





based on their thoughts of committing a crime, like in the science-fiction dystopian society in *Minority Report*<sup>7</sup>. Already, in the United States, in Indiana, an 18-year-old was charged with attempting to intimidate his school by posting a video of himself shooting people in the hallways... Except the people were zombies and the video was of him playing an augmented-reality video game, all interpreted to be a mental projection of his subjective intent.

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This is exactly why our brains need special protection. If our brains are just as subject to data tracking and aggregation<sup>8</sup> as our financial records and transactions, if our brains can be hacked and tracked like our online activities, our mobile phones and applications, then we're on the brink of a dangerous threat to our collective humanity.

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Before you panic, I believe that there are solutions to these concerns, but we have to start by focusing on the right things. When it comes to privacy protections in general, I think we're fighting a losing battle by trying to restrict the flow of information. Instead, we should be focusing on securing rights and remedies against the misuse of our information. If people had the right to decide how their information was shared, and more importantly, have legal redress<sup>9</sup> if their information was misused against them, say to discriminate against them in an employment setting or in health care or education, this would go a long way to build trust. In fact, in some instances, we want to be sharing more of our personal information. Studying aggregated information can tell us so much about our health and our well-being, but to be able to safely share our information, we need special protections for mental privacy. This is why we need a right to cognitive liberty. This right would secure for us our freedom of thought and rumination, our freedom of self-determination, and it would insure that we have the right to consent to or refuse access and alteration of our brains by others. This right could be recognized as part of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which has established mechanisms for the enforcement of these kinds of social rights.

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During the *Iranian Green Movement*, the protesters used the internet and good old-fashioned word of mouth to coordinate their marches. And some of the most oppressive restrictions in Iran were lifted as a result. But what if the Iranian government had used brain surveillance to detect and prevent the protest? Would the world have ever heard the protesters' cries? The time has come for us to call for a cognitive liberty revolution. To make sure that we responsibly advance technology that could enable us to embrace the future while fiercely protecting all of us from any person, company or government that attempts to unlawfully access or alter our innermost lives.

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Thank you.

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<sup>7</sup> *Minority Report*: film by Steven Spielberg, 2002

<sup>8</sup> (here) storing of data

<sup>9</sup> compensation