

CS/PHIL 201 Discussion Prompt Response

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Response to Prompt for Module # 5 on topic Data, Location, and Voice Assignment

How do you feel about the information collected in your timeline? If you feel the data collected has been collected nefariously, explain why using two moral theories. If not, how much data, or what type of data would need to be collected to be morally impermissible? Again, evaluate using two ethical theories.

I feel that my data that was collected was not collected nefariously. It was interesting to hear what data was being collected on my group members. When I installed Chrome as my browser and set it up as my default browser, I was very cautious and aware of the settings and questions that the prompts were asking. I learned that a lot of my data was not being tracked and analyzed compared to my teammates. For example, my Google account did not track my data, while it did for other team members. Thus, the tacking information did not make a difference, whether good or bad, because it did not have an influence on me.

People with the deontologist moral theory may state that the data collected does not interfere with their 'moral code' because the act of collecting the data does not interfere with any right. Although there is some grey area in this scenario, the data that is being collected, tracked, and analyzed has been accepted and approved by the user within the user terms. Thus, someone who followed this ethical theory would agree that no right is being broken and no wrongful act is occurring because users are accepting these terms.

Utilitarian ethics would also argue that this data collection does not breach their code of ethics because the overall benefit of the collection maximizes the happiness of those involved. Both parties, the individual and the organization are benefitted from the collection. The user benefits from the data collection because Google uses its algorithms to better serve the user. Google benefits from the data because it can autonomously sell it to ad agencies and use it for data analytics within its various products.

These are some reasons that show that the data collection and analytics that Google is collecting can be seen as ethical.

Play devil's advocate. What reasons speak against your analysis? What does the third ethical theory say? Do your best to give some compelling reason as to why/how companies can morally collect their users data.

Most people would argue that the way Google is collecting data is immoral. Many people believe that Google collects an excess amount of data that is unnecessary. Google has also been known to sell this data autonomized to other companies, such as ad companies. Furthermore, with all of the collected data and tracking, bad actors could either steal the private data, or possibly buy it.

The virtuous ethical theory would argue that the information that was collected is immoral according to its rules and standards. The information that Google is keeping on its users would be seen as an unvirtuous act because someone of virtue would not be collecting the vast amount of private data on its users. They would also likely argue that Google selling this information is unethical and not the virtuous thing to do.