Case Study: Fetal Abnormality

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Christian worldviews play an important role in healthcare behaviors. Based on religious teachings, individuals decide on which medical procedures and interventions to use, and are likely to reject those that go contrary to their beliefs. This essay is a reflection on the “Fetal Abnormality Case Study”, where Jessica a Christian, is faced with the dilemma of aborting her pregnancy or seeing it to full term and raising a child with severe mental and physical defects.

**Christian View of Human Persons**

Christianity views the nature of human persons as an image of God. As White (n.d) states, during creation God made human beings in his image, and as such, personhood has an origin beyond the physical or human realms. This is different from other theories that describe the nature of human persons based on physical and cognitive attributes among others. The Christian view of the nature of human persons is therefore compatible with the theory based on human properties. This theory of moral status consider human beings as having value due to the fundamental realities that pertain to only humans.

**Relation to Intrinsic value and dignity**

Intrinsic value denotes the means of assessing an entity’s worth depending only on the inherent worth of the entity, and is assumed to be independent of any detriment or benefit that the entity might bring (White, n.d). On the other hand, since every person is a human regardless of physical or cognitive disabilities, the Christian worldview argues that dignity should be afforded to all persons, which denotes respectful treatment. The theory based on human property is therefore related to intrinsic value and dignity since all focus on the fundamental realities that pertain to only humans, regardless of any other challenges an individual may have.

**Theories Used and Evidence from Text**

Dr. Wilson utilizes the theory of cognitive properties. This theory posits that individuals possess moral status only if they have specific basic cognitive functions that are anywhere between foundational to high-level. Such a theory will therefore assume the ability to reason and communicate are indicators of moral status (White, n.d). Dr. Wilson argues from the fact that the fetus does not demonstrate any level of awareness and rationality, hence based on his medical knowledge and the disabilities the child will have, he recommends an abortion. Aunt Maria on the other hand, employs the theory based on human properties which states that humans have value due to the fundamental realities that pertains only to humans. Regardless of the news about the defects, she pleads with Jessica to keep the pregnancy and discover what God intends and even attempts to call the priest. This is Christian worldview.

Jessica, the individual heavy with child and with an important decision to make is conflicted between maintaining a sacred life and her hopes for a better socioeconomic position and increased independence. However she can be said to apply the theory based on sentience (White, n.d). This theory of moral status argues about consciousness on the bass of pain and pleasure with pain being deemed evil (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). Although much is not provided about her views, Jessica partly wants to keep her life sacred, a situation that will not occur if she aborts the fetus, and causes it pain. However, this religious view also implies the application of the theory based on human properties. Finally, Marco employs the theory based on relationships. This theory holds that relationships between persons denote the moral status. As such a human has moral status only when he or she has a relationship with other individuals who value him or her. Marco states that he will support Jessica in whichever decision she takes. In this case, the fetus’s moral status in Marco’s perspective depends on whether the mother values it or not.

**How Theory Influences Recommendations**

Each theory follows a logical structure to afford or deny the human being moral status (White, n.d). For instance, since the fetus lacks rationality and other cognitive abilities, the doctor recommends it to be aborted, to save the couple the distress associated with raising a severely disabled child. In a similar decision making approach, the Aunt Maria, believes the fetus is human, hence a child of God hence Jessica should keep the pregnancy to full term and raise the child regardless. In Marco’s perspective, the fetus will only be kept if the mother decides to, with the relationship between the mother and the fetus determining moral status. Finally, Jessica does not make any decision and can be viewed as a moral agent, weighing between two moral issues.

**My Theory and its Impact on Action**

Theory I agree with is the theory based on human properties. This theory realizes that a fetus has value since it has fundamental realities that only exist in humans. The other theories employ functionalist approaches to assess the value of human persons which go against Christian values and the belief of affording dignity to all individuals since they were created in the image of God (White, n.d). Since this theory agrees that the fetus has fundamental realities that can only be found in humans hence it is human with a moral status, it will oppose any suggestions to abort, but instead support the suggestion to keep the pregnancy and raise the child.

**Conclusion**

Moral status shapes the judgment given regarding a person’s value and treatment according to moral and ethical standards. The Fetal Abnormality case study, has shown how various individuals are guided by different theories of moral status, and how they determine when to afford dignity or not. However, the theory based on human properties stands out, not only due to its alignment to Christian worldviews, but also its recognition of the fetus as a human as it possesses human properties despite not being cognitive as developed humans.

# References

Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. (2013). *Principles of biomedical ethics.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

White, N. H. (n.d). *God, Humanity, and Human Dignity.*