

Marx, G. T. (2016). *Windows into the Soul: Surveillance and society in an age of high technology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226285917. \$35.00

Gina Petonito
Miami University

Windows into the soul: Surveillance and society in an age of high technology provides a comprehensive overview of surveillance, its history and manifestations in contemporary society, the interactions between human subjects, objects, and audiences, as well as ethical concerns. Marx's discussions are so detailed and nuanced, they defy a brief review. So, this review will only highlight the main issues.

Marx begins with a meticulous and detailed evaluation of the varied surveillance methods. He distinguishes between old forms, which rely on unaided senses, and new forms which rely on tools that enhance and surpass the senses. The book, for the most part, focuses on the new form, whose genesis Marx outlines in Chapter 2. Throughout the book, he analyzes surveillance as a "neutral" phenomenon, enabling him to focus on surveillance's positive and negative aspects.

Marx shifts to a discussion of surveillance processes, or how surveillance occurs in the real world. He demonstrates how surveillance transforms, in concert with other structural components, over time. He states that modern practices have "softened," or become less visible and engineered into everyday activities. Again, his analysis is wide ranging pointing to the various ways surveillance passively or actively collects data from people, from the ubiquitous digital cameras to biochemical analyses of breath, blood or saliva. This surveillance softening bypasses ethical consent processes. For example, passive surveillance techniques, such as street cameras, never pause to ask for people's permission to be surveilled. Marx notes how surveillance, such as street cameras, tends to expand further into everyday life, but he also identifies instances where surveillance has contracted. In Chapter 6, Marx identifies twelve methods of neutralizing and counter-neutralizing surveillance. While most examples are individual efforts, once can conceive of ways, given the right cultural milieu, that surveillance can be collectively resisted. Universal bio-chipping is not inevitable!

The third section is most compelling. Marx presents a series of satirical stories, crafting an "ideal type" that reveals how surveillance operates or could operate in a family, workplace, or government setting, or by a voyeur. The stories showcase the various surveillance tools available or conceivably available for use and how they connect the public and private, and the subject and object of surveillance. Marx explains his decision to depart from actual case studies in order to present the full range of elements involved while remaining grounded in reality.

To illustrate, in Chapter 8 “family-based surveillance,” Marx paints a dystopian vision of companies selling surveillance technologies to parents in order the better “care” for their children. The fictional company, PISHI (Parents Insist on Surveillance Help, Inc.) offers a collection of surveillance products to observe every aspect of a child’s life. PISHI evokes fear of a distant and impersonal government to market their package to concerned parents. And then, in a surprise twist, PISHI requires that the participating parent fill out five comprehensive surveys. The watchers become the watched, highlighting yet another of the book’s themes, that surveillance impacts and can negatively affect the watchers, as well as the watched. These vignettes could provide excellent teaching tools, stepping stones towards a deeper discussion of Marx’s themes.

Although many scholars focus upon the social control aspect of surveillance, Marx argues that control is one of its many possible goals and outcomes. He ends his book with a discussion of ethics and policy, reiterating the book’s main theme: “surveillance is neither good nor bad, but context and comportment make it so” (p. 284). In this final section, Marx poses a series of questions that consider the situations in which surveillance is used and the moral stance of the watchers. These questions cover the desirability of surveillance tools, the equity and fairness associated with their use, and whether or not neutralization efforts should be regarded as heroic or self-interested. Such questions make explicit the public’s unease when considering the benefits of surveillance and can serve as a guide for future research.

In short, *Windows into the soul* provides an exhaustive compendium of terms, themes, and literature on surveillance that can germinate many new research directions. This volume will serve as a vital and important reference book for the serious surveillance scholar.