

CS/PHIL 801 Discussion Prompt Response

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Response to Prompt for Module # 9 on topic Working for War

The non-profit has successfully installed the plug-in on college campuses across the U.S. Make a detailed utilitarian argument about whether or not this is ethically permissible. The goal here is to identify several parties involved, describe how their happiness is affected and give some rough values for how they are affected. Do some speculative math (assign values from -10 to +10 and multiply by the number of people that are involved).

I think on average the college attendees and faculty are not affected by this plug-in because they won't would not see a difference on whether they are being surveillance or not. Although, if someone is aware of this plug-in they may abuse it and truly be holding innocuous conversations and benefit from the plug-in. Therefore, I think the result to an average score of about 18,000,000 for the entire campus.

On the other hand, the government employees eavesdropping would be wasting a significant amount of time working through invalid threats and they may miss some of the truly innocuous behaviors. This being said, I think that the average score of the government employees would result somewhere around a -80,000.

Thus, the overall value would result to about 17,920,000. Therefore, the utilitarian argument would state that the plug-in is clearly ethically permissible because the overall happiness is significantly outweighed.

How would a Kantian Deontologist respond to the Utilitarian? Or, How would they approach the problem in general? Create a maxim and identify whether it is a) universalizable and b) see if you can identify whether it seems problematic for other uses of technology

I think a probable maxim in this case would be "do not invade privacy". From a deontologist perspective, this maxim would agree that the plug-in is morally permissible to be installed because it would help protect individuals from being monitored by the government. I do not think that this maxim is universalizable because I do think it is morally permissible to monitor persons who are a threat to society.

I do not understand what section 'b' is trying to ask as far as other uses of technology. From my understanding of the question, I do realize that the plug-in would most likely only be available on computers and would therefore not be applicable for phones and other devices like smart watches and tablets. This being said, the government could still easily monitor the public through other devices.