

'Moral absolutes are not useful in business ethics' Discuss.

Kant Believes in moral absolutes, the same rules should apply to every situation. In some businesses sex discrimination is a problem as well as offending, women's reputation and respect could be ruined. Some men treat women as inferior, even just by telling a sexist joke and this could lead to men getting promotions over women etc. Kant would come up with a rule to universalise for example: treat men and women equally, how you would want to be treated yourself. This would have to apply to everyone, no exceptions. It isn't contrary to the will or self contradictory to say this so this rule would work. In many situations Kant's universalise isn't the best way to do things because he doesn't allow for exceptions even though every situation is different and will have different outcomes however here, it would work. If everyone followed this rule the business environment will improve for everyone.

A utilitarian weighs up the outcomes so would look at everyone involved in something like whistle-blowing, to evaluate the best action. Erin Brockovich revealed the serious damage to people from dangerous toxins leaked from pacific gas and electricity company. This resulted in the company having to pay the largest injury settlement ever in the U.S. Utilitarian's would look at the effects telling everyone would have on the company including staff/customers etc and then the needs of the people who are exposed to the chemicals. The health of locals all through the 60's - 80's was being compromised therefore there's a far greater need for this to stop, although the company would lose \$333m in damages it's just money, this is their lives. Mill especially would agree with this as it's the intensity of the pleasure or pain that matters. This does seem like a better approach than moral absolutes because it's taking all factors into consideration and therefore the outcomes in everyone's best interests. If we always chose what to do this way in situations like these the result would always be the one that ends in the least amount of suffering.

Natural law is similar to Kant because it believes in moral absolutes; it strictly follows these but also is in people's interest because part of the primary precepts is to defend the innocent. With an issue like lying natural law would derive a secondary precept from these primary precepts. Enron was an American energy company who suppressed information from everyone about how badly they were doing; the shareholders lost nearly \$11 billion because of them, they ended up bankrupt. Natural laws defend the innocent and ordered society would come in here, the result of their lying affected a lot of people and corrupted the state of businesses all over the country. Many people who were clueless on all this lost their jobs/money. A secondary precept like 'don't lie' wouldn't be practical because you can't imagine a world of business where everyone always told the truth, this rule would have to be broken at times. If you changed it to something like 'don't lie if it's not in the best interests of others' people wouldn't know where to draw the line, it's not consistent but if

everyone did roughly follow this and didn't ever lie to the extent Enron did then far less damage would be caused. In this case moral absolutes are good because having guidelines would keep people in order and prevent disasters like the Enron scandal from happening.

Virtue Ethics doesn't like businesses purely out there to make profit. Monsanto is an example of this. They inject synthetic hormones into cows to increase milk production even though there is no shortage in this industry therefore it is clear their main interest is money, not satisfying the needs of the public. There have even been claims the hormones in the cows are a threat to those who consume its health. In a Eudemonia society all businesses would work together and rather than the main focus being money, it would be to make sure everyone has everything they need because companies like Monsanto's priority is to make as much money as they can and live in luxury at the expense of others, whether that's through cheap labour or low quality products. With virtue ethics there aren't absolutes it's more based on the sort of person we should be rather than rules; because then we would make the right decisions anyway, considering everyone. If we were all virtue ethicists we would have a happier and equal community especially in business because we'd all be looking out for each other rather than just being out for ourselves.