Donaldsons algorithm and affirmative action essay examples

Countries, United States

Humans have long asked themselves what is right and what is wrong. Different cultures have given various answers to this questions across time, making it difficult to establish a universal standard. This is especially important when representatives from nations that hold differing views do business with each other, as it means that they must find a way to reconcile the opposing cultural patterns. The philosopher Thomas Donaldson developed a famous algorithm that serves to resolve these conflicts in a simple manner. Nevertheless, this procedure is not infallible; sometimes, even though a certain course of action would be ethically acceptable, it is forbidden under the algorithm. For example, companies from the United States of America would have to forgo their affirmative action policies in countries that do not allow for this type of discrimination.

Donaldson's algorithm serves to resolve differences between an international company and a host country that is not its original one. He then theorizes two types of conflicts: Type #1, wherein the country finds a practice permissible due to its relative level of economic development, that is to say that it is only a matter of differing circumstances and not of an essential moral conflict; and Type #2, in which the varying attitudes are independent of the host country's relative level of economic development. As one can see, policies like affirmative action would fall under the latter categorization, due to it not being explained by economic variables, but by essential differences in habits and cultures.

However, this only characterizes the conflict; Donaldson then establishes two criteria to determine whether actually doing the action would be ethical or not. " The criterion he proposes in such cases is that the practice concerned

is permissible only if it is impossible to conduct business successfully in the country without undertaking the practice and if the practice is not a direct violation of any fundamental international right" (Sorell & Hendry 15). These two norms are even more subjective than the first and frequently pose problems. For example, a business could claim that it would be impossible to conduct business without a certain policy, while it would just be really difficult. On the other hand, while Donaldson tries to establish his basic human rights as universally accepted, they are also subject to controversy. For instance, while many see affirmative action in the United States of America as ethically consistent and a form of assuring equality, some countries have also conceptualized it as a form of discrimination, as it obliges the employer to take into account the candidates' sex, race, sexual orientation, etc. This would violate the fundamental right of non-discrimination; therefore, it would be forbidden under Donaldson's algorithm.

Even though the imposition of an affirmative action polity in a country that is strict against discrimination would be ethically wrong under Donaldson's algorithm, this practice is actually ethical. Minorities around the world are constantly disregarded and one cannot look over the fact that they usually must begin from conditions that are less advantageous than others. Affirmative action serves as an intention to correct this wrong, allowing people from underprivileged minorities to also be accounted for and raise their quality of life.

In conclusion, while Donaldson's algorithm serves as a guide for ethical international business actions, it does not necessarily correspond to what is

ethical per se. While the assumptions that it makes may be generally accepted as norms, the interpretations that each culture gives to these patterns differ. For example, while affirmative action may represent an effort towards equality for some, for others it is a form of discrimination.

Reference List

Sorell, T. & Hendry, B. (2001). International Business Ethics. In Malachowski, A. R. (ed.), Business Ethics: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management (5-18). London: Routledge.