

# The Price of Participating in Society Is the Sacrifice of Privacy and Self

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

*In what is arguably one of the most craven opportunistic moves by a business/media group to increase its circulation/profitability, on 10 April the New York Times (NYT) embarked on what it describes as its [Privacy Project](#).*

*A day later on 11 April, no doubt with the NYT's foreknowledge of what was to come thanks to an unofficial US government tip, Ecuador revoked **Julian Assange's** (Wikileaks founder) asylum in its UK Embassy and fed him to the British Police dogs eagerly awaiting to arrest him and dump him in jail.*

In May 2017 [I wrote](#) that Assange was doomed from the get-go to be arrested and handed over to the US Government and that it would only be a matter of time before **Edward Snowden** befell a similar fate.

*"[Chelsea Manning's](#) leaked information made WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange, a household name. It also made them permanent enemies of the US State. In 2010, Assange released a video that he called Collateral Murder. The video shows an airstrike in which Iraqi journalists are killed. Other releases based on Manning's leak were known as the Afghan Diary and Iraq War Logs. The diplomatic cables exposed some of the silly machinations of the US State Department and the over classification of documents.*

Meanwhile, mainstream media (MSM) outlets like the New York Times and Washington Post feasted on the leaks and gave them prominent coverage daily, even as they excoriated Assange and his merry band of leakers. The MSM believes that WikiLeaks is not "real" journalism even as they used the classified material Assange provided to bolster their subscription numbers. Aren't they accessories to Assange's crime? Apparently they are not.

Assange has been living for the past five years under diplomatic protection in the Embassy of Ecuador in the United Kingdom. He has been accused of rape in Sweden and, if he leaves the embassy, would be arrested by UK authorities and, ultimately, end up in the USA. To make matters worse, now he is a target of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director.

Pompeo once praised WikiLeaks. Whatever data he has seen that made him go ballistic can't be good for Assange, obviously. [Former] Attorney General Jefferson Beauregard Sessions over at the Justice Department has hinted that an arrest warrant is in the works.

He will never get a get out of jail card and is trapped in Ecuador's Embassy in London. The trip from the UK to Sweden to the USA would be swift if he capitulates. 'It's time to call out WikiLeaks for what it really is: A non-state, hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia,' [then] CIA director Mike Pompeo said at a May event hosted by the Center for Strategic

and International Studies in Washington, DC. 'Assange is a narcissist who has created nothing of value and he relies on the dirty work of others to make himself famous: He's a fraud.'

Assange continues to dig a hole for himself with the CIA Vault leaks even as he enlightens us all, apparently, about the machinations of governments around the world."

## Hello Clipper

The New York Times Privacy Project's mission statement is essentially a rehash of a privacy and encryption issue that began on 16 April 1993 over the National Security Agency's proposal to embed a [Clipper Chip](#) in the nation's communications networks and nascent Internet/World Wide Web (WWW). The chip would have allowed NSA and US Law Enforcement Agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation to easily access foreign and domestic public communications. The proposal was the brainchild of President Bill Clinton's administration but a wide awake American public and anti-Clipper Chip groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) opposed the technology and by 1996 the US government gave up on the technology.

# THE PRIVACY PROJECT

Companies and governments are gaining new powers to follow people across the internet and around the world, and even to peer into their genomes. The benefits of such advances have been apparent for years; the costs — in anonymity, even autonomy — are now becoming clearer. The boundaries of privacy are in dispute, and its future is in doubt. Citizens, politicians and business leaders are asking if societies are making the wisest tradeoffs. The Times is embarking on this monthslong project to explore the technology and where it's taking us, and to convene debate about how it can best help realize human potential.

Screengrab from [The New York Times](#)

There is grave doubt whether the American public or pro-Assange interest groups have the voice and staying power of those like the EFF that a couple of decades ago opposed the Clipper Chip.

According to the New York Times project mission statement,

"The boundaries of privacy are in dispute, and its future is in doubt. Citizens, politicians and business leaders are asking if societies are making the wisest tradeoffs. The Times is embarking on this months long project to explore the technology and where it's taking us, and to convene debate about how it can best help realize human potential."

## Privacy in Dispute? Convene a debate? You're Kidding!

Only those in cryogenic freeze or in solitary confinement for the past couple of decades would not know that privacy is already dead, a quaint relic from a time long since past. In today's world, the price of participating in society is the sacrifice of privacy and self. It is not so much that technology is the culprit, it's that a networked world, whether through stories told around a campfire that are passed on in an oral tradition, or instantly via Facebook/Twitter, appears to be a necessary human craving. Wanting to belong to something or some group, to be able to identify with an ideology or fad is apparently irresistible.

What do you really have to trade with your fellow human beings other than your deepest secrets, knowledge and individuality?

Humans are merrily merging with machines or rather the software and interfaces that allow textual and vision immersion, and the light speed acquisition of knowledge that the networked world provides. The [Fourth Amendment](#) to the US Constitution be damned. Who needs it? The government or marketplace will always find a workaround to that relic of a bygone era.

All of this seems preordained by some Universal Machine God. We bow our heads whilst on the mobile device. The Internet/WWW is a sort of public confessional where there is no mediating priest to talk to God for you. It is straight talk with the Public God who dispenses likes or dislikes like the number of prayers a priest tells you to recite to regain a clean soul. And the Internet/WWW is a vengeful God with a long memory. Past sins from youth, or once though well hidden, find their way onto the network with punishment meted out by a hash tag with a name linked to it.

## Sickness of the Future

The NYT Privacy Project, or even my musings here, are not necessary to understand future diseases at work right now in 2019. For a better description of that we can turn to a short story written by Chinese Sci-Fi writer Chen Qiufan titled "**A History of Future Illnesses.**" The story is located in the book [Broken Stars](#), Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation (Ken Liu translator).

"Technology allows ritual to become an indivisible part of everyday life. Its implanted into you and becomes part of your genetic heritage to be passed on to your children and they children multiplying and mutating, more vigorous than its host. You cannot control the impulse to refresh the page. Information explosion brings anxiety but can fill your husk of a soul. Every fifteen seconds you move the mouse, open your social networking profile, browse the comments, retweet and reblog, close the page, and do it all over again fifteen seconds later. You cant stop.

You no longer talk to people in real life. Air has lost its role as the medium for transmitting voice. You sit in a ring, your eyes glued to the latest mobile device in your hand as though worshipping the talisman of some ancient god. Your thoughts now flow into virtual platforms at the tips of your fingers. You are auguring, laughing flustering joking. But reality around you is a silent desert.

You cannot free yourself from the control of artificial environments. Ritual is omnipresent. It is no longer restricted to sacrifice, sermon, mass, concert, or

game performed on a central stage where the classical unities hold. Ritual itself is evolving, turning into distributed cloud computing, evenly spread out to every nook and cranny of your daily life. Sensors know everything and regulate the temperature, humidity, air currents and light around you; adjust your heart rate, hormonal balance, sexual arousal, mood. Artificial intelligence is a god: you think it is there for your welfare bringing you new opportunities, but you've become the egg in the incubator, the marionette attached to wires. Every second of every minute of every day, you are the sacrifice that completes the unending grand ritual. You are the ritual.

Radical thinkers obsess wove how to withdraw from all this. The power of ritual comes from repetition, not its content. Day after day, the repetition of poses and movements gradually seeps into the depth of consciousness like a hard drive's read-write-head repeatedly tracing the patterns of an idea, until the idea becomes indistinguishable from free will itself...Romantic love is ritual's most loyal consumer along with patriotism. The radicals try to imitate the Luddites of old [but]...the only thing that can be done is nothing."

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