

The Moral Need for Privacy

Traveling around certain cities in the world, one can notice a lot of security cameras. It is estimated that London has over two hundred thousand security cameras (mostly private) with over 52 per tube station. These cameras exist because somebody does not trust others to do what is right. As we sleepwalk towards a surveillance society, we need to ask what the impact is, not just on current actions but also on how people learn to live in such a society. As human beings, we need privacy and liberty balanced with good policing in order to develop our internal moral sense.

In business, we have competing beliefs about what makes a proper business. Some businesses are highly structured with manuals and training defining the job. Other businesses are built on a different model looking for creativity from each worker and the structure is far looser. Each of these are built on a belief about people and what services or products this business will provide.

As we build the capacity for the state and businesses to track us nearly everywhere and to watch everything we do, we are losing our privacy. As nearly everyone has a cell phone today, those cell phones are being used to track us all the time. Even though we may turn off tracking, there are still ways to track us using the signals that the phones exchange with the towers ever so often. And there are efforts by government agencies to destroy the encryption so that everyone's calls can be heard by others.

This flies in the face of how human beings develop a moral sense. Children who are watched all the time and a parent is always telling them what to do never develop their own moral code. All they learn is to either follow only the instructions they are given or to learn how to find out when they are not being observed and break the rules then.

Western Democracy is built on the belief that even uneducated people can develop a moral sense because they grew up in freedom and that this moral sense is better than that of the leaders. Thus, we have elections and jury trials. Surveillance is built on the belief that the authorities know better than the people what is right and wrong.

Our society was based on people becoming moral actors who could make their own choices. We, as human beings, need freedom and privacy to properly develop our own moral sense. Yes, that means that many will break the rules. Many a child has stolen a treat from the store only to be caught and punished. That is part of learning the social moral code. So, we teach our children that they have to pay back what they stole from the store, that they have to do amends to those they hurt, and that they will have consequences for those actions they do in secret. This is part of growing up.

Parents give their children the illusion of privacy and freedom so that they can grow up. Sure, we watch who they play with, track who calls them, and where they drive. But we don't always let them know about that tracking so that the

child faces the moral choices alone and grows.

But as a society, we cannot treat adults as children. Our democracy needs independently thinking and morally capable adults in order to survive.

Likewise, businesses need privacy in order to make new deals, find new customers, develop new ways of operating, and prepare for the new future. Businesses need to be able to communicate with prospective customers without someone else knowing about it. Businesses need to be able to do deals in private so that others don't profit from advanced knowledge. Yes, there will be businesses that break the law. That is why we need strong policing of businesses.

Our military has constantly claimed the right to secrecy. There are multiple levels of secret clearance in order to limit who knows what. There are secret bases where new ideas can be tested out. Yet, those are overseen by Congress. Our society needs the same thing for everyone.

What about police solving crimes? Yes, police need to be able to prosecute crimes. Historically, they have been able to do that without constant surveillance. Old time policing is able to solve crimes without breaking the encryption on everyone's phones and breaking everyone's privacy.

Parents need their children to grow up to be independent thinkers and develop a strong moral sense. Likewise, our country needs independent businesses with strong business ethics.

Privacy is a moral need.

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Risky World

There is a new technology that allows people to use someone else's voice to say something. This is being used by criminals to tell financial officers to transfer company money to the wrong bank account. A managing director of a company in England received a call with his boss' voice telling him to transfer thousands to an account in Hungary.

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