

Baby theresa essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In March 1992 Theresa Ann Campo Pearson was born with anencephalia, a rare condition where the upper skull and brain cortex are missing. Although her brain stem can still produce breathing and a heartbeat, she could never have a conscious life. Most anencephalic babies are detected and aborted during early pregnancy because of the severity of their condition. The ones that are born, usually die within a few days. The parents of Theresa decided to volunteer her organs for transplant, because of the shortages of available organs, the physicians gave their consent to the procedure in hopes of saving other babies.

Unfortunately the problem with this decision was that if the doctors waited until baby Theresa died naturally, the organs would not be usable due to deterioration. This case was then taken to court where the procedure was not allowed due to the law that states that you can't take the organs from a donor until they die. Baby Theresa died nine days after her birth and it was too late for organ transplantation because her organs had deteriorated too much. Main issues, potential responses, and criticism that arose from this case can be understood through the articulation of associated ethical principles and theories.

Baby Theresa is evidently incapable of giving her own informed consent or personal autonomy, as a result the authorization is granted to her parents and physicians to make decisions on her behalf. They agree upon an organ transplant in hopes that her organs could be used to help other children in need. This sparked a great deal of controversy, raising a number of ethical questions by the public and other ethicists. In the parents and physicians'

perspective, they are solving the problem by taking a quality of life approach to the situation.

Since Baby Theresa would not be able to lead a normal life, her existence holds little value and her healthy organs would do her no good. The Quality of Life perspective centers around the supposition that lives have relative value to others and some are more worth living because they have more value or utility. Baby Theresa's short life is considered not worth living and holds minimum value because of her inability to communicate or relate to others, form any type of social bonds or life fulfilling goals.

According to the utilitarian approach, a principle associated with the quality of life perspective, moral decisions are made by the weighing of potential benefits and disbenefits that can arise from that action. It focuses on the greatest amount of utility, for the greatest amount of people. Following this moral reasoning, Baby Theresa should be killed to maximize positive benefits and minimize any negative disbenefits. If the procedure were to take place, the total amount of satisfaction and happiness for all the affected people would be a lot greater than the dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

However there were some objections regarding this supposition because of the high potentials of leading us into a slippery slope of reasoning. It not only undermines the value of diversity, but it is also underestimating that there could still be joy and value from a disabled individual's life. I believe this is plausible when generalizing all people with disabilities because although they may not have the potential to accomplish the many goals in life, they can still lead a very positive and happy life.

Yet this doesn't specifically relate to the rare case of Baby Theresa, where she has no hope for living a life of happiness since her natural death will take place only days after her birth. Therefore, while Jason Marrow states an excellent argument of how this way of reasoning can lead us down a slippery slope, Peter Singer's view is more substantial for this specific case. The judge's decision along with many other experts were opposed to taking the organs because they were also afraid of what may come from allowing it, which relates back to Jason Marrow.

They believe that by deliberately interfering with nature and altering the policies to allow the killing of Baby Theresa to be legal, will only lead society into a slippery slope of reasoning. If the justice system allows this type of killing, they are unsure what consequences could arise in the future.

Therefore to be secure and prevent this from occurring, the justice system and many experts agree that no matter what the situations is, it is always wrong to use a human life in order to fulfill the needs of another human life.

This principle of the wrongness of killing is further associated with the Sanctity of Life perspective which outlines that the mere existence of human life is of ultimate core value. Humans should not interfere with nature and should allow nature to take its course. Despite knowing baby Theresa's circumstances, the parents and physicians should not interfere, thus allowing for her natural death to occur. Each and every human life is of equal worth and the moral decision should be made without considerations of the beneficial outcomes.

In this case, the parents' moral duty should be to look at the best interest of their child. Instead they are basing their decision on the outcome or consequences of their actions which is ultimately benefiting other children. They are essentially using Baby Theresa as a means to another child's ends. Another response that arose from this case was criticisms against the wrongness of killing. According to some professionals, it is not always wrong to kill innocent human beings.

There are three rare circumstances in which killing might be justified: (a) If an innocent human has no future because she is going to die soon no matter what (b) If the innocent human has no wish to go on living, perhaps because she is so mentally underdeveloped as to have no wishes at all and (c) Killing the innocent human will save the lives of others, who can then go on to have good, full lives. Baby Theresa is faced with all three of these rare circumstances which means killing her would not be wrong because it is justified.

This is plausible because I believe that if someone like Baby Theresa follows all three circumstances, they are living a worthless life and should be sacrificed for the greater good. As horrifying as that may sound, there is no sense of Baby Theresa continuing to live if her assured natural death is only days ahead. Her life should be sacrificed in hope of saving other children who desperately need her organs to live a long and fulfilling life. There were other significant controversies regarding the definition of death and how the moment of death should be characterized.

People have proposed the possibility of revising the definition of death to comprise cortical death, as in the case of anencephalic babies such as Baby Theresa. The typical approach that was used to characterize death was the point when there was no sign of life and all vital signs have been ceased.

With the controversy from this case, people wanted to alter the definition of death and relate it to the irreversible cessation of brain function, from both the cerebral and brain stem. This approach not only includes Baby Theresa and others with her condition, but also patients in a persistent vegetative state.

I believe this is a valid assumption because if someone for example, is suffering from serious mental incapability where they are mentally unconscious, they are not able to have any interaction with the environment or people around them. They are essentially living in an isolated world of the unconscious, where choosing to live or die is not even a thought that could be present in their minds. This type of reasoning can be related to Baby Theresa's case since she is in a similar mental state. If she is left to her own natural death, the couple days she would live would be in a world of unconsciousness and isolation due to her condition.

Also, newborns generally lack characteristics of personhood, such as the intrinsic cognitive capacities, that is present in the moral culpability of mature individuals. She also lacks a meaningful concept of self and the ability to deliberately rationalize since newborns cannot foresee the consequences of their actions. In sum, Baby Theresa was left to her own natural death despite the parents, physicians and other conflicting debates against the courts' decision. Was it really horrendous for the parents to ask of such a procedure to take place?

Are they right or wrong in volunteering their baby's organs for transplant?

This all depends on the principles and theories used to justify your answer. In my opinion, taking the quality of life perspective, I don't think it was wrong of the parents or physicians. They have no bad intentions or motives and are only doing what they think is best in such a rare circumstance. Since they are anticipating the death of their daughter, they believe that their daughter's life can only be fulfilled by helping others in need. Although the idea of this may sound unpleasant, it may be the only possible solution to such a dilemm