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PHIL 102

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Waterboarding, the topic in the US that everyone remembers, but few want to discuss. Aside from presidential statements and election news, most of the US population doesn’t talk about the concept. Compare that to the concept of torture, which in general most people would be appalled and disgusted at the mere idea. Personally, I feel the same, torture is an inhumane and harsh method of attempting to obtain cooperation and information, and coupled with modern psychological evidence, nor do I feel as though it is an effective means to that end.

When speaking of something like waterboarding, it would benefit us to first go over exactly what waterboarding is. Waterboarding is a torture method which involves tilting the victim on a board, putting a cloth over their face, and pouring water onto their nose and face, simulating the act of drowning, according to humanrightsfirst.org. This is what the US calls an enhanced torture technique, used to attempt to extract information from the prisoner. Waterboarding is not the only so called enhanced technique, but they all aim for the same goal, to cause the prisoner to break through the use of stress and pain and provide, what they are hoping, is useful information.

However, the interesting thing to note is that, waterboarding, and so called enhanced torture techniques, as stated in the Committee Study of the CIA’s Detention and Interrogation program, it was not an effective method of obtaining information or cooperation from detainees, with 7 of the 39 prisoners in CIA custody not providing any intel at all, and even worse than that, it could be counter-productive, due to the extreme mental strain it put them under. This strain and stress caused several prisoners to provide fabricated information just to make the torture stop. This information is compounded with findings that several of the prisoners provided good, accurate intel without being subjected to these enhanced techniques. Compounding the point farther, a study done by New World Torture, referencing Glen Carle, which stated that several of the prisoners that he observed at these interrogation camps could not even manage a coherent reply. It goes farther to provide psychological evidence, using US special forces, that the use of torture degrades both memory and cognitive function. With this being said, the next logical step in that line of thinking is, what is the point. If it only provides counter-productive intel, or none, and good intel can be obtained without resorting to torture, what is the point.

Growing up in a military family, that question was always answered with “look at what they do to your country, they deserve it”. That simple statement, at least from my experience, seems to be one of the biggest justifications that people give when promoting the idea that we should torture people for information. In that case, the end always justifies the means, and if it is a benefit to this country, then you shouldn’t care, or even worse that it is right to do and that you only need to look out for yourself. I grew up hearing that, and for a large part of my young life believing that. However, after hearing some of the stories that my uncle told, and seeing the news coverage and leaked documents that have come out in recent years, the idea that the government knows best and that they can be responsible with the idea of torture and security has come under immense amounts of fire, the idea of waterboarding included. Howevert hese ideas only work if the act is in the best interest of me, in one example, and those I care about in the other, which reports and research have shown that torture for information is unreliable and inethical. For instance, and I am paraphrasing, in that same report, there are several lines that have, “obstructed or hindered oversight”, in them. Soon after this document was declassified, the CIA released a statement in complete objection to these findings. The CIA, a government agency, was in complete objection to a report released by the government. That idea alone is insane, and goes to show the lack of oversight and the amount of what seems to be vengeful thinking that goes into these types of tortures. That is the only reason for them to continue if they are not effective, as revenge, as an attempt to provide happiness and a feeling of security and control to a population that feels attacked and hurt. This idea is seemingly corroborated by a Study done by the University of Denver, that talked about the idea that since over 9/11, over the years has been desensitized and the idea of interrogation has almost been romanticized by the government, with almost anyone asked about the idea giving examples in a narrative fashion as opposed to logical reasoning backed by evidence.

Waterboarding is in my opinion, very barbaric, and completely unethical. The acts not only do not provide incorrect information, but create an environment where we sanction the sue of torture to justify the governments ends.

Works Cited

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