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CYS 323

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5/3/25

**Should We Regulate the Ethics of the Internet?**

The online world is a fixture of modern life, and online environments are influencing how we learn, work, and socialize. But as the internet develops, so does the ethical dilemma of its use. To me, the number one concern is about privacy and transparency, particularly on social media. People post their lives without realizing the extent to which their content may be monitored, saved, and shared. At the same time, organizations use methods to obscure how they use someone else's data. There is a lack of transparency and consent surrounding privacy, surveillance, and control. As someone who cares about privacy, I feel we need ethical regulation to protect individuals from being exploited, and I feel like technology should be for the users, not the other way around.

One of the experiences that brought home the need for ethics online is when I witnessed someone get doxxed while they engaged in what appeared to be a pretty benign online debate. The issue being argued over was as trivial as cookie flavor. One mentioned they enjoyed Lofthouse cookies, and somehow this escalated to other people posting their address online. It showed how soon the online group can turn foul and how rapidly personal information may be used as ammunition against anyone. Something which was initiated jokingly violated some individual's personal space and security. It left me thinking about how websites regulate individual actions and keep people safe from such harassment. It also prompted me to remind myself that ethics regulation is not merely policy-making; it is about protecting humans from real damage (Calo, 2012).

Social media companies have a big responsibility when it comes to managing content and the protection of users' information. On certain fronts, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have increased efforts on moderation tools and rules of content. Nevertheless, few companies enforce standards in every situation. X (formerly Twitter) has struggled with the types of content that ought to be accessible to everyone to see, raising concerns about hate speech, disinformation, and abuse. Although some will argue that these companies are capable of self-regulation, examples such as these make me skeptical of how effective that is. Ethical standards shouldn't be left to company discretion alonethere should be policies in place that can be enforced to protect users no matter what platform they're on (Tavani, 2016).

To keep my online life private, I am cautious about what I share. I avoid posting my own photos or personal details, and I verify that the people I interact with and follow are individuals I know in real life. This is in trying to limit the possibility of my information being misused or passed on to the wrong people. Though it's not an ideal solution, it makes me feel in control in a digital space that can sometimes seem out of control. But I wish there were more obvious, site-wide safeguards so individuals wouldn't have to rely on individual prudence to keep themselves safe. Moral regulation can fill part of that gap by forcing sites to put users first and foremost and obtain consent at a more profound level (Floridi, 2013).

If I could implement one rule across all websites and apps, it would be to explicitly prohibit harmful content of any kind. While it may seem broad, the reality is that harmful content comes in many formsviolence, harassment, misinformation, and exploitation. It will spread with ease if platforms do not have strong safeguards in place. I remember the early days of YouTube when offending or disturbing videos were not as policed, and it was a dangerous site for young viewers with no restrictions. Today, there are still sites that do not do a good job of filtering such content. Having a strict moral policy against harmful content could help make the online environment safe for everyone, and it is a key step towards making the internet more responsible and human-oriented (Gillespie, 2018).

Looking to the future, I think the solution will be hybrid governance, in that it develops an approach that combines light regulation with ethical education and an understanding of corporate responsibility. Astier (2005) advocates for coordinated international governance to regulate the internet because, absent a set of common ethical norms, all individual initiatives will be harmful. In addition to legal systems, platforms, if possible, should be incentivized or required to design ethical use systems where ethical norms are the basis. This includes privacy controls to make access to personal information more open, transparency in data collection and distribution practices, and transparent manipulation of content moderation. Van den Hoven (2008) advocates for moral methodology, meaning an ethical approach that is flexible and adaptive to changes in technology. This is an ethic that engages ethicists, developers, policy makers, and users in ongoing conversations about ethical behaviour instead of applying standards or rules. Calluzzo and Cante (2004) also comment on the importance of software developers' and users' ethical awareness, and suggest that computer science and engineering student courses and companies should be leaders in ethical internet use.

The internet is the best and worst of human nature, and it is an incredibly potent tool. It has altered the way we live and communicate, but it has also opened the door to deep ethical challenges from information exploitation to content vulnerability. As we continue to integrate into the digital age and further into all aspects of life, we must consciously strive for ethical stewardship. This stewardship needs to be viewed as a system of protection for individual rights and the rights of the public. Given the scale and sophistication of the internet, this calls for adaptability, coordination, and an overarching sense of joint accountability to find a balance between individual freedom and responsibility.

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