The subject of the punishment of offenders always excites controversy. Some will argue that the law is too soft. Others believe that it is excessively harsh. This chapter examines how the exercise of punishment (in pursuit of the enforcement of the criminal law) might be validated. Further it examines the various theories that have been advanced by penologists, law reformers, and philosophers to justify or explain its rationale. These theories include the idea of retributivism, consequentialism, restorative justice, and denunciation. Each of these theories makes an attempt to defend the use of state coercion in order to achieve certain objectives.
12. Why punish?