

Kantian formalism research paper sample

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Abstract

There are several ethical issues raised for the audience of the film, Food Inc. It seems to be done for the purpose of raising awareness and evoking strong feelings. It also stimulates rejection of certain behaviors in the agricultural industry. These behaviors are carried out by some of the wealthy food producers whose assets were (apparently) built by selfishness and greed. Some of the issue can be described according to specific philosophies which address certain dilemmas in the film. Upon explaining the philosophies, examples of ethical issues will be given along with the resulting dilemmas. Food Inc. is a very popular documentary that gives the viewer a peak into the world of U. S. Agriculture. There is no doubt that it tugs on the heart strings of animal activists. It also capitalizes on the things that motivate people such as fear, anger and curiosity. It raises certain ethical issues and includes information and guest speakers to support claims made about the kings of the agricultural industry. It opens with a beautifully colorful supermarket not unlike a place that every viewer visits during the week. This is quite possibly the hook applied to gathering all viewers into one tour boat. All people of every culture and economic class can identify with the film from the start because of the very first scene. The overall themes in this film will be discussed as they relate to ethical principles such as Kantian formalism, utilitarianism and consequentialism.

Kantian formalism speaks about deeds in such a way that they are only good if they are done for the purpose good will. In other words, a moral person is someone who does the something good because they just want to do the

right thing and there is no expectation of selfish gain. This is the basic premise offered by German philosopher Immanuel Kant. After careful observation, it seems that farmers and growers of organic products have an ethical issue which induces tremendous financial problems, yet they persevere. They want to produce meat and poultry that is free of steroids, preservatives, antibiotics and harmful toxins. They want to treat their animals more humanely than their giant, corporate counterparts. They are completely different in the way they raise, feed and slaughter their animals for the market. Farmers do not expect to push the large companies out of business since all they want is room to participate honestly in the industry for fair compensation and provide an income for their families. Producing healthy, organic and disease-free food at the risk of constant threats is their moral dilemma. They want to do this for no other reason than the fact that it is right and fair for consumers. Yet, they are closely watched and forced to endure financial impositions by regulators and industry superiors. The dilemma is so taxing on the human spirit to discover. This film does a great job of showing the hardships that small farmers must live with each day.

Utilitarian

Utilitarian theories are based on the consequences of actions. What is right and wrong will depend on how others are affected and a decision is morally good if it helps the greatest number of people (Merriam-Webster, 2014). This is simply an umbrella over the contributions of two great thinkers. Rather than applying the rigidity of Bentham's Principle of Utility, the logic of John Stuart Mill is more appropriate for this analysis. According to Mill, utilitarianism " seeks to promote the capability of achieving happiness

(higher pleasures) for the most amount of people” (Cavalier, Ph. D, 1996).

This is the intent of corporate giants like McDonalds and their meat suppliers. The moral issue with the fast food industry and the top four companies in the meat packing industry is that they will do whatever it takes to meet the food demands of the carnivorous public. If it means that millions of pounds of beef must be produced in an extremely short time period, then they are doing the right thing. It is great because they can satisfy their customers and increase profits for themselves and shareholders. This creates a dilemma for which they do not seem to be concerned.

Utilitarian thinking can assign praise for conduct even if it hurts another person. For instance, the film explained that mad cow disease and e-coli infections have caused people to become sick and a little boy even died. This might have been avoided if profit were not prioritized over food quality. According to the company that contributed to such tragedies, they did nothing wrong because it was a mistake and they were simply producing plenty of food to the markets and consumers. In the first example of an ethical issue, the dilemma was suffered by the people who upheld their moral values. On the contrary, the corporations that adopted the Utilitarian approach bear no pain from the resulting dilemma. Instead, the environment, animals and consumers bear the pain while meat companies reap in billions of dollars in profits.

Consequentialism

A final example of an ethical theory shown in Food Inc. is consequentialism. According to this way of thinking, whether an act is morally right depends only on the consequences of that act or of something related to that act”

(Armstrong, 2003). The artificial fattening of chickens and feeding corn to animals that should be grazing on grass are two behaviors which bear negative consequences. Other instances include providing poor work conditions for slaughter house employees and controlling seeds with genetic manipulation. Exploitation of illegal immigrant workers and keeping a painful glass ceiling over the heads of chicken farmers add to the filthy jar of harmful practices. It seems that a great deal of time was spent showing the poor morale of the agricultural industry by subtly referencing consequentialism. These are the issues explained in the movie that all come with their own unfortunate dilemmas.

The biggest dilemma is faced by all of America and is known as obesity. Obesity can point the finger of blame on the many products that come from the corn crop. High fructose corn syrup among other chemicals and additives are included in hundreds of foods consumed on a daily basis. Also, the food in supermarkets and fast food restaurants lack nutrients. The healthy food is highly priced while unhealthy food is cheap. One family in particular, had the dilemma of choosing fast food over fresh vegetables because of their limited funds. They had to do this even though the father was obligated to take medications for chronic health conditions including diabetes. Since many families can relate to this situation, it helps the audience to clearly see that there are millions of victims of this careless industry.

Consequentialism (or the lack of it) speaks out against the government as well. Companies hire workers who are illegally living in the United States. Nothing good comes of this for them because they are not offered fair wages and decent work environments. They do not have unions or anyone to stand

up for them when mistreated. With regard to the employees, there is nothing good that can come from a company treating them this way. Instead of doing a good deed for the workers by arresting the companies which hired them illegally, they simply arrest the hard working people. The company can replace them with more unsuspecting, desperate people who need jobs. The chief immoral behaviors highlighted in Food Inc. are carried out while lacking consequences for inhumane actions. The dilemmas range from sickness in society to destruction of the environment (Kenner, 2008).

In conclusion, the nature of large companies that produce the nation's food clearly do not subscribe to consequentialism. This code of ethics is brought to light by those who lack good intent. This contributes to the nutritional diseases suffered by millions of people. Utilitarianism seems to be the ethical code by which large corporations thrive and the dilemmas are suffered by the consumers. They believe themselves to be doing what is right because they keep up with the apparent demand of meat-eating consumers. In the spirit of efficiency, quality and nutrient value are sacrificed. This leaves the impression that profits, power and control are their biggest concerns.

Kantian formalism demonstrated in this film is uplifting. Some food producers only want to do what is right despite the pressure to sacrifice quality when selling goods.

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