Madison Pribble

PHIL 315 Midterm Extractos

Required: Modern Warfare versus Suspected Terrorist (Modus Ponens)

1. If modern warfare is morally permissible, then torture of suspected terrorists is morally permissible.
2. Modern warfare is morally permissible.
3. Therefore, torturing suspected terrorists is morally permissible

The author believes that modern warfare is morally permissible and therefore following the

above premises he also believes torturing suspected terrorists is morally permissible. Modern warfare can be described as the present time fighting of a war. The reason the author believes premise 1 is true is because collateral damage is torture of innocent men, women, and children. Therefore, dropping the bomb would torture all of those innocent individuals so it would also be morally permissible to torture suspected terrorists initiating that violence. The reason the author believes premise 2 is true is because of our willingness to rage war in the first place. Therefore, he believes that it is permissible to torture terrorists to prevent maximum loss of life, outlined in premise three, just as modern warfare is permissible. However, a counterargument could arise because the author believes that every individual finds modern warfare to be permissible which is not always the case.

I agree with the authors premises because if torturing one man results in preventing an imminent atrocity and prevents the deaths of many then the benefits will outweigh the negatives. This supports the Utilitarianism theory because there are more benefits in torturing one man versus the death of many innocent individuals. Therefore, if modern warfare is permissible, then it is also right to torture suspected terrorists to prevent war and protect the people of our nation. Premise 1 is true because modern warfare is permissible so that makes torturing suspected terrorists in order to save lives also permissible in my opinion. Premise 2 is true in my opinion because modern warfare is a necessary way to protect our nation therefore, I think it is morally permissible. Therefore, premise 3 is true because it can help save many lives and help to prevent an atrocity and prevent the maximum loss of life. This argument is valid and sound because I think the premises are true and the conclusion follows. I personally support our military and everything they do to protect the nation that I live in, therefore I think that the torture of one individual suspected of terrorism in order to protect the innocent people of our nation is a necessary and permissible action that maximizes utility. Although I agree with the author, some may disagree for many reasons. These reasons could include torture always being wrong, nonsupport of war and the military, or they may disagree that modern warfare is similar to torturing suspected terrorists and therefore have differing opinions.

Number 1: Utilitarianism and Jim (Modus Tollens)

1. If Utilitarianism is true, then it is obvious that Jim ought to kill one of the men.
2. It is not obvious that Jim ought to kill one of the men.
3. Therefore, Utilitarianism is not true.

Individuals can look at the Modus Tollens argument to ensure the authors beliefs in this

situation. Utilitarianism is a theory that explains something as being morally permissible if it maximizes utility and the benefits outweigh the negatives. As premise one states, if Utilitarianism were true then there would have been no other choice than for Jim to kill the one man to save the rest of the men. However, premise 2 tells us that it was not obvious that he should kill the one man. Additionally, Jim is a pacifist and killing would go against his moral values. It would not be Jim’s fault if the bandit killed all those men. The author thinks that Jim should not be forced to kill anyone because if he refuses, he would not be the one killing the others. Therefore, this tells us that the author believes Utilitarianism is false, as stated in premise three.

I agree with the author that Utilitarianism would force Jim to make a decision that is against his moral standards by forcing him to kill someone. Premise one appears to be true because Utilitarianism focuses on doing the action that will maximize utility. In this case, killing the one man to save the other men would maximize utility because it would be saving nine other individuals who otherwise would be killed. Premise two is also true because it is not obvious that Jim should kill one of the men. Furthermore, it is not his responsibility and he should not have been put in that position to be forced to kill someone and violate his personal ethical values. Therefore, premise three follows the earlier premises in being true and Utilitarianism is shown as false in this argument. However, I think that Utilitarianism is a useful theory and can be applied with many ethical choices throughout one’s life. Although I see how some individuals would disagree and think that Jim should kill the man, I believe that he should not be forced against his values. I understand that it would be saving lives, but Jim would also have to live with the fact that he personally killed someone. This would not mentally or emotionally affect the corrupt bandits like it would Jim and I feel like he should not be blamed for killing someone if he were forced to do it. I see both sides of the story and I agree with Utilitarianism in many cases. However, in this situation, if I were Jim, I think that I would not be able to kill an innocent man because I would forever blame myself. Although Utilitarianism was rejected in this argument, some people may disagree and believe that Utilitarianism is always true so therefore Jim should kill the man. This argument is valid, and the conclusion does follow the two premises. It is also sound because it is valid and I believe the premises and conclusion are true. I personally agree with the authors reasons for each premise and would also reject Utilitarianism in this case.

Number 2: Ethical Judgments are more than “mere opinions” (Modus Ponens)

1. Sometimes we can support our judgements with good reasons, and we can provide explanations of why those reasons matter.
2. If we can support our judgements with good reasons and provide explanations of why those reasons matter, then ethical judgements are more than “mere opinions”
3. Therefore, ethical judgements are more than “mere opinions”

The author believes that when an individual can give supportive reasons and explanations to

his or her judgements, then it becomes more than just a personal opinion. Premise one explains how individuals try to provide reasonable support and explain their judgements. The author believes, as stated in premise two, that if one can give that support and explanation then their “opinions” become more than that. Therefore, the conclusion informs the audience that the author believes ethical judgements are not just opinions and are more than ones own personal ideas. Although it can be frustrating to “prove” one’s opinion, the author believes that if you are able to provide adequate reasons and explanations, then it is more than just your opinion.

I agree with the author about the above argument. Furthermore, I agree with premise one because there are many arguments where individuals can provide good reasons and explanations to the importance of those reasons. Premise two is also important because providing those reasons help to validate an argument and with enough reliable reasons the individual’s “opinion” can be proven as more than just their “opinion”. I also agree with premise three in that ethical judgements are more than just “mere opinions”. I believe that with dedication to research and providing one’s argument with validating reasons and explanations for those reasons can eventually prove those ethical judgements or at least make them more than just an opinion. Although I agree with these premises, some may disagree because some individuals believe no matter the reasons backing an argument some things are just morally impermissible or just wrong opinions. This extracto is valid and sound in that the two premises are followed by a valid conclusion and each is true. Furthermore, I also agree with the authors premises and conclusion in this argument in that they are true and logical. Ultimately, if premise one and two are true, which I believe they are, then it must be true that ethical judgements are more than just opinions.