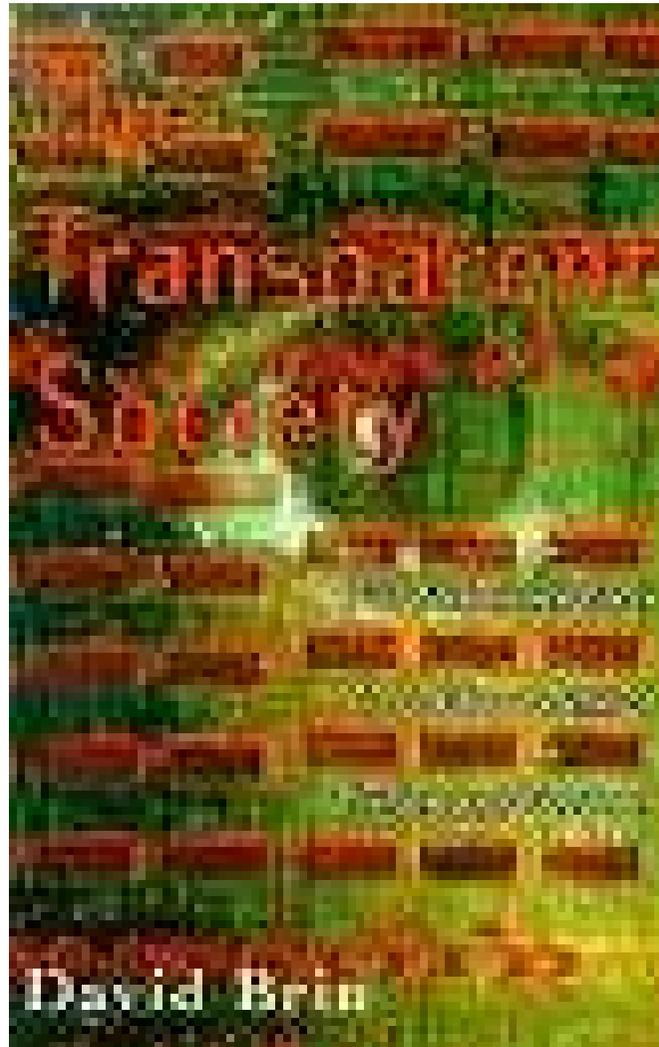


"The Transparent Society": Ten Years Later



Panelists

David Brin

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A. Michael Froomkin

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Ten Years is Forever In 'Net Years'

- A lot of people made fun of it when it came out
- Still in print 10 years later
- Routinely cited in legal and communications work
- It's part of the mental furniture
- Even though almost no one seems to agree with it!

“..the cameras *are* coming. You can rail against them, shaking your fist in futile rage at all the hovering lenses. Or you can join a committee of six billion neighbors to control the pesky things, making each one an extension of your eyes.”

– TTS, p. 333

Major Themes of TTS

- Information is power
 - In the hands of government
 - But can also be harnessed by the ‘hive mind’
- If information flows are banned, only criminals (& governments) will have information
- Transparency has (many) virtues
 - Perfect law enforcement
 - Better competition

Themes (2)

- Info-reciprocity is better than trying to regulate the information state/firms
 - Don't blind the state
 - National security
 - More transparency → better crime clearance rates
 - Don't blind the citizens
 - Be wary of information gathering by firms – make them share too

Themes (3)

- Privacy is fundamentally a matter of taste and social expectations
 - You (or your kids) might not miss it
- Identity of speakers enhances debate
 - Anonymity is not always bad, just usually bad
- Strong crypto gets in the way of transparency
 - It should be discouraged, maybe taxed
- BUT – not all information should be free
 - Protect copyright (or something like it) and keep paying me for my books

A Few Thoughts

- Blind grading
- What does the Bush administration teach us about the Transparent Society?
 - Not a transparent admin, and institutions proved unable to enforce FOIA, etc.
 - Lack of transparency facilitated Gulf War 2 (e.g. WMD claims)

Questions

- Are we willing to surrender to technological determinism?
- Is it plausible to believe that radical transparency will lessen rather than worsen power disparities?
- The US Courts treat anonymity as a core political value – what will a transparent society do to politics?

Questions (2)

- What would the economic consequences of radical transparency be?
 - Rampant Taylorism?
 - For everyone? Just for lower-paid workers?
 - And where does copyright fit in the transparent society?
- What about power:
 - How will turning cameras on bosses help workers?

And Finally...

- Is privacy just a taste? Should we just “get over it”?