

PHI 413V Topic 2 Case Study on Moral Status: Fetal Abnormality

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Moral status is the value or worth of a person. The moral status of a fetus has recently posed a huge ethical dilemma, while abortion has been known to be controversial all along (Brown, 2018). However, sometimes, the fetus may be at risk or risk the mother's life. In this case, it is medically advisable to terminate the pregnancy. Abortion raises ethical questions, especially surrounding the moral status of the unborn child. The case study involves a couple, Jessica and Marco, who have visited the hospital for a prenatal clinic at four months of pregnancy. The ultra-sound reveals several abnormalities in the fetus, and the doctor, Wilson, recommends an abortion. They are torn between which action to take. This essay presents the Christian view of the nature of human persons, theories of moral status that the participants in the case study use, and how the theories support the recommendations of action of each participant in the case study.

Christian View of the Nature of Human Persons

The Christian view of the nature of human persons is based on the biblical view and description of the person. First, the human person's nature is that humans are created in the image of God and that all humans reflect what God is like. God's image in human persons involves several innate characteristics that make the person "like God." The characteristics are that God has made human persons rational, sociable, free, creative, and capable of having a relationship with him (McEwan, 2020). Rationality means that the human person can think, understand, and make decisions and judgments. Being rational means that the person can weigh the consequences and actions of their judgment. Humans are created to be sociable, meaning they are relational. They are also given free will to choose between courses of action. Humans also can use creativity to make the world better. Secondly, the Christian view of the nature of

human persons is that human persons are made with a body and soul. The body is mortal, but the soul is immortal. The soul is God-given and continues to live on even after death.

The moral status theory is compatible with the Christian view of human persons, which is Kant's moral theory of respect for persons. According to Downie and Telfer (2018), the respect for person theory holds that every human has a right to be respected, and all humans should be treated the same way. The Christian view of the nature of persons holds that moral status does not differ from one person to another. In the Christian perspective, human beings are intrinsically valuable and worthy of dignity and respect since they are created in the "image of God."

Theories Used by Marco, Jessica, Maria, and Dr. Wilson to Determine the Moral Status of the Fetus

Marco seems undecided about the moral status of the fetus. He is disappointed about the unfortunate news but worries about their future economic and security plans. However, he feels the fetus has a moral status since it is human. His theory to determine its moral status is based on human properties. It stipulates that a human being has value simply because they have properties of a human, such as genetics. The fact that Marco recognizes that the fetus has value since it has his and his wife's genes shows that he uses the theory of human properties. Despite finding it difficult not to view the financial burden of having a disabled child, he believes that the fetus has a moral status.

Jessica, the expectant mother, is torn between making a final decision given the medical, financial, and religious implications that the decision might have. However, she acknowledges that the fetus has moral status and finds it hard to make a final decision. Therefore, she also uses the moral status theory based on human properties. Jessica's trying to hold her tears after the unfortunate news indicates that she believes the fetus has moral status and deserves life.

Maria, Jessica's aunt, firmly holds the Christian worldview and uses the theory of respect for persons to determine the moral status of the unborn child. As seen in the case study, she pleads with Jessica not to abort the child, citing that it is against her beliefs. She says that God intends and Jessica's responsibility as a mother would be to care for the child despite the financial constraints. She believes the fetus has moral status, is created in God's image, and should thus be respected.

In this case, Dr. Wilson, the medical professional, does not influence the decisions made by the parents. Sutherland (2021) notes that a patient has a right to make autonomous decisions without the influence of healthcare professionals. However, as a right of the patient to get the full information, he puts across the diagnosis of the fetus. He recommends an abortion as a medically responsible alternative, given that the fetus may have a poor quality of life. The theory he uses to determine the fetus's moral status is based on cognitive properties. The theory holds that cognitive properties confer moral status to a person. Cognitive properties involve thinking, reasoning, memory, and understanding. It is clear that the fetus will lack cognitive abilities, which leads to Dr. Wilson recommending an abortion.

My Point of View

Such an unfortunate situation may require a practical and rational decision, even though it is hard to make. As a medical professional, I believe in enhancing a patient's well-being and the best patient outcomes. The fetus lacks cognitive functionality, therefore, is not a moral agent. I agree with and would use the moral status theory based on cognitive properties. More so, their quality of life would be low if they were born. I would therefore recommend an abortion being a medically responsible action. It would save the fetus from suffering and thus is the best outcome in this case.

Conclusion

Challenging and unfortunate situations such as the one presented in this case study pose a serious moral dilemma. The decisions different people would make in such a scenario are based on their beliefs, moral compass, and the theories that guide their morality. Moral theories and religious views can be used to determine the moral status of the fetus in such a scenario. I respect the nature of human persons, but in this case, I would favor the moral theory based on cognitive properties. The theory holds that cognitive abilities and functionality endow a person's moral status.

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