**Week 7: Philosophical**

**District 9**

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The movie “District 9” is an extremely interesting movie, in that it uses the science fiction genre to pose ethical questions about issues that have happened in the past, and possible issues that we may face sometime in the future. While the future aspect will always be speculatory, the reference to the past is clearly pointed at South Africa and the Apartheid that existed to some extent up until 1994. Two questions posed by this assignment are what ethical issues does the main character, Wikus van der Merwe face, when assigned to evict the aliens; and is the eviction of the aliens just or justified. While posed separately, attempting to answer the first can also answer the second question.

With the first question, on what ethical issues does the main character face when assigned to evict the aliens, one must first ask oneself if the eviction is legal or justified. According to “A Landlord’s Guide to the Eviction Process there are seven basic reasons that landlords may use as justified reasons to evict someone, those seven reasons are as follows:

1. Not paying the amount of rent.

2. Continuously damaging the property

3. Any severe health hazard.

4. Involvement in any kind of illegal drug activities.

5. Violating any of the terms of the lease.

6. Unauthorized entry such as forceful entry.

7. Not moving out even after expiry of lease term.

Out of these reasons, only three plausibly apply to the situation presented within “District 9”. Those reasons are continuously causing damage to the property, any severe health hazard, and involvement in any kind of illegal drug activity. These are the only apparent viable reasons, because at no point in the movie is there any indication of rent being expected, a violation of terms of lease, unauthorized entry, expiration of a lease, or that there has been any other attempts made at getting the alien population to relocate on their own to the new location.

Given this information, and the dimwitted character of Wikus , it easy to see where the legality and justification of the eviction might be seen. The alien district is clearly a slum, which could be because of the Apartheid conditions or because the aliens were constantly destroying anything that was given to them. As the aliens do live in deplorable conditions, the jump to severe health hazards is extremely easy, and finally, the involvement of any kind of illegal drug activity is not a far stretch when you consider that the aliens are addicted to cat food, which provides an outlet for Nigerian gangsters to exploit in attempts to purchase alien tech that works. Also, the types of living conditions presented in the film generally breed many other forms of illegal activity. As such, the ethical issues that Wikus faces, is that of whether or not he should accept the position to lead the eviction process. However, given these three plausible reasons it would be extremely easy for Wikus to believe that the eviction was both legal and justified, and maybe even ethical because from Wikus’ viewpoint the location the aliens were being relocated to was a much nicer location.

If one attempts to answer the second question on whether or not the relocation is justified, it is obvious that the answer is that the relocation is not justified. This is seen once one understands that there is no real cause for the eviction, and what is the real purpose and reason behind the relocation.

The cause of the eviction in the movie is never made clear, at least within the reasons already listed above, and the purpose of eviction appears to be to appease the human public opinion of moving the aliens farther away, so that the aliens are “out of sight, out of mind”. This also has the secondary purpose of allowing the MNU Corporation to continue their unethical experiments on the aliens, and perhaps increases MNU’s ability to perform these experiments. While this particular reasoning is an assumption, it is based on the imagery that is presented within the movie, as this is at least alluded to throughout the internal MNU scenes.

First, once Wikus has become infected with the alien DNA MNU wants to use and harvest him to further their own profits and benefits of the alien technology. Secondly, this is seen when Wikus and Christopher return to the MNU facility to recover the container of alien fluid. During this scene the unethical alien experiments are revealed to Christopher, causing the direct realization that the longer his people remain on earth, the longer MNU will use his people in these experiments and eventually enable humanity to be able to use the alien technology, and quite possibly use it against his own people. This then causes Christopher to change the arrangement that he had made with Wikus on healing Wikus’s arm so that he can return home, and then return with support to rescue his people as fast as possible.

As such, the imagery presented in the movie, and what society currently recognizes as legal or ethical clearly leaves no room for any type of argument that the actions taken in the movie were either ethical or legal. Even the society within the movie recognizes to some extent that the actions of MNU were not ethical, as one employee eventually reported some of these issues that he saw, and spent time in prison because of that decision. This leaves the ethical decision in the hands of Wikus and whether or not he believes the eviction to ethical and legal, which at the beginning of the movie is clear that he does.

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