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Throughout my final semester in the College of Information Sciences and Technology, I have been focusing on the subjects of privacy and data protection. I realized I had an affinity for the subject as I found it to be closely related to another interest of mine: philosophy. The general use of privacy in daily interactions is omnipresent, so I want to focus my career largely around how privacy relates to the question of morals within technology between companies and their consumers. Philosophy leads to a general consensus of how people learn, act and make decisions. The effect shared knowledge has on decision making, and the ability to influence these decisions, is a very powerful asset which is why I believe privacy and data protection is of paramount importance in today's digital age. Globally, most consumers are not aware of how privacy and data collection have a direct impact on their decisions. Most privacy policies are largely disregarded by ordinary individuals, thus leading to more pertinent philosophical questions within commerce and technology sectors regarding privacy and data collection and ultimately to the question of "good" versus "bad".

The commerce industry has pivoted to a technological focus, realizing pertinent consumer information, such as background and interests, can be far easier to collect. Rather than leveraging physical means, such as in-store cameras and stock reduction, to analyze consumer and product interactions, companies now monitor online activity and collect more information than typical consumers are aware of. In general terms, data collection is permissible as long as some form of consent between the collector and the consumer exists. However, data collection consent is a handshake in which many consumers do not take the time to understand the full agreement and its ramifications, leading to personal data and activity being collected with limited knowledge of such to the consumer.

Of these handshakes, I believe I have been able to recognize three separate outcomes which outline a consumer's experience: 1) the clearly stated and fair handshake; 2) the unjust and top-heavy handshake; and 3) the unknown/forced handshake. Of these privacy handshakes, there is only one positive experience available to the consumer, as a clearly stated and fair privacy agreement is neither hard to understand or forced upon the consumer like the opposing two agreements. These agreements, and the underlying philosophy of such, is where I would like to focus my future interests.

By labeling three separate outcomes of a handshake, it allows us to examine the philosophical nature of each, further illustrating the moral responsibility of the commerce industry. I strongly believe anything related to the data protection principles of lawfulness, fairness, and transparency, constitutes what is morally "good" in privacy. Conversely, actions conceived to manipulate or gain advantage over the consumer, are "bad" in a moral sense. Collection of dark patterns which aim to guide consumers into actions they may not want to take, or uses of information dominance to get consumers to purchase more than they budget, can be viewed as acts of greed and deception, permissible only through their consumers' ignorance in data privacy. Unfortunately, most consumers just click "I Agree" without regard to the consequences of the handshake, something I feel is imperative to see corrected.

As I begin my professional career, I will champion the approach that each decision made in the field of technology requires much philosophical thought for framing the related privacy outcomes. As the commerce industry is specifically being scrutinized for their approach to data collection, I find it an absolute necessity to inform, educate and protect consumers on how privacy should keep them safe, not put them in unfavorable situations.