

Killing in War and Individual Responsibility: On Harmless Aggression

FUKUHARA Masato

Who is morally liable to be killed in war? The individualist view of liability has been a familiar justification of the intentional killing. Accordingly, the criterion of liability is the individual responsibility for a threat of unjustified harm. However, this view has been challenged because it cannot adequately ground the common-sense morality of permissible national defense. Recently, some philosophers have presented counterarguments against this objection, proposing two modifications of liability: (1) the expanded account of liability, (2) the combined account of liability and lesser evils.

In this paper, I refute these modifications of liability as follows. First, after a short overview of the individualist view of liability, I explain that if this view accepts our common-sense morality, killing the unjust soldiers in response to harmless aggression must be proportionate to their degree of liability. Second, I argue that the expanded account is based on faulty reasoning and the combined account is unconvincing because it cannot defend independently of lesser evils itself. Therefore, the individualist view fails to deliver a plausible set of conclusions about when national defense is morally permissible. Finally, I suggest that our common-sense morality includes collectivist view of liability and this view is more promising.