

Welfare and charity research paper example

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Introduction

Among the various ethical issues that remain critical to the principled society, one of which is the contemporary issue of welfare and charity. By definition, welfare is an objective delivered by charitable institutions through collective funds from concerned organizations, individuals and the government. However, ethical issues arise in terms of how unfortunate individuals should be helped and the manner of providing assistance. There is a question of to who should welfare is distributed to the deserving poor and to the underserving poor, but the question here is how to determine the deserving from the opportunists. In the wider spectrum of welfare, the issue of social responsibility is being raised such as the extent of care given to the less fortunate and up to what level is it ethical enough to give and when is it become a subject of self-defeating behavior. The following discussion will focus on answering the question of ethics when it comes to welfare and charity. In addition, the discussion will be backed by theoretical principles; thinkers and concept to further examine the philosophical grounds of the issue.

Ethical Debate Surrounding Welfare and Charity

Social welfare and charity is couched under the ethical terms of social rights and responsibilities. However, opposing views about giving stipulates variation of responses based on the nature of human beings and self-interest. The opposing argument suggests that welfare and charity does provide a long-term solution to the problem of human scarcity. At some point, given the opportunity, people will just do what they think is best and

the most convenient and that it is part of human nature to seek comfort amidst the time of distress. However, in the state of welfare people are aware that relying on other aspect of human nature, which is compassion, can defeat their lack in sustenance. On the other hand, the same principle reveals the other aspect of human nature, which is temptation. In welfare and charity, people are motivated by self-interest and their natural capability for survival is replaced by a nation of not working for their own survival (Westfall).

Meanwhile, the other side of the argument suggests that through social welfare, people are being given an equal opportunity to participate in the society and not merely to encourage people to be less productive. This is because people need to have a minimum level of well being in order to bring them to an equal economic level. Not all individual with enough labor capacity could sustain himself unless he has enough correspondence to prove his capabilities, then he can find economically viable means for long-term sustenance (Gingrich).

Applied Ethical Theory

The described issue can be attributed to the ethical theory of consequentialism. This theory suggests that the moral statute of an action whether to determine if the action is morally right or wrong depends on the resulting consequences of an action. Theoretically, it is morally correct to choose actions that are perceived to have the best consequences (ucs. mun. ca). This theory is combined with the greatest happiness principle, which define actions that promote happiness is considered as morally correct as opposed to doing something that hinders happiness that reverses happiness.

John Stuart Mill coined the term greatest happiness and he speaks about happiness among the people as the result of an action. Utilitarian's think of happiness as intrinsically valuable since happiness is derivative of well being, satisfaction and pleasure. On the ethical issue surrounding welfare and charity relates to the said ethical theory in such a way that the resulting action in charity and welfare is happiness among the receiver of the benefits. The focus of charity is to provide nourishment to the necessities of the less fortunate. In addition, thinking of welfare constitutes a notion of making people happy on some degree despite being fortunate. The sense of hope is present among the objectives of charity. For instance, street children no longer have the available means to obtain education, let alone to survive the daily need for food. However, charitable efforts regenerate the hopes of these children to survive another day by giving them food, bringing them over to children homes and other institutions. Such action reflects a spark of hope for the street children therefore it promotes happiness.

Ethical Concept

Apart from consequentialism, welfare and charity can also be defined under Immanuel Kant's concept of categorical imperative. The term "moral law" signifies acting in such a way that humanity is being treated as an end in itself and not basically for the purpose of means, which requires consideration to human dignity as a primary reason for action (Paton). Under the universal moral perspective suggested by Kant, all people are equal in nature and none is more privileged than the other. Therefore, if humanity should be treated fair and equal, the social reality of underprivileged individual's situation in life should also be treated equally and this equality

entails the right to live as normal in the society (Paton). However, in order to establish equality, everyone should uphold the respect to moral law, which includes giving for the sake of charity and welfare. Everyone has the moral duty to do something that is morally right, if one person gives to charity or as simple as giving a beggar a dollar, the action was done according to what the person believed to be his moral obligation done in good conscience.

Considering the difference in ethical perceptions on the issue of welfare and charity, someone who believes in either the ethical concepts of Kant and Mills would agree that charity is a form of moral respect to humanity and the consequences of such might entail a greater good. Believers of Kant would see the issue of welfare and charity as a form of expressing equality. Given such belief, the immediate notion that might come up regarding the given issue is the decision to approach the problem in a manner of encouragement. For a Kant philosophical believer, there is no existing problem at all because charity and social welfare is a social moral obligation of respect that promotes equal existence. On the side of Mill believers, giving for charity is an action derivative of personal ethical perspective. Meaning, actions such as giving to charity encompasses a resulting situation that encourages the less fortunate to self-defeat, that they would continue to pursue other people's generosity instead acting for their own welfare.

In terms of possible decisions that would come up in the process, one would find welfare and charity as an avenue for the fulfillment of personal interest. Conflict of interest emerge in the issue as some individuals uses charity as an excuse for moral justification. For example, a business owner known to be engaged in less honorable deeds for profit might use charity and welfare to

mask his real nature. If such person is to be questioned for integrity, one way to establish a good reputation as person with good moral conscience would turn to any charitable institution to donate large sums of money and pose in front of cameras while handing over his donation. This image of giving would entail positive outcomes because people reading the newspaper showing the picture of the businessman awarding hefty donation constitutes positivity. However, such action does not confer to the principles of ethical behavior because the action was made not due to the occurrence of human compassion, but mainly due to anticipation of personal gains.

On a Personal Note

Welfare and charity are actions brought naturally due to human compassion. However, it also attracts negative basis of interest due to the fact that the nature of giving for the poor for instance is something that warms the heart of the many. Humans by nature have the capacity for compassion, it does manifest in the objectives of self-proclaimed and unannounced philanthropists. Several individuals believe that by giving a dollar to a beggar will help them to get by for another day, but according to Kant, our ethical responses should confer to our moral respect to society and that equality is the ultimate result of such. If we are to base our decisions to resolve the ethical dilemma about charity and welfare, our efforts to equalize the less fortunate with the rest of the society cannot be achieved by giving them a dollar a day. It would be more ethically right if the efforts made to change the situation of the less fortunate would entail a long-term result.

In terms of decision, dealing with the ethical problem of welfare and charity must be based on doing what we thought to be more beneficial on the long

run. For example, giving money for charity is not ethically right because money is only a measure of materialistic value. The less fortunate people came in such situation because of the lack of several elements of suitable living. For example, the reason that a family is poor is probably the parents do not have enough academic credentials to land a good job. For the same reason their children in return were also not able to go to school. However, welfare and charity provides them solution to only a fraction of the problem and it does not address the source of the problem, which is the lack of fundamental resources for long-term survival. In order to help the less fortunate to get by on a longest term is to address what was missing in the first place and that is difficulty of getting a job and the children's education. If the society would address the root cause of the problem there won't be a need for charity in the first place and it would be more ethical for that matter.

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