

HW 5

This chapter of the book discusses privacy, specifically a persons privacy online. First, the book address if we even have a right to privacy. I tend to agree with the view that privacy is necessary for personal security. Additionally, privacy provides a restraint against repressive governments. Speech that may be viewed as 'unpatriotic' due to its questioning of current governmental policy could be generated and disseminated more effectively if privacy were guaranteed to both writer (anonymity really), and more importantly, reader.

The book then proceeds to covers the current state of privacy controls in the US, that is, none. In the current lazi-faire system there are businesses that exist solely to accrue and sell personal information of individuals. As the book notes, sales of a users private information results in a negative action towards the user, while the user sees no benefit. Additionally, market forces have shown themselves to be inept at solving this problem. I, personally, agree with one of the books more radical views: a persons personal information is the property of that person. Just as a company may trademark a logo that other, non-affiliated companies may not sell without permission, personal information should be not be sold without the explicit permission of the person involved. Although the book quips that this would restrict the free flow of information in the market, I would retort that such information should not be in the market in the first place. Although companies may wish to harvest and sell non-identifiable information about their clients, selling any information that could result in a risk to the client should require the explicit authorization of the client.

Privacy, however, is about more than seeking to not be annoyed by marketing firms. Privacy allows individuals to pursue interest without interference from the government or the general populous. Ideas can be fully explored, even if they are considered 'dangerous' to the status quo, or undesirable.