Karyn Keane

Dr. Repp

PHIL 308

25 April 2017

Applied Ethics Exercise

I was assigned to examine the topic at hand through a libertarian lens. Our notes from class provided the topic of social welfare programs for the sake of the hypothetical situation, stating that a libertarian would respond to the issue by saying that “taxing the rich to benefit the poor violates a fundamental right—the right to enjoy the fruits of my own labor.” One can infer from this example that according to libertarianism, what makes an action right is that it does not violate anyone’s fundamental rights. What makes an action wrong is that it violates someone’s fundamental rights.

Bearing this theory in mind, one could argue that all United States borders should be closed to immigrants. When we allow immigrants into the country, they have opportunities to work American jobs. A libertarian could argue that since allowing these immigrants to take American jobs limits available employment opportunities for American citizens, open borders result in a violation of American citizens’ fundamental right to work. Thus, according to this argument, borders should be closed. To organize this in a typical argument deconstruction format:

Premise 1: According to libertarianism, something is wrong if it violates someone’s fundamental right.

Premise 2: Letting immigrants take American jobs leads to fewer employment opportunities for American citizens.

Premise 3: Letting immigrants “take away jobs” from American citizens is a violation of American citizens’ fundamental right to work.

Conclusion: We should have closed borders.

Conversely, libertarians could also argue in favor of open borders. They could contend that by allowing immigrants to move freely into the United States, we would be preserving their fundamental rights to safety and opportunities for holistic life advancements. To ban them from coming in would be a violation of their fundamental rights. In other words:

Premise 1: According to libertarianism, something is right if it doesn’t violate someone’s fundamental rights.

Premise 2: The rights to safety and holistic life advancements are fundamental rights.

Premise 3: Barring immigrants from entering the United States would violate immigrants’ fundamental rights to safety and holistic life advancements.

Conclusion: We should have open borders.

In this case, the argument opposing closed borders reigns superior. The fundamental rights of immigrants are just as valuable as those of American citizens and their access to opportunities should be regarded with the utmost importance.