

Chapter 2

Veillance:

Beyond Surveillance, Dataveillance, Uberveillance, and the Hypocrisy of One-Sided Watching

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ABSTRACT

This chapter builds upon the concept of Uberveillance introduced in the seminal research of M. G. Michael and Katina Michael in 2006. It begins with an overview of sousveillance (underwatching) technologies and examines the “We’re watching you but you can’t watch us” hypocrisy associated with the rise of surveillance (overwatching). Surveillance cameras are often installed in places that have “NO CAMERAS” and “NO CELLPHONES IN STORE, PLEASE!” signage. The author considers the chilling effect of this veillance hypocrisy on LifeGlogging, wearable computing, “Sixth Sense,” AR Glass, and the Digital Eye Glass vision aid. If surveillance gives rise to hypocrisy, then to what does its inverse, sousveillance (wearable cameras, AR Glass, etc.), give rise? The opposite (antonym) of hypocrisy is integrity. How might we resolve the conflict-of-interest that arises in situations where, for example, police surveillance cameras capture the only record of wrongdoing by the police? Is sousveillance the answer or will centralized dataveillance merely turn sousveillance into a corruptible uberveillance authority?

INTRODUCTION: SURVEILLANCE

It is often said that we live in a “surveillance society” (Lyon, 2001), but what does “surveillance” mean? The primary definition of the word “surveillance” is:

sur-veil-lance [ser-vey-luhns] noun

1. A watch kept over a person, group, etc., especially over a suspect, prisoner, or the like ...

[examples] The suspects were under police surveillance. (Random House Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2013, accessed through dictionary.com)

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Veillance

The word “surveillance” is from the French word “surveiller” which means “to watch over”. Specifically, the word “surveillance” is formed from two parts:

1. The French prefix “sur” which means “over” or “from above”; and
2. The French word “veillance” which means “watching” or “monitoring”

The word “Veillance” comes from the French word “veiller” which means “to watch”. It derives from the word “vigil”.

The Harper Collins Complete and Unabridged English Dictionary defines “vigil” as:

1. A purposeful watch maintained, esp at night, to guard, observe, pray, etc.;
2. The period of such a watch

[from Old French vigile, from Medieval Latin vigilia watch preceding a religious festival, from Latin: vigilance, from vigil alert, from vigēre to be lively].

Thus “surveillance” is “watchful vigilance from above”. So a literal translation of “surveillance” into English gives “overwatching” – not a real English word. The closest existing English word is the word “oversight” (dictionary.com, Random House, 2013), which emerged around the year 1300. In fact Google Translate returns the French word “surveillance” when presented with the English word “oversight”. But in current English usage, the word “oversight” has a somewhat different and in fact, double, meaning, compared with “surveillance”. Specifically, “oversight” can mean:

1. An omission or error due to carelessness. My bank statement is full of oversights. or;
2. Supervision; watchful care: a person responsible for the oversight of the organization. (Random House, 2013).

The fact that the English word “oversight” has two meanings perhaps explains why we use the French word “surveillance”, i.e. why we use the term “*surveillance cameras*” rather than “*oversight cameras*”.

A surveillance camera is a camera that typically watches from above, e.g.:

- The “eye-in-the-sky” afforded by an aerial surveillance “drone”;
- Cameras on property (real-estate), i.e. land or buildings.
 - Cameras are affixed to land by way of watchtowers or poles or masts.
 - Cameras are affixed to buildings in weatherproof enclosures, or affixed inside building interiors by way of “ceiling domes of wine-dark opacity” (Patton, 1995).

SOUSVEILLANCE

There has been a recent explosion of interest in body-borne camera systems to help people see better, as well as for body-centered sensing of the body itself and the environment around it. Such systems include the self-gesturing neckworn sensor-camera of Figure 1, when fitted also with a 3D data projector to project onto the real world (See Figure 2).

Another related invention is the MannGlass™ HDR (High Dynamic Range) welding glass that evolved out of experiments in photographically mediated visual reality in the 1970s (pre-dating 3M’s SpeedGlass™ welding glass of 1981, which only provided global auto-darkening across the whole field of view), leading eventually to the general-purpose “Digital Eye Glass” (EyeTap) (See Figure 3).

It is clear from the foregoing that a portable, wearable, or implantable camera borne by an individual person is not a surveillance camera. It is still a veillance camera, i.e. it is still “watching”

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