

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SURVEILLANCE IN THE MODERN ERA

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Abstract: *Police visual state as David Lyon says, in the contemporary period the great affirmation of social mobility and economic deregulation combined with the technological enhancement of information infrastructures have developed a real "surveillance society": in which society itself self-monitors. A "leap forward", in the systematic overcoming of the old boundaries of traditional supervision and with the superimposed diffusion of different models of control, corresponding to equally different interests and areas, in which "surveillance" becomes so much the task of watching over the public order of police forces, as well as commercial surveillance on their businesses, or private gadgets on proprietary and private territories. On the one hand, the diffusion of video surveillance certainly derives from a political climate, we would say world-wide, which a very specific geopolitical and ideological situation has helped to spread. In this sense, the year 2001 certainly represented an "ideological leap".*

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Introduction

Capable of affirming a sort of generalized vigilance over multiple spaces, in a delicate evolution that has delegated a whole series of powers to state or parastatal, police, military or paramilitary "security structures", and as such is still a reason for continuing concern about freedoms civilians, emblematic case the Patriot Act in the United States. In this climate, the great narrative of the "terrorist threat" and the figures of terrorism as such play a central role, involving a reinterpretation in the sense of fear of the social territory itself: cities, vehicles, events felt for years as potential targets, ideal places-objects of terrorist threat, in a transformation of the perception into reality both of the environment and its civilized places, as well as of the next unknown, redesigned in the sense of an always possible threat, of an anonymity that could suddenly explode.

All this is so fresh and evident that it does not need to be further explored here, also due to its socio-political implications already addressed by various analyzes, and not entirely pertinent to the reasons for this research. From another point of view, however, the affirmation of video surveillance seems possible to reconnect it to a deeper way of being of the capitalist-industrial civilization itself: which, finding a highly developed sense of ownership - in turn, joins to reconnect to the powerful self-determination in an individualistic sense of the distinctive bourgeois subjectivity, and to its atomization - with an overwhelming massification of the city environment, it has begun to proceed with the involution of a fear of the other and of a general fortification of one's own spaces, to defense of more or less invisible but always looming threats. In this sense, the need for surveillance lies between the loss of the community bond and the affirmation of mass anonymity, in the free flow of metropolitan movements and the conflictual "tribalization" of urban territories, which occurred after the 1960s. 900: a development that generates widespread social insecurity, on which the need for a collective if not personal defense begins to develop from those years onwards - think of the various solitary "punishers" or "cleaners" proposed by cinema and literature, starting from that period: Taxi driver (1974) or Inspector Callaghan (70s saga) among many, among the most tangible examples of the phenomenon - to which the technological development of the following decades adequately responds. Which begin to exploit artificial visualization techniques and the progress of miniaturized and sophisticated vision and recording devices by technological evolution, and which begin to spread in parallel to more or less massive armor systems, which have come to fortify doors, gates - a place that later became a crucial place for remote surveillance - buildings, public and private spaces.

1. The way of the artificial eye is a very precise presupposition of a social order

The way of the artificial guarding eye, then, is based on this very precise presupposition of a social order, to be recognized in a mentality that over time has crept into collective feeling and is directed towards a way of fear that is always suspended in the face of an everyday landscape that has become indecipherable, and always potentially full of dangers. It is the certainty of having to fear, what finally convinced the city to fortify itself, thus exploiting all the technological possibilities, also and above all technological, capable of better satisfying this need, and thus creating an increasingly schizophrenic path in the contemporary city. Which, on the one hand,

develops and multiplies an attractive, intimately commercial seduction of its places, therefore euphoric and hypercommunicative at all their possible levels, but on the other hand it approaches an ever greater work against it, of selection, filter, control, if not of relational refusal to its own entry.

A dissociated path, this, recognizable for example in many moments of entertainment, free time or entertainment: discos, concerts, stadiums, all situations in which the natural condition of attraction and playful-artistic fun is increasingly combined with a real and its own selective repulsion, pending threat to the public or its agreed patrons. In different ways each time, this public is stopped, searched, blocked, held in suspense outside - the entrance, then, becomes something fatal -, selected according to its document, and increasingly observed in the meantime. - inside, especially then inside these "play centers" - by the technological devices scattered almost everywhere, within these same places. It is emblematic that, precisely where there was fun intended as lightheartedness, today instead control or concern grows, which have inevitably become surveillance and denial. Because behind every surveillance there is always the threat of a negation, of a complete repulsion, which in the meantime is suspended. From integrated urban control, consisting of a few crucial institutional and above all military spaces, in the space of a few decades, we have thus passed in the space of a few decades to the idea of a control as extended as possible over the most capillary territories of the various cities, all of which have become a little "of quartz ", spreading out in myriads of places and moments of social life.

2. A "new utopia"

For every infringement and accident, here is the almost automatic security social reaction, promptly invoking the "new technologies": "let's put a camera on every bus", an Italian mayor once said (but perhaps, at the same time and in the same way, the said many other mayors in many other cities), or, after a theft or an attack in some club, public opinion raises in the newspapers, with stereotypical phrases such as "let's place cameras in the bathrooms of discos"; thus sowing the tree of electronic surveillance from the Pentagon to the local butcher's shop, or the village kindergarten. In reality, it is important to demonstrate how all this surveillance and technological evolution of the metropolitan custom is based, in fact, on a real utopia, a "new utopia" like a new land discovered by our time. This utopia is one based on the belief of being able to watch over the entire territory of social relations and personal movements. To be able, through

the advancement of surveillance technologies, to really penetrate everywhere, and in this way control everything, everything that happens on the face of the Earth. Now, it is true that, however, feared and in some way denounced by various authors, such as David Garland, or Virilio himself and other critics, a technology, above all by satellite, is developing, capable of penetrating into the lowest terrestrial recesses and of locating even minimal. However, the real possibility of being able to see everything seems to remain utopian, in order to reconstruct the dynamics and memory of everything. That is, to organize a truly total coverage - "coverage", a typical word of security jargon - of the living that appears and gives itself, articulating a total vision capable of supporting a total understanding of life lived, past, recorded, and therefore seen, and therefore finally understood, by the action of this whole virtuous circle of visual recognition.

The controlled place, that is, always escapes at least a little from its vision and control, because it is the life within itself that is always at least a little subversive - in the inevitable home run existing outside the view fixed in surveillance, but even in the intentional inside of one's own irreducible phenomenon, whose presupposed intentions or existential recesses are far more unfathomable than a simple trace of the passage, in a decisive difference, here, to be conceived between the life that passes and the existence that gives itself a ' intention. Two coexisting levels of the world, but different in essence and quality, then confront each other on this oscillating ridge of representation, because the life-that-passes - the one that is nakedly visible, in front of the surveillance machines - does not betray all its intentions, causes, reasons, as predecessions and purposes that created and implied it; the life-that passes is not, in fact, the existence-with-the intention, that intimate, invisible part of the being that gives itself an intention.

Utopia, therefore, in this original sense, is no longer that of a dreamed and not (yet) existing positive place, as in its classical philosophical tradition, but rather evokes a re-seen negative place, and always (inevitably) at least in some of his part escaped.

Thus we discover a profound divergence that is insinuating itself into the philosophical heart of Western society. In fact, in such a context two diametrically different practices of the concepts of vision and truth oppose each other, which in the case of video surveillance understands them in the form of enlightened totality - one dependent on the other: vision as a vision of truth, as a vision of the existing totality, and truth as a visual illumination of the whole.

Conclusion

Truth as a vision is a practice now conceived in a purely material, quantitative, inferior sense; unlike the other conception often prevalent, however, in the Western philosophical tradition, that of vision as the pleasure of higher truths, qualitative and sublime truths. In the latter, the vision is not reduced to a pure material passage, of a certain reality-truth: it is rather aimed at practices of aesthetic and, at the same time, spiritual elevation, in which the generating idea of the vision is contemplation, the contemplation of beauty, as for example Neoplatonism has professed by fertilizing centuries in its cult of vision understood as enlightenment, both external and internal. Seeing, in the culture of the past centuries, was a knowledge for the soul, as for the happiness of the gaze, to discover the truth that shines, but that is higher - while today, among the video surveillance that has grown like a fortress, seeing is becoming only to discover, to verify the hidden evidences and the most abject realities, to know the naked truth-clue, which is lower.

The physics of video surveillance can be distinguished in two distinct precise moments, one identifiable, one in the physiology of the fixed vision of the moment of shooting, first of all, and the other in its corresponding display on the monitor, in the control units of the images taken. , parallel but distinct from the first phase. These two phases reveal, each in its own specific way, a completely new way of developing what, undoubtedly, must be identified as a peculiar type of representation.

It is clear, in fact, that the model of representation constructed by video surveillance perfectly interprets that type of "representation output" defined by us as an indicative discount, of which video surveillance is in fact one of the most emblematic and tangible cases.

