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How do I make important decisions?

Here are the facts. Since 1994 I have been actively interested in the topic of health and nutrition. By the word *actively*, I mean that I have been reading several books, magazines, periodicals, scientific articles, and I have also talked to several different experts in the field, both professionals and non-professionals.

As a conclusion of my investigations, in October of '95, I eventually decided to discontinue the intake of all animal products in my diet, being strongly convinced that such foods (meat, fish, dairy products, and eggs) are not only unnecessary to human nutrition and well-being, but are even rather harmful to human health.

My current diet now consists of predominantly raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and, secondarily, legumes, bread, rice, pasta, grains, and other cooked vegetables.

When I went home for Christmas, and told my parents about my dietary changes, this seemed to scare the hell out of them! They started saying that, by giving up animal products, I was basically committing suicide, and I would have soon run into all sorts of diseases such as anemia, anorexia, protein deficiency, organic deterioration, and several others. I spent about 2 weeks trying to convince them, on scientific grounds, that I was perfectly healthy (I have not been sick at all since I changed my diet, not even a cold), and that, in the long run, I would have been better off on a plant-based diet. However, my parents were still asking questions such as "Where do you get your protein?" and other questions that were, in fact, the same questions that I had been asking myself before conducting extensive research on the subject of health and nutrition.

My father was particularly concerned, and, as the end of Christmas break and my return to College were getting closer, he started saying that he could not sleep at night, and he was feeling very bad because of me, that he was extremely worried for my health, and that he would not have been well as long as he knew I was not eating meat, fish, cheese, etc. It sounded as if *his* health was dependant upon *my* diet.

I thought I had basically three options to deal with the situation:

1) I could go back to eating meat and animal products, just to make my parents happy, but knowing that it was not good for myself

2) I could tell my parents that I was going to eat like I once used to, and then eat what I wanted to eat instead (after all, they are thousand miles away, and they can't check what I am eating when I am away from home!)

3) I could make it clear that I was deeply convinced that I was right, that they did not have to worry for my health, and that I was not going to change my mind and my eating habits back to animal products anyway.

I chose the third course of action, and this is my reasoning: I am basically convinced that health is a good thing, and that disease is a bad thing. Now, if we add to this the fact that I am totally convinced that an animal product-free diet is much healthier than the standard diet, then it would not make any sense for me to go on eating flesh food, knowing that it could be harmful to my health. For this reason I did not chose the first option.

The second alternative was what many people suggested I should have done. What was very attractive about it was that my parents would have been happy, and that I could have gone on with my fruit and vegetable diet. Apparently, everybody wins! However I strongly refused this course of action for two reasons: first, it was just a temporary remedy, since I could not have gone on cheating forever, and, second, I would have had to deliberately *lie* to my parents. Lying under virtually *any* circumstance is against my principles, and in this case more than ever, because I would have lied to my parents and also, under my perspective, I would have had to hide a fundamentally good thing that I was doing, and make my parents believe that I was doing something that I personally regard as unhealthy, and therefore bad.

The bad aspect about my course of action is that it is probably bringing pain to my parents, but there is always the hope that sometime soon they will at least accept and respect my decision, or - even better- they will change their mind and they will agree with me. Also, by choosing the third course of action, I am not lying to anyone, and I am not hiding something which I think is fundamentally good and healthy, i.e. my vegetarian diet.

I do not know if there is an ethical theory that perfectly fits my reasoning, but I can say that mine was probably more of a deontological approach than a utilitarian one. From a utilitarian perspective, I think, lying to my parents would have been good, but I refused to do that because of my *a priori* notion that lying is bad and should be avoided, even if by doing so, I might bring pain to my parents.