Chapter 8
The Consequences of Watching:
Redefining Privacy

ABSTRACT

The discussion of surveillance invariably leads to an assessment of the idea of privacy. This is a construct that has been widely debated over time, with some of the early aspects of privacy taking shape in Britain. Later, a Supreme Court judge in America argued for privacy as the right to be "left alone." Over time, the concept has seen transformations with the focus on defining what aspects of the narrative can be considered to be protected. Eventually, every context of surveillance such as I2P and P2I has slightly different considerations of privacy.

INTRODUCTION

Other than surveillance, a major component of this book is the notion of privacy. All through the previous chapters I have hinted at the issue of privacy in the various examples and explanations. It is important to understand the ways in which surveillance works in everyday life before beginning to reconsider the way in which an understanding of privacy is transforming. This chapter focuses entirely on the issue of privacy.

After a brief introduction, I offer a review of the idea of privacy as it has manifest itself over history. This review offers a current description of privacy, followed by the analysis of privacy within the four contexts of surveillance.

To begin with, privacy must be considered in its relationship with the profiles and narratives that become the outcomes of surveillance. Perhaps the most debated outcome of the production of profiles has been the concern with the erosion of a sense of privacy. The product of surveillance is a profile – a story about an entity. The concern is over the way in which the profile can be used to control, and entity as discussed in the last chapter. There is little doubt that the profile offers powerful opportunities of control and the question is whether the use of the profile to manifest the control violates the sense of privacy.

A Brief History of Privacy

There are numerous aspects of this term that has opened it up for discussion throughout the history of human civilization that predates the current concerns with the erosion of privacy with expanded surveillance. Early references to the importance of privacy can be traced to ancient texts including the religious texts of the major religions in the World. There are references to way in which privacy should be conceptualized is also available in the texts related to politics and policy in early civilizations of the World and in the more modern times there has been a greater emphasis on the way in which privacy needs to be codified and often protected.

Religious documents such as the Bible, Geeta, Quran all have references to the notion of privacy where a person has the expectation to be left undisturbed. For instance, a commentator stated the following about privacy and how it is manifest in the Bible:

First, biblical privacy is more about protecting modesty than it is about being able to do what you want without anybody knowing. Modesty compels you to keep your good deeds covered rather than proclaim them on the corner (cf. Matthew 6). Modesty also compels you to keep your body covered, rather than flaunt it (cf. The Bible) (Bayly, 2018).

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