# Privacy in the World to Come

Years ago one of the running jokes that Johnny Carson had on The Tonight Show was that the television worked both ways. We could see him and he could see us. Today people don't think that's quite so funny. They own cell phones which allow one to record live video while simultaneously broadcasting it to the world. They drive cars which keep track of where they are and probably how fast they are going and can send help if the air-bag deploys and can even talk with them. It's no stretch of the imagination to picture a television being able to hear what one says and see what one does since we can rig up our desktop computers to do that now.

Do you think that trend of "smart" tools and appliances will continue? I certainly do. Can you easily picture the day in the near future when someone can use those appliances with their built-in computers to see and hear what we do whether we like it or not? I can, too.

Some of those who read the novel "Invisible Hand" are frightened by the computer system that is integral to that book. They associate the money system proposed by "Invisible Hand" with that computer always watching and listening. They somehow fear that the new kind of money being suggested by that novel is what will bring about a complete loss of privacy.

They are right that the loss of privacy is coming. They are wrong that the non-POM form of money is what is bringing it. In fact, the non-POM form of money is *the only thing which can let us maintain and protect our privacy.* Non-POM *defends* our privacy.

There are many motives for others to spy upon us and anyone who has the money can buy tools and learn techniques for spying. You can walk into a store and purchase these tools, no questions asked. Your government and your boss can tap your phone and your computer. Even if such activities are against the law, people do them today and few, if any, are punished. So just making a law against invasion of privacy will not prevent your government or your employer or your neighbor or your ex-husband or your boyfriend or even your church from taking away your privacy. If the tools exist, they can be bought by a POM, though one might have to pay black market prices.

So how can a non-POM be any different? Doesn't the accounts computer keep track of all money earned and all money spent and the property of every individual? Doesn't the accounts computer make public what you did to earn that money? The answer is yes. Of course it does. But are you ashamed of owning property? When you come out of your home in the morning to get the newspaper aren't you telling the world that you own that house? When the accounts computer makes available that you did a good job and others benefited from your actions are you ashamed of having actually earned money by doing good things? These are not things that any rational person would try to hide. In fact, we buy expensive homes and cars and clothing to show others what good people we are.

But let's go deeper. In a non-POM economy people are paid for the net benefit of the consequences of their actions. Is your loss of personal privacy a benefit or a loss? I think we all feel that it is a loss. I don't want people to watch me in the bathroom or bedroom or even when I'm just sitting around the house. If I put up a fence or wall around my back yard, I want that to keep people from seeing me when I go there. I think most people feel the same way I do about these matters. Therefore, if someone helps others to spy on me, I want that to cost them money. Not just the person who did the spying but the persons who provided the tools

to do the spying. I think that the Payers would see it that way as well. Therefore, those people who make the tools for spying would be very careful about who gets access to those tools. Thus, lots of people would be paid for protecting my privacy and that of everyone else.

But what about that computer system? It controls lots of cameras and microphones. That is coming whether we like it or not no matter what kind of money we use. If we still have a POM then *we can expect that system to be used to control us and to exploit us* because people can gain money by doing so. People will pay programmers to write the code that lets someone spy on us. People will pay the computer manufacturers and their employees for making the microphones and cameras and putting them in our appliances. People will pay to get access to data about us. And you know that a law or two or even a thousand will not prevent it from happening. It will be done legally or illegally and almost certainly by the police and other government agencies.

A non-POM society, on the other hand, will pay programmers to write code that prevents your personal information from being accessed by anyone without your consent. Since the security of your information is a good thing and its falling into the wrong hands constitutes harm to you, people will earn money by protecting your information and failing to protect your information will cost them money. This is completely different from a POM economy in that no one can earn money as a result of invading your privacy. No one can buy your information. No one can use money to bribe those who might be able to gain access to your information. Sure people can make errors and have accidents but the results of such mistakes are unlikely to destroy your privacy. Those who discover such an accident will be paid for correcting the problem with minimal damage. No mass media can make money by spreading word of your private life. In fact, it would cost them lots of money to do so.

The computer system in a non-POM society would be the strongest supporter of your privacy because it puts you in control of the information that is made available to the world. Doing things while an appliance is watching would be like having a cat watch you. It sees but it just doesn't care. It may remember but it isn't going to tell anyone. And like a faithful dog it will summon help if you have a problem. The "I've fallen and I can't get up" situation would have the computer system trying to send help since the programmers would get paid for its doing that.

Finally, today the most common motivation for invading the privacy of others is monetary. One can earn money today by doing so. That motive is eliminated in a non-POM society because there's no way to make money by prying into others lives. No one can hire you to pry.