Discussion of Ethical Theory

Name

Institution

**Introduction**

Ethical theory is one of the major theories that assist people to respond to various ethical dilemmas in their day to day life. For instance, the concepts of ethical theory could be applied some years back in Indiana after one couple gave birth to an infant with Downs Syndrome. The baby that was known as Baby Doe had other complications that involved disconnection of the stomach from the throat. Shockingly, the condition hindered Baby Doe from taking water or food as normal babies do. In fact, the stomach deformity could be corrected through a corrective surgery (Fieser, 2017).

However, the quality of life of the infant would have been miserable throughout its life. Additionally, the infant’s parents would have been subjected to a very great financial and emotional burden. Unfortunately, Baby Doe died after six days because his parents denied him stomach surgery. Indeed, even the Indiana Supreme Court endorsed the decision of the infant’s parents after a controversial and contentious public debate. After the death of Baby Doe, the government of Indiana and the general public asked themselves whether it would be appropriate to perform corrective surgery for such a deformed infant (Fieser, 2017). The case of Baby Doe is an example of ethical dilemma that the infant’s parents, the Indiana Supreme Court and any other involved parties could practice the concepts of ethical theory to determine the fate of the deformed infant.

**Definition and Explanation of Ethical Theory**

Ethical theory is a decision model that involves systematizing, defending and providing recommendations of concepts of wrong or right behavior (Waluchow, 2003). According to Waluchow (2003), ethical theory provides critical concepts for making decisions concerning relatively difficult issues. Ethical theory encompasses two confusing elements that include ethics and morality. Morality describes a set of beliefs that every person has regarding what is wrong and right. Conversely, Ethics involves the methods for justifying people’s beliefs and the set of rules that guide people in applying them. Ethical theory entails another concept known as judgment (Waluchow, 2003). Essentially, judgment is unavoidable and presents itself in the life of every person in the world. Hence, judgment plays a significant role in morality. Reasoned and justified judgments lead to a sound morality. As a matter of fact, nobody can refrain from making judgments. When getting married, for example, the couples must make judgments when choosing the right partner for a long-term relationship.

Worth to mention, ethical theories could be divided into three general parts including normative ethics, metaethics and applied ethics (Waluchow, 2003). Normative ethics explore more on practical task that involve arriving at moral standards which regulate wrong and right conduct. In particular, normative ethics helps people to articulate their good habits with the duties that they ought to follow. Moreover, normative ethics regulates the consequences of one’s behavior on people. Applied ethics helps people to examine specific controversial issues such as infanticide, abortion, homosexuality, animal rights, nuclear war, environmental concerns or capital punishment (Waluchow, 2003). Metaethics investigates the origin of one’s ethical principles as well as what those principles mean.

**Importance of Metaethics for Determining Moral Judgment**

Metaethics plays a significant role in determining moral judgment. Metaethics is a field of ethical theory that investigates where people’s ethical principles emanate from and what those ethical principles mean. Metaethics addresses the questions of whether the ethical principles are merely social inventions or expressions of individual’s emotions (Waluchow, 2003). Essentially, metaethics investigates the psychological background of people’s conduct and moral judgments in attempts to particularly comprehend the factors that motivate people to be moral. Accordingly, metaethics answers the question of why be moral. For instance, most people are aware of some basic moral standards especially that state that you should not kill or steal. However, that does not necessarily suggest that most people would psychologically compel to adhere to those specific moral standards. In such a case, metaethics would help people in such a situation to understand the reasons as to why they should be moral. Most people in such a situation, for instance, would not kill or steal to avoid punishment, to attain happiness, to gain praise, to fit in the society or to be dignified. Hence, metaethics assist people to understand why they should be moral and in making reasoned and justified moral judgments (Waluchow, 2003).

**How Ethical Thinking Results in Practical Moral Action**

As a matter of fact, ethical thinking leads to a practical moral action. Ethical thinking manifests in decisions that are aimed to bring positive impact (Gordon et al., 2009). Additionally, ethical thinking describes a decision making process that focuses on seeking mutual benefit and desire to implement things that are best for other people. Therefore an individual that adopts ethical thinking also practices moral actions because every action we take originates from our own thinking (Gordon et al., 2009). Indeed, we demonstrate moral actions when we think ethically. Conversely, people demonstrate immoral actions if they think unethically.

In our personal lives, for example, we think about the quickest ways to acquire wealth. Most people think of stealing as one of the quickest means to become wealthy. The desire to become rich quickly through stealing is unethical thinking. This unethical thinking leads people to stealing whereby they rob other people of their property by force. In this case, stealing is an immoral action. On the other hand, an individual would think that starting a bookshop would make him or her rich instead of stealing. Such kind of thinking is ethical. Apparently, the action of setting up a bookshop business instead of stealing from other people is a moral action.

**Primary Ethical Theory and a Particular Worldview Elements**

In the case of Baby Doe that had a Downs Syndrome and a stomach complication, I would say that the infant’s parents had a moral obligation to ensuring that the infant went through the corrective stomach surgery. In my ethical position, it was an immoral action for the infant’s parents to neglect their deformed infant on the basis of emotional and financial burden. Although the quality of infant’s life would have been compromised even after the corrective stomach surgery, the infant deserved optimum medical attention to save the life of such an innocent child. Additionally, according to the worldview about what is a human being, Christians believe that man was created by God and in his own image (Naugle, 2002). Hence, the infant’s parents would not have denied the infant its right to undergo corrective stomach surgery. In fact, the Indiana Supreme Court and the infant’s parents would have endorsed the infant’s surgery to protect the image of God.

Indeed, only God has the right to take away people’s life. Furthermore, the worldview regarding how different people know what is right and wrong would assist me in building my ethical position on this ethical dilemma. According to Christian belief regarding this worldview, people resembles God in terms of image and character (Naugle, 2002). Hence, if God’s character is good then people’s character should also be good. Christians believe that all lives are equal before God (Naugle, 2002). In this case, the life of the deformed infant is equally important as the life of a normal person. Therefore, the infant’s parents and the Indiana Supreme Court had an obligation to work towards saving the life of Baby Doe.

**How Christian Worldview Clarifies and Interprets the Ethical Issue and Contributes to the Decision-Making Process**

One of the worldviews that clarifies and interprets ethical issues involves the worldview question about how we know what is wrong and right. In particular, Christian beliefs imitate the conduct and behavior of God who is the Supreme Being (Naugle, 2002). Christians follow Bible teachings to understand and interpret the ethical issues. According to Christians, the Bible is a sacred book that details how people should behave themselves (Naugle, 2002). Furthermore, Christians consider everything that the Bible endorses as ethical issue. For instance, Christians understands corruption as unethical issue because the Bible prohibits corruption.

As such, the Christian worldview has an influence on the decision-making process. Indeed, most Christians rely on the Bible to determine what is right and wrong in the decision-making process. Accordingly, Christians believe that a sound decision manifests in what God endorses in the Bible (Naugle, 2002). In the case of Baby Doe, the infant’s parents would not reach to the decision of denying the infant a corrective stomach surgery if they were to adhere to the Christian worldview of morality. According to Christians, the Bible teaches them that all lives are equal (Naugle, 2002).

**Compare and Contrast the Christian Perspective with an Alternative Worldview**

The Christian perspective about what is right and wrong is based on the Bible teachings that reflects how God intends people to conduct themselves. In particular, Christians believe that people represent God’s image and character (Naugle, 2002). As such, anything that God likes is right while anything that God despises is wrong. An alternative belief that I would compare this worldview with includes Buddhism. According to Buddhism, God is not the Supreme Being (Shipton, Coetzee & Takeuchi, 2014). Buddhists believe that what is wrong and right is determined by the four noble truths that were created by Buddha. However, both Christians and Buddhists believe that there is wrong and right issues. The major difference comes in the perception of determining the cause of wrong and right actions (Shipton, Coetzee & Takeuchi, 2014).

**Concrete Illustration of How the Ethical Position Would be put into Practice in Specific Life Contexts**

In the case of Baby Doe that bears deformities, my ethical position would advocate for the infant to undergo the corrective stomach surgery. According to my ethical position, life is more valuable than material things. So, the infant’s parents would not deny the infant a corrective stomach surgery on the basis of financial and emotional burden. In fact, it would have been better if the parents allowed the surgery for the infant than wait for the innocent baby to die. All lives are equal regardless of whether the holder is normal or deformed. If I would borrow Christian worldview about what is a human being, I would conclude that the infant’s parents contributed to violating God’s will. According to Christians, all human beings are created by God and only Him have the power to take it away from the owner (Naugle, 2002). Additionally, Christian worldview perceives killing as unethical and immoral. According to Christians, there is no single circumstance that allows people to either kill or contribute to any act of terminating the life of another human being (Naugle, 2002). Hence, the infant’s deformity would not be a perfect excuse to allow such an innocent baby to die at an age of six days. The deformed infant had a right to live as many years as God would grant him.

References

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