*Final Paper*

Currently, within the medical community, there is a debate on the biomedical ethics of the Gender Reassignment Surgery (GReS). However, if one truly looks to the biomedical principle, the conclusion of this paper/my argument will be that GReS is morally permissible due to the fact that an individual is a competent adult. Thus, meaning the individual has the right to self-determination. In this paper I show that GReS is morally permissible based on the biomedical, Kantarian and Utilitarian principles.

This paper will be based off of the claim/argument that if one suffers from severe mind/body imbalance, then gender reassignment surgery (GReS) is morally permissible. I began my argument with this claim for several reasons, however before I begin explaining those reasons, I would like to address the opposing side to GReS. The American Psychological Association has classified Gender Identity Disorder (GID) as a psychiatric disorder that can be treated over time in therapy. This statement is based off of the idea that not liking oneself is a mental disorder (self-body image), and therefore, can in fact be reversed to a healthy self-image. GRes has been compared to the idea of someone with an eating disorder who cannot continue to starve themselve because they have a bad self-image. Instead, they need therapy and rehabilitation. If society will not allow those with eating disorders to stop eating because they are not happy with the way they look, then why should it be allowed for those who identify with the physical attributes of the opposite gender to be able to medically change themselves?

Well, it seems logical that as long as the individual who is wishing to have the gender reassignment surgery is competent, and has the financial means and support of loved ones, then it should be morally permissible to have a GReS due to human beings having the right to self-determination/autonomy. In fact, gender identity disorder is a biological issue resting on what they believe they should look and feel like. If one thinks their body should be physically a man’s or a woman’s, but it is not, then their body and soul are always going to be separate causing great distress on the individual. Utilitarian philosophers state that the outcome of all the happiness the individual will feel after having the surgery far outweighs the negative effects of harassment. This is because GID should be treated as a physical issue in which one should be allowed to receive surgery in order to be physically and spiritually coherent.

The second part of the argument is the “p” that one suffers from severe mind-body imbalance. The idea that one’s body is separate from who they are as a person is a much greater issue than trivializing it as a mental “issue”. It is impossible for a human being to feel confident as an individual if they are uncomfortable with what they see when they look at themselves in a mirror. If one is uncomfortable in their own skin then this begins to have an effect on their daily lives, thus affecting those around them. This brings in Kantian Moral Theory. The Kantian Moral Theory is centered around the idea that although individual autonomy is important, and needs to be respected, it is also important to keep in mind the needs and feelings of others. When undergoing such an extensive surgery as GReS, it is important to have loved ones’ support. This support is imperative primarily because the concept of changing one’s gender is still an idea that society does not fully endorse so the patient must be prepared to face situations that may include: harassment, violence, and discrimination. Also, Kantian philosophers bring in the question of one’s financial situation. Due to the fact that changing one’s identity is an elective surgery, it is unlikely that insurance will cover any part of the process. This means that the money for this transformation will be coming out of pocket, and therefore, it is important that the needs of one’s dependents are taken care of before the surgery. Thus, according to Kantian philosophers, it would not be fair to neglect dependents in the search for one’s own identity. Expanding on that principle is the thought that if the person is rational, then he or she is a free human. Thus, from what I have learned throughout this course, if a person is rational then they do in fact have autonomy, and therefore would be in control of his/her healthcare decisions. However, as stated in the previous paragraph, Utilitarian philosophers would say that even if one’s family/friends do not agree with their decision to get the procedure they should still proceed with the surgery if it makes them happy. This is based on Utlilitarians taking into account the best outcome. The happiness and peace that will come from someone who gets the surgery will be far greater than if they decided to confine to what his/her parents wanted, and never fulfills their own wants/desires. A counter argument to the fact someone suffers from severe mind-body imbalance is that GID is currently classified as a psychiatric disorder, and therefore, it should not be treated as a physical disorder. Due to it being a psychiatric disorder it would be seen irresponsible to use surgery as a form of treatment, when in fact psychologist should be dealing with the disorder, and dealing with it accordingly. Those who do truly believe GID is a psychiatric disorder believe those who suffer from GID should be treated only by psychiatrics and psychologists, and not by a surgeon. Although GID is currently acknowledged as a psychiatric disorder, if one suffers from a severe mind-body imbalance in which interferes with everyday life functions then gender reassignment surgery (GReS) is morally permissible. This argument is in fact valid because the GReS is an elected procedure, and it is allowed to take place as long as one qualifies for the surgery.

After reviewing this paper, it is fair to conclude that gender reassignment surgery (GReS) is morally permissible from the principles of biomedical ethics, and the moral theories of Kantian, and Utilitarian. This argument has been proven with the use of Modus Ponens to set up my argument, as well as, supporting evidence to validate my claims, and make my argument sound.