Moral theories in the film casablanca

Entertainment, Movie

While watching Casablanca I was intrigued by the moral dilemmas the characters faced throughout the movie and how they solved them. Throughout the film I was able to connect what was occuring in the movie to two moral theories; utilitarianism and kantism. Along with the connection of the moral theories something that was very relevant throughout the movie was the characters of the film speaking about consequences and how consequences affect things throughout the film. Casablanca takes part in a time during history where many people were trying to get out of Europe and to lisbon and America. This made Casablanca a hub to get out of Europe.

Rick who is the main character himself used to be a resistance fighter left Paris for Casablanca to live for him and himself only. In the beginning of the movie when Rick is speaking with another character, he says " I stick my neck out for nobody" this line give the viewer an idea of what moral theory Rick currently is living by. In my opinion when the movie began I saw Rick as a true Kantian. At this point in the movie the viewer does not know much about Rick and his background so with Rick saying he " does not stick his neck out for anybody" it is seen that he is " governed by himself". Even though there are obviously some instances where what Rick does is not a Kantian belief I belief in the beginning of the movie he is going through his own version of " enlightenment". I believe this is true as Rick just left Paris and is no longer fighting with the resistance. Rick is living in Casablanca and learning to live and do things for himself.

Later in the movie the viewer learns of Ricks past and his relationship in Paris with Ilsa, this has an effect when Rick sees Ilsa again. Once Rick and

Isla see eachother again Rick tries to be selfish and not go back to the past with his feelings, but instead his moral theory becomes more utilitarianism. Rick begins to shift to a more utilitarian mindset as he worries more about helping Isla and her husband escape Casablanca for the greater happiness of them over himself. In my opinion the change in moral theories represent a change in maturity. Rick has left the idea of thinking for himself and doing things for himself and is now more focused on what action will present the greatest overall happiness for the most amount of people.

Another thing that was prevalent throughout this film was how consequences were discussed and thought of through different actions. In the beginning of the movie Ugarte has valuable papers that allow people to travel through Europe freely. Ugarte knows he can't trust many people and must be careful with these papers, while thinking of his options he believes the person he could trust the most with the papers in Rick. Ugarte knows that if he is arrested he will not have the papers on him and the papers will be with Rick. The consequence of leaving the papers with Rick is Rick can turn Ugarte in and get him killed, but Ugarte takes that risk as even though Rick disliked Ugarte, Ugarte trusts Rick the most. Another instance throughout the movie where the consequences of an action were worth it was Rick lying to Isla about leaving Casablanca. Rick determines a plan to get Lazlo and Isla out of Casablanca while tricking Renault. Rick is ultimately not only risking his life by lying to officials but he is also lying to Isla who admitted she wanted to stay with Rick as she still loves him. Rick determines that the consequences

of going through with his plan of getting Lazlo and Isla out of the country are worth it, even if he never sees Isla again.

Ethics has given me a new outlook on how to look at daily choices and actions and how things I may not even notice are related to ethics are all connected. Throughout the semester it has been incredibly interesting to learn about different moral theories and how they differ from one another. I have enjoyed being able to put the theories to the test in the class of Casablanca as I never would have thought that moral theories are so universal and can be seen everywhere before this class.