13 Reasons Why is a TV show based off of a book written by Jay Asher. The show released on Netflix in March of 2017. The series is about a young girl name Hannah Baker, a sophomore now at Liberty High School. She recently moved to Crestmont about two months ago. She finds herself a job at the local movie theater where she meets Clay Jensen, a shy boy who works there. Clay is also a sophomore at Liberty High. He befriends Hannah and starts to gain a crush on her. Hannah meets many friends and enemies during her short time in Crestmont. Hannah surprisingly takes her own life.

Two weeks after her tragic death, her classmate Clay finds a mysterious box on his front porch. Inside, he discovers seven double-sided cassette tapes that were recorded and sent to him by Hannah Baker. Each tape unfolds her emotional daily diary, with details on the thirteen reasons why she decided to kill herself. She left instructions to each individual whom received a package from her and that they were one of the reasons why she ended her life. She asked that after they listened to the tapes, they were to pass the package to the next person. If they did not follow the rules, the public would be released a separate set of tapes which would reveal much more. Things many of them did not want shared.

Clay struggles to listen, he was trying to cope but has to know why he made the list. Each episode goes deeper and deeper into the relationships Hannah gained and showcases the problems she faced. The suspenseful story is told through Clay and Hannah as a narrative. The show ends in a way that leads you to believe there will be a second season. The show has been trending for months. It received a lot of popularity. Good and bad.

Given the widespread popularity of 13 Reasons Why, there are several ethical issues that must be discussed. After the show launched many people were binge watching (meaning watching a series all at once), and spreading it like wild fire. It became very popular and big controversy arose. The main ethical issue is that the show is about a girl who commits suicide and people are concerned that viewers, kids especially, will follow. Another major issue is the show actually shows the suicide in detail.

A number of mental health professionals, suicide prevention experts, and school counselors have already voiced concerns about the show, particularly surrounding the depiction of the suicide (Martinelli 2017). The show is said to be glorifying suicide by showing Hannah’s classmates finally caring about her after her death and being confronted about what they did. The show could also be showing fantasy revenge. Hannah is actually blackmailing her classmates to listen to her tapes and also blaming them for what she did to herself. This could be sending the wrong message about suicide and frame it as an effective action. The show even depicts adults. The ones specifically in the show are shown not treating or handling the issues like they should. This could discourage children who are struggling from seeking help.

Parents are getting school wide spread emails telling them not to allow their children to watch the series or to be aware of the show. My parents included! I have two younger siblings a home. While watching I did not even think about screening for them before they seen it. There are a few episode I would definitely hide from their viewing. I remember people were not happy about the series. They were saying things like “It’s showing more teen violence,” or “More kids are going to commit suicide,” or even “This is showing teens how to commit suicide.” As if they didn’t already know about it before. The ethical issues are something for us to look at.

Next I want to look at three philosophers from the book and explain why their framework provides us with the best opportunity to explore the moral issues for this case. I have chosen Kant, Smart, and Aristotle. These 3 philosophers fit my case well.

I have chosen to look at Kant’s prospective because it focuses more on obligation and ought they to have ran the campaign? Or ought they to have ran the episode with the suicide in it? And is it morally right for them to have done so? Kant thinks we should focus on something good. He focuses more on the intention not the consequences.

I then wanted to look at a Utilitarian prospective. Utilitarian’s main focus is happiness. Smart would ask does promoting this show to the public does it bring happiness to everyone. Nobody’s happiness counts more than anyone else’s. This is important because we have to think about who all this could be affecting. Utilitarian’s try to answer moral questions.

Aristotle would ask is this virtuous to do so? He focuses on virtue ethics. He’d ask questions like “Will I have a well lived life as a producer?” or “What kind of virtues does a producer have that leads to a well lived society?” He looks at where to draw the line and I think that is good for this case. The two conditions of highest good are that it is final and self-sufficient.

These philosophers all have very different views. The case will be evaluated by each one to see which philological view would be best in deciding how to fix these ethical issues.

The first philosopher is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) who was a German philosopher who is a central figure in modern philosophy. He focused on deontology and duty based ethics. Kant vied that the sold feature that gives an action moral worth is not the outcome that is achieved by the action, but the motive that is behind the action (McCormick).  Kant says that the only motive that can endure and act with moral value is one discovered by reason. He uses the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative says act as you would want all other people to act towards all other people. Act as if it was a universal law.

Kant looks at good all by itself. Good without qualification. For example coming to class is not good by itself, but it is good to come to class for your grade and for learning (Leake). However, moral goods are those without qualifications. So thins like good will. You ought to do it even if it doesn’t make you happy or benefit you. Not to cheat is morally good. Saving someone is morally good. Goodwill is doing your duty. Attempting to do good is still good, because it involves the intention. Kant is the opposite of consequences.

Kant says being rational is the rule that tells you what you ought to do. He also says to never use people as a means. In this prospective you want to value people’s dignity. Humans have value over price. All humans have value.

Lastly, as mentioned before act always in such a way as you would want to be treated. Always at an end and never as a means. In other words don’t use people.

Now let’s apply Kantian perspective to this case. Kant’s prospective focuses more on obligation and ought they to have ran the campaign? This show is a campaign about suicide and suicide awareness. Selena Gomez is one of the celebrity faces who helped get the ball rolling on this Netflix original. She has struggled with things growing up and wants teens to feel like they are not alone. The main ethical issue of the show is that a girl commits suicide and viewers are concerned. Kant says focus on reason and intention. So did they intend to get people to follow what Hannah does in the show? No they were not focused on consequences.

Nic Sheff a writer said he immediately knew he wanted to be involved in the project when her read the pilot for *13 Reasons Why*. It his close to home for him. He thought it had good intention. “I was struck by how relevant and even necessary a show like this was: offering hope to young people, letting them know that they are not alone—that somebody out there gets them.”(Sheff 2017) This was a topic he felt strongly about. It does explore the reality of teen/adult suicide, but this is not intended to make more commit suicide or inflict self-harm.

Again another major issue is the show shows the suicide in detail. Kant would ask “Ought they have ran the episode with the suicide in it?” Is it morally right for them to have done so? Kant says to focus more on the intention not the consequences. The producers of the show say an opportunity to look at current issues of sexual assault, suicide, cyberbullying, depression, and more. It does not seem that they have ill intention.

Now that they have announced there will be season 2, Netflix is going to be adding a trigger warnings to the show according to Vanity Fair and other news outlets.

The next philosopher I wanted to talk about is Smart. John Jamieson Carswell (September 1920-October 2012) was an Australian Philosopher. He is a utilitarian. Utilitarianism is said to be one of the best moral theories. It focuses on whether actions are morally right or wrong depending on their effects. Consequences are involved in this theory. The effects of actions are relevant to the bad and the good results that they produce. Consequentialism is the theory in which rightness and wrongness of actions is determined exclusively in reference of the consequences. Utilitarian’s take parts of that theory and use it to value happiness.

So rightness or wrongness of actions is determined exclusively with reference to the consequences of the action. Nothing matters except the result. Happiness is the main key. Smart says “Why do you care in the first place?” To be benevolent. Which is to want good for people. Happiness means pleasure. You don’t just look at your happiness. Nobody’s happiness counts more than anyone else’s. You can make a table or chart that evaluated everyone’s happiness to see who is effected the most. Good or bad.

This is a good theory because it does take everyone into consideration. It doesn’t just focus on the intention. It wants everyone to be equal. Equally happy. Something to think about when decision making.

Now applying the Utilitarian view to this case. Smart would ask does airing this show bring happiness. Will this bring happiness to all that are involved? You also want to consider who all is affected by this decision. The main ethical issue was the show is about a girl who commits suicide and people are concerned that viewers, kids especially, will follow. So this effects children, teens, adult viewers who may have suicidal thoughts. This affects the producers who put out the show along with Netflix. This also affects the parents of the viewers. Studies suggest that graphic depictions of suicide, or detailed descriptions of the suicide methods can increase the chance for “copycat suicides.”(Gould) In addition the show goes into detail about Hannah’s suicide. This is what is scary. Is this wright or is this wrong? In the book by Jay Asher she commits suicide by taking medication pills. In the show she commits suicide by filling the tub, getting in clothed and cutting her wrist causing her to bleed to death. I did watch the show I did not read the book, so I am not sure how much detail it went into in the book.

This scene was in the final episode of *13 Reason Why* when they show her suicide. About 37 minutes into the show, as Clay talks to a councilor about how he could have helped save her. Showing this could yes show teens a way how to commit suicide, but this could also induce fear. It was a quick seen that was hard to watch, because you didn’t want Hannah to die.

If you made a chart you would weigh who this episode affects. It affects the producers, the audience, the actors, Netflix. Then you would weigh the possible outcomes. The producers would be happy. They spread awareness and made money. The audience is happy because they liked the show, however there are a lot of the audience that are unhappy too. The actors are happy because they made money, but also sad because they may disappoint fans if suicide increases. Netflix had a lot of viewers and a lot of sceptics so they are probably mutual.

The last philosopher is as an ancient Greek philosopher born in 384-322 BC. Aristotle believed in the highest good.  For a better life, a well lived life and happiness. To get there you need to have good virtue and you need to have a well-character to be virtuous. There are two conditions of the highest good. That is final and self-sufficiency. Aristotle would ask is this virtuous to do so? He would also ask will I have lived a well life as myself in my profession if I do this.

Where do you draw the line he asks? You have to draw it somewhere. Virtue ethics is to ask yourself what kind of person you should be. Virtue is a character trait that makes you agent-centered. Not act centered. Referring to the goal you are aiming at. To the thing you pursue that seems good to you. Goods you pursue stand in specific kind of relationship to each other. Aristotle’s description of human behavior is what makes it intelligible.

If you are reasoning badly and the links get you somewhere else, then set your goals to get you here to happy living. A good life is one that is happy. The highest good is a self-sufficient one. That is where you feel like nothing is missing. When you learn to oppose order on yourself it comes from someone else (such as a teacher) then you are more rational. You’ll have more virtue. You must do virtuous things. You must have wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. Moral virtue is excellent character when we want to do something and are not being forced to do it. Courage, creativity, and timeliness are traits that will help you perform a job well done. You want to outweigh the vices with virtues.

Now we will be applying Aristotle’s Perspective to this case of *13 Reasons Why*. Aristotle would ask if it is being virtuosos to produce this show. The ethical issue is that the show is about a girl who commits suicide and people are concerned that viewers will follow. Here you don’t focus as much about everyone’s happiness, the intent or the consequence. You focus more on if this act is virtuous. This show is not to harm anyone. They are doing their job (Kant), and this job done well will help the society be better. You can’t help copycats. You can try to prevent! This is about awareness and prevention. Not about showing youth how to harm themselves on purpose so they will follow. Adding the trigger warning will be good for parents and children.

The other issue that is about showing the suicide in detail, I don’t believe Aristotle would find virtuous. It is not necessary. You can get the full picture of what happened to Hannah without showing her cut her wrist open. This will not better the society.

These producers such as Selena Gomez do have good virtue. They have a good character they want to do better in the community and in our society. They are trying to show courage, and timeliness. This is a current issue in our society. Youth and adults feel alone. Like they don’t have anyone to go to. The show has good virtue. There are parts that could be left out such as the suicide and rape scenes. You could still get the point across and still do this in a moral, ethical way.

The philosopher and approach that I think would provide the best way to look at the issue with *13 Reasons Why* is Aristotle’s approach. Let’s start with why I think the other ones would not work as well, starting with the Kantian perspective. Kant has a great idea by looking at what the intention of the show could be. Also what producers had in mind, in which they did have very good intentions in producing this show? However, if you look at this perspective you do not see exactly what the consequences will be because you disregard the consequences. Again they have great intentions, and most people usually do. But the outcome may end up being bad. Not just for them but for everyone including you.

Then looking at the Utilitarian perspective you can see an idea of who is affected, but it is hard to tell who is really affected the most or if there is a stronger loss within one category until more research is done. You don’t know if more suicides have happened since the showing of *13 Reasons Why* or if there has even been a study done. Since the subject is so new and is broad. There isn’t just one specific individual to look at like in the Vulture case we did in class.

Aristotle is the best option because he is looking at the society as a whole. And this show was able to be viewed all over the county. It was not specific to one location. There are different points/issues you can also look at and determine separately. Such as playing the show and not showing the suicide. They could show her in the tub, however not showing her slit her wrist in detail. Aristotle shows how you can be ethical. The producers of Netflix have virtue; however the 13th episode alone was not very ethical to show.

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