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Philosophy 20 Final

Military Conscription in the Initial Position

There could be no greater enactment of moral impermissibility than the practice of depriving the fundamental conviction of freedom, equality, and liberty. In practice the thievery of a just society that considers individual rights may emancipate merely destruction and chaos. Freedom, equality, and liberty are natural characteristics of all people and any society that impinges said qualities is destined to face the consequences of defying nature. Yet if we accept this fundamental belief that all persons are created equal and free from oppression, than under what circumstances may we consider the act of military conscription in any realm of moral permissibility? Thus, the forcible conscription of any individual to the service of chaos, destruction, and death cannot constitute moral permissibility since it fails to recognize the basic unalienable rights of freedom and liberty through merely a culture of oppression.

Controversy surrounding the use of military conscription appeals to the merits of utilitarianism as an effort to ensure the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest amount of people. Many proponents that argue for conscription claim that conscription guarantees maintenance of a certain level of forces that may be called upon to address national defense needs.⁵ In the event of a national catastrophe when there are not enough volunteers, proponents argue that an all-volunteer force would be inadequate and thus risk jeopardizing a collective society or government.⁵ Second, it is argued that

conscription brings talented individuals into the military that would not otherwise voluntarily join. Individuals that have achieved a higher level of education or socioeconomic status do not normally volunteer for military service, and drafting those individuals would greatly benefit the military.⁴ Additionally, proponents argue that a draft requirement prompts equality in the way it spreads the burden of national defense, while a volunteer military system concentrates that burden among those who are economically disadvantaged.⁵ Yet, although the proponent's argument may seem compelling it defies the fundamental values of peace and morality.¹

The proponents of military conscription fail to recognize the subversion of culture and the indefinite enabling of the valuation of conflict. It seems as though throughout history a label of conflict has bestowed upon human existence. Many have tied humanity and catastrophic conflicts as inter-reliant terms, thus viewing an act of war or mass violence as an inevitable endeavor of all humankind. The advent of military conscription further emancipates the inevitability of war and further reinstates the human capacity of a perceived need to inflict harm and cause major detrimental conflict. Yet could or would war exist if those who were fighting it were not subverted in some way to partake in the act?

The answer may be found in the culture of war and conflict in itself. As history shows the glorification of war has transgressed throughout humanity and still continues to seduce modern generations. The reenactment of war and military conflict could be seen in children's toys, movies, cartoons, poems, narratives, songs, art, and music. This coupled with economic and social stature prospects, the idea of individual military involvement may seem compelling and be a universally held value of integrity and honor.

Nonetheless these values of integrity and honor may have a link to the enactment of physical violence and furthermore justify the enlistment or participation in an institution that seeks to evoke potential offensive or defensive violence. Therefore the need of military conscription qualifies merely an ambition of future violence, thus dismantling the core humanly principles of deliberating peace.

It seems as though a universal culture has nurtured a need for individuals to partake in such institutions. Thus, could a culture of oppressive tactics that lures individuals to value violence and laws for military conscription in any way justify moral permissibility in light of deliberating what is just? When could the qualities of equality, freedom, and liberty be suspended to solve imminent threats? According to John Rawls, the answer is never. John Rawls, through his social contract¹ and Difference Principle¹ defines “justice as fairness”¹ claiming that social and economic inequalities may exist if and only if that results in compensating everyone. Thus according to Rawls’ philosophy what defines moral permissibility may intertwine with that what defines justice. Rawls argues that participants in determining what is just should assume his definition of justice when undergoing the process of deliberation under the “veil of ignorance”.¹ The “veil of ignorance” is a tool that must be assumed to fully reach and conceptualize a potential “original position”.¹ In the original position, the participant must imagine her/himself in the position of freedom and equality and be committed to the principles of social and political justice. The “veil of ignorance” comes into play as the key activity that can allow a participant to exercise the original position.¹ Rawls suggests that to enable the ability to partake in the “veil of ignorance” deliberation, there must be two requirements that are met. First the participant must put aside self-characteristics and preconceived

notions and ideologies. Second, the participant must forget all historical and societal circumstances. Furthermore Rawls' philosophy rejects John Stuart Mill's principle of utility because Rawls claims that utilitarianism¹ does not take the rights of individuals seriously. Rawls argues that utilitarianism is in tension with the strength of people's moral convictions. Since the theory of utility aims at maximizing the overall well being of the greatest amount of people, it would be inadequate for the underrepresented majority or minority. An example of this can be given in the case of slavery. Slavery will ensure a greater amount of good served for the greatest amount of people, however it will fundamentally deny rights to the minority that are slaves.

John Rawl's ethical evaluation of the concept of justice for the position of military conscription becomes clear. If an individual undertakes a path to deliberating justice in terms of military conscription, than he or she must assume the veil of ignorance. Under the veil of ignorance and its two requirements for reaching the original position the advent of military conscription should be deliberated to counter that of utilitarian principles. A military conscription under utilitarian principles may uphold some morality or practical implication since the enactment of conscription can potentially bring about the greatest amount of happiness after the projected conflict is resolved. Cost to benefit ratios of historical wars bear witness to the principles of utilitarianism as in the case of World War II. During World War II roughly 27 million Soviet troops lost their lives as they were battling Nazi Germany in the eastern fronts.⁴ Although 27 million deaths may be a staggering number, in accordance to utilitarian principles the 27 million deaths as a result of World War II would be considered minuscule to the potential catastrophes that may have potentially pursued if Nazi Germany somehow obtained Soviet lands. However

according to Rawls this approach could not be utilized, since the majority of the 27 million deaths were a result of unsuspecting and forced conscripts who had been robbed of individual choices of freedom and liberty that define justice under the deliberation of the “veil of ignorance”.¹ By assuming the veil of ignorance a deliberation may conclude that the defense utilized by the Soviet Union was not the lesser evil than that of Nazi Germany’s offense since both sides utilized forcible conscription through manipulative tactics in maneuvering their military forces, and ethnocentric political rhetoric. Furthermore through the deliberation of justice and utilization of the “veil of ignorance”³ military conscription for purposes of utility may be found to be unjust or equivalently impermissible in the moral sense.

Therefore through John Rawls’ theory of ethical evaluation it seems as though military conscription fails to deliberate justice and obtain moral permissibility since it rejects essential qualities of egalitarianism and adheres to a subversive culture of normalized acts of violence. In conclusion, a system that strips the natural rights of liberty, life, freedom, entices merely subversion and chaos.

Free Will and the Enactment of Morality

The existence of the phenomenal reality of morality and the need to deliberate justice for whom individuals are held accountable for their actions speaks to the meta-ethical concept of free will. Through the constant deliberation of every-day life and continuous uses of moral judgment for a variety of every-day encounters, an analysis of military conscription as being morally impermissible speaks to the existence of free will in our every day lives.² Free will constitutes to individuals making choices that aren’t

coerced, doing what they want to do, and through a common denial of a fate. Thus the analysis of military conscription and its immoral implications due to subversion and lack of deliberative justice in accordance of Rawls' philosophy speaks to the ideals of libertarian freedom. Libertarian freedom speaks to the ability to author our own decisions, such as recognizing the state of the world at any time as not a subsequent result of past occurrences from a previous time.² With consideration of Heisenberg and Einstein's theories of quantum mechanics as the complete theory of universal phenomenon, it seems as though since the universe has permitted the existence of human beings and our abidance and creation of morality and ethical principles of philosophical deliberation, then there must exist some form of free will in the universe. Thus the quantum mechanical quarrel of the behavior of electrons within anatomic structures seems to be of random order based on unpredictable circumstances, which also speak to the random order of the complex cognition of human moral endeavors. Since this analysis of the meta-ethical concept of free will grants the existence of libertarian freedom, than the moral deliberation discussed in the essay hold validity to every-day life as an issue which may be reality for many individuals around the world. Considering the existence of free will and opposing the materialist argument of determinism² follows the path of recognizing the natural rights of freedom, equality, and liberty. In accordance to these principles free will provides relevance to the analysis of the immoral status of military conscription.

Works Cited

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