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Abstract for “Can Retributive Punishment Change the Past?”

The retributivist idea that punishment can annul wrongdoing is often the target of philosophical ridicule. Surely we cannot change past wrongdoing—after all, it is in the past! We cannot change the past. I defend annulment against these concerns. First I argue that—in a limited but genuine sense—it is in general possible to alter past events. Next, guided by that argument, I provide two examples of altering past *wrongdoing* through *punishment*. The normative significance of these examples requires further exploration, but they should not be dismissed simply because they involve altering the past.