

Secret Surveillance and the Right to Privacy



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It doesn’t seem to me that enough people are truly outraged by the revelations of the National Security Agency’s spy program. Too many seem to have a “Well I haven’t done anything wrong so why should I care?” attitude. This is very troubling to me. For starters, “done anything wrong” is becoming increasingly versatile, what with all of the millions of laws already on the books and thousands more being created yearly. It’s very likely that we all do “wrong” every day. The bigger offense, however, is the aggression that’s committed against us by the state’s secret surveillance.

Already an Interloper

The state already exists as an aggressive interloper in the affairs of society. Every regulation it enforces interferes in the peaceful co-existence of human beings because such enforcement is paid for by stolen resources. Further, its regulation is backed by its demand to monopolize the dispute adjudication industry. In other words, your only legal recourse to state malfeasance is an appeal to the state; clearly a violation of one of the most basic principles of jurisprudence, that one should not sit as judge in one’s own dispute.

To add insult to injury, the state proceeds to interfere *secretly* in the affairs of society. When I sign up for an email account, with say Google, the terms and conditions of my use are between me and Google. Never mind the small print, our “meeting of the minds” only goes so far as a reasonable expectation on email service provision. The state then comes to Google and demands (by force) information on its users’ activities and also that Google not tell its users about the state’s snooping. Clearly this is coercion by the already coercive state. Regardless of the state’s use of the information, it was obtained by violence against innocent people. That is wrong, in my opinion, and because the ends themselves are always nefarious when it comes to the state, it’s not even a question of means justifying ends.

A Right to Privacy?

One's right to privacy only exists as one's right to property. If someone stands on the sidewalk and looks through my window at my naked body, my privacy has not in any way been violated because I have (obviously) not taken adequate measures to secure my privacy. Peeping Tom has a right to look wherever he damn well pleases, so long as he's not trespassing on the property of others. My so-called right to privacy ends where another's right to the use of their faculties begins.

The state demanding information from one party to a contract about the other party is an aggression against the property of the first party. And if the first party voluntarily reveals information they promised not to reveal, such constitutes an aggression against the second party. Privacy has nothing to do with it. Contracts are a matter of property rights.

Final Thoughts

Edward Snowden, Bradley Manning, Julian Assange, and the like (assuming they are truly private actors) should all be considered heroes. Society's enemy *numero uno* is the state. Heroism is when someone risks their well-being to protect the life or liberty of someone else. These men, in my opinion, have done just that. I hope we all learn something about sacrifice and love for our fellow man from these heroes.