

Outsourcing Censorship to Corporate Partners

I have great respect for private property and private businesses, but there can come a point at which a private business becomes a public corporation that is able to exist and grow primarily due to the protection and support of the state. These corporations not only enjoy special legal protections (such as limited liability) but they can also leverage these protections to obtain monopoly status as the sole provider of electricity, water, information, etc. in a given region or field. Defending the supposed right of these entities to cut off or “de-platform” certain people and brands may seem harmless when there is still nominal competition in the field (such as with social media), but what happens when it’s an electric company cutting off a server farm, ICANN revoking domain names, or an ISP blocking traffic to certain websites?

At what point do we recognize that the state outsourcing censorship to its corporate partners is every bit as dangerous as censorship undertaken by the state itself? If we don’t learn this crucial lesson soon, the much-vaunted “freedom” of the information age may come to an abrupt and perilous end.