

Ethical Issues in "My Sister's Keeper"

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The title of the film "My Sister's Keeper," directed by Nick Cassavetes (2009), aptly captures the fate of a girl brought into existence through in-vitro fertilization. Anna is genetically matched to her older sister Kate, so that she (Anna) can donate one of her kidneys to save her sibling who is suffering from leukemia and renal failure. Their mother Sara is keen to have Anna donate her kidney, although she is reluctant because she wants to enjoy her life. On her part, Kate does not wish Anna to sacrifice her own life for her, and she gently asks her to refuse to donate her kidney.

This film raises a number of ethical issues. The first one is the practicing of genetic engineering, which uses embryo tissues to create new life. Conception is a natural process that takes place through sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Therefore, the idea of creating an embryo through artificial means violates the natural order of things. This practice contradicts religious teachings with regards to God's intention of man, and the role of marriage in procreation.

The second issue raised in the film is the extent to which individuals have control of their own lives. The right to life is a fundamental and universal human right. Anna's life is threatened by the obligation imposed upon her to donate her kidney. She wishes to lead a normal life and raise a family of her own. Forcing her to donate her kidney threatens her own survival, and therefore violates her right to life.

Nevertheless, Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory argues that an action is judged to be right or wrong in light of its effect on others. Accordingly, both Anna and Kate are faced with a moral dilemma regarding their right to life. Kate's need of a kidney automatically endangers Anna's life, which means that she was morally right in refusing to have a transplant. On her part, Anna's

reluctance to donate her kidney means that Kate will not live, thus portraying her as selfish and uncaring toward her sister. Her attitude echoes Christian teachings about being one's brother's keeper, which evidently inspired the film's title. Thus, Anna fails the moral test of being her sister's keeper. Ironically, it is Kate who becomes her sister's keeper by giving up the desire to live to save Anna from the obligation to donate her kidney.

References

Cassavetes, N. (Nov 2009). *My Sister's Keeper: Film*. U.S.A: Warner Bros Pictures.