

Critical response

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If Sam were a Utilitarian, what would he do? If Sam were a Utilitarian, then he would think in terms of the greatest balance of goods over evil or harms, or the decision that would lead to the common good (Alavudeen et al. 41). First, Sam will determine the different options or courses of action for him: (1) he may continue working for Greyarea, Inc. to sustain financial stability, especially for his family; (2) he may break the confidentiality agreement and expose the unethical actions of the company, saving a large number of people in the long run; (3) he may act covertly against the company; or, (4) he may just mind his own business, thinking that it is out of his control. Each of these decisions has both inherent good and harm in it.

Therefore, the second step is for Sam to evaluate what good or harm will be obtained from each action and who will be affected. If he keeps silent, then the wellbeing of a large number of people will be placed at risk and the company will keep on expanding and earning massive profits. If he breaks the confidentiality agreement and exposes the company then the public will be informed and harm will be prevented, but the company will suffer serious losses, he will lose his job and throw his family into financial instability once more. Hence, Sam, being a utilitarian and believing that the 'end justifies the means' will choose to keep silent, saving the company, as well as himself and his family. For Sam, the greatest good is the one that will benefit his family and, indirectly, the company. He will not sacrifice his job and his family for things that are out of his control, such as the people choosing to buy cigarettes from Greyarea. They have their own choice, and Sam has his own.

2. If Sam were a Deontologist (Kant), what would he do?

If Sam is a Deontologist, then he will definitely break the confidentiality

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agreement and expose the unethical actions of Greyarea, regardless of the consequences to him, to his family, to the company, and to other stakeholders. Deontology is duty-based ethics and it claims that individuals are morally obliged to make decisions or act based on a specific set of rules and ideals irrespective of outcome (Alavudeen et al. 40). Thus, Sam, being a deontologist, knows that what the company is doing is immoral, for it deceives and cheats the public. And so, based on such knowledge alone, of such discovery that the company is unethical, Sam will carry out his moral duty, and that is to inform the public about the company's unethical behavior.

Sam will do something about the situation out of respect for the moral or ethical codes and out of obligation to do so. Sam knows that he will be morally correct if he decides to act based on duty and respect for the moral law. This concept of 'respect' means value which takes self-interest for granted. Kantian deontologists believe that the only absolute good is a good intention, and hence the only determinant of the moral correctness or incorrectness of an action is the intention of the entity doing it (Alavudeen et al. 40-41). Since Greyarea is acting on an unethical principle—deceiving the public about the dangers of their cigarettes—then their deed is immoral, even though some positive or good outcomes arose from it.

Work Cited

Alavudeen, A. et al. Professional Ethics and Human Values. New York: Firewall Media, 2008. Print.