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Project Paper 1: Theranos Scandal

“Fake it till you make it” a Quote I have often heard in various points of life. Steve Jobs was inspired by this quote in the creation of the Iphone One. He had no working model yet, but was out selling his idea as if he did.As testing went on the apple company was able to produce a viable to market product.This created the illusion that they always had a working product. Thomas Edison on his light bulb patent lied to his investors and created fake displays until he had a working light bulb. But this strategy of faking it till you make will it always succeed? The company Theranos discovered it has horrendous consequences after Elizibeth Holmes the founder lied to Investors and Patients. She sold the idea that Theranos had created a one drop blood test. Theranos tried to use a process of microfluidics and 3d printing in order to make small devices that could use an invasive needle to take 1 drop of blood; and produce all the same results that a regular blood test could produce. She asked her staff of scientists and engineers to lie about the results that they were getting; so that she could show investors that she had a to market product ready for them. These were critical tests that had peoples lives on the line. Cancer patients, Dialysis patients, there were many patients that relied on these faked tests. The CEO Elibeth Holmes believed that if she kept lying and having her staff fake these results eventually she could produce real working ones.

Looking at the virtues and vices of the Theranos Company Scandal we can try to see how these events were allowed to unfold. There were many people responsible for the moral dilemma of allowing Theranos to provide fake test results to patients, so that they could get money to produce a working product. Observing the sphere of influence of this situation there were a lot of “pleasure and pains” motivating people to lie about Critical test results. Self-indulgence ran rampant around the investors who wanted to believe that Theranos was able to create this product. The Current Healthcare market relies on only 2 companies to do all of their blood testing Quest Diagnostics and Laboratory Corporation of America. They have labs filled with many employees that run their tests. Theranos wanted to streamline this process by having machines run these tests. This idea is viable and is being implemented today by many microfluidics experts. Theranos wanted to go above and beyond this being in silicon valley. They tried to make this machine small enough to fit in your home. This would allow anyone to run their own at home blood tests. Blood tests require large amounts of blood and needles. Theranos also promised that their product could be done with only 1 drop of blood. This is so many medical revolutions it's impossible to believe that investors never even got her to show a real working product. The absolute insensibility of all of these investors and The Ceo to be able to believe they could produce products that would take 10-20 years to develop in months. Aristotle would Find everyone responsible for letting fake tests be given out would be guilty due to self indulgence and insensibility.

Today Medicine is moving in a direction where robots are entering the medical field. There are many complex and precision operations that can be handled by a machine that a human cannot do. So patients must question how reliable these machines are. If machines cannot give accurate results and patients are getting those, they will lose faith in the idea that machines have a palace in the medical field. Thereanos had a moral duty to its customers to provide clarity to the patients and give them accurate results. Instead Theranos had a motive to simply make money without care to how it would affect their patients. They had a maxim of fake it till you make it to justify giving fake results and information until they were able to produce valid results. Everyone on the Theranos team had a decision to stay. They where given extensive NDA’s and many scientects left the team or were fired often if their loyalty to the company was called into question.It would be impossible to have a consistent world without the trust in doctors to give reliable and accurate results; it violates the trust in engineers to be able to work in the medical field furthering people's fear of technology in medicine. There is no way Kant would find this morally permissible. We cannot build a reliable future with technology if we cannot trust the technology to give us transparent and accurate results.

Theranos had an idea that would benefit the greater good of humanity. The idea of a needles one drop machine to administer blood tests at home is an idea that may one day be possible. Their methods to achieve this were through lying and deception. They believed that they would be able to achieve this goal and so they lied with the intention that they would achieve their goal and no longer be fraudulent. They had patients who were suffering from serious medical conditions such as cancer, syphilis, kidney diseases. Out of 100 patients with syphilis theranos could detect 70. Other tests had up to 90% accuracy from the theranos machines. The bad in this case was far worse than any good that could be produced.They were risking the lives of anyone who would take part in th theranos blood tests. Seeing as the Harm Theranos caused to humanity outweighed the good Mill would not find Theranos to be morally correct. There is little benefit to humanity Theranos achieved and they caused reputations of many biomedical scientists and engineers to be called into question.

Personally I agree most with the Kantian idea that they had a moral duty to their customers to provide reliable data. The medical field moving forward will be increasingly filled with more and more technology. It will be impossible to create a world with reliable trust between engineers and doctors for their patients to have machines deliver accurate information. My goal is to become a biomedical engineer. I wish to create machines that help people with diseases be able to live their lives. My father has stage five kidney failure and has to go to dialysis 3 times a week. Microfluidics could provide the future technology that he might be able to do at home or even go as far as creating artificial kidneys. Companies like theranos only provide reason for people to fear technology in the medical field. How can people trust their lives to machines when they are created by morally questionable people who only seek profits. People like human interaction in medicine. It creates a sense of trust because we can be deceived by a person, especially one with medical experience telling us something. We cannot form this future with people relying on technology for medicine if the companies producing the machines deceive us. Robotics are only as good as the people designing them. I belive in medicine it is important to never lie about your results as a katian would agree that the truth is the most important value.

Sources:

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In-text: (Carreyrou, 2022)

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