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**"To what extent will individuals have control over the privacy of new information generated by nanotechnology (genetic information, location, spyware)? To what extent have our privacy rights already been eroded by current technology"**

These are excellent questions. Privacy is a complex notion, and while people can generally agree that privacy is generally a good thing, we may be willing in some situations to accept limitations on or violations of privacy. But there is a *lot* of disagreement about what kinds of situations should result in limitations on privacy.

Using examples of existing surveillance technologies, consider the following range of perspectives on privacy. In some cases, people will *welcome* violations of privacy – videocameras in parking lots, for instance, that monitor people’s behavior, are generally not seen as problematic. This is probably because there is an obvious and broad benefit: the protection of people and property. In other cases, violations of privacy will be entirely unwelcome – videocameras in bathroom stalls or locker rooms, for instance, are generally seen as very problematic. But many cases will fall somewhere in between – paparazzi photographing celebrity indiscretions, for instance (highly sought after by fans, but disliked by celebrities); employers monitoring employee phone calls and e-mails (highly sought after by employers, but disliked by employees); videocameras installed at inner-city street corners to record potential crimes (highly sought after by police, but disliked by those who believe that crimes will just move to another corner); and so on. As a society, we may be willing to tolerate, or even embrace, certain violations of privacy, depending on the *nature, purpose, and outcome* of the violation, as well as the *governance* structure in place to administer the relevant technology.

*Nature:* What is the technology? How does it work? How will it be used? Where will it be used? Will surveillance be obvious or stealthy (e.g., will I be able to see the cameras or be alerted to their use, or will surveillance take place without my knowledge)?

*Purpose:* Why is the technology being considered/used? Who is proposing this use? Why? Are there other (better?) means for achieving this goal? Who stands to benefit from the technology? Who stands to lose?

*Outcome:* Will the technology achieve the desired outcome? (And is the outcome really desired in the first place?) Can we anticipate any side-effects? Are these side-effects desirable, tolerable, or undesirable? Can the undesirable side-effects be ‘treated’?

*Governance:* Who will govern the technology? Who will have access to data? Can they be trusted? How will data be used? Can access be limited (to particular people, or particular kinds of data) and, if so, how? Will people be able to foil the technology (e.g., using a radar detector to avoid speed traps) and, if so, legally? Will abuses be readily identifiable? Will inappropriate violations be subject to penalties? How will regulations be designed and enforced (and, if necessary, revised)?

It is probably fair to say that, given current trends, individual citizens will have an increasingly difficult time managing their own privacy in the future. Is privacy worth protecting at all costs? Probably not. Is it worth giving up altogether? No way. This means that it is very important to design a governance structure equipped to deal with the challenges of existing and emerging technologies, one that helps to protect privacy in the contexts that matter most to us – whatever those happen to be. It is easy to imagine a world in which ‘Big Brother’ (government, industry) watches our every move (photo radar, spyware cookies, wiretapping). It is just as easy to imagine a world in which we ourselves watch everyone else’s every move (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube). Other options are possible. The questions before us are: In what kind of world do we want to live? Why? And what do we need to do to get there?