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1 WELCOME TO SUSTAINABILITY AND GREED (SUS1501)

Warning: This is a crazy module!

Our Basic Commitment is this:

If by the end of this module you have not

• wondered whether you are registered for the wrong degree;

• wondered whether your lecturers have lost their marbles;

• wondered whether you have lost your marbles;

• had to go for a walk to clear your mind;

• wondered what the point of all this stuff is; or

• wondered what the point of everything is;

well then you need to check that you have a pulse!

This module is meant to confuse you. It's meant to force you to scratch your head. It’s meant to force you to question things and to wonder. And it's meant to force you to THINK.

Intrigued? Well read on......
2 START HERE

Once again, welcome to Sustainability and Greed (SUS1501). As we have already said, this is going to be one of the craziest and hopefully one of the most interesting modules that you will do during your studies. So prepare yourself psychologically now. This module is meant to confuse you. It's meant to force you to scratch your head. It’s meant to force you to question things and to wonder.

ABOUT THIS PAPER STUDY GUIDE

First and foremost this module is an online module. It was never really designed to have a paper based study guide like this. And you will not be able to complete this module without logging into myUnisa. You need to do this to:

- Get your semester calendar;
- Read the discussion forums;
- Communicate with your Teaching Assistant;
- Read your assignment instructions; and
- Submit your assignments.

The only thing that this study guide provides you with is the basic or static content of the module. This is so that you can still read this content even if you don’t have access to a computer.

PURPOSE

Ok. That’s the basic warning (or promise depending on how you look at it). But besides making you think, what is the formal purpose of this module - the purpose which we put on all our documentation? Well it goes like this:
The overarching purpose of this signature module is to remind commerce students of their human-ness, and to present them with a primer to a lifetime of critical thinking. These objectives will be pursued by: a) introducing students to selected ethical traditions; and b) providing them with opportunities in the form of case studies to apply these to the contemporary social themes of sustainability and greed.

Doesn’t sound too whacky really, does it? Don’t be fooled.

MODULE STRUCTURE

We’ve said this is going to force you to scratch your head. What we don’t want is for you to do this because you are kept guessing as to what is coming next. There are no secrets here. The module will play out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<td>1-3</td>
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<td>• START HERE!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• At a Crossroad - Introduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Crossroad Assignment</td>
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<td>• Dean’s Lectures</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-8</td>
<td>Ethics Core</td>
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<td>(5 weeks)</td>
<td>• Do the right thing – Deontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s all about consequences - Consequentialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ME, ME, ME - Egoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fair’s Fair – Distributive justice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greenies – Environmental Ethics</td>
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</table>

| 8-11  | Case Studies                   |
| (3 weeks) | • Sustainable Development     |
|         | • “Greed is good!”            |

| 11-14  | PHEW! – Final Assignment       |
| (3 weeks) |                                 |

As we enter into each one of these, we’ll introduce them in more detail.

HOW YOU’LL BE ASSESSED
Right - let the craziness begin. In a "normal" Unisa module, you will typically do two assignments and then a written exam. This means that some of you will only really work for two weeks of an entire semester. You'll do:

- an hour when you get your study pack to find the assignment dates
- a day or two before assignment 1,
- a day or two before assignment 2, and
- two or three days before the exam.

The extra days for the exam are because the exam mark usually makes up 80% to 90% of the total module mark.

Does this sound about right? ..... of course it does - for some of you! Well, this module works nothing like this! Here you will do a eight assignments and a final "portfolio assignment"......

Yup - you heard me - eight (8) assignments plus 1! And no exam!!

What’s more, the eight assignments (the year mark) count 80% of the total mark. This means that the final portfolio (which is technically equivalent to the exam) counts only 20%.

Don’t panic!

This doesn't mean you are going to be doing four times the amount of work during the semester. The assignments are really mini-assignments. With the exception of Assignment 01 which is 16 multiple choice questions, they all involve writing two or three of paragraphs (about 300 words).

When it comes to our actual marking of your assignments (other than Assignment 01), we use a very simple marking guide. It looks like this:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Assignment 01 submitted</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing submitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment submitted late</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break rules of engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism (i.e. copying)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An attempt made but does <strong>not</strong> contain all required content, or the</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation of the theory is clearly incorrect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within the range of what we expect - contains all required content</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as listed above and these are not clearly incorrect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blows our mind</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Note: this may or may not contain all the required content, but</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the presentation is excellent, the arguments are compelling, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in some way they force the marker to rethink their own perspective on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the questions being asked.)</td>
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Of course, we are allowed to use any intermediate grade which we think are appropriate.

What all of this means is that you really need to keep working at the module throughout the semester. You can't just cram all the work in two weeks! In fact you probably need to do a bit of work in every single week of the semester. And we think is a good thing.

**A SEMESTER PLAN**

So, we suggest you make yourself a semester plan. To help you with this we have put a semester plan template into the "Additional Resources". You can download this by clicking on the "Additional Resources" link here:
and downloading the "SEMESTER PLAN.rtf" file. Note that you'll have to fill in the actual due dates. To find these you need to look in the “Calendar” on your welcome page.

**DOING WHAT YOU NEED TO DO (MYUNISA ONLY - NOT DIGI-BAND)**

But how do you get started on this plan? How do you get to the "At a Crossroads - Introduction" which is the next section?

Well, it's not really very difficult to do what you need to do in this module. Especially once you get the hang of it. For the most part it is just a question of pressing the "Next" button at the top or bottom of a page! See the arrow:
That is how you get to the "At a Crossroad - Introduction". Other than that, the "Prev" (previous) or "Table of contents" buttons are also there. Then all you need to do is read the material which will have specific instructions.

So hit "Next" .............

3 WHERE YOU ARE NOW: AT A CROSSROAD

So, we have this introductory three weeks which we call “At a Crossroad”. Besides all this introductory stuff, there are two essential things which will happen in this section:

ASSIGNMENT 01
You get to do your first assignment. This is an absolutely critical assignment. It gives its name to this whole introductory section. But more importantly, this assignment really sets the scene for the craziness of this module.

**NB** - In fact it is so important that you cannot do any of the other assignments if you haven't done this one. Well, you can do them, but you won't get any marks! For this reason, this assignment stays open right up until the deadline for the final assignment at the end of the semester.

**THE DEAN'S LECTURE**

The second thing that will happen in this introductory three weeks is that you will be treated to a series of lectures by the Executive Dean of the College of Economic and Management Sciences. Besides welcoming you to the College, this really puts this module into a bigger perspective.

So let's get cracking ......

4 **ASSIGNMENT 01: CROSSROADS ASSIGNMENT**

To do this assignment you must log on to myUnisa and go to this Self Assessment tool:
5 THE DEAN'S LECTURE

5.1 A WORD OF WELCOME

I would like take this opportunity to personally welcome you to the College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). This is one of the largest colleges of Unisa’s seven colleges with somewhere in the region of 150 000 students enrolled for a range of programmes. Together with our sister college, the College of Accounting Sciences, we produce about one out of every four BCom degrees awarded by South African universities. It’s obvious that this college adds a lot of value, especially to the African continent where the graduate pool is less than quarter full.

The College is currently being restructured, but at present has nine departments in two schools where you can choose to study. I am sure you have seen them on our web as you were making your choice, but let me just mention the schools: School of Economics, and School of Management Sciences. In addition we host the Centre for Business Management, the Centre for Decision Sciences, the Centre for Industrial and Organisational Psychology, the Centre for Public Administration and Management and the Centre for Transport Economics, Logistics and Tourism. And finally, we also have our Bureau for Market Research and Institute of Corporate Citizenship.

This then is CEMS. And you are now part of this family. So again, welcome to CEMS! I hope that you will enjoy your journey with us and wish you the best!

Ok, let’s move on now to the second objective of this lecture: why it’s important to have a signature course in CEMS and why that module is entitled “Sustainability and Greed”. By now you will hopefully have read the introductory material on the module. You’ll know that this is an unusual module (a "crazy module" perhaps). And you’ll have hopefully read the purpose statement of the module. In case you haven’t, it goes as follows:
The overarching purposes of this signature module will be to remind commerce students (in other words you) of your humanity, and to present you with a primer to a lifetime of critical thinking. These objectives will be pursued by: a) introducing you to selected moral and political philosophy theories; and b) providing you with opportunities in the form of case studies to apply these to the contemporary social themes of sustainability and greed.

That is an awful lot of words but we can draw out the absolutely key words:

- Your humanity
- Critical thinking
- Moral and political philosophy theory
- Sustainability
- And of course greed.

For this lecture I want to really zoom in on the last two:

- Sustainability
- And Greed.

So let’s first look at some definitions. Firstly, sustainability. This is all about long term continuance; it’s about the capacity to endure; it’s about our ability to keep going; or our ability to support life into the distant future.

When we look at these definitions it should be immediately obvious that this is something we would want. We must want to keep going as a species. Because the alternative is that we die out – that we go extinct. Actually, most of us want more than just to make sure that we don’t go extinct. Most of us want our children and their children to grow up in a world which is at least as good as the world we grew up in. This is the essence of sustainability.
But is it really your problem to worry about this? Is it your concern?

Well, let me tell you what I believe the answer to these questions is using a little story:

_Once upon a time, there was a family that kept a cow, a dog, a chicken, and a cat. A rat was seen in the house and the owner of the house set a trap to kill it. The rat then called a meeting with the other animals in the house and asked for their help in removing the trap. All the other animals, especially the chicken and the cow, told the rat off, saying that the trap did not concern them since it could not trap them. The trap eventually caught a poisonous snake, but not before the snake fatally bit the owner of the house while he was trying to stop a fight between the cat and the dog. The cat and the dog, each blaming the other for the owner’s demise, fought one another to the death. For the owner’s funeral the cow was slaughtered and, for the last funeral rites, so was the chicken._ (Ngambi, 2011, RARE Total Leadership: Leading with the Head, Heart and Hand, pg 1)

In the long run, whose concern is the trap? Everyone’s! Just like sustainability. It is all of our business to be concerned about this.

Now it should be immediately clear that worrying about sustainability means being concerned about others. It means being concerned about more than our own immediate desires. And this means being very weary of greed. So let’s then think about greed for a minute. It’s a very relevant topic at the moment, particularly in our field isn’t it? Just think about the economic meltdown which we have been experiencing for the past couple of years. How many times have you heard that this is a result of greed?

The present rot started with supposedly highly respected financial institutions making very high risk loans. They then took these high risk loans and, through some fancy financial footwork, dressed them up to look like low risk investments which they sold on. Why did they go to all this trouble? Well it was very profitable to do so. It meant huge bonuses and lavish lifestyles, fancy cars and expensive French champagne. Greed? I will leave you to make up your own mind!
It was of course inevitable that this would unravel at some point. It just wasn’t sustainable! Unfortunately when it did unravel, it wasn’t just the greedy who suffered. It was also millions of ordinary people who lost their jobs, their life’s savings, and their pensions. In fact it is probably safe to say that it became almost everyone’s problem - just as the trap in the story I related was everyone’s problem.

Sustainability then is what we must want to achieve. Greed represents a distinct threat to achieving this. Worrying about this – about avoiding greed and promoting sustainability - is everyone’s business. This is why we have a module called Sustainability and Greed.

This then brings me to my third objective in this short lecture. To introduce you to the RARE framework for living and leading. It’s a framework which was described in a book written by the previous Dean of CEMS, Professor Helicy Ngambi entitled “RARE Total Leadership: Leading with the Head, Heart and Hand”. RARE is an acronym:

- R for Responsible;
- A for Accountable;
- R for Relevant; and
- E for Ethical.

I have already spoken about the economic meltdown and it must be immediately obvious that when dishing out blame for this, economic and management sciences graduates must surely accept a big portion. After all it was to a large extent highly trained economic and management science graduates who developed the fancy financial tricks used to dress up high risk loans to look like low risk investments. My college does not want to produce this type of graduate.

Let me repeat this: My College does not want to produce this type of graduate.
We want to produce leaders and managers of tomorrow who are aware of sustainability and greed issues. And the RARE framework is one concrete way in which we might pursue this goal.

In the four mini lectures which follow this one, I’m going to deal with each of the pillars of the RARE framework – responsibility, accountability, relevance and ethics - separately.

But before I move to these I would just like to reflect on how crucial it is that we do produce the right kind of leaders and managers. Most of you come from Africa and so most of you will fully appreciate the incredible wealth that this continent is blessed with.

To name but a few of our riches: we have the bulk of the world’s diamonds; we have 50% of the world’s gold and 40% of its platinum. Everyone knows that energy is crucial and in this regard we have 7.5% of the world’s coal reserves; 8% of its known petroleum reserves; 12% of its natural gas. But that is all dirty energy. We’re even more blessed in potential clean energy. We have 40% of the world’s hydro-electric power generation potential and of course we have two huge sunny deserts ideal for generating solar power. And last but not least, we have millions hectares of potential farmlands.

Basically we’re rich! And yet we are poor? “Eish!” As we would express our surprise in South Africa - Rich and yet we are poor! It is my view that without leaders and managers who exhibit RARE character, we will remain poor despite our wealth.

5.2 THE DEAN’S LECTURE: RESPONSIBLE

Okay. Let’s now unpack RARE: Responsible, Accountable, Relevant and Ethical personal leadership. The RARE principle-based value system advocated in CEMS fosters:-
• **Responsible** behaviour of leaders, employees and citizens towards one other and all stakeholders, not at the expense of others but in mind of the future state of the institution, nation and the continent at large;

• **Accountability** to each other and the other stakeholders, taking ownership of decisions and avoiding the blame game and scape-goating and making excuses for toxic behaviour instead of owning up to the consequences of choices and decisions;

• **Relevant** engagement in a value-adding way towards one another and all stakeholders, and being of service to the community;

• **Ethical** behaviour that advocates honesty, integrity, openness and trust.

This is a personal leadership approach that is all encompassing. It allows individuals to be total leaders. This approach comprises five broad dimensions, namely: vision, change, connectivity, engagement, and integrity. These dimensions interact to construct the fibre of a RARE person and leadership that is appropriate in leading into the future and leveraging African principles.

In this first mini lecture on RARE the focus is on Responsible leadership which is visionary and a catalyst for change.

Let me quote an African proverb which says: ‘An elephant never gets tired of carrying its tusks.’

Responsibility can be defined in many ways. According to www.businessdictionary.com it can be defined as:

“a duty or obligation to satisfactorily perform or complete a task (assigned by someone, or created by one’s own promise or circumstances) that one must fulfil, and which has a consequent penalty for failure”.
People have a responsibility to moderate their actions, to be reliable or trustworthy; to be placed in control and having to be answerable for actions; being the source and cause for an action.

As an individual you must accept and understand your own vulnerability and the effect of your behaviour on those around you. You have to take responsibility for the outcome or consequences of your actions and emotions and manage these effectively and in a principled manner to contribute to sustainable success at all levels.

Responsible leadership anticipates and is passionate about the future. A responsible leader cultivates the envisaged future in the hearts and minds of followers but, most importantly, recognises when there is a need for change in order to realise this envisaged future. Responsible leadership entails being legitimate, acting with integrity, being a role model, and ensuring that as a leader one develops successors. Studies also show that leaders are great catalysts for change and are able to recognise the need for change; challenge the status quo and advocate change; and champion the new order.

It is also worth mentioning that, although leaders like all humans acknowledge barriers and fear change, they find practical ways to promote the need for change and overcome such barriers. Responsible leadership achieves this by being adaptive in order to thrive in tomorrow’s world and embraces disequilibrium so as to get things done; by being visionary in embracing creativity and innovation; and by invigorating and inspiring. They believe in lifelong learning and investing in developing future leadership.

That’s what you need to be Responsible.

5.3 THE DEAN’S LECTURE: ACCOUNTABLE

Okay let’s talk about the “A” in the RARE. That is, Accountable leadership and connectivity. Molière says, “It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable”.

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Wikipedia defines accountability as follows:

“In ethics and governance, accountability is answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving.[1] As an aspect of governance, it has been central to discussions related to problems in the public sector, nonprofit and private (corporate) worlds. In leadership roles,[2] accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences.” (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability)

According to www.businessdictionary.com it can be defined as: “The obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It also includes the responsibility for money or other entrusted property.”

Accountability requires that you connect with the people that you interact with. It is also driven by the urge for transparency (Waistell, 2008). Connecting is the ability to identify with and relate to people in a way that enhances the ability to influence them positively (Maxwell, 2010). Accountable people; inspire trust and commitment by ensuring that their words and actions are integrated -- people do not care or want to commit to the vision until they know that you care for them; are answerable for all the resources they are entrusted with; do not play the blame game or use manipulative impression management tactics to cover up their incompetence but, instead, own up to it and use mistakes as learning moments for future improvement and give credit where it is due. They display attitude that is caring, humble, and does not operate in isolation but is relevant and engages all the stakeholders. The shift in values from self to others demonstrates empathy and elicits commitment and trust in relationships.

To ensure that one is responsible and accountable, one must begin by looking first at oneself and only then expect responsibility and accountability from others. People
often revert to blaming others when something goes wrong -- they blame the
environment, circumstances, and everyone but themselves which is a victim
mentality. If this destructive behaviour is to be stopped, it is imperative to develop a
culture of responsibility and accountability.

Here are some guidelines:

- Clarify values and establish achievable goals and outcomes. Without clarity in
  values and set goals and outcomes, employees and managers, citizens and
  leaders end up being frustrated and sometimes destructive. When people
  demand rights without understanding the responsibility and accountability
  that go with such rights they indulge in behaviours such as burning schools
  and libraries, the source of a sustainable future, when on strike. It is critical
  at this stage to clearly define and demonstrate the principles, values,
  exceptional performance and behaviour that are expected, as this shows the
  intended direction of any institution, organisation or country.

- Reinforce commitment to avoid compliance, which does not foster
  productive behaviour.

- Provide feedback and clarify consequences in every relationship. Feedback
  lets people know whether they are still on the expected and agreed path or
  not, and makes early intervention possible when needed. Feedback allows
  for the celebration of small successes, which is a form of encouragement for
  sustained high performance. Similarly, if performance is consistently below
  the desired and agreed level, people need to know that there will be
  consequences and exactly what these will be. If there is no responsible
  leadership and consistent under-performance has no consequences, there
  will be no accountability. The RARE approach aims to create a culture of
  accountability, responsibility and a ‘no blame games or excuses’ mentality
  across the continent, the country and within organisations and institutions,
  starting at family level in the home. This links to the importance of relevant
  leadership.
5.4 THE DEAN’S LECTURE: RELEVANT

In this mini lecture we discuss the second “R” in the RARE which refers to relevant leadership as engaging.

"I saw my mission as one of preaching reconciliation, of binding the wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence." Nelson Mandela.

Some synonyms to relevant: pertinent, germane, material, apposite, apropos. These adjectives describe what relates to and has a direct bearing on the matter at hand. Something relevant is connected with a subject or issue. From Wikipedia: “The concept of relevance is studied in many different fields, including cognitive sciences, logic, and library and information science. Most fundamentally, however, it is studied in epistemology (the theory of knowledge). Different theories of knowledge have different implications for what is considered relevant and these fundamental views have implications for all other fields as well. Something (A) is relevant to a task (T) if it increases the likelihood of accomplishing the goal (G), which is implied by T.”

A thing might be relevant, a document or a piece of information may be relevant. The basic understanding of relevance does not depend on whether we speak of "things" or "information" or person. A relevant person and leader is in touch with the surrounding environment, both internal and external. Such people acknowledge that they work in a diverse environment with others who have different and sometimes even conflicting needs and expectations that have to be addressed in a responsible and balanced way. Such relevant leadership and people:

- drive organisational and national performance by analysing future trends;
- pays attention to solutions that impact positively on challenges facing institutions;
- continuously develops best practice in pursuit of excellence;
embraces and leverages the benefits of diversity;

commits to the execution of strategy without excuses, and is decisive and courageous;

Is transparent, and motivates and inspires everyone to high performance levels.

This is leadership that seeks to add sustainable value that is applicable, pertinent, significant, appealing and winning. It acknowledges that what is relevant in one environment may not be so in another, and therefore is flexible, innovative and adaptable. And then there is the ethical part of RARE.

5.5 THE DEAN’S LECTURE: ETHICS

The last letter in RARE, “E”, referring to Ethical leadership and integrity is the focus of this last mini lecture.

William Shakespeare says; “It’s not enough to speak, but to speak true.”

From Wikipedia, “Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour.” You will hear much more about ethics in general in the next sections of this module. But let me give you my perspective particularly my perspective on ethical leadership. Because this is what we want you to aspire to.

The Centre for Ethical Leadership describes “ethical leadership as knowing your core values and having the courage to uphold them in all facets of your life in the service of the common good; therefore, ethical leaders need to demonstrate integrity by being authentic”

(http://www.ethicalleadership.org/uploads/2/6/2/6/26265761/1.4_core_values_exercise.pdf). Cashman suggests that being authentic is a process that requires a one to know her/himself by practising what she/he looks for in others; listen with a giving
attitude that seeks a contribution from others; express her/himself in a manner that creates value; appreciate self-expression that creates value; and serve because leaders are not judged by how well they lead but by how well they serve.

Leading with integrity requires leaders to be transparent and honest, trustworthy and humble; it is an important cornerstone of RARE leadership. In the financial crisis that led to the economic meltdown there was evidence of many unethical mistakes. It was said in many cases that the cause of the crisis was greed. Integrity is not and should not be a slogan; it is not about what a one says but whether his/her words and deeds are synchronised. Most relationships at personal and business level are destroyed because of a lack of integrity. Building effective families, organisations and nations needs a leadership that is ethical and trustworthy, irrespective of whether it is being watched.

We need to overcome the destructive and unethical actions of some of our leaders in ourselves, including kleptocracy (which is basically “rule by thieves”) and tenderpreneurship (we all know what that is). Civil society needs to be responsible and stop electing leaders to office on the basis of emotions associated with liberation politics and misplaced loyalty. Toxic leaders are supported because of past favours or connections even when it can be seen that their actions will destroy the future of people, institutions and countries. The impetus behind electoral decisions should be the vision for the country and the capabilities of leaders to achieve that vision. Similarly, there must be more shareholder activism to fight corruption in the private sector, which in many cases colludes with the state to rob the nation.

Being a RARE leader or person is a precedent to practising total leadership. RARE principle-based values equip leaders with a core value system that guides their leadership actions and activities. Being a total leader, one needs to lead with the head (intellectual capability), through the heart (managing others and being aware of their feelings) and through the hands (the ability to get things done with the available talent).
I can assure you that as your new family, what we expect of you in terms of being RARE we also expect of all our staff. This is something that is embedded in our service charter. We are committed to addressing economic and management sciences (EMS) challenges and we trust you will become party to addressing these challenges too.

We strive to be innovative, constantly seeking better ways of pursuing being a truly African University in the service of humanity; We are all engaged in learning, and finding joy in its constant pursuit; We are diverse, bound by strong values and ethos, in many ways more accurately described as a family; We are committed to your success as a learner; We care deeply about excellence and relevance in their many forms. Our vision as an African community is centred on people, knowledge, the future, and education. As CEMS, in pursuit of excellence with integrity we aim at being RARE and to produce students that are RARE. We acknowledge that, ‘It takes vision, commitment, culture-building leadership, trust, empowerment, communication, connectivity and critical thinking to build a successful, focused college’ and a student that is RARE. We will continue to build a successful college that remains relevant and makes meaningful contribution to you, our student, the university, country, continent and global village.

Let me conclude my lecture with another story from Professor Helicy Ngambi’s book which has inspired so much of what has been written here:

“Once upon a time there was a king who had an only child, a very beautiful daughter. Many men had wanted to ask for her hand in marriage from the king. The king gave a decree that anyone who successfully touches the tail of any of the three animals would marry the princess and inherit the kingdom. One of the most persistent admirers decided to take the challenge.
The first animal to approach him was a Rhino, which looked very fierce — so he decided not to touch its tail. He thought to himself, “surely, I’ve two more opportunities.” The second was an Elephant and it did not look too friendly either, so he said, “well, I still have one opportunity.” Then came a Donkey, which looked kind of friendly and calm, and he said to himself, “now this is my chance!” He was very happy and pleased with his seemingly correct decision to have waited. When he went to touch the donkey’s tail, he found out that it had none! (Ngambi, 2011, RARE Total Leadership: Leading with the Head, Heart and Hand, pg 85)

The lesson from this story is that you should never allow fear, procrastination, stereotypes or anything else to stop you from taking advantage of the opportunities that will enable you to achieve your goals or realise your dreams and become the winner you were born to be. Fear and procrastination stole from the suitor in the story the opportunity to marry the beautiful princess and become the future king. After all, fear stands for “False evidence appearing real”. Don’t allow it to block your success by hindering you from seizing the moment in becoming RARE and becoming a winner! Remember quitters never win, and winners never quit!

Have fun in a RARE way as you experience this innovative module with our lecturers!
6 INTRODUCTION

Right. You’ve drawn a line in the sand on a bunch of thorny issues in your crossroads assignment; you’ve seen what your fellow students think about these issues; and you’ve heard from the Dean of the College. So now it’s time to really get stuck into this thing properly. It’s time to tackle the core theory!

And as I mentioned in the overall course introduction, the theory which forms the foundation or core for this course is the branch of philosophy called ethics. At this point I can just hear you all saying: “ARRRGGH! Philosophy? Ethics? Aren’t I doing an economic and management sciences qualification?”

So, what is ethics? And why do you need to worry about it? And how is this going to be taught? Well read on.....

6.1 So, what is ethics?

Let’s start out by trying to pull together a definition of ethics. My guess is that you have some sort of an idea what ethics is already? If I asked you “what is ethics?” you would probably say: “It’s got something to do with knowing right from wrong.” Or you might say: “It’s about values”. Some of you might immediately think about religion. Some of you might think about this with examples: “Nelson Mandela is an ethical person, Pol Pot was not.” ¹

If you are interested in who Pol Pot was, you can check him out on Wikipedia I guess. I could just as easily have used Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin. But they were not as...
One thing that most of you will agree with is that ethics is related to morality. In fact more often than not, in everyday use, the words "ethics" and "morality" are used to mean the same thing. She’s an ethical person. She’s a moral person. Same thing. That was the ethical thing to do. That was the moral thing to do. Same thing. And the opposite applies too: She’s an unethical person. She’s an immoral person. Again, the same thing.

Both really relate to what is considered good or right, and what is considered bad or wrong. Behaving in a way that is ethical or moral implies acting in a way that is good or right. Acting in a way that is unethical or immoral implies doing a bad, wrong or evil thing.

There is however a technical distinction. In moral philosophy (and theology) morality refers to moral behaviour, and ethics is understood as the study or critical reflection on what people regard as moral behaviour. The value of this distinction is that ethical reflection on what is seen as moral behaviour can be evaluated and changed. For example, many people once thought slavery was morally acceptable, today, after much ethical reflection, debate, activism and changes in the law, most would agree it is not.

All this said, the most important thing is that if you answered the question “What is ethics?” by saying “It’s about figuring out what it right and what is wrong”, you were basically on the right track. If you want to make it personal, ethics is about answering the question: “What sort of person ought I to be and what ought I to do?”

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poetic, and besides, if you don’t know who Pol Pot was, you will then learn something else.
6.2 Why Do We Need To Worry About Ethics?

And now for the million dollar question..... Why is it that we have decided to make ethics the theoretical core for a module entitled “Sustainability and Greed” which is being run in a College of Economic and Management Sciences?

Well there are three reasons in no particular order:

1. Firstly, our aim in this module is to reconnect economic and management sciences students with their human-ness. And being able to think about what it is that we ought to do, is in our view a cornerstone of our human-ness. It is one of the crucial things which differentiate people from other animals. Who of course, do not really think about what they ought to do.

2. Secondly, we really believe that an understanding of ethical traditions provides a very good way to think about the title themes of sustainability and greed. Surely we ought to do sustainability as a species. The ultimate alternative is extinction right? And by far the most common (although not universal) gut reaction to our module title is that greed is just plain wrong.

3. Lastly, besides everything else we are trying to do in this module, we are really trying to encourage critical thinking in general. And as a branch of philosophy (a discipline which is all about critically and systematically tackling problems), ethics is one way to do this. I guess we could have chosen some other branch of philosophy – logic or epistemology perhaps? – but ethics kills many birds with one stone.

So there you have it. That is why we teach an ethics core.

6.3 How We Tackle This?

The next obvious question is how we tackle this? How is it that we go about teaching ethics in this core? This is important because philosophy can be a pretty intimidating subject in general, and the branch of ethics is no exception. If you don’t believe me why don’t you try and read Kant’s “Critique of Practical Reason” which you can
download this for free from http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5683. Kant’s book starts with the following sentence:

“The theoretical use of reason was concerned with objects of the cognitive faculty only, and a critical examination of it with reference to this use applied properly only to the pure faculty of cognition; because this raised the suspicion, which was afterwards confirmed, that it might easily pass beyond its limits, and be lost among unattainable objects, or even contradictory notions.”

ARRGGGHHH! I have a headache already.

So, to get around this little difficulty, we use a teaching trick which has probably been around since people first started to think about what they ought to do to: the folk story.

Yup you heard us: the folk story!!

Haven’t you heard folk stories that end with the line: “And the moral of the story is...”? In fact, more often than not folk stories convey an ethical message. And they do it really simply, without complex concepts and language like “pure faculty of cognition”, “unattainable objects, or even contradictory notions”!

So for most of the ethical traditions which we have chosen to present, we start out with a story. We then use this to illustrate as simply as possible what “the moral of the story” is.

6.4 What's In and What's Out?

From the last section, you should already know that there are some ethical traditions that are in - some traditions crack the nod! Which of course means that some do not. Actually, lots of ethical traditions are left out. Too many to mention in fact. There are however three themes which don’t have their own sections but which do need to be mentioned even if it’s very briefly. These are: a) value systems, b) relativism, and c) business ethics.
Value Systems

Briefly, what is a value system? Well Wikipedia defines it as follows:

“A value system is a set of consistent ethic values (more specifically the personal and cultural values) and measures used for the purpose of ethical or ideological integrity. A well defined value system is a moral code.”

(Note: You should always be careful about what you read in Wikipedia - sometimes it is a load of rubbish. In fact, the same can be said for anything you read, hence the importance of learning to think critically.)

You’ll find examples of value systems in most cultural settings. For example in many parts of Africa, value systems which appear to be variants of the idea of Ubuntu are widespread. Religions all contain value systems. And then there are other value systems that draw on both religious and secular (non-religious) ideas, such as feminist value systems, human rights systems, socialist value systems and so on. In other words, value systems are complex, as they come from different sources and change over time. We draw on them often without being aware that we are doing so, because we are influenced by our families, communities, education and the media.

Value systems touch not only the way we think, but what we feel and how we act. Often they reflect our deepest convictions about who we are and what life is about. Value systems also give rise to conflicts: conflicts about economic systems, or between religions, or between cultures and political allegiances. Values are not neutral, they can be very divisive. But they can also unite groups.

Relativism

So how does this help to explain relativism? Well, most traditional ethics work is about trying to figure out what is good and what is bad - period. But there is a school of thought which says that there can be no such thing as good and bad in general.
They argue that it all depends on where you stand and which systems and cultures are valued. This is relativism.

A relativist would recognize that what is good for a communist might not be good for a feminist; that what is good for a Christian might not be good for a Hindu; or that what is good for a South African might not be good for an American. In short, good and bad according to relativists can only be considered relative to underlying value systems. Wars are fought over differences in these things. That’s how different they can be.

Now there are pros and cons to relativism. On the up side, relativism could lead to tolerance. The acceptance that there might be different views on some things might allow people who have different views to live together respectfully. For example understanding that Jewish people generally don’t eat pork, and that Hindu people often don’t eat meat, could help a great deal in making for a friendly dinner party between neighbours who happen to be Jewish and Hindu respectively.

On the down side however, relativism can be a bit of an ethical cop out. For example, in some cultural settings slavery might be ok. Can we really accept this? In other contexts ritual killing might be called for by the gods. Should we accept this? In some contexts, female genital mutilation is accepted. Is this ok? These are tricky questions.

Well actually not really. But then I’m not a relativist. (Note: whenever an opinion is expressed like this - "I'm not ....." the "I" is the overall course author, Neil Eccles and not your teaching assistant.)

Business Ethics

The last of the three left-out-themes that we felt needed a mention is business ethics. The reason for mentioning it is that many people would expect to see it in an ethics course being given to economic and management sciences students. In fact, many people would wonder why we didn’t just deliver a module in business ethics and leave out all of the more theoretical stuff which follows.
Well, the reason for this really is the same as the reasons for doing an ethics core module altogether. We want to connect commerce students to their humanity; we want to help commerce students to understand the moral and indeed political dimensions of sustainability and greed; and most importantly, we want to encourage critical thinking. And we just felt that business ethics, especially a superficial understanding of it, was too narrow an approach to achieve these goals.

Why do we say this? Well, business ethics really focuses on the question of “what ought a business to do?” And in a nutshell there are two (or perhaps its three) answers which have emerged:

1. Businesses ought to look after SHAREHOLDER interests. For more information on this try and look up a dude by the name of Milton Friedman and in particular, have a look at his famous 1970 New York Times Magazine article entitled "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits" (Available at: www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html)

2. Business ought to consider the interests of a broader group than just shareholders: they ought to consider STAKEHOLDER interests. The person who is usually recognized as introducing the stakeholder theory is R. Edward Freeman. If you Google him, you will find lots of stuff including some YouTube videos where he explains his own thinking.

3. I said there were “two or maybe three” interpretations of what a business ought to do. Well, it’s “two maybe three” because stakeholder theory can be split into two sub-theories. The first is really not a lot different to the shareholder theory. It holds that businesses ought to consider stakeholder interests in so far as considering these might be in the interests of shareholders. For example, a company should consider employee interests, but only because this is in the interests of shareholders. The other sub-theory is that businesses ought to consider the interests of broader
stakeholders because it is just the right thing to do in terms of society as a whole.

Anyway, the point is, that understanding what a business ought to do, is hardly going to encourage you to think about the much more personal question of “what ought I to do”. And so we want to go a bit deeper than some approaches to business ethics.

6.5 A higher purpose: Virtue ethics

In this module we are going to examine several ethical theories which, as we have said are hopefully going to challenge you to think deeply about what is right and what is wrong. But, before we get there, it’s important to recognise that there is perhaps a bigger purpose to all of this.

Ultimately as you go through all of this thinking about what might be right and what might be wrong we want you to have the question in the back of your mind:

What about me? What about my character?

In other words, in your quiet spaces, and away from all of the stuff which you are going to write in the discussion forums we want you to be asking yourselves some difficult questions. For instance, am I basically a selfish person, or do I often put the interests of others first? Even more important, how does studying this module impact on my life? Will my behaviour change as a result?

As soon as we start doing this we are entering into the realm of virtue ethics.

MAKING CHOICES IN A COMPLEX WORLD

We live in a complicated and ever-changing world. People from many cultures jostle each other. Traditional ways of life are mixed up with contemporary challenges. Not everything in traditional life was good. Nor is everything that is modern bad.

Nonetheless, we often hear today that we seem to have lost our ‘moral brakes’. Perhaps we have also lost our moral compass – or satnav! Many are asking: ‘What is right and wrong’ and ‘how should we live’? Within the family and our mixed society,
many voices shout out different answers to our questions and choices need to be made about the path we want to follow. The choices we make are influenced by our families, cultures, our education and how all of these interact with our characters.

But what is all this talk about character?

The word character refers to what we are, morally speaking. Are we fair, kind, generous or are we unfair, uncaring and mean? Do we think only of how we can ‘get ahead’ in material terms? Or do we see ourselves as part of a community to whom we are accountable? Do we care for anyone other than ourselves? And if we do not, what sort of society will we create if we have neither ‘moral brakes’ nor a ‘moral compass’?

**WHAT ARE MORAL VIRTUES?**

Examples of moral virtues include things like being honest, treating others fairly, being a caring person, doing your work diligently, not blaming others for your own errors, owning up to having made a mistake, being generous, respecting the rights of others, etc.

The key difference between a value and a virtue is that a virtue is something that you have made your own. A virtue is a way that you act or live that is good, and not simply an idea or theory of ethics.

Virtuous behaviour is the opposite of vicious, unacceptable and damaging behaviour. And we have all experienced this haven’t we? Being treated with contempt, being lied to, and being manipulated. Malicious behaviour like this hurts people, damages relationships and results in a lack of trust and co-operation. It also reveals the importance of virtue ethics.

So virtue ethics regards certain behaviour as vicious, unacceptable and damaging and requires that we avoid this type of behaviour. But it also seeks to inspire good behaviour, behaviour that will result in you becoming a better person, colleague and example to others.
WHERE DO VIRTUES COME FROM?

Virtues are derived from moral norms and values. So, if you really accept the norm ‘do not steal’, you will practice the virtue of honesty. If you really believe that ‘power must not be abused’ you will practice the virtue of fairness. If ‘respect’ is one of your values, you will not abuse or exploit other people or animals. NOTE: the key word here is “practice”!

Norms and values are usually derived from one or more of the following sources:

- religious faith,
- moral philosophy,
- cultural teaching or
- world view (framework of thinking).

We learn them from our families, schools, faith communities, and friends. The importance of norms and values is that, when practiced, they usually protect individuals and society from selfishness and exploitation.

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER - WHY BE MORAL?

As we said earlier, it is easier to think critically about ethics than it is to live a moral life. For instance, how would you answer the following question: ‘why be moral’?

Now the rubber is really hitting the road! One can discuss values till the cows come home, but nothing will change unless our attitudes and behaviour changes.

Which of course prompts the question: “Have I got the will?” In other words, am I prepared to change what needs to be changed to make this a better world? Isn’t this what ethics is all about – not just thinking critically – but being prepared to live ethically?
This is why we speak about this as being crunch time. Ethicists use the term ‘volition’. This term means having the wish, making the choice or decision to act morally. The saying, ‘Talk is cheap; actions speak louder than words’, expresses this.

**REMINDER – THE KEY QUESTION**

As you go through each of the next sections, you are going to do an assignment. In each of these we will ask you what you think about some issue and you will write this in a public discussion forum where everyone will be able to read it. Most of you will write something which reflects your personal values.

But here’s what we want you to ask yourselves:

- Do I really practice these values?
- Can I really claim that these are my virtues?
- Is what I am saying really what I do?

Only you can answer these questions!

**6.6 What You Should Know Now?**

- By now you should have an idea of what ethics is (and how ethics relates to morality).
- You should understand the three reasons why we are bothering to try and teach you ethics
- You should have a bit of an idea of what: a) value systems, b) relativism and c) business ethics are all about.
- You should also understand virtue ethics and how this sets up a higher purpose for this module.
- And you should know that you are really looking forward to story time!!
7 Do the right thing – DEONTOLOGY

7.1 How the good life was lost -

There was a time, long long ago, when all of the animals lived freely together. Mother Earth provided them with all that they needed: air to breathe, water for drinking and for washing, and fertile soil for growing crops.

She also provided them with seasons. She gave them spring with mild temperatures and lots of rain – a perfect time for planting their crops. She gave them summer, with warm, long days and storms of rain, perfect for their crops to grow to their fullest, richest potential. She gave them autumns with their cool dry days which were ideal for harvesting of the crops. And perhaps most importantly, she gave them winters when there was no work to be done in the fields because it was just too cold for the animals to go out, let alone for any crops to grow. During these bitterly cold winters, the animals would divide their time between thinking, talking and resting.

Besides planning for the next spring, mostly the animals thought about life. And so one winter, it came to be that the animals decided to tackle the question of why life was so good to them? All of them had their theories. Elephant argued that if it were not for Porcupine, they would be unable to plant their seeds because, as everyone knows, porcupine is the best digger of holes. If they were unable to plant their seeds argued Elephant, then there would be no crops and life would not be so good. Therefore according to Elephant, Porcupine had to be a key part, if not the key part, of any explanation as to why life was so good.

Lion had another view. She countered that while Porcupine was undoubtedly the best digger of holes and might indeed be a part of the reason for life being good, when he (Porcupine) got to rocky ground, it was Buffalo with his great strength who was able to drag the rocks out of the way. Surely then Buffalo must be a key part, if not the key part of any explanation of why life was so good?

Porcupine’s theory was different again. According to him, anyone could dig holes really. Perhaps not quite as well as he could, but respectable holes nonetheless. And
most animals could move rocks, particularly if they worked together. But not everyone could bring water from the stream to the fields to keep the crops growing during those times when the summer storms failed to come. Only Elephant could do this. Elephant was thus surely a key part of the explanation for why life was so good to the animals?

Buffalo held an altogether different view. He argued that while all of these contributions of the other animals were indeed a part of the reason for the good life, it was surely Lion, who commanded the respect of every other animal that was the key. After all Buffalo reasoned, was it not Lion who was able to get all of the other animals out into the fields working from sunrise to sunset during the growing seasons? And without this, there would surely be no crops.

While these animals were advancing their ideas, Snake was silent. But as the presentations of all the other animals came to an end, many an eye turned to her. It was well known that amongst the animals snake was the wisest, and that in many a previous debate, it had been she who had put forward the most convincing theory.

And so, after allowing a brief silence laden with expectation to descend on the gathering, Snake began her own presentation:

“Brothers and sisters, I have heard all that you have said here on this cold evening. My view is surely very different to the views which have been presented here tonight. And yet it is not. It is different in that I cannot find it in me to attribute the goodness of our life together to any one of us. The real reason for the goodness of our life, comes from the contributions of all of us taken together. From the thoughtfulness of Elephant, and of course from her watering skills which she gives freely. From the thoughtfulness of Lion, and of course from her motivating ability which she gives freely. From the thoughtfulness of Porcupine, and of course his ability to dig holes which he gives freely to all. And from the thoughtfulness of buffalo, and of course his ability to move large rocks out of the way which he gives freely. Each of us is valuable.”
“But it is not just that we each have a valuable contribution to make that is the basis for our good life. Probably more important than this is the respect with which we hold each other for the contributions which we each bring. It is our respect for each other which keeps us together, and it is working together that is the root of our good life.”

Snake’s theory was thought provoking indeed. So thought provoking in fact that no-one noticed that Baboon was nowhere to be seen. In fact while all the other animals were thinking about Snake’s idea, Baboon was considering an altogether different question. The bitterly cold weather had left him with a ravenous hunger. And answering the call of this hunger had brought him stealthily to the winter food store. It was here that he was confronted with the problem of whether he should eat another melon, or another sweet potato? He resolved this by eating both, and then another of each for good measure.

Beyond a tiny twinge of guilt in the back of his mind, he didn’t really worry too much that what he was now eating was beyond his allocation of the stored food. After all Baboon was the joker amongst the animals and not the thinker and finding a good answer to the question of whether to eat a melon or a sweet potato left only enough room in his small mind for a twinge of guilt.

Trouble began the next day. At breakfast there was not enough food to go around and so everyone was left feeling hungry. This hunger built up and by luncheon, the good life which had been debated the night before seemed but a distant memory. Elephant was throwing her immense weight around and preventing all the other animals from getting near the food until she had eaten her fill. And a little more to make up for breakfast. Only Buffalo, with his great strength stood any chance against Elephant. But he had a problem of his own. Lion, having tried to take a bite out of Porcupine only to get a mouth full of quills, had decided that Buffalo was looking very appetizing. Being the prudent sort, Buffalo cleared out. While not the brightest of the animals, Baboon wasn’t silly enough not to see that he might be next on Lion’s menu and so he took to the tree tops.
Only Snake was left alone. But she didn’t need someone threatening to eat her to see that the writing was on the wall. Through Baboon’s thoughtless act, the respect that had kept the animals together and sustained the good life was evaporating. And so with a heavy heart, Snake turned and slithered away into the grass.

7.2 So What?

“Thou shalt not steal” – Do what is right. Rules are rules.

To understand what deontology is fundamentally all about we first need to make a distinction between doing what is right and achieving some good. According to a deontologist, so long as you do what it right – so long as you act in the right way – whatever the outcome is, it will by definition be good. Doing what is right means behaving morally, not doing what is right implies behaving immorally – end of story. It doesn’t really matter what the outcome of the action is.

Rules come into the equation because, if formulated correctly, they specify what is right. And so deontology is often thought of as being about rules which we are duty bound to follow.

However, it is vitally important to emphasize at this point that deontology is NOT about blindly and stupidly following whatever rules are presented to you. No. The rules must be correctly formulated. They must specify what is right.

It’s very easy to illustrate this. Just think about apartheid in South Africa. Amongst other things apartheid was a set of rules or laws which citizens were told that they must to follow – rules are rules. A brilliant ironic example here would be the Immorality Act, No. 5 of 1927 which prohibited sexual relations between people of different races. Would a deontologist say that we ought to follow this rule because it is a rule? Surely not. The passage of time has led us to generally accept that this was never a correctly formulated rule. It was a rule that did not specify what was right. If you like it was a bit like the rule “Thou shalt steal”. This is clearly a rule. But I’m sure that most of you would agree that it does not specify what is right.
This leads to a very vital point. Just because someone doesn’t break the law, doesn’t mean that the person is following a deontological moral path. The law might not be right. Remember, although we often think of deontology as being about rules we are duty bound to follow, in fact this is not really the essence of the approach. Ultimately it is about doing the right thing. Please remember this point as when you are doing your assignments.

So how does our story of the good life relate to this? Well it’s easy to see the moment when the morally questionable act takes place isn’t it? We all intuitively get it. Baboon goes and steals from the food store. And all of us have the idea that stealing is wrong.

But, what would we have said if the story had ended as follows:

**VERSION 2:**

“......the problem of whether he should eat another melon, or another sweet potato? He resolved this by eating both, and then another of each for good measure.

The next morning all the animals got up and went about their business as usual. No one even noticed that any food was missing. Life was still seemed to be fine.”

Would Baboon’s actions in this new story have been moral or immoral? Or worse still, what would we have said if the story had ended as follows:

**VERSION 3:**

“......the problem of whether he should eat another melon, or another sweet potato? He resolved this by eating both, and then another of each for good measure.

The next morning all the animals got up as usual. They noticed that there was a little less food in the store than they had thought. But this was perhaps a good thing. Several of the animals – Elephant, Rhino and Hippo in particular – were at risk of picking up some lifestyle diseases associated with obesity. They decided that this was
as good a sign as any that they should go on a diet and in so doing all extended their lives.

Life was really good.”

Hmmm. A bit more tricky right?

Well not if you are a deontologist who believes in a rule that stealing is wrong. If you are such a deontologist, you would still judge Baboon’s actions as being morally wrong. Stealing is stealing and stealing is wrong. Baboon’s actions might have had:

- bad consequences (original version);
- no consequences (version 2);
- or even good consequences (version 3).

Irrespective of this his actions would still have been judged as morally wrong.

7.3 Kant do it!

There are a lot of deontological moral philosophers out there. But none have been more influential than a dude by the name of Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804). And so we are going to spend a bit of time looking at some of Kant’s ideas. At the very heart of Kant’s moral philosophy was a thing (a rule) that he called a “Categorical Imperative”.

Categorical = unconditional;  
Imperative = command.

So a categorical imperative is an unconditional command. Do the right thing – unconditionally. This was in a sense Kant’s answer to what would a right rule would look like.

But how to define these categorical imperatives? Do we look to our God whoever that may be? That’s the route many of us would follow. Not Kant though. Kant
decided to go it alone. In fact, he argued that our moral knowledge is the only real basis which we have to argue for religious faith. Or if you like he argued that in order to be able to recognize some sort of higher order, we would have to recognize the difference between right and wrong intrinsically.

But that is an aside really. Getting back to categorical imperatives, Kant actually went so far as to formulate no less than five versions of categorical imperatives:

- The formula of universal law;
- The formula of a universal law of nature;
- The formula of humanity as an end in itself;
- The formula of autonomy;
- The formula of the Kingdom of Ends;

I’m only really telling you this detail to sound clever though😊. We are just going to look at Kant’s most famous formulation – the formula of universal law.

This categorical imperative went as follows:

“Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.” (Kant 1785 cited in http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/ - accessed February 2012)

What the heck is a maxim??!!

The best way to explain it is by giving you a general form of a maxim. That would look like this:

“I will A when C in order to achieve E”

Where:

A – is some act e.g. stealing sweet potatoes and melons
C – is some circumstance e.g. I’m hungry

E – is some type of end e.g. feeling stuffed!

So in our story Baboon followed the maxim:

“\textbf{I will steal sweet potatoes and melons} (A) when \textbf{I’m hungry} (C) in order to achieve \textbf{feeling stuffed} (E)!”

Ok, now that we know what a maxim is, we can get back to Kant’s first formulation of the categorical imperative: “\textit{Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law}.” What this formulation really provides is a protocol or decision procedure for examining the morality of certain acts. We can unpack this protocol as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Step 1}: State your proposed act as a maxim;
  \item \textbf{Step 2}: Restate this maxim as a universal law;
  \item \textbf{Step 3}: Ask whether your maxim is conceivable in a world ruled by the universal law; and finally
  \item \textbf{Step 4}: Ask whether you would rationally act on your maxim in such a world.
\end{itemize}

Only if the maxim passes through all four steps can it be said to be moral. So let’s do this for our story. In fact we have already stated Baboon’s act as a maxim:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Step 1}: “I will steal sweet potatoes and melons when I’m hungry in order to achieve feeling stuffed!”
  \item \textbf{Step 2}: “All rational animals in the jungle will steal sweet potatoes and melons all the time and will always feel stuffed”
  \item \textbf{Step 3}: In all likelihood if all the animals are stealing sweet potatoes and melons all the time they will soon run out and so it is highly likely that Baboon’s original maxim is not conceivable in a world ruled by the universal law.
\end{itemize}
In other words Baboon’s maxim fails at step 3 and cannot be considered to be moral. A failure at Step 3 would result in what Kant referred to as a *perfect* duty to refrain from acting on this maxim.

**What about Step 4?**

Well imagine the animals lived in a jungle which essentially had a limitless food store. In this world, it would not be inconceivable that all the animals would be able to “steal sweet potatoes and melons when they’re hungry in order to achieve feeling stuffed”. So the Maxim would pass Step 3.

But I imagine that after a while overindulgence would to get the better of Baboon. Eventually he’s going to start getting indigestion, or acid reflux, or Baboon gout. Not to mention increasing his chance of getting heart disease, hypertension or diabetes. In other words, in all likelihood, in a world governed by the maxim in step 2, baboon would soon stop acting on his own maxim. Or if you like it would fail at Step 4. Kant called these failures at step 4 *imperfect* duties. You could apply them with some exceptions – like when you were feeling ill from eating too many sweet potatoes and melons!

And that is that! Well actually, that is what we are going to cover. If you want to check out more on Kant’s ideas on ethics and morality go and have a look at [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/).

### 7.4 The Paradox of Deontological Constraints

There are problems with deontology of course. There are problems with all human ideas really.

But for deontologists, probably the most frustrating problem is the paradox of deontological constraints. It goes like this – a deontologist may not consider doing what is not *right* even if doing so will prevent a huge number of other wrong actions. I can’t tell a lie to prevent 1000 lies. I can’t torture a person to prevent 1000 other tortures. I can’t kill one person to prevent 1000 other killings. And I can’t steal a
sweet potato even if in some way this would prevent 1000 sweet potatoes from being stolen!

This is a problem for most rational people. Some deontologists have tried to get around this but as they get closer and closer to avoiding it, they tend to get closer and closer to deontology's opponent – consequentialism. Which we are about to deal with.

7.5 What You Should Know Now

- First and foremost you should understand that deontology is all about doing what is right. According to deontologists, good will be the inevitable consequence of this.

- Because rules are used to specify what is right deontology is often thought of as being duty bound to follow rules. BUT remember, the rules must specify what is right. Deontology is NOT about blindly following the rules, and it is NOT about complying with the law.

- Then, if someone asks you: "Have you heard of Immanuel Kant?" you should answer: "yes".

- You should also know that Kant's main ethical idea was a thing called a Categorical Imperative.

- And, you should know that a Categorical Imperative is an unconditional command – do what is right – unconditionally.

- You should know what a maxim is (although I must confess that I have to go back and read the explanation every time I have to define it!?)

- And lastly, you should be able to examine the moral validity of acts using Kant's formula of universal law version of the Categorical Imperative.
7.6 Assignment 02: Whitey Basson's millions

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions and do assignment 2. This is different to assignment 1 in that you will do this in a discussion forum. But detailed instructions are available in myUnisa in the online Learning Units.

8 IT’S ALL IN THE OUTCOME – CONSEQUENTIALISM

8.1 The Great Thirst

“Long long ago when Kaggen created the animals, there were no fountains, rivers or waterholes on earth. All that they had to drink was each other’s blood and they ate the flesh off each other’s bones. Yes, those were blood-red days and no one was safe.

Then Elephant, the great one, said, “This can’t go on. I wish I were dead. Then my bones could become fruit trees and my sinews could become tendrils that spread over the ground and bear tsammas, and my hair could become a grassy field.”

And the animals asked him, “How long must we still wait, Elephant? How long must we still wait? Because Elephant’s live for a long, long time!”

“That I don’t know,” said Elephant. “We’ll have to see.”

But Snake said, “I’ll help you!” And before Elephant could move, he had bitten Elephant with his poison fangs, and held on to him until he died.

Then the animals stormed forward! Lion and Leopard, Jackal and Hare, Hippo and Rhino, and even old Tortoise with his knock knees. They ate and ate of Elephant’s flesh, and drank his blood, and stopped only when all that remained were his bones and sinews and hair. Then they went to sleep as everyone had eaten quite enough.

But when they awoke the next day, the animals began to complain again. “Now Elephant is dead and his flesh is eaten up, where are we going to get food?” And if
they had had tears they would surely have cried, but the sun caused their bodies to become dried up, even their eyes.

“Don’t worry!” said Snake. “Remember Elephant’s promise?”

“He said that when he died…..” said the animals. “But you have killed him.”

“Don’t complain so,” said Snake. “Let us not be hasty. Wait and see.”

That night, when the stars rose one by one from their resting place, there was a new fire in the sky. “It’s Elephant’s spirit!” said the frightened animals. “Now he is definitely coming to destroy us all.”

“Wait and see,” said Snake.

Elephant’s eyes were two shining, burning coals that climbed high into the sky till they stopped right over the place where the animals had devoured his body.

And suddenly, his bones stood upright and they grew roots and branches full of fruit. And his sinews spread all over the earth and bore tsamma melons. And his hair became a grassy field.

“Now we have food!” exclaimed the animals as they began to graze. Of course some of the animals who couldn’t survive without meat and blood crept away in the night. They were Lion and Leopard, Jackal, Wildcat and Owl and one or two others.

And when the other animals went to sleep they came out stealthily to kill and devour. Hawk was so cheeky that he sought his pray in broad daylight. Only Vulture said, “I also want meat, but I’ll not kill for it myself.”

Even though they now had food, the animals were still not happy.

“Water! Water! Water!” they complained. “We’re dying of thirst.”

“But the fruit is full of water,” said Snake. “And the tsammas and the grass.”
“Water! Water! Water!” groaned the animals and, as before they began looking at each other for the youngest, sweetest blood to drink.

“Elephant gave his body for you,” said Snake angrily. “And I gave my poison for you. But you never stop complaining.” The animals did not realize that snake had used up all his poison to kill huge Elephant. “Wait a minute. I'll make water for you!” said Snake.

Then Snake disappeared into a hole in the ground and he hissed and blew and spewed out streams of water until the water bubbled above the ground, over the empty plains and into low lying areas.

“Now we have a fountain and rivers and waterholes!” said the animals feeling satisfied.

So that is how the animals received their food and water, and even today we hear about elephant grass and the water snake.

A San tale, retold by Pieter Grobbelaar

in: Madiba Magic: Nelson Mandela’s Favorite Children’s Stories,

Tafelberg: Cape Town

8.2 So What?

I want us to zoom in here on the killing of Elephant by Snake. The moral question is, was Snake’s killing of Elephant a good thing or a bad thing?

Surely for Elephant it was a bad thing? Snake murdered him in cold blood! Cut him down in the prime of his life in what sounds like a gruesome act – “he had bitten Elephant with his poison fangs, and held on to him until he died”. And doesn’t it say in most holy books: “Thou shalt not kill” or something like that? Aren’t those the rules? So surely this was not the right thing to do?

But let’s not be too quick in judging here.
Look at the end result! All the other animals were left better off. They had trees with fruit, melons and grass to eat – well those that wanted fruit and melons and grass had these. And even those who still wanted to eat meat would probably have been better off. All of a sudden Lion was not going to be competing with huge hungry Hippo for his share of the meat. The consequence of Snake’s act of killing Elephant was that the rest of the animals (the majority) were better off than before.

So maybe it was a good thing? Especially given that Elephant had said, “This can’t go on. I wish I were dead” anyway.

This illustrates the essence of consequentialism. Unlike deontology which we just dealt with, in consequentialism, we focus entirely on achieving a good outcome and not on doing what is right. Consequentialism is a form of ethical thought in which the consequences or results of an action are used to judge the morality of that action. In other words the end result is what makes an act, decision or rule to be a right or wrong.

Whenever you ask yourself: “Does the end justify the means?” you are being consequentialist in your thinking.

8.3 Let’s break it down a bit

Ok. So we have the essence. In other words by now you should be able to tell if someone is being consequentialist in their ethical thinking – you just need to ask: “Are they focusing on the outcome rather than anything else?”

But as with most things philosophical it is a bit more complicated than that. So let’s get into it then……

UTILITARIANISM – MAXIMUM GOOD IN THE JUNGLE

By far the most commonly discussed form of consequentialism is a thing called utilitarianism. In fact some might even say this is the defining type! So this is as good a place to start as any. Utilitarianism holds that any action is judged as good if that act maximizes the total amount of good in a system.
We can illustrate this in a simple table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total amount of good</th>
<th>Total amount of bad</th>
<th>Net good / bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two options are available. Taking Option 1 leads to a net good of 6 taking Option 2 leads to a net good of 8. The utilitarian would choose Option 2. End of story. Irrespective of what that option involved.

Let’s think about our story:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total amount of good</th>
<th>Total amount of bad</th>
<th>Net good / bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1 – don’t kill Elephant</td>
<td>Elephant (1)</td>
<td>All the other animals (many)</td>
<td>1 – many = bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2 – kill Elephant</td>
<td>All the other animals (many)</td>
<td>Elephant (1)</td>
<td>many – 1 = good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So killing Elephant was good?

**BUT – HOW DO WE MEASURE GOOD?**

This is where it all gets a bit tricky really. One school of thought is called hedonism. Hedonism holds that the only real good is pleasure and the only real bad is pain. But again, how do you really measure pleasure and pain? Different people have different preferences and pain thresholds. And are the criteria of pleasure and pain really enough anyway – what about beauty, or love, or knowledge and truth?

Think about our story again. We don’t really know how much pain Elephant suffered. We can’t say it was a “7” or something.

Or how much pleasure the other animals got out of the deal? Actually within a very short period of time they were already complaining because they didn’t have water.
Remember the line: “Even though they now had food, the animals were still not happy”. So perhaps they didn’t get too much pleasure?

We just don’t know do we? We can’t say they got “15” pleasures.

**BUT – WHAT IF NO FRUIT TREES HAD MATERIALIZED?**

Or tsama melons or grass for that matter.

Look – let’s be honest, Elephant’s promise that his bones would become fruit trees, his sinews would become tsama melon plants and his hair would become grass is pretty farfetched. So what would we conclude about Snake’s killing of Elephant if his promise had failed to happen?

Well let’s examine the consequences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total amount of good</th>
<th>Total amount of bad</th>
<th>Net good / bad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1 – kill Elephant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 dead Elephant and nothing else</td>
<td>0 – many = bad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So would we say Snake’s killing of Elephant was bad because the actual consequences were that the system was left less well off? Elephant died and no one really got any major benefit right.

Or …. would we recognize that Snake acted on the basis of expected consequences? Would we say: “ok, Snake took a chance, things didn’t turn out so great, but his intentions were good”?

This is a crucial question because hindsight is the only exact science. ²

² And some philosophers have even argued that we cannot even know history so hindsight might not be so exact.
In other words, life is unpredictable. We may make decisions which we think will have good consequences, but it may turn out that the consequences are terrible. For example, a retirement advisor advises a person to buy a particular portfolio of shares because to the best of his knowledge this will yield good returns. Then some Americans or Europeans come along with a sob story about not being able to pay their debts and the whole stock market plummets. The intended consequences were good, the actual consequences were dire.

**BUT – COULDN’T ELEPHANT JUST HAVE LOST A LEG?**

Surely we are getting to the limits of what this story can tell now! Sorry about this. But this is an important consideration in terms of consequentialism. One of the major problems with utilitarianism – maximizing the good of the system – is that it simply asks too much of individuals.

Is it really fair or reasonable to expect that Elephant should sacrifice his life to maximize good for the other animals? Doesn’t seem fair to me. Which brings about the question of whether maximizing good is really necessary?

What if Elephant could have given up just one leg – produced fewer trees, fewer tsamas, and less grass, but retained his life? It’s quite possible that the net good in the system with this sacrifice might be less than if Elephant actually gave up his whole life. Instead of having a glut of food, the animals might have had just enough.

This is the difference between maximizing and satisfying consequentialism.

**BUT – WHAT IF ONLY HIPPO (AND HIS FINANCIAL ADVISOR) GAINED?**

A lot!

This is the last what if – I promise. But imagine this. Imagine that Snake kills Elephant. Elephant’s bones become fruit trees, his sinews become tsama vines and his hair becomes grass. Now Hippo (and Rhino, his friend and advisor) are the two biggest animals in the jungle. Together they monopolize the bounty and so get even bigger
and more powerful. For everyone else life is the same old drudgery – it might even be worse.

So what has happened here? Well, the good in the system has increased in aggregate. But the distribution of this good is highly unequal. Some have benefited hugely, others have not benefited at all. ³

Utilitarians would say “No problem”. So long as the aggregate good has increased Snake killing Elephant was a good thing. So long as the economy grows, doesn’t matter if inequality has also increased.

Doesn’t seem right to me.

8.4 What You Should Know Now

We could go on and on here but we won’t. You get the picture right?

• In consequentialism the morality of an action is judged on the basis of the consequences?

• The most common form of consequentialism is utilitarianism – maximizing the aggregate good to the whole system

• But how do you measure good? Perhaps hedonism - pleasure and pain?

• And is it actual good or intended good?

• And is maximizing really necessary? Can we get away with satisfying?

• And shouldn’t we worry about equality?

³ Sound a bit like attempts to date to achieve Black economic empowerment in SA?
Consequentialism is cool, and we all use it to some extent. But it is far from simple which I guess is why we often get it wrong?!

8.5 Assignment 03: "20,000 children die each day"

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 3.

9 "ME, ME, ME" – EGOISM

9.1 The Countryman and the Snake

“A Countryman happened in a hard winter to spy a Snake under a hedge, that was half frozen to death. The man was good natured and took it up, and kept it to his bosom, till warmth brought it to life again; and as soon as ever it was in condition to do mischief, it bit the very man that saved the life on’t. Ah thou ungrateful wretch! Says he, is that venomous ill nature of thine to be satisfied with nothing less than the ruin of thy preserver?” (Pg 54)


9.2 So what?

By now I don’t need to explain to you the basic structure which we follow when presenting these ethical tradition study units right? You know that we start out with a story to illustrate the tradition and then explain it.

This story is a bit different though isn’t it? Most strikingly, it is not an African folk tale. The reason for this is that I couldn’t find any African folk tales which really illustrates egoism. Even this tale from Aesop’s Fables is a little bit dodgy really.

The reason? Well egoism is not really an ethical tradition that too many people who are trying to sound ethical would usually talk about. At least not in popular circles. This is because it is a tradition which is based on “self-interest” rather than some idea of greater good. If you like it is a selfish tradition.
Selfishness as an ethical tradition? That doesn’t sound right. Well let’s see.....

The story above is simple. A dude is walking along and sees a snake in trouble. He says: “That’s not good!” In other words he makes an ethical judgment. “Let me correct this bad situation by saving the snake” he says. For his trouble, the snake turns around and bites him.

The moral of the story? Well there are a couple really, but for the purposes of this particular tradition the moral is that, you need to look after yourself before you worry about snakes (or anyone else for that matter). Yourself - this is the key to egoism.

The previous study unit should be fresh in your mind so you should immediately see that egoism is a special case of consequentialism right? The morality of acts is evaluated on the basis of consequences - for one’s self in this case. Do I benefit?

There are at least three recognized types of egoism:

- **Psychological egoism** – the idea that we are programmed to be selfish. That there is a Countryman who acts unselfishly might tell us that this is not absolutely true. This is something that most of us feel intuitively. Most of us feel that within all of us is the capacity to be a bit unselfish right?

- **Rational egoism** – the idea that being selfish is just plain sensible. The story illustrates the consequences of this breaking down. The Countryman rather irrationally puts the snake’s interest before his own and suffers dire consequences as a result

- **Ethical egoism** – the view that being selfish is not just sensible, but morally good. For this to hold you would have to say that the Countryman was morally bad to put the snakes interests before his own.

Right - can you start to see where this might be heading? In terms of this module’s title? Towards a justification for greed perhaps? Yes indeed. That is where it might be going. Or it might not....

2016/01 (Eccles)
Just before moving on to what some big thinkers have had to say about egoism, it is probably important to just mention the opposite of egoism – altruism. Altruism is about giving something away that is valuable without any expectation of return. Altruism, means putting the interests of others before your own. The Countryman and the Snake story is essentially an illustration of altruism. Many would say it’s an example of irrational altruism.

9.3 Movers and Shakers

Deontology had Kant, we didn’t really look at any movers and shakers in consequentialism, but names like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill would be front and centre. So who are the movers and shakers in terms of egoism? Actually there are a couple of people who we are going to talk about:

- Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882)
- Frederich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900)
- Ayn Rand (1905 – 1982)
- Adam Smith (1723 – 1790)

Why so many? Well, partly it’s because I really like to present big name mover and shakers. Darwin, Nietzsche and Smith would all qualify as big names. But as you will see, none of them were really out and out advocates of egoism. Rand is a real egoist, but is not quite such a big name. So I decided to present a bit about all of them. There are many others of course - Mandeville, Stirner, Milton Friedman and on and on. You can check them out if you like.

But besides wanting really big names, as I already said, this is the ethical tradition which touches on one of the two key concepts in this module overall – Greed. So it seems fair to put a bit more effort into understanding it. Is it a real philosophy of greed or isn’t it?

CHARLES DARWIN (1809-1882)
Darwin wasn’t really a moral philosopher. He was what was known as a *naturalist*. No - A naturalist is not someone who runs around with no clothes on! In fact it is what they used to call people who studied natural phenomena in the old days. In Darwin’s case, it was biology and geology that floated his boat. And as you probably know, he is particularly associated with the subject of evolution. His main claim to fame was proposing a basic mechanism by which evolution is now widely believed to occur: the theory of *natural selection*.

Now you can be pretty certain that you won’t find many chapters in ethics text books describing the ethical traditions of Darwin! Because he wasn’t a moral philosopher. So why do I start out with Darwin?

Well it all boils down to the implications of his theory of natural selection. So we need to have a quick look at this. A very quick look! The first thing to understand is that in presenting his theory, Darwin was really trying to explain how the diversity of plants and animals that he observed came to be, and in some cases went out of being (i.e. went extinct). And his thinking went as follows.

He observed that in populations of animals or plants at any moment in time, variation exists. You don’t really have to think beyond humans to see this – some of us are tall, some of us are short; some of us have red hair, some of us have black hair; some of us wear size 10 shoe and some of us wear a size 15 shoe. You can call these things traits. I have a set of traits; you have a set of traits.

Many of these traits don’t make one bit of difference really. But some traits are important because they affect what Darwin referred to as our “fitness”. This is NOT fitness in the running- a-marathon sense of the word. Fitness in the Darwinian sense of the word refers to our ability to reproduce!

Think of it this way – if we go back to our story – the trait of picking up snakes would probably be detrimental to our fitness. Get bitten by the wrong snake and you are not going to be alive long enough to reproduce!
So now we have the idea of variations in populations, and the idea that some variations will affect our ability to reproduce. Darwin then observed that some traits at least seem to be passed on from one generation to the next. They are inherited in other words. He didn’t understand the mechanism by which this happened – that only came later once we began to understand genetics – but he did nonetheless observe the inheritance of traits.

Well once he had these basic facts, natural selection was obvious to him. Check this out:

Picking up snakes is an evolutionary dead end. Not picking snakes up leads to long lasting families!

So what does this all have to do with egoism?

Well it presents a basis for anyone wanting to justify selfishness from a very basic biological reality kind of perspective. Let’s look at the story we began this section with. The act of saving the life of the snake, which on the surface seems to be a morally good thing to do, turns out to be the kind of behaviour that is not really going to stick around for long because natural selection will eliminate it eventually.
It’s a behaviour that is likely to go extinct as you can see from the illustration above.

Going back to the three types of egoism I listed above (psychological, rational and ethical) a simple reading of natural selection would give us a mechanism to explain why psychological egoism would come to be. Because individuals lacking rational egoism would die and eventually the trait would presumably not be passed on anymore. And that is that.

Before leaving Darwin, it is important to note that Darwin himself did not advocate egoism as a moral tradition. In other words he was not an ethical egoist. And his intention was not to provide a basis for defending egoist behaviour. However, his theory of natural selection was, and indeed remains, a very important theoretical basis upon which egoism might be justified.

**FREDERICH NIETZSCHE (1844 – 1900)**

To put it mildly Nietzsche is a rather controversial moral philosopher. He is perhaps best known for saying: “God is dead. And we have killed him” in his book The Gay Science published in 1882, and for claiming to be the “first immoralist”. But then egoism is perhaps a controversial moral philosophy so I suppose there is little wonder that he might be brought into the fray.

Now Nietzsche is a very complex philosopher to try and get your head around. A lot of what he wrote was written in aphorisms which are open to interpretation and inevitably misinterpretation. I’m telling you this for two reasons. The first reason is that what I present here is a very, very superficial interpretation (or possibly a

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4 For some even better examples than snake handling why not check out www.darwinawards.com

5 The words “brought into” are very important. As you will see Nietzsche does not really seem to advocate egoism. However, like Darwin, he is frequently used to lend authority to egoism.
misinterpretation) of what Nietzsche had to say about morality in general and how this might be interpreted as contributing a case for egoism. The second is to reiterate the fact that linking Nietzsche to egoism is probably a misinterpretation. Nietzsche often claimed to be against all moralities and if egoism is a morality, then Nietzsche would presumably be against it.

So as we did with Darwin, let’s start out by understanding what the objective of Nietzsche’s little project was. Darwin wanted to explain the diversity of plants and animals. What did Nietzsche want? Well it seems that he was driven by a desire to see human kind move to higher and higher states of being. In particular he wanted to see the emergence of what he called “Übermensche”. Loosely translated it means, “over-men” or “supermen”.  

In his desire to see such progress, Nietzsche wanted all barriers to progress removed. And this seems to have been what brought him into conflict with “morality”. Unlike more conventional moral philosophers who harped on about what was moral and what wasn’t, what was good and what wasn’t, Nietzsche asked "What is morality’s value”? What is the point of it all? Or more precisely, what does morality contribute to or detract from progression to the “superman”? 

In answering this question Nietzsche basically noted that all moralities tend to claim to be unconditional – to be The morality. In a sense they tend lay claim to being the end point. And reaching an end point is clearly contrary to striving towards a higher state. So I guess you could say he viewed the claim of most moralities as a dead end in human development. And so he labelled himself an “immoralist”.

6 And immediately you should begin to see the kind of problems which might emerge out of Nietzsche writings. You can imagine all sorts of supremacist crackpots taking up this kind of idea. Not least of all his ideas were reportedly taken up as a key part of Nazi anti-Semitic ideology. This despite the fact that Nietzsche himself was vehemently opposed to anti-Semitism.

7 Sounds kind of Darwinian – what contribution does morality make to our fitness?
So if Nietzsche is opposed to all moralities, how is it that he gets held up as a supporter of egoism? Well in a world where egoism (selfishness) does not have many supporters, a philosopher who criticizes its nemesis, altruism, is likely to become a de facto ally. Beyond this, it seems that Nietzsche felt that the prevailing morality at the time he was writing was one based on altruism and so he perhaps spent more time criticizing this than other moralities. So his writings are littered with criticism of altruism. Finally, as I already mentioned, Nietzsche’s riddley (enigmatic is a better word I guess) writing style helped no end in cementing this. People could interpret the riddles in a way that supported their own personal projects.

So let’s wrap up this bit on Nietzsche. Firstly, what would Nietzsche have said about the snake story? My guess is he would have applauded the style of writing and perhaps (just perhaps) might have concluded that picking up snakes hardly seems like a path to becoming a “superman”. But really who know what Nietzsche might have said? In terms of egoism, it seems that while he didn’t really advocate egoism, he was a strong critic of altruism. And that was enough to bind him to egoism. Just like the fact that he advocated a “superman”, was enough to turn him into a champion for various supremacist types.

AYN RAND (1905-1982)

Finally - a real egoist! Up until now, the two big names have really just been used as advocates of egoism. You can easily tell that Rand is the real deal. She wrote a book entitled “The Virtue of Selfishness”. It doesn’t get more real than that! That’s essentially another way of saying that ethical egoism, or self interest, is morally good or virtuous. And make no mistake, in this book she defends selfishness as though the future of mankind depended on it.

8 Personally I recon Nietzsche made a mistake here. He did not draw a distinction between the theoretical prevailing morality (the stuff contained in religious texts and moral philosophy treatises), and the realities of moral practice. Or if you like between “Sunday morality” and “rest-of-the-week morality”. Perhaps?
So how does Rand go about her argument? Well she starts out by bashing altruism—egoism’s nemesis. Remember altruism is defined as giving up something that is valuable without getting anything in return.

Her bashing of altruism goes like this. Altruism she says holds that any action taken for the benefit of someone else is good and that any action taken for your own benefit (in your self interest) is bad.

She then gives some examples which apparently demonstrate the absurdity of this. For instance she compares an industrialist who pursues and accumulates a huge personal fortune and a bank robber who steals a huge personal fortune and suggests that altruism would claim they are both bad. Absurd right? Well assuming that the industrialist didn’t exploit anyone in his accumulation of a fortune, it doesn’t really seem fair.

Rand then goes on to present the following argument:

“Since nature does not provide man with an automatic form of survival, since he has to support his own life by his own effort, the doctrine that concern with one’s own interests is evil means that man’s desire to live is evil – that man’s life, as such, is evil. No doctrine could be more evil than that.”

Think of the Countryman and the Snake. According to Rand, altruism would judge the countryman evil had he not picked up the snake which does seem a little wonky really. Note that although Rand uses the word “survival” which kind of ties back to Darwin’s natural selection, her critique of altruism is very much in the realm of

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9 And this is a very big assumption.
10 Arrgh! I only have a Kindle version of Rand’s 1961 book The Virtue of Selfishness (published by Signet, New York) and this particular quote doesn’t have page numbers. But it is in the Introduction.
morality – altruism is an evil doctrine. Not just an irrational one or an evolutionary dead end one.

Having bashed altruism, Rand then goes on to clarify or constrain selfishness. She says that her philosophy does not advocate absolute unconstrained pursuit of self interest. Rather she claims it to be “rational”. To render it rational, she suggests an objective moral code based on three central virtues of:

- rationality,
- productiveness and
- pride.  

These she claims encapsulate the two things which allow humans to sustain life: thinking and productive work. And sustaining life, one’s own life in particular, is the original objective standard of value.

The Countryman in story at the beginning had the productive work bit right, but not the thinking bit and so he met his end and in so doing his act was immoral – according to Rand.

And that is that really. At least that’s enough on Rand for this study unit.

**ADAM SMITH (1723-1790)**

If you are wide awake you will have spotted that Adam Smith predates all of the other movers and shakers discussed so far. However, the contribution to the development of egoism which is traced back to Smith is very very important because it binds the prevailing economic system in the world today (capitalism) to egoism.

11 An egoist form which she attributes (probably incorrectly) to Nietzsche.
12 Personally I’m not really clear where pride comes from?
And in fact some might say that I could have just presented Smith as the mover and shaker and left it at that.

So how is Adam Smith linked to egoism? Well, as was the case with both Darwin and Nietzsche his simplistic binding to egoism perhaps has more to do with those who have interpreted his work than what he himself said. Although self interest did indeed play an important role in Smith’s thinking.

So what was it that he did in fact say? Well in general, Adam Smith is probably best recognized as the father of modern economics and capitalism. Actually calling him the father of capitalism is a little bit of a stretch. Capitalism was up and running in a form before Smith. But he was the first person to really have a crack at describing how it worked. He did this in his book entitled: “An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations”. The Wealth of Nations for short.

Just being the first person to describe capitalism, the economics which is today an economics characterized by the pursuit of self interest (and probably even greed) is probably enough for most to say Adam Smith must have been the father of egoism too.

But this is almost certainly not a fair assessment of Smith. But let’s just quickly check out the (tiny) bit of the Wealth of Nations that has most frequently been used to justify egoism. This all really revolves around one of Smiths famous “invisible hand” quotes. Let’s examine the most famous of these and how it might be interpreted:

“By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

13 You can download this (and many other books) for free from http://www.gutenberg.org
Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.”

You can see selfishness dripping from this quote:

- “intends only his own security”,
- “he intends only his own gain”,
- “pursuing his own interest”.

But by means of this “invisible hand” – the market (according to popular interpretation) – the selfish person’s actions actually result in an end that is not just his own gain or security. In the context of a book entitled the Wealth of Nations you might well jump to the conclusion that this end is the wealth of the nation. That’s really all that’s needed for pop-egoists. Individual self interest (possibly greed) in a free market leads to the wealth of society as a whole – the nation.

**CAPITALISM ROCKS!**

BUT! There is a huge “but” here. For starters check out the detail of this quote alone. Smith is speaking about a very specific thing here – supporting domestic rather than foreign industry. So it hardly seems appropriate to claim that he is making any sweeping, general defence of egoism right?

Then there is the bit in the sentence immediately after the reference to the “invisible hand” appearance where he says: “Nor is it always the worse for the society.....” [emphasis added]. This is definitely not the same as saying: “It is always better for the society” which is what would be needed for a general defence of egoism. Beyond
this quote we need to recognize that elsewhere in the *Wealth of Nations* Smith clearly warns against unchecked self interest and greed.

However, perhaps the most important “but” is the fact that before publishing the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith had published another book. This one entitled: “*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*”. In this Smith actually wrote about moral philosophy. And what is clear is that Smith wasn’t really interested in saying that egoism or altruism were the more important moral traditions. He was more interested in how real people actually came to moral judgments.

And his idea was? Well one of the central elements of his thinking was imagination - the capacity of humans to imagine. And, in particular, their capacity to imagine what other people could be feeling. Just knowing this is enough to know that Smith can really hardly be held up as a defender of rabid and absolute self interest (let alone greed). What would the point of imagining what other people are feeling be if you were advocating absolute self interest?

**9.4 From Egoism to Greed?**

Throughout this section we have hinted at the possibility that egoism *might* be linked to greed - that it might be the ethic of greed. And on some sort of level this seems to make sense: self-interest ...... selfishness ...... greed. Seems to be a reasonable chain, if not a set of outright synonyms.

But is this argument really sound? If it’s not, then egoism cannot really be thought of as an ethic of greed. Well let’s examine self-interest and greed. Self-interest, as the words suggest, is an interest in self and is generally assumed to be an interest in some sort of wellbeing. And given that it is generally recognised that as a social species - our wellbeing is ultimately served by living in a "happy" society - one might easily argue that it becomes part of our self-interest to ensure a "happy" society.

Greed on the other hand is by definition much more harsh. More sociopathic (or socially destructive) if you like. You can go and look up a pile of definitions of greed
on the web or in your dictionary. But they all seem to share the idea of greed being an *excessive* desire to accumulate something. In other words you might think of it as self-interest gone mad.

Now no ethical tradition can really bear the label of socially destructive. And so greed cannot really be accommodated in any proper ethical tradition.

However, the line between self-interest and greed is definitely not as clear as the definitions might lead us to believe. And so the possibility exists that egoism might well be used to defend greed. And this is a problem.

### 9.5 Problems with Egoism

As with all the other ethical traditions which we have covered, we do need to think about problems with egoism. So what are these? Let me list three:

1. Well let’s start out with the most basic one. What is your initial reaction to the word “selfish”, and even more so to the word “greed”? My guess is that you have a basic negative gut reaction. That’s got to count for something. It suggests if you like the opposite of psychological egoism – psychological altruism.

2. Then there is the fact that it’s really hard to find a big name thinker who can really be called an out and out egoist. Darwin more than likely wasn’t; nor was Nietzsche; and Smith most definitely wasn’t. But Ayn Rand was.

3. For the last one, I’m going to take you back to Darwin. Of all the movers and shakers mentioned, Darwin is the one who presents a mechanism by which (psychological) egoism might come to exist in humankind. The problem is that while Darwin’s mechanism seems so simple and intuitive, there is a lot more to it when it comes to what really happens. We have already noted that humans are a social species – and in this regard, our survival cannot simply be dependent on our individual thinking and productive effort (as Rand suggested). It must be dependent on our thinking and productive effort.
in the context of our society. There are even more technical issues with just using Darwin's natural selection as a mechanism. For one, natural selection probably doesn’t really happen at the level of individuals (selves). It happens on the level of genes. Without getting in technical details of evolutionary theory, in our story, we might well ask what if the snake was substituted with Countryman’s child, and the man gave up his coat and froze himself to save the child? In effect he would probably be protecting the long term prospects of his genes, and many fathers would do this. Rand of course would say that any threat to individual sovereignty is “savage, blind, ghastly, bloody unreality”. Bottom line, Darwin’s mechanism shouldn’t be interpreted too simply, and the egoism / altruism divide is probably not black and white.

9.6 What You Should Know Now

Right! It's that time of the study unit again when we take some time to recap. We have covered a lot of ground in this study unit haven't we?

- We have come to know that egoism is all about self-interest;
- We know that it is a form of consequentialism;
- And we know that there are at least three types:
  - Psychological egoism – biologically programmed selfishness
  - Rational egoism – selfishness just makes plain sense
  - Ethical egoism – selfishness is not just sensible it is morally good.
- And we know the opposite of egoism is altruism;
- We have examined the contributions to egoism that have been made by some big name thinkers:
  - Darwin - providing a mechanism for psychological egoism;
  - Nietzsche – violently criticizing altruism;
o Rand – declaring selfishness a virtue;
o Smith – as the father of capitalism.

- We have thought about the link between egoism and greed;
- And finally we looked at some of the problems with egoism

And that's that!

9.7 Assignment 04: "ME, ME, ME!"

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 4.

10 "FAIR'S FAIR" - DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

10.1 The Story: Honeyguide's Revenge

The generosity of Honeyguide was known far and wide. At some time or another everyone in the area had been invited by her to share in a delicious treat of honey made by her good friends, the bees. And so it seemed only right that, when one day Honeyguide came upon a huge hive in the forest, dripping with wonderful golden honey, she should chose to share it with the man who had just recently arrived in the area.

Now, although the man was new in the area he had still heard of the generous Honeyguide. And so, when the little brown bird flew up to him while he was working in his fields and started flying around in circles chirping excitedly, he knew exactly what to do. He knew that all he had to do to get to a magnificent feast was to follow Honeyguide. And the man loved honey! Boy did he love honey!

So he followed Honeyguide. Across the fields, up the hill, back down the hill and through the river, and into the forest. Had he not been so certain of the feast that awaited him at the end of the trip he would no doubt have stopped following
Honeyguide very early on because the day was hot, and it wasn’t a short trip to the hive.

But he knew the treat he was in for and so he followed, and at last they came to the tree with the hive in it. The man didn’t need Honeyguide anymore to point out the rich prize. So bountiful was the hive that beautiful golden honey literally dripped out of it. The man was so excited he could hardly contain himself. He set about gathering all the honey. And then he proceeded to eat all the honey - every last morsel. He didn’t leave a single drop for Honeyguide.

Honeyguide was astounded. Surely everyone knew that the whole point of all of her efforts was sharing the rich produce of her friends the bees? But she was wrong. This man didn’t seem to know or if he knew, didn’t seem to care. After he had finished all the honey (every last morsel) he took a short nap under the tree because he was feeling a little bit stuffed. And, once he had rested for a while, he made his way back to his house.

There and then Honeyguide knew that she had to teach this man a lesson. If she didn’t her beautiful sharing friendship with all people would be lost forever. And so when she happened to come across another huge hive, dripping with wonderful golden honey, but this time in the tree where Leopard was busy with her cubs, she knew what she would do.

Off she flew to the fields where the greedy man was working.

The man could hardly believe his luck when Honeyguide showed up for a second time in just a few days. With the memory of his last feast still fresh in his mind, the man dropped his tools and quickly followed the little brown birds. Across the fields, up the hill, back down the hill, through the river, and again, into the forest. But this time he hardly noticed the trip. All he could think about was the honey.

And when they finally came to the tree with the huge hive he also didn’t notice anything but the wonderful golden honey dripping from the hive. Specifically, he didn’t notice Leopard. Unfortunately for him, Leopard’s attention was not equally
held by the honey. She was very much aware of this hungry looking man coming
closer and closer to her cubs!

The rest, as they say, is history. Honeyguide got her revenge thanks to an angry
Leopard and from that fateful day on all people knew with absolute certainty that the
bounty of nature was meant to be shared.

A tale told to me when I was a child. I can’t tell you who told me (either my
grandfather or a teacher) but I’m sure they won’t mind me telling you.

10.2 So what?

This is a pretty common folk tale. It told to me at some point in my own childhood –
can’t remember whether it was by my grandfather or at school. It doesn’t really
matter I suppose. The point is this story is all about sharing and fairness – distributive
justice if you like. And there are layers and layers.

So let’s look at it – this is what I see. Firstly, there’s the "elephant in the boardroom",
the greedy man who doesn’t share any of the honey with the Honeyguide despite
Honeyguide’s generosity in leading him to the honey. On the surface, this is an act of
pure greed or selfishness that enrages “nature” – the guys gets a swat from an angry
leopard to prove that he has violated some sort of law of nature. Sure, he did some
work for his honey. He walked “[a]cross the fields, up the hill, back down the hill and
through the river, and into the forest”. But this according to the tale doesn’t entitle
him to eat all the honey. And indeed the conclusion is that in nature, resources are
shared - “that the bounty of nature was meant to be shared by all”.

So much for the obvious. As usual though, if you think a bit harder about this
situation other problems start to emerge. For instance, what about the bees? We
focus all this attention on the injustice of the man, and the generosity of
Honeyguide. But why should either the Honeyguide or the man, or anyone other
than the bees for that matter have any claim on the honey? It was the efforts of the
bees which produced the honey. The story suggests that the bees and the
Honeyguide are friends. So perhaps the bees don’t mind this little arrangement. But I
must admit that I’m not sure how long I would stay friends with someone who was in the habit of kindly sharing the spoils of my labour with all and sundry. It just doesn’t seem fair.

So what is fair? How do we decide (on a personal and on a social level)? Well, philosophically, the field dealing with these questions is known as *distributive justice*. Now, real philosophers will tell you that when you get into the field of distributive justice, you are no longer really in the realm of moral philosophy. You are entering into the world of *political philosophy*. Certainly this is the case when you try and figure out how to share on a social rather than an individual level.

But let’s not get caught up in this. Let’s rather focus on some of the main models which have been proposed.

### 10.3 How to share .... common intuitions

Well for starters, there are some “common intuitions” which most of us entertain when we think about sharing:

**DESERVING**

One of the most obvious ones is that rewards should go to those who *deserve* those rewards. In our story, you might argue that the Honeyguide deserved a share of the honey, and so it was unjust that the man ate it all. Of course, you can think of being deserving in terms of good and bad. The man presumably got what he deserved when the leopard gave him a smack!

In the real world you will often hear this being used to justify why some people have so much more than others. For example, “Bill Gates is stinking rich because he was smart and he worked exceedingly hard. He deserves all of his money.” If you like, it’s a very capitalist kind of distributive fairness. If you work really hard, you can become as rich as you like. And because of this kind of logic, it is argued that people have a strong personal incentive to work really hard.

**NEEDING**
The next one is that rewards should go to those in need. No one in our story really seems particularly needy. The man has crops for his main food, so the honey is just a luxury. The Honeyguide just seems to share because she is kind (with other people’s stuff if you ask me). No-one really seems to worry about the bees too much. But I suppose if you read between the lines, it seems that the bees don’t seem to object too strongly to their friend the Honeyguide handing out their honey, so we can perhaps assume that they don’t really need it too much either.

However, need is still an important reason for sharing. Let’s imagine for a minute that the story is the same except for one minor detail - the man was in fact starving. If he did not eat every single bit of the honey he would fall down dead. Would it then have been fair for him to eat all the honey? Even though it was the bees who made it all, and the Honeyguide who shared it. Given that neither the Honeyguide of the bees seem to need the honey, I would probably say that this would change everything.

Need as a distributive justice model is anything but capitalist. In fact, Karl Marx is famously linked to this basis for distribution in the quote which goes: "From each according to their ability to each according to their need."

**BENEFITTING THE MOST**

The idea of benefit is related to that of need, but is not exactly the same. Need implies that there is no alternative. It’s ‘do or die’. Benefit is not like this. It’s not a matter of life or death. You can benefit greatly from something even if failing to gain it would not result in unbearable hardship.

Again, we have to add some information to our story to illustrate this. Let’s assume that while the Honeyguide and the bees *kind of* like honey, the man really loves it. It’s the light of his life. The reason he gets up in the morning. It makes him completely happy. In this case, the bees and the Honeyguide eating the honey will *kind of* benefit them. But if the man eats the honey – boy is he going to be happy. The benefit will just be so much greater.
Doesn’t it then make sense that he should go ahead and eat it? Assuming of course, as we have done, that none of the three really need the honey.

EQUALITY

Last but not least is the notion of equality. We all know what this one is about. Split the honey up equally between the three! Simple.\(^{14}\) The bees get \(1/3^{rd}\), the Honeyguide gets \(1/3^{rd}\), and the man gets \(1/3^{rd}\).

This seems to be the one that the story itself hints at in the closing line: “that the bounty of nature was meant to be shared”.

A BIT OF EVERYTHING

The thing with common intuitions is that they are common! All of these things would no doubt have resonated with you. They all make perfect sense in isolation. The problem is that they are not always compatible. Dividing things according to who deserves what might mean that someone who is really needy, but perhaps not deserving may end up ....well dying. Need is about do or die right? Is that just their tough luck?

The same sort of arguments can really be applied to any pair of these intuitive notions. So how then do we divide things fairly? Well, the simple answer then becomes: it depends. It depends on the context. Which is hardly a basis for any kind of universally satisfactory model of distributive justice is it? Who decides what it depends on after all?

\(^{14}\) Or is it. Should we split it equally in proportion to body weight? Or just plain equally.
10.4 How to share .... utilitarianism

Enter utilitarianism. Well, it’s not really the entry. You should remember that we discussed this under consequentialism. Let’s just recap though in case you have forgotten what utilitarianism is all about. Utilitarianism is about the “maximum good in the jungle”. In technical terms the fairest distribution of stuff according to utilitarians, is the one that maximizes the total net benefits to the population. It doesn’t worry about individual interests at all.

In our story, we would divide the honey in such a way that it yields the maximum net good in the system, irrespective of individual proportions. If for some reason, maximum good was generated by the man eating everything, then there would be no problem with the current story other than that the man got a smack from the Leopard for essentially irrational reasons.

But as we have already discussed at length, there are problems with utilitarianism, not least of all that it really doesn’t have anything to say about massive inequalities. Utility might well be maximized through an unacceptably unequal distribution of stuff.

10.5 How to share .... John Rawls (1921 - 2002)

Enter John Rawls. Rawls was, without a doubt, one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th Century. He didn't like either the "common intuitions" idea or utilitarianism which I have just discussed - for more or less the reasons as I outlined above. Of course, it's easy not to like something. It's usually more difficult to come up with a superior alternative. But this was what Rawls set out to do.

Basically his ultimate goal was to define principles for distributive justice which are aligned or compatible with the ideals of freedom and equality. Now this is no easy task. Many have argued that these two ideals are opposite sides of the coin. Freedom often seems to result in inequality and achieving equality often seems to require constraints of freedom. So how did Rawls go about doing this?
THE ORIGINAL POSITION

Well his starting point was a thing called the "original position". This held that valid principles of justice are ones which everyone would rationally chose (i.e. freedom) from a position of equality. Freedom and equality. So in our story, what model of justice would the bees, Honeyguide and the man have chosen/agreed to if they were all equal? Must admit, I can't say I know off the top of my head?

But after careful thinking Rawls came up with three principles. Actually he said there were two principles, but the second principle actually has two sub-principles – in my mind this makes three principles! He argued that if these were applied to the basic structure of society, they would deliver a just or fair society. Or at least a society that was fairer than either utilitarianism of common intuitions would deliver. So what were these principles?

PRINCIPLE 1 - GREATEST EQUAL LIBERTY

The first principle that Rawls presented was as follows:

“each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others” (Rawls, 1971, pg 60).

If you are still awake, this should remind you a little bit of Kant shouldn’t it? Remember making the maxim universal? The liberty is appropriate if, and only if, you would be willing to accept it as a universal law - "a similar liberty for others".

Anyway, that is an aside really. The point is that with this principle, Rawls set out to guarantee our most basic liberties e.g. the right to vote, the right to freedom of thoughts and speech, the right to own property etc. Basic non-negotiable human rights.

PRINCIPLE 2A – EQUALITY OF FAIR OPPORTUNITY

The second principle (or Rawls’ principle 2a if you like) is the principle of “equality of fair opportunity” (Rawls 1971, pg 60). According to this principle, any person,
irrespective of where they sit in society should have absolutely equal opportunity to attain absolutely any position. Anyone can become the president! Perhaps the most important practical implication of this principle, is that this means that at the very least everyone must have access to equal education irrespective of the accidents of birth – irrespective of whether one is born into a wealthy family or into a poor family. In fact the idea of this principle is basically to try and remove any arbitrary benefit associated with where people are born in society.

PRINCIPLE 2B – THE DIFFERENCE PRINCIPLE

Rawls’ third principle (or more correctly the second part of his second principle) is a principle which he called “the difference principle” (Rawls 1971, pg 60). Perhaps more than any of the other principles, this principle allowed some degree of inequality to be considered. What Rawls basically said was that any inequality could not be detrimental to the interests of the least well off in society – the poorest of the poor, the weakest of the weak. In fact it ought to be beneficial to the poorest of the poor! But how the heck would that work? Well here is an example. If inequality is a motivator, then inequality could drive poor people to do what it takes to get rich - to take the future into their own hands and shed the shackles of poverty. Another example might be having the wealthy paying taxes which disproportionately pay for the delivery of public services.

ORDER IS IMPORTANT!!!

So those are the principles:

1. **Greatest equal liberty** - which guarantees basic non-negotiable human rights; and

2. **Equality of fair opportunity** and the **difference principle** - which really define conditions under which inequality might be considered acceptable or permissible.
But are these principles all equally important? And if so what happens if they happen to be in conflict? Well actually Rawls argued that they are not equal. He said that they must be applied in the order which they have been presented here. First the basic liberties delivered in principle 1 get guaranteed. Then equality of opportunity is guaranteed. And finally, once these are in the bag, inequality can only be contemplated if only if that inequality is in the interest of the least advantaged in society.

AND THE BEST FOR LAST - THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

I probably should have introduced this right at the beginning when I told you about the Original Position because this is really an important ingredient of a legitimate original position according to Rawls. But I want you to think about this very carefully – in fact if there is one thing I absolutely insist that you take out of this discussion it is Rawls’ "invention" known as the veil of ignorance. Actually it’s not really entirely his invention. Lady Justice has typically been blindfolded. It doesn’t really matter though. The point is that this is really a brilliantly useful tool for thinking about what is fair and right as far as I am concerned.

Rawls’ idea goes like this: when we are thinking about principles which we are going to use for distributing stuff fairly, we should not know anything about where we sit in society or our natural talents – the accidents of our birth place/family and our genetic makeup. So for example, we should not know whether we are black or white (or any other colour); whether we are Hindu or Muslim or Christian (or from any other religion); we should not know whether we are a woman or a man; we should not know our sexual orientation; or the socio-economic class from which we come; we should not know whether we are blessed with some incredible sporting ability, a brilliant mind for maths, or whether we will suffer from a debilitating psychiatric illness etc. Or in the case of our story whether we are a person or a bird or an insect. In short we should be ignorant of accidents of birth.

Can you imagine the implications of this? Let’s go back to our story which we kind of lost for a while. So imagine that in the original position the bees, the Honeyguide and
the man were all sitting around a table at a workshop trying to agree on how to split this honey fairly. And imagine that they pulled on this veil of ignorance which would mean that all they knew was that there was a pile of beautiful honey and three possible eaters of this honey. What principles would they design to allow them to split it? Do you think that they agree to a split where all the honey goes to one of the three as happened in the story? That would mean there would be a 2/3 chance (66%) that they would get nothing at all! Hmmm? Quite an interesting question isn't it?

You might apply the same kind of thinking to wealth inequalities. Do you think that the rich would defend their exceedingly huge wealth if they weren't really sure whether they were going to be one of the rich or one of the poor? The probabilities would not be good for being amongst the rich in today's increasingly unequal world would they.

Which brings me to the last word on this - If the only thing you remember and grasp out of all of this stuff on Rawls is the veil of ignorance then I'll be a happy lecturer. So go and think about this again!

**REFERENCE**


**10.6 What You Should Know Now**

As usual it's time for a little summary. At the highest level, we have covered three schools of thought on sharing:

- Common intuitions
- Utilitarianism
- Rawls' ideas

Within *common intuitions* you should recall the following four:

- Rewards to those who *deserve* them;
• Rewards to those in need;
• Rewards to those who will benefit most; and
• Rewards split equally.

In terms of utilitarianism, there was nothing new here: maximizing the aggregate good to the whole system.

Finally in terms of Rawls' ideas we touched on:

• his "Original position";
• his thinking about agents and interests (fundamental interests and not so fundamental interests)
• his idea of "permissible inequality" and the two principles governing this:
  o "Difference principle";
  o "Fair and equal opportunity principle";
• And finally his idea of the "veil of ignorance" (remember if this is all you remember then I'm happy!)

10.7 Assignment 05: 4 billion living in poverty

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 5.

11 "GREENIES" - ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

11.1 What? .... No Story??!

Nope. Not this time. We don’t need one. Picking up bits and pieces from the other stories which we have already discussed will do just fine to illustrate environmental ethics thank you very much. And it will give us a chance to recap all the stories so it’s a win-win situation!
So, let’s just remind ourselves what those stories were:

- For Do the right thing - Deontology we had the story “How the Good Life Was Lost”. Let’s call it GLL for short;
- For “It’s All About Consequences” (Consequentialism) we had the story “The Great Thirst”. GT for short;
- For “ME, ME, ME” (Egoism) there was the very short story of “The Countryman and the Snake”. CS for short;
- And finally, for “Fair’s Fair” (Distributive Justice) we used “Honeyguide’s Revenge”. HR for short.

Now the first thing that you should spot as you look at all four of the titles together like this is that to some extent they all involve “nature”. In GLL the second line is: “Mother Earth provided them with all that they needed: air to breathe, water for drinking and for washing, and fertile soil for growing crops”. All very idealistically “natural” – the idea of a life sustaining “Mother Earth” providing for the needs of the inhabitants. As the story progresses, this beautiful idealistic “natural” image is shattered by a selfish act.

In GT, the progression is exactly the opposite. It starts out with a violent bloodthirsty image of “nature” with animals running around eating each other just to survive. And through sacrifices of Elephant and Snake, it becomes more bearable. Although, it never quite achieves the idealistic state which is described in the beginning of GLL.

As you know, CS is quite different to all the other stories – it’s very short. There is no long description of the state of “nature”. But we might quite easily think of the snake as representing “nature”. As a symbol of “nature” if you like. Which brings us to HR. Once again it’s all about “nature”. There are fields, there are bees, there are birds and trees. And there are leopards.

All of them therefore rely on “nature” images. The last two, (CS and HR) are special though because they have humans as part of the picture - either part of nature or at
the very least interacting with nature. In CS the countryman interacts with the snake – he picks it up and he gets bitten. In HR the man interacts with the honeyguide and the bees and because of his greed he has a brush with an angry leopard.

This is the very essence of environmental ethics – it’s about how humans ought to think and behave in terms of nature.

11.2 Value - Intrinsic vs Instrumental

To get your head around environmental ethics, you must first get you head around the difference between two types of value: intrinsic and instrumental. I know, I know – you’re really tired of these nasty big words, but we’re on the home straight now so bear with me.

Intrinsic value is the more difficult of the two to actually get your head around if you ask me. But basically intrinsic value is value just because! Something has intrinsic value in and of itself. It has virtue in and of itself, rather than being granted value by someone else. Instinctively most of us will immediately think along the lines of saying all people have intrinsic value simply because they are people. In some religious traditions, this intrinsic value is linked to the teaching that human beings (and all of nature) have been created by God. God loves you or created you and if God loves you or created you, you must be valuable.

Instrumental value is much easier to understand. Something has instrumental value by virtue of what it can do for you (or someone else). In other words it is useful. Think of a hammer. A hammer is a great instrument. You would never say that a hammer has value just because it is. But if you have to hit nails into wood, for some or other reason, you would say that a hammer has great value. It’s an instrument and its value emerges out of this – so it has instrumental value!

Got it?

- **Intrinsic value** – is value just because.
- **Instrumental value** – is value because of what it can do for you.
11.3 So what?

Why is understanding intrinsic and instrumental value important in terms of environmental ethics? Well there are really two basic schools of thought in environmental ethics:

The first holds that *nature only has instrumental value*. In other words it only has value in so far as it can do stuff for us humans – provide us with air to breath, with food to eat, water to drink, with shade to sit in, with hammers .... the stuff we need to survive and indeed thrive as humans.

You will appreciate that this is an extremely human centred view of things – that’s why it is called the *anthropocentric view*. *Anthropos = human*, *centric = centred*. Now there is a word you might want to drop at your next party! This has important implications in terms of how we ought to behave towards nature. If we have an anthropocentric view, then we only need to worry about looking after nature in so far as we don’t want it to stop doing useful stuff for us. Just like you look after a hammer because you might want to hammer in more nails in the future. You would never say that a hammer has some “God given” right to being looked after. And likewise, if you hold an anthropocentric view of nature you would never say that nature has “God given” rights to protection. It is not worthy of protection just because it is. It is only entitled to protection because of what it can give us.

The second school of thought should then be obvious? It’s the opposite of this. It holds that nature (as a whole or in part) has *intrinsic value*. In other words, nature has value simply because it is. Now all of a sudden, we have a very different view of nature. All of a sudden, we have a situation where we would think of nature as having “God given” rights. And all of a sudden, nature becomes entitled to protection not because of what it can give us, but because it is just the right thing to do because it has value in and of itself.

Ok – that’s the theory. But what does this actually mean? Well, perhaps we can examine this using our stories. As mentioned, because we are talking about the
interaction between people and nature here, CS and HR hold out the best prospects for clues. So we’ll focus on them for now.

In CS the countryman clearly acts as though he believes that that snake has *intrinsic value*. He saves the snake simply because it seems like the right thing to do and not because he thinks that Snake will be useful to him in the future. In fact, Snake turns out to be worse than useless to him in the end. Snake turns out to be harmful! If the countryman had been a bit more anthropocentric, he might have seen no particular value in snake, and would have felt no obligation to save him. And he probably wouldn’t have gotten bitten!

HR is a bit more tricky because it seems like the man is not doing too much thinking at all in this story. He’s just being greedy. But let’s for a minute become a little bit more realistic about this situation, and imagine that Honeyguide is not nearly as smart as she is made out to be. In fact let’s assume (and it is not an unreasonable assumption) that she is actually not really intelligent enough to hold a grudge or engineer a meeting between the man and the irritable leopard. Then what would be the correct course of action for the man? Should he eat all the honey himself, or should he share some? Well, it would depend on:

- whether he felt that the bird had *intrinsic value* and therefore “God given” rights (to honey in this case), or
- whether he felt that the bird only had instrumental value and therefore no special rights to fair treatment.

### 11.4 Nature - and our place in it

At the end of the last section, I asked you to think about whether you believe nature has intrinsic value (i.e. you are non-anthropocentric) or whether you think its value is purely instrumental (i.e. you are anthropocentric). Keep that thought in your mind. You are going to need it later.
From my side though, I think I’m anthropocentric in my outlook. Or at the very least, I believe that the value of people is so far greater than the value of anything else that, in general, I would think about nature in a very human centred or anthropocentric way. In an instrumental way.

Why am I telling you this? Well for starters, I’m not telling you this to try and get you to change your mind if you had originally felt that nature has significant intrinsic value. In all likelihood I’ll have changed my own mind in a couple of months’ time anyway.

The reason I’m telling you this because anthropocentric thinking like mine can really get us into trouble. BIG trouble! In fact many would argue that it has already gotten us into big trouble and that is why we have to think about environmental ethics at all.

And the root cause of this trouble in my opinion is that while we are busy focusing on people, we can easily lose sight of our actual place in nature. To be precise, we start to believe that there is a) nature and there is b) humanity and that these are separate entities. Once we start thinking like this, we start to believe that a certain amount of independence might be possible. That one might be able to exist without the other. And of course, because we tend to think that we are the smart ones here – the rational, thinking ones – we are inevitably inclined think that it is humans that can exist without nature.

When it comes to nature’s independence from us we tend to be a bit less certain. In fact the general view seems to be that nature is dependent on us for protection isn’t it? Think about it – you have environmental protection agencies, and nature conservation agencies. Fragile Earth needing protection images. It’s about humans protecting nature right? Like in the picture?

WRONG?! Very wrong.
Here’s how I see it. At the end of the day humans are animals. Sure we are smart. Well maybe smart is too strong a word – we can think. Which makes us very successful as a species. But for all our smartness, we really have not yet figured out how to live on another planet. The reality is that we are absolutely dependent on this planet and the “nature” which it provides.

So is “nature” dependent on humans? Well let’s be frank, there was “nature” long before humans fell out of trees! Or arrived depending on your view of the origins of people. Scientists have estimated that the first signs of humans running around on the Earth date back about 200,000 years. In contrast, there appears to have been life on Earth since around 3,800,000,000 years ago. The dinosaurs had come and gone by 65,000,000 year ago – that’s 64,800,000 years before the first people appeared. In short, historically, nature has not been dependent on humans.

But, what about the future? Would there still be life on Earth if somehow humans were to vanish tomorrow? Personally I can’t see any reason to believe that life and nature would not persist even if we were removed. It just doesn’t make sense.

Oh dear! So it seems that while we are dependent on nature, realistically nature is not really dependent on us? If you like, while nature might not have too much intrinsic value, its instrumental value from a human point of view is immeasurably big. Without nature we die. And really we do need to wonder about the value of intrinsic value! Take a person and drop him in the middle of a jungle and he is going to end up as some other animal’s lunch, intrinsic value or not.

Bottom line, if you are anthropocentric in your outlook, just make sure that you don’t lose sight of your place in nature. Also bear in mind that an anthropocentric viewpoint lacks a spiritual sense of awe, wonder and gratitude towards the natural world.

11.5 What You Should Know Now

Well this was a nice short section wasn’t it? Basically there are four concepts that we have really covered:
• Intrinsic value - value just because
• Instrumental value - value because of what something can do
• Anthropocentric view of nature - the human centred view
• Non-anthropocentric view of nature - it’s obvious what this is right?

And then we spent a bit of time reflecting on our place and relationship with nature.

That's it!

11.6 Assignment 06: "Save the rhino!"

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 6.
12 SUSTAINABILITY?

12.1 Introduction

Welcome to the first case study in this module. In this case (as with all other cases) you are presented with something. In this case it's a problem. In fact some of us think that this particular problem may be “The problem” of our species in our times: the sustainability problem.

WARNING - Some of what we present here will shock you.

What we hope, is that it shocks you into beginning a journey of thinking about real solutions.

So, what is this sustainability problem then? Well, check out Figure 1 below:
Figure 1: The sustainability problem (2008 data)

Does this say anything to you? Does it move you? Guess it’s not exactly horrifying yet. In fact, as graphs go, it’s pretty beautiful really – don’t you think? It’s got everything:

• Bubbles;

• But not just any bubbles – different size and different colour bubbles;

• It also has lines (dotted and also different colours);

• And look at the beautiful sliding “J” shape that the bubbles make!

Ok, ok. We get a bit carried away whenever we present this graph. The important thing is that this is not just a pretty face … pretty graph. It actually tells a story too. So what does it tell us? Well read on…..

12.2 The Human Development Index

Let’s start out by clearing everything off the graph which we showed you in Figure 1 above. In other words, let’s deconstruct it.
Figure 2: Blank space - A bit like your lecturer's brain on many an occasion!

And then we can build it up again from the ground. The first thing that we do is add the x-axis (the horizontal one). On this axis is a variable called “The Human Development Index”: 
Figure 3: Step 1 – add The Human Development Index

And, surprise, surprise, The Human Development Index (HDI for short) is a measure of human development! It’s a number which is published by the United Nations Development Programme (the UNDP), and you can read up much more about it at the following site: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/ (site last checked: 1 December 2011).

But in a nutshell, according to the HDI, the level of development of a group of people can be evaluated by measuring three things:

- The **health** of that group of people;
- The level of **education** of that group of people;
- The **wealth** (specifically the financial wealth) of that group of people.
So what the UNDP does is chuck a bunch of measures for these three things into a calculator which miraculously comes up with a number between 0 and 1 – as you can see in Figure 3. A score of 0 is absolutely undeveloped. In fact it is probably not possible to get 0. Even a group of monkeys has a life expectancy and therefore some measure of health!

At the other end, 1 is absolutely developed. But again, scoring a 1 is probably technically impossible.

There is an important threshold in the HDI ... 0.8:

- Any group with an HDI greater than 0.8 is considered developed;
- Any group with an HDI less than 0.8 is considered developing.

This is indicated by the vertical line in Figure 3. Anything to the right of this line is developed while anything to the left is developing.

That’s the HDI. What’s next?

**12.3 The Ecological Footprint**

Well, the next step in reconstructing Figure 1 is to add the y-axis (the vertical one):
This is a variable called the Ecological Footprint. Not quite as easy to figure out what this is all about as it was to figure out what the HDI was about right? Although the word “ecological” does probably make you think “environment” perhaps? And indeed this is in fact a measure of environmental sustainability. But how does it work?

Well, if you look carefully, the units in which Ecological Footprints are measured is hectares (ha) per capita. Now a hectare is a measure of area – specifically it is 100m x 100m or 10,000 m². That’s a little less than the area of two football fields. And basically the Ecological Footprint is a measure of the area of planet Earth that is needed to support a person (that’s why it’s “per capita” or per person). If you think about yourself, it’s the area of the Earth that will support your personal lifestyle.

As with the HDI you can go read up a bit more about the Ecological Footprint at the following site: http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/ (site last checked: 1 December 2011).
Now this area isn’t as simple as the size of your backyard. Duh! In addition to the size of your back yard, you have to think about the area that it would take to:

- grow the vegetables that you eat;
- graze the animals you eat;
- produce any seafood that you eat;
- grow the trees that provide the paper that you use;
- and the big one – produce the energy that you use.

Add all of this up and you get your Footprint. So if you eat a lot of food, use a lot of paper, drive a huge car, fly overseas 4 times a year, and leave your lights on all the time, your footprint will be high. If you eat less food, ride a bicycle to work, have never been in a plane and turn off your lights, your footprint will be lower.

But how does this relate to environmental sustainability?

Well, as with the HDI, there is a threshold on the y-axis too – the yellow dotted line. And it works like this: If you take the area of the entire planet and divide it by the number of people on the planet (the population) you get how much area each person should get if everyone got equal shares. And this number was about 1.8 ha.

- So, if your footprint is greater than 1.8 ha you are using more than your share – i.e. you are unsustainable; \(^{15}\)
- If your footprint is less than 1.8 ha you are living sustainably.

\(^{15}\) Remember what Kant said – a thing is only ok if you can imagine generalizing it to all people, and if all people are using more than their fair share we would run out of planet Earth right!
12.4 The Quadrants

Now that we have the axes and thresholds, we notice that the graph is logically divided into four quadrants (Figure 5):

![Graph showing quadrants]

**Figure 5: Step 3 – Defining the quadrants**

To really understand these quadrants it is useful at this point to introduce a very popular definition of the concept of sustainable development attributed to a famous report known as the Brundtland report:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."  

**QUADRANT I:**

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So keeping this in your mind, and starting in the bottom left corner we have a situation where the group in question has:

- an HDI of less than 0.8 (i.e. it is *developing*)
- and an Ecological Footprint of less than 1.8 ha (i.e. it is *sustainable*)

Thinking of this in terms of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, the group is *not really meeting the present needs* of the people, but on the plus side, it is *not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*. Not entirely good, and not entirely bad.

**QUADRANT II:**

If we then move clockwise to the quadrant in the top left corner we have the situation where the group in question has:

- an HDI of less than 0.8 (i.e. it is *developing*)
- and an Ecological Footprint of greater than 1.8 ha (i.e. it is *unsustainable*)

Thinking of this in terms of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, this group is *not really meeting the present needs* of the people, AND, it is *compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*. This is all bad.

**QUADRANT III:**

Moving right along to the top right corner then, we have the situation where the group in question has:

- an HDI of greater than 0.8 (i.e. it is *developed*)
- but it has an Ecological Footprint of greater than 1.8 ha (i.e. it is *unsustainable*)

In terms of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, the group is now *meeting the present needs* of the people, but on the downside, it is *compromising*
the ability of future generations to meet their needs. As with Quadrant I this is not entirely good, and not entirely bad.

QUADRANT IV:

Finally we come to Quadrant IV in the bottom right. Here we have the situation where the group in question has:

- an HDI of greater than 0.8 (i.e. it is developed)
- and it has an Ecological Footprint of less than 1.8 ha (i.e. it is sustainable)

In terms of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, the group is now meeting the present needs of the people, AND it is not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is all good. This is where we want to be....

12.5 The Problem

We still don’t know what the problem is though. But at least we are now in the home straight – we know what the axes on Figure 1 mean. So let’s put all the bubbles back and do the last explanations:
Step 3 – put the bubbles back

Each bubble on the graph represents a country. You can see this because we have labeled one or two. The size of the bubble is proportional to the population of the country. The bigger the bubble, the bigger the population. To be precise, from biggest to smallest, the population categories are as follows:

- Greater than 1 billion (there are only 2 – China and India)
- 100 million to 1 billion
- 20 million to 100 million
- 10 million to 20 million
- 5 million to 10 million
- Less than 5 million
The colour of the bubble tells you the region in which the country is found (you can see the detail in the key in Figure 6).

Right. Now, finally, we get to the heart of the issue – the problem. There are 2 things on Figure 6 that you should be able to spot which we have not yet discussed:

- The shape of the graph
- The red horizontal line at an Ecological Footprint of 2.6 ha

These two capture the problem which is as follows: If you calculate the average Ecological Footprint for all people on Earth the number you get is 2.6 ha. And you will immediately appreciate that this is greater than 1.8 ha. In fact it translates into roughly 1 ½ Earths. In other words we are consuming more than we have, or if you like, at a global level we are unsustainable.

Oh Oh!

And if that is not enough, the shape of the graph tells us that in general, as we develop – as countries move from being developing to being developed – we become exponentially less sustainable.

Oh Oh!

But surely this can’t be right? If there is only 1.8 Ha per person how can we be using 2.6 Ha? Good question. The answer is this. A long, long time ago (between 250 – 350 million years ago to be precise) big chunks of the planet was covered with forests. Then something happened. We’re not sure exactly what but rumour has it that a large meteorite (or meteorites) might have hit the Earth. Anyway, whatever it was, it caused these forests to die. These dead forests gradually got covered with soil and water and over the course of 250 - 350 million years – hey presto – they became fossil fuels. Coal, oil and gas! They are the saved up energy which we are using today. Because of this, most of us don’t need to have a little forest to grow trees for firewood to supply our daily energy.
So, in essence, we are living on savings and this is why our footprint can get bigger than 1.8 ha. But this is not sustainable. At some point we will use up 250 – 350 million years of savings. And besides which burning these fossil fuels is causing another little sustainability problem which you might have heard about – climate change. 17

“So what?” you might say. Well, let’s go a step further and begin to speculate on the realm of possible solutions that we might consider. It’s in examining these that things get shocking. Very shocking indeed! Be warned this is where things could/should get disturbing.

But let’s be brave and see what all the fuss is really about. In essence there are two possible solutions:

12.6 Solution 1 – Reduce per capita footprint

The first obvious solution is to reduce the per capita footprint – down to 1.8 ha to be precise. In other words we do something – anything – to bring the red horizontal line on the graph down to the yellow horizontal line. And there are two broad ways in which we can do this:

12.6.1 Technology – Produce efficiently

Let’s start with the solution that seems to be most favoured – improved technology. And in particular we are looking at improved production technology. The basic idea here is that we’re supposed to be a pretty smart species. For crying in a bucket, we have put people onto the moon! So surely we can figure out smart ways to produce

17 For more information on this go and look at: http://www.unep.org/climatechange/, http://www.newscientist.com/topic/climate-change
the stuff that we consume in a smaller Footprint area? Obviously this is the most favoured solution because there is nothing particularly shocking or alarming about it.

There are however a couple of problems which we need to think about before we conclude that some smart engineer is going to solve this problem for us:

**ARE WE REALLY INNOVATIVE ENOUGH?**

Most people believe that we really are innovative enough. But let me pose this challenge to you: when was the last time we really had a revolutionary innovation in transport technology? Probably in the first 40 years of the 1900’s when we took to the skies. Since then not a lot has really changed if you think about it. Sure our cars have airbags these days. But they are still generally powered by internal combustion engines. And if you think hybrid cars are The Answer, you might want to check out the fuel consumption of the Lexus hybrid SUV compared to other comparably sized SUV’s. It’s actually less efficient than many?!

So what if we are not really as smart as we think?

**HAVE WE GOT THE TIME?**

The next problem is kind of related to the first. Depending on how smart we actually turn out to be, developing the technology necessary to reduce our per capita footprint is going to take more or less time.

The thing is though, we are already at 1.5 times our planet’s entire capacity. The other “little” thing is, that the human population is growing every day. In 2008 – the year the data in the figures above comes from – the world population was estimated at about 6.7 billion people. On the 27th October 2011, it apparently reached 7 billion.

What does this mean in terms of the graph? Well, it means that today the available Ecological Footprint is actually not 1.8 ha anymore, but **1.72 ha**! The horizontal yellow line is moving down on the graph – or if you like, the clock is ticking. Time is an issue.
HAVE WE GOT THE WILL?

Ok, so we might (or we might not) be smart enough to reduce our per capita Footprint. And we might (or we might not) have the time to reduce our per capita Footprint. But assuming that we have the brains and the time, the next thing we really need to ask is whether we really want to. This might seem like a pretty stupid question. But if you really think about it, you have to wonder.

This issue is really most apparent when we consider technologies which could help us become more sustainable and which actually already exist – like solar energy for instance. We know how to capture solar energy and have done for many years now. And yet, in South Africa at least, our major forward energy supply strategy as a country is largely based on coal. The same can be said for many other parts of the world.

So we have some technology – but we don’t seem to have the will to really implement it. Incidentally, when things don’t make logical sense, you really do need to ask who stands to benefit from behaving irrationally? It must be someone powerful. So who does own the coal mines?

WON’T TECHNOLOGY JUST MAKE THINGS CHEAPER?

Last, but definitely not least, we need to think about what will actually happen if production gets more efficient. Well, for better or worse, we live in a capitalist society where consumption is king. So inevitably when someone develops a technology which makes production of some commodity more efficient, this “saving” usually gets split into 2 (at least so the theory goes):

- A little bit will get passed back to the consumer – the commodity becomes a bit cheaper. In effect this makes the owner of the new technology more competitive in the marketplace.

- And the bulk of the other savings will go back to shareholders (the business of business being profit for the owners and all that sort of stuff).
The bottom line is that consumers and shareholders are going to have a bit more cash. And what, in a consumption society, do we do when we have spare cash? We buy stuff!

The point is, this production efficiency stuff can only work if we actually bank the savings. It is not going to work if we just use the saving to buy a whole lot of other rubbish which will clog up our cupboards or garages. This unfortunately is not my original idea. If you are interested in reading more on this, why don't you check out Jevon's Paradox

So, there are problems with the preferred solution to the sustainability problem outlined above. Given this we must then begin to consider the alternative, and as you will see, less favourable solutions.

12.6.2 Consume less - WARNING: Dire economic consequences

We can reduce our per capita Footprint in another way. We can consume less. Eat less food, drive a smaller car (or better still ride a bicycle), fly overseas less frequently etc etc.

Sounds ok right? Well it’s not ok at all. Consumption is what fuels economic growth. So if you reduce consumption dramatically, you risk throwing the economy into a recession. Why do you think the Chinese are so willing to lend American’s money? Well, on a global scale there are very few countries who have mastered the art of consumption the way the American’s have. If you don’t believe me on this just look at Figure 1! Sure, the United Arab Emirates has a slightly higher per capita Footprint. But there are less than 5 million people there. In America there are over 300 million. The point is if the Americans stop consuming, Chinese economic growth is at risk. Simple. (Although I’m not sure why the Chinese don’t just lend the money to the 1.4 billion Chinese people so that they can consume more?)

The point is that reducing consumption is not something which we seem likely to take very easily. But we might want to ask ourselves how big the problem would be? Well we can get a rough idea by looking at Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Most of you will have heard about this, but for those of you who need a reminder, GDP is

2016/01 (Eccles)
basically one measure of economic activity. It’s important because two successive quarters of GDP shrinkage marks a recession in the minds of many. And a big part of the numbers that make up GDP is consumption. So let’s use this as a proxy for consumption:

![Graph](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 7**: World GDP (nominal) over time – blue line. And the approximate effect of adequate consumption reduction – red line.

Figure 7 then shows the world GDP between 1980 and 2015 (2009 to 2015 are estimates).

So now we can ask, what is it we want to achieve? Well we want to reduce our average Ecological Footprint to about 2/3 of the present Footprint (1.8/2.6 to be precise). So it stands to reason that we would need to reduce our consumption (as proxied by GDP) to about 2/3 the present consumption. The effect of this is shown in the red line on Figure 7.

This would take world GDP back to about the 2003 level. Doesn’t sound so bad?
BUT check out the size of this relative to the actually recession that happened during the global financial crisis which started in 2008. It’s huge! And remember, in South Africa, we lost a million jobs during the 2008 financial crisis.

So, let’s face it, reducing consumption is no easy solution. Of course if you think this is alarming, now we really get crazy.

12.7 Solution 2 – Increase the available footprint

The second solution suggested by the graph is to increase the available footprint – up to at least 2.6 ha to be precise. In other words we do something – anything – to bring the yellow horizontal line on the graph up to the red horizontal line. And once again, there are two broad ways in which we can do this:

12.7.1 Find another planet!

Look, we could pretend to think about this, but 50 odd years of space exploration has not really yielded anything to give us much hope that this is possible!

So let’s just move right along......

12.7.2 Reduce Capita WARNING: Genocidal thoughts

There is no comfortable way to say this. The second possible way to bring the available footprint up to the current consumption is reducing the number of people on planet Earth – i.e. genocide. In other words we carry on consuming at present (or even higher) Footprint levels, but we are able to do so sustainably because we are taking the area of the Earth and dividing it up between fewer people.

Ok. Now sane people would never really advocate such a solution. However, we’re going to explore it in a bit more detail anyway. The reason for this is that by looking at what would actually be required, we perhaps really begin to appreciate the scale of the problem which we are facing.
So, how many people would we need to wipe out in order to make our consumption sustainable? Well, the answer to this would depend on the level of consumption that we want to sustain. So if we wanted to sustain a level of consumption equivalent to the average consumption in the United Arab Emirates (the least sustainable country on Figure 1) we would need to wipe out more people than if we wanted to sustain consumption equivalent to the average Chinese consumption. But what are the actual numbers? Well check out Figure 8:

![Figure 8: Wipeout needed to sustain various consumption levels.](image)

What does this tell us? Well, to make the average consumption of the least sustainable group of people on planet Earth (i.e. citizens of the UAE) sustainable, we would have to wipe out 5.5 BILLION people! To make the average consumption of the U.S. sustainable, we would have to wipe out about 5.3 billion. To make the average consumption of the most sustainable major Western European country (happens to be Germany) sustainable we would need to wipe out 3.5 billion
people. For South African average consumption to be made sustainable, we would need to wipe out more than 2 billion people. And so on, and so on.

Why have I put the last five bars on the graph? Well, those of you who know your history will know that these five “events” are the biggest genocide events which we know about:

- Mao Tse Tungs Cultural Revolution – 70 - 100 million?
- Nazi Germany – 6+ million?
- Stalin’s Russia – 6+ million?
- Cambodia – 2 million?
- Rwanda – 1 million?

The important thing here is that besides Mao’s efforts, you can’t even see any of these on the scale of this graph!!!

This, ladies and gentlemen, is crazy stuff. Even with the declining population in much of Western Europe and efforts such as China’s one child policy, the human population continues to rise alarmingly. And remember we are already consuming the productive capacity of 1.5 planets!

This is the problem!

12.8 Assignment 07: Sustainability?

There is no conclusion to this section. I’m not going to tell you that I know the solution. Or even that I’m hopeful that anyone knows the solution. What I can tell you is that I believe we are going to have to undergo a social transformation on the kind of scale that our predecessors underwent when our societies moved from
hunter gatherer societies to agricultural ones, or when they moved from agricultural societies to industrial ones. Major changes!

Anyway, assignment 07 is your chance to think about this stuff. So please log into myUnisa for the instructions in the online Learning Units and to submit your assignment.

13 "GREED IS GOOD!"

Case study 2 is just about as opposite to the last case as it is possible to be. No pages and pages of reading here?! Here we jump straight into the assignment.

13.1 Assignment 08: “Greed is Good”

Once again, it’s time for you to log into myUnisa so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 8.
14 FINAL PORTFOLIO: BACK AT THE CROSSROADS

Phew! Almost done. Just one last activity left – assembling a portfolio. But before we get down to the nitty gritty, I’m curious. In the introduction to this module 15 weeks ago, we promised you a crazy module. In fact we warned you that:

“If by the end of this module you have not:

• wondered whether you are registered for the wrong degree;
• wondered whether your lecturers have lost their marbles;
• wondered whether you have lost your marbles;
• had to go for a walk to clear your mind;
• wondered what the point of all this stuff is; or
• wondered what the point of everything is;

well then you need to check that you have a pulse!”

So, did you? .... Did you:

• wonder whether you were registered for the wrong degree?;
• wonder whether your lecturers had lost their marbles?;
• wonder whether you had lost your marbles?;
• have to go for a walk to clear your mind?;
• wonder what the point of all this stuff was?; or

• wonder what the point of everything was?

Hope so!

Ok let’s get on with the final activity.

14.1 Aim of the Portfolio

The aim of this portfolio is for you to reflect, in a reasonably organized fashion, on the things that you have thought about throughout this crazy module.

Three things to remember

• This is the single biggest “assignment” that you will be doing in this module.

• In a sense it replaces the typical examination which you would usually do in less crazy modules - **MISSING THE DEADLINE FOR THIS IS LIKE MISSING AN EXAM. DO NOT EXPECT ANY EXTENSIONS.**

• But it probably doesn’t count as much as a typical exam – i.e. you will not be able to pass this module just by waxing the exam! **However, you must get 40% for this or you will not pass.**

14.2 Final portfolio: Back at the crossroads

Time for you to log into myUnisa, for the very last time in this module, so that you can read the instructions in the online Learning Units and do assignment 8.