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Unit #1 Assignment

CYBR 4400

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**Problem 1 (5 points)**

In class we discussed the question of whether Barlow's Declaration was a necessary manifesto to influence the evolution of the Internet with respect to current government regulation, or an utopian daydream that will not have any influence of the Internet's future. Write a short essay providing your answer to this question. Support your position by drawing upon your expected outcomes or concerns associated with three current Internet policy issues (e.g., cybersecurity, privacy and net neutrality). Your answer should specifically draw upon or quote the manifesto in at least three specific areas to support your answer.

Barlow’s Declaration makes arguments that can be applied to our current government regulation of the internet and can have influence on changes in regulation as we move forward. Barlow’s statement, “you are trying to ward off the virus of liberty by erecting guard posts at the frontiers of Cyberspace” directly addresses government regulation of sites and services that are continuously increasing and evolving through various countries in the world. In the United States, we don’t necessarily see government regulation of internet content but various other countries are seeing an increased in blocked sites or reduced access due to the content of the site or their virtual presence. This is cause for concern as it threatens our access to the service and the content available. Regulation of the internet is controversial at the very least but also poses the question of who has the right to decide what needs regulation. The government does have the right to control and regulate some of the content on the internet, especially content that poses a threat to the public such as human trafficking activity and similar sites. But they do not have the right to regulate content that are posted by the general public or are meant to provide information or services that do not pose threats.

Barlow also touches on the idea of virtual identity and the threat government poses to our self-identity. “Your legal concepts of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us” says Barlow. He argues that the internet provides freedom from the conformity that our physical selves are subject to in current society. With the government having its hand in almost all social issues dating back to slavery, segregation, women’s rights, and so on, Barlow provides the idea of the internet being a place of equality and freedom to all regardless of these labels that are placed on us by the government. This idea challenges the governments practice of regulating rights based on race, gender, and various other labels that are erased or unimportant on the internet. The government shouldn’t have the right to place regulations that discriminate or perpetuate privilege and therefore shouldn’t apply laws from the physical world for the internet.

Another issue that Barlow discusses is the freedom of speech the internet provides and government intention to regulate what is said on the internet. He says, “your increasingly obsolete information industries would perpetuate themselves by proposing laws, in American and elsewhere, that claim to own speech itself throughout the world.” Barlow argues that the government cannot own our speech, and this translates into our virtual presence as well. With the rise in use of social media platforms by just about everybody ranging from politicians to celebrities to everyday people, many things said can be controversial or offensive. The government most definitely does not have the right to control what is said on the internet. Just like how we aren’t followed around and monitored on our thoughts and words in everyday life, speech shouldn’t be monitored on the internet unless it is threatening or abusive and poses a threat to public safety.

**Problem 2 (5 points)**

(1) If an Internet service is a natural monopoly, what is the concern in deregulating the Internet service providers offering this service?

* If the service provided by Internet service providers is deregulated, providers can increase their prices to unaffordable rates that do not fall within the common carrier regulations in place.

(2) Explain how Common Carrier regulation was used to regulate telephone utilities that were assumed to be natural monopolies.

* The Common Carrier regulation is used for services that are a public necessity and need to be a universal service. Under the regulation, prices for the service must be reasonable to mimic a competitive market. It also controls entry and exit into the market so that one company cannot provide service for very few consumers or move onto another service and monopolize multiple industries.

**Problem 3 (5 points)**

(1) Can you identify a market or regulatory failure that is causing a problem in your use of an Internet service (e.g., Internet access, social media, search, etc...) that you believe could be used as justification for government intervention?

* Amazon controls multiple services but their main service is delivery of goods to its consumers. Amazon doesn’t have any competitors, and if any do arise, they are unable to compete with Amazon because of their monopoly in this specific service. Government intervention for this would look something like limiting what Amazon can sell/provide from their website.

(2) Explain any concerns this problem could be imposing on society in general. Are you aware of any existing regulations or laws in the United States that are addressing this problem?

* This problem could cause sellers/producers to provide their goods at higher prices due to a lack of competition. Consumers may not have the option to find the same product at a cheaper, fairer price that also promises similar prime benefits of delivery time or shipping and handling fees. I’m not aware of any existing regulations or laws because this isn’t a problem that affects those who use Amazon’s service too drastically since it is convenient for us as consumers.

**Problem 4 (5 points)**

List each step in the interdisciplinary policy framework introduced in class. For the problem you identified in Problem 3, discuss how the framework would apply with regard to issues or concerns for each step, along with a quick idea for a solution.

1. Identify the Problem and Current Policy
   * The problem is Amazon monopolizing a certain industry/service. Current policies include them offering their products from various sellers as well as providing the product at multiple price points of new and used. Without policy, they can easily increase these prices as much as they want on top of the seller’s price point as well as refuse to sell a certain product. This keeps the product from consumers who don’t look elsewhere since Amazon is the most convenient option.
2. Define Policy Objectives
   * Putting in policy that helps promote equal sharing of the service Amazon provides by dividing the goods sold on a certain website or by provider. An example would be limiting a Amazon or another company to selling only a certain type of product or having a limited number of sellers that use their site to sell their product. This would allow for other companies to specialize in selling a certain category of a product.
3. Understand Role of Technology
   * Because of how easy it is for Amazon to sell its products and because of the Prime member benefits they provide, Amazon can easily use its website to provide its service to millions throughout the world. Its accessibility in so many regions of the world beats out most other companies that are attempting to provide services similar to Amazon which is made easy and convenient through the internet. Amazons website reduces the need for a consumer to go through various sellers and simplifies it to just one website and company.
4. Develop Policy Options for Analysis
   * Limiting Amazon to selling only goods rather than also providing Prime Video or Music and allowing for others to compete is a policy option that could help other companies flourish. A better example would be allowing for another company to take over the service of Prime Pantry. Amazon is currently partnered with Whole Foods, something other companies could do to continue current regulation. By partnering with Amazon, Whole Foods is able to deliver their goods and provide a service that would be harder to do on their own. Similarly, large corporations like King Soopers or other local groceries could partake in this and boost their sales.
5. Compare and Recommend Best Option
   * Limitations on the products and services Amazon provides is a difficult regulation to implement since most consumers use Amazon for the convenience of having all their services on one website. Instead, integrating the corporations that are seeing a decrease in their sales with Amazon would benefit both Amazon and the company in question.

**Problem 5 (5 points)**

In Lessig's Code 2.0 case studies, answer ONE of the questions below (your choice to choose the question you find most interesting):

* Jakes Communities: What should society do about virtual lives that have negative impacts on non-virtual lives?

The virtual life someone leads can sometimes be an escape from their “real life”. A lot of times, these virtual lives can be drastically different from their appearance in person. Lessig gives the examples of Jake Baker’s stories and “Grand Theft Auto”. For Jake Baker, his stories often times included him and outlined detailed actions and impacts on others. They could easily be translated into “real life”. “Grand Theft Auto”, on the other hand, is a game in which you take on a character. The world in while the game operates mimics our own, but the real consequences do not exist. Both of these are escapes from “real life” but the game takes on a character, unlike Jake’s stories that do not involve characters but instead real people (or at least characters that could easily be related to the person sitting next to you).

The negative impacts virtual lives have on non-virtual lives in these cases differ. The game is written for you, giving you various options and paths to play, but not necessarily giving a player the license to write exactly what they want to do. The original thoughts that go into your virtual life are different in that they are your decisions and of your own making. Just like in person, everyone is held responsible for their words and actions in their virtual life. Therefore, the idea of holding one responsible for their virtual life is, in my opinion, the right course of action, especially for those negatively impacting others. Society can hold individuals responsible for what they say and do in their virtual lives that is of their original thought and making. It isn’t fair for someone to be held accountable for what they do in a video game, since those options are written by creators. But our tweets, comments, blog posts, etc., should be treated the same as our words and actions in person.