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Morally Right for Batman to Let Joker Live: Adhere to Morality and Influence in Subtlety

With the success of *The Dark Knight* in 2008, the debates on morality problem behind the movie have heated up. Mark D. White and Robert Arp throw a question “Should Batman Kill the Joker?” in their homonymic essay to the society where they attach a deeper thinking into ethics and moral. By applying the pop culture Batman and Joker without breaking away from the essence, White and Arp wisely simplify the abstract ethics and moral problem to a concrete question on whether Batman is morally or ethically right to let the Joker live which can get readers involved into a philosophical ethics and moral problem more easily. Instead of giving a direct solution and playing a role of saint, White and Arp mention three possible perspectives to deal with the moral problem reflecting on three schools, utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics which provides readers a well-refined background to ponder. Utilitarianism would argue that Batman should kill the Joker based on “comparing the many lives saved against the one life lost.” (546) While deontology, would “focus on the act of murder itself” (546) combining Kantianism. In addition, virtue ethics provides a perspective which highlights “the character of the person who kills the Joker” (547). Among the three perspectives, I support deontology which insists on Batman is morally and ethically right to let the Joker alive.

As is mentioned in the United States Declaration of Independence that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." It is an accepted ethics code that everyone has the inviolable right to survive regardless of what he has done. Killing a man privately is an action that deprives the right to live which means killing people is morally wrong according to the widely accepted moral code. In addition, White and Arp indicate “While the Joker is evil, he is still a human being, and is thus deserving of at least a minimal level of respect and humanity.” Therefore, in the case of Batman and the Joker, if Batman has killed the Joker, Batman would be the immoral person who kills others privately. Instead, letting the Joker alive is a respect to the Joker’s right to live which is not only moral but also shows Batman’s determination in adhering to morality as well which heartens citizens to maintain the morality.

Furthermore, killing the Joker will not lead to absolute justice without evil but will instead mislead the society into immorality. Hero is defined as the individual admired and recognized by majority. Thus, what a hero does will have strong impact on his admirers’ morality and behaviors. In addition, individualistic heroism which refers to sacrificing an individual imitating the example of heroes has become a popular social value. Murdering a criminal by torture will fan the flames of violence in the society since the hero, Batman, has murdered a person according to his own judgement which encourages criminals or even citizens to murder on their own benefits or senses of justice. Killing the Joker exerts negative influence on social stability which means it is not morally right. On the contrary, adhering to morality and not killing the Joker will set up an ethical example which promotes the society change to morality.

In conclusion, Batman should not kill the Joker in consideration of the humanity as well as the social stability. Killing the Joker is not only an immoral decision against the fundamental human right of life, but also an unethical behavior which has negative impact on social morality. Killing the Joker does not end evil, but the value of adhering to morality reflected by letting the Joker live does.

Works Cited

United States. *The Declaration of Independence*. 1776.

White, Mark D., and Robert Arp. “Should Batman Kill the Joker?” *The Norton Sampler*, Cooley Thomas, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013, pp. 545-548.