BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE, PILANI
First Semester - 2016-2017
Professional Ethics
HSS F343 (Close Book)
Comprehensive Examination

Room No. 2216/2217/2221   Max Marks: 40.0
Date: 13.12.2016   Duration: 3 Hours

- **Attempt Any Four Questions.**

- **If Anybody Attempts Five Questions, His Or Her First Four Answers Will Be Evaluated.**

- **All Questions Carry Equal Marks.**

1. State and critically analyze Utilitarian Ethical Theory with special reference to the justification of general happiness and the distinction between higher pleasures and lower pleasures. Use examples to strengthen your answer.

2. Define and discuss the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from the perspective of Business Ethics with special reference to arguments for CSR and benefits of CSR.

3. Describe and critically analyze the issues of engineering ethics especially focusing upon the ethical use of professional information in engineering.

4. **The Ethics of Marketing to Children: A McDonald's Case Study**
   There are considerations to take when marketing to children: full disclosure of advertising, responsible child-friendly content and directly addressing parents' concerns. McDonald's Happy Meal site, obviously child-directed, advertise the Happy Meal product itself, as well as creating an online space for children to play and interact with the McDonald's brand.
   While the Happy Meal website does not explicitly push their products in the games and videos on the website, it is all branded content. Furthermore, there is no imagery of the French fries included in every meal or the cheeseburgers that are an option. It presents a utopian view of the McDonald's brand by focusing on only the few healthy options, fully knowing that many children engaged in the brand due to their advertising efforts are asking their parents to go to McDonald's for the French fries and cheeseburgers.
   In the parent-directed section, the Happy Meal site says "Happy kids are safe kids," which again, seems very optimistic. Happy kids, according to extensive research, often eat cheeseburgers and become part of the staggeringly rising percentage of children under 12 who are obese. Finally, due to the nature and challenges of new media, children are more connected to advertising methods that are more difficult for parents to monitor: a fact that McDonald's seems to be taking advantage of.
   According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children are "cognitively and psychologically defenseless against advertising." Further, it claims that children "do not understand the notion of intent to sell and frequently accept advertising claims at face value." (2006)
   Regardless of what is being marketed, is marketing to children ever ethical? Is the purchasing power of children what must be considered, or is it the very fact that they are defenseless that makes them off-limits to what adults understand to be branded content? Branded advertising is hard to get by on a subconscious level for a fully-formed adult: in fact, it often sticks out like a sore thumb. We find it intrusive, and often annoying. Children are much more easily tricked by

marketing like this. Playing a McDonald's game may directly affect their likelihood to request a Happy Meal on the way home from school. In fact, McDonald's is counting on it.
[Use theoretical details of the issue of Marketing and Advertising Ethics in the theme Business Ethics and an ethical theory of your choice to discuss the case. You may use and apply theoretical detail of any other ethical issue that is relevant and listed in the course handout.]

5. You are a computer programmer working for a small business that provides specialized financial services to local, mostly small businesses. You have been working for company X for about six months. Recently X has been occupied with reengineering the inventory system of a local hardware chain, ABC Hardware. The objective is to enable ABC to keep better track of their inventory, to be more responsive to changes in customer demand, and to adopt a "just in time" strategy to reduce inventory. Your supervisor calls you into his office. "Do you know of any existing software products to help ABC keep better track of its inventory?" You mention a particular product that you have worked with in another job and point out that ABC could use it without any modification. The only drawback, you point out, is that this software is somewhat expensive. Your supervisor leans back in his chair, puffs on his cigar and says, "That's no problem. We have that software. Why don't you just install it on ABC's computers?" You diplomatically indicate that this would violate the licensing agreement X has with the developers of the software. "Do it anyway," your supervisor says. "Nobody's going to find out, and ABC is a very important client. We need to do all we can to keep them happy." What should you do? 1. Go ahead and install the software on ABC's computers. After all, your supervisor is right: nobody will know what you have done. Furthermore, you haven't been working for this company very long and don't want to be branded a troublemaker. 2. Refuse to do it. Make it clear to your supervisor that he is putting you in a very difficult position, and you are not happy about it. It is illegal, and you don't have to do it. Period. 3. Go ahead and install the software. But be sure to cover yourself first by writing a memo that clearly states that this is illegal, and you are doing it because your supervisor has left you no choice. Establish the case that your supervisor is responsible for the act, and then send several people within the company copies of this memo, including your supervisor. 4. Discuss the matter confidentially and informally with another colleague, preferably another supervisor, possibly someone over your supervisor's head. If this person's reaction is good, then both of you can approach your supervisor and try to talk him out of this course of action. Also, have some concrete alternatives in mind that you can propose, such as using a less expensive program, getting the license for ABC and having X absorb part of the cost, or negotiating a deal with the owner of the program to extend the license to several users at a lower rate. [Use theoretical details of ethical issues of Computer Ethics and an ethical theory of your choice to discuss the case and answer the question posed at the end of the case with the help of options that are provided after the question. You may use and apply theoretical detail of any other ethical issue that is relevant and listed in the course handout.]