

Case Analysis: Whistleblowing

On July 12, 2007, the United States military responded to reports of small arms fire in a Baghdad suburb. They could not identify the gunmen, so they sent two Apache gunships. On that day a dozen Iraqis were killed and among them were two Reuters news agency staff members. The whistleblower (Manning) sent the footage to WikiLeaks, and they released the footage titled “Collateral Murder”. In this video it covers two competing narratives on the event. One comes from Julian Assange, the owner of WikiLeaks and Ivan Eland a U.S. Defense Analyst. Assange argues against the actions of the United States military while Eland defends and justifies the actions in Iraq and more specifically the actions of the soldiers in the video. In this Case Analysis I will argue that deontology shows us that Manning did not act out of loyalty to the United States, and that her actions were an immoral case of whistleblowing.

In Whistle blowing and Rational Loyalty by Wim Vandekerckhove and M.S. Ronald Commers they cover the relationship between the employers and the employee. More specifically, the idea of loyalty and how this can relate to whistle blowing. One concept that stuck out to me is the idea of a form of psychological contract that exists between the employer and the employee. In a way all employees are kind of looking after or showing their employee a little bit of loyalty. People may not jump at the first opportunity to get a new higher paying job. In return these employers keep giving up money and benefits. This is needed to keep our economy moving. If we were constantly training new people, rehiring, and doing paperwork for new hires everything would start moving at a snail’s pace. One concept I believe exemplifies this idea of a psychological contract is the two-weeks’ notice. Employees are looking out for the employer with this and giving them time to look for new people and not leaving them stranded. Another key in this paper is the idea that sometimes whistleblowing is the loyal thing to do

because you want to make that organization better. It is kind of like telling someone they have food on their face. It is embarrassing for a second, they fix it, and boom everything's better. One key to this is that there needs to be some form of institution through a whistleblower can blow the whistle through an internal channel. If the employer is also truly loyal then they will change to reciprocate the loyalty that the employee has shown.

When we move back to our case with this information, we can begin to question whether the whistleblowers actions were truly loyal or not. It is hard to tell if our whistleblower truly wanted to help make the country better, but it is also hard to tell if the government would take this complaint seriously. Looking back now we can see that the government did take this complaint seriously because they went back and tried to right their wrongs by compensating the children who were injured during the absolutely brutal and gruesome attack. We can also see that the whistleblower completely avoided the use of internal whistleblowing channels to report such an event and try to create change from the inside.

When we look at this from the deontological point of view, we can also find how the whistleblower blowing their whistle was also immoral. This is because our whistleblower completely removed the ability for the government to do the right thing in response to these actions. By whistleblowing the governments hands were forced, and the whistleblowing removed the ability for them to choose the right thing to do. In a way it is as if the governments actions to redeem themselves were for the wrong reasons. They did not compensate the injured kids because they were in the wrong, but because the world saw what they did was wrong, and they were trying to save face at this point. Then when we bring the categorical imperative into the equation, I believe the whistleblower went against it. The whistleblower acted against this by

whistleblowing for the countries own good. They took their ability to make the right decisions away.

In Julinna Oxley and D.E. Wittkower's "Care and Loyalty in the Workplace" we once again tackle the ideas of loyalty in the professional world. One aspect of this paper that stuck out to me is the ethics of care in the workplace. This entire idea of care is a voluntary case of interdependence. We are choosing to join into this relationship between our employers. This means that we are at least going to care a little bit and that care is directly related to our loyalty. Of course, this is a two-way street. We care for our employers and our employers care for us. If we truly care though we have a certain obligation to make the thing we care about better or help it be the best it can be. This is where whistleblowing and the idea of care can collide. If we truly care about the organization sometimes people need to blow the whistle. Sometimes you need to go above their heads and try and make change for the better because you care and are loyal. One example of this that really stood out to me is the friend that is a failing student who is no longer going to class. Sometimes it is best to go over their heads and try and find someone to help them because you care.

Then when we move towards our case analysis one may wonder if the whistleblowers actions were loyal according to Oxley and Wittkower. I believe they would find our whistleblowers action's to be disloyal. It is hard to tell what the whistleblowers true intentions are. Did they truly care about trying to make the United States better? Were they acting out of care for the United States? I do not believe they did. Would it not be better to address this issue internally? The whistleblower released thousands of sensitive US government documents which in essence aided our enemies and only hurt the US (Jefferies 2022). If they truly cared about the United States or trying to make the United States better, I believe they never would have released

thousands of documents and potentially just released the video. This does nothing to help and only hurts the organization and aides the organizations enemies. If we go back to the example of the failing student this would be like telling on them to their parents with a hundred photos of them drinking out and about.

When we once again look at this from a deontological perspective, we can see again that by acting independently and trying to solve another's problem the whistleblower removed the ability for the United States to do the right thing. This is why it is immoral from this perspective. By blowing the whistle it assumes that the people were intentionally trying to kill people and it was not a mistaken case much like the murderer at the door example. Then when we look towards the categorical imperative we can once again see how this was an immoral case of whistleblowing. The whistleblower treated the United States without any respect or loyalty. She completely removed their ability to do what was right and correct their mistakes.

Overall, I believe that whistleblowing is an important and vital part of any society. Enabling these whistleblowers to blow the whistle without fear of repercussions is an essential way for the world to remain a safe place to live. For example, I believe the Boeing case really exemplifies this fact. They were skipping safety regulations in favor of a profit which caused many to be hurt and even killed. I also believe that the deontological point of view does not lend itself to this way of thinking. I do not believe that corporations and often times countries will ever act in a way where they will correct these actions. I think that it is the duty of the public to push them in the right direction and without whistleblowers the public may never learn about any of these actions. With this case I believe that the whistleblower did the right thing but went to far. There was no need to release additional classified documents. I also believe that the idea of loyalty in professional ethics is a little dicey in todays climate. I think we often have no choice

but to be loyal to our employers and we as employees have little power to enforce the employers end of the loyalty contract or agreement.