Utility Over Privacy

The applications of personal data collected can range from incriminating you to recommending a cat video on YouTube. Given such a drastic gamma of possibilities it is hard to decide whether companies should prioritize privacy over utility, or if you should go over every terms & conditions and decide for yourself which products to use. From my understanding, the masses should not worry about privacy when it comes to collecting simple data like the posts one liked on Facebook.

To determine if you should worry or not, first place a value on your importance. If you are famous, your personal data is extremely valuable. If you are not, it is just another number in a database. Additionally, as I mentioned before, data can be used to incriminate you. If you know you did not commit a crime, why should you worry? And if you are searching up how to craft a bomb, make sure you add “for school purposes” at the end of the search. Jokes aside, another factor one should consider is who has access to data collected because in many cases sensitive information is stolen from large companies, and though they had no malicious intent, the new owners of such data may have. One should be confident of where their data is maintained and if it is inputted data, first make sure the company is trustworthy.

Many may think that data collected from them with utility purposes does not make a huge difference, so they are better off not sharing any data at all. However, it does make a huge difference, but it is done to all of us so subtly and has been done for so long that we take it for granted. The increasingly complex algorithms that try to maintain one in an app, or to give one a good and secure experience are so effective that it is hard to compute their effects. Try creating a new YouTube account, or try using your friend’s YouTube account; spoiler, it will be impossible to find anything of interest.

The bottom line is that you should first value yourself. If your value is too high, your data is too important, or you know it can be used against you, beware of the applications you use. However, if you are part of 99.99% of the population that has nothing to hide and likes to binge watch Netflix, maybe giving Netflix a few bytes of data to recommend you better shows is actually a good idea.