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Course

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Ethical Dilemma

When considering this paper, a recent incident, in which I faced a challenging ethical dilemma, came to mind. I was doing my usual Saturday morning shopping when I noticed that the woman who was ahead of me in the long queue to the cashier had dropped a hundred-dollar bill. Instinctively, I quickly placed my foot on the money trying to hide it in the hopes of picking it up later. As I stood on the money wondering how I could pick it up without being noticed, I studied the woman. Her hair looked slightly disheveled, but her long trench coat looked new and expensive. I peered around her to look at the items in her shopping cart. She had milk, bread, T-bone steak, expensive skin lotion, and a few other toiletries. As I studied her, I realized that I was doing so as an assessment of her financial position.

In my personal opinion, she looked like she was well off, a sharp contrast to my financial position. I looked at my hand held shopping basket that only contained scarce items, of which I deemed highly important to my daily survival and hygiene. As we approached the till, my foot still firmly placed on the money and dragging it along with me. I thought of the body lotion I had sacrificed in order to buy soap. I thought of the McDonalds burger that I had been craving all week and the movie I was so eager to watch but had no funds to buy the ticket. Keeping the money would clearly be a treat, yet taking it from the woman felt wrong and dishonest. My

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dilemma was if I could pick up the money and keep it or had to pick it up and give it back to the woman.

For the purpose of this paper, I chose to use the ethical egoism theory to analyze the dilemma that I found myself in. The ethical egoism theory purports that everything is determined by self-interest and that all human actions are guided by the only objective to fulfill personal desires. The theory proposes that an individual should be concerned about others only in situations where their actions also contribute to the fulfillment of their personal interests. When considering the dilemma, the ethical egoism theory would require that I keep the information to myself and keep the money in order to be able to buy movie tickets, body lotion, and enjoy a king size McDonalds burger.

Furthermore, the theory suggests that should I have decided to tell the woman that she had accidentally dropped her money, I should have done so only if it would have been in my best interest. In this instance, I should have informed her of her loss only if she would be more likely to offer to pay for my purchases or if she would be likely to offer a small reward of some kind. This way, we would both have benefited from my actions.

However, it is worth noting that the ethical egoism theory also raises another dilemma, as it suggests that ultimately I should tell the truth, because if my actions were to be deceitful, there would be a high probability that my personal happiness would be negatively affected, if I were caught trying to keep the money. In conclusion, the recommendation would be that I had to tell the woman that she had dropped some money in order to evade the likelihood of being caught in my deceit.