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"Intentions and Moral Permissibility"

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“Intentions and Moral Permissibility”

by

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Abstract

Judith Thomson and Frances Kamm have presented intuitive cases to show that intentions cannot determine the permissibility of an act. In this paper, I argue that their cases are not decisive. I first examine some recent attempts to defend the role of intentions for permissibility against Thomson and Kamm by writers such as FitzPatrick, Walen and Hanser, and I argue that these writers have not established that intentions can independently determine the permissibility of an act. Next, I present variant cases to Thomson’s and Kamm’s cases in which intentions appear to determine the permissibility of the acts, as direct counterexamples to their claim. Finally, I consider some possible replies that Thomson and Kamm might make against the cases I have put forward, and I argue that they do not undermine my conclusion.