

As technology continues to advance, the importance of cybersecurity has become more apparent than ever. The internet has revolutionized the way we communicate, store and share information, and conduct business. However, it has also given rise to a new set of threats, including cyber-attacks, data breaches, and identity theft. In this context, cybersecurity is not just a necessary set of measures to protect one's digital assets and data but also a fundamental human right. In this essay, we will explore how two ethical theories, libertarianism, and utilitarianism, approach cybersecurity ethics. Libertarianism advocates for maximum individual freedom and minimal government intervention, while utilitarianism prioritizes the greatest good for the greatest number of people. We will examine how each of these ethical framework's views hacking and ethical hacking, two crucial aspects of cybersecurity.

Libertarianism is the act of seeking to maximize a person's individual freedom and minimize any state intervention with everyday lives. Libertarians believe that individuals have natural rights that would allow them the rights to life, liberty, property, and moral autonomy. (Rothbard, 2002) Utilitarianism however, is that theory that advocates actions that cause happiness for the majority of people and strongly oppose decisions that do not benefit or cause happiness to the greater population. Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism, meaning that actions are based on their outcomes, not by their motives or intentions. (Scarre, 1996)

Within cybersecurity, there are currently no universally established ethical standards for people to follow. Researchers within cybersecurity lack any agreement upon what common ethical principles would look like and some even remain unconvinced of the value of establishing a structure that can address the realm of cybersecurity. (Webb-Blanken, et al., 2018) A Libertarian would argue that individuals and businesses are free to take whatever measures they deem necessary to protect their own systems and data from unauthorized access or theft. However, libertarians may also argue that government regulations and laws aimed at improving cybersecurity could be overly burdensome and could infringe on individual rights. However, a utilitarian would judge each instance individually, for instance, if a company suffers a cyberattack and loses sensitive data, it may be morally justified for the company to hack back the attacker and recover their data if this is deemed beneficial for most people involved.

Libertarians typically oppose illegal hacking as it infringes on people's privacy and property rights. However, some may argue that hacking can be a form of political protest an oppressive government that violates individual rights, though this view is not universally accepted within the libertarian community. On the other hand, a utilitarian would consequences of illegal hacking and weigh the benefits and harms to society. While they would agree that illegal hacking violates privacy, they may also consider whether it leads to positive outcomes such as exposing government corruption or preventing harm to individuals. However, a utilitarian would also consider the potential negative consequences of illegal hacking such as the loss of trust in online security and the potential for retaliation from government authorities. Ultimately, a utilitarian would need to evaluate each individual case of hacking on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it would lead to the majority benefiting.

Ethical hacking from a libertarian point of view, would be looked at as a legitimate way of accessing computer systems, networks, or applications with permission, and thus consider it as a justifiable practice. However, some libertarians may argue that it is still a violation of privacy, even when it is done for a good cause. On the other hand, utilitarians tend to agree with the views of libertarians on ethical hacking, given that it can help prevent potential harm and promote greater security for a larger number of people. The utilitarian argument is grounded in the belief that the benefits of ethical hacking outweigh the potential harm or privacy violation that might be associated with it.

Overall, the perspective on cyber security among libertarians and utilitarians depends on their interpretation of key ethical principles. Libertarians tend to prioritize individual rights and property, which leads them to generally oppose hacking as a violation of privacy and security. A Utilitarian, on the other hand, prioritize overall utility and may support ethical hacking when it can prevent harm and promote greater security. However, both perspectives acknowledge the importance of ethical considerations and weigh the potential benefits against the potential harm of hacking. Ultimately, any assessment of hacking practices should consider the ethical principles at stake and strive to balance the competing interests of individual privacy, property rights, and the greater good.

## References

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