

Business Ethics &  
Corporate Social Responsibility:  
The Environmental View



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Business Ethics &  
Corporate Social Responsibility:  
The Environmental View

- Ethics is concerned with the following:
  - Good vs Bad
  - Right vs Wrong
  - Fair vs Unfair
  - Praise vs Blame



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Business Ethics &  
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- Deontology:
  - An ethical theory that holds that actions are right or wrong independent of their consequences



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Business Ethics &  
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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?



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- Problem:
  - It is not clear on what basis non-humans can be considered to have 'rights'
    - non-sentient beings are not considered moral persons



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- Utilitarianism:
  - An ethical theory that holds that actions are right if they produce, or tend to produce, the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of persons



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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?



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- Problem:
  - This perspective only recognizes the instrumental value of 'goods'
    - the natural environment would therefore only have value 'in use'



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- Justice:
  - Consists in giving each person his or her due, treating equals equally and unequals unequally
    - Distributive
    - Procedural
    - Compensatory
    - Retributive



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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?
  - Lead to fair outcomes?



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- Problem:
  - Focus is on persons, and giving them what they 'deserve' based on 'merit'
    - on this basis, on what basis would nature be rewarded for 'good' behavior?



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- Ethic of Care:
  - Asks us to recognize and take seriously the moral worth of relationships, particularly those characterized by caring



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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?
  - Lead to fair outcomes?
  - Promote caring relationships?



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- Problem:
  - It is not clear what might be meant by 'caring' for non-humans—or what it might mean for them to 'care' for us
    - anthropomorphism might lead us to interpret certain non-human animals' behavior as caring



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- Libertarianism:
  - Suggest right action consists in maximizing the capacity for free, informed personal choice



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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?
  - Lead to fair outcomes?
  - Promote caring relationships?
  - Advance personal liberty?



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- Problem:
  - non-humans are not considered to have 'choices' in the way in which humans do, and therefore are not privileged with liberty
    - All species do not have the capacity for reasoning
  - personal liberty might lead to asserting personal choice at the expense of animal rights.



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- Virtue theory:
  - Focus is on achieving our personal ethical ideal—a matter of who we are, not what we do



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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?
  - Lead to fair outcomes?
  - Promote caring relationships?
  - Advance personal liberty?
  - Stimulate personal ideals?



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- Problem:
  - The matter of character is central to virtue theory...do non-human species have 'character'?
  - similarly, can they be considered to have 'values'?
  - What if environmental values are not part of one's ethical ideal?



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- Land Ethic:
  - A thing is right when it tends to preserve the beauty, stability, and integrity of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.



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Business Ethics &  
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- Does the contemplated action:
  - Conform to important principles?
  - Create more good than harm?
  - Lead to fair outcomes?
  - Promote caring relationships?
  - Advance personal liberty?
  - Stimulate personal ideals?
  - Contribute to sustainability?



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Man...ought to regard himself, not as something separated and detached, but as a citizen of the world, a member of the vast commonwealth of nature...to the interest of this great community, he ought at all times to be willing that his own little interest should be sacrificed.

--Adam Smith



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- 5) Who are we? Are we part of nature, or something separate and distinct from nature?



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- 9) We seem to accept as a matter of course that human beings are 'naturally' driven to acquire more and more. Is this the case, or rather are we socialized into a consumption mentality? What evidence can you provide in support of your position? Even if we are naturally acquisitive, are we hopelessly so? What would it take for us to adopt 'simpler' lifestyles?



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- 11) Let's return to the question of our 'nature.' There was a time in our not-so-distant past in which overconsumption was viewed as evidence of a moral lapse--that greed, in short, was viewed as a moral vice. Now, however, we have 'progressed' to the point at which greed is viewed quite differently; consider the words of Gordon Gecko in the movie Wall Street:



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- Well, ladies and gentlemen, we're not here to indulge in fantasy, but in political and economic reality. America...America has become a second-rate power. Its trade deficit and its fiscal deficit are at nightmare proportions. Now, in the days of the free market, when our country was a top industrial power, there was accountability to the stockholder.



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- The Carnegies, the Mellons, the men that built this great industrial empire, did it because it was their money at stake.  
Today, management has no stake in the company!  
...The new law of evolution in corporate America seems to be the survival of the unfittest.  
Well, in my book, you either do it right or you get eliminated.  
...I am not a destroyer of companies.  
I am a liberator of them!



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- The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed, for lack of a better word, is good.  
Greed is right.  
Greed works.  
Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit.  
Greed, in all its forms—greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge—has marked the upward surge of mankind, and greed—you mark my words—will not only save Teldar Paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the U.S.A.



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- Is greed good, or is greed a moral vice?



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