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Phil 355E

Reflective Writing Assignment

Throughout this course, I've taken on various ethical dilemmas and perspectives, especially through case analyses on whistleblowing, cyberconflict, and the role of social media in elections. These topics have really have expanded my understanding of ethical principles and how they apply to real-world situations. In this reflection, I'll discuss how my thoughts have evolved over this course and the key takeaways from each topic, highlighting the importance of rational loyalty, just war theory, and virtue ethics in navigating complex ethical issues.

Whistleblowing: Rational Loyalty and Virtue Ethics

When I first analyzed the whistleblowing case involving Chelsea Manning and the "Collateral Murder" video, I mainly focused on the legal implications and national security concerns pragmatically. However, after studying Vandekerckhove and Commers' concept of rational loyalty, my perspective shifted. They argue that true loyalty means staying committed to ethical principles and values, rather than just blindly following an organization. This idea really hit home for me because it emphasizes the need for ethical integrity and the courage to challenge wrongdoings.

I came to see Manning's actions, driven by a deep sense of justice and responsibility, as aligning with rational loyalty. Her whistleblowing wasn't a betrayal; it was an attempt to maintain the moral integrity of the U.S. military by exposing misconduct. This new understanding made me appreciate the tough ethical choices whistleblowers face and the moral bravery needed to act despite the consequences.

Learning about virtue ethics added another layer of understanding. Virtue ethics is all about the character and intentions behind actions, not just the outcomes. In Manning's case, her actions showed virtues like courage, honesty, and justice. This perspective helped me see the ethical side of whistleblowing beyond just legal concerns, highlighting the importance of moral character in challenging decisions.

Ethical integrity and rational loyalty often mean challenging unethical behavior within organizations. It takes courage to stick to core ethical values, even when it's risky, and this is crucial for maintaining moral integrity. Moral integrity will degrade unless honest action is taken.

Cyberconflict: Just War Theory and Virtue Ethics

The cyberwar between Israel and Iran, marked by attacks on crucial infrastructure, raised big questions about the ethics of cyber warfare. At first I saw cyberattacks as strategic tools in modern warfare without thinking much about their ethical implications, particularly beyond the digital space. But studying Michael Boylan's application of Just War Theory to cyber warfare gave me a structured way to evaluate the morality of these actions.

Boylan's criteria of just cause, legitimate authority, proportionality, and discrimination highlighted the ethical issues in the cyberwar between Israel and Iran. Both countries engaged in actions that heavily blurred the lines between military and civilian targets and caused disproportionate harm to the respective populace. This analysis, along with Taddeo's focus on cyber-specific just war principles, showed me the importance of following ethical guidelines in cyber operations.

Through the lens of virtue ethics, it was clear that both nations' actions lacked near all moral virtues like justice, prudence, and temperance. Their cyberattacks were indiscriminate and retaliatory, reflecting a failure to prioritize ethical principles over strategic gains. This view deepened my understanding of the ethical complexities in cyber warfare and the need to integrate moral virtues into military decisions.

Following ethical guidelines and cultivating moral virtues are essential in cyber warfare. Ethical decision-making in conflicts should focus on justice, prudence, and protecting civilians over strategic goals.

Social Media and Information Warfare: Virtue Ethics and Responsibility

The 2016 U.S. presidential election showed just how influential social media can be on public opinion and democracy as a whole. At first, I saw platforms like Facebook as fairly neutral, just facilitating a "public square". But after learning about Jarred Prier's concept of information warfare and Keith Scott's discussion on balancing free speech with regulation, my perspective changed.

Prier's analysis revealed how social media can be used for information warfare, manipulating public perception with disinformation and viral hoaxes. This highlighted the ethical responsibility social media platforms have to maintain information integrity. Scott's emphasis on balancing free speech with preventing harm showed the need for content regulation to protect public discourse.

Through the lens of virtue ethics, Facebook's failure to prevent the spread of disinformation and prioritize engagement over truth became clear. The platform's actions lacked virtues like prudence, justice, and responsibility, compromising the democratic process.

This analysis made me realize the ethical obligations of social media platforms and the need for stricter measures to ensure information accuracy.

Social media platforms have a big ethical responsibility to keep information accurate and prevent disinformation. Balancing free speech with protecting public discourse is key to safeguarding democracy.

Working through these ethical dilemmas has greatly deepened my understanding of the complexities in whistleblowing, cyber warfare, and the role of social media in elections. Each analysis evolved the critical importance of ethical principles and moral virtues in navigating these challenges. Moving forward in life, I'll carry the lessons of rational loyalty, just war theory, and virtue ethics with me, recognizing the importance of ethical integrity, principled decision-making in conflicts, and the responsibility to maintain public discourse integrity. Carrying on these concepts not as individual analysis's but as a combined whole will ensure I'm better equipped for ethical dilemmas in my future professional and private life.

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