

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE, PILANI

First Semester - 2017-2018

Professional Ethics

HSS F343 (Close Book)

Comprehensive Examination

Room No. 3201/3246/3247/3248

Date: 14.12.2017

Max Marks: 40.0

Duration: 3 Hours

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- All questions are compulsory.
- All questions carry equal marks.

1. Describe and discuss three ethical concepts and the ethical issues associated with advertising. You may conclude the answer with your own assessment.
2. State and analyze the nature of and the ethical use of four types of professional information in engineering ethics. You may use an example to elaborate your answer.

3. **The Death of Socrates**

The death of Socrates, “the wisest and most just of all men” in 399 B.C., has shown the unreliability and undesirability of the democratic rule of Athens. Socrates is seen as a wise and benevolent citizen martyred for raising his voice against injustice and corruption. The false charge against him was that he was corrupting the youths of Athens and inventing new Gods. The jury voted for death as the penalty and Socrates carried out his own execution by drinking the poison called hemlock given to him. He accepted the verdict and decided to die, held on to his intellectual and moral beliefs, when other options such as escaping from prison, begging apology to the jury and living in exile elsewhere were available to him. But he chose to die as a law-abiding citizen and because of his respect for the system.

Common men ridicule Socrates for undermining human pleasure and criticize him as an impractical man. People see him neglecting life and ignoring the most pragmatic aspect of human livings. The common understanding of justice and right is that who are deprived and disadvantages in society struggle hard for their rights and the rich and powerful extract what they want. Inequality is inbuilt in the social system and people reject the Socratic pursuit for justice and equality. For them his fight was a futile effort. It is unnecessary to bring life to an untimely end like Socrates did.

But Socrates was well aware of these facts, which the common men thought that he did not know. On the other hand, people seem to ignore the truths about the deeper aspect of human living and human desires. They lack the knowledge that there is something more than living well with wealth and power. In fact, proper use of the wealth and power should be based on rational judgment and moral virtues. Socrates was worried about what our priorities ought to be if our lives were to really go well. He was struggling hard to convince people that in order to live a good life, attachment to virtue is essential. Living well for Socrates is to have an understanding of virtue and transcends that is just ethically defensible. That is the wisdom necessary to comprehend the value of virtue in human life. Virtues matter in every aspect of our life. Every person and every profession should start with the understanding of virtue and why they matter in our lives.

Satyendra Dubey, a 31 – year old civil engineering graduate from IIT, Kanpur, was gunned down by an unidentified assailant (Gaya, Bihar, India) on November 27, 2003. He was working with the National Highway Authority of India and was assigned to the Golden Quadrilateral Project that connects the four corners of India. He was posted at Koderma, Jharkhand. He was trying to expose the poor implementation of work and rampant corruptions and irregularities to PM's office. Just after two years, on November 19, 2005, S. Manjunath was gunned down by Pawan Kumar Mittal (alias Monu) the son of a petrol pump owner in Lakhmipur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh. He was working for Indin Oil Corporation as an area sales manager. Manjunath was a 27-year-old MBA from IIM Lucknow. He was trying to prevent adulteration in petrol.

[State and discuss the ethical justification of Whistle-Blowing in the light of the above and your understanding of the ethical issue of Whistle-Blowing.]

#### 4. **Yesterday's Pastry**

The Atlantic bakery, owned by M Srinivas, makes a variety of pastries to serve the community in Chennai. The product is good, and M Srinivas's business has grown rapidly. He is justly proud of the quality of his products and their fair prices.

But success has its own problems. M Srinivas finds it increasingly difficult to handle both the financial aspects of the business and the bakery operation. He has decided to concentrate on baking and delegate the financial responsibilities to Vignesh, a recent graduate from the College of Business Administration at a local university. Vignesh joined the Atlantic bakery with great expectations of improving the business operation and increasing its profitability. Upon setting up a paper accounting system, he found that the profitability of the operation was not very good and somewhat erratic. Part of the problem stemmed from increasing competition. But Atlantic also lost money because of the large amounts of left over pastries in the stock that were simply thrown away. Vignesh decided to solve this problem by mixing the left over pastries in the stock with fresh ones and then selling the whole lot at a slightly reduced price. While this eliminated the waste and also benefited the customer by lowering the overall price, it also lowered the quality because some of the items bought by the customer were not as fresh as the others. Still, Vignesh reasoned that the lower prices would attract new customers while eliminating the profit draining waste. Is there an ethical problem here? What is it? Should Vignesh recommend that Atlantic tell its customers that some of its product is not fresh? Assume M Srinivas rejects Vignesh's proposal. What should Vignesh recommend to deal with the waste problem?

[Use theoretical details of the ethical issue of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Management Ethics and an ethical theory of your choice to discuss the case and answer the questions posed at the end of the case. You may use and apply theoretical detail of any other ethical issue that is relevant and listed in the course handout.]