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Facebook's Ethics have not earned them a "Like"

Facebook once changed the world, connecting consumers in a new-innovative way. Yet despite how revolutionary the tech company would become, its legacy has crumbled, becoming plagued by its *inability* to protect its users' data. And as more investigations and congressional hearings have unfolded, it has become apparent that Facebook possesses poor values, especially in terms of the key ethical framework characteristics that are used to determine a company's morals: consequentialism, rights & duties, and virtue ethics. And it is through these frameworks that Facebook's entire system of operations can be pulled into question, measuring its decisions and actions, while also putting pressure on the tech co. to give power back to its users.

All of this is first shown when looking at how Facebook earns its money. According to Investopedia, Facebook earned over \$40 billion in revenue in 2017—89% of that was earned from digital advertisements (Sharma). With that said, the writer of this article, Rakesh Sharma, has stated, "Facebook generates revenue primarily from targeted advertising and user data... In a series of scandals dating back to March 2018, Facebook has compromised user data, privacy, and security by granting multinational companies access to the personal information of its users," (Sharma). To explain further, advertisers use personal data from Facebook's product ecosystem for ads. They then create custom ads that target specific individuals based off of their personal data (Sharma). In terms of consequentialist ethics, these actions prove that Facebook has prioritized its profits over its customers. There is little to no regard for privacy, as Facebook has allowed its advertisers to totally abuse their power. In the eyes of Facebook, the most desirable

outcome was making a profit, and that of course is understandable, but not at the cost of the company's ethics.

The company's ethics are further pulled into question when listening to what ex-employees have to say about Facebook's actions, like Sandy Parakilas, a former operations manager that was responsible for policy data breaches. When speaking about Facebook, Parakilas said:

My concerns were that all of the data that left Facebook servers to developers could not be monitored by Facebook, so we had no idea what developers were doing with the data... I know that they could have prevented it... They felt that it was better not to know. I found that utterly shocking and horrifying, (Lewis).

Not only does Parakilas's comments justify just how poor Facebook's consequentialist ethics are, but they also shine a negative light on the company's right and duty ethics. As a whole, Facebook's company culture was (at least in the past) weak. Employees like Parakilas did not believe in their leaders because the actions taken by them were wrong. And to purposefully under inform yourselves and your subordinates? Not only does that reveal the severe lack of communication skills implemented at Facebook, but it also suggests that their environment was purely toxic—not team oriented. At least from what can be inferred from Parakilas's experience, employees are expected to do as they are told, whether the objective is right or wrong. When a company is conducted like that, it is more than fair to suggest that its culture is unhealthy.

The unhealthiness of Facebook's culture and actions can be further exemplified when looking at the company's relationship with Cambridge Analytica— a political consulting firm that purchased the data of tens of millions of Americans (without users' knowledge). They then

used the data to create a “psychological warfare tool” to convince users to vote for President Trump, creating personality profiles for the 2016 election. Analyzing the matter, *Guardian* writer Issie Lapowsky wrote:

... the Cambridge Analytica scandal, as it's been called, was never just about the firm and its work... instead, the scandal and backlash grew to encompass the ways that businesses, including but certainly not limited to Facebook, take more data from people than they need, and give away more than they should, often only asking permission in the fine print—if they even ask at all (Lapowsky).

The actions taken by Facebook (and other tech companies) to exploit its users' data reveal their significant lack of virtue. To put it simply, there is no dignity in violating a person's privacy to make a profit. Especially in the way Facebook has conducted itself, not asking users for permission and when they do, utilizing nonchalant- small print, these actions are deceptive and create an online environment that does not prioritize trust. And in terms of Facebook allowing Cambridge Analytica to manipulate the election, it is not only invasive to our democracy, but it is purely unpatriotic.

In terms of what actions should be taken to ensure that Facebook conforms to proper business ethics, one fact is for sure: fining them is not suitable. Facebook continues to earn big profits, and paying fines is not substantial to its business, especially as the tech industry continues to boom. What the industry (not just Facebook) needs is government regulation. There needs to be laws put into place that determine what can be allowed and what cannot be. And when these companies do break the law, prison time needs to be the consequence. Billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg are not hurt by spending big money; it only further enables them. But

when you threaten to remove people like him from society, and actually make an example out of someone, I am more than confident that there will be more of a desire to obey the laws and ethics that a democracy thrives under.

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