

Who is Tracking You?

One of the big issues facing humanity is how advanced computer technology will affect our lives. As computing power continues to grow, computers can remain our friends and continue to become the ultimate tool for growing the Tree of Knowledge. Or - computer technology could become the ultimate tool of oppression and slavery.

As many of you know, computers just do what they are told to do. They are neither good nor bad. It's all in how we choose to use them. They have the power to become the tools of creating freedom or suppressing freedom. Which way they are used depends on what we do with them - or what we allow others to do with them.

For example, today we have RFID (Radio Frequency Identifier) chips. The chips are tiny unpowered computers that are the size of a grain of rice. They are used to track merchandise making it easy to know where items are in the shipping process. They are also implanted into animals so that cattle can be tracked, or if lost, pets are found - the owner can be contacted. In a perfect world the use of RFID chips on humans would have a lot of beneficial advantages. If everyone had an ID chip implanted, then their medical history could be accessed immediately if they are injured. You wouldn't have to carry money or credit cards because the chip would tie you into your funds. You wouldn't have to have keys anymore because the locks on your home and your car would recognize you and know to let you in. No more passwords to remember on your computer because the computer knows who you are and can get you into your stuff. It could be used to track criminals - except that in a perfect world there would be no criminals to track. If we only lived in a perfect world.

In a world where everyone has an ID chip, there is the dark side where the technology can be abused. Unfortunately it seems in the real world, as soon as some new technology is developed, someone finds a way to do something terrible with it. Let's take the same world where everyone has an ID chip. But in this world the government is tracking everything you do. Every time you walk near any door or computer or get into a car your ID chip is scanned and reported to a central database. Every thing you buy is also tracked. Money no longer exists and all transactions are done through your ID chip.

Suppose that an oppressive government is formed and you have a different political or religious view than the ruling powers. All they have to do is tell the system to find you and as soon as you walk near anything that can read your ID you are instantly reported to the police. Or suppose they just want to generally control your life. They can put restrictions on what you are allowed to buy. If you try to purchase something on the restricted list then the transaction fails and the attempted purchase is reported to the authorities. Or you try to go home but the door on your house no longer opens for you. Or the door opens to let you in - but won't open to let you leave. No one can do anything unless they do exactly what they are told to do. We have the technology today to build that kind of world.

We have the technology to track everything a person does and every place they go. We can create a system that totally enslaves every person on the planet. It is up to us to choose not to do that.

It is because of this, in part, that we in the Church of Reality must adhere to the Principle of Freedom and the Principle of Privacy to ensure that we do not use RFID and other types of computer tracking technology to enslave the world. If we are to ensure that tomorrow is better than today and that the human race evolves in the sacred direction, then we as Realists need to be visionaries and to help ensure that reality is part of the thinking that goes into the big decisions. We can not allow nations, religions, or any other group to seize control of the authority to use technology to turn us into slaves of the great machine. We need to be a free people moving towards a better world.