

Case Analysis on Whistleblowing

In the video “Collateral Murder”, there was footage shown from the war in Iraq where military members in an Apache helicopter shot and killed possible threats along with citizens as collateral damage. It is difficult to say whether their actions were moral or not because times of war are different and being on the front line puts tremendous stress on a soldier. There was footage that showed the soldiers following protocols before firing, they always asked for permission from their commanding officer and gave as much feedback about the possible target before engaging. They also flew around the targets multiple times to try and gather as much information before killing anyone. Robert Gates, the U.S. Defense Secretary stated that “They were in a combat situation. The video doesn’t show the broader picture of the firing that was going on at American troops” and “These people were operating in split-second situations”. There was also mention of the rules of engagement at the time of the war stating that it was much more relaxed. The commentator also stated that the soldiers would need to act in self interest of safety to protect their own lives first. 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.

One of the first main concepts that Vandekerckhove talks about in his paper is loyalty. He defined loyalty as “a willingness to sacrifice. It carries that notion of sacrifice with it, because a loyal individual designates someone who is willing to act for the benefit of someone or something else” (pg. 227). He also states that loyal means “true to obligations” (pg. 227). In a case of whistleblowing, the employee would be breaking their loyalty to the company if he/she were to break their obligations and do something against the companies wishes or ignore their managers and go straight to the board of directors. Vandekerckhove also explains the origin of loyalty and how it can have differing meanings. I could argue that loyalty to a nation would be different then being loyal to a company or another person. It is certainly different for a soldier or member of the armed forces than it is for a civilian in a country. For a soldier, loyalty is obeying orders and fulfilling their missions. It is like the term “fidelity” the Vandekerckhove defines as “unfailing fulfillment of one’s duties and obligations” (pg. 228).

Manning as a soldier in the army vowed to uphold orders and serve her country was under more strict loyalty codes than someone outside of the armed forces. In the military, you don’t have the right to be a whistleblower. One of the things many people who sign up for the military could agree on is that you sign away certain rights and liberties for the protection of others and for your nation. When she uploaded the classified video of the helicopter and her fellow comrades’ actions, she did not respect them as individuals. Kant’s ideals states that the duty to respect others is absolute, and it’s never right to fail to respect others for the greater good. If Manning’s greater good was to show the public or the world how the United States soldiers were conducting

war time action, then it was still wrong to throw her fellow soldiers under the bus for obeying orders and showing their actions to the public. Those soldier who were out on the front lines were disrespected by being publicly humiliated by the release of the video. They were under a tremendous amount of stress and had to make split second decisions for the safety and the safety of their comrades. It is unfair to them to be shown as villains or murders when they were doing their duty as United States soldiers. Another reason Manning's actions were immoral stem from the deontological aspect that a particular action is right or wrong based on the best reasons. I would argue that public knowledge of the actions taken by the military was not the best reason she could have chosen. I believe that choosing to uphold the chain of command and the wants of your country take priority over whether or not the war and the actions taken in war time are moral. War in general is not moral, so trying to be a whistleblower during wartime and leak information regarding your units' actions were not loyal and not moral.

A concept of Oxley's paper is loyalty as a product of care. She states that "loyalty should thus be interpreted as a kind of partiality to those one cares for, justified on the basis that one cares for the other" (pg. 224). A good example of this is that you would care for your significant other because you have an obligation based on the voluntary choice to live with one another. Another example of this could be with soldiers. Each soldier has voluntarily chosen to join the service and each of them has an obligation to do what is in the best interest of their survival. Whether that is making decisions during wartime or simply doing your job properly because your actions might affect the outcome of one of your fellow servicemen's lives. Another explanation of loyalty is explained as "loyalty as concern involves placing the interest of another being ahead of oneself or another person" (pg. 225). This is very true for soldiers who are willing to risk their own lives for the sake of others. If Manning followed these beliefs, then she would not have placed her own interests first by releasing the video. One of the things that Kant said was "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". What if Manning had done something immoral and one of her friends or fellow soldiers released information regarding her deeds to the public? I am sure that she would have been angry or upset. She could have possibly felt betrayed by the ones just like herself, out on the front lines serving their country. I am sure she would not have wanted that on herself. If you consider that, then her actions would once again be considered immoral.

A good point that Oxley establishes when discussing loyalty to a corporation is that "it is possible for an employee to care for and be loyal to a corporation that pursues amoral interests" and includes "the possibility that employees may also care for and be loyal to corporations whose interests are immoral from the care ethical perspective" (pg. 235). Being an ethical person or making an ethical decision does not mean that you can't work for a company that does not always follow ethical decision making. It is rare for a company as an entity to be moral in most situations. It is rather the people who run the company or the ones in charge that have the responsibility to make ethical decision for the company itself. So, if we looked at the United States army as an entity similar to a company, could Manning have been loyal even though some

of the actions taken from the entity were immoral? I believe the way she could have done this was by not becoming a whistleblower. If she did not agree with the way that the military was acting, then there should have been other options than breaking the law by releasing classified information to the public and disrespecting her fellow “employees” or the other soldiers. When looking at the United States as her contractor or company, then becoming a whistleblower also demonstrates her lack of loyalty to the “company” and breaking the moral code.

The concept of whistleblowing is a good ethical tool to bring up problems that could affect the safety of others. Loyalty is also an important aspect of relationships both inside and out of businesses. I think that respecting others as individuals is also needed in society and businesses for people to act ethically and live together peacefully. When defining loyalty as a symbol of nationalism for one’s country, it is different than being loyal to a company or individual. You are supposed to give up one’s own ideals for the sake of the nation. I feel as if some of my arguments may have been a bit biased being a veteran myself and feeling some of the pressures that the soldiers in the video would have had to endure on the front lines. When it comes to national security and protecting the freedoms of those within a country, loyalty is more important than acting as an individual and risking the lives of those around you.