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Tutorial Group 5

Are white lies a better choice than the truth? Many of us have been through situations where we must decide between telling white lies or the truth. In this essay, I will discuss about the pros and cons of white lies and their ethics.

When I first saw this question, I immediately I agreed that white lies are better than the truth as I have been advocating white lies since young and white lies seems to be working out well for me. However, as a GEQ student, I started to apply the knowledge gained from the module to perceive the thesis in different angles.

I started questioning why white lies are working so well for me and I tried to disconfirm my belief that white lies are more ethical and better than the truth. Then, I realised that advocates of white lies may feel that white lies are better because the liars cannot feel the negative consequences of white lies! We might be biased towards white lies as we are not the ones feeling the effects of white lies, but the one being lied to.

Hence, looking at this thesis from the perspective of the one being lied to, the better question to ask might be: “Would you rather be told white lies or the truth?” However, this question once again has biasness in itself as it is part of human curious nature to always want to know the truth. Furthermore, the ones being lied to cannot weigh the differences between the effects of white lies and the truth as they do not know the truth.

Hence, this question of whether or not white lies are better than the truth is a difficult question to answer as the liars cannot feel the consequences of the white lies and the ones being lied to does not know the effects of the white lies (otherwise, they would know the truth).

So how do we know when white lies are better than the truth? In many of these situations, the liars might have underestimated the impact of white lies. White lies, like conventional lies, tend to require even more lies to cover up and before we know it, even the smallest lies can easily escalate into those potentially damaging ones.

Most of the consequences of white lies are not immediately felt, but instead, they surface over long period of time and many of them are unforeseen. Hence, whenever one is deciding between white lies and the truth, one should be aware that white lies are double edged swords with such damaging potential.

Despite all these, white lies can be a temporary relief if used correctly. Sometimes, it might not be a good time to reveal a truth to someone and hence, white lies can be used to temporary delay the truth. For example, it may not be a good time for parents to inform their child about a poor financial situation while the child is having examinations. However, these white lies are only a temporary relief and may not be a good permanent solution.

Moreover, another important question would be what exactly are the purposes of white lies? Most people might tend to assume that they are harmless lies that are meant to benefit the “victim”, but white lies should be told for the better good of all the parties involved and for a better society. This does not necessarily mean that the liar should prioritise their own welfare, but instead, should consider the effects on each entity involved and tweak the lies such that they bring the least damage to the entities involved.

Hence, white lies can be better than the truth depending on the situation. However, it may be difficult to judge and give a concise answer for each situation as there are too many factors to consider.