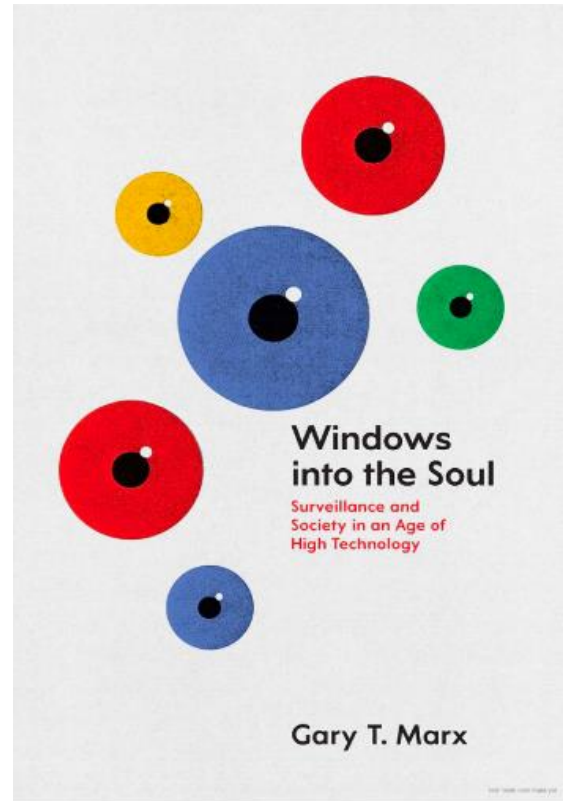


RETHINKING SURVEILLANCE IN THE AGE OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY

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Marx, G. T. (2016). *Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 404 pages, ISBN: 9780226285917.

Technology has embedded into our life and today it is crystal clear that we live in a streaming data sphere. While we, sometimes, voluntarily become part of this data streaming; sometimes, the data belonging to us flow involuntarily through this streaming. Every passing day, new technologies emerge in order to collect and mine people data. One of the most striking and extreme examples is “head stuff”¹ developed in San Francisco. Headset, a



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¹ Heady stuff: Tracking your brain at work. Retrieved April 2, 2019 from

<https://www.reuters.com/video/2019/04/02/heady-stuff-tracking-your-brain-atwork?videoId=533009844>

wearable technology, can detect the brain activities of human beings. The main purpose of using this technology is to monitor the brain activities of workers in order to increase the productivity in workplace. Two different points of view have already come forward in respect to productivity of this technology: the ones considering headset technology as a positive asset and the ones thinking negatively about the contributions of this technology to productivity. Inventors and producers of this technology estimate that monitoring brain activities of labor force will be useful to increase the productivity, spotting the staffs who feel tired and need a break. On the other hand, it is assessed that monitoring the brain activities of staff during their working hours would impose pressure on them and this would affect working people negatively.

Gary T. Marx, a professor emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology claims in his latest book- *Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and Society in an Age of High Technology*- that the issue of monitoring people not be considered solely as good or bad. According to Marx who emphasizes that we live in a society-under surveillance, today, what makes something bad or good is the context and the compartment (2016, p. 10). So much so that Marx defines himself as “neither technophobe nor technophile” (p. 323). By the same token, Marx’s book proposes a new perspective to the readers in respect to the relationship between surveillance and technology. On contrary, he discusses surveillance issue thoroughly through many perspectives in “*Windows into the Soul*”.

Marx², who has studied, lectured and produced academic properties on surveillance since 1970s, compiles all his knowledge in “*Windows into the Soul*”. According to David Lyon³ whose major research area is surveillance studies, this book is Marx’s “maxime magnum opus”. When we assess the book, it consists of four chapters in which Marx has introduced concepts “that capture the rich empirical variation in surveillance settings and behavior and the feature the complexity of social orders, while nonetheless revealing patterns” (p. 10). The first chapter titled “Concepts: The Need for a Modest but Persistent Analyticity” focuses on contexts of surveillance, its structures, its means and its objectives. What makes this chapter so prominent is the new surveillance discussion of Marx. According to Marx, in the high technology era we have been passing through the description of surveillance has changed and new

² Marx’s other works: Marx, G.T. (1988). *Undercover: Police Surveillance in America*. Berkley: University of California Press; (1985).“The Surveillance Society: The Threat of 1984-style Techniques.” in *The Futurist* 6, 21–26; (2002).“What’s New about the New Surveillance? Classifying for Change and Continuity,” in *Surveillance and Society* 1, 9–29.

³ On the back cover of the book is Lyon’s review about the book.

surveillance areas have diversified in respect to the traditional ones. While traditional surveillance “relies on the unaided senses and was characterized of preindustrial societies” (p. 17), new surveillance implies “using of technical means to extract or create information” (p. 20). According to the inferences from Marx’s interpretations, technologic means are utilized together with human senses in new surveillance operations. Thus, the use of high technology has changed the nature of surveillance. Marx describes the new surveillance features in this way: “The new surveillance not only reveals the hidden; it often is of low visibility or is invisible. It is more likely to be involuntary” (p. 56). Through new surveillance concept, Marx illustrates the nature of surveillance society we live in today as well. In the age of technology surrounding us, our personal information is collected, stored and sold discreetly.⁴

What is the significant aspect of this chapter is Marx’s criticism on Foucault (p. 64). Unlike Foucault who attributes the main purpose of surveillance to power, Marx claims that power is not sole main reason in the context of surveillance and even it is not a major factor. According to Marx, here are the reasons of collecting personal information: “compliance, verification, discovery, documentation, prevention and protection, strategic advantage (influence), profit, symbolism, publicity, organizational functioning (or governance, administration, or management), curiosity and self-knowledge” (p. 65). That Marx points out many reasons for collecting personal information demonstrates that he analyses the issue in multiple contexts. Assessing the issue through this point, Marx diversifies the point of view in the collection of personal information, attracting the attention of his readers to different issues.

In the second chapter of the book titled “Social Process”, Marx carries on his assessments about the structure of surveillance. According to Marx, the resistance of subjects and agents differs in line with the change in the nature of surveillance. In fact, in here we should underscore a reality: we, ourselves, offer our personal information to the firms. As Marx clarifies in analytical template through this chapter, people, still, resist against surveillance in different ways. Marx defines the resistance of people with the concept of *surveillance neutralization*.¹² Neutralization moves explained by Marx in this chapter are: discovering, avoiding, piggybacking, switching, distorting, blocking,

⁴ The latest Facebook scandal illustrates how personal information has been collected involuntarily. See details. Facebook collected 1.5 million users’ email contacts without their knowledge. Retrieved April 18, 2019 from https://edition.cnn.com/2019/04/18/business/facebook-email-contacts/index.html?utm_medium=social&utm_term=image&utm_content=2019-04-18T09%3A00%3A50&utm_source=twCNN

masking, breaking, refusing, explaining, cooperating and counter surveillance (p. 145). While the neutralization methods of surveillance by subjects vary, the agents of the surveillance have found out new way to deal with surveillance. The strategies of the agents created by Marx are: technological enhancements, the creation of uncertainty through deception and randomization, the use of multiple means, and the creation of new rules and penalties (p. 168). Marx likens this mutual neutralization process to cat-rat race (p. 168). During this life-or-death race, cats and rats learn many things from each other. We can understand this cat-rat race better through Personal Data Protection Legislation⁵ put into force in 2016 in Turkey. Briefly stated, the legislation aims to prevent the violation of privacy rights by; prohibiting not only the arbitrary collection of personal data without any restrictions, but their accessibility to unauthorized sources and publishing these data without any permission as well. Thanks to the ruling, it has become mandatory to take the consent of the subject for collecting and mining of personal data. On one hand, the subjects became more formidable against surveillance; on the other, the agents have developed new methodologies in order to eliminate the legislation. For example, since the new legislation has been in force, it became compulsory for users to give open consent before using the applications. As Marx highlighted, agents devise new methods in order to collect and mine personal data and even, they impose penalties. By the same token, as long as not giving consent, the users cannot use the applications. In other words, open consent has turned to compulsory one. Without informing the users sufficiently, sensitive personal data are carried on to be collected and mined, just taking their consents.

The last but not least thing discussed in the part II is the culture of surveillance. According to Marx, our understanding of surveillance is shaped by culture (p. 172). Therefore, in the part III of *Windows into the Soul*, Marx offers fictional scenarios involving work, children, a voyeur and a police/national security agent to illustrate how the culture of surveillance is represented and communicated. Marx, specifically, has created fictional stories as case studies “because no real world case study would be likely to contain all the elements that are worthy of consideration” (p. 174). Marx who spent big chunk of his life on studies about surveillance takes surveillance- a very sensitive issue- to another level, embellishing the stories with humor and satire. The

⁵ For more details about Personal Data Protection Legislation see:
<https://www.kvkk.gov.tr/SharedFolderServer/CMSFiles/7d5b0a2f-e0ea-41e0-bf0b-bc9e43dfb57a.pdf>

question Marx rightfully asked: “What terms would we now use if Orwell had not written *1984*, and would awareness be as acute?” (p. 176).

In the last part of the book, Marx presents forty-four “techno-fallacies of the information age” and discusses the ethics of surveillance (p. 266). In this chapter, Marx does not make any distinction between old and new surveillance systems while conducting ethical discussions. He puts “context and compartment” issue on which he focuses through the book on the pedestal of the ethic discussion. According to Marx, “a situational approach to analysis and ethics is needed” (p. 284). In the final chapter, his emphasis on the relationship between democratic society and surveillance is very significant. As underlined by Marx in the book, surveillance is to be visible and comprehensible for a democratic society (p. 320). In here, it is essential, once again, to emphasize the importance of penning the user contract of social media applications used by millions of people in a transparent and comprehensible format. Especially, data collection, storing and protection policies of the applications, available for 13 years and older ones, such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp are supposed to be written in transparent and understandable language.

For the high technology age we live in *Windows into the Soul* offers neither a disaster scenario nor a utopic model. Marx who presents multiple aspects for his readers makes huge contributions to surveillance study oeuvre thanks to this book. While discussing the complicated issue of surveillance, Marx uses caricatures and the items of popular culture ironically. *Windows into the Soul* is an indispensable reference guide for academicians studying on surveillance and the ones who has a liking in this field.

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