

Chapter 10

Living While Being Watched

ABSTRACT

The process of surveillance has now become a part of our everyday lives. It is futile to expect that an entity would not be surveilled. It is also quite likely that there will be interest in greater opportunities to surveil others. In these situations, there needs to be better awareness of the ways in which surveillance occurs and to remember that the object of surveillance is the narrative, which is to some extent in the control of the surveilled entity. At the same time, the watcher needs to consider what needs to be watched and make the appropriate arrangements of watching. In the end, the key to surveilling is to do it in a stealthy way, without it being discovered that surveillance is happening.

INTRODUCTION

The processes of surveillance in contemporary societies is not about to suddenly disappear but is expected to increase and be more pervasive in everyday life. The consequent questions of privacy as discussed in this book will also remain in the forefront, perhaps with heightened legal arrangements for the protection of an altered sense of privacy. There may also be technologically efficient modes of watching where the fact that one is being watched recedes out of sight. However, for people and

institutions who remain aware of the processes of surveillance there may be new tendencies to both watch and to evade watching.

In this chapter I reiterate the importance of narrative and how it is constructed by the subject as well as by others watching the subject. I then offer a set of pragmatic concerns related to the decision of engaging in surveillance and understanding the different ways in which we can be cognizant of the surveillance we all experience. This awareness applies to an overall understanding of the technologies and the systems of surveillance and knowing when and how to be aware of the surveillance process. Most importantly, it is to remember that true surveillance is a covert process and the most important thing for the future watcher is to do it without coming into view.

I would suggest that within the four contexts of surveillance that I have laid out here, the common factor is the narrative. The object of surveillance is eventually the story related to the entity being watched. This story is the combination of all the elements I have suggested earlier ranging from the mundane act of purchasing vegetables with a credit card at a grocery store to complex acts of subterfuge to conceal a nuclear testing by a nation. All these acts of people and institutions make up the narrative and any conversations about surveillance will need to focus on how much of the narrative is being captured through the process of surveillance. In the dystopia of *1984* George Orwell had painted a picture where every aspect of a person's life story is under observation and the idealized surveillance system is indeed like the 1988 film called *The Truman Show* where a person's entire life story is pre-designed by a television network and the life story becomes an endless serialized TV show for the voyeuristic pleasure of the audience. The film offers a glimpse into the way in which institutions might be able to create an environment where every aspect of the story of the person is controlled and surveilled without any knowledge by the individual. Indeed, the narrative of the person is so well managed that the person never even realizes that the narrative is indeed being managed. This makes the narrative crucial. Any entity that can capture the narrative,

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