

Should Google use Ad Tracking or Targeting?

Introduction:

Companies like Google are using our search engine results to send us ads targeted towards hoping for an impulse buy or using what we search against us. Tracking of our search engine results and IP address by Google raises concerns of possible violations of privacy by many people. People such as Steven Aftergood state that we are beginning to have a higher lack of privacy and our data.¹ Everything from our web browsing data, search engine results, and cookies are being tracked by both the government and third party sites to either send us targeted ads or to have something against us in the case if we ever get into any trouble.² Deborah Hurley states, "We need to take account our human rights when it concerns our privacy."³ The purpose of this paper is to bring about awareness of this current issue through a logical, yet philosophical standpoint.

Premise of Kant's Arguments:

1. According to Kant lying is morally impermissible meaning that if you lie, even to do good, it isn't justified.⁴
 - a. By giving your private information to Google or trusting in the government, you believe what you do is freedom of privacy, yet they are using the information to track you or be held against you which isn't only lying but entirely immoral.
2. All humans are born with dignity, logical and rational reasoning.
 - a. This leads to the question if what if one of the people Google were tracking had an irrational way of thinking? Does it count as morally impermissible?

¹ Scott, Jeramie, and Julia Horwitz. *Privacy in the Modern Age: The Search for Solutions*. Ed. Marc Rotenberg. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 19-23. Print.

² Cockburn, Andrew. *Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-tech Assassins*. 1st ed. New York: Henry Holt, 2015. Print.

³ Scott, Jeramie, and Julia Horwitz. *Privacy in the Modern Age: The Search for Solutions*. Ed. Marc Rotenberg. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 70-71. Print.

⁴ Mazur, Tim C. "Lying and Ethics." *Mark Kula Center for Applied Ethics*. Santa Clara University, n.d. Web. 19 July 2015.

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3. It is immoral to use another person as means to justify an end.⁵
4. End doesn't justify means is basically what Kant is trying to say:
 - a. If Google does something that benefits our safety yet invades our privacy then that would be immoral as they are taking away our personal freedoms as a human.
5. For every action there is a reaction so that must mean we must think logically even in the case of Hypothetical Imperatives.⁶
 - a. Should we be using google knowing that they track our data?
 - b. Is it a rational decision to have a gmail account knowing you are giving away personal information?
6. Kant argues to act only in the Maximum of the Universal law:
 - a. Act to treat humanity always as an end and never as a means
 - i. By google tracking your personal data, would they want the same thing to happen to them?⁷
 - ii. When they are lying about not collecting our personal data in the interest of themselves or the government, aren't they treating us as a means?
 1. This is why according to Kant lying is morally impermissible.
7. I believe that we as humans should be treated with dignity thus granting us certain rights to privacy and the freedom of how companies should use our information.⁸
8. Kant believes that we should only look at things through a formal aspect. This means that we have formal duties not related to consequences.
 - a. Granting our freedom can be looked at a formal argument

⁵ "Categorical Imperative | Philosophy." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 Oct. 2014. Web. 19 July 2015.

⁶ "Kantian Theory and Human Rights" <http://www.follesdal.net/ms/Follesdal-2014-Maliks-kant-hr.pdf> Reidar Maliks and Andreas Follesdal; Date Accessed: 7/19/2015.

⁷ Silverman, Jacob. "Big Data's Big Libertarian Lie: Facebook, Google and the Silicon Valley Ethical Overhaul We Need." Saloncom RSS. Salon Magazine, 26 Apr. 2015. Web. 19 July 2015.

⁸ McCallion, Jane. "Data Privacy Should Be a Human Right, Says EU." *Alphr*. Alphy.com, 14 Jan. 2015. Web. 19 July 2015.

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- b. You can't lie, a lie is always wrong therefore Google lying about not tracking us is unjust regardless of the results
9. We have a moral duty to treat someone in a just way, we can't do an injustice in order to do justice.
 - a. As I said before, there is no exception that Google should be invading our privacy as humans⁹
 - b. Even if you know that Google is invading our privacy or lying, it still won't make it right. That is the hypotheticals I talked about earlier.¹⁰
10. The internet was released to the public as unregulated, then regulating us through search engines like Google would therefore be a lie. ¹¹
11. A person can think through reason and therefore they can differ from right or wrong. Since a person can think through reason they know lying is wrong as it is not in accordance with the universal law. This means though we can differ from right or wrong it must constitute with the universal law of reasoning and rationality. ¹²
 - a. All humans must have pure reason to think through rationality as to not harm another being in accordance with the universal law.¹³
 - i. This ties in with us having goodwill

W.D Ross's take on this: According to Ross, companies have a moral duty to be honest. This would mean that Google needs to be honest and tell us which ways they use our information¹⁴ and how they are tracking our data.¹⁵ Without Google doing this, we are forced to use the internet in fear of what we write, say, search, etc. on the internet can come back to haunt you. That applies even if it was something 7 or 8 years ago.¹⁶ Ross would argue that we have a

⁹ Williams, Garrath, "Kant's Account of Reason", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/kant-reason/>.

¹⁰ "The Syllogism of Necessity." *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Marxists.org, n.d. Web. 20 July 2015.

¹¹ "The Birth of the Web." *CERN Accelerating Science*. CERN, n.d. Web. 20 July 2015.

¹² Silber, John. *Kant's Ethics: The Good, Freedom, and the Will*. Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 2012. 190-95. Print.

¹³ Allison, Henry E. "Commentary on Section Nine of Antinomy of Pure Reason." *Essays on Kant*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 15-17. Print.

¹⁴ Website: <http://donttrack.us/>

¹⁵ Flux, Elizabeth. "Google Maps Has Been Tracking Your Every Move, And There's A Website To Prove It." *Junkee*. Junkee.com, 14 Aug. 2014. Web. 21 July 2015.

¹⁶ Epstein, Robert. "Google's Gotcha Ya: 15 Ways Google Monitors You." *US News*. U.S.News & World Report, 10 May 2013. Web. 21 July 2015.

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prima facie duty to never treat people as a means. This means to treat people through moral obligation not moral judgement. Google's moral obligation would then mean to always be open, honest, and never lie regardless to where it leads the company as a whole.¹⁷

1. Ross is a deontologist¹⁸
 - a. His argument as mentioned earlier is the same as Kant in terms of never treating humans as means
 - i. This is why he is not a consequentialist
2. Ross believes that all humans have sensibility¹⁹
 - a. This ties in with humans having logical reasoning, goodwill, and rationality
 - b. This also means that we as humans should be treated as humans
 - i. Lying is the act of dishonesty or deception usually for personal gains
 - ii. Stealing involves taking something that doesn't belong to us
 - c. Google stealing your personal information and lying about is treating humans as a means and not morally permissible
 - i. Therefore, regardless of the consequences both Kant and Ross would argue that Google is doing something morally objectionable.

The Premise of Peter Singer's Argument:

1. Peter Singer states that if two issues coincide with each other, you have a moral obligation to consider the consequences and think of which one will have the better outcome.²⁰
 - a. This would mean that if Google used our information as a method of protecting us for example, than it would be morally right
 - b. This also means that you can treat someone as if they aren't human if you are providing better benefit as a whole
 - c. However, Google using our information to make themselves more secure rather than making us more secure would be morally impermissible
2. One can argue that since Google is spying on us, that is actually making us less secure in a sense rather than protecting us as a whole

¹⁷ "W. D. Ross's Moral Theory." *W. D. Ross's Moral Theory*. Department of Humanities: Michigan Tech University, n.d. Web. 21 July 2015.

¹⁸ "W. D. Ross." *Ethics in PR* - Wikispaces, n.d. Web. 29 July 2015.

¹⁹ Ross, W. D. "The Ideas and Sensible Things." *Plato's Theory of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1951. 221-24. Print.

²⁰ Singer, Peter. "The Triviality of the Debate Over 'Is-Ought' and the Definition of 'Moral'" *Utilitarian.net*. American Philosophical Quarterly, 1 Jan. 1973. Web. 22 July 2015.

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- a. Another person can argue, "What if a terrorist²¹ was searching how to build a bomb on the internet²², if we didn't track his search engine results, a catastrophe could have happened.
- b. However someone can also argue that people shouldn't be tracked if they are just normal people. Imagine you are searching for butt rash ointment and then suddenly you got third party results all over your search engine²³
3. Overall Peter Singer can argue that since Google is working with the Government to detect possible security threats through our search engine results that it is morally okay, however if you went by Kant's argument, it would be morally wrong and dishonest therefore not following ethical code.²⁴

The Deontological vs. Utilitarian Argument:

A Deontologist would argue that it is never okay to treat a person as a means but always as an end. This prevents you from dishonesty or lying to them for Moral Obligation. The Utilitarian argument would basically state that it is okay to treat someone as a means if the consequence would result in a more positive difference. A Deontologist would be a constructionist, while a Utilitarian would be a consequentialist.

1. Kant: What Google is doing is dishonest and we have a moral obligation not to lie.
2. Singer: If Google ends up lying and does a greater good then them lying is okay

My view on this would be more of a political argument. I believe that we have a right to the freedom of privacy and that the internet should be for public use. I also believe that the Government, Google, Social Media, etc. shouldn't be used against us in terms of our personal beliefs as it is freedom of speech as long as you aren't intentionally taking away the rights or freedoms of others.²⁵

1. This would be a constitutionalist argument
 - a. This would go under some philosophical views of thinkers such as John Locke

²¹ Bolan, Kim. "Fort St. John Man Arrested on Terrorism Charges." *Www.vancouver.sun.com*. Vancouver Sun, 11 July 2015. Web. 22 July 2015.

²² McPhee, Michele. "Son of Boston Police Captain Arrested as Possible Terrorist." - *12 News*. 12 News Now, 13 July 2015. Web. 22 July 2015.

²³ Koetsier, John. "Google Planning Its Own Ad-tracking Tech to Compete with Today's cookies." *VentureBeat*. VentureBeat.com, 17 Sept. 2013. Web. 22 July 2015.

²⁴ Bach, Kent. "Self-Deception Unmasked." *Philosophical Psychology* 15.2 (2002), pp. 203-206.

²⁵ Waluchow, Wil, "Constitutionalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/constitutionalism/>.

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- i. We would then have to differ between liberalism and neo-conservatism when looking into arguments such as these²⁶
 - ii. Liberalism and Conservatism today are philosophically different then it was at Locke's time
2. This would go under the terms of political science and political philosophy

It is one Big Scheme:

The technology Google²⁷ uses involves Automatic Speech Recognition²⁸, Nonlinear Optics, Micro-Electronics, Infrastructure²⁹ systems³⁰, and Semiconductors to power a Multi-Billion dollar supercomputer whose electrical bill cost millions alone.³¹ They use this technology to not only power their databases but get paid more than the technological cost of this technology by third parties³² and the government when they get your private information. This same technology have been used in Computerized Warfare, as well as Cyber Security³³ and Big Data systems.

The Premise of Rawls:

1. Rawls is a political theorist who believes that society should be fair and just, however he thinks the way society has become is corrupt and cruel. ³⁴
2. Rawls would believe that we as humans should be treated equally
 - a. Since Google would probably not share their information with others, they shouldn't be collecting our information

²⁶ "John Locke." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 2009. Web. 22 July 2015.

²⁷ Brandt, Richard L. *The Google Guys: Inside the Brilliant Minds of Google Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin*. New York: Portfolio / Penguin, 2011. Print.

²⁸ Konar, Amit. *Artificial Intelligence and Soft Computing: Behavioral and Cognitive Modeling of the Human Brain*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC, 2000. Print.

²⁹ Steiber, Annika. *The Google Model: Managing Continuous Innovation in a Rapidly Changing World*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

³⁰ Stross, Randall E. *Planet Google: One Company's Audacious Plan to Organize Everything We Know*. New York: Free, 2008. Print.

³¹ Segev, Elad. *Google and the Digital Divide: The Bias of Online Knowledge*. Oxford: Chandos Pub., 2010. 60-65. Print.

³² McMorris, Brian. "Google: The Next Ponzi Scheme to Fail?" *Seeking Alpha*. Seekingalpha.com, 12 July 2009. Web. 23 July 2015.

³³ Long, Johnny. *Google Hacking for Penetration Testers*. Burlington, MA: Syngress, 2008. Print.

³⁴ Wenar, Leif, "John Rawls", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/rawls/>.

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- i. In a society that is free and fair, Google won't be needing to collect our personal data or our browsing history
3. All citizens should be of political equal and ultimately should have a balance of powers
 - a. Corporations using us, Government's controlling³⁵ us, and an Elite ruling³⁶ us would be unjust in society
 - b. We aren't treated with fairness by Google
 - i. Even Google's smaller ad publishers³⁷ or small developers³⁸ who use Google are cheated off their money without many noticing
 - ii. What Google is doing would be called an abuse of power³⁹, stealing⁴⁰, inequality and non-social fairness
4. Logically speaking, Rawls wouldn't be a Utilitarian when saying all humans should be treated equally, but he would be a Deontologist because he is saying that the Google CEOs should basically treat themselves the same way as the people.

Conclusion and my Opinions:

I think Google's main goal isn't to make the government more secure but just to make money and monopolize the market. This is further exposed by the way they have been treating publishers on their site as well as how they have been deleting high revenue generating apps for years without violations. Google overall is a corporation, but regarding what any philosopher

³⁵ Cukier, Kenneth Neil. "Who Will Control the Internet?" *Foreign Affairs*. 23 July 2015. Web. 23 July 2015. <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2005-10-01/who-will-control-internet>> .

³⁶ Snyder, Michael. "World Bank Whistleblower Reveals How The Global Elite Rules The World." *Global Research*. Center for Research on Globalization, 1 Feb. 2015. Web. 23 July 2015.

³⁷ "YouTube Gaming: Google Stealing Mobile Ad Revenue From YouTubers? (BO1 Gameplay)." *YouTube*. Tbits, n.d. Web. 23 July 2015.

³⁸ Helft, Miguel. "Meet Cyanogen, The Startup That Wants To Steal Android From Google." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 23 Mar. 2015. Web. 23 July 2015.

³⁹ "Google Steals Web Content for Ad Revenue | Incredible Bot." *Incredible Bot*. Incrediblebot.com, 10 Apr. 2015. Web. 23 July 2015.

⁴⁰ Stamper, Laura. "CHART: How Google Destroyed U.S. Print Media By Stealing All Its Ad Revenue [THE BRIEF]." *Business Insider*. Business Insider, Inc, 14 Nov. 2012. Web. 23 July 2015.

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says I believe in the deontological argument in this case. I believe that Google brought their way up the ladder through cheating, dishonesty, and stealing.⁴¹

I believe that overall Google's CEOs are fairly greedy.⁴² This is why many app developers turn to third party sites like FireFox or Opera's Mobile Store. Google wants to saturate an already competitive market either by weaving out enemies, making illegal ties, stealing from others, or even psychologically manipulating people into impulse buys.

I believe that Google has an agenda of globalization.⁴³ They have stolen our personal data for years. They have lied to us on how they are using our information. They have become so big that they can literally make their fanbase do almost anything.⁴⁴ Google also manipulates rankings and search engine results to saturate the market even more which is why SEO is a very competitive field and why reputation management is such a huge deal.⁴⁵

Why I agree with the Deontological Argument:

I believe that people have the given right to be treated as humans regardless of the situation. We should never treat persons as means but always as an end to themselves. I am a supporter of the Kantian theory when it comes to situations like these. Although I presented both sides of the argument, I believe I also exposed the dark side of Google or at least provided insight to it being a dominant market. People can argue a business is a business, and even if they are dishonest, that it correct in Business standards. However, I believe a good business should care

⁴¹ Dice, Mark. *Big Brother: The Orwellian Nightmare Come True*. San Diego, CA: Resistance, 2011. Print.

⁴² Vise, David A., and Mark Malseed. *The Google Story*. New York: Delacorte, 2005. Print.

⁴³ Cleland, Scott, and Ira Brodsky. *Search & Destroy: Why You Can't Trust Google Inc.* St. Louis, MO: Telescope, 2011. Print.

⁴⁴ Assange, Julian. *When Google Met WikiLeaks*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

⁴⁵ Assange, Julian, Andy Müller-Maguhn, Jacob Appelbaum, and Jérémie Zimmermann. *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*. New York: Or, 2012. Print.

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about who they serve and treat people as people.⁴⁶ This is regarding whether how large or how small they may be.⁴⁷

Quotes on Liberty:⁴⁸

1. "Give me Liberty or give me death", Patrick Henry
2. "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his soul", God
3. "I'm a lover of my own liberty, and so I would do nothing to restrict yours.", Gandhi
4. "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.", Benjamin Franklin

Bentham on Liberty⁴⁹:

1. Bentham would argue that liberty can only be obtained through the legal system.
 - a. This would mean we could end up gaining certain liberties by losing certain liberties for what may seem better in the current situation⁵⁰
 - b. This would also mean that he is saying the opposite of those I just quoted⁵¹
2. Bentham would be in support of treating people as means if it can make the current situation better so he would be a utilitarian at the end.

What is Liberty?

Liberty is essentially our rights as humans. We think of ourselves through logical reasoning, rationality, and good will. We as humans must never be treated as a means according to the

⁴⁶ Biro, Meghan M. "Are You A Character-Based Leader?" *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 30 Sept. 2012. Web. 23 July 2015.

⁴⁷ Rotimi-Sosanya, Lola. "30 Motivational Quotes by Marcus Lemonis, Host of CNBC's The Profit." *TIPS ON STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS*. Inspire the Entrepreneur, 29 Mar. 2014. Web. 23 July 2015.

⁴⁸ "Liberty Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. Xplore, n.d. Web. 28 July 2015.

⁴⁹ Jeremy Bentham." The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics. 2008. Library of Economics and Liberty. 28 July 2015. <<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/bios/Bentham.html>>.

⁵⁰ "Bentham on Liberty." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. University of Tennessee at Martin, n.d. Web. 28 July 2015.

⁵¹ "Bentham on Human Rights and Liberty." *D5.4: Anonymity in Electronic Government: A Case-study Analysis of Governments? Identity Knowledge: Future of IDentity in the Information Society*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 July 2015.

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Deontological argument. This would mean we should never have to lose privacy or have our data stolen without our consent. The Utilitarian argument may seem tempting, but in my opinion, it is history repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

In regards to this paper: How do we know Google is Spying on us?

According to the book, "The Internet Election", during 2004, 63 million people used the internet for political information, 43 million used email to discuss politics, and 13 million people used the internet to make campaign contributions or to volunteer for their selected political organization.⁵² My question would be, how would authors and prospective researchers know statistics like this unless we are being tracked through the internet?

If you look at the website Wikileaks or articles on Edward Snowden⁵³, you would know that the government has been using these types of technologies: Search Engine results, cookies, web data, etc. to track us. You would also know that Google executives have had many insider meetings with the White House since Obama took office.⁵⁴ Something doesn't seem right, and we can obviously make somewhat of an informed conclusion.

Back to the Honesty Argument:

1. As I mentioned earlier, many Deontologist would agree that lying isn't justified
2. Google not being very transparent about these certain meetings can indicate dishonesty or something happening behind closed doors
3. If they weren't doing anything wrong then why is it revealed that the NSA have been coincidentally been using this same type of technology?
4. A Utilitarian would state that if the government is doing this for our safety or to make us more secure than it may be okay.

⁵² Williams, Andrew Paul, and John C. Tedesco. *The Internet Election: Perspectives on the Web in Campaign 2004*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. Print.

⁵³ Harding, Luke. Introduction. *Edward Snowden: Geschichte Einer Weltaffäre*. Bonn: Bpb Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung, 2014. N. pag. Print.

⁵⁴ Mullins, Brody. "Google Makes Most of Close Ties to White House." *WSJ*. The Wall Street Journal, 24 Mar. 2015. Web. 29 July 2015.

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- a. However, a deontologist or even a libertarian⁵⁵ would argue that us losing our security can't justify gaining more security.
- b. They would also argue that it is wrong to trust people who have been lying to us because we are trusting someone treating us as a means

The politics of things:

There is a reason why this is such a controversial topic today. The argument would fall into politics. Essentially Liberalism vs. Conservatism. Utilitarians such as Bentham, Mills⁵⁶, and Singer would be more of modern day liberals. Kant and some of the other deontologists that I mentioned would take more of a modern republican or libertarian approach.

This would go into the constitutionalist argument, our given rights and treating each other in accordance with the universal law. People such as Ronald Reagan (a founder of modern conservatism), would argue that, "Liberalism is all about power, control, and enslavement; their primary objectives are of themselves and not of the American people".⁵⁷

A conservative would argue that:

1. Google would take a Utilitarian approach⁵⁸ to things
2. They are more like modern day liberals
3. They are dishonest and don't care about the perceptual benefits of the American people.
4. Google doesn't consider Human Dignity (In terms of the right to privacy), or consider the negative impacts they are creating for us.⁵⁹ They are that of liars.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Morse, John T. Afterword. *Benjamin Franklin*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898. N. pag. Print.

⁵⁶ Mill, John Stuart, and J. B. Schneewind. "Bentham." *Mill's Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Collier, 1965. 240-72. Print.

⁵⁷ Reagan, Ronald, Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner. Anderson, and Martin Anderson. *Reagan: A Life in Letters*. New York: Free, 2003. Print.

⁵⁸ Bykvist, Krister. "Chapter Five: Utilitarian Aggregation." *Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2010. 57-62. Print.

⁵⁹ Huber, Wolfgang, and Brian McNeil. Preface. *Ethics: The Fundamental Questions of Our Lives*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. N. pag. Print.

⁶⁰ Schneier, Bruce. "The Evolution of Cooperation." *Liars and Outliers: Enabling the Trust That Society Needs to Thrive*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley, 2012. 27-41. Print.

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Final Conclusion: Overall this topic is a fairly controversial issue but I would have to agree with the conservative side on this politically or the deontological argument and I hope I refuted the Utilitarian, Liberal, or Progressive claims throughout this paper.