Ethics Café
18 March 2019
14:00 to 16:00

An initiative of
Sophiatown Community Psychological Services

Truth Telling, Lying and Ethics
Another lie ... another half-truth ... another instance of silence in the face of un-truth ...

Do you find yourself reacting when being lied to? Feeling that, for example, it is wrong when those you are trying to support are selectively honest, or when those in authority seem to lack moral courage to speak truthfully?
Truth Telling and Lying – Various Ethics Perspectives

- Utilitarianism
- Virtue Ethics
- Kantian Ethics
- Ubutu Ethics
- Utilitarianism
Kantian Ethics

• We are all worthy as human beings, and deserve to be treated with dignity. We ought not to treat others as a means to an end.

• We are rational thinking beings, with the ability to make reasonable decisions. This ability gives us freedom.

• If I lie to others, I go against my own dignity as a rational thinking being. “Each lie I tell contradicts the part of me that gives me moral worth”.

• When I lie, I do not honour the dignity of others. My lies deprive them of their ability to exercise their freedom, to take into account all factors as they made decisions. This may impact their autonomy and choices.

Tim C Mazur, Lying. Available at https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/lying/
Ubuntu Ethics

- The community and collective are prioritized.
- Interdependence, solidarity and treating others with respect, dignity and compassion are paramount.
- Ubuntu is a way of being that cannot be developed outside of being in relationship with others.
- Moral maturity is about realisation of one's best self in relation to others.
- 'Humanness' is realised through human connectedness, an attitude of doing good to others and not doing harm to others.
- If I lie, is this right or wrong to myself and the interest of all?

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• The central question: ‘What kind of a person should I be?’
• Virtue ethics focuses on moral character, ‘that goes all the way down’.
• A person’s character can be described with reference to virtues, e.g. honesty, compassion, courage, loyalty, self-control.
• The idea of ‘practical wisdom’ guides my choices.

"Virtue lies in our power, and similarly so does vice: because where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act."

-Aristotle

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Virtue Ethics. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/
Utilitarianism

- Utilitarianism is about balancing of interests.
- Morally justifiable choices are in the best interest of the greatest number of people.
- Consequences of actions should maximise benefit and minimize harm in the bigger picture.

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Insights?
Take-aways?
Things to do?