

Introduction face. he  
refused to divulge  
any information



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## **Introduction**

In life, people face many challenges some of which they are supposed to make crucial decisions especially on moral issues.

Unfortunately, one may make a decision that would haunt him/her for the rest of his/her life. The issue of distinguishing 'good' from bad in moral circles has been a controversial area probably due to lack of standards of defining 'good' or bad. What may seem as good to one party may be bad to the other. Does this mean 'goodness' or 'badness' is relative? Well, to answer this, we might consider analyzing a moral dilemma that a very close friend of mine underwent during the post election violence that rocked Kenya after the 2007 general elections. This paper uses Kant and Mill's moral principles to give insight to this moral dilemma that George, my friend from Kenya had to go through, the decisions he made and eventualities thereafter.

## **The Moral Dilemma**

I met George in January 2007 in England where he had come to study and we became very good friends. One thing I remember George could not avoid talking about was the coming general elections back in Kenya later in the year. He kept on saying that half of the then current members of parliament would not get re-election.

As we broke for Christmas holidays, George left for Kenya at least to be part of this phenomenal exercise that comes once in five years. In the early morning of 28th December, news started trickling in that not all went well with the Kenyan general elections. To my chagrin, news had it that violence

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has broken out throughout the nation. I could not stop thinking of George, as my efforts to reach him over the phone were futile. As schools reopened in January 2009, I could not wait to meet George. He arrived late; however, he was a different person.

He looked withdrawn and as I hugged him, I could feel bitterness in his heart coupled with guilt written in his face. He refused to divulge any information but after I coerced him for long, he gave in, given that I was his confidant. What he told me left me gasping and I could not offer any assistance, not at that time. This is George's story cum moral dilemma. George told me that after hell broke loose in Kenya, different communities attacked each other especially in Rift Valley province where there has been unrest since independent Kenya. Police could not contain the situation and rowdy youths took to streets to protest what they termed as 'rigged' elections. In the middle of this melee, people started rooting and killing innocent people as family members watched.

George was not spared. A hard knock at their front house awakened him from deep sleep after a day full of errands. He knew something was wrong when he rushed to sitting room only to find his mother and father bundled at the corner of the house. With rowdy youths baying for blood, George pleaded with them to spare his parent's life. They agreed to do so; however, they would only spare one parent and George had to choose.

He painfully preferred his mother to his father and he watched his father hacked to death. Unfortunately, in the scrimmage, George had to run for his life and by the time he came back to England he had not heard about his

mother; they were separated. After staying in England for eight months, George told me that he could not continue with his studies and he had to leave for Kenya. He left on September 4, 2009. I never heard from him until December the same year when I learnt from a family friend that George had committed suicide for he could not bear the guilt of choosing who was to die between his parents. From a moral perspective, George was in a moral dilemma; unfortunately, he had to make choice or risk losing both parents.

Did George make the right decision? Answers to this question could come from Kant and Mill's moral principles.

### **Kant and Mill on Morality**

According to Mill, " actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill Para. 4). Taken from this perspective, George was right in choosing his mother to live.

Making no choice would result to George losing both parents and this would be wrong for it brings sadness. Given the situation that George was in, choosing one parent was the only ' good' thing he would do for it would bring ' happiness.' Therefore, it was in best interest that he made a choice in the first place.

Kant on his part argues that, " actions are moral if and only if they are undertaken for the sake of morality alone...the moral quality of an action is judged not according to the action's consequences, but according to the motive that produced it. Finally, actions are moral if and only if they are undertaken out of respect for the moral law" (Kant 16). Taken from Kant's <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-face-he-refused-to-divulge-any-information/>

argument, George's actions were moral because his motive was to spare one of his parents than losing both. Morality stands out clearly in this case because George did not have the best option; he only had a better one and that is what he went for. The question here is not whether to kill or not to kill, it about to kill two people or one. Given the fact that killing is 'immoral' George did the only moral thing, to kill one person than two.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of morality remains a controversial issue even to date.

Given the situation that George was in, he made the only logical 'moral' choice. Interpreted from Mill's argument, George did a 'good' thing by choosing his mother over his father because at least this would bring 'happiness' as opposed to the pain of losing both parents. On the other side, George's actions would pass as moral under Kant's judgment because the motive behind the choice he made was to save life, a moral thing.

Even if George were in his parent's shoes, he would expect them to make a choice and choose losing one child over losing two. Therefore, George's actions were 'moral.'

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