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CSF - Ethics

03/04/2016

Paper 1

If the FBI comes knocking at your door, you know something's wrong. And if they came knocking at my door, looking to illegally detain one of my closest friends, I would tell them to go fuck themselves in so many words. Since using that sort of strong language to a law enforcement officer is generally considered a dumb thing to do, I would do the next best thing and lie to them. I would gladly say that I had no idea where my friend was. The book presents this scenario as a moral dilemma; however, the situation seems pretty clear to me. You need to choose between lying to the FBI and being complicit in a far greater crime--participating in the illegal detention of US citizens based on solely on ethnicity. In this case, I wouldn't be immoral in the least bit by lying to the FBI.

If I believed in utilitarianism, I would argue that the end justify the means. In this case, the greater good was being served by telling a lie; therefore, my actions were deemed optimal. But if I took this approach to its logical conclusion, could I be the next in a long line of people that committed mass atrocities in the name of the greater good of society? If I preferred Kant to Mills and called myself a deontologist, I might argue that I had a moral duty as a US citizen to assist my government in any way that I can. We're

at war, right? Or maybe I would argue with myself over what duty had more weight: not lying to my government or protecting my friend. I could use the rule that says that when I must choose between telling the truth to authority or keeping my word to a friend, I would always choose keeping my word to my friend. But what what I do if after making my promise to my friend, I found out that they were really guilty of planning or carrying out violence? In this case, there might be a rule that says that it's ok to not keep your word to your friend, if your friend turns out to be an axe murderer. Either way, I'm afraid I might go down a rabbit hole with this approach. In the end, I would reject both of these approaches.

Both of these ethical frameworks seem lacking in this situation. It's impossible to realistically measure utility, and it's impractical to constantly make new moral rules on the fly or boil all of them down to a single, master rule as in the case of the categorical imperative. As humans, we are complex beyond our understanding. When we begin to accept how little we know, it seems foolish to blindly subscribe to one ethical framework over another. In practice, we might find that ethics brings important questions to the forefront. In this case, it would be a good idea for me to question what the right thing to do in our dilemma is according to multiple viewpoints.

In the end, I place more value on protecting a friend than lying to an organization that itself routinely lies to the American public. I place more value on being on the right side of a civil rights issue than following the current interpretation of the law (would we now

argue that Japanese internment camps during WWII were legal). My gut feeling about what to do in this situation seems simple enough, but this simplicity masks great complexity. I'm not even aware of the many ways that my personal decision of what's ethical in this case is affected by all the variables that helped shape my views and character. It's impossible to measure the ways that my decision could change as my view of reality updates, as in the case where I find information indicating that my friend was possibly guilty. Regardless, we can't avoid making moral decisions, and in this case, I would gladly tell an itty bitty little white lie to the US government. And although I reject utilitarianism on the whole, I would choose the much lesser of two evils in this situation.