

Case Analysis on Whistleblowing

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In a documentary style video titled *Collateral Murder?* by Al-Jazeera, a well-known news channel which is based in the Middle East, this video details and analyzes another video from the infamous media company, Wikileaks who leaked a video (of the same title) of an American Apache Attack Helicopter mercilessly gunning down a group of Iraqi citizens in the midst of the second Persian Gulf War. The casualties in this event which later became known as the Baghdad airstrike, included two Iraqi war correspondents working for Reuters international news agency. Their cameras were mistaken for RPG's, but they were fired upon again even after injury, which is in violation of rules of engagement of war. The situation becomes even messier when it turns out that this video gets leaked to the internet by former United States Army soldier Chelsea Manning, leading to her eventual conviction in a court martial case. In a situation like this any decision Chelsea Manning decided to take will have an ethical dilemma. However, I believe In this Case Analysis I will argue that through the Kantian ideology of Deontology shows us that Manning did act out of loyalty to the United States, and that her actions were a moral case of whistleblowing.

In Wim Vandekerckhove and M. S. Ronald Commers article *Whistle Blowing and Rational Loyalty*, they discuss the multiple interpretations of what it means to be loyal and the differing beliefs across many disciplines of what constitutes as loyalty and why or why not should a group of people be loyal to entities such as organizations, businesses or even countries. In terms of rational loyalty, they are two major differing school of thoughts and those are the beliefs of Duska and Corvino. Duska believes within an organization there is no conflict between remaining loyal and whistle blowing based on the fact that there is no duty

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of loyalty within a business organization because he believes you cannot be loyal to a business entity and that loyalty depends on ties that demand self-sacrifice without the expectation of receiving rewards as the point of working in a business is to make profit, such is the goals of both employee and employer. Corvino goes against this line of thinking, specifically refuting his two supporting reasons why businesses do not require a duty of loyalty. His argument lies in the fact that he believes that businesses are a group of people and receiving rewards is simply just a byproduct of being loyal. The reason I discussed these two beliefs in business ethics is even when you take in both views, former United States Army soldier Chelsea Manning did the ethically correct thing. The United States Army exists to defend the interests of a government chosen of the people, by the people and for the people. Which means she serves the American people and not specifically the United States Federal government. Using Duska's argument she does not owe any loyalty to the Army simply because she is there because it is her job and if she deems it right to whistle blow then she is morally allowed to do so. She also did not get rewarded for her actions and knew the negative repercussions of her actions. If we use Corvino's argument, the United States Army are a group of people who serve the American public, hence leaking this video is showing her loyalty to the country as a whole. In the Kantian philosophy of Deontology, Immanuel Kant focuses more on the importance on people's reasoning for committing an act whether than if the act was morally right or wrong. Chelsea Manning's reasoning for leaking the video of the Baghdad Airstrike of 2007 was because she believed the actions of this military unit to be immoral and wanted to expose the wrongdoings of the United States military to the world. As Chelsea Manning herself was quoted to say "The decisions that I made in 2010 were made out of a concern for my country and the world that we live in." (John Stoltenberg, 2013). Using Kantian philosophy whether it was morally wrong to expose that information does not matter because her intentions were completely ethical. This act fits more into Deontology

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when you take into effect that she knew by leaking this information to Wikileaks and online hackers that she broke the United States Espionage Act of 1917 and was going to face jailtime. Loyalty in the article discussed in this paragraph was defined as self-sacrificed with no expectation of rewards, her loyalty to the American people and to the wellness of the world is seen in her brave action to leak the information even if it means risking her own freedom.

In this article, Julinna Oxley and D.E. Wittkower's *Care and Loyalty in the Workplace*, looks at loyalty in a different concept with this article viewing loyalty as a type of care opposed to trying to define what it meant to be loyal and breaking down the aspects of loyalty in Wim Vandekerckhove and M. S. Ronald Commers article *Whistle Blowing and Rational Loyalty*. The biggest difference in this article is rather than being motivated by the four criteria of loyalty and the duty of loyalty, now caring for the well-being of the people within your organization is the main motivation for loyalty. Rather than looking at loyalty as a set of obligations to fulfill, loyalty is look at as an expression of caring for another person or entity. Entities including businesses, doing things that may be beyond your contract and the goal of making profit just out of the love of the company and making people within the company grow a caring relationship for each other. Similar to the idea of ethics of care, loyalty should be done out of the benefit of both parties to establish a flourishing relationship of mutual interdependence. An interesting facet of loyalty that was not brought is how morally damaging loyalty can be when it is to an immoral cause. The writers recognize that not all expressions of loyalty are morally appropriate hence they believe appropriate loyalty is being loyalty to an entity that is caring in nature while inappropriate loyalty would be the opposite. There is also a dilemma with loyalty specifically when it comes to whistleblowing

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as loyalty could drive someone to become a whistleblower for the love of the company or to attack and silence a whistleblower for that very same love of the company. To combat this

dilemma, it is written that whoever works in the best interests of the entity is the truly loyal one, but this is a fallacy because the best interests of the entity is in the eye of the beholder.

The main idea of the article is that loyalty itself is not a moral act but what you are loyal to as

well as the reasons why you are loyal to the entity is what makes it moral or immoral. This

closely follows the deontological belief that the reasoning for action is what decides the

morality of said action, not the action itself. Going off both the article and the Kantian

philosophy of Deontology, Chelsea Manning does not owe the United States Army any

loyalty as she believed that by whistle blowing that video to Wikileaks she was doing it out of

the love of the American people and wanted to let them know what was truly going on with

their troops. Through the perspective of Chelsea Manning, by leaking the information of the

Baghdad airstrike she was working for the best interests of the American people. Whether the

action of whistle blowing is a moral act or not, it does not matter because her reasoning is

entirely ethical and moral.

In the end, Chelsea Manning was convicted of multiple crimes of espionage and many deem her a traitor to the United States of America, but many deem her a hero to the American people. Such is the fate of a whistleblower, they end up leaving a divisive legacy. I personally agree with her conviction, it may have been a little harsh, but she broke the law and the law should be upheld in this country. However, the law and ethics are not the same, whether you believe what she did was wrong, or right is up to your own personal interpretation. One thing that cannot be said is that she did not have the right reasons to blow the whistle on the Baghdad airstrike, the acts committed in those videos were very unethical and broke the rules

of engagement of modern warfare. As a country that parades themselves as the bastion of Democracy, we should not shun Manning for showing the ugly parts of Democracy because in a truly free country we should be allowed to see it for what it truly is, the good, the bad and the ugly.

References

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