Bioethics: Human Life Issues

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Ethics and ethical theories hold great importance in the field of philosophy. The basic purpose of the theories is to ensure the justification of any scenario or ensuring the betterment and well-being of the people, as well as the whole society in some cases, being affected by it. The case study of breaking the promise and lying focuses on utilizing the wrong means to achieve better goods, so the justification of the act needs to explore, keeping in view the philosophical concepts. In this paper, I will discuss the case scenario of breaking the promise and lying in the light of the philosophical theories of utilitarianism and natural law, as described by Thomas Aquinas.

In order to become able to identify different aspects of the case according to the theories of utilitarianism and natural law by Thomas Aquinas., it is quite important to explore the details of the case. So, according to the case study, Jane Rachel is unemployed at the moment, however, she is getting her unemployment compensation check. She becomes familiar with the suffering of people in African due to the drastic conditions of famine and she wants to help them, however, she does not have finds to lend her support to the needy. She asks for a loan of thousand dollars from an ex-colleague, John, on the claims that she has to pay for her rent and food expenses, as she is short on employment compensation is which actually wrong. Though she as promised to return the loan, she has no intention of doing so as she thinks that being on a permanent position and receiving the tenure, he can easily afford the amount. John lends the amount to Jane for the sake of her personal expenses, as he thinks that he was partially responsible for the loss of her job. The amount was sent to the relief fund and was utilized for providing food to the starving children in Africa.

Now considering all of these details, the utilitarianism theory will direct our attention to the aspect of the case that Jane has got the loan from John, in order to help the poor and starving kids of Africa. The utilitarianism theory focuses on ensuring the greatest good directed towards the greatest number of people. So this particular theory will focus on the point that although Jane has got the money from John by lying and then making a false promise, which is not intending to fulfill, she is doing bad to John or harming him, only for the sake of ensuring the greatest good of the African children who are starving. She wanted to do it on her own, however, cannot afford at the moment due to the loss of her job and her unemployment compensation would be only enough to meet her personal expenses. On the other hand, John is a full-time professor of philosophy who is getting the full amount of his tenure, so it only seems god that he would have enough funds and lending a thousand dollars will not cause a major setback to him, however, that thousand dollars will provide much more benefit, happiness, and satisfaction to the starving kid in Africa, as they would be able to eat to their full if not more times than at least for one time (Mill, 2016). On the other hand, the natural law theory bay Thomas Aquinas will draw our attention to the aspect that Jane is practically stealing from John which hinders the harmonious functioning of the society, therefore should be avoided. In addition to it, Jane has lied to John that she has run out of the unemployment compensation when she is actually still getting it. Moreover, she has also made a false promise to him that she will return the amount once she gets employed, while she has no intention of doing so, to begin with. She thinks that John has enough money to donate to the cause. She has not asked his opinion on the stance or asked about his financial condition and just made the decision on her own and enacted it as well, while John is unaware of the whole scenario and just lend the money to her, due to his guilt of being responsible for the discontinuation of her job (Aquinas, 1945).

The theories of philosophy do not just highlight the concerning aspects of the scenarios, but also provide the suggestions for the solution of the ethical dilemma discussed in the scenario. In order to explore the suggestions for the resolution of the ethical dilemma, it is quite important to explore what is an ethical dilemma. So, an ethical dilemma is the situation or the point of the conflict between two moral imperatives and supporting one would harm the other and vice versa. So, keeping in view the ethical dilemma presented in the case scenario of breaking a promise and lying, the utilitarianism theory would suggest the solution that Jane has done the right thing of taking the money from John and sending it to the relief fund for the starving kids of Africa, which would then be utilized for the said purpose. The basic claim of the utilitarianism theory is providing the greatest good to the most number of people. It implies that in the situation of ethical dilemmas, a person can harm few or lesser numbers of people in order to ensure the safety and betterment of most number of people. In this particular scenario, the ethical dilemma is between practically robbing John of the thousand dollars, and providing the amount to the relief fund which would use it for feeding the starving kids Africa. Following the suggested solution of the utilitarianism theory, it is better to steal from John and instead of ignoring the needs of the starving kids of Africa, who may have not eaten anything for a few days. The children may have been on the brink of death and even a single meal could save their lives. Jane will be providing the greatest good to the most number of children in famine-stricken Africa by providing the funds to them by getting the amount from John after making a false promise with him. On the other hand, the loss of the thousand dollars will not put the life of John on stake, as he is full-time professor, who is getting his tenure and can afford the basic necessities of life, even if he does not get the thousand dollars back from Jane (Mill, 2016).

On the other hand, the natural law theory by Thomas Aquinas will suggest a different solution to the ethical dilemma discussed in the case scenario. According to the natural law theory, there are two sides to the ethical dilemma. One focuses on the apparent good present in the scenario, while the other focuses on the harmonious functioning of the society. According to the first point, a person can pursue the bad even if there is an apparent good in it. According to this particular point, Jane has done the good thing by breaking the promise and lying to John and taking the thousand dollars for sending the aid to the starving kids in Africa. It is justified and good act because she has only done wrong to John to achieve the apparent good of saving the African kids from starvation. According to the other point suggested by the natural law theory, the harmonious working of the society should be ensured which means that any evil should not be practiced or promoted in society. From this perspective, the suggested solution of the ethical dilemma discussed in the case scenario is that Jane has not done the right thing by breaking the promise, as well as lying to John, because she is promoting such practice in the society. Although her motive was justifiable as she just wanted to help the poor children in need, her mean that is taking the amount from John by lying about her needs and making the false promise of returning the amount when she has no such intention is disturbing the harmonious functioning of the society. She has lied to John for ensuring the betterment of the poor kids of Africa, however, her actions are only supporting the notion that it is acceptable to steal from people and deceive them in order to serve the poor communities of the world. So., the suggested solution of the ethical dilemma according to the natural law theory is that Jane should not break her promise and lie to John as it is not justifiable (Aquinas, 1945).

According to my opinion, the resolution provided by the natural law theory that Jane should not break the promise and lie to John is the best. The reason for supporting this resolution is that breaking the promise, lying, and robbing someone from his rightful property or amount is not justified if it is being used for tending to the needs of the poor communities of the world. It is wrong and unjustified on the grounds that if all the people or even e a few start doing this, it will disturb the working of the society as the people would not be able to trust anyone and would not lend support even to those people who genuinely need it. Jane could have cut short her expenses or worked hard to get employment so she could support the cause on her own. On the other hand, even if she considered that John had enough money and he could spare a thousand dollars easily in order to support the cause, she could have talked directly to him and asked about his stance for supporting the poor and starving kids of Africa. It only depended on him to support or not support the cause. Even if he did not support the cause, he was not committing any crime or doing something unethical. However, Jane has done an unethical act by deceiving John to pay her the amount, which she did not need for her personal expense but for the sake of charity. Using the amount for helping the poor community is also not a greater issue but the major problem is that she has unethically taken the amount from John, who has to lend her the money due to this guilt for the loss of her job. The most unethical thing in the whole scenario is that Jane is not intending to pay back the amount to John even if she gets the job and has enough money to pay him back. This is the main reason that supports the resolution provided by the natural law theory, which states that the practice is wrong on the ground that it will disturb the harmonious working of the society.

 The case scenario of breaking the promise and lying highlights the ethical dilemma of supporting the starving kids of Africa, by getting a thousand dollars from a person by deceiving him. The utilitarianism theory supports the notion that providing little harm to few people is acceptable to ensure the greatest good of the greatest number of the people, while the natural law theory states that the harmonious working of the society should not be disturbed. I support the resolution of the natural law theory that Jane should not break the promise and lie to John as she is promoting the wrong means of doing well by such an act.

References

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