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Course:

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Ethical Decision Making

Cultural ethical relativism refers to a situation whereby a certain culture believes that something is right. Consequently, this belief suffices to make the action right for people belonging to that culture. The agent-centered version of cultural ethical relativism stipulates that the judgment passed to each institution or action should be in accordance to the prevalent culture's standards. On the other hand, the evaluator-centered version of cultural ethical relativism postulates that cultures ought to employ their own standards in passing judgment to institutions and actions whenever and wherever they occur.

For instance, businesspersons in America use direct language in communication. They are not afraid of direct confrontations, conflicts, or competition. What is more, they do not put personal relationships before their business. For this reason, they make business decisions in accordance to business strategies rather than loyalty or friendship and family ties. To the contrary, Chinese businesspersons make business decisions based on family ties or personal relationships. They also prefer to use indirect language in communication and avoid confrontations especially in public. This is a sign of respect. A new businessperson who wishes to excel in his or her business has to abide by these practices in either culture. Otherwise, other businesspersons will not see them as viable partners with whom to conduct business. Direct

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confrontations in China portray disrespect, while indirect language in America depicts individuals as being untrustworthy. What is more, families are loyal to each other in conducting business with each other. Breaking this chain to conduct business with a different company can result in putting a strain on the relationship between the two families.

Doctors have an obligation to save lives. The only constraint to this obligation is the cultural diversity, in which each culture has different definitions of right and wrong. In this situation, I would disregard my colleague's advice and vaccinate the family, even if it would be against their will. The vaccination will include both the children and the adults. Children are not exempt from this culture, because they will grow up learning to live by their parent's cultural practices. However, I will do it without their knowledge.

The utilitarian theory of ethical morality in decision-making proposes that an action is ethically right if the consequences of the action are beneficial to a bigger population. This is to imply that an action should not just benefit a person committing it; rather, it should benefit the majority of people involved. Following this line of reasoning, vaccinating the family will save their lives, not just mine. This makes my actions morally right.

The deontological approach of ethical decision-making purports that actions should be committed based on duties or rules and regulations. It is my duty to save lives as a doctor. I also have an obligation to decisions that are in the best interest of patients in all situations. Consequently, choosing to vaccinate the family against their will is justifiable using this theory. I would be fulfilling my duties and obligations as my profession demands. Additionally, vaccinating the family will not benefit me in any way. To the contrary, the family will be the biggest beneficiaries of my deeds. They will get to protect their lives from the deadly disease that could potentially lead to very negative outcomes.

I can also justify my decision to disregard the will of the family by applying the Kantian theory of ethical decision-making. In this theory, rationality and duty ought to be the guiding principles in making decisions. Duty obligates individuals to commit certain actions, and this makes it right. What is more, intentions behind every decision determine if a decision is right or wrong. Good will justifies decisions. In this context, my action to give the vaccine to the family is both my duty and out of the right intentions for them.

I feel that giving the vaccine without the knowledge of the recipients is a good option. The reason why the family is refusing to take the vaccine is that their culture does not allow it. If they knowingly disregard their culture to go ahead and have the vaccination, they might later face condemnation from other members of the culture. Moreover, their conscience might be troubled for the rest of their days. They will live with a burdened heart for acting immorally. It is logical to avoid such consequences for the family, particularly because it is not a guarantee that all or any of the family members will contract the deadly disease during this outbreak. There is the chance that none or some of them will contract the disease even without the vaccination. Considering this scenario, it would be unnecessary to make the family disregard their culture knowingly, even if it is against their will. Keeping the deed from them ensures that they maintain a clear conscience whether they might or might not have contracted the disease, because they will have to keep living in this cultural setting even after their outbreak.

I chose to disregard my colleague's advice, because the relativist theory of morality was not convincing enough. The theory of moral relativism says that there is no universal law that can apply to all cultures across the universe. Different cultures live by different principles; therefore, no individual is in a position to pass criticism to other cultures with different views from his or her own. In this case, my colleague has to respect my culture just as much as that of

the foreign family. She cannot side with me on my decision; neither can she side with the family on their stand. She has an obligation to respect both cultures as a cultural ethical relativist.

Despite the fact that I was in a different cultural setting with different values from my own, I had no obligation to act in accordance to the prevalent culture. Moral subjectivism stipulates that the right action by an individual is what he or she feels or thinks is right. However, my colleague would argue that being in a different cultural setting preempts me to act in accordance with the prevalent culture. This notion makes sense indeed; however, I felt that I would be acting immorally by following her advice. Acting in discretion, therefore, was my best option to fulfill my duties without getting into conflict with my colleague and the family members.

Additionally, the fact that I chose to administer the vaccination to the family is a good portrayal of my acknowledgement of their cultural practices. I do acknowledge that they have the right to practice their culture without interference or judgment. I understand they will have to bear the consequences of my actions in their culture, even if it is against their will that they get the vaccine. Consequently, I attempt to shield them from being judged based on my actions; it would simply be unfair to the family, if I subjected them to such an ordeal. However, there will be no issue, if they do not know that they broke a law. I get to save their lives without causing any turbulence in their lives.

Debates on ethics are essential in determining the better course of action on various crucial matters in society. However, the theory of cultural ethical relativism denies debates their major function, which is to review accepted practices and propose new practices. It gives the implication that individuals should tolerate all laws, rules, and regulations in their respective cultures with no question. This kind of tolerance is unreasonable. For instance, it does not make sense in the particular context that the foreign government is handing out vaccines to its citizens,

whereas some communities in this country do not accept any kind of medication other than their traditional medicine. This beats the logic in distributing the vaccines in the first place. This distribution is with the expectation that the citizens will take the vaccine. If the government acknowledges this community's culture and refrain from distributing the vaccines, the result will be the death of a good number of the members of this community. On the other hand, if the government disregards the culture and distributes the vaccines anyway, the members of this culture will not take the vaccines. It becomes a waste of the vaccines as they could have been of use of different community members. This is a good example of how cultural ethical relativism is unreasonable.

My decision could have different implications in different cultures. However, cultural ethical relativism does not object to any cultural practice. All decisions or actions are right as long as they are within a certain culture's acceptable norms. For this reason, there is no justification in my colleague's claims that my decision is wrong. The case is similar with the family. I choose to look at the overall situation using the utilitarian theory of ethical decision-making. The consequences of my actions are for the greater good. I get to fulfill my duty and save the lives of the family. It is improbable that the family's culture had traditional medication to curb the deadly disease. The family could die, if this was the case, and I chose to respect their wishes. My decision becomes right, because it is with good intentions.