



The Relevance of Joseph Fletcher's Situation Ethics for Animal Experimentation in Clinical Studies

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Abstract

The need for continual progress in medical research is one among the challenges today facing humankind. On-going, necessary medical research involving animal subjects will be defended from a Utilitarian standpoint. Animal experimentation can be conducted in such a way that injury and suffering to the animal subjects can be minimized. Clinical studies have been necessary for the eradication of many diseases, such as smallpox and polio and promise similar results for other medical conditions in the future. The ethical and emotional demands placed upon the experimenter during clinical trials, as well as the suffering of the animal subjects, presents us with an ethical dilemma concerning the moral justification of animal experimentation for clinical studies. Get rid of this; philosophers use critical methods. This paper will argue that inflexible ethical absolutism is too restrictive to proffer solutions in significant areas of conflict and that Joseph Fletcher's "Situation Ethics" be the primary moral guide for animal experimentation.

Keywords: Animal experimentation; Situation ethics; Love; Clinical trials; Clinical utility; Medical conditions; Utilitarianism; Ethical relativism; Clinical studies; Autonomy

Introduction

In my culture, it is a taboo the experimentation of human subject for clinical studies. In addition, the inaccuracy associated with the results, of the clinical trial of the cadavers, made it impossible to further the experimentation of human being.

Nuno [1] cites that the Empirical school of thought thus (3rd century BCE–4th century) would reject the study of anatomy and physiology by dissection of cadavers or by vivisection on the grounds of not only cruelty and the established taboos, its uselessness. Empiricists believed pain and death would distort the normal appearance of internal organs and criticized the speculative nature of the conclusions drawn from experiments (p.2). Alternatively, the use of animal subject for clinical trials is because of the closeness in the anatomical structure between human being and the vertebrate animals Nuno [1].

Animal experimentation is a hotly debated issue in legal, social, and moral philosophy. Both sides of the debate presented influential arguments for and against the use of animal for clinical studies. In 1975, Peter Singer an Australian philosopher published a book entitle *Animal Liberation* [1] Singer argues that the use of animal for food, research etc., was based on the principle of speciesism Nuno [1] and it is the act of treating human beings as morally different from animals, and this is a form of discrimination similar to racism. Singer will say that since all animals deserve equal moral consideration. Most forms of animal experimentation are unethical Nuno [1] cites Singer, "I argue that there can be no reason except the selfish desire to preserve the privileges of the exploiting group- for refusing to extend the basic principle of equality of consideration to members of other species" (p. 256). One could that human and animal are not ethically equal. Therefore, they do not deserve equality of consideration.

Sarah Chan and John Harris [2] cites the despite acknowledging that animals may be deserving of the same moral status as humans, the report finds reasons that humans and animals should be differently treated; "Our natural emotional response to, and concern for, members of our own species is clearly built deeply into our nature and it is not clear that the option of responding to members of other species, with the same concern in every case, is open to us. We should consider therefore what our treatment of non-human animals should be in its own terms, rather than in terms of consistency with our treatment of human beings." 13 Personhood is not apparently, the sole or even most important moral criterion: The sentiment that we should accord our own species particular moral privilege is to be heeded, whether rationally justified or not and the reasoning for accepting the principle of speciesism appears to be that "These sentiments are too strong to be easily cast aside" (p.11).

Although, Singer did not present his argument from the intrinsic right of animals, his arguments centred on the utilitarian standpoint, which is different from the hedonistic understanding of reality, like Bentham. Singer further points out that human action should be guided towards a balance in order to avoid pain and suffering of the animal thus, to "further the interest of the affected" Nuno [1] cites Singer, "By using the principle of equal consideration of interests; one should give priority to relieving the greater suffering" (p.256).

A critical evaluation of Singer's idea, one could affirm that animal experimentation for medical reason is not morally wrong in principle, and in the practical sense. Singer, could admits that the practice of animal experimentation be situation justifiable. This paper will argue that ethical absolutism is too restrictive to proffer solutions in significant areas of conflict especially in bioethics, and that Joseph Fletcher's "Situation Ethics" be the primary moral guide, and the autonomy for the experimentation of animals for medical reasons.

Literature Review

Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the morality of human conduct. Omorogbe [3] ethics is a moral principle that governs human behaviour. We argue that, ethics is a branch of moral philosophy, which specifies moral conduct. The overwhelming thing about ethics is that, the ability to undertake what actually constitutes the right or wrongness of an action remains a moral dilemma [4]. Ethics is based on well-founded standards of right and wrong, which prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, and benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues (p.1).

Velasquez, et al., [4] further argues thus, Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons (p.3).

For Joseph Fletcher, ethical standard is "Situation ethics." Joseph Fletcher (1905-1991) An American priest, a moral philosopher and a bioethicist, he wrote the book entitled *The New Morality* (1966) and his *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work* (1967a) (Robert, n-d: p.1). Fletcher could be influenced by the ideas of Bonhoeffer, Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann. Fletcher [5] he coined the phrase "Situation ethics" in a reaction against absolutism, the universal ethical standard for moral assessment.

Fletcher argues that the absolute moral rule is too demanding and restrictive to the contemporary ethical practice. Robinson [6] thus, Situation ethics essentially means; there is no ethical standard that can be uniformly or consistently applied, for each situation demands its own standard of ethics. In fact, there is no action you cannot perform if, in your judgment, the action is for a good cause, and if you have the proper motive in performing it (p.1).

Fletcher [5] will say that human's existence is practical already, that practical life is the bases of contemporary bioethical issues. In this sense, bioethical challenges needs a practical approach to proffering solutions, instead of engaging in absolutism (p.147). Here Situation ethics is a moral standard which interpret virtue base on the reflections of the existing facts, interpersonal situation and value. One could say that, the situation ethics is a moral philosophy with a clear expression of individual's interests in a given situation. In addition, situation ethics presents a clear attempt to save human kind from the bottle-necks of legalism, when dealing with bioethical issues.

However, Fletcher's situational ethics is in opposition with the absolute traditional Christian ethics (p.143). Michael [7] argues that the ultimate norm of Christian ethics is love. Here love is only the absolute norm, and the practical utility for human existence. Love holds a unique position in human existence because love alone is without dispute, but the ultimate norm for the contemporary Christians ethics (p.123). Robinson [6] cites Fletcher, who argued that absolute or legalism as a moral standard has failed to produce the desired result for the evaluation of ethical issues, in this sense: Legalism cannot help to guide human behaviour, especially when the dynamic nature of man taken into consideration (p.1).

Robert [8] argues that Fletcher's Situationism is perched between the ethical approaches of legalism and antinomianism and is a pragmatic and relativistic methodology of ethics that makes moral principles or laws subservient to the one absolute moral law of love (p. 1).

Although, Fletcher did not advance his ethical theory to the rejection of antinomianism but argue that ethical standard should be relative. Situational ethics is based on a single principle of "Agape love." Robinson [6] argues that situation ethics is based on agape love as a principle, which enables man to solve or proffer solution to ethical challenges, properly armed, weighing the pros and cons of all ethical situations. Situation ethics in some quarters could be argue as too complicated, because it requires the individual to provide an answer sweet able for an ethical challenges at a particular time, but individual who set aside the principle of love - agape - is better served doing nothing (p.1).

As a priest, Fletcher argues, "Modern Christians ought not to be naive enough to accept any other view of Jesus' ethics than the situational one". Fletcher [5] further argues that the middle way between legalism and antinomianism is the domestication of agape love. Thus, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with your entire mind; and your neighbour as yourself" - Luke 10:27. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends - John 15:13. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us - 1 John 3:23. The case of the Canaanite harlot, Rahab, can also be used to demonstrate Situationist principles in the bible. Rahab lied in order to save the Israelite spies: and yet, she is commended in the New Testament record, Robinson [6].

From the above, Religion is rooted in the ethical system and moral standards, and the appeal of situation ethics to the doctrines of utilitarianism and existentialism, is an approach to secular philosophy. Secular philosophy, in the actual sense negates the religious approach to reality. In my opinion, situation ethics and its doctrines betray the Christian ethics. Although the teachings of situation ethics, has set a clear moral standards that would enable the individual to be an actor instead of spectator about realities and life challenges.

Principles of Fletcher's situation ethics

A principle could be defined as a fundamental truth or a particular system of reasoning. A principle is a concept of value, which guides and evaluates human behaviour. In moral sense, a meta-ethical theory stipulates how certain value could be followed or conducted and inevitable consequence awaits defaulters. In Fletcher's philosophy, the principle of situation ethics is normative and it includes: pragmatism, relativism, positivism and personalism.

Fletcher argue that love is the principle utility, and it is the only thing that is morally constant thus; "It is a principle that can be applied in every situation, and that would enable the individual to achieving the greatest good" Robinson [6].

Fletcher [5] argues that pragmatism is "The good, is what works, what is expedient, what gives satisfaction" (p.42). Here, Pragmatism becomes a universal maxim or absolute norm but ethically relativism. Relativism is the ability to make choices, recognizing the fact that nothing is absolute but love [5] Pragmatism seems to negate the Beauchamp and Childress principles of bioethical practice, because of the 'conflict of interest', which are associated with the said principle. In

this sense, the situation ethics does not advocate for an antinomianism but argues that ethical pragmatism, the best option to avoid legalism for the experimentation of animal. Fletcher [5] although, the situation ethics reduces morality to subjectivity but it does not isolate ethics from the world of experience and which in my opinion, is one among the tenets of practical philosophy.

The principle of positivists, Fletcher [5] asserts that positivist is something about belief and not proven. It is a thing of faith. God is love, is a philosophy of faith. Here, love is the most important criterion for human happiness (p. 12). The positivist group, frown at the absolute moral standard, which rejects utilitarianism as a primary moral guide for animal experimentation. In my view, absolutism is a philosophy of faith but it does not celebrate the practical life of the individual. The positivists will say that the absolute moral standard is too strict to effect urgent changes and cannot proffer solutions to bioethical cases, as well as the existing facts in the health care sector and service delivery. We argue that the positivist principle here is too transcendental for practical philosophy, and this could lead to different interpretations and the attributions of love by different scholars.

Furthermore, the principle of personalism is another criterion presented by Fletcher for the achievement of human happiness. Happiness here is not hedonism but love, which comes from the natural understanding of reality. Thus, human welfare and happiness (but not, necessarily, pleasure) Fletcher [9]. Furthermore, Robinson [6] argues that the only thing that is intrinsic good is love and there is a need to show love to persons suffering from different illness, by experimenting animals for clinical utility, is a duty of care for achieving human happiness (p.1).

Thomas et al., [10] argues that, the four principles referred to here are non-hierarchical; meaning no one, principle routinely "Trumps" another. One might argue that we are required to take all of the above principles into account when they are applicable to the clinical case under consideration. Yet, when two or more principles apply, we may find that they are in conflict. For example, consider a patient diagnosed with an acutely infected appendix. Our medical goal should be to provide the greatest benefit to the patient, an indication for immediate surgery. On the other hand, surgery and general anaesthesia carry some small degree of risk to an otherwise healthy patient, and we are under an obligation "not to harm" the patient. Our rational calculus holds that the patient is in far greater danger from harm from a ruptured appendix if we do not act, than from the surgical procedure and anaesthesia if we proceed quickly to surgery. Further, we are willing to put this working hypothesis to the test of rational discourse, believing that other persons acting on a rational basis will agree. Thus, the weighing and balancing of potential risks and benefits becomes an essential component of the reasoning process in applying the principles (p.2).

Ethics of animal experimentation

Tom Regan Book *A Case for Animal* (1983). He argues for the introduction of Kantian ethics of intrinsic right of all sentient beings. The right of all life forms and their rights to live and flourish is the absolute norm, and can only be set aside in an extreme case such as war. Regan's philosophical exposition abolishes all forms of animal experimentation and this view, has been the foundation for most animal liberation movement [1].

Tom Regan further viewed that (non-human) animals have moral or legal proponents. In this sense, animal experimentation is unethical

because animals cannot consent to research [1]. Although one could argue for a justification of animal experimentation on medical reasons, only when the permissibility produce no cruelty to animals. We further argue that clinical utilities itself is a form of cruelty to humankind, and that, given the current pervasive subordination of animals experimentation for clinical purposes, cruelty to the animals could be minimized. Sarah Chan and John Harris [2] cite the Nuffield council on bioethics reports on harm avoidance – not causing harm.

The simple principle here is this: it is wrong to cause harm. The more complex question implied is: what is harm? Is an animal that is not self-aware harmed by being killed in a painless fashion? This principle may seem to be somewhat at odds in this report with the concept of absolute moral value and the value of life. For example the discussion of the "sliding-scale view" of moral status does not seem to admit of the notion that harm may be caused by inflicting suffering on beings of lesser moral status and that causation of harm is the moral wrong in this case, rather than the mere use of beings of a particular moral status. This is further explored, however, in the evaluation of "possession of a life" as a morally significant feature 149. Substantial further consideration is given to the ways in which animals may be harmed by being made to suffer (p.38).

Thomas et al., [10] argues that due to many variables which exist in the context of clinical cases, as well as the fact that exists in the health care delivery. There are several ethical principles that could be applicable in many situations. These principles do not consider situationism as the primary guide for ethics but accepted absolute ethics. In our view, humans must act-utilitarian for consequential reasons. In this sense, a pragmatic result will be achieved (p.1).

A critical analysis of the schools of thought; for and against the experimentation of animals for medical reasons seems interesting and educating. The problem with animal experimentation debate is that both sides of the schools are enormously rigid and self-protective, presenting their views from one standpoint to the other. In my opinion, the animal liberation scholars has failed to see the whole issue in its entirety; sociologically, morally, culturally etc., on the need for human to act-utilitarian in order to save life, through the provision of clinical utilities for the patient suffering from different illnesses. Animals' experimentation is useful for the benefit of man, especially for clinical utilities.

Trish [11] argues that "These animals are heroes". Their contribution to discovering life-saving advancements in medicine and science-for both pets and humans-is enormous," said Jon Klingborg, DVM, past-president of the California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). Thanks to the last century of animal research, we have achieved life-saving treatments for people and animals. As veterinarians, we are able to treat more ailments and prevent more diseases and that allows us to keep our pets living longer and healthier (p.1).

In the same vein, animal experimentation is not only useful to human, but also to animals themselves. Available research data has proven that without animal experimentation, millions of dogs, cats, birds, and farm animals would be dead from more than 200 diseases. According to Americans for Medical Progress (AMP) argues that animals in biomedical research, has prevented diseases, through the provision of clinical utilities; vaccines, and the treatments of farm animals were made possible through clinical studies Trish [11].

Discussion

The relevance of Fletcher's ethics for animal experimentation

The Situation ethics: Is an applied philosophy of recovery, which addresses the issues of subjectivity, intentionality, and normativity in moral philosophy. Furthermore, the situation ethics; is a systematic analyses and a clear attempt for the advancement of the human interests. We argue that situation ethics is a critical anthropocentric philosophy. Additionally, situation ethics opposes the teleology and strict laws for ethics. For the situations, the adoption of consequentiality in ethics would help human kind to achieve its goals and objective without hindrance, especially in bioethical challenges that are confronting human kind.

The situation ethics, examines the critical nature of the undesirable medical condition, and call for an urgent application of situation theory; this would enhance prompt decision making in order to ameliorate the acute medical conditions; abnormal sign, symptoms, worsening of a disease, injury etc., and these medical conditions seriously jeopardizes the human health. However, it is an obligation, and duty for us to show love, to the sufferers of acute medical conditions, through animal experimentations for clinical utilities. Here, moral duty entails that humans should act- utilitarianism in the experimentation of animals for clinical utility.

Animal experimentations inspired by sacredness of life; there is a need for us to save life, because we cannot create. For this reason, humans must act pragmatic in ethical decision because the well-being of others is our constituency Michael [7]. Although, some scholars might argue on the contrary, that interpreting ethics base on pragmatism, will repudiate moral standard, because of its flexibility.

The Clinical study is the greatest love to patients and the only norm that emphasis more about duties to others. Michael [7] argues that situation ethics is an autonomous ethics of duty, duty entails doing what is best in a given situation. Duty involves obeying or flouting an existing rule, in order to achieve the greatest good (p.173). Some moral philosopher could support this view about ethics of duty, although flexible, but it gives the individual the opportunity to work out the best, what is the right thing for an individual to do, and that, which is good in a particular situation.

Lane-Petter [12] argues that, Situation ethics motivate man {...} to discover new knowledge, subscribing to the severe intellectual discipline of the scientist but at the same time ignores the existence of moral principles that may moderate his pursuit he may run the risk of vitiating his originally altruistic motivation. The question is, therefore, not whether experimentation should recognize restraints but what restraints {...} for the greatest good of humanity.

However, the idea of obeying or flouting the existing rules, to act-utilitarian might sound uncritical to the "Kantian notion of duty," because Kant attributed moral standards to be objective, which is not a motivation by desire. We argue that the strong ethical decisions of

Kant needed a revalidation because of the strict legalism in order to save humankind from further suffering and pain due to acute medical conditions. Here, we suggest that animal experimentation be encourage for clinical studies and utilities. For example, a patient suffering from kidney failure needed another kidney for transplant and for recovery; the only option left is to farm kidney in pigs. For the situations, the best possible decision is to farm human organ in pig, if that will be the only justification for the greatest good of the greatest number.

Furthermore, animal experimentation for medical reason, we argue that situation ethics proffers the best decision of capacity, relative to the individual, motivated for the sake of love. Instead of ethical absolutism, only affirms dogmatism and the compliance to moral rules.

Michael [7] cites Fletcher "Act ethics is relative: It appreciates the importance of coming to terms with infinite human condition-the need, that is, in all decision making to weigh and choose between competing values" (p.173).

Conclusion

We will say that situation ethics is a doctrine, which ascribes morality as a property of man's behaviour, conditioned by social and historical facts, existence, as well as moral values which make the living individuals to act as an actor not a spectator in his world. We argue that, situation ethics be adopted as a primary moral guide, and the only justification for animal experimentation for medical reasons.

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