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PHILOS: ETHICS 003

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3 Astute Individuals

This is the dialogue of three astute individuals. To refrain from strife and dogmatic ideologies, each of the three individuals will be gathered and instead of comparing and contrasting each other's offerings, they will each present a narrative that will evidently shine the light of how they think and effectively using intersections and tensions between deontological ethics, utilitarianism, and existential questions of morality and suffering. Each story will provide a backdrop for their different approaches to their specific view along with independent narrative, they will all tackle the question of what it means to live a moral life in a complex and often unforgiving, unfathomable world. Our characters and alignments with their stores will be: Kara, whom will follow Kantian Ethics with a combination of Rule Deontological approach, she will be presenting the story of Abraham, and his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Sam, will follow a Utilitarianism approach, followed by the story of King Solomon and the two mothers. Lastly Alex, whom will present an Ethical Dilemma of Omelas and Existentialistic viewpoints, presenting the story of Job narrative has his basis. The setting will consist of a tranquil garden backdrop where our three friends would gather to discuss the nature of morality and divine justice, using biblical stories as points of reference. They meet, and settle, then Kara presents her testimony immediately.

Attention! As I would like to present an offering to the painting we will create here today. Speaking of offerings, consider Abraham's test. Where his faith and duty to God led him to the brink of sacrificing his own son. I see it as a profound example of moral duty, transcending personal loss, it is comparative to the likes of Kant's categorical imperative (Kant, 1785). Demanding adherence to moral laws, regardless of outcome. Though personal desire depends on intention, and the immediate consequences of one's actions. God's command is a stark illustration of acting according to maxims that one would will to be become universal law. I believe what may be seen as crucial here is the concept of duty that exists independently of the potential consequences. Abraham's decision, ultimately towards the end as the knife truly was about to impale his son, his duty to obey divine will, irrespective of personal loss or the ethical dilemma it presented. I see individuals whom may abide by such circumstances, but their narratives, yes, may be that of an illusionary divine law. But we must reject the flip side of the coin where we inherently know is to be righteous. We are the makers of our own worlds as well as the diplomat for others that come into conjunction for us. We can't change individuals, nor assume their stance with negative attachments. I see a parallel to rule- deontology that allows the being of change and addressing this stance. Rule- deontologist, much like Kant, argue that moral judgments must be based on general rules or principles. These rules are not derived from the consequences of actions but for their inherent rightness like I said before. This story is but a mere challenge that must be digested adequately and be of use to consider when there are certain actions that we must or must not do, regardless of outcomes. It alleviates the notions of other individuals and their topsy- turvy loose

principles and allows us to take charge of our “I AM” and ask ourselves about that nature of the very rules we currently live by, whether we uphold them or seek a way to change them for ourselves and then showcase that for others. I guess a question to ponder would be, how do we navigate the tension between duty and outcome, especially when our moral intuitions clash with demands of the unwavering rule? See it so, Abraham’s story doesn’t provide a clear and definitive answer, but it invites us to contemplate and not undermine the principles we seek to deem universal for ourselves and all. Thank you for your consideration, I pass the speaking baton to Sam.

Sam collects himself and then presents. Thank you, Kara, for your visions, allow another individual whom was born with the descendants of visionaries, the differentiating factor would be his stillness before the Lord and the wisdom granted to contemplate the nature of his mind and others. The story of King Solomon and the two mothers is a fascinating exploration of moral judgment. Where the outcome presents and tackles deterministic ethical values of an action. I see Solomon’s decision to propose dividing the living child between the two women claiming to be its mother, reveals a not only a blatant display of taking charge of choice for an uncomfortable beginning, but there is deeper insight into utilitarian thought that alleviates the middle and outcome of said choice. Utilitarianism, as advocated by philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (Mill, 1863). Perhaps later, you may see the necessary expansion of the topic resurrected by Peter Singer (Singer, 2011). All of which encompasses the emphasis of the consequences of our actions. Our mission statement is: To maximize happiness and minimize suffering. So, in Solomon’s case, his proposal wasn’t an endorsement of harming the child, but the wisdom of a strategic move to unveil the true mother’s compassion, thereby effectively ensuring the child’s wellbeing. Allow this narrative, like Kara’s, to challenge us to consider the practical application of the mind of a utilitarian. Solomon’s judgment led to the greatest good, and the child’s alongside two women’s momentary distress led to the return to its rightful mother. I see this narrative as a clear example of how we think when it comes to navigating moral dilemmas, focusing specifically on the outcomes rather than intrinsic right or wrongness of an act or decision. Perhaps some critics may argue that utilitarianism can justify morally questionable actions only if they lead to positive outcomes. With Solomon and his wisdom, perhaps it underscores a critical aspect of utilitarian ethics. The need for discernment and the ability to predict consequences of our actions accurately should by not merely be tunneled about the end justifying the means, but about using stillness in the heat of the moment and wisdom to achieve the most compassionate and just outcome. We must exercise these principles when given the opportunity of definitive choice too in an unforgiving world. I hereby pass this imaginary baton to Alex, may he be last to speak in our circle, but first to test us with his wisdom.

Perhaps I can piggyback off the wisdom of Solomon. I sure would like it, I’m sure there are many of us who wouldn’t dare be stricken with the option of choice or being the decider or executioner. And to practice those ideals in an unforgiving world. What therefore when the choice is taken from you? I would like to provoke the spiritual depths of moral life. The story of Job offers us a poignant lens through which an examination of what nature and suffering can do to the human condition. I see his experience haunts us with the haunting reminder of the reality we encompass and the undeserved suffering, whilst challenging and trying to faith our notions of justice and the moral order of the universe. Job had integrity; Job had faith from the get-go, co-signed by the Lord himself is how I like to see it. And through

that, his faith was tested through extreme adversities, of course he remained steadfast in the end. But we mustn't undermine the harsh middle of his story. He endured suffering without apparent cause or reason, bringing to the forefront existential questions about the meaning of our actions and the nature of our moral universe (Camus 1942). I could hear Job's dialogue with God, and it pains me to reveal the limitations of the human understanding and complexity of divine justice. It's a narrative that doesn't offer easy answers but invites us with the ambiguity and uncertainty that we often fail in accompanied by our ethical decisions even in stillness. Existentialism emphasizes the individual responsibility in creating meaning in an absurd world. We are confronted with freedom, and the burden of choice, trekking a path of authenticity and courageousness even when we are imprisoned in our minds or the minds of others, mentally or physically. Like the citizens of Omelas, who are you to decide whether to accept happiness built upon the suffering of an innocent child, if we really think about it, we'll spiral with unlimited harsh moral dilemmas that defy clear cut answers (Le Guin, 1973). I see Job's story is a forefront to challenge the integrity of our choices and values we uphold even in excruciating suffering. Allow this to be a reminder of the impact our decisions have in the world around us, whether it be to ourselves and others who are just trying to barely make it out alive. Thank you, as he pretends to hand the invisible baton to the next guest, only to see it drop unto the ground.

They give a look of seen and heard approval, they, in unison, get up and go their separate ways from which the different corners of the garden they came from. Hopefully we are left with a deeper appreciation for the intersections and tensions between different ethical theories and the existential questions that pervade our understanding of what it means to live a moral life. May these diverse perspectives not be dogmatic in nature, but allows us to gain a rubric of how invitations from different beliefs and narratives to portray them, can ultimately lead us just a little bit closer to our own great decisions, perhaps with complimentary compassion, and the engagement of new minds will create a stillness in our time of exploration on this earth. All foundational texts and narratives can be found in the Holy Bible (New International Version, 2011).

References:

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