

Edward snowden kantian ethics assignment

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This has raised multiple ethical issues ranging from national security, information privacy and the ethics behind whistleblowing in general. The reach and impact of these leaks have gone global and have put in question the very overnment that protects us as well as the extent Of the public’s rights on privacy. Various foreign governments have begun making changes to their programs and prosecuting many directly involved in the espionage of the public and political parties that were spied on.

The US government, which continues to put pressure on the Russian government to hand Snowden back for prosecution with three felonies under the Espionage Act, seems upset and wanting to set an example to anyone willing to speak up against those in power, as if to place fear in anyone else with similar ideas or intentions. Whistleblowing is not protected against violating the Espionage Act, and although there is protection within the intelligence community for whistleblowing, it only accounts for non-secret related materials.

Snowden “ made his choice based on basic theories of civil disobedience: that those who control the law have become corrupt, that the law in this case (by concealing the actions of government officials in building this massive spying apparatus in secret) is a tool of injustice, and that he felt compelled to act in violation of it in order to expose these official bad acts and enable debate and reform. (Greenwald & TheGuardian, 2013) Therefore under Immanuel Kant and a teleological view, does Snowden fall under ethical “ guidelines” for a Kantian perspective on his leaks?

Kantian ethics asks two questions: ‘ Can I rationally will that everyone act as I propose to act? If the answer is no, then we must not perform the action. ‘ Does my action respect the goals of human beings rather than merely using them for my own purposes? Again, if the answer is no, then we must not perform the action. ’ (“ KANTIAN ETHICS,” n. d.) Event Analysis The publicity principle states that “ all actions relating to the right of other human beings are wrong if their maxim is incompatible with publicity. (Goodin, 1996, p. 155) Therefore keeping secrets in itself is unethical and immoral if it involves the public not being able to formulate, debate or agree with such policies being kept secret by the government in relation to the public and fellow man. Snowden asserts that the reason he leaked secret government data was for the public good. In fact there is no reason to believe Snowden acted on his own interest due to the detrimental effects his leaks have caused his personal life.

Although some might argue that Snowden’s actions of releasing secrets while under oath in itself destroys the basic Kantian principles, the argument is still that the actions of Snowden were a greater public good than the breaking of a promise or oath. The government’s deceit alone is wrong and therefore should not be done under Kantian ethics. Teleological views place Snowden’s actions on a scale of ethical egoism and utilitarianism. The greater good and why he did what he did rather than if it was favorable or not (deontological).

Snowden appears to wish that everyone stand up to their beliefs and would acknowledge that whistleblowing, under the pretext of the greater good, is needed by all to eliminate the corruption and breached privacy of those we have in power. Although a further analysis would provide a deontological <https://assignbuster.com/edward-snowden-kantian-ethics-assignment/>

perspective and aid in asserting Snowden's decision to whistleblow as "honorable" and "right", the question being answered is that Snowden felt "obligated" having the knowledge and status he had to leak selected information to the public willfully.

The fact Snowden chose to leak only information he and his media connections felt would not be detrimental to the public or government, yet would provide enough information that the public as to start an open debate on "big brother" oversight and privacy laws, shows that Snowden was in good faith and conscious leaking information for good and not for personal gains. The government, specifically the NSA and Obama Administration have been embarrassed by the leaks. Their aim is to bring Snowden back to the US for prosecution and have him be the next target under the Espionage Act for whistleblowers.

Under the Obama Administration there have been double the amount of people prosecuted under the act than any other previous administration in history since the enacting. (Greenberg, 2014) It seems that Snowden has seen an unfairness and gross abuse of power and has felt compelled to bring these things to light for the public interest, and for the global stage. The need for change from such actions, the employment of fear to strip the public's rights and privacies, and the use of mining centers to take all our data to whatever government end has all been shown.

They (the government) is not particularly happy with the revealed truths behind their hidden programs. The fact they label it under the Espionage Act as to say Snowden has aided our enemies in breaching national security is,

to the open minded and intelligent, a cowardly move, since our “ enemies” already have known about communication tapping, hacking and other methods employed by the US. The true “ enemies” the US would want to keep these secrets hidden from are the American public themselves.

The NSA has had a big impact by Snowden and the public has started to scrutinize their secret programs which enable them to store our private data for use. The information leaked such as the mass data collection and failed encryption of various companies such as Google, Facebook, and Yahoo to name a few, have all lead to changes. The actions Snowden took has had a positive effect so far to the extent of companies protecting the public that use them almost daily. In reference to the second Kantian question ‘ Does my action respect the goals of human beings rather than merely using them for my own purposes?

Yes Snowden’s actions respect greatly his fellow Americans, and even goes further for the good of the world. He has leaked information of espionage to the public without warrant across the globe by the US and it’s “ Five Eyes” allies, which include Australia, the I-JK, Canada, and New Zealand. Snowden’s ctions both teleologicaly (the right of society to know the truth) and deontologicaly, specifically through the utilitarian movement (greatest social good) show that he did not gain from his actions and instead has lost plenty in return for them.

He has taken the brunt of his decision but has hoped for the public to become more aware of what their governments do without their knowledge of or consent. Although Kant himself might not approve of Snowden’s

betrayal of his oath to company, he would definitely would not approve of the US' surveillance programs and might be biased to Snowden and his actions, for the maxim to work however, it means that everyone on earth should act as Snowden did and betray oaths and promises for what they deemed the greater good to the public.

Many might agree with this and so agree with his actions as honorable and worth being called the "hero" as many are calling him. The universal law of "betray an oath or promise to secrecy, if it is necessary to protect and shed light for the public good and future, then do so," is what Snowden reflects.

Recommendations The recommendations fall more on the government agencies caught with the proverbial "hand in the cookie jar." The recommendation is simple in nature and it is transparency.

It has been difficult for the US government to maintain a level of transparency on operations it feels keeping secret benefit national security, and to an extent that could be correct. In the case of massive data mining, tapping of all telecommunications (and the willingness of such companies to knowingly allow it), as well as "safeguarding" companies to provide backdoors for the NSA, all prove to be a far stretch of protecting the nation and more so a giant machine for eavesdropping and destroying privacy. The government should have clemency towards Snowden and the public should help protect him.

He has done what he has for the public good and to defend the Constitution, therefore we should applaud and aid him as he has done a great public service. More protection to government officials in regards to whistleblowing

should be enacted to better serve the public in the future from injustices, corruption, and abuses of power. Had Snowden trusted the ethical conduct of his employers and the agencies he worked for, he would have not felt compelled to uphold his beliefs and destroy his liberties in the US, as well as his lifestyle which was above the average American, for the rest of his fellow Americans.

The social “ consensus at the Santa Clara University event was that Snowden could indeed be placed within such a framework... ” such as being right in his actions. (DeCosse, 2014) Conclusion Snowden has done right and in hopes that it can bring change to the methods employed by our government and its agencies that are there to protect rather than cast a blanket on the public as if saying we are all guilty until proven innocent Whether or not Snowden returns to the US or remains abroad nder protection as a political refugee seeking asylum remains unclear.

What does remain clear is that Snowden might have more documents and information on other programs that have not been released, as well as a trump card as an insurance policy to his life and well-being. The media awaits, and the government continues to apply pressure to extradite Snowden from his current location in Russia.