

The choices we make

Life



Poverty in the United States today has many faces. There's the pleading face of a middle-aged man on a city street holding up a sign that says " Hungry, Need Help. " There's the anxious face of a young child in a schoolroom somewhere, whose only real meal today will be a free school lunch. There's the sad face of a single mother who doesn't have enough money to buy clothes for her children. And there's the frustrated face of a young man working at a minimum-wage job who can't afford to pay his rent. The sad thing is everyone knows someone like this. What are these people to do?

What lengths should they go to be happy? Many times a person's virtue is challenged. Especially when they are forced to choose between a basic human need or a particular ethical indiscretion. So the question is " What effects do poverty and the absence of opportunity have on individuals' senses of virtue? " For one, a person who is poor may choose to steal to obtain a basic need such as food, shelter, or safety. Second, a person's religion may be challenged when poor or in an extreme circumstance that may require a choice between following their way of believing or living.

And finally, parents may do things and make sacrifices to make sure that their children are safe and cared for. Society looks upon people who commit crimes as bad seeds in a community. But, has anyone ever really looked at the person and wondered " what could make this individual so desperate that they would risk everything to steal \$50 bucks out of a cash register, or a loaf of bread from a quick stop. " Don't get me wrong. Not everyone that steals has a good reason, nor is it right. But if you looked deep into the life of the individual, do you see them? Really see them.

Most of the time these people are poor, come from broken homes and sometimes do what they have to too survive. They live in poverty stricken “ghettos” or in poor communities that have no resources to help them. What are they to do? Ask yourself “ Would you steal to feed yourself or yourfamily? ” It happens every day in every city. Most of these people have low paying jobs and struggle to make ends meet. They do what they can and ask for help just to be turned away. Where is the problem? Is it the person themselves? No! It’s the society around them. People do what they must to survive no matter what.

It’s a basic instinct that kicks in and takes over. “ Religion (even if “ primitive) is generally assumed to be in some sense moral. ” (Murdoch 740) People often take religion out of context and use it for their own good or the good of a specific cause. Some examples are Hitler and theHolocaust, orabortion. Hitler used god as a weapon wipe out the Jews. People that are for or against abortion and the laws surrounding it look to it as a moral andethical dilemma. Let’s for a moment touch on this one; Let’s say that you are a pregnant teenager that had been brutally raped.

You have a choice keep the baby, and the memory of the terrible act or abort the “ fetus”. The trouble is your religion is in the way. What are you to do? Do you stick to your religion and the fear of what may happen in the next life or do you do what you feel would be a way out of a bad situation? This is where religion gets in the way of many dilemmas for people today. They have to make a choice. Keep it or don’t. For some the choice may come easy depending on how strongly you feel about your particular morality or virtue.

Many people say “ God never gives us more than we can handle. Is this true? Would you be able to handle this type of situation? Again that depends on the individual and their state of mind. In the end it all comes down to what they think and what the consequences of their action may be. Their idea will be different for everyone, no matter what the circumstance. We cannot judge a person’s views if we do not understand them. The third and final question is How far would a parent go to keep their children safe and healthy? Many parents would say “ I would give my life to keep my child safe”. This is not a fact that is being argued.

What is being argued is if the parent would risk their ethical stand to protect a child. Parents today work so hard to make sure that their children have food and clothing and shelter. But what about the parents who do all of this and still are unable to provide for their families? What are the choices for them? They may steal, lie, cheat and sacrifice their own happiness to provide the same happiness to their families. Is this something that society should look upon in disgust? Or should society take a stand and help? For many years I have helped in an organization that does just this.

We provide clothing food and gifts to underprivileged children every year at Christmas time to make sure that all are happy and joyous like all the other children whose parents can provide. Is this unfair to the happy child who has everything? One can argue that poor people deserve more, but in reality all parents rich or poor would do anything to ensure that their children are cared for no matter what the cost or consequence may be. “ Duty may be easily performed without strain or reflection but may also prompt the well known

experience of the frustration of desire together with a sense of necessity to act" (Murdoch 734)

Each human has the free will and the right to choose the course of their own actions. When an individual takes responsibility for their conduct, they are ultimately acting as a rational being. Realizing that they have the ability to freely choose their actions and that no one else can force them to do something. With the freedom of choice also comes the responsibility for that decision. When an individual takes responsibility she has reached their highest state of reasoning: she has realized that not only is she free to make decisions, but also that their decisions have outcomes.

By applying their free will, they are ultimately saying, " I choose to take this action, and I choose take responsibility for the consequence. " Morals depend on humans exercising their freedom of choice and acknowledging that their choices have significance. Reason allows us not to just behave instinctively or randomly, but to realize that our actions will have an outcome and to act accordingly to the end we wish to achieve. When an individual knows the result of their actions and willingly chooses to carry that behavior out, the individual freely accepts the consequences and thus takes responsibility for that end result.

With all that being said, a person who is poor or pushed to a make a decision may or may not turn to religion and ethics. People are like robots and are programmed from childhood to believe or act in certain ways. They are sometimes torn by the morality of a decision and the virtues in which they believe. These choices are not easy and are not always the right ones but we

are humans and we make mistakes. This is how we learn to survive and make things better for the next era. We can only take it one step at a time.