

Under the relatively idealistic ethical framework of Kantianism, large corporations like Apple and Microsoft should not compromise with authoritarian regimes on web censorship but should instead work to help the peoples under such governments to illegally work around their government's censors. Compromising with such governments has caused issues for them internally and externally, and for good reason [1]. While the companies may argue that restricted internet is better than no internet, the Kantianism framework claims that comparison of consequences is irrelevant, but rather "something in the nature of the action makes it intrinsically wrong [1]." Here the actions of the companies break the categorical imperative of Kantianism, treating the people living under the censoring government as a means to the end of increasing profit and influence in that part of the world. Unless it can be unequivocally proven that the companies' motive is altruistic and not for profit, this alone makes the action of compromising with the authoritarian government inherently ethically wrong. Prior behavior of the companies seems to contradict their actions as well, for example the case of Apple refusing to decrypt a terrorist's phone for national security purposes, citing individual rights and customer privacy [2].

An easy counter argument to the Kantian viewpoint is the consequentialist framework of act utilitarianism. The focus of an action's morality shifts from the action itself and onto the consequences of said action [3]. Operating under the assumptions that a person with access to the internet will be happier than if they were actively kept from having access to the internet, if the company chooses to not provide any internet out of a moral opposition to the restriction of the web, the entirety of the population will have no increase in happiness. Comparitively, if the companies were to morally compromise with the government, the people would have access to some form of internet, however restricted, and would therefore be happier than if they didn't. Act utilitarianism claims this comparison of no extra happiness to a bit of extra happiness makes the decision to work with the authoritarian governments ethically right.

While it may seem like no resolution can come from an argument between a consequentialist and a deontological viewpoint, Kantianism has an answer to this utilitarian counter argument. Even if the companies were entirely altruistic, agreeing to censor the internet not for profit but so the public might have some access to the web, the companies are still actively hindering the public's Kantian "enlightenment [4]." Rational human beings "are entitled to freely express their thoughts, and to receive the expressions made by others [1]." Therefore the public is inherently entitled to exercise their own reason, unrestricted by censorship. The utilitarian view also doesn't take into account the less tangible "harm" done to people who consume censored material, effectively "damaging" and altering their worldview without their permission.

Due to the inability to prove the corporations' true motives in compromising with authoritarian governments and the restriction to rational decision-making censorship creates, companies cannot ethically work with authoritarian governments under Kantianism.

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