

*Moral absolutes are no help in answering questions about business ethics. Discuss.*

Moral absolutes are actions that are considered to be right or wrong. These do not take into account the actions that have been performed.

Natural law is a theory that has strong emphasis on what is right and wrong. Aquinas has split actions into five primary precepts, which we must follow in our everyday lives and the secondary precepts. A company 'Pacific Gas and electric were taken to court over the allegation of Hexavalent Chromium was added to the water supply to a town in Southern California. Hexavalent Chromium was hazardous to human health and by adding it to the town's drinking water this would be extremely harmful to the inhabitants of the town and Aquinas would be very against what the company have done because it is against his primary precept 'Defend the innocent'. This example shows that Aquinas' principle 'defend the innocent' is applied correctly as an absolute because the life of a human has intrinsic value and is very important.

A Kantian moral absolute states that humans have the ability to reason and to be able to apply that rationally. Animal cruelty has been the centre of major debate in the past. A company that have been highlighted in this debate is Monsanto. They provided their cattle with growth hormones so they could produce more milk. However, the effects of the hormone caused a lot of pain and suffering as well as being infected with diseases. When a cow became infected with the disease this means that their milk will also be infected with the disease which the company would sell to the general public. The disease could be passed on to the humans that drank the milk and this therefore could infect them too. Kant says that human life is of an intrinsic value and should be more important than anything else in the world. Kant would most definitely see that what Monsanto were doing would be unacceptable. This is because the company put human lives at risk in order to make more money for their company. You could use the moral absolute 'do not give cattle an unsafe growth hormone in order to produce more milk' as a useful absolute in relation to this issue. This could also be applied to all companies.

The Utilitarian approach weighs up which is the most useful and which brings about more pleasures. This is contrary to the Kantian and Natural law approaches. Espionage can be debated whether it's the best thing to do or not. Proctor and Gamble sent their own employees to spy on another company by deceiving them. They did this by pretending to be market researchers. The aim of doing this was to gain information from the rival company so that they could succeed and do better. Utilitarian's would weigh up the whether by doing this the company brought a higher pleasure to a greater number of people. By the use of espionage, jobs would be kept, less money would be lost and the company would be able to reach a level of what their rival company is at. Without the use of espionage in this situation more money would be used into research and this may lead to the loss of jobs if the financial situation was bad. When looking at this case, we can question if what Proctor and Gamble did was really wrong.

Virtue Ethics looks at reaching a eudemonia in life, where life comes to the best possible outcome. Virtue looks at the right ambition of the company and the needs of their customers and not the profit made.

Moral absolutes can be help in answering questions about business ethics as seen in the case studies mentioned above. But there are cases where moral absolutes have to be broken by the company in order for them to do well and do what they need to do to survive in the business world.