



Ethics & Social Responsibility (Week 11)

Environment and Ethics



Environment and Ethics

- The case for environmental ethics
- Ethical frameworks
- Roles of businesses and the government



Weekly discussions

- Any noteworthy current affairs that raise ethical questions or concerns?



The state of climate change

- Climate Action Tracker

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wJo5aKBwq0>

- Tesla's Contributions (7.30)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a_vYnJ8Ral



What are environmental ethics?

- Environmental ethics, what does it entail?
 - “In relation to the environment it means that we must live in harmony with our fellowmen and with nature in a way that will bring about happiness to all in the present and future generations.”

WHETHER YOU LIVE IN A...



Rural village



Small island or coastal town



Big city

CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS YOUR HEALTH

Drought,
floods and
heat waves
will increase.



Vector-borne diseases, like malaria and dengue virus will increase with more humidity and heat.

Basic necessities will be disrupted...



FOOD

Hunger and famine will increase as food production is destabilised by drought.



AIR

Pollution and pollen seasons will increase leading to more allergies and asthma.



WATER

Warmer waters and flooding will increase exposures to diseases in drinking and recreational waters.

Between **2030** and **2050** climate change is expected to cause

250 000 ADDITIONAL DEATHS PER YEAR

due to malaria, malnutrition, diarrhoea and heat stress.



World Health
Organization



Ethical Framework for Environmental Ethics

- Utilitarian theory:
 - Seeks to achieve the greatest amount of happiness
 - Act utilitarianism: Could in theory justify the short term exploitation of the environment to make a profit and benefit stakeholders
 - Rule utilitarianism: A longer-term POV would require us to look at the bigger picture and to support sustainable development (esp wrt future generations)



Ethical Framework for Environmental Ethics

- Utilitarian theory:
 - Another aspect: quality of happiness (higher v lower pleasures)
 - Economic gain may not bring about the same degree of happiness as appreciation for nature etc.



Ethical Framework for Environmental Ethics

- Kantian theory:
 - RECALL: Categorical imperatives
- 1) Principle of Universality
 - Act only according to the maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law
 - AKA: Do unto others as you would have it done to you
- 2) Principle of Humanity
 - Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only
 - Three levels of obligations: Cause no harm, prevent harm and do good.



Ethical Framework for Environmental Ethics

- Rawls' theory of justice (Justice as Fairness)
 - Recall: Rawls was primarily concerned with societal rules of conduct
- In determining the amount of societal goods that one would receive, one must make a decision under a “veil of ignorance”
 - The hypothetical self-interested and rational man would not know in advance the position, social status, natural assets and abilities, intelligence, strength and psychological propensities of the competing individuals
- Fair distribution of benefits and burdens wrt the environment



Ethical Framework for Environmental Ethics

- Theories of Justice – Aristotle (regarding the use and exploitation of resources e.g. in less developed countries)
- Distributive: examining the benefits and advantages accruing to one person as compared to another. E.g. amount of wages received by X and Y respectively should correspond to amount of work put in by X and Y respectively
- Compensatory: Compensation of victims for wrongs done to them, to restore the victim to the original position prior to the wrongdoing
- Retributive Justice: To punish wrongdoers and restore moral equilibrium



Environmental Responsibility of Businesses

- Classical theory
 - Businesses have no corporate social responsibility or ethical responsibility towards the environment
 - Businesses should be solely concerned with generating profits
 - Key proponent of this theory: Milton Friedman



Environmental Responsibility of Businesses

- Drawbacks of classical theory
 - 1) Externalities like pollution, resource depletion and the protection of endangered species
 - 2) Business interests at the 'micro' level of individual firms and industries are not always identical to the 'macro' level goals of the market



Break

- Come back in 10-15 mins



Environmental Responsibility of Businesses

- Neo-classical theory
 - Environmental concerns need only be integrated within the moral minimum to become business' social responsibility
 - Moral Minimum has been interpreted in various ways:
 - Obedience to laws
 - Avoiding harm
 - Fulfilling the social contract that business has with society
 - Fulfilling the ethical responsibilities towards stakeholders etc.



Environmental Responsibility of Businesses

- Is the moral minimum enough in the Asian context?
 - “there is no ‘free market’ in Asia; instead there is poverty, illiteracy, shortage of basic human needs, poor infrastructure and corruption”
 - The concept of free market may develop later when Asian societies have fully developed but it does not exist for now



Environmental Responsibility of Businesses

- Stakeholder theory
 - Corporations ought to be operated for the benefit of all who have a stake in the enterprise
 - These constituencies would include employees, customers, suppliers and the local community
 - Each stakeholder would have an interest in the government



Government Responsibility

- Greta Thunberg at the UN:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrtLsQbaok>



Government – Private Sector collaborations?

- Indonesia post 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7bnE3AcJNE>
- What do you think the responsibility of the Government is wrt the environment?



Responsibilities of individuals, community and NGOs

- NGOs are able to mobilise public opinion and take action with respect to the burning environmental issues of the day
- Over the years, they have brought a number of major lawsuits against international mining and petroleum companies, charging them with environmental damage and human rights abuses
- They have also taken action against governments, e.g. suing Spain in 2020 for failure to take adequate action on climate change

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JoJo Pose - Apollo Fresh



Conclusion

- Any questions?