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HUM 207

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In Class Discussion

**Question # 2**

Based on the question posed, we considered criteria to determine the morality of the described experimentation and the potential shortcomings of choices surrounding those criteria.

The first criterion is that the issuer of treatment believes it will have a positive effect on the individual patient.

The second criterion is that the experimentation is likely to aid a large portion of cases that may be effected by the treatment.

We clarified that benefit may come from immoral decisions but that the recipient of the benefit of decisions brings ethics into question.

Clearly experimentation that provides net benefit neither to the individual patient nor to a general group is wrong. That is, experimentation that fits neither of our two criteria is unethical.

The utilitarian philosopher would determine that experimentation that meets our second criterion only would be ethical. That is, the greatest good achieved for the greatest number, even at the cost of the individual, is most ethical. Mathematically, morality of a situation is determined in this model by maximization of benefit: benefit equals average benefit per individual times the number of individuals.

The Kantian philosopher may completely ignore either of our criteria and determine the experimentation is ethical as long as the experimenter means well to the definition of the experimenter.

Virtue-based philosophers and followers of deontological ethics may find that any decision lacking the first criterion is unethical. This is because a lack of the first criterion would likely involve misleading or manipulating a patient expecting the issuer of treatment to act in the patient's best interest.

Experimentation that fulfills both criteria probably satisfies a large majority's definition of ethical and also fulfills ours.

The situations placing our two criteria in conflict with one another are in a gray area. They are partially moral and partially immoral. We seem to value the first criteria more than the second, however, we recognize that when these criteria are in conflict, either the individual or the many benefits, while the other loses. We tend to value the individual more than the many because the many is made up of individuals and we seem to believe that only the individual has the right to decide to sacrifice at the benefit of others. Therefore we believe only that if the individual is clearly made aware of the possibility of the second criterion being true and the first being false that this situation is morally permissible.

The utilitarian perspective neglects the individual and ignores the concepts of rights, rules, and freedom of choice. The Kantian perspective ignores the effects and only focuses on intentions. The virtue and deontological perspectives will choose a potentially less-beneficial choice to preserve rights, rules, and virtues.

Each of these perspectives are extreme and therefore we consider a weighted mix of them for determining morality of these choices, if it is even our choice to determine morality.