

Meta AI Case Study

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November 1, 2025

In my paper I will be using the Kantian ethical theory for the ethical challenge that Meta is facing. The app would let the users ask questions and interact using AI, but most of the users accidentally shared private conversations, audio clips, and images publicly without knowing. I would say, based on Kantian ethics, the people at Meta had the duty to design the app in a way that protected all users' privacy and respected their humanity. So, I will explain the main ideas of Kantian ethics, then talk about the situation from Silberling's article, and lastly I will show how Kantian ethics can guide Meta's actions.

Kantian ethics is a deontological ethics. The theory proclaims that individuals have to act based on moral rules, and treat others as ends, not merely means, to attain goals either for personal or organizational benefits. Kant reiterates that it is only when actions demonstrate respect for every person's dignity and autonomy, irrespective of the consequences, that they will be morally right. Lying, deceiving, and not protecting others' rights are deemed morally wrong since such actions utilize people as mere means rather than respecting them as fellow human beings.

The Meta AI made a bit of a privacy problem in that users could publish private content publicly without knowing it. Some of those questions were more on the safer side, but others revealed sensitive information, such as home addresses, legal issues, or even criminal activity. The company didn't make any clear indications as to where it would post that content or how to work the privacy settings. Users who logged in via public Instagram accounts could expose intimate or embarrassing details without ever knowing. Silberling describes this as a "privacy nightmare," showing how Meta's app design puts users' private information at risk.

From a Kantian perspective, Meta's actions were wrong because they clearly did not treat users in a way that respected their autonomy and privacy. By releasing an app through which people could easily share sensitive information without clear warnings or controls, it treated users as means to attract engagement rather than as ends whose privacy must be protected. Even if the app were oriented towards entertainment or research, Kantian ethics holds that violating people's rights for whatever purpose is morally unacceptable.

Under Kantian ethics, it is the direct duty of people at Meta to design such an app by keeping users' privacy a priority. They should have warned users openly, applied default private settings, or enforced compulsory privacy checks before the public sharing of content was allowed. Thus, Meta would be respecting the users and their personal information, thereby accomplishing its moral duty. Ideally, such sensitive data would not have been disclosed accidentally through such an ethical design, yet the working of the app would be there.

In conclusion, Kantian ethics can solve the ethical challenge posed by the Meta AI app. According to this point of view, Meta should have shown respect for users' privacy and autonomy. Lacking the proper safeguards that would treat users as means instead of ends is wrong. That being said, Kantian ethics would encourage us to further develop technology that would protect human dignity in such a way that innovation is not at the price of privacy or ethical responsibility.

Resources

Silberling, A. 2025. 'The Meta AI App is a privacy disaster