent ability and duty of the normal individual to choose between good and evil.} \textsuperscript{325} \]

As a way of illustration, mischief requires intention to destroy or damage property.\textsuperscript{326} If, for instance, defendant wanted to damage someone else's goods, he would be acting with the required mental state, intention of mischief.

For Holmes, intent revolves around two aspects: the "foresight that certain consequences will follow from an act[,] and[,] the wish for those consequences working as a motive which induces the act."\textsuperscript{327} An exceptional application of this requirement, which is unheard of in civil law jurisdictions, is the aforementioned doctrine of the transferred intent,\textsuperscript{328} which essentially applies to murders. It often occurs in bad aim cases when a defendant intends to kill one victim, but in fact, accidentally or unintentionally,\textsuperscript{329} kills another one.\textsuperscript{330} In this case, the

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\textsuperscript{324} Ex Parte Trombley, 193 P.2d 734, 739 (Cal. 1948).
\textsuperscript{325} Morissette v. United States, 342 U.S. 246, 249 (1952).
\textsuperscript{327} HOLMES, supra note 271, at 53.
\textsuperscript{328} 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law § 135 (1998).
\textsuperscript{329} \textit{See, e.g.}, State v. Fekete, 901 P.2d 708, 714 (N.M. 1995) ("the transferred intent theory has been applied in so-called 'bad aim' situations where a defendant, while intending to kill one person, accidentally kills an innocent bystander or another unintended victim").
\textsuperscript{330} \textit{See, e.g.}, Miller v. State, 636 So. 2d 144, (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1994) ("The doctrine of transferred intent operates to transfer the defendant's intent with respect to the intended victim to the unintended victim"); Crawley v. Com., 492 S.E.2d 503, 505 (Va. Ct. App. 1997) ("Under the common law doctrine of transferred intent, if an accused attempts to injure one person and an unintended victim is injured because of the act, the accused's intent to injure the intended
defendant is culpable, and bears criminal liability for the murder of the unintended victim to the same extent as if he had killed his intended victim. In civil law, bad aim cases have a more reasonable solution. They are considered attempted murders with respect to the intended victim, in conjunction with a negligent homicide with regard to the unintended one.\textsuperscript{331}

The concept of knowledge entails an awareness that defendant is committing an act that is considered an offense.\textsuperscript{332} Again, "it does not require any knowledge of the unlawfulness of such act or omission."\textsuperscript{333} The Texas Penal Code states that "[a] person acts knowingly... when the person is aware of the nature of his conduct or that the circumstances then surrounding the conduct exist [... or,...]... when he is aware that the conduct is reasonably certain to cause the result."\textsuperscript{334} As the New York Penal Code explains, "[t]he main distinction between [intentionally and knowingly] is that the [former] entails a conscious desire to cause a particular result by one's conduct and the [latter] entails an awareness that the result is 'practically certain' to follow from such conduct."\textsuperscript{335} "A 'knowingly' \textit{mens rea} is a lesser standard than 'willfully'; if awareness of conduct can be proven, it is permissible for a jury to infer knowledge on the part of the actor.\textsuperscript{336} For example, in \textit{Liparota v. U.S.}, the defendant was prosecuted for violation of a federal food stamp statute, which prohibited fraud through improper use and transfer of food stamp victim is transferred to the injury of the unintended victim, even though the wounding was accidental or unintentional Conexion); State v. VanValkenburgh, 856 P.2d 407, (Wash. Ct. App. 1993) ("Intent against any person generally may be transferred to another if that other is injured").

\textsuperscript{331} See HENDLER, supra note 7, at 143.

\textsuperscript{332} See, \textit{e.g.}, State v. Williams, 503 N.W.2d 561, 566 (Neb. 1993) ("[K]nowingly... commonly imports a perception of the facts requisite to make up the crime").

\textsuperscript{333} People v. Taylor, 9 Cal. Rptr. 2d 227, 235 (Cal. Ct. App. 1992)

\textsuperscript{334} TEX. PENAL CODE ANN. § 6.03(b) (Vernon 2003).

\textsuperscript{335} N.Y. PENAL LAW § 15.15 commission staff notes; N.Y. PENAL LAW § 15.05 (1), (2) (McKinney 2003).

cards or coupons. This is a regulatory offense which requires proof that defendant acted knowingly.337

The “reckless” mental state occurs when a person is aware of a “substantial and unjustifiable risk” that his or her act will cause, and “consciously disregards” it.338 Intent to cause serious bodily harm murder requires that recklessness on the part of the defendant, who intends to cause his victim bodily harm that he knows is likely to cause death.339 A defendant is acting recklessly if he is aware—under a subjective test340—that death may ensue and consciously disregards this possibility.341 In other words, “reckless” mens rea cannot be asserted on an objective consideration of what a defendant should have known,342 but rather on defendant’s perceived and consciously disregarded risk.343

A “negligent” state of mind implies that the defendant should be aware of a substantial and unjustified risk. Under Pennsylvania’s definition, for the person to be negligent, “[t]he risk must be of such a nature and degree that the actor’s failure to perceive it... involves a gross deviation from the standard of care that a reasonable person would observe in the actor’s situation.”344 The difference between a “reckless” and a “negligent” mens rea is that in the latter, defendant fails to perceive a risk associated with conduct, while in the former, defendant perceives and consciously disregards the risk.345 The test to determine the

338 MPC § 2.02(2)(c).
339 See, e.g., R.S.C. Part VIII § 229(a)(ii) (Can.).
341 Sarah D. Himmelhoch, Comment, Environmental Crimes: Recent Efforts to Develop a Role for Traditional Criminal Law in the Environmental Protection Effort, 22 ENVTL. L. 1469, 1477-1478 (1992).
342 See Rutledge, 836 F. Supp. at 537-538.
344 The rationale of the reasonable person standard is to ensure that there is a fixed, non-fluctuating parameter but rather a uniformed, objective standard against which all accused are measured. Kevin Jon Heller, Beyond the Reasonable Man? A Sympathetic but Critical Assessment of the Use of Subjective Standards of Reasonableness in Self-Defense and Provocation Cases, 26 Am. J. Crim. L. 1, 8 (1998).
345 18 PA. CONS. STAT. ANN. § 302(b)(4) (West 2004). See also MPC § 2.02.
existence of negligence is that of reasonableness. Conduct that reveals "a marked and significant departure from the standard" which would be expected of a "reasonably prudent" person under the circumstances indicates negligence.\textsuperscript{347} Ordinary negligence, sufficient for recovery in a civil action, will not suffice in a criminal context.\textsuperscript{348} The defendant's conduct must go beyond that required by the unreasonable risk test for tort liability; it must amount to a gross, criminal, or culpable departure from the standard of due care.\textsuperscript{349}

\textbf{Justifications and excuses}

The third component of the offense in common law jurisdictions is the absence of justification or excuse.\textsuperscript{350} In other words, the presence of an excuse or justification may lead to the absence, or even inexistence, of a crime. Justifications and excuses permit the exclusion, or reduction, of criminal liability in conduct that would otherwise constitute an offense.\textsuperscript{351} Although different in origin, justification and excuse are generally treated together, as both have a similar effect. They generally include: (i) duress,\textsuperscript{352} (ii) necessity,\textsuperscript{353} (iii) self-defense,\textsuperscript{354} (iv) defense of

\textsuperscript{347} See Regina v. Tutton and Tutton, [1989] S.C.R. 1392, 1395 (holding that jury should have considered parents belief in faith healing in case where child died from the parents' depriving him of insulin).


\textsuperscript{349} See People v. Penny, 285 P.2d 926, 937 (Ca. 1955)(jury should have been instructed regarding criminal negligence, not civil negligence); People v. Rodriguez, 8 Cal.Rptr. 863, 879 (Cal. Ct. App. 1960) ("In order to impose criminal liability for a homicide caused by negligence, there must be a higher degree of negligence than is required to establish negligent default on a mere civil issue"); Somers v. Superior Court, 108 Cal. Rptr. 961, 967-968 (Cal. Ct. App. 1973) ("[C]riminal liability is premised on intentional violations of the law").


\textsuperscript{352} 21 AM. JUR. 2D, Criminal Law § 160 (1998).

\textsuperscript{353} MPC, § 3.02.

\textsuperscript{354} Id. § 3.04(1).
others,\(^\text{355}\) (v) defense of property,\(^\text{356}\) (vi) parental disciplinary rights,\(^\text{357}\) (vii) law enforcement privileges,\(^\text{358}\) (viii) entrapment,\(^\text{359}\) (ix) mental defenses negating responsibility, and (x) a very limited defense of error of law. From a comparative law perspective, these defenses are of little interest. Even though there are certain differences in the treatment of each of these defenses, they are very similar in civil law and common law, which is reflected in both the analysis of courts and authors.\(^\text{360}\)

Duress arises when the defendant is coerced to commit a crime by the use of unlawful force against his person or another’s person. The threat must be “present, imminent, and impending”\(^\text{361}\); and, it must induce a well-grounded apprehension of death or serious personal bodily injury if the crime is not carried out. Duress also includes the threat of use of force.\(^\text{362}\) Unlike civil law, this defense is not available for homicide, but in some U.S. states, duress may reduce the degree of homicide.\(^\text{363}\)

Like in civil law,\(^\text{364}\) the necessity defense entails choosing the lesser evil.\(^\text{365}\) As a result of some force or condition, the defendant must choose between committing a relatively minor offense or allowing himself or others to suffer substantial harm to person or property. However, there is a significant difference here between civil law and common law. The necessity defense is considerably limited in Anglo-


\(^{356}\) MPC § 3.06(1); 21 TEX. JUR. Criminal Law § 1946 (2001).


\(^{359}\) 25 OHIO JUR. Criminal Law § 711 (2000).

\(^{360}\) See HENDLER, supra note 7, at 66.

\(^{361}\) 1 AM. JUR. 2D Abduction And Kidnapping § 56 (2004).


\(^{363}\) See 21 AM. JUR. 2D, Homicide § 115 (2004).

\(^{364}\) See C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain).

American jurisdictions, as it is not available in common law. Thus, in common law jurisdictions, its existence is dependent on an express statutory enactment. The Model Penal Code contemplates the necessity defense for those situations in which the harm or evil to be avoided is greater than that sought to be prevented by the law defining the offense charged. In Canada, however, the courts may not balance the social utility of breaking the law against obeying the law. The defense is available in Canada only when the accused has no realistic choice but to violate the law, and there is no other "safe avenue." Like in most civil law jurisdictions, the necessity defense is generally not available for homicides under the common law.

The self-defense justification also presents remarkable similarities in both civil law and common law. In common law, a person may use whatever force reasonably necessary, except for deadly force, to prevent the immediate unlawful imposition of harm to himself. The person resorting to self-defense may not use deadly force unless the danger that is being resisted is also deadly force. The Canadian Criminal Code states that "[e]very one who is unlawfully assaulted without having provoked the assault is justified in repelling force by force if the force he uses is not intended to cause death or grievous bodily harm and is no more than is necessary to enable him to defend himself."

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367 MPC § 3.02(1)(a).
369 ZAFFARONI, supra note 110, at 481.
370 See People v. Trippet, 66 Cal. Rptr. 2d 559, 563 (Cal. Ct. App. 1997) ("The defense may be available where a defendant is charged with committing any criminal act except the taking of an innocent human life").
371 BACIGALUPO, supra note 96, at 359.
373 See R.S.C. Part I § 34 (Can.).
374 Id. at 34(1). Further, "every one who is unlawfully assaulted and who causes death or grievous bodily harm in repelling the assault is justified if [:] (a) he causes it under reasonable apprehension of death or grievous bodily harm from
As in civil law jurisdictions, the requirements for self-defense include the repression of only present or imminent use of unlawful force by another, and the use of only reasonable means to repress that force. Like in civil law, the person resorting to self-defense may not have been the aggressor. However, if he was a non-deadly aggressor he may defend himself against deadly force with deadly force, but only if he completely withdrew after his initial aggression.

In some common law jurisdictions, courts extend the benefits of self-defense to cases that fall within the classification of battered spouse syndrome. In these cases, when a woman kills her partner after being physically abused, or kills to prevent another attack, she may avail herself of the benefits of self-defense, even if the killing in self defense

the violence with which the assault was originally made or with which the assailant pursues his purposes; and (b) he believes, on reasonable grounds, that he cannot otherwise preserve himself from death or grievous bodily harm,” id. at 34(2).

See CóD. PEN. art. 34 (Arg.); C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain); COD. PEN. COLOM. art. 32 (Colom.)

See State v. Urbano, 589 N.W.2d 144, 151 (Neb. 1999) (“To successfully assert the claim of self-defense, a defendant must have a reasonable and good faith belief in the necessity of using force and the force used in defense must be immediately necessary and justified under the circumstances”).

See McGarity v. State, 5 S.W.2d 223, 227 (Tex. Ct. App. 1999) (“‘imminent’ means something that is impending, not pending; something that is on the point of happening, not about to happen”); Darty v. State, 994 S.W.2d 215, 218 (Tex. Ct. App. 1999) (“An ‘imminent harm’ occurs when there is an emergency situation, and it is ‘immediately necessary’ to avoid that harm when a split-second decision is required without time to consider the law”).


See C.P. art. 20(4) (Spain).


Commonwealth v. Rodriguez, 633 N.E.2d 1039, 1041-1042 (1994) (woman fatally stabbed her boyfriend who had been abusing her) (“There can be no
is not the consequence of an imminent peril.\textsuperscript{383} In these circumstances, the courts have tended to relax some of the requirements of self-defense.\textsuperscript{384} In order to avail herself of this defense, a woman who kills or attacks her abusive spouse or partner must prove that she has been through the battered woman cycle at least once.\textsuperscript{385} This cycle includes the tension-building phase, followed by the explosion or acute battering incident, culminating in a contrition phase - often referred to, as the "honeymoon" phase.\textsuperscript{386} Additionally, she must prove, usually through expert opinion,\textsuperscript{387} that she has experienced learned helplessness and that she suffers from a series of symptoms by which the syndrome can be diagnosed.\textsuperscript{388} These requirements make the defense quite narrow as they exclude those women who opt to defend themselves without experiencing the whole syndrome cycle. Even worse, the courts impose the burden of being assaulted and reconciled in order to be able to use this defense.

The right to defend others\textsuperscript{389} and the right to defend property\textsuperscript{390} are quite similar in both civil law and common law jurisdictions.\textsuperscript{391}


\textsuperscript{386} \textit{LENORE WALKER, THE BATTERED WOMAN} 55-70 (1979).


\textsuperscript{389} See Daniels v. State, 215 S.W.2d 624, 625 (Tex. Crim. App. 1948) (allowing right to defend third person); Rylee v. State, 117 S.W.2d 85, 87 (Tex. Crim. App. 1938) (allowing protection of third person as a defense); Valadez v. State, 408 S.W.2d 109, 111 (Tex. Crim. App. 1966) (allowing jury to decide if defendant was justified in protecting third person); Townsend v. State, 93
Basically, "a person is justified in using force to protect a third person when the [latter] is threatened [under] circumstances [which] would [allow the third person] to protect himself and, the actor reasonably believes that intervention is immediately necessary."\textsuperscript{392} A person may also use force—even deadly force in some jurisdictions\textsuperscript{393}—"to prevent or terminate an unlawful entry upon land;" the use of force is necessary, as it affects property in the actor's possession, to prevent confiscation, or to recapture personal property when the other person's interference with the property is unlawful.\textsuperscript{394}

The limited right of parents to use force to discipline their children\textsuperscript{395}—whereby parents are allowed to cause physical pain by hitting, paddling, spanking, slapping, or any other physical force against their children—is similar in civil law countries and has generated agitated debates in the last few years.\textsuperscript{396} Law enforcement agents are entitled to violate the law when it is reasonable to do so.\textsuperscript{397} In other words, these acts would be criminal if not performed by law enforcement agents, such as applying force, entering into property or depriving people of liberty.\textsuperscript{398} Unlike common law,\textsuperscript{399} these privileges are not treated as special

\textsuperscript{390} MPC § 3.06(1).

\textsuperscript{391} See HENDLER, supra note 7, at 141.


\textsuperscript{393} See Phoenix v. State, 640 S.W.2d 306, 306-307 (Tex. Crim. App. 1982) (deadly force can be used only in self-defense, when "immediately necessary," and where no lesser force is possible or would place the person at a greater risk of substantial harm); 22A AM. JUR. 2D Death § 135 (2004) (can only use deadly force to protect property where there is "an element of danger to the person" or "to prevent a felony").

\textsuperscript{394} MPC § 3.06(1).

\textsuperscript{395} See note 357.

\textsuperscript{396} See generally Mary Kate Kearney, Substantive Due Process and Parental Corporal Punishment: Democracy and the Excluded Child, 32 SAN DIEGO L. REV. 1 (1995) (discussing whether parents should have the right to corporally punish their child).

\textsuperscript{397} Berman, supra note 358, at 24-25.

\textsuperscript{398} DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 273.

\textsuperscript{399} SANFORD H. KADISH, BLAME AND PUNISHMENT: ESSAYS IN THE CRIMINAL LAW 111 (1987).
defenses in civil law countries, but are considered within the general causes of justification that would not trigger criminal liability.\textsuperscript{400} 

Entrapment,\textsuperscript{401} which arises when a law enforcement agent induces a defendant to commit the crime,\textsuperscript{402} is the only defense that is unknown in the civil law world.\textsuperscript{403} For the defense to be available, the government's conduct must create the predisposition to commit the crime.\textsuperscript{404} Otherwise, when the law enforcement agent merely provides someone who is already willing and ready to violate the law with the opportunity to commit a crime, the entrapment defense will not be available.\textsuperscript{405} Entrapment is aimed strictly at governmental misconduct and its objective is to prevent the government from manufacturing crime. The rationale is to protect those who commit a crime at the initiative of the government, when law enforcement agents implant in their minds the predisposition to commit a crime, and actively induce its commission.\textsuperscript{406}

\textbf{Responsibility}

Common law has developed a fairly sophisticated set of rules dealing with the defenses excluding blameworthiness.\textsuperscript{407} The most important one— and the one that has received the most consideration from authors and the courts— is the insanity defense.\textsuperscript{408} The prevailing test to determine whether a defendant may be responsible for the act performed is the \textit{M'Naghten} right-wrong test which arose in a 19\textsuperscript{th} century English

\textsuperscript{400} WELZEL, supra note 93, at 70. 
\textsuperscript{401} Annotation, \textit{Entrapment as Defense to Charge of Selling or Supplying Narcotics Where Government Agents Supplied Narcotics to Defendant and Purchased them from Him}, 9 A.L.R.5th 464 (1993). 
\textsuperscript{402} 25 OHIO JUR. 3D Criminal Law § 711 (2000). 
\textsuperscript{403} HENDLER, supra note 7, at 66. 
\textsuperscript{404} 15B FLA JUR 2D Criminal Law § 3051 (2001). 
\textsuperscript{405} State v. Dickinson, 370 So. 2d 762 (Fla. 1979) ("There is clearly no constitutional prohibition against a law enforcement officer providing the opportunity for a person who has the willingness and readiness to break the law"). 
\textsuperscript{406} 15B FLA JUR 2D Criminal Law § 3051 (2001). 
\textsuperscript{408} See 2 TORCIA, supra note 297, at §105 (addressing insanity defense).
This test probes whether, at the time of committing the act, the accused party was laboring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the mind, as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing, or if he did know, that he did not know that what he was doing was wrong. The M’Naghten test focuses exclusively on cognitive disability and does not take into account volitional disability.

The Model Penal Code adopted a somewhat different test. Under this test, “a person is not responsible for criminal conduct if at the time of such conduct, as a result of mental disease or defect, he lacks substantial capacity either to appreciate the criminality of his conduct or to conform his conduct to the requirements of law.” Unlike the traditional M’Naghten test, the Model Penal Code test does not require total lack of capacity but substantial lack of capacity.

At the federal level, in 1984, the U.S. Congress adopted another test, which rests heavily on the original M’Naghten test and rejects the lower standards of the Model Penal Code. Under the federal test, the defendant is not responsible if “as a result of a severe mental disease or defect, the defendant was unable to appreciate the nature and quality or the wrongfulness of his acts.” In many common law jurisdictions, the burden of proof of the inability to appreciate the wrongfulness of the act falls on the defendant. In Medina v. California, the U.S. Supreme Court held that this reverse burden of proof is not unconstitutional.

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410 Id.
411 United States v. Freeman, 357 F.2d 606, 617 (2d Cir. 1966) (applying “wrongfulness” standard).
412 MPC § 4.01.
413 Id.
414 Id.; United States v. Massa, 804 F.2d 1020, 1022-23 (8th Cir. 1986) (applying the Model Penal Code insanity test).
417 See, e.g., State v Rullo, 412 A2d 1009, 1011 (N.H. 1980) (“the defendant bears the burden of establishing, by a preponderance of the evidence, the affirmative defense of insanity”); 21 AM JUR 2d, Criminal Law, § 50 (2004) (defendant has burden of showing “insanity as defined by law”); Michelle Migdal Gee, Annotation, Modern Status of Test of Criminal Responsibility-State
Common law has only recently delved into the temporary mental defects of intoxication and automatism. The intoxication phenomenon, which includes problems caused by alcohol or drugs, has a different treatment depending on whether the intoxication has been provoked voluntarily or involuntarily. The Model Penal Code states that “if the actor, due to self-induced intoxication, is unaware of a risk of which he would have been had he been sober, such unawareness is immaterial.” However, the courts have admitted that when voluntarily provoked, intoxication can negate specific intent, but not general intent. Most common law jurisdictions treat involuntary intoxication as insanity. Thus, an involuntarily intoxicated defendant, who “at the time of his conduct lacks substantial capacity to appreciate its criminality or to conform his conduct to the requirements of the law,” has a valid affirmative defense. In general, a defendant is considered involuntarily intoxicated “when he has become intoxicated through the fault of another, by accident, inadvertence, or mistake on his own part, or because of a physiological or psychological condition beyond his control.”


TEX. PENAL CODE ANN. § 8.04(a) (Vernon 2004) (“Voluntary intoxication does not constitute a defense to the commission of crime”).

Phillip E. Hassman, Annotation, When Intoxication Deemed Involuntary so as to Constitute A Defense to Criminal Charge, 73 A.L.R. 3d 195 (1976) (“Generally speaking, an accused may be completely relieved of criminal responsibility if, because of involuntary intoxication, he was temporarily rendered legally insane at the time he committed the offense”).

MPC § 2.08(2).


State v. Davis, 612 N.E.2d 343, 347 (Ohio Ct. App. 1992) (voluntary intoxication was held to be capable of negating specific intent).

See 21 AM. JUR. 2D Criminal Law §§ 55, 171 (1998) (stating that involuntary intoxication is a basis for the insanity defense).

MPC § 2.08(4).
control."428 U.S. courts expressly rejected the doctrine of *actio libera in causa*,429 which has had an ample reception in civil law countries.430

The automatism defense, which is triggered, for example, as a consequence of epilepsy attacks,431 negates responsibility when there is a mental or physical condition that deprives the act of its voluntary character.432 Defendant is "reliev[ed] [from] criminal responsibility... because [he] has not engaged in an act... [, i.e.], in a voluntary bodily movement."433 The Model Penal Code permits this defense.434 However, this should not be considered a defense,435 but instead, as in civil law, simply an absence of *actus reus*.

The law of error encompasses "mistake," or "a false conception of [the object of cognition]", and "ignorance," or "absence of any perception of the potential object of cognition."436 The law of error in common law jurisdictions is not considered a separate defense, but rather a circumstance that negates the required mental state. The Model Penal

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428 Hassman, *supra* note 422, at 199.
429 Sabens v. United States, 40 App. D.C. 440, 443 (D.C. 1913). "[A] man who voluntarily puts himself in a condition to have no control of his actions must be held to intend the consequences. The safety of the community requires this rule. Intoxication is so easily counterfeited, and when real is so often resorted to as a means of nerving a person up to the commission of some desperate act, and is withal so inexcusable in itself, that law has never recognized it as an excuse for crime.... If the mental status required by law to constitute crime be one of deliberation and premeditation, and drunkenness or other cause excludes the existence of such mental state, then the crime is not excused by drunkenness or such other cause, but has not in fact been committed." *Id.*; See J. Perez Diaz, *Ponencia del Secretario de Justicia sobre la Reforma del Codigo Penal De Puerto Rico*, 62 REV. JUR. U.P.R. 159, 253 (1993) (discussing "actio libera in causa").
433 *Id.*
434 MPC § 2.01(1).
435 Some courts and authors consider it as a defense, even negating *mens rea*. *See* LAFAVE, *supra* note 283, at §§ 6.1-6.2.
436 2 HELEN SILVING, CRIMINAL JUSTICE 760 (1971).
Code expressly treats it as a defense, however, which operates when: (i) "the ignorance or mistake negates the purpose, knowledge, recklessness or negligence required to establish a material element of the offense"; or, (ii) "the law provides that the state of mind established by the ignorance or mistake constitutes a defense."437 The classic example is the case of "an individual [who takes] a [coat] from a coat rack in a [restaurant] believing it to be [his] own... [when it actually] belongs to [someone else]."438 In this case, there is no larceny because this crime requires a specific intent of taking another's property; because of the mistake, intent is not present. The distinction between crimes requiring general intent439 and specific intent440 find little application in the law of error in common law jurisdictions since the law of error generally applies to crimes requiring specific intent. In crimes of general intent, the mistake is a defense only if the mistake is reasonable, and the act was not morally or legally wrong had the facts been as the defendant believed them to be. In strict liability offenses, mistake is not a defense.441 The Model Penal Code does not require that the mistake be reasonable; the defense may be successful even if the mistake is considered unreasonable, so long as it prevents the defendant from having the requisite intent or knowledge.442 In most jurisdictions, the error defense will not be available when "the defendant would be guilty of another offense had the situation been as he supposed.... [However, under the Model Penal Code,] the ignorance or mistake of the defendant reduces the grade and degree of the offense... to those of the offense of which he would be guilty had the situation been as he supposed."443

437 MPC § 2.04(1).
440 Id. § 128.
441 See Garnett v. State, 632 A.2d 797, 804 (Md. 1993). In Garnett, a retarded man was deemed guilty of statutory rape even though his mistake was reasonable.
442 MPC § 2.04(2).
443 Id.
As a general rule, ignorance of the law is not an excuse, so mistake of law is not considered a defense. Ordinary, knowledge that the crime exists is not an element of the crime itself and does not negate the mens rea of the offense. However, in the Model Penal Code, there are two general exceptions when mistake of law can act as a defense. The first exception is the "reasonable reliance" doctrine. This takes place when the defendant relies on "an official [interpretation] of the law, now determined to be wrong, contained in [a statute, a judicial decision, or an administrative order by a public officer responsible] for the interpretation [or enforcement of the law defining the offense]." The second exception is when "the statute... defining the offense is not known to the actor and has not been published or otherwise reasonably made available prior to [his] conduct.

V. Crimes Against Life

Common law

Homicide is the most salient crime against the person. In some common law jurisdictions, a distinction is made between culpable and non-culpable homicides. Non-culpable homicides are those that are justifiable or excusable, and thus causing a death is "not

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445 Id.
446 MPC § 2.04.
449 MPC § 2.04(3).
450 40 AM. JUR. 2D Homicide § 1 (2004).
452 See 15B FLA JUR 2D Criminal Law § 3424 (2001) (“By statute, a homicide is justifiable when committed in resistance to an attempt to murder or to commit any felony on a person”).
453 See, e.g., Hopson v. State, 168 So. 810, 811 (Fla. 1936) (“[w]here homicide is committed by accident or misfortune, the homicide is excusable”).
necessarily" unlawful.\textsuperscript{454} These include the execution of a person sentenced to capital punishment, a soldier's killing of an enemy during wartime—provided that he respects the \textit{jus in bello} rules, such as those contained in the Geneva Conventions\textsuperscript{455}—or a law enforcement agent's killing of a person in the line of duty.\textsuperscript{456} Culpable homicides have been characterized as the unlawful causing of the death of another.\textsuperscript{457} They include murder and manslaughter. In Canada, there is a third category, "infanticide," defined as a mother's killing of her "newly-born child," either willfully or through omission, when the mother is mentally disturbed as a result of the birth.\textsuperscript{458} Some jurisdictions also include the categories of negligent or vehicular homicide.\textsuperscript{459}

\textbf{Murder}

Murder is considered the unlawful killing of a human being\textsuperscript{460} with malice aforethought.\textsuperscript{461} "Malice"\textsuperscript{462} consists of "an unjustified


\textsuperscript{456} \textit{See} 40 AM. JUR. 2D \textit{Homicide} § 1 (2004) ("[The term 'homicide'] does not necessarily import a crime, since one's act in taking another's life may be excusable or justifiable").

\textsuperscript{457} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{458} R.S.C. Part VIII § 233 (Can.).


\textsuperscript{460} 40 AM. JUR. 2D \textit{Homicide} § 1 (2004). With respect to the concept of "human being," common law and civil law courts and authors have debated the criminal law consequences of taking the life of fetuses and embryos with similar arguments. \textit{See} Kayhan Parsi, \textit{Metaphorical Imagination: The Moral and Legal Status of Fetuses and Embryos}, 2 DEPAUL J. HEALTH CARE L. 703 (1999) (overview of views on fetuses and embryos in law); Keeler v. Superior Ct. of
disregard for the possibility of death or great bodily harm and an extreme indifference to the sanctity of human life. Despite its name, malice does not require any special malicious *mens rea* or even premeditation. Criminal homicides that are committed intentionally, whether purposely or knowingly; recklessly, manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life with a depraved heart; or arising out of the perpetration of particular felonies, are considered murder. There is also murder when defendant does not have the intention to kill but to inflict serious bodily harm, as a result of which death occurs. The Model Penal Code, however, has abandoned this last category as an independent subcategory of murder, and includes it within the category of reckless murder.

Amador County, 470 P.2d 617 (Cal. 1970) (court found that unborn but viable fetus was not a human being under state statute).

461 40 AM. JUR. 2D Homicide § 37 (2004). Courts continue to use the common law concept of malice aforethought to define murders. *See* State v Galloway, 275 NW2d 736, 738 (Iowa 1979) (court states that “malice aforethought is a necessary element to murder”).


466 See People v Jefferson, 748 P2d 1223, 1226-27 (Colo. 1988), (“depraved-heart murder... derive[s] from decisions and statutes condemning as murder unintentional homicide under circumstances evincing a ‘depraved mind’ or an abandoned and malignant heart”).


468 See also MPC § 210.1 (stating that “[a] person is guilty of criminal homicide if he purposely, knowingly, recklessly or negligently causes the death of another human being”).

469 See Glenn v. State, 511 A.2d 1110, 1116 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. 1986) (“The critical distinction that needs to be made, however, is between the results specifically intended, not between the presence or absence of a specific intent... [T]he inchoate form of intent-to-kill murder is assault with intent to murder, whereas the inchoate form of intent-to-commit-grievous-bodily-harm murder is assault with intent to maim, disfigure, or disable”).

470 MPC § 210.1.
Under intent-to-kill murder, there is an express intent to kill. All the necessary deliberation is involved in the formation of the purpose to kill before the perpetration of the fatal act.\textsuperscript{471} A typical example of this type of murder is when defendant purposefully shoots a victim, causing the victim's death without any justification or excuse.\textsuperscript{472}

Another type of murder is that "committed recklessly under circumstances manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life."\textsuperscript{473} A classic illustration of this depraved heart murder is the case of a workman who drops a brick from the top of a large building to a crowded street, killing a passerby.\textsuperscript{474} The Model Penal Code provides that such recklessness and indifference are presumed if the actor is engaged as the perpetrator or participant of a "robbery, rape or deviate sexual intercourse by force or threat of force, arson, burglary, kidnapping, or felonious escape."\textsuperscript{475}

There are common law jurisdictions that consider a crime those homicides committed in the perpetration of all or certain specified felonies.\textsuperscript{476} Here, defendant does not intend to cause death,\textsuperscript{477} which may be casual and unintentional.\textsuperscript{478} The law supplies or presumes intent to kill

\textsuperscript{471} 40 AM. JUR. 2D Homicide § 39 (2004).
\textsuperscript{472} See Cupps v. State, 97 N.W. 210, 213-214 (Wis. 1903) (stating that "under our statute every intentional taking of human life not excusable or justifiable is murder in the first degree").
\textsuperscript{474} LAFAVE, supra note 283, at § 14.4(a). Other examples, as illustrated by LaFave, are: "firing a bullet into a room occupied, as the defendant knows, by several people; starting a fire at the front door of an occupied dwelling; shooting into the caboose of a passing train or into a moving automobile, necessarily occupied by human beings; throwing a beer glass at one who is carrying a lighted oil lamp; playing a game of "Russian roulette" with another person; shooting at a point near, but not aiming directly at, another person; driving a car at very high speeds along a main street; shaking an infant so long and so vigorously that it cannot breathe; selling 'pure' (i.e., undiluted) heroin," \textit{Id.}
\textsuperscript{475} MPC § 210.2(1)(b).
\textsuperscript{476} 40 AM JUR 2D Homicide § 40 (2004) (felony murder).
\textsuperscript{477} See Adams v. State, 341 So. 2d 765, 767-768 (Fla. 1976) ("Even an accidental killing during a felony is murder").
\textsuperscript{478} See Frady v. People, 40 P.2d 606, 608 (Colo. 1934) (stating that "malice, deliberation, premeditation and intent" do not need to be proven in felony murder); Stansbury v. State, 146 A.2d 17, 20 (Md. 1958) (the fact that a weapon
by attaching the intent to commit the other felony to the homicide.\(^4\) Despite ample criticism against the felony murder rule,\(^4\) the United States Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of felony murder statutes in presuming intent.\(^4\) Thus, it becomes essential to prove the existence of a direct causal link between the homicide and the commission of the other felony.\(^4\) For example, if defendant committed arson,\(^4\) and a firefighter died in the resulting fire, because the homicide resulted from defendant’s act of arson, and the homicide was an ordinary and probable effect of the felony, there is felony murder whether the death was intended or not.\(^4\)

Intent to cause grievous bodily harm which results in death requires: “the intent to inflict the wound which produces a homicide,”\(^4\) and a finding that the defendant “knew or should have known that his acts created a strong probability of death or great bodily harm.”\(^4\) For

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\(^{479}\) See Stansbury, 146 A.2d at 20; State v. King, 68 P. 418, 420 (Utah 1902) (“the implied malice involved in the felonious intent to rob being... sufficient to establish the malicious intent”).

\(^{480}\) See People v. Washington, 62 Cal.2d 777, 783,(Cal. 1965) (noting several treatises, articles, and cases criticizing the felony murder rule).

\(^{481}\) Hopkins v. Reeves, 524 U.S. 88,101 (1998) (holding that Nebraska’s felony murder law presuming intent was constitutional).

\(^{482}\) See Jenkins v. State, 230 A.2d 262, 269 (Del. 1967) (stating that “the felony murder rule... should be limited to homicides proximately caused by the perpetrator or attempted perpetration of felonies which are... foreseeably dangerous to human life”).

\(^{483}\) See U.S. v. Tham, 118 F.3d 1501, 1508 (11th Cir. 1997) (malice in committing arson supplies malice for felony murder); People v. Chavez, 329 P.2d 907, 914 (Cal. 1958), cert. denied, 358 U.S. 946, (1959),cert. denied, 359 U.S. 993 (1959) (felony murder where defendants committed arson and knew people were inside building).

\(^{484}\) See Glover, 50 S.W.2d at 1052.


\(^{486}\) State v. Baca, 950 P.2d 776, 784 (N.M. 1997) (second degree murder becomes first degree “when the murder is committed in the course of a dangerous felony”).
example, in *State v. McNeill*\(^{487}\) defendant took a knife to the victim’s apartment to “scare off” a man he believed was there “so he could talk to the victim alone.” When defendant entered the apartment, “he and the victim began arguing and shoving one another;” then, defendant “stabbed her in the chest, back, arms, abdomen, and breast before [he was restrained from] wounding the victim further,” but she died after several hours.\(^{488}\)

As can be appreciated from this classification, the common law concept of murder equates to all cases of willful homicide, whether aggravated or simple, in civil law.\(^{489}\) For example, intent-to-kill murder corresponds to direct willful homicide, and depraved heart murder, as well as murders where defendant’s intent is to seriously cause bodily injury, coincides with eventual willful homicide.\(^{490}\)

In some jurisdictions, murder is divided into degrees according to its gravity and seriousness.\(^{491}\) The most common divisions are first and second degree.\(^{492}\) In general, first degree murder includes premeditated\(^{493}\) and deliberate\(^{494}\) murder. Premeditation is “a fully formed conscious purpose to kill that may be formed in a moment and need only exist for such time as will allow the accused to be conscious of the nature of the act he is about to commit and the probable result of that act.”\(^{495}\) Similarly, “deliberation requires that the defendant considered the

\(^{487}\) *McNeill*, 485 S.E.2d 284 at 286.

\(^{488}\) Id.

\(^{489}\) HENDLER, *supra* note 7, at 142. However, as clearly put forward by Hendler, not all these cases have an exact correspondence in civil law.

\(^{490}\) Id.


\(^{492}\) See *Id*.


\(^{494}\) 21 AM. JUR. 2D *Criminal Law* § 133 (2004) (deliberation). See also, e.g., People v. Osband, 919 P.2d 640, 688 (Cal. 1996) (“We have defined ‘deliberate’ as ‘formed or arrived at or determined upon as a result of careful thought and weighing of considerations for and against the proposed course of action’”).

\(^{495}\) Kirkland v. State, 684 So. 2d 732, 734 (Fla. 1996).
probable consequences of his act before doing the act. Additionally, felony murders, or crimes committed in the course of certain enumerated and highly dangerous felonies, such as "arson, burglary, kidnapping, rape [and] robbery," are also considered first degree. Second degree murders include murders committed with an intent to cause serious bodily injury, killings resulting from "outrageously reckless" conduct (depraved heart), and felony murders that are not considered first degree murders. This classification of first and second degree murder generally coincides with the civil law distinctions of aggravated (first degree) and simple (second degree) homicides.

**Manslaughter**

As opposed to murder, manslaughter can be conceptualized as the unlawful killing of a human being without malice aforethought, or premeditation. Manslaughter has traditionally been classified as voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary manslaughter includes killings in the heat of passion. This crime originated the belief that killing on the spur of the moment—such as when a person killed another in a village brawl, or a husband who found his wife in bed with another man and killed either or both of them—was less blameworthy than killing with malice aforethought, with premeditation and deliberation.
believed that in these cases, defendant did not deserve capital punishment, which was the prevalent punishment in the United Kingdom for centuries. Consequently, the courts carved out the manslaughter crime for those cases in which the defendant was provoked and thus killed in the heat of passion before he “cooled off.”

Provocation, in order to be adequate, must be such as might naturally cause a reasonable person in the passion of the moment to lose self-control and act on impulse without reflection. A two-tiered test has been created with which courts analyze: (i) whether the wrongful act was of sufficient nature to deprive an ordinary person of self-control, and (ii) whether the provoked person acted all of a sudden before his or her passion had time to cool off.

Involuntary manslaughter may be caused by reckless conduct, such as when a person is aware of a substantial and unjustifiable risk and

505 See Holmes v. D.P.P., 2 All E.R. 124, 128 (H.L. 1946) (“the reason why the problem of drawing the line between murder and manslaughter, where there has been provocation, is so difficult and so important, is because the sentence for murder is fixed and automatic”); Regina v. Cunningham, 1 Q.B. 288 (Crim App. 1958) (stating that “provocation may reduce murder to manslaughter”); Ashworth, Sentencing in Provocation Cases, 1975 CRIM. L.R. 553, 553 (1975) (“[m]urder is the only crime to which provocation may afford a defence, and this is traditionally justified by reference to the fixed penalty for murder”); Royal Commission on Capital Punishment 1949-1953 Report (1953), [Cmd. 8932], at para. 144 (addressing the provocation defense as “an attempt to reconcile the preservation of the fixed penalty for murder with a limited concession to natural human weakness”).

506 See Glenn, 511 A.2d at 1123 (“[a]ll murder had become theoretically unmitigated and, therefore, capital”).

507 DRESSLER, supra note 251, at 529.

508 See Comber, 584 A.2d at 42-43 (“an intentional killing committed in ‘sudden heat of passion’ as the result of adequate provocation constitutes voluntary manslaughter”).


510 King, 181 A.2d at 166.

chooses to take it anyway. An example of this type of manslaughter would be a pharmacist that sells an expired medicine trusting that it will serve its purpose and will not cause the death of the patient, when in fact, it does. Additionally, involuntary manslaughter may take place when a person acts with a grossly negligent conduct. This would be the case in the above example if the pharmacist gave the patient the expired medicine without even looking at the expiration date. Involuntary manslaughter may also occur in the course of the commission of certain offenses, such as when a person procured an illicit drug for herself, and another person who consumes it with her dies of an overdose.

Civil law

In civil law jurisdictions, modern criminal codes generally contain two parts. The first part delineates the general aspects of the theory of the offense, as well as sentencing principles and crime participation. The second part, called “special part,” or lex specialis, contains the definitional terms and sentencing penalties for each crime. Unlike common law, the definitions of crimes in the special part of the codes are quite abstract, and formulated in somewhat more vague terms. The premise behind this lies in the belief that the general theory of offense should suffice to explain all vicissitudes of each particular crime.
In the civil law world, there is usually only one general category of crime against life, namely, homicide (also referred to as simple homicide). Most civil law jurisdictions recognize three subcategories of homicide: simple homicide,\(^{517}\) aggravated homicide,\(^{518}\) and negligent homicide.\(^{519}\) Simple homicide is defined as killing another human being.\(^{520}\) It is a general category that encompasses all homicides committed willfully with both direct and eventual dolus, unless they fit into one of the special subcategories.

Aggravated homicide is the killing of a human being where there exist special circumstances that render the crime more inhumane and cruel. These circumstances vary in different jurisdictions. In Spain, for example, some of these aggravating circumstances are: malice; the receipt of a price, reward or other promise; and brutality in order to increase the victim's suffering.\(^{521}\) In Italy and Argentina, among other states, the criminal code also includes the existence of a family link as an aggravating circumstance. Thus, the homicide of a parent, grandparent, child, grandchild or spouse turns simple homicide into aggravated homicide.\(^{522}\) In Argentina, another aggravating circumstance is killing due to racial or religious hate.\(^{523}\) Interestingly, in France, the profession of the victim may be an aggravating factor—such as the case of judges, lawyers, jurors, public officers, military and police officers.\(^{524}\) In a small minority of civil law jurisdictions, there is a general category of aggravated homicides that more closely resembles the common law concept of murder and malice aforethought. These jurisdictions include Germany, which considers a murderer "whoever kills a human being out of murderous lust, to satisfy his sexual desires, from greed or otherwise

\(^{517}\) See C.P. art.138 (Spain) (simple homicide is referred to as murder); CÓD. PEN. art. 79 (Arg.); C. PÉN. art. 221-1 (Fr.); C.P. art. 575 (Italy) (where simple homicide is merely called homicide).

\(^{518}\) See C.P. art. 139 (Spain); C. PÉN. art. 221-2 (Fr.); CÓD. PEN. art. 80 (Arg.); C.P. art. 576 (Italy).

\(^{519}\) See C.P. art. 142 (Spain); C. PÉN. art. 221-3 (Fr.); CÓD. PEN. art. 84 (Arg.); C.P. art. 589 (Italy).

\(^{520}\) See C.P. art. 138 (Spain); C. PÉN. art. 221-1 (Fr.); CÓD. PEN. art. 70 (Arg.); C.P. art. 575 (Italy).

\(^{521}\) See C.P. art. 139 (Spain).

\(^{522}\) CÓD. PEN. art. 80 (Arg.); C.P. art. 576 (Italy).

\(^{523}\) CÓD. PEN. art. 80 (Arg.).

\(^{524}\) C. PÉN. art. 221-4 (Fr.).
base motives, treacherously or cruelly or with means dangerous to the public or in order to make another crime possible or cover it up;\textsuperscript{525} and Switzerland, whose criminal code conceptualizes murder as different from simple homicide, when the defendant acted without scruples, with malice, and in a perverse fashion.\textsuperscript{526} Negligent homicide is generally defined as causing the death of another human being due to imprudence,\textsuperscript{527} negligence,\textsuperscript{528} inattention,\textsuperscript{529} or non-observance of rules or a professional standard.\textsuperscript{530}

Some jurisdictions also contemplate another subcategory for crimes committed under mitigating circumstances. One such subcategory is unpremeditated ("preterintentional") homicide, which takes place when greater harm than that intended or planned occurs. In the Italian Criminal Code, criminal liability is attached to anyone who, with the intention of committing certain grave crimes, causes the death of a human being.\textsuperscript{531} The unpremeditated homicide usually carries a sentence that is lower than that foreseen for simple homicide.

In some jurisdictions, the codes contemplate the crime of passionate homicide, which carries a reduced sentence, and applies to those cases where the defendant killed as a consequence of a violent mood commotion.\textsuperscript{532} This resembles voluntary manslaughter committed in the heat of passion.\textsuperscript{533} Other civil law jurisdictions have adopted mitigating factors, i.e., situations where the penalty for simple homicide is reduced due to the existence of special circumstances. These

\textsuperscript{525} § 211 Nr. 2 StGB (F.R.G.).
\textsuperscript{526} SCHWEIZERISCHES STRAFGESETZBUCH [STGB] art. 112 (Switz.).
\textsuperscript{527} See C.P. art. 142 (Spain).
\textsuperscript{528} See C.P. art. 589 (Italy); CÓD. PEN. art. 84 (Arg.).
\textsuperscript{529} See C. PÉN. art. 221-6 (Fr.).
\textsuperscript{530} See Id.; CÓD. PEN. art. 84 (Arg.).
\textsuperscript{531} C.P. art. 584 (Italy).
\textsuperscript{532} See StGB art. 113 (Switz.); § 213 StGB (F.R.G) ("If the person committing manslaughter was provoked to rage by maltreatment inflicted on him or a relative or a serious insult by the person killed and was thereby immediately torn to commit the act, or in the event of an otherwise less serious case, the punishment shall be imprisonment from one year to ten years").
\textsuperscript{533} See MPC § 210.3(1)(b) (manslaughter is homicide committed "under the influence of extreme mental or emotional disturbance for which there is reasonable explanation or excuse").
mitigating factors generally include a violent state of emotion, which again can be equated to the common law form of manslaughter committed in the heat of passion. As in common law, some jurisdictions also expressly include the crimes of infanticide and motor vehicular homicide as separate crimes.

Some criminal law comparativists, perhaps betrayed by the apparent similarities, particularly in terminology, have held that simple homicide can be equated with manslaughter and that murder compares to the civil law concept of murder adopted in Spain or, aggravated homicide, as adopted in Italy, France or Argentina, to name but a few. In actuality, murder in common law jurisdictions encompasses all cases of civil law willful homicide, whether simple or aggravated. Although U.S. precedents and doctrine refer to certain situations that do not always find an exact correlation in civil law, both systems have normally given reasonably similar solutions. For example, intent-to-kill murder shares many similarities with direct dolus, and intent to cause serious bodily harm murder—despite superficially appearing to correspond to unpremeditated homicide—actually equates to homicide committed with eventual dolus.

Similarly, voluntary manslaughter committed in the heat of passion equates to civil law's homicide committed in a violent state of emotion, as contemplated in the criminal codes of Switzerland and Argentina, among others. Involuntary manslaughter committed by a negligent act, referred to by the Model Penal Code as negligent homicide, can be equated to civil law's negligent homicide. When involuntary manslaughter is caused by a reckless act, its counterparts in

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534 See, e.g., CÓD. PEN. art. 81 (Arg.).
535 See, e.g., STGB art. 116 (Switz.).
536 See, e.g., C.P. art. 152 (Spain).
537 See Barney Sneideman, PERSPECTIVES ON THE LATIMER TRIAL: Latimer in the Supreme Court: Necessity, Compassionate Homicide, and Mandatory Sentencing, 64 SASK. L. REV. 511, 535 (2001) (noting that many civil law countries apply a lesser degree of homicide depending on the motive for the killing).
538 See HENDLER, supra note 7, at 148.
539 See id. at 149.
540 STGB art. 113 (Switz.); CÓD. PEN. art. 81 (Arg.).
Conclusions

Common law and civil law have been traditionally seen as distinctive and fairly diverse. Each belongs to a tradition that has been regarded as quite different. However, in several areas, common law and civil law have been increasingly moving toward natural convergence. This process toward convergence does not mean that civil law and common law are one and the same. On the contrary, as demonstrated, there are still important differences in virtually every area of law in these two systems. However, these differences derive from a different order of priority in sources, a different style of judicial decisions and doctrinal analysis, and a slightly different interpretation method.

Civil law tends to proclaim sets of principles of general and more abstract applicability to govern most areas of offense. In contrast, in common law jurisdictions there is a tendency to articulate rules of more precise and specific applicability through the courts' adjudication functions.

In the present stage of development toward convergence in the theory of offense, common law and civil law have arrived at practically analogous solutions in the vast majority of criminal law problems, despite differences in style, methodology and terminology. For example, the conception of actus reus resembles the more elaborate notion of act. Civil law, especially through the lens of the Goal-oriented school, places more emphasis on the voluntary nature of the act than common law. However, in practice, the situations where an act exists—and therefore, the cases of inexistence of an act—are essentially the same in both common law and civil law. Similarly, the four mental states of common law find acceptable equivalents in civil law for most crimes. Also, in the area of defenses and justifications, despite certain differences in their treatment, are very similar—with the sole exception of entrapment—in both civil law and common law. Additionally, the conception of crimes against life and the criminal law solutions adopted—albeit clothed in different terminology—are very similar in civil law and common law. For example, murder in common law jurisdictions encompasses all cases of civil law willful homicide, whether simple or aggravated. Similarly,

541 See HENDLER, supra note 7, at 149.
intent-to-kill murder shares many similarities with direct dolus, and the intent to cause serious bodily harm murder equates to homicide committed with eventual dolus. Likewise, voluntary manslaughter committed in the heat of passion equates to civil law’s homicide committed in a violent state of emotion; involuntary manslaughter committed by a negligent act can be equated to civil law’s negligent homicide; and, involuntary manslaughter caused by a reckless act finds its civil law counterpart in homicides committed with eventual dolus and conscious negligence.

The reasons for the similarity in treatment, structure, and analysis between civil law and common law offense theory and practice are twofold. First, common law and civil law present common features: a highly compatible nature derived from their common Western philosophy and secular objectives, and a history of evolution toward convergence. Second, common law and civil law jurisdictions generally pursue similar criminal justice objectives, which translate into related criminal law solutions and instruments.