HSS317: Ethics/Assignment-8/30-April-2020/20171059/CSE

1. Before taking the course, my ideas about Ethics revolved around 'moral principles', about what is right and wrong. To be very honest, I didn't think much before opting for the course because I have a particular fondness for philosophy and I love to contemplate on fundamental questions about life, reality and existence. Since Ethics is nothing but moral philosophy, I took it without hesitation. I thought the course would revolve around ideas of right and wrong conduct, which it certainly did. We looked at many great philosophers and how varying their opinions were about questions concerning human morality, which I had expected. I looked at some very interesting viewpoints which made me question a lot of aspects of my life, but my ideas around Ethics remained largely unchanged until the very end, when we entered the last module.
My ideas revolving around Ethics seemed to all render pointless when we read 'The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility' by Strawson. Strawson makes a very convincing argument that one can never be morally responsible one's actions. Although there have been many rebuttals to his argument, Strawson does seem to convince the reader that moral responsibility is indeed an illusion. And if it is, then Ethics and the entire study of moral philosophy is pointless as there would be no point in defining right and wrong conduct.

2. Yes, I personally felt that the course content was in fact **more than adequate** for just one semester. Of course, it would take years to actually delve into the depths of the ocean of Ethics, but the content covered ensured to try and touch upon all the various topics which made it really captivating. It would have been great to go more into applied ethics and apply theories to real life situations. We did that in the term paper, but that was just one application. Some exposure to say, military ethics, like what should the laws of a war be or how one should handle military prisoners. But there honestly wasn't that much time and we covered as much as was possible in the four months.

3. The most interesting for me was the impossibility of moral responsibility by Strawson (in close competition with Kantian deontology). It was honestly the most enchanting work I read throughout the course, and I'm especially glad it came at the end. Throughout the course, we looked at different perspectives about which action would be deemed morally desirable, **and then Strawson enters in saying that there is no such thing as moral responsibility!** His skepticism is very fascinating indeed and it was a great idea to bring this at the end of the course.
I honestly didn't find anything to be particularly boring, but if I had to pick one, it would have to be 'Ethics and Observation' by Harman. It was well written and Harman makes a gripping argument, but I found it a tad bit boring to argue against the existence of ethical facts.

4. **Yes, I do feel that the course could have spent some time discussing applied ethics.** That is precisely what I have mentioned in my second answer as well. Although it

would have been great to apply more of our ethical theories to real life scenarios, one cannot do that without first fully comprehending the ethical theories themselves. Hence, I feel it was essential to go through all the modules of the course instead of directly jumping onto applied ethics. Our assignments covered up for it though, as many of them had very thought provoking real life scenarios.

5. **No, certainly not.** A course which would primarily discuss the ethics of AI or technology would not just be a very interesting one, but also a necessary one for computer scientists and engineers. However, in my personal opinion, the general ethics course we had should necessarily be a prerequisite for a course like that. As I have pointed out in my fourth answer, **one cannot move on to applied ethics directly without comprehending the fundamentals first.** A general ethics course should be essential to complete, in my opinion, before moving onto a more specific one.

6. Yes, absolutely. **I think the most interesting part of the course were the assignments,** which were really thought provoking and engrossing. It had something to do with what was being taught in the lectures, but one had to think creatively to start answering them. They really made me think, and I learnt a lot from them. No, they were neither too easy nor too hard.

7. Yes, definitely! **We should definitely scrap VE, it was pointless.** The worst problem with VE was that it was based in the philosophies of a particular group of people (atleast for the group I attended). I personally felt it just 'taught' us what was right and conduct and **did NOT make us argue reasonably and decide for ourselves what is right and wrong.** That was the major flaw in the course. The Ethics course taught me to reason well and question the validity of arguments, which was missing in VE. Also, VE (atleast in my time) was not a very well structured course. Ethics, on the other hand, was extremely well structured and there was nothing in VE that wasn't done in Ethics. VE was more of a 'spiritual' course, like whether it is okay for us to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, or that we should always respect our elders. Some people may argue that these value cannot be taught in Ethics which is false. Ethics teaches us to argue systematically and reason for/against ethical dilemmas, which would help one to analyse whether it would be morally correct to drink alcohol, for instance. So no, **there is nothing in VE that cannot be done in Ethics.**

8. In my opinion, this question is highly dependent on one's capabilities. Personally, I'm not the most intelligent of people and it's often difficult for me to understand concepts without the help of a teacher. Some of my counterparts at IIIT are extremely smart and are able to figure out the concepts by themselves by just reading the textbook. I am able to as well, but I end up taking a considerably larger amount of time in doing so. Hence, attending lectures helps me understand better **because of the 'teacher' element and hence is always a better learning experience for me.**
   One might say then that 'watching videos' would suffice as it would have the 'teacher' element in it. But I would argue against that too, as it does not have a 'human' element.

There is something different about a proper classroom where students can interact with the teacher and ask doubts, which certainly lacks in remote lectures.

9. I think the use of both, Moodle and Teams was on point throughout the course! Moodle was used very productively, with all our assignments and reading material being uploaded there and also being used for submissions. With the commencement of the lockdown, we moved to Teams and that was used well too, with us being able to attend live lectures and ask questions. Of course, I still feel there can be no 'human' element in live lectures pertaining to my answer to the eighth question, but **I feel we made the best out of Teams and Moodle, both!**

10. I would be very interested in a course about **Metaphysics and Epistemology**. I love to contemplate about the fundamental nature of reality and start from the very basics. Thinking about space and time and the nature of our existence highly fascinates me and I would love to take such a course! I would also love to study the philosophy of religion and about the existence of God, since many philosophers in the past have tried to prove/disprove the existence of God, which would be pretty interesting to look at!