

Kant and the Environment

<p>Global warming – Kyoto, Carbon footprints, wasting energy, transporting food</p>	<p>Categorical Imperative – Universalisability A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced. Developed countries have a much larger carbon footprint, and many scientists believe we are already producing more CO₂ than the environment can cope with. Kant would use the CI to say we should each produce that amount of CO₂ which, if everyone produced the same amount, the environment could withstand.</p>
<p>Deforestation – Cattle ranching in Brazil leads to desertification as the rain forests hold in water in the roots</p>	<p>Self-contradiction The rain-forests are the lungs of the planet, and contain a vast number of different species, useful for medication etc. When the forests are destroyed, they cannot grow back. If this was a universal law, the forests would soon disappear, and we would be unable to use the land, which would have turned to desert. This is self-contradictory, as the existence of the rule makes the rule meaningless.</p>
<p>Pollution – French nuclear testing, Brent Spar oil rig, chemicals – leading to acid rain</p>	<p>Contradiction of the will Utilitarians may justify pollution because “the ends justify the means”. We all benefit from cheaper fuel, safer weapons etc. and a minority of people affected by pollution pay the price. Kant asks us to imagine ourselves in everyone else’s shoes. He would be against any form of inequitable pollution (where one group suffers more), as we would not wish to be that one group, so it would be contrary to a rational will to wish for such a universal law.</p>
<p>Energy – Nuclear power stations (e.g. Chernobyl), coal mining etc.</p>	<p>Ends in themselves Kant is happy for people to work for us. However, if individuals are risking their lives to give us energy, they are being used. Treating people as ends means giving them safe working conditions, decent pay etc. When there are safe alternatives, such as wind, hydroelectric and other ‘greener’ forms of energy, putting lives at risk in Nuclear Power stations is unjustifiable. However, there are the same risks with coal mining.</p>
<p>Loss of Habitat – Palm oil (Orangutan), 82% of endangered birds are threatened by loss of habitat</p>	<p>Reason The loss of habitat for birds and non-human mammals is not a direct concern for Kant. Only rational beings are moral agents. However, habitat destruction makes an area vulnerable to flooding, crop failure, the spread of disease and water contamination. As these affect humans, they would be a concern to Kant. He would use reason to work out the best way to make rules for humans to live by. Kant is a conservationist.</p>
<p>GM Crops – Golden rice</p>	<p>Good will Golden rice could provide Vitamin A to millions of malnourished people, at no cost to poor farmers. Teleologists would jump at the chance, whilst critics are concerned about unknown risks. Kant is not interested in balancing consequences, as no outcome is inherently good. Technology that only the rich can afford is not just. Here, however, Kant would support GM crops if the company made a way for all farmers to be able to use them.</p>
<p>Recycling – Prevents waste of materials, reduces consumption and pollution in making new materials</p>	<p>Synthetic A Priori For many ethicists, environmental ethics is about weighing the cost and the benefit of our proposed actions. Kant disagrees, saying the rules can be agreed without any a posteriori justification. Recycling allows us to re-use our raw materials, making sustainability possible. If a process is unsustainable, it contradicts the universal nature of the categorical imperative. All moral rules, such as “Recycle where possible”, are synthetic a priori.</p>
<p>Extinction of a species - half of all current species may be extinct by 2100</p>	<p>Law of Nature Kant says we should act according to maxims that we could will become laws of nature. If we made it a law of nature that species become extinct at a greater rate than new species are created, all species would eventually become extinct. There is no problem with killing off an individual, problematic species, but the large scale destruction of species is unsustainable and would not make an acceptable law of nature</p>

Utilitarianism and the Environment

<p>Global warming – Kyoto, Carbon footprints, wasting energy, transporting food</p>	<p>Teleological Utilitarians are consequentialists. They judge what is right or wrong by looking at the outcomes. With regard to global warming, they would need to know what the consequences will be, and how that compares to the benefits of CO2 production. They would be supportive of offsetting CO2, or carbon neutral (and climate neutral) actions. If the net consequences are neutral, an action (e.g. flying on holiday) isn't wrong.</p>
<p>Deforestation – Cattle ranching in Brazil leads to desertification as the rain forests hold in water in the roots</p>	<p>Rule of thumb As the rainforests are so useful, and contain many sentient beings, cutting them down for cheap burgers will never be justifiable. However, some forests do need to be cut down, and to work out whether to cut down a forest for agricultural production, you would need to calculate all the species affected, and the impact on humans. Rather than do this afresh each time, Bentham suggests a rule of thumb, using info. from previous calculations.</p>
<p>Pollution – French nuclear testing, Brent Spar oil rig, chemicals – leading to acid rain</p>	<p>Hedonic Calculus Pollution is unavoidable, but the calculus will work out when it stops being justifiable. They would look at the extent – how many people/sentient beings are affected. The duration – how long the damage lasts. The certainty – for example, what are the chances of an oil tanker spillage? This needs to be weighed against the benefits – what products are you producing? Will they lead to intense and lasting pleasure? Etc.</p>
<p>Energy – Nuclear power stations (e.g. Chernobyl), coal mining etc.</p>	<p>Principle of Utility – greatest good for the greatest number In choosing between Nuclear Power and renewable energy, utilitarians look for the greater good. They wouldn't worry about a few individuals put at risk by nuclear power. They would weigh these costs against all the pleasure gained through the use of energy. There is not enough renewable energy for everyone's needs, so this would lead to people being unable to do the things they wish to, resulting in a loss of pleasure.</p>
<p>Loss of Habitat – Palm oil (Orangutan), 82% of endangered birds are threatened by loss of habitat</p>	<p>Mill - Higher/Lower pleasures Mill was more concerned with higher pleasures. If farming required destroying the habitats of birds, this would be less concern than if higher mammals suffered. Ultimately, human pleasure counts for more as it is a higher quality of pleasure. Mill's thinking could justify a much greater level of destruction of the environment if it increased the quality of human life e.g. developing education in China.</p>
<p>GM Crops – Golden rice could provide Vitamin A to millions of malnourished people.</p>	<p>Act and Rule Utilitarianism Act Utilitarians would consider each GM crop separately. Rule Utilitarians ask whether allowing GM crops would, as a rule, lead to the greater good. GM crops have many risks. Whilst Golden rice may have lots of benefits, rule utilitarians may be against GM crops because of the risks. Act Utilitarians would allow GM crops because of the benefit to people in poorer countries. This outweighs the risks of Golden rice.</p>
<p>Recycling – Prevents waste of materials, reduces consumption and pollution in making new materials</p>	<p><i>“Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign”</i> Recycling has good consequences, increasing productivity, reducing costs and preventing pollution. Utilitarians would see recycling as good. However, Mill would have had concerns about forcing people to recycle. He believed that the individual should have freedom over his own actions. Some would argue that not recycling is harming others. Mill is often seen as a rule utilitarian, as there is no other way of justifying this principle.</p>
<p>Extinction of a species - half of all current species may be extinct by 2100</p>	<p><i>“Everyone to count for one, and no-one to count for more than one”</i> The last panda in the species is no more valuable than any other. This means that the extinction of a species is not a very significant event for utilitarians. It doesn't cause a large amount of bad consequences. However, the number of species becoming extinct may have serious implications for all species that are left, and Utilitarians would be concerned about these.</p>

Virtue Ethics and the Environment

<p>Global warming – Kyoto, Carbon footprints, wasting energy, transporting food</p>	<p>Eudaimonia Aristotle had a concept of ‘happiness’ that meant that nothing was lacking. If there could be a better happiness, then it would be eudaimonia. Clearly, melting icecaps and freak weather isn’t eudaimonia. However, neither is being unable to drive or fly because of CO2 production. Some would argue that for perfect happiness, we need to greatly reduce CO2 production.</p>
<p>Deforestation – Cattle ranching in Brazil leads to desertification as the rain forests hold in water in the roots</p>	<p>The good for the community Sometimes it would be right to destroy a forest. For example, if a community needed a school, hospital, or even roads. However, destroying rainforests for cheap beef is not an example of what is good for the community.</p>
<p>Pollution – French nuclear testing, Brent Spar oil rig, chemicals – leading to acid rain</p>	<p>Doctrine of the mean Pollution is a result of consumption. We cannot completely prevent pollution, as we cannot stop consumption. However, it is wrong to consume as much as we can. We need to be temperate, controlling our desires and consuming what we need to. This is an example of the Golden Mean.</p>
<p>Energy – Nuclear power stations (e.g. Chernobyl), coal mining etc.</p>	<p>Intellectual Virtues Aristotle wasn’t proposing a formula to solve ethical dilemmas. He was showing the sort of person we should want to be. In order to solve the energy debate, we would want leaders who knew what they were talking about – wise, educated leaders. Whilst the average person doesn’t know which is better – Nuclear energy or coal – the wise people we have chosen to govern us should be able to work it out using their wisdom.</p>
<p>Loss of Habitat – Palm oil (Orangutan), 82% of endangered birds are threatened by loss of habitat</p>	<p>Context MacIntyre said that to understand a moral issue, we have to understand the historical context. In some countries, for example, it is common to shoot Urangutan as pests. In such countries, it may not be seen as a great problem if their homes are destroyed to make palm oil. What is valued, or seen as of intrinsic worth, varies from one culture to the next.</p>
<p>GM Crops – Golden rice</p>	<p>Moral virtues - nobility Most people are wary of GM crops. They think that corporations are rich and greedy, and want to exploit poorer countries by selling them expensive GM crops that they have to by to compete with Western companies. However, Golden Rice is different. The owners have shown courage and nobility by waiving any fee for poorer farmers.</p>
<p>Recycling – Prevents waste of materials, reduces consumption and pollution in making new materials</p>	<p>Moral virtues - habit Aristotle said that we learn how to be morally virtuous through habit. This helps us when looking at recycling. It is good to get into the habit of recycling, washing up tins and taking glass to the bottle bank. Green campaigners now realise that they need to get people to change their habits, like leaving a tap running when brushing their teeth, in order to help the environment.</p>
<p>Extinction of a species - half of all current species may be extinct by 2100</p>	<p>Heirarchy Aristotle saw humans as the ‘top of the tree’. Animals do have an intrinsic value, but humans are much more important. As such, an individual species becoming extinct is no real problem. The rate at which species are becoming extinct is quite worrying now, and a virtue ethicist should be concerned with that.</p>

Situation Ethics and the Environment

<p>Global warming – Kyoto, Carbon footprints, wasting energy, transporting food</p>	<p><i>'Only one 'thing' is intrinsically good; namely, love: nothing else at all'</i> Situationists do not see pleasure as intrinsically good. They would not be too concerned about the loss of pleasure if people had to consume much less energy. However, they are concerned with people's interests. The most loving thing to do is to look out for people's interests. As such, Situationists would want to balance the harm done against the good. They would want China to increase their CO2 production, but America to reduce theirs.</p>
<p>Deforestation – Cattle ranching in Brazil leads to desertification as the rain forests hold in water in the roots</p>	<p><i>'The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else'</i> There is nothing wrong in principle with cutting down a forest to farm the land. Situationists believe there are no absolute rules. As long as you are acting according to love, meeting people's interests, you are doing the right thing.</p>
<p>Pollution – French nuclear testing, Brent Spar oil rig, chemicals – leading to acid rain</p>	<p>"Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else." Fletcher said the end justifies the means. Pollution usually means one group of people suffering in order to benefit the majority. For example, factories in Manchester cause acid rain in Sweden. If there is more good done than harm, the Situationist is happy. Kant would claim that this was unjust. However, Fletcher would say that justice comes from sharing out love, making as many people happy as possible.</p>
<p>Energy – Nuclear power stations (e.g. Chernobyl), coal mining etc.</p>	<p>Situationist What is right or wrong is relative to the situation. In France, they have 80% Nuclear Power. In Germany and Spain, solar power is used extensively. California is able to make use of geothermal power. There are no absolute rules, and legalistic requirements to use specific percentages of renewable energies are unhelpful. Each situation should be evaluated separately.</p>
<p>Loss of Habitat – Palm oil (Orangutan), 82% of endangered birds are threatened by loss of habitat</p>	<p>Personalism Situation Ethics requires us to put people first. If land needs to be cleared for development, Situationists would not be too concerned about the animals living on the land. Even Greenpeace has said that China has such a poor standard of living that development is more of a priority there than environmental concerns. Situation Ethics is not concerned with non-human animals for their own sake.</p>
<p>GM Crops – Golden rice could provide Vitamin A to millions of malnourished people.</p>	<p>Relativism Situation Ethics is relativist. For this reason, they would not be either for or against GM crops as such. Each crop needs to be considered in its own right. Golden Rice, for example, has huge potential benefits for the malnourished. It is also being given free to poorer farmers. Other crops may not have these benefits, and the unknown risks might make them undesirable.</p>
<p>Recycling – Prevents waste of materials, reduces consumption and pollution in making new materials</p>	<p>Pragmatism Recycling is useful, it works. It allows us to reuse materials, which is cost effective and good for the environment – Situationists would support this. However, in some cases it costs too much to recycle. Certain materials, for example newspaper, are of such poor quality that it is not economically viable to recycle them. The decision about what is right must be made on the basis of what is pragmatic.</p>
<p>Extinction of a species - half of all current species may be extinct by 2100</p>	<p>Agape This sort of love is used exclusively for humans. The loss of an individual species, such as the Desmoulin's whorl snails made extinct by the Newbury bypass, is not a concern for Situationists. The large number of species becoming extinct will affect the carefully-balanced ecosystems of the world, and this will cause problems for humans. For this reason, we should try to avoid unnecessarily making species extinct.</p>

Natural Law and the Environment

<p>Global warming – Kyoto, Carbon footprints, wasting energy, transporting food</p>	<p>Real and apparent goods You can fly to Paris or Rome for £1. People think that this is good. It looks like it is good, but it is just an apparent good. There are lots of things that seem to be good, but are destroying the planet we live in. Natural Law would look at energy-hungry devices (tvs, computers, videogames) and ask whether they really help us to fulfil our human nature. In many cases, things that appear to be good simply are not.</p>
<p>Deforestation – Cattle ranching in Brazil leads to desertification as the rain forests hold in water in the roots</p>	<p>Interior and exterior acts Cattle ranching may be an example of a bad interior act (it is greedy) and a bad exterior act (it destroys the environment). In some cases, such as in Brazil, people may feel they have little choice about how to make money, and are doing so to feed their families. This might make it a good interior act, but deforestation will still be a bad exterior act as it leads to so much destruction. All acts should be good interior and exterior acts.</p>
<p>Pollution – French nuclear testing, Brent Spar oil rig, chemicals – leading to acid rain</p>	<p>Do good and avoid evil Pollution destroys God’s creation. Natural Law does not allow us to do evil that good may follow. Testing nuclear weapons in the sea is intrinsically evil. Knocking an oil rig into the sea is a bad act. Whilst this seems plausible, it suggests that pollution is intrinsically evil, yet we can’t help but pollute to one degree or another. This sort of absolutist statement just doesn’t work in the real world.</p>
<p>Energy – Nuclear power stations (e.g. Chernobyl), coal mining etc.</p>	<p>Secondary precepts From ‘Protect and preserve the innocent’ we get to absolutist secondary precepts such as ‘Do not kill’. If energy production is inherently dangerous, leading to loss of life, it should be stopped. Utilitarians can justify some risk and loss of life as leading to the ‘greater good’. Natural Law disagrees, saying the end doesn’t justify the means. This is a real problem, as it would require us to stop all forms of unsafe energy production. Unhelpful, but maybe right?</p>
<p>Loss of Habitat – Palm oil (Orangutan), 82% of endangered birds are threatened by loss of habitat</p>	<p>Double effect Destroying the habitat of animals is an evil act, and at first Natural Law seems to be against it. However, if what you are doing is developing a bit of land for the good of people, and a secondary effect is that some animals end up without a home, you need to balance up the two sets of consequences or ‘double effects’. In this way, many acts of destruction can be justified, almost identically to Utilitarianism or Situationism.</p>
<p>GM Crops – Golden rice could provide Vitamin A to millions of malnourished people.</p>	<p>Protect and Preserve the innocent (D) With millions dying of hunger and malnutrition, Natural Law demands a radical solution. If Golden Rice can save millions of lives, Natural Law may require us to allow it. Whilst GM Crops appear to be an unnatural way to make greedy people rich, it may be the best way to help developing nations fulfil their God-given purposes to survive and develop.</p>
<p>Recycling – Prevents waste of materials, reduces consumption and pollution in making new materials</p>	<p>Efficient and final causes These days, there are lots of ways in which people are encouraged to recycle. They are rewarded (green clubcard points for reusing bags) and punished (charges for not recycling household waste properly). These are the efficient causes, the things that make us recycle. The final cause, the reason why it is good to recycle, is to save resources. Understanding both causes helps us to run a system that actually works.</p>
<p>Extinction of a species - half of all current species may be extinct by 2100</p>	<p>Worship (W) It is hard to see how any other theory can really justify caring very much about the extinction of a species. This seems wrong. Natural Law would say that the variety of species around the world was an example of God’s amazing nature. By protecting an endangered species, we are showing how much we value and appreciate the creator.</p>

