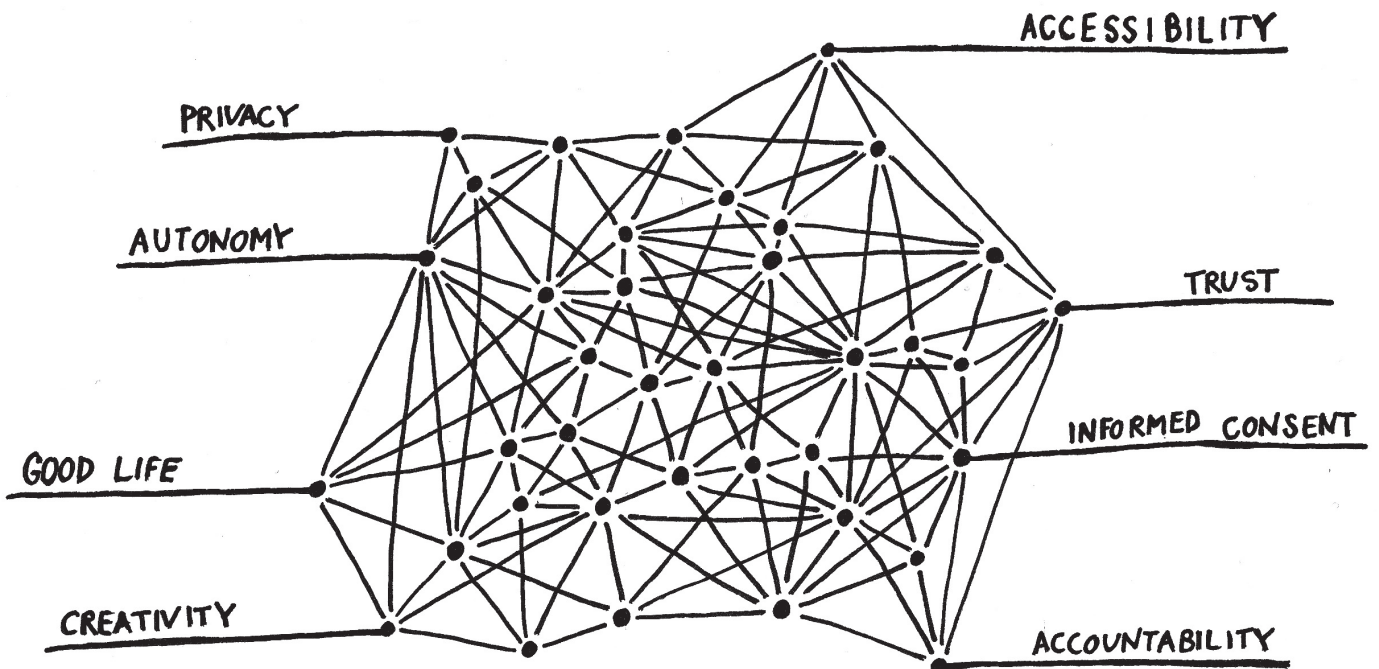


D a t a

E t h i c s

D e c i s i o n

A i d



Handbook

Assessing **ethical issues** with regard to
governmental **data projects**

Disclaimer

This 'Data Ethics Decision Aid' (DEDA) has been developed by the Utrecht Data School and Utrecht University.

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DEDA - Version 3.1
June 2020

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Utrecht, 2020.

As DEDA is being used, we continue to explore ways to improve it. Changes may be implemented in future editions. If you have used the DEDA and have suggestions for improvements, feel free to contact us. You can share your thoughts via email to **info@dataschool.nl**. We appreciate your feedback.

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Introduction

Why DEDA?

Big data, algorithms and new methods of analysis all promise benefits for public management and government policy. These means can enable a wide range of salutary developments, from smart cities to improved economic welfare on a large scale. But such opportunities, unfortunately, also come with risks that can easily be overlooked. In the long run, such risks often lead to well-intentioned initiatives producing bad outcomes. Some data projects, for example, have resulted in court cases, while others have conflicted with guidelines for favourable public policies.

Companies and governments have often been the target of public indignation because of the way they gather, use and share data. In response, several laws and regulations have been altered and the European Union has increased its fines for privacy infringement in order to encourage and enforce the responsible use of personal information. Aside from privacy, several other problems must be considered in any data project. For instance, datasets may have been obtained from questionable sources or their information used out of context. The datasets, models and algorithms can be inherently biased or reinforce particular biases. Moreover, there may be conflicts of interest between commercial companies and public institutions. Sometimes data-driven policies lack critical reflection on their social impact. In short, data projects have entered grey areas that present dilemmas to which laws and regulations have no immediate answer and that require ethical reflection. Guidelines for ethical decision-making can help us make morally sound decisions regarding data projects.

The Data Ethics Decision Aid (DEDA) is a tool that contributes to the assessment of the ethical issues at stake in any data project and helps develop a sense for conflicting values in such projects. DEDA also creates and raises awareness

concerning (public) values that may be affected by data projects and can be used to document the ethical decision-making process. Developed in close cooperation with data analysts from the municipality of Utrecht, DEDA aims to aid in the responsible use of data management, models, algorithms and related issues.

Aim

This handbook should be used as a supplement to the DEDA poster. You can use the handbook when needing further explanation about concepts or when seeking to delve deeper into a question. Some questions are accompanied with examples.

Use of the Handbook

1 This handbook complements the DEDA poster. On the poster, questions are clustered by colour. The questions are methodically structured to guide the user through the data-related considerations (blue) and general considerations (green). Each cluster is given further explanation in this handbook. You can use post-its to write down answers and action points on the poster and to collect responses.

2 In the cluster with data-related considerations, you can skip over questions not (yet) relevant for your project's current phase. However, we recommend that you revisit these questions during the project if and when they become relevant. The general considerations focus on responsibility, communication, transparency, privacy and bias.

Note: When you cannot answer a question during the workshop because you need additional information, we recommend that you make answering that question an action point. You can also think of specific points of interest connected to that question.

3 The final section on the DEDA poster is centred on values. Based on the values that are important within your organization and to the team members, you can decide how to tackle ethical difficulties arising from your project.

DEDA aims to map the entire data project globally. When you conclude from DEDA that the project is making use of personal information, a PIA (Privacy Impact Assessment) should be conducted to analyse how one is collecting, using, sharing, and maintaining such information. In cases where the processing of personal information 'forms a risk for certain individual freedoms of the subjects', the GDPR states that a DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment) is a legal obligation. A DPIA aims to identify and mitigate the risks of the processing activities. For example, a DPIA must be generated when the data processing is conducted systematically to evaluate a person's personal characteristics ('profiling') or when sensitive information is processed on a large scale. The GDPR is active across Europe and accords with previous laws in the Netherlands that covered the use of personal information.

Questions

DATA RELATED CONSIDERATIONS ●

ALGORITHMS

Explanation

Algorithms process data to develop insights into particular phenomena. Guided by models, algorithms can ‘weigh’ certain data more heavily than other data. For example, there are algorithms that determine the number of available parking places in a garage and algorithms that evaluate who is or isn’t entitled to social benefits. Algorithms make use of mathematical models. These models sometimes seem value-free because they are based on numerical and statistical, but in fact they are hardly ever truly value-free.

Algorithms are mostly designed to pair certain numerical values with normative values such as ‘risk of fraudulent conduct’ or ‘unusual occurrence.’

Think, for example, of a neighbourhood with ‘smart’ street lanterns equipped with microphones. If one of these microphones register a sound louder than 130 decibels, a warning signal is transmitted to a police station. The warning signal provides information about the lantern’s location and suggests that the local police should visit the area of the lantern because an ‘unusual occurrence’ has been registered. A sound louder than 130 dB could indeed be the result of an unusual occurrence (such as a shooting) but it might also come from everyday sounds such as a popped balloon or construction work.

Because algorithms will increasingly inform our decision-making processes, it is important to understand how their output has been established. Algorithms should be subject to the best practices of transparency: they should be accessible to experts for testing and for the verification of their results. Governments should be able to explain the functioning of the models and algorithms they use. Such models and

algorithms are also subject to accountability standards and the guidelines of good public policy. Government institutions are ever more frequently being asked to account for the models and algorithms they employ. At times, it is unclear who owns a particular algorithm, and certain models and algorithms are not publicly available. In such cases transparent communication can be difficult or even impossible.

Further explanation about Machine Learning and Neural Networks

Machine Learning

Machine Learning is the domain that focuses on the development of (self-)learning computers. Such computers learn to ‘think’ and sometimes ‘act’ in a manner similar to the ways human beings do. Machine learning processes are designed to allow computers to autonomously improve their learning processes through an assimilation of ever more data and information, often based on real-life observations and interactions. Machine Learning and the techniques it employs form part of the field of artificial intelligence.

Neural Networks

Neural Networks are a Machine Learning mechanism in which a set of algorithms mimics the structure of neurons. This ‘deep learning’ process provides the foundation for the most human-like forms of artificial intelligence.

SOURCE

Explanation

It is important to check the source(s) of your data(sets). In cases of purchased datasets or outsourced data collection, the original context of the data collected may be difficult to determine.

When it comes to data collection, the idea that more data is better data is sometimes embraced. But this idea is problematic in instances where the collected data is not sensitive to a project's context. It is important to reflect upon whether the data gathered in fact suits a given project's aims. Bigger datasets do not always lead to research or inquiries of higher quality.

Along with concerns about volume, we should be cognizant that most data also have expiration dates. The GDPR contains regulations about storage limitations and the duration of data storage, but one should also be aware that some data have limited longevity. Ethical reflections about the data's origins should therefore begin with a consideration of the kind of data that would truly be necessary to achieve a project's aims and the length of time this data remains relevant to the matter at hand.

ANONYMIZATION

Explanation

Anonymization is the process whereby the identification of individuals based on personal information in the dataset becomes impossible. This process is irreversible.

One example of anonymization would be to change each of the social security numbers in a dataset to a random number, and then to delete the original numbers. Often a single step does not suffice for complete anonymization, since, in the same example, the random number linked to personal data would also have to not be connected to additional recognizable personal data such as given names and surnames.

As with anonymization, the **pseudonymization** of a dataset makes it impossible to identify individuals based on personal data. But here the process is reversible. In our example, the social security number is likewise replaced by a random number, but at least one person possesses the decryption key and thus can reverse the process and translate each random number back to the corresponding social security number. After deciphering the random numbers and restoring the social security numbers, first names and last names can be recombined with the correct personal data to re-establish the original dataset.

VISUALIZATION

Explanation

Some data projects require visualization of either the data it has used or the results obtained. Visualization can be done in many ways.

Here one reflects on the way that utilized data or expected outcomes will be visualized. Is the chosen way to visualize the best way, and what reasons might there be to choose a less obvious means of visualization? Can the visualization be incorrectly interpreted? Which styles and techniques have been chosen, and do these express particular biases or prejudices? Keep in mind that the same dataset, when visualized in various ways, may then be interpreted in different ways. Finally, it is important to realize that not all results are suitable for visualization.

ACCESS

Explanation

Access, depending on the context, can mean many things. Here we inquire into the access granted within your organization to its collected and archived datasets. This subject is relevant because not every dataset should be accessible to everyone, as when, for example, a dataset contains classified or personal information.

A second aspect to consider here is whether commercial or third parties might be interested in the data or datasets your organization possesses. Access by third parties may present ethical challenges that warrant careful reflection.

SHARING, REUSING AND REPURPOSING

Explanation

Some datasets may not only be of use for the data project you are currently working on but might also be reused for other projects. However, the data gathered for the purposes of one data project might not be appropriate for another, if the latter project has different aims. In such cases, the data might lose validity when used outside the original project's context.

Providing access to the data for everyone within a company or government, or providing open access (to anyone), involves several considerations. Easily accessible data could promote transparency and trust; yet trust might also be violated if it turns out that such wide access to the data was not appropriate.

In answering this section's questions, it might help to list the pros and cons of reusing data.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS



RESPONSIBILITY

Explanation

In general, responsibility corresponds to the codes of conduct governing your specific area of expertise, your organization or your specific position. The code of conduct for public servants in the Netherlands focuses on:

- Good governance
- Confidential use of information (such as providing protection for personal data)
- Responsible use of public resources
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest

The general principles are designed to sustain fair and responsible policies that consider citizens' interests. Data projects often have an impact on citizens' lives. Keep in mind that political parties, citizens, lawyers or activists can call upon their rights to enquire into your data projects.

COMMUNICATION

Explanation

Often communication is thought about only when things go amiss. To be able to inform the public about (earlier steps in) your decision-making process, it is important to have an idea about how this might be communicated. If the data scientist present during the workshop can explain the more technical decisions made during the project, does this same person, by default, explain these decisions to members of the media? Another consideration concerns what the project leader wants to communicate about the project. Consistent communication is essential not only within an organization but also with respect to external representation. Thinking about communication will help impart a message that conveys responsibility on behalf of your organization and might increase the trust of parties not involved in the decision-making process. It also helps to provide answers if external experts pose critical questions about the project.

TRANSPARENCY

Explanation

Governments may be held accountable by citizens, the media and political parties. Data projects can exert impact on public space, social interactions, socio-economic security and even civil rights. Therefore, transparency is an important theme for any data project.

With regard to data projects, transparency means that someone can provide an explanation for the dataset, its contents, origin and use. Additionally, someone should be able to explain the algorithms and models that have been employed to transform raw data into useful information.

When considering transparency, one may think as well about the necessary information which can, may or should be shared with citizens and experts to ensure that they can make informed considerations regarding their personal data or the particular data project as a whole.

It isn't always easy to be transparent. Models and algorithms may be so complex that they cannot (easily) be explained. Knowledge of statistics and data science is often necessary to understand what the algorithms and programmes do. In such cases, transparency may mean not that models and algorithms must be 'translated' to some easily understandable explanation but rather that they remain open to critical questioning.

Finally, it is wise to be aware that one can be too transparent. Excessive transparency with regard to a dataset could, for example, lead to data breaches and thus potentially to privacy infringements.

Explanation

Privacy is regarded as a fundamental right (and a requirement for the fulfilment of other fundamental rights such as freedom of expression). Because of the GDPR, data controllers that breach certain privacy-related obligations can be penalized with stiff fines. Even if it seems that certain people may not care about privacy – as when they freely share, for example, intimate details about their personal lives on social media – their right to privacy still stands. Privacy rights are essential to democracy if only because it is each person's own right to decide what kind of information to choose to share.

Explanation

Bias is a big problem in data analysis. A biased dataset, model or algorithm can produce results that diverge from the reality it is attempting to describe and represent. Existing biases are sometimes included in interpretations of datasets during data collection, analysis or storage, or in the decisions made on the basis of the data.

Types of bias

Confirmation bias

Everyone likes to be surrounded by like-minded people. This is why we and most of our friends share similar views. Confirmation bias is often abetted by cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance (as described by the psychologist B.F. Skinner is a mechanism that makes people more likely to ignore views that conflict with their own, even if such views are important and valid for the matter at hand. This inclination may cause trouble in the use of data, since it may lead to the avoidance or ignorance of significant external perspectives, divergent interpretations or relevant concerns.

Ingroup biases

Similar to confirmation bias, ingroup bias occurs because people are inclined to agree with the most dominant views in a particular group. Because of ingroup pressure, individuals who do not agree with the dominant view or have a gut feeling that it may not be right are more likely to remain quiet – they wish to avoid saying things that would be deemed stupid or that would put them on the ‘wrong’ side of the matter at hand. This kind of bias is problematic for data collection and analysis because it can potentially result in the invisibility of important insights from group members, insights that might otherwise have helped prevent possibly negative results in a given project.

Selection bias

The outcomes of your data collection, visualization or interpretation can be influenced by the information that you have gathered. This information might even have been misleading. Certain groups may be underrepresented or not represented at all; other groups might be overrepresented. What might seem objective may nonetheless be influenced by the kind of data used in the project. Random sampling, comparison groups and team talks can all diminish the risk of selection bias.

The feedback loop

In data projects, feedback loops ensure that a project's results, either intentionally or unintentionally, are somehow reused as new data. When this happens by accident, it could lead to negative consequences.

FINISH



FINISH

VALUES

Explanation for step 3

At the start of the workshop, you wrote down a few values you hold important. Gather them and reflect, by yourself, on your project. Do you think your values are represented in it, and if so, where can they be placed?

You may place each of your values on the poster at a spot you feel is representative of each value. For example, the value 'ownership' could be placed in the communication section or the source section. You might also feel that the entire project represents one of your values, and if so, you may place this value in the middle section.

Next, let each member of the team discuss whether the project represents the values they have written down, and if so, where these values should be placed on the poster. Likewise, when it is your turn, explain to your fellow team members why you feel your value is best represented where it is.

Some values might not be represented in or by the project. If not, discuss why you feel a certain value is not represented and whether you feel your value *should* be represented. If it should, then discuss how the project can be changed so as to incorporate your value. Finally, it may be that one or more of the values you have written down are not relevant to the project. 'Loyalty', for example, may not matter to a data project that, say, counts pedestrians in a certain area. In such instances, you may put the value on the side of the poster.

The project report

The DEDA poster, including all the answers and action points you have gathered, can be used as a foundation or as support for a report about the data project.

Answers and action points can provide guidance in accounting for any of your (ethical) decisions made throughout the project. The answers you have formulated will help you explain your decisions and, equally importantly, why you have opted not to do things differently.

In hopes of aiding such a report, the next pages feature information about the most commonly used moral theories. Some government institutions already use these moral theories in their ethical decision-making process. For other government institutions, these theories can help guide decisions about the ethical problems that have arisen during the workshop.

FINISH

MORAL THEORIES

Explanation for moral theories

Different moral perspectives offer different results.

The question ‘What is the right thing to do?’ is hard to answer. Different moral theories offer different answers to that question. Moral theory tries to offer systematic answers about what people should and should not do. The following pages of the handbook will discuss the most important ideas within moral theory. Keep in mind that each theory has a distinct set of sub-discussions and ongoing debates.

Moreel relativism

‘The rightness of any action depends on the society you live in.’

For moral relativists, moral decision-making processes are social constructs. Society decides what is good and what is bad, but in theory different, or even opposite, determinations might have been made. Moral relativism also holds that one’s personal moral code depends on the moral code of a culture, which in turn is understood as the array of social norms and values. An act seen as wrong in one part of the world could be right in another. Eating pork, for example, is morally wrong for Muslims, whereas Christians on the basis of their religious beliefs do not consider it to be problematic. Moral relativism opposes theories that assume the existence of absolute and universal moral or ethical values.

Moreel relativism and data

Privacy is a concept embedded within a venerable Western tradition. Western ideas about privacy focus on the individual and on categories that tell us something about that individual, such as intimate relationships with family and friends, secrets and (hidden) correspondence. Within non-Western traditions, the concept of privacy can have markedly different meanings. For instance, the Chinese word for privacy, *yinsi*, can be translated ‘what is hidden’ or ‘bad.’

Cultures change, and although privacy is ingrained within our traditions, a moral relativist could argue that modern culture no longer needs this concept since privacy’s relevance is now in decline. The phrase ‘I have nothing to hide’ is frequently given as a rejoinder to concerns expressed about governmental surveillance. Additionally, social media platforms such as Facebook continue to attract and retain users

despite their controversial privacy policies. The de facto abandonment of privacy in these contexts could be an argument in support of moral relativism.

Whether a situation or an act is a privacy infringement depends on the moral code of the society in which the situation or act takes place, according to the moral relativist.

Critique of moral relativism

Most critiques of moral relativism focus on the difficulty of defining culture. Can it be said, for example, that such a thing as Dutch culture even exists? Are we part of a Western culture? Is culture related to our religious heritage? Another point of critique is that a single person might be said to have different backgrounds. Which moral values do you hold if you grew up in the Netherlands, but your parents are from China? The moral relativist’s response to these criticisms would be to say that the difficulties in defining culture do not form a sufficient basis for denying that morality is shaped by culture and is constitutive of our norms and values.

Certain philosophical questions arise with regard to moral relativism as well. If we take moral relativism to mean that morality depends on culture, this view ignores the possibility that certain aspects of morality might derive from human nature. If we return to privacy as an example, we could argue that it is part of the biological or evolutionary aspect of human nature, and therefore should not be ignored. But were the moral relativist to take this into account, however, her position would be jeopardized. After all, moral relativism holds that considerations relevant for moral theory can be found in human culture, not in human nature.

FINISH

MORAL THEORIES

There is also the argument that no empirical evidence for moral relativism actually exists. What we perceive to be bad, other cultures might accept as morally sound. A certain tribe, to cite a classic example, murders all of its older members as soon as each turns fifty. In our eyes this practice is exceedingly bad, but the tribe's members regard these killings as good acts, since they believe the elders' bodies live on in the afterlife. In accordance with their worldview, it is thus salutary to kill their elders, a perspective that we find impossible to understand. We see here why evidence for moral relativity is so hard to provide: differences in morality within different cultures can be explained by the religion and history of that culture, but not necessarily through reference to any other moral framework.

Utilitarianism

'The greatest happiness for the greatest number.'

Utilitarianism mainly considers the consequences of a given action. An action is morally justifiable when it creates the greatest happiness for the largest number of people. Within this philosophical tradition, the concept of happiness has been described by a number of thinkers and scholars. Bentham and Mill both defined happiness as the absence of pain and the presence of pleasure.

Utilitarianism and data

Values like 'public safety' and 'privacy' are often in conflict. Dilemmas occur when one value prevails over another. From the utilitarian perspective, more value is assigned to the happiness of many (in this case, public safety) than to (individual) privacy. However, from the utilitarian perspective one could also argue that privacy is necessary for well-being. As such, the utilitarian approach could result in totally different outcomes. The utilitarian will try to weigh the arguments for and against a course of action by keeping in mind the greatest happiness for the greatest number, engaging in something like a cost-benefit analysis. It is important to note that utilitarianism counts each person involved in a certain dilemma as equally valuable. This means that each individual, and each group comprising the same number of individuals, is given the same value regardless of their social standing. In theory, then, the well-being of minorities could be ignored in favour of the well-being of the majority. A comparable line of argument can be made within the medical context, so that a utilitarian may decide to sacrifice one person so that this individual might serve as an organ donor to many who require these organs to continue their respective lives.

Critique of utilitarianism

A case often made against utilitarianism asserts that the idea of use or happiness is of little to no practical value. To determine what is best for the largest number of people, you would have to know all possible positive and negative outcomes for a particular action and be able to weigh them accordingly. Utilitarians have responded to this argument by introducing a set of rules that optimize such a weighing process (rule utilitarianism). However, this response is useless if we try to weigh the question of privacy versus public safety, because this dilemma is hard to quantify. However, when dealing with similar issues (by transparent means and through legitimate political institutions), utilitarianism might serve as a guiding moral theory in the development of a set of rules that may contribute to working with data in an ethically justifiable way.

FINISH

MORAL THEORIES

Virtue ethics

‘What would a good person do in this situation?’

Virtue ethics distinguishes itself from other moral theories because it focuses not on the question, ‘What is the right thing to do?’ but instead on the question, ‘What kind of person do I have to be to be able to do the right thing? What kind of character must I possess to make the right decisions?’

Virtue ethics was founded in Ancient Greece. Plato and Aristotle may be called virtue ethicists, in that they considered the kinds of characteristics (virtues) an individual needed to cultivate to be a good person. An example of a virtue is honesty. An honest person would tell the truth and abstain from lying. Other virtues are courage, generosity, moderation, authenticity, being funny and kindness. In cultivating virtues, practical wisdom enables a virtuous person to develop the skill to make the right decisions.

Virtue ethics and data

Professionals working with technology, like programmers, tend to be problem solvers. A focus on problem solving frequently leads to a predominantly utilitarian perspective, which often remains implicit. Some philosophers argue that virtue ethics might offer a solution for professionals who incline to adopting utilitarian perspectives. These philosophers do not mean that there should be no focus on concepts like privacy and informed consent. But attention should be primarily focused on the kind of environment that would allow professionals to develop the necessary data-wisdom to make decisions about their work’s impact. A virtuous data analyst would possess virtues like ‘respect for the sensitivity of personal data’ and ‘prudence and selectivity in the communication and sharing of data’. Professionals should receive training in

such virtues during their education or should be selected on the basis of whether they exhibit such characteristics.

Critique of virtue ethics

One of the main criticisms of virtue ethics is that unlike other ethical theories, it offers no overarching guidance. Instead of availing itself of a set of rules or principles, virtue ethics thinks of morality in terms of what a virtuous person would do. However, if you do not possess the virtue in question yourself, it can be puzzling to know what to do in a given situation.

Another argument against virtue ethics is that it is hard to explain why certain characteristics are virtues, while others are not. Aristotle presents some controversial ‘virtues’ in his work without always explaining why such a virtue is relevant in a particular situation.

It can also be said that virtue ethics is a naive theory, at least with respect to hierarchical situations like those often found at companies and institutions. Should each employee be virtuous? Or is it enough for managers to be virtuous, with the other employees conforming to their superiors’ behaviour? If we frame the question thus, we diverge from virtue ethics, which promotes the cultivation of virtues in all people.

Kantianism

‘Our conduct should be guided by (certain) universal principles.’

Immanuel Kant developed a widely known moral theory based on a principle he named the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative holds that an action is right if you would want everyone in your situation to choose to do that same thing. Because humans are capable of rational thinking, they can use the categorical imperative to guide their conduct.

The above formulation is the most widely known variant of the categorical imperative. A different formulation holds that we should use people never merely as a means to an end but rather, simultaneously, as an end in themselves. This formulation focuses on respect for the dignity and autonomy of other people. According to this variant of the categorical imperative, it is immoral to manipulate other people or to hinder them from achieving their goals.

Kantianism and data

Data projects promise to improve the quality of the services of a company or government. The current way that models are being developed and tested can be relatively experimental. Seemingly promising practices, such as improvements in public transportation through the monitoring of pedestrians through mobile phone data, would be immoral to a Kantian. The use of personal data without a person’s explicit permission could be a violation of that person’s autonomy. There are ways we could respect the autonomy of such individuals, such as providing them the opportunity to give or refuse permission to share such data, or by being transparent about the use of the data being collected.

Critique of Kantianism

Some critics argue that the categorical imperative, being too abstract a principle, cannot guide specific moral decision-making processes. Additionally, Kantianism does not seem to consider relevant details about the context necessary for decision-making. At times, Kantianism seems unable to answer questions about conflicting values, such as how to weigh privacy against safety, or even to answer how personal data pertain to a person’s autonomy. However, there are contemporary philosophers that have developed more nuanced views that may more readily translate to context-related moral decisions.

FINISH

MORAL THEORIES

Moral particularism

'The right thing to do depends on the specific situation.'

This moral theory emphasizes that we can only determine the right thing when we consider all the relevant facts within a certain context. Relevant facts might be the resources at hand or the time and technology available in a given situation. Moral particularists deny the existence of moral values or principles that are universally true. They claim that the justifiability of each action depends on the context of that action. An action is justifiable if the context of the situation requires a certain action. Some moral particularists think that universal values and principle can help determine the right course of action, independent of their truth as universal values or principles.

Moral particularism and data

This moral theory does not consider general questions such as 'Is informed consent a necessary data practice?' Instead, a moral particularist would tackle the moral issues of each separate data project and see what is required to make it morally successful. The focus shifts away from the general responsibility of governments and companies with regard to data and moves towards the specific responsibilities with regard to that particular project. This theory therefore allows for greater respect for the diversity and differences of each case and permits more varied solutions.

Critique of moral particularism

There are two main points to the critique of moral particularism. First, some philosophers argue that without universal principles there can be no moral truth. In the absence of such universal tenets, people will not have reason to make a moral decision. This criticism focuses on people's motivations to act morally.

Second, it is argued that rationality should be consistent. There lurks a danger when we focus solely on the perils of an individual situation without looking at the larger picture. For example, when we think of a specific situation where someone hurts another person, it could be hard to explain why this is morally wrong. According to this line of thinking, if we lack a clear notion of why hurting others is wrong in general, we cannot make an argument that would explain why it is wrong to hurt someone else in this specific situation.

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This 'Data Ethics Decision Aid' (DEDA) has been developed by the Utrecht Data School and Utrecht University.
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DEDA - Version 3.1
June 2020

For updates, see:

dataschool.nl/deda

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Utrecht, 2020.

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