

Reading Questions for February 23

These questions cover a reading by Robert K. Fullinwider called “War and Innocence.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

We are now looking at debates regarding killing in war. As with a lot of the debates, we’re going to be looking at two people who disagree, but who hold positions somewhat in the middle of the spectrum. In particular, both of the people we read are going to say that sometimes it’s ok to kill during a war. But they disagree about whom it’s ok to kill. Fullinwider, the person we’re reading for today, is going to argue that while it’s sometimes morally ok to kill combatants, it’s never morally ok to kill noncombatants (although he hedges a bit near the end).

I thought it might be worth flagging that some of Fullinwider’s examples struck me as being sexist. I picked this article because it’s fairly historically significant, but I thought it was worth noting the sexism and apologizing for picking a reading that is offensive in this way.

*Questions:*

1. On pages 90-1 Fullinwider describes two people – Elizabeth Anscombe and Paul Ramsey – who argue that noncombatants may not be intentionally killed. He also describes one person, George Mavrodes, who criticizes Anscombe and Ramsey. What are Anscombe and Ramsey’s arguments? Why does Mavrodes criticize them? What do you think about Mavrodes’ criticism?
2. In section II (pages 92-4), Fullinwider describes some cases that feature a character named Smith. Fullinwider has some judgments about who Smith is justified in killing? Who does he say Smith can kill?

Fullinwider thinks that his views are connected to self-defense and to punishment. How does he think they are connected? What do you think about what he has to say – is he right or not? Why?

3. In section III (pages 94-5), Fullinwider offers his argument for the moral immunity of noncombatants. How does the argument go? What do you think of it?
4. In section IV (pages 95-7), Fullinwider considers a potential objection to his argument that Mavrodes can make and offers two responses. What is the objection, and what are the potential responses? Are they plausible?