**Module 2: Critical Thinking**

**Strict Kantianism**

Software development often strives to innovate old ideas. However, sometimes morality becomes a bit gray(instead of black and white) when innovation takes place. Strict Kantianism states that morality and virtue are universal [1]. Therefore, something is wrong no matter what the circumstances are. Things are right or wrong, they are black or white, there are no exceptions for something in a gray area. For example, murder is wrong even in the case of self-defense. Thus bringing us to the question, should software development strive for innovation? Is it morally right to innovate no matter what the cost? Perhaps innovation is morally right no matter what.

A lot of recent innovations have been coming in the form of machine learning and artificial intelligence(AI). To make these innovations, AI requires a lot of data to properly train itself. Data can come from essentially anywhere. Normally, the data is coming from the users. Therefore, vast amounts of user data is being used to train AI for the users. Which in-turn innovates platforms for the user experience. However, do users want their data to be used by software engineers to train AI models?

According to an article written by Newsroom “People may consent to the use of their personal data, without being sufficiently aware or informed of the nature and extent of potential implications.” [2]. Companies are getting consent to harvest their user’s data by having them simply check a box on their platforms. The problem is there is often tons of fine print that people are agreeing to without reading the fine print. At which point companies can legally use their data for anything stated in the fine print. However, even though it may be legal, is it morally right?

Companies using sneaky tactics to acquire data legally may not be morally correct because it is not in the best interest of the users. It is not in the best interest of the people when people are feeling cheated out of their personal data. Which is universally unjust and thus morally wrong of the companies. However, an argument some try to make is companies are simply using the data to create a better experience for the user.

Users love when innovation leads to exciting new products to try out. Using personal data to create new innovative products is the job of a company. Therefore, anything they do towards building such new products is morally correct. Why would users want to hold back their data when it helps produce the new products they love. For example, “Facebook and other social media was designed to gather data and collect social profiles of people’s lives in terms it connected the world and made platforms for people to share their voice that they may not have had before.” [3].

With both sides having compelling arguments it is hard to decide which one is morally correct. One side states data mining user information is morally wrong no matter what. The other side states data mining being used to innovate and create new products for the users is morally correct because it benefits the users. Under the shroud of strict kanatism I believe the use of sneaky data mining is morally wrong no matter what. I believe it is morally incorrect because it starts by tricking the users into legally, but not fully aware of, attaining their personal data. Therefore, with strict kantianism taken in consideration, data mining is morally wrong.

**References**

[1] Kantian ethics. Corporate Finance Institute. (2023, October 7). https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/esg/kantian-ethics/#:~:text=Kant%20advocates%20a%20stringent%20notion,the%20case%20of%20self%2Ddefense.

[2] *Should you know (or care) how your data is being used before you consent?*. UNSW Sites. (n.d.). https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2020/08/should-you-know--or-care--how-your-data-is-being-used-before-you

[3] FZE, B. B. (2023, November 6). *Arguments for and against Data Mining*. UKEssays. https://us.ukessays.com/essays/information-technology/arguments-for-and-against-data-mining.php