Why-should-society-opt-for-internet-anonymity-rather-than-transparency

Rabiul:

What does “**Anonymity on the Internet”** mean? This applies to interaction a user has on the **Internet** which protects his or her identity from being shared with another user or with a third party. With **anonymity** in place, people can go online to express themselves without fear. Moreover, it enables us to openly discuss our opinions and feelings **anonymously** without judgment from people and also from authority. We are able to practice our freedom of speech without being censored by government or corporation(s).

**THE ETHICS OF ONLINE ANONYMITY**, according to a research paper written by **Robert Bodle, PhD at (College of Mount St. Joseph, USA)** states that anonymity helps support the fundamental rights of privacy and freedom of expression. These rights are enshrined in constitutions, recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948: **Dont read out the numbers**) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1967, 1976 **Dont read out the numbers**). “**Electronic Frontier Foundation**” an organization which explains the necessity of internet anonymity. According to them, **Internet Anonymity** saves us from political or economic retribution, harassment, or even threats to our lives. Because of anonymity Whistle blowers report news that companies and governments would prefer to suppress, human rights workers who struggled against repressive governments can work freely; and victims of domestic violence can attempt to rebuild their lives where abusers cannot follow.

But every coin has two side, there is no such thing as absolute blessing. Although **Anonymity on the Internet** gives us freedom of speech, protects us online abuse, makes it safer to ourselves. It also can help few individuals to live double life, internet trolling can get more random and spamming may become more wide spread. Yet we would stress that the pros still out weigh the cons.

Maisha:

Lets look at doxing. It refers to collecting and publishing private or identifying information about an individual on the internet. Personal information of people being compromised on a daily basis is at the centre of the problem, for instance, 21% of internet users have had their social accounts or emails hacked while 12% have been stalked or harassed online. A research carried by New York University Tandon School of Engineering reveals that several websites recorded over 1.7 million text files shared on those sites within a period of only 6- to 7-weeks and over 5,500 files were involved with doxing. Over 90% of those doxed files included the addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of the victims. These serve as significant evidence as to why anonymity should be preserved so that repercussions like such can be avoided.

Freedom of speech has been significantly suppressed all in the name of transparency on social media platforms. With the increasing usage of these platforms, internet freedom has had a global decline which affected 33 out of 65 counties. Asia being most impacted by this has 14 out of 15 countries where people got imprisoned for being expressive in a nonviolent way.

Wechat, one of the largest social media platforms with over a billion users has had immense contribution when it comes to capturing data for the “**Social Credit System**” in China. One national blacklist has more than 14 million people listed as “discredited”. This is the consequence of the government having explicit information about the individuals and this acts as a major privacy breach.

Abrar:

China first announced "social credit system" in 2014. It is a way to grade its citizens .Through this they wished to strengthen the idea of "keeping trust is glorious and breaking trust is disgraceful,". A person's social score depends on their behavior. The exact rubrics is a secret though — but examples of infractions include bad driving, smoking in non-smoking zones, buying too many video games and posting fake news online.

James Gautrey, a technology specialist at investment manager Schroders says "WeChat has a billion users, so by capturing its data, the government can see what all those people are thinking and doing. It's a dream for them."

This is what a New York-based blogger Wen Yunchao, who left China in 2012 after being repeatedly harassed by police over his online writing said.“To link online rumor-mongering with one’s social credit score can just be another way to punish government critics for speaking up,”  he also added “If you post ‘rumor’–or negative information about the Chinese government–online, your credit score becomes lower as a result. It may affect you in real life, such as you have to pay a higher interest rate when applying for a house loan, or you can be barred from taking the civil service exam or bar exam or from working for the state media. Of course, the current system has not expanded to this degree yet, but from the design and implementation of the system, I see a high possibility of such linkage.”

Now the following excerpt is to show how history repeats itself:

In 1933, Hitler demanded that Germany's president, Hindenburg, sign what became known as the Reichstag fire decree (Reichstagsbrandverordnung). It nullified many of the key civil liberties of German citizens, and it was used as the legal basis to imprison anyone considered to be opponents of the Nazis. It was also aimed at suppressing publications that were considered unfriendly to the Nazi cause. According to one of Hitler's leading critics, Dietrich Bonhoeffer\*, the decree meant that "the right to privacy of communication by mail or telephone no longer existed."   
\*Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906–1945: martyr, thinker, man of resistance (London, T&T Clarke, 2010) p.119. Now let me ask you, if Hitler had today’s information technology would the death count of the Jews stop at 6 million?