

Shawshank redemption



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Running Head: ETHICAL REVIEW An Ethical Review of Tim Robbins' Character
In the Movie Shawshank Redemption of College/Institution

Name of Professor

Name of Class/Course

The question of ethics and the morality of human action has always been one of the greatest debates man has yet to agree upon. As the progress of an ethical society depends critically upon its morality, the establishment of a sound criterion for rightful and wrongful actions is essential to that purpose. In this paper, the character of Tim Robbins in the movie Shawshank Redemption will be reviewed for ethical considerations based on the ethical theories of utilitarianism, egoism, Immanuel Kant's premise on "good will" and, that of virtue ethics-all, in an attempt at arriving at a resolution to the question of ethics.

Several scenes from the movie Shawshank Redemption give rise for ethical reflection. In the scene where Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) offered financial advice to Captain Hadley (Clancy Brown), Andy almost got himself killed trying to argue his point across. Eventually, Andy was able to secure his position among the guards and, also, his inmates by giving them a "night of freedom", drinking beers on the rooftop.

Andy's "self-sacrifice" proves to be questionable based on Kant's Ethics on Good Will. According to Kant, an action can only be perceived as done in "good will" if the rational being has the right reasons behind his actions-the right reason being honor bound by duty to do the right thing when a person is in power to affect a change. Since the motive behind Andy's actions is questionable, the act is therefore, morally incorrect.

On the other hand, from the virtue theorists' point of view, the nature of man

<https://assignbuster.com/shawshank-redemption/>

is too complex to put an exact science upon. For them, the question of ethics relies heavily upon a man's character and since Andy Dufresne is dominantly good, he is bound to act morally and perform good deeds. This theory is further strengthened in the part where Andy helped a new inmate, Tommy Williams (Gil Bellows), gain his high school diploma in the hopes of giving the young delinquent a chance at leading a respectable life after prison.

In addition and, in sharp contrast against Kant's theory, ethical egoism allows for the advancement of one's personal interest provided that the act is done in agreement with morality. This theory comes close to defining the motivation behind most of human actions, however, lives much for speculation when evaluating the true morality of an act.

The ethical climax, however, does not arise until late through the movie when Andy was sent back to the yard after a two-month unwarranted stay in the isolation room. Here, we can see the struggle for virtue raging inside Andy. He wants to have happiness, he wants to have freedom, and now that all the hope he has left of achieving that freedom was unjustly taken away from him, he is forced to take matters into his own hands. As Andy said in the movie, " Get busy living or get busy dying".

The ethical conflict in this scene is very visible since we have already established that Andy is a man of good moral character and based on the virtue theorists' point of view, he is destined to do good things. The theory on ethical egoism though, that speaks of the promotion of one's personal interest and, that of utilitarianism which places a gross amount of emphasis on the happiness of the majority, won over that of what he was " supposed" to do as dictated by his own moral character and that of the state which

orders him to stay in prison.

The ethical theories presented to man in an attempt to encompass the dynamics of the human mind translated into action seem to collide against each other as evidenced by the review done on this paper. The theorists' tendency to focus on a certain aspect of the human soul, whether it is the rational side or the emotional side seems to be the downfall. Virtue of ethics is the only theory, among that discussed, which truly embraced the diversity of man.

References

Ash, T. (2003). Utilitarianism. Retrieved November 19, 2008, from <http://www.bigissueground.com/philosophy/ash-utilitarianism.shtml>

LaFave, S. (2006). Kant's Ethics. Retrieved November 19, 2008, from http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/Kant_eth.htm

Richter, D. J. (2002). Virtue Ethics. Retrieved November 19, 2008, from http://academics.vmi.edu/psy_dr/virtue%20ethics.htm

Moseley, A. (2006). Egoism. Retrieved November 19, 2008, from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/egoism.htm>