

# Escape from Being Tracked and the Right to Privacy

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**Abstract** The present paper uses the conceptual framework first introduced by Erich Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* (1941) to draw parallels between how Germans came to embrace authoritarianism and totalitarianism in the 20th Century and how Americans have come to entertain authoritarian remedies in the 21st Century. Erich Fromm's (1941) seminal conceptualization of negative and positive freedom are relevant today to understand the expansion of the internet and calls for privacy protections and privacy rights. A vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing has emerged in post-Great Recession and post-war America. Alternatively, valuing positive freedom can offer a real and long term solution to external threats to both individual freedom and social order (Fromm, 1941). A global social movement revolving around "privacy rights" has emerged in the 21st Century. It is rapidly becoming a lightning rod for past social movements in the 20th Century.

**Keywords** Escape from Freedom, Right to privacy, Privacy protections, Democracy, Active agency, Social responsibility, and social movements

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years the issue of cyber-privacy has become increasingly salient and has now started to take hold, sweeping across nations, cultures, and continents. This has occurred in large part due to the exponential increase of smart phone technology and internet access, which has made the entire world more accessible and more open to public view. The smart phone is only the beginning, however, as smart devices continue to evolve, and like it or not, the "internet Kudzu vine" is entangling more and more of our everyday lives, with no signs of cold weather abatement. Whether one is concerned about marketing and monetizing, or concerned about government security and national autonomy, people, businesses, and governments want to know what data is being collected, what is being done with that data, and who is buying it. High profile media coverage of privacy infringements in both the United States and Western Europe have led to a growing public awareness of and support for privacy protections. *Calls for privacy rights are a direct response to being tracked on the internet by governments, cyber businesses, and hackers, etc., and may foreshadow the emergence of a global civil rights movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (e.g., see Right to be Forgotten Act [European Commission, 2012; The Editorial Board, 2015]; Wikileaks disclosure of U.S. diplomatic documents [Khatchadourian, 2010]; Edward Snowden leak of classified National Security Agency information on mass

surveillance of U.S. citizens [Gellman, Blake, & Miller, 2013; Starr & Yan, 2013]; Facebook screens information sent to users [Golbeck, 2013; Swern, 2013]; Snapchat tracks personal data of users [Bilton, 2014; Mosendz, 2014; Van Allen, 2014]; Apple denies U.S. government backdoor access to Apple phones operating system and advocates for government transparency [Blatterberg, 2014]; Cyber-breach of U.S. Office of Personnel Management affecting up to 18 million federal employees [Sciutto, 2015]; European Court rules that Google cannot transfer personal information of Europeans to the U.S. [Scott, 2015]; Kilbourne, Kilbourne, & Harned, 2016).

The present paper uses the conceptual framework first introduced by Erich Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* (1941) to draw parallels between how Germans came to embrace authoritarianism and totalitarianism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and how Americans have come to entertain authoritarian remedies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. More specifically, some U.S. government officials and politicians are proposing during a distinct period of economic and psychosocial instability in U.S. history (i.e., Post Great Recession and Post War America) to employ the exponential growth of high tech and the internet in the United States as an instrument to escape from contemporary societal threats to freedom (e.g., terrorism) and to re-establish social order (i.e., security or pre-freedom [Hassani, n.d.]).

Erich Fromm's (1941) seminal conceptualization of negative freedom and positive freedom are relevant today to understand the expansion of the internet into our daily lives and calls for privacy protections and privacy rights. Specifically, the "escape from being tracked" is conceptualized as a negative freedom and "the right to privacy" is conceptualized as a positive freedom. Negative

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freedom is achieved when we escape from unwanted influence and control (e.g., totalitarian regimes or intrusion by advertisers and/or governments into our personal lives) whereas positive freedom is only achieved through: 1) self-realization and self-integration, 2) responsibility, and 3) individual independence and sharing of community (i.e. democracy and equality).

## 2. The Historical and Cultural Backdrop

It is well known that the rise of the Third Reich in Germany following World War I and how freedom became an important issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (i.e., something to fight for and defend) were major factors influencing Erich Fromm's book *Escape from Freedom* (1941). Fromm observed how the German people attempted to escape from the economic and psychosocial threats created by the end of the World War I (i.e., negative freedom) to only find themselves enslaved by their embrace of Nazi Germany. Germans chose security, in the form of thoughts and behaviors associated with authoritarianism, destructiveness, and conformity, instead of positive freedom (i.e., the freedom to create a totally integrated self and a sense of *communitas* as the healthy foundation for a fledgling democracy). In choosing security, Germans were consciously or unconsciously choosing what Fromm called pre-freedom, or the state when a person is primarily or only conscious of themselves as a member of a community, race, party, and/or corporation, etc. For an adult, pre-freedom is a regressed state since the adult is now relating to the "State" or "Party" in a way similar to the way a child knows they are a member of a family and learns to submit for protection and safety to their all-powerful parent(s).

Interestingly, there are definite parallels between the economic and psychosocial conditions in Germany after the end of the World War I and the economic and psychosocial conditions in the United States after the end of the Great Recession and the official end of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars.

**Economic Instability.** War reparations following World War I, hyperinflation throughout Europe in the early 20s, and then the Great Depression, beginning in 1929, destabilized the German economy, creating massive unemployment and virtually wiping out the savings and assets of the German middle class. Economic instability and domestic chaos followed and did much to foster social and political unrest (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). In the United States, the so-called Great Recession of 2007 to 2009 was the longest downturn since World War II (18 months) and the deepest recession on record in terms of job losses (The American economy shed 6% of nonfarm jobs). Many contend the American economy has still not fully recovered and continues to foster economic instability and insecurity for millions of Americans, especially for prime age workers, and is weighed down by widespread underemployment, wage stagnation, loss of benefits, and

loss of manufacturing jobs. Without question, the economic recovery from the Great Recession has been cumbersome and uneven (clearly favoring those higher up the income ladder), has furthered the decline of the American middle class (Che, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015; O'Connor, 2015; Picchi, 2015), and has contributed to social and political instability in the United States.

The Pew Research Center (2014) recently reported that five years after the U.S. economy's recovery from the Great Recession that 39% of surveyed respondents indicated their recovery as fair and 23% indicated their recovery as poor. Pew's data further indicated that on multiple measures, inflation-adjusted gross domestic product (GDP), job growth, employment population ratio, and personal income, the economic recovery from the Great Recession has lagged behind previous recoveries. These findings have not gone unnoticed by the middle class and, in fact, recent data by the Pew Research Center (2015) indicates that the middle class in America is shrinking, falling from 62% of households in 1970 to 43% of households in 2014.

**Threat.** In Germany following World War I, the communist threat at home and abroad was ever present (e.g., the Spartacist Uprising in Germany, the Bela Kun in Hungary, and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia) and a constant reminder to Germans of a possible takeover of the middle class (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). In the United States, the Islamic Extremist threat was sudden, shocking and unexpected, and became a constant reminder of an existential threat to all Americans. A slumbering nation awoke to the 9/11/2001 attacks (by Al-Qaeda's Hamburg Cell) on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City (killing more than 2000 people) and stood collectively frozen like a deer staring into the headlights of an oncoming car. The U.S. government responded quickly by launching major military operations and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The human toll from both wars was substantial (i.e., 6,800 U.S. troops and 6,900 U.S. contractors died [Watson Institute, 2016]). The subsequent vacuum created by the official ending of those wars, which included the American withdrawal of combat ground forces, was filled rapidly by ISIS or ISIL and with the spreading of extremism throughout the region. The aforementioned became a constant reminder to America in general and the American middle class in particular that their way of life was under attack and that the war with Islamic extremism was not over.

Most recently, following the Islamic terrorist attacks in Paris, France and San Bernardino, California, USA, the Pew Research Center (2015) reported that nearly 30% of U.S. respondents cite terrorism, national security, and ISIS as important problems facing the nation, 47% favor the use of ground forces against ISIS, and 56% believe anti-terrorist policies have not gone far enough to protect the country. While there are big differences between Conservative Republicans and Liberal Democrats, youth versus older generations, and white versus nonwhites, there is a widespread belief across the board that government efforts

to combat terrorism are falling short. In the AP-Times Square Poll (Dobnik, 2015), 68% of those polled identified mass shootings in the U.S. as very or extremely important (e.g., shootings in San Bernardino, CA., Charleston, SC; Roseburg, OR; and Chattanooga, TN), 64% targeted the Paris attacks in 2015, and 63% honed in on atrocities committed by Islamic extremists.

**Polarization.** Polarization of the radical left and the radical right were common and apparent on the streets of post-world war one Germany. There were rallies, demonstrations, confrontations, and imprisonments. German socialist and liberal circles were committed to maintain Germany's new found and fragile democracy while the German National Right were committed to revise the Versailles Treaty, even by force, and focused on manipulating the public longing for authoritarian direction to restore order and security (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). Today, in the United States, polarization of the left and the right are as evident as during post-World War I Germany. (While we do not see rallies, demonstrations, or confrontations on the city streets and corners of America, we do see polarization *vis a vis* the mass media as a result of the long reach of the internet, smart phones, and social media into our everyday lives.) A recent study by the Pew Research Center (2014), for example, found Republicans and Democrats increasingly divided along ideological lines and especially by those actively involved in the political process. Those who identified themselves as either Liberal or Conservative were more likely to be hostile toward the political opposition and to feel that the opposition party was a threat to national security. What has emerged in the United States, as the nation heads into the 2016 Presidential election, is a clear trend for both the ideological left and ideological right to isolate themselves into their own respective communities and to demand one sided and sometimes drastic solutions from their leaders (e.g., shut down the government or seize government buildings).

**Intolerance and Discrimination.** During post-World War I Germany and in fact throughout much of the surrounding region during that same time period, there was a pervasive wave of intolerance, discrimination, and violent antisemitism toward national minorities (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). A similar wave of intolerance and discrimination has arisen, ironically, during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the United States. With the election of Barack Obama on November 4, 2008, the first African American President in U.S. history, many Americans proclaimed the end of racism in America. That claim could not have been further from the truth. The election of America's first African American president ignited a white backlash unprecedented in post-World War II U.S. history and gave birth to a ferocious opposition mixed with high charged racial hate and extreme ideological remedies. President Obama's skin color, religious faith, birth origin, and immigration policies all came under attack. The lightning rod for this new found racial intolerance and discrimination toward national

minorities in the U.S. became the illegal Mexican immigrant. Calls to deport an estimated 11 million illegal Mexican immigrants, to build a wall along the southern border to keep them out, to jail them, or to kill them, became all too common. Pleas to keep the U.S. Military's Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp open for business and its doors shut on Muslim extremists railed through the hallways of Congress (Savage, 2016).

The Pew Research Center (2015) recently reported that with over 45 million immigrants in the U.S. (14% of the U.S. population), including 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants, Americans remain divided along party lines. Republicans are much more likely to say that immigrants exacerbate crime, weaken the economy, do not want to really assimilate, and that Latinos in particular have a negative impact on society. The animosity by Republicans toward Latinos appears way out of proportion to the facts: the population of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. has been stable at around 11.3 million for the last five years, the unauthorized Mexican immigrant population has actually declined since the 2007 peak, six states account for 60% of unauthorized immigrants, unauthorized immigrants make up only 5.1% of the U.S. labor force, and just 7% of K-12 students indicate having at least one unauthorized immigrant parent (November, 2015).

**Disillusionment and Distrust of Political Leaders.** Another feature of post-World War I Germany was widespread disillusionment with national and international politics and a general sense of distrust of political leaders and government officials. A *zeitgeist* of cultural despair and alienation arose and created a shared longing to restore the nation to a former and higher moral order (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2015). Similarly, disillusionment with the political process and distrust of government has reached new heights in contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> Century American society. It has created a longing to restore the nation to a former and higher moral order and to a past era of "American Exceptionalism." According to the Pew Research Center (2014), public trust in the U.S. government remains near historic lows, with only 24% of respondents indicating that they trust Washington always or most of the time. While a more recent report (Pew Research Center, 2015) indicated a mixed response to the role of government and government effectiveness, the same political apathy and malaise toward the U.S. government persists: only 19% reported trusting government always or most of the time, only 20% reported government programs are well run, and a striking 55% reported that "ordinary Americans" would be better at solving the nation's problems.

### 3. The Freedom Problem

Concurrent with the above economic and psychosocial developments in the U.S. has been the exponential growth of scientific breakthroughs and high tech innovations at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The depth and range of high tech is

staggering (Psychroneity, 2015): wearables, delivery drones, tensor flow, robo-bees, electronic circuits in living plants, supersonic jets with softer booms, 3D-printed internal organs, plucking light particles from laser beams, tiny particle accelerators, Youtube music applications, large hadron collider, invisibility cloaks, DSLR cameras, high-tech light shows, etc. The full impact of these scientific breakthroughs and high tech innovations for the U.S. and the world is still hard to fully appreciate. However, there is little doubt that science and high tech are changing society, the way we relate to one another, how we perceive ourselves, and our ability to reach out across the globe (Kilbourne & Kilbourne, 2015).

Science and high tech are also influencing how law enforcement, the military, and national agencies attempt to safeguard ordinary citizens and to protect the nation. Revelations by Wikileaks's disclosure of U.S. diplomatic documents (Khatchadourian, 2010) and Edward Snowden's (Gellman, Blake, & Miller, 2013; Starr & Yan, 2013) leak of classified National Security Agency information on mass surveillance of U.S. citizens set off a storm of debates. Later attempts by law enforcement to secure "backdoors" to social media websites [Blatterberg, 2014] denies U.S. government backdoor access to Apple phones operating system and advocates for government transparency) further magnified concerns by law abiding citizens about being misled and tracked by government. Moreover, the larger issue of sharing personal information with internet companies and being tracked by their cookies only feeds into a general sense of intrusion and a sense that "Big Brother" is watching.

*The basic issues debated pertain to what is appropriate surveillance in a democratic society, what is the best way to protect the nation from terrorist acts and foreign espionage, and how will Americans elect to balance their civil liberties with real national security needs? None of these questions are easily answered nor are any of them answered in a single voice.* Here lies the problem. In post-Great Recession and post-war America, we all bear witness to an insecure nation attempting to escape from the continued throes of economic insecurity and terrorist threat (negative freedom) by seeking security (i.e., pre-freedom). An insecure nation which has become increasingly willing to sacrifice its long history of civil liberties, individual rights, and constitutional safeguards by engaging in mass surveillance, deportations, secret imprisonments, and even torture to protect itself from threat. A bundle of mixed threats, some foreign and some domestic, has arrived on the shores of America in the form of Islamic extremism, 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants, changing demographics (i.e., more nonwhites than whites), slow economic recovery and a shrinking middle class, and changing norms and values (e.g., alternative lifestyles). Post-Great Recession and post-war America is under attack.

Yet, there is a compelling logic in using science and high tech to monitor, track, intercept, and bring to justice individuals and groups with illegitimate and antisocial goals (i.e., criminals, terrorists, spies, corporate raiders, consumer

scams, etc.). The irony, however, is that there is also a very "Big Brother" and "Neo-Fascist" look to this compelling logic, the very thing the U.S. fought to eradicate in World War II. The proposed remedy for the terrorist threat, for example, increased surveillance, military strikes, and the abridgement of individual liberties and freedoms at home, starts to look more and more like a new poison, creating just one more "negative freedom" to escape from (Fromm, 1941). In other words, millions of citizens in post-Great Recession and post-war America are attempting to escape not just from economic insecurity and terrorist threat (i.e., the sickness), they are now also attempting to escape from surveillance and restrictions by big government and big business (i.e., the cure).

A vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing has emerged in post-Great Recession and post-war America. A situation in which the apparent solution of one problem (i.e., escaping from economic insecurity and terrorism) in a chain of life circumstances creates a new problem (i.e., increased surveillance, restrictions, and the loss of basic rights, etc.) and increases the difficulty of solving the original problem (i.e., economic insecurity and terrorism). This vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing does not achieve the goal of solving the original problem (i.e., economic insecurity and terrorism) and it does not provide a real sense of security to those who get caught up in it, similar to a dog chasing its own tail. Moreover, the vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing is aggravated by the pedestrian observation that one man's freedom can be another man's oppression.

For example, when NSA engages in mass data surveillance of millions of law abiding citizens to ferret out terrorist activity (Gellman, Blake, & Miller, 2013; Starr & Yan, 2013) and President Obama signs a cybersecurity bill allowing "information sharing" between companies and the government (Kopan, 2015), it is also perceived as infringing upon a basic American freedom, "Every man's home is his castle:"

Amendment IV: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. (The Constitution of the United States, Amendment 4).

When President Obama (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016) takes executive action to combat gun violence in America by expanding mandatory background checks for some private sales (e.g., the "gun show loophole"), he is also perceived by millions of Americans as bypassing the legislative process (i.e., separation of powers) and infringing upon a basic American freedom, "The right to bear arms:"

Amendment II: A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. (The Constitution of the United States, Amendment 2).

## 4. The Freedom Solution

The basic question is whether a vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing can ever really solve the initial problem, in this case provide economic security and safety for millions of Americans, and the answer is simply “no.” In a vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing (i.e., “escaping from something” in Fromm’s terms [1941]), the focus of problem solving is never on the true cause(s) of the problem (i.e., *ipso facto* by definition), the focus is always on escaping from the problem, which is not the same as identifying the actual cause(s) of the problem. The actual problem can in principle never be solved. Moreover, any security (i.e., pre-freedom in Fromm’s terms [1941]) provided by an external and higher authority (i.e., an organization, party, corporation or form of government) can never provide real and lasting psychological security to the individual. It can only provide a false sense of security because it comes from outside the individual (i.e., the individual is never afforded autonomy or responsibility for their life choices), and, as such, the individual will never be able to get enough of it and will always depend on the external source of authority for its provision (e.g., like a child who never grows up).

Oftentimes in life things appear to correct themselves with the passage of time. The pain and agony is in the waiting, and for some the pain and agony may be too much and the wait may be too long. Economies do recover and threats to security do subside. All life is change. We frequently come to see in hindsight the true causes of a prior societal problem(s) (e.g., economic recessions, war, terrorism, discrimination, poverty, unauthorized immigrants, global warming, etc.) and recognize that these crises are human made and are therefore avertible. *Not-with-standing, a major problem with the vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing in contemporary post-Great Recession and post-war America is that the remedy has become the poison.* The initial threat may be lessened or removed with the passage of time (i.e., the economy may fully recover or terrorism in the Middle East may be reduced or eliminated), and lessons may be learned, but the remedy remains a fact of life and creates a real threat to individual autonomy and individual freedom. In a socio-political sense, the negative freedom solution (e.g., increased public surveillance and/or restricting the right to bear arms to escape from terrorism) may become a much bigger threat than the initial problem (e.g., terrorism) because: 1) it is very difficult to remove once it has become established and institutionalized, 2) it may transform a free society in unknown ways and persist for generations, and 3) it may intentionally or unintentionally lay the ground work for Neo-fascist thinking and Neo-fascist social movements.

## 5. Positive Freedom

The only real and long term solution to external threats to individual freedom and social order is to appreciate and

value positive freedom (Fromm, 1941). Positive freedom and psychological security can only be attained by the individual from within themselves, neither can be provided by others (i.e., governments, institutions, parties or organizations), and both are individual foundation stones of democracy. Positive freedom and real psychological security only result from self-realization and self-integration, when the individual becomes aware of the different aspects or dimensions of themselves and integrates those dimensions into their whole self and, in turn, integrates the various dimensions of self into healthy relationships with others and the community. At best, institutions, organizations and government can only provide a supportive environment, one which is both democratic and provides a fair opportunity structure, that will facilitate the individual’s self-growth, healthy relationships, a healthy and productive lifestyle, a sense of community, and positive freedom. Institutions, organizations, and/or governments cannot live the individual’s life nor can they protect the individual from all the vagaries of life.

Positive freedom, then, like everything else involved in the human experience, does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a social context. While positive freedom can evolve in principle in each individual under diverse psychosocial conditions, it is most likely to evolve as “a way of life” for a particular individual when the following themes are proactively emphasized, cultivated, and reinforced by the social community:

1. *Freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin.* When freedom stands alone, it is conceptually indistinguishable from narcissism, anarchy, Machiavellianism, and/or fascism, where anyone can do whatever they choose without any consideration of consequences to others. Freedom only acquires its unique meaning to the individual when it is inseparably tied to responsibility and when it requires each individual to make a choice in relation to the consequences to self and others. Positive freedom, then, becomes a creative act of independent choice (Fromm, 1941) when it takes into consideration and weighs the effect(s) of one’s actions on oneself and on others, and attempts to maximize positive effects for both the self and the other (i.e. a win-win equation).
2. *Positive values are affirmed and validated.* This consists of a positive value statement (e.g., the right to privacy, the right to bear arms, the right to vote, the right to love and be loved, etc.) and is always associated, directly or indirectly, with a positive, prosocial action that validates emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally the positive value statement. In a democracy the right to vote is at the heart of democracy and, therefore, it is the responsibility of each citizen to register to vote and to vote in every local, state, and national election. In the U.S., the Fourth Amendment bestows to citizens the

right to be safe in their homes against unreasonable searches and seizures and is a basic right of privacy. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each citizen to know “best practices” when using information technology and to use services that respect their privacy (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 2014). Recent efforts to create strong privacy and data security protections at the state level to fill in the gaps of federal privacy and data security protections is another way prosocial action has occurred (Peterson, 2016b).

3. *Citizens and public servants are trained and educated in civics, cultural diversity, and scientific literacy.* Every citizen in a free and democratic society needs to complete a course or training in civics, the study of the rights and duties of a citizen and how government works (Merriam-Webster, 2015), and every citizen needs to be educated to appreciate, value, and celebrate cultural diversity. Every citizen in a free and democratic society also needs to be scientifically literate in order to understand the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and how the latter affects government, democracy, and modern life. Additionally, all public servants (e.g., government employees and elected officials) need to complete training and be certified in public ethics. Certification in public ethics holds public servants and elected officials accountable to a standard that goes over and above the law, insures practices consistent with positive freedom, and protects against private agendas and secrecy in public places.
4. *Societal solutions are tailored to the particular problem(s) and are time reviewed and time limited to protect civil liberties.* Too often when a public tragedy occurs (e.g., a teen suicide, mass murder, terrorist act, or child molestation, etc.), there is a knee-jerk reaction to implement an immediate and wide-net response to stop any further occurrences of any similar occurring event. There are many examples of this in contemporary American society. When a high school teen commits suicide on campus the school administration implements a policy to send any teen showing signs of suicidal ideation to the nurse’s office and is immediately sent home. When a child is molested a call to CPS results in automatically removing the child from the home and placing them in safe holding. When a grisly mass murder is committed by a psychiatric patient any violent threats by other psychiatric patients may be treated by increasing their medications or placing them in conservatorships. When a terrorist act occurs, gun laws are re-examined (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016) or a country harboring terrorists or a country near-by to a country that harbors terrorists is invaded (Gompert, Binnendijk, & Lin, 2014). While such knee-jerk and wide net responses may seem politically correct at the time,

they rarely solve the problem(s), and they often create more problems than they solve. Alternatively, societal problems are more likely solved when specific strategies are developed that deal with the specific problem. For example, when a child is molested in the home is the perpetrator in or out of the home and are there relatives available to take the child? When a teen commits suicide on a school campus were there warning signs from family, friends and/or school staff that were not heeded and was the tragedy an isolated event? When a psychiatric patient commits a mass murder were there warning signs and symptoms overlooked or dismissed by professional staff that should have been part of the treatment plan? When a terrorist act occurs was there a breach, for example, in airline security at a particular airport in a particular country or was there a security breach at all airports in all countries throughout the world? Specifically tailored strategies are more likely to solve specific societal problems. They are more likely to be continued or discontinued appropriately when there are scheduled timely reviews, and they are less likely to involve threats to personal freedom.

## 6. How to Protect Yourself Online (Best Practices)

While there is a growing of body of experts, companies, and civil society groups around the world who reject proposals by governments to weaken strong encryption (Peterson, 2016a), there are three tiers of online protection that require low, moderate, or high effort on the part of the user or consumer of online services. *Low effort security protection* includes, but is not limited to: 1) reducing what you share online, 2) do not share any personal information on any website or social media site you belong to, 3) maximize the privacy settings on your social media accounts, 4) make sure all links are legitimate (e.g., if you get a link from your bank and the email link in the email points to another website it is usually a scam), 5) use the “Private Browsing” option in your internet browser, and 6) make sure the website you are using uses a legitimate SSL Certificate by hovering on the lock icon to the page URL. *Moderate effort security protection* may include: 1) strengthening all of your passwords to be at least ten characters and containing both symbols and numbers, and 2) never give your credit card to a website. (Always use a trusted payment gateway to protect your information [e.g., Paypal]). *High effort security protection* may include: 1) only browsing the internet with a proxy server, 2) using your own mail server, buy a server from a web host that will not read your email and only use that for email services, 3) use someone else’s internet (Your IP has a lot of your personal information and will likely sell your personal information as well as your internet activity to anyone willing to pay), and 4) disabling Flash and Javascript (Most

websites will not run without these, but they prove a huge security risk).

## 7. Conclusions

The present paper drew a conceptual parallel between post-World War I Germany and post-Great Recession/post-war America in terms of economic instability, threat, polarization, intolerance and discrimination, and disillusionment with and distrust of political leaders. These similar economic and psychosocial conditions have fostered in contemporary post-Great Recession/post-war America a vicious cycle of negative freedom chasing; a situation in which the apparent solution of one problem (i.e., escaping from economic insecurity and terrorism) in a chain of life circumstances creates a new problem (i.e., increased surveillance, restrictions, and the loss of basic rights, etc.) and increases the difficulty of solving the original problem (i.e., economic insecurity and terrorism). Using science and high tech to monitor, track, intercept, and bring to justice individuals and groups with illegitimate and antisocial goals (i.e., criminals, terrorists, spies, corporate raiders, consumer scams, etc.) makes sense, on the one hand, but it tends to trigger threats to personal freedoms and individual liberties on the other (e.g., surveillance of law abiding citizens and loss of privacy). Alternatively, Fromm's notion of positive freedom (1941) is proffered as a better solution since it can lead to positive strategies to solve societal problems without abridging individual rights and liberties and can facilitate more constructive and proactive uses of emerging information technology. Fromm's notion of positive freedom (1941) is thus as relevant today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as it was when Fromm first introduced it in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The single best confirmation of the importance of the current discussion of negative and positive freedom is the fact that a global social movement revolving around "privacy rights" has emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is rapidly becoming a lightning rod for past social movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (e.g., free speech, civil rights, anti-government, women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, religious freedom, Earth Day, etc.) and holds up the potential for becoming the defining social movement in modern human history. (It may foreshadow the very definition of civil rights and human rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.) The "privacy rights" social movement is undeniably the first global and "virtual reality" social movement in human history. It is a social movement that is rooted in the internet and mass media news coverage, has no fixed or designated leadership, lacks a formal ideology and formal organizational structure (although it tends to be but is not exclusively democratic), emerges spontaneously and periodically as a result of need and circumstance (populist), attracts other rights issues and concerns, distributes itself based on internet access (mostly around large urban centers), and is self-regenerating. Perhaps most

importantly, while the "privacy rights" social movement is not likely to gather all rights advocates under one tent, it is very likely to succeed in two historically unprecedented ways: 1) it is very likely to grow proportionately to the spread and influence of the internet worldwide, and 2) its core concept, the right to privacy, is likely to be incorporated worldwide into all social movements to a greater or lesser degree. It is unstoppable.

There are no doubt other short and long range implications of the present conceptual analysis which have not been discussed in the present paper. The most apparent of which is that current neo-fascist trends in contemporary American society (e.g., waterboarding, mass data surveillance, infringement(s) of Second and Fourth Amendment rights, a proposed Muslim ban and threats to religious freedom, military detention without due process, white supremacy, building a wall around America, and deporting undocumented immigrants *en masse*, etc.) are not likely to quietly or magically go away. It is not facetious to consider, then, whether such neo-fascist trends could result in a national neo-fascist movement in the USA, the exact type of social movement that World War II purportedly fought to eradicate from civilized society. Second, and even more likely for the thoughtful and sober minded, if a neo-fascist national movement is ultimately rejected by mainstream American society, what does America do to re-educate and re-socialize millions of Americans who have embraced racist, xenophobic, and neo-fascist beliefs, how much will it cost, and how long will it take?

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