

In a world that is becoming increasingly digital, consent becomes more important than ever. As individuals, we are rarely aware of the extent to which our online behaviors and personal preferences are being tracked, analyzed, and used to influence our choices. Cookies are collecting our data for brokers, who are then selling that data to the highest bidder, who then use it for whatever purpose they chose. It's crucial that individuals have the opportunity and the understanding to make informed decisions about what data they are willing to share. Especially in the context of data harvesting which uses that data to feed algorithms designed to predict our needs. These conclusions are then used to manipulate us, and heavily impact our emotional response. Without informed consent, people are vulnerable to this manipulated, unknowingly changing their behaviors to fit someone else's idea of normal or ethical. From my perspective this is tantamount to a massive experiment.

The most important limitation for the harvesting of information is consent. Something that is often granted without fully understanding what is being relinquished. I know I have never personally read a terms-of-service agreement nor have I read an amended term-of-service agreement. A study published in the Digital Journal shows that about 1% of us actually read them (1). The rule of thumb I have adopted, if it's free, you are the product. If you do not want to be a product, you should have that option. When you are agreeing to personalized experiences, the strings attached to that experience should be transparent.

As we become increasingly dependent on technology, our day to day lives are interconnecting with digital platforms regardless of our level of engagement. While modern technology excels at conveniences, such as smart phones, communications, mapping tools, and

other efficient services, it still introduces ethical concerns, particularly when it comes to individual privacy and the way personal data is manipulated.

While I do have a moral objection to the mass collection of data from un-consenting people, the collection of that data should be from a wide range of sources. This is essential in creating a more realistic and unbiased view of reality, as seen in the story of the blind men and the elephant. Without the complete picture, each man's perception is limited, correct from their perspective, yet wrong overall, to what they are able to interact with. Similarly, if data is collected only from narrow, isolated sources, it can lead to skewed and incomplete views of reality. If all the privacy focused individuals on the planet were able to remove their consent for machine learning, their perspective would be essentially removed from what is becoming a collective conscience.

From a Christian worldview, there is a clear call for transparency, truth, and respect for the dignity of individuals. Scripture reminds us that humans see in part, and it is only through God's guidance that we can come to understand the fullness of truth (1 Corinthians 13:12). Technology, if used honestly and ethically, has the potential to help us see the bigger picture by integrating diverse sources of information. However, this must be done with informed consent and a commitment to serve others rather than exploit them for profit. Just as the blind men needed humility to recognize their limited perspectives, designers of algorithms must also acknowledge their limitations and approach their work with ethical responsibility. Ultimately, the Christian worldview emphasizes stewardship and care for others, guiding us to develop technology that provides a fuller, more truthful view of the world while respecting privacy and individual rights.

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