

# Liquid Surveillance: The Contribution of Zygmunt Bauman to Surveillance Studies<sup>1</sup>

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Liquid surveillance describes well today's regimes of in/visibility and is characterized by data-flows, mutating surveillance agencies and the targeting and sorting of everyone. However, the great virtue of Zygmunt Bauman's work for surveillance studies is that he engages several tasks: he contextualizes what might be called liquid surveillance within the major movements of modern society, recognizes the significance of changing forms of surveillance to the production of social order, encourages serious consideration of the lived realities of in/visibility, refuses to accept monocausal explanations of the surveillant vision and dynamic, and confronts courageously the ethical and political challenges that surveillance now presents to our world. Bauman's work on surveillance spans his illustrious career as a social thinker but as yet awaits full exploration and exposition.

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Today's Big Brother is not about keeping people *in* and making them stick to the line, but about kicking people out and making sure that when they are kicked *out* that they will duly go and won't come back... (Bauman 2006:25)

Liquid surveillance captures the core of what can be learned about surveillance from Zygmunt Bauman. Although Bauman does not use this phrase, it aptly connects his work with surveillance studies. It speaks to the looseness and frailty of social bonds, seen in surveillance terms as the transformation of ordinary citizens into suspects and their relegation to consumer status across a range of life-spheres. Because of the way that personal data are used, everyone living in so-called advanced societies is routinely targeted and sorted by numerous organizations on a daily basis, whether applying for a driver's license, paying a telephone bill or surfing the internet. The concept of liquid surveillance captures the reduction of the body to data and the creation of data-doubles on which life-chances and choices hang more significantly than on our real lives and the stories we tell about them. It also evokes the flows of data that are now crucial to surveillance as well as to the "time-sensitivity" of surveillance "truths" that mutate as more data come in (producing Kafkaesque consequences for some at the sharp end).

The old, relatively solid institutions of marketing or crime control have softened, becoming malleable and rapidly adaptive in a world of software and networks. For Gilles Deleuze, this is no longer a world of discipline in fixed

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enclosures, but rather of “control.” Indeed, the feeling of liquidity surrounds Deleuze’s formulation, too: “Enclosures are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will change continuously from one moment to the other like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point” (Deleuze 1992). The old and the new meet, paradoxically, in social media sites such as Facebook, where “friends” are fluid and surveillance is multifaceted. Liquid surveillance, with its security-related reliance on citizen tip-offs and anti-terror hotlines, also helps to shape its own counterpoints: everything from identity theft to no-fly lists are seen by data-handling organizations as problems of individual biography rather than as institutional responsibilities.

All these themes, although not clustered under the heading of surveillance, appear in Bauman’s work. Surveillance is a strong thread running right through Bauman’s social and political analyses, especially since the mid-1980s. Some of the best available insights into surveillance originate in or are clarified by Bauman’s work, just because he places them in a broad cultural context and simultaneously reveals them so sensitively as thoroughly human issues. At the same time, some of the aphorisms through which he situates surveillance so adroitly sometimes remain incomplete. This is addressed here by posing some epistemological, empirical and ethical questions for Bauman, questions especially about a hermeneutics of suspicion, the softwares of seduction, and ethics beyond the Other.

So how is surveillance characterized in Bauman’s writings? In his work on *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987) and *Freedom* (1988), Bauman made the decisive shift toward considering surveillance as a central theme of modernity. Until then, as Dennis Smith rightly observes, Marx, Gramsci, and Habermas had been the dominant influences in his work. From this period onward, they were supplemented although not displaced by Foucault, Adorno and Lévinas (1999:29). Through all, Simmel is also important; Bauman says he learned more from Simmel than from any other (2004a:15). By now, consumerism had enjoyed 20 years of ascendancy, making it harder and harder to expose capitalist hegemony and to propose serious alternatives (Bauman 2008). The key to this was the disciplines invented to encourage compliance and complacency, that found their origins in the panopticon but which would mutate with modernity, in some ways being superseded by other modes.

The panopticon prison design, as we shall see in a moment, was but one stage in the development of modern (surveillance) disciplines, but it has engaged Bauman’s struggles with modernity to a significant degree. The theory, or perhaps theories, of surveillance offered by the panopticon are highly suggestive and offer some plausible explanations of how some surveillance works, right up to the present (see e.g. Lyon 2006a and especially Haggerty 2006; cf. Andrezejewski 2008). However, Bauman never falls back on the work of one sole theorist, in this case on Foucault’s interpretation of Bentham. It is also important to note the roles of Adorno (on the political impasse between exposure and involvement) and Lévinas (on the ethics of the Other) along with other social thinkers in shaping the overall structure of his reflections on surveillance. Since the appearance of *Liquid Modernity*, for example, Bauman has referenced Thomas Mathiesen’s studies on the “synopticon” as being suggestive of how surveillance has metamorphosed from the panopticon in an age of television saturation and consumerism (Bauman 2000:85; cf. Lyon 2006b).

The aim here is largely one of exposition. The main themes of Bauman’s work on surveillance are drawn out for their illuminative and critical quality, to indicate why these are significant for the surveillance studies field, as well as to interact with them critically and analytically. However, while it is important to focus on surveillance as a field of study, this should also be seen as part of some larger concerns in which it is intertwined. Of broadest significance, perhaps, is

what David Garland calls the “culture of control” (Garland 2001) that has developed most rapidly in the United States and United Kingdom since the 1970s and what Saskia Sassen calls the “disassembly” of the state, internationally (Sassen 2006). But equally, surveillance is often articulated with security. Bauman’s work often, rightly, links security and surveillance, especially as the growth of each is rapidly being globalized. He quotes approvingly, for instance, urban theorist Teresa Caldeira’s comment that a “new esthetics of security shapes all types of construction and imposes a new logic of surveillance and distance...” (Caldeira 1996; cited in Bauman 2007b:75). But other forms of surveillance, relating for instance to Bauman’s determined effort to theorize consumption, relate not to security but to what he calls “seduction,” to competition, opportunity and governance in the marketplace.

Many of those researching contemporary surveillance practices and processes owe much to Bauman’s insights, and this certainly includes the present author. If we do have some capacity to see what is going on—we can never escape the visibilities theme in analysis as well as in daily reality!—it is because we stand on his shoulders. At the same time, this does not imply that Bauman is what he has never claimed to be, a theorist of surveillance. His work is simply presented here as a fruitful and inspiring way of reading surveillance.

### **Modernity and Surveillance: From Fixity to Liquidity**

The panopticon is the starting point of Bauman’s essay on freedom as a social relation (and he is still discussing this today, see Bauman 2010). In modern society, security comes to be viewed as a matter of “guiding and monitoring human conduct” (Bauman 1988:10). Administration of the proper setting, to prevent or encourage certain kinds of behavior, is vital. Foucault saw the panopticon as illustrating modern discipline via surveillance but, says Bauman, he missed the further insight available in the panopticon as the opposition between freedom and unfreedom, the purposeful administration of social conditions. The will of the experts can guide the inmates, who need only do what is required for “peace and calm” to result. It is assumed that they seek their happiness, as might be expected of Utilitarian Bentham, within the organized architectural space of Panopticon, under the eye of the unseen Inspector. Behavioral control, with asymmetric access to information, is the key to the freedom of the inspectors, in relation to the inmates. In Bentham’s utopia, the “freedom of some makes the dependence of others both necessary and profitable” and *vice versa* (Bauman 1988:19).

The problem of control and reproduction of order was surveillance, but surveillance of a distinctively modern kind. Indeed, says Bauman, it was a “totally novel social figuration” (1987:45). Why? Because control was now highly symmetric, and based on watchers-and-the-watched. No longer diffuse and malleable, surveillance now touched life in general, not just specific moments, and erased individual differences by seeking uniformity, even as different categories were recognized as needing slightly different treatment. This new surveillance also required professional surveillers, expert educators, although coercion did not disappear. They could draw on the now secularized Churchly techniques of pastoral and proselytizing power, to reform and convert the subject. And of course it was the state that now took over control as subjects were “denied the capacity of living human life without the surveillance, assistance and corrective intervention of those in the know” (1987:50).

Following an insight of Ernst Gellner, Bauman contrasts the premodern as “wild culture” that needs no conscious care to reproduce, with the modern “garden” culture that requires constant tending and where supervision is needed to rid the place of weeds. So “gardeners” take over from “gamekeepers,”

believing themselves to be responsible for the cultivation and welfare of all. Surveillance and education accompany the destruction of popular culture and the tending of compliant plants. “Civilizing” appeared to be curiously close in practical meaning to “policing” and “culture” could in some respects be “legislated.” In this world, Max Weber’s myth of the ascendant Puritan made much sense. Or rather, as Bauman suggests, the myth started to make sense just as the figure of the Puritan began decisively to disappear.

For Bauman, the modern project with its intellectual legislators and educators is seen to be in serious trouble as later twentieth century—market or consumer—culture successively freed itself from such tutelage. Consumer seduction, as he famously put it, substitutes for repression as “conduct is made manageable, predictable and hence non-threatening, by a multiplication of needs rather than by a tightening of norms” (1987:168). The obverse of consumer seduction, of course, is the ongoing repressive regimes required to deal with the “new poor” inevitably generated—rather than residual and curable—by consumerism. And this “most conspicuous social division” finds its fracture “between choice and the lack of choice, between the capacity for self-constitution and the denial of such capacity, between autonomously conceived self-definitions and imposed categorizations experienced as constraining and incapacitating” (1992:198). What Bauman did not suspect, at this time, was the ways in which older surveillant means of governance—imposed categorizations and the like—would be adopted within consumer marketing, something that is still not suspected by some consumers (see Gandy 1993, 2010; Turow 2006; Pridmore 2008).

The theme of panoptic dismantling and replacement by self-surveillance and monitoring reappears in a number of Bauman’s works (e.g., 1998a, 2001a,b, 2002), and it is worthwhile to examine the elaboration of this idea. In *Globalization*, for example, he notes Mark Poster’s (1996 and reprinted elsewhere) Foucauldian comments on the “superpanopticon” but insists that the similarities are superficial. The database, after all, determines who should be included for full access to consumer privilege. It is not intended to prevent escape. For Bauman, it is a “vehicle of mobility, not the fetters keeping people in place.” This is spelled out more clearly in the description of the database as an “instrument of selection, separation and exclusion. It keeps the globals in the sieve and washes out the locals” (1998a:51). The former are made to feel at home wherever they go; the latter are deprived of passports and transit visas. While the “superpanopticon” may not be the best name for it, that database is still an instrument of surveillance, sorting, in this case, the varieties of mobility.

The case of globalization is particularly interesting because, as Didier Bigo also observes (2008:108–109), it is in the world of constant circulation that liberties and exclusions are generated. As Bigo says, “Security imagines the future and projects itself into it as a maximal form which has reduced the margins to non-existence...” (2008:109). It achieves this through new surveillance technologies that actually reconnect what Foucault argues should be considered separately, namely, security, and discipline. As what is done in the name of security increasingly involves surveillance in actual fact, so its digitization spells the capacity to profile and to categorize, to socially sort for the imagined future who will be left free to travel—for example—and who will be excluded from such opportunities. The most obvious example of this is seen in the growing use of no-fly lists, especially since 9/11, that focus on the contradictory category of those too dangerous to fly but too innocent to be arrested. Contradictory in logic only, however, such lists are surprisingly consistent in their prohibitions of “Arabs” and “Muslim” travelers.

In relation to the employment world, Bauman sees the demise of the dominating panopticon, where education and integration were important, in relation to the “disengagement” of what he calls today’s “swarms” (2001a:127). Swarms are

coordinated without being integrated, and in them individual self-interest is the only call that matters. The uncertainty and fear of unemployment is enough to make this management-at-a-distance work. Such “at-a-distance” coordination also happens across national borders including that occurring within security industries themselves (see e.g. Abrahamsen and Williams 2009). Paralleling this, then, fears of (national) insecurity also support the disengagement of panoptical controls. Freedoms may be constrained, but a prized “security” is the trade-off, and the exclusions of some strangers the collateral consequences (2001, *passim*).

Such motifs increase in volume in *Society under Siege* (2002) as the baleful effects of the “war on terror” begin to reverberate through Bauman’s writing. The “swarms” reappear, this time as remote soldiering (as opposed to erstwhile marching army columns) as they attempt to seek out the terrorist target, itself not merely a mobile but a mutating marker. Global insecurity, transposed into the key of personal safety, gives rise to the “terrors of the global” in *Liquid Fear* (2005:123) that in turn spawn more surveillance. Bauman notes what he calls the “media is the message” effect of new surveillance technologies, in which due to the focus on external observation fails to detect motives and choices and thus substitutes suspicious categories for “individual evildoers.”

Simmel’s figure of the stranger haunts the world of liquid fear, caught as she or he is in the “gray zone” between declared enemies and trusted friends, in the plight of “ambivalence incarnate” (2006:126). This both carries us back to the world of the “wandering Jew” like Kafka whose experiences and expositions of the theme animate *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) and forward to the post-9/11 world of notoriously porous categories such as “Middle Eastern,” “terrorist” or “migrant worker” (Topal 2007) not to mention the young, black male singled out for disproportionate scrutiny in downtown areas of major North American and European cities.

The panoptic task was to eliminate ambivalence, to classify clearly. Its early power derived from uncertainty; was the inspector watching? Self-discipline was needed just in case. Today, transparency is still sought by surveillant means, but the categories themselves create the uncertainty. They are either unknown, whether for national security or trade secrets reasons, or else they themselves have succumbed to liquidity. By this I mean that they are permitted to multiply and morph so that the filters miss no possible category, just in case. They are also inscrutable just because they come wrapped in technical codes, especially the algorithms that are quite opaque to most non-technical people (Beer 2009). Allowing the “terrorist” category to expand both gives play to the precautionary principle (Zedner 2009:83–84) and perpetuates the uncertainty of all “strangers” who, like Kafka, experience surveillance as a bewildering, shadowy and opaque process (see Solove 2004).

The fear of being caught in the wrong category is a key motif in Bauman’s more recent work. “Whether in their consciousness or their subconscious, men and women of our times are haunted by the *spectre of exclusion*” (2004a:47). This relates to the sea change that has occurred between the “social state and the security state” in which “state provisions gradually turned from token’s of citizen’s rights into tools of social exclusion and symptoms... of social stigma” (2004b:79). Today, says Bauman, the “security” in questions has little to do with those things promised by Roosevelt (in the United States) or Beveridge (in the United Kingdom), or with our place in society, human dignity and the like, but rather with “the body and personal belongings” (2004b:82). And the insecurities emanate from criminals, asylum seekers, the underclass or from terrorists. These, of course, are some key groups from which the new surveillance will purportedly protect us.

As Bauman’s work takes us further into the heart of contemporary consumerism, however, the panopticon does make a comeback. However, it now works in reverse, says Bauman, “flushing the undesirables *away* and keeping the regulars



in.” Those thereby excluded are the “weeds in the consumerist garden, people short of cash, credit cards and/or shopping enthusiasm and otherwise immune to the blandishments of marketing” (2007a:4). This represents a notable shift from the earlier analysis (in the 1990s) of the seductions of the commodity marketplace, seen for instance in *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (1998b). There, the “panoptical drill” is seen as “unsuitable” (1998a:24) for the training of consumers; the advertising baits and lures take over. But now the *sorting* capacities of the (reverse) panopticon are seen to include-and-exclude and, as we know from other analyses, to grade, rank and offer differential treatment to all consumers according to their contribution to corporate profit (Pridmore 2008; Burrows and Gane 2006).

At this point, the argument takes us to where we came in, the Baumanesque world of liquid surveillance. The various features of today’s surveillant regimes—mutating, mission-creeping, mobile, suspicious-and-seductive, fragmentary, data-flowing, protocol-governed, responsabilized—may all be found in some dimension of Bauman’s work, although he himself has not brought them together for surveillance studies purposes. They grow in the contexts that Bauman has analyzed; the premodern to the modern and from thence to the postmodern or, now, liquid.

What gives such explorations their power, however, is not the history-of-ideas that hints at what begat what or the effortless prose that holds the reader with memorable phrases and arresting aphorisms, important though both of these are. It is rather the adroit analysis of complex powers that resist monocausal explanation, the intensely personal concern about the ordinary people caught up in circumstances not of their choosing and the determination to acknowledge the reality of the ethical and political challenges confronting us all that commands attention.

### **Liquid Surveillance**

Why, then, might liquidity be a good way of conceiving contemporary surveillance? In a word, today’s surveillance does not keep its shape; it morphs and mutates. As Clive Norris says, referring to video cameras, surveillance is characterized by “expandable mutability” (Norris and Armstrong 1999:58). It spreads, changing as it goes. In the 1990s, analysts noted the development of “function creep” as new surveillance tasks, not originally thought of or authorized, were added to systems. For example, the UK database of school children, set up by law in 1997, was intended to collect general aggregate data to plan for services. But as time went on, it became a means of amassing detailed information on children—how they arrive at school, who eats meals at school, who has special needs—on a termly basis (House of Lords 2009: item 359). Today one may speak of “mission creep” as for example a system such as Customer Relationship Management moves wholesale from one institutional area—marketing intelligence—to another, the “war on terror” (see e.g., Pridmore 2008).

Surveillance not only creeps and seeps, it also flows. It is on the move, globally and locally. The means of tracing and tracking the mobilities of the twenty-first century are “going global” in the sense that connections are increasingly sought between one system and another. The quest for harmonization of, for example, machine-readable travel documents so that systems are “interoperable” between as well as within countries actually harmonizes the technologic of IT with the political economy of globalization (see Lyon 2009). But more locally, surveillance becomes mobile in so-called location-based devices and RFIDs that allow Walmart to keep tabs on its stock, employers on their truck drivers and parents on their teenagers. Such devices enable a reframing of surveillance as control, based on invisible, ubiquitous circuits (Hayles 2009).

Such liquidity may also be visualized as networks, although these are not only horizontal but, in some cases, also have vertical links (such as in traditional policing). At any rate, as Bauman would acknowledge, it is important to move away from state-centered notions of governance in fields such as security. As he says, the current world is in a state of interregnum, where the old is dying. Territory, nation, and state are no longer central. Along with the “interregnum” state of affairs, uncertainty (and associated risk-orientations) and institutional disparity (and the growing separation of power and politics) are key characteristics. Surveillance is increasingly the means of coordination within these new circumstances. Power, Bauman asserts, is evaporating from the nation state into (using Manuel Castells’ expression) the electronically facilitated “space of flows” (Bauman in Davis and Tester 2010:204).

Globalization in this realm brings together not only local and the transnational but also broadens the sectors involved and stretches them so that what happens in one place—new US rules on who may fly, for instance—immediately affects other countries and regions (McGrew 1992). In the production of intelligence, argues Peter Gill, tracing the networks within which information flows is crucial to proper understanding. The corporate sector has increasingly to be reckoned with, alongside conventional state sectors and also what he calls “communitarian” sectors (Gill 2006). The flows of data within and between sectors are facilitated by forms of brokerage, especially since 9/11 in task forces or what are described in the United States as “fusion centers” (see Monahan: 44–48).

From the perspective of those whose data now flow more freely, the idea of liquid surveillance also speaks to the looseness and frailty of social bonds, in a world where trust is eroded at every turn. It is seen, for instance, in the insidious spread of suspicion and simultaneously in the consumerist turn. Together, these help to make everyone vulnerable to targeting and sorting. Either evil lurks on every hand, and no one can be too careful. Every stranger equals danger. They could be pedophiles; they might be terrorists. Or else the other is a competitor, and again, cannot really be trusted. The TV Big Brother is the prime example here: one of us will be ousted eventually. So, as Bauman reports, the advertised solution is “*trust nobody*” (2006:68, compare Andrejevic 2007). There is “no place to hide” any more, not only from those seemingly ubiquitous terrorists, or from the determined surveillors who are out to find them (O’Harrow 2005) but even from your own parents or children in what was once believed to be the haven of the home. They may just not be who they seem.

In an ironic commentary on *Life in Fragments*, liquid surveillance also reminds us of the data-dissection of the body and its re-membering in sometimes grotesque data-doubles (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). Bauman refers, in *Life in Fragments*, to the disconnected and episodic character of contemporary life, where people relate to each other only partially and briefly and where such relations are increasingly inconsequential, leaving little of mutual obligations or rights in their wake (1995:49–50). But in the surveillant satire, the solidity of the human body dissolves in data particles, detached from the whole and subject to instant reassembly as profiled and projected parodies of the persons whose bodies revealed or released the data in the first place (see also Haggerty and Ericson 2000). The sting, of course, is that the reassembled bits *are* consequential, for choices and life-chances.

Here, the sense of flow becomes palpable as personal information moves constantly from the individual to the database and back again, via experiences of access and denial, inclusion and exclusion, privileges, rewards and benefits or lack thereof. The individual is unlikely to have a sense that drinking at a particular bar may reduce chances of obtaining credit or that cross-border shopping

may attract the interest of officials in an unemployment benefit department. However, the commercial information about visits to the bar may be traded such that institutions concerned with credit-worthiness or the likelihood that credit card debts will be repaid on time may use them to situate the consumer within a category of risk (Duhigg 2009). Similarly, personal data fragments are reassembled from multiple sources in security contexts that connect them in this case with regimes of suspicion, where the risk concerns some concept of “national security” (Amoore 2009).

Liquid surveillance speaks to the flows of data that are now crucial to surveillance as well as to the “time-sensitivity” of surveillance “truths” that mutate as more data come in. A simple application for a driver’s license in England could be held up because of a poor personal trust score based on whether the applicant spent more time with clearing banks or mail order companies (Lips, Taylor, and Organ 2009). Personal data are processed in massive quantities today; indeed, as Perri 6 points out, it is appropriate to speak of a “personal information economy” (Perri 6 2005). They flow increasingly freely between organizational and even national databases. But as they are combined and mined they alter, so that with a hard-wired Kafka effect we can never be sure how we are being read or what the consequences are. This might just mean that we miss some rewards from our loyalty program but it could also mean that we find ourselves denied a boarding pass for a plane or refused credit at a bank. No-fly lists ensure that this happens, routinely, and often to the innocent (Bennett 2008), and perfectly innocuous-sounding “rational discrimination” touches certain groups more frequently than others (Gandy 2010).

The old, solid institutions of marketing or crime control have become fluid and rapidly adaptive in a world of softwares and networks. The old enclosures, like the panopticon, in which surveillance disciplines were instilled, are gone, and in their place only something resembling Gilles Deleuze’s audio-visual protocols check and trace us in a mobile world. Or rather, they are now supplemented—not supplanted—by the controls that admit or deny access, indicate eligibility or exclusion. Interestingly in Facebook, where “friends” are fluid, surveillance appears in several guises. Plenty of participants and observers have pondered the ways in which Facebook offers opportunities for old-fashioned snooping and stalking. But Facebook is also a major clearinghouse for serious and systematic surveillance by corporations, crime control agencies, and of course security concerns.

Lastly, liquid surveillance, relying not only on high-tech softwares but on street-level citizen tip-offs and anti-terror hotlines, morphs with the mood of the moment. In a convenient confluence with liquid fear, liquid surveillance joins forces with everything from emergency preparedness drills to neighborhood watches. In this way it also helps to beget its alter egos. If everyone is responsible for surveillance duty, everyone is also responsible for seeing to it that they are not surveilled against their will. Evading surveillance is in this view a problem of individual biography, not of institutional responsibility. Each of us is encouraged to be vigilant against identity fraud, malicious hacking or “privacy invasion.” The corporations and government departments handling personal data can point to their data protection compliance. It is up to individuals to check their own “privacy settings.”

My comments thus far have tried to address the analysis of power—changing forms of surveillance and the production of social order—and the everyday life of visible persons. But there is another vital dimension of Bauman’s work that focuses attention on the ethical and political. This dimension is a crucial one, to which Bauman has made significant contribution in the social sciences in general. But in relation to surveillance and security such issues are paramount.



### Ethical and Political Challenges

Bauman's work is highly suggestive for understanding the ethical dilemmas of contemporary surveillance even though, as I have stressed, he does not focus on surveillance studies as such. In particular, we find him saying little about the "rights" of autonomous individuals to their "privacy," civil liberties and the like, but quite a lot about how today's technologically mediated organizations affect everyday life. The work of Levinas, on which Bauman draws, is concerned with an ethics of the Other, and not primarily with the needs-oriented rights-bearing individual. The relevance of this for an ethics of surveillance is profound (see Brigham and Introna 2007).

Current surveillance practices, emerging out of classic bureaucratic regimes, frequently exacerbate the sense that apparently random snippets of information—not just age or income but what toothpaste is purchased or which movie was rented—become significant enablers or obstacles for ordinary life. Moreover, technologically mediated surveillance is carried on at a distance, separating in space and also in time those whose data are manipulated and the institutions engaged in their manipulation. These twin themes have animated Bauman's work for a long time, and it is worth tracing the development of his ideas to get some perspective in the present.

A landmark in Bauman's work is *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) in which he picked up and elaborated Hannah Arendt's insights into how those managing the holocaust overcame the "animal pity" of which "normal men" are affected in the face of physical suffering (1989:20). Bauman's view is that this threshold is crossed when violence is authorized from above, actions are routinized by bureaucracy and victims are dehumanized. The civilizing process, argues Bauman, is understood lopsidedly when rationality is raised above ethics and violence is split away from a moral calculus. This is Weber's territory, of course, but Weber's analysis becomes much more poignant at the point of Bauman's pen.

The ascendancy of instrumental-rational criteria makes violence efficient and cost-effective, says Bauman, and dissociates it from moral evaluation of ends. The meticulous division of labor and the substitution of technical for moral responsibility show how this is achieved. Moral standards become irrelevant for technical success. So it is easy to see how the dehumanization of the objects of bureaucratic operation follows. The next phase, as Bauman observes, is for information technologies to augment and amplify these effects, until "more than any technology that preceded it [IT] succeeds in obliterating the humanity of its human objects" (1989:115). "Eventually, all contact with concrete situations is abstracted away," until today, poorer people who seek to maintain some contact with the formal economy are "deselected" or "demarketed" or travelers whose names or origins are deemed dubious find themselves on lists, to be delayed or detained.

The problem here lies in the process described by Bauman as adiaphorization, a concept that first appears in *Postmodern Ethics* (1993b) and continues use to the present (in *Liquid Fear* 2006, for example). This speaks to ways in which "reasonable decisions" are declared morally indifferent, a process that begins in bureaucracy but is amplified in a world of self-augmenting technologies supported by the momentum of current political economies of panic, precaution, and outsourcing. Again, such highly "rational" forms of discrimination in today's surveillance regimes tend inexorably toward outcomes that are, as Oscar Gandy has meticulously analyzed, best described as "cumulative disadvantage" for the usual suspects and the perennially poor (Gandy 2010).

The "means" are unbound in the so-called industrial revolution (the code word that hid the means-ends reversal from sight 1993b:190) seen in the shift from wood-and-water to coal-and-iron which for Bauman makes not the

industrial plant but the mine the metaphor for modernity. In this, he follows Lewis Mumford, who comments on the contrast between the balance created by agriculture and the discontinuity created by mining, “now feverish with gain, now depleted and vacant” (Mumford 1961:450; cited Bauman 1993b:192). This “technological stance toward the world” is explored further by Jacques Ellul, Bauman reminds us, where even the social world is subjected to a “new plasticity” and the resulting atomization was ideal for the operation of “technique” (Ellul 1964:51).

Bauman notes another irony; the supposedly non-divisible unit of modern social thought, the product of the modern breakup of collectivities, is actually astonishingly divisible. Technology tends to view the world—including, perhaps especially, that of “individuals”—as a collection of fragments. Taking cues from Ellul, again, Bauman, says the “disassembly and re-assembly go on continuously and have long ago become self-propelling” with the end result that “the moral self is the most evident and the most prominent among technology’s victims” (1993b:198). The subject—as Deleuze’s “dividual”—can no longer confront the totality of the world or the other human.

Alongside this, and feeding from it, a “technology-induced fragmentarity” conceals *both* the organic interconnectedness of the created order *and* the disassembly of the moral self, bringing about the growth of “risk society.” The problem-focused quest for efficiency boomerangs back, and does so with a vengeance, such that today, in the post-9/11 world, it produces a myopia that can only focus on calculable risks for which we can seek further technical solutions. And today, such identification, monitoring, screening, and data-processing systems are sold, unselfconsciously, labeled as “solutions” by transnational technology corporations, even while they continue to conceal the real problems that cry for “solution” or at least for ethical care. Now, because Bauman finds such “fragmentarity” ethically troubling, he tends to leave the technology story there, without considering, for example, what gains to democratic governance might be possible using new technologies. Thus, as with Weber on bureaucracy, Bauman on technology can sound rather pessimistic.

A further irony, beyond those explored by Bauman, is that in the surveillance sphere, those solutions for a world of risk—especially risk of terrorism—are heavily dependent on the new “mining” metaphor: data-mining. Here, the self is even more fragmented than in its erstwhile bureaucratic management model, even more vulnerable to technological intervention at a distance. Once again, the larger context and the real moral choices are neatly sidelined. Curiously, too, data-mining is a common technique that cuts across sectors and institutional areas, equally “efficient” for identifying terrorists and traffickers, consumers and clients.

### **Softwares, Suspicion, and Spirit**

Zygmunt Bauman’s work is immensely satisfying for the surveillance scholar. He places today’s dizzying technosocial developments in the broad context of mutating modernities, insists that we come to terms with the lived realities of persons whose visibility has rendered them asymmetrically transparent, and refuses to evade difficult ethical and political consequences both for organizations and for persons. What more can be said? It would not be fair to Bauman to query his work for its inadequacy in relation to surveillance studies. As I say, he has never claimed specific expertise in this area. But I would like to propose three areas for further consideration, at least two of which may be challenges that Bauman himself will be reluctant to accept.

The first has to do with what I am calling the “softwares of seduction” and this is really an empirical query. Exactly how does (in this case) consumer

“seduction” work? I suppose at bottom this has to do with a question I am often asked: starting with your definition of surveillance, what is not covered? Some current research is predicated on the proposal that in fact surveillance *has indeed* become the key principle for many organizational and institutional areas and thus, yes, it is increasingly ubiquitous (see Lyon 2007; Haggerty 2009). That term itself is suggestive, of course, because many are staking their next technological hopes and dreams on “ubiquitous computing” or, in Europe, “ambient intelligence” or AmI. Another version of this appears in the hype surrounding “Web 2.0.” These dreams have directly surveillant consequences, by definition.

But even without AmI, or Web 2.0, surveillant processes are increasingly in use, just as a result of the “informatization” of so many organizational and now domestic processes. For a long time, while my own work benefited from Bauman’s—the concept of “categorical seduction,” complementing Gary Marx’s “categorical suspicion” (Lyon 1994:156; 2001a:25–26) as an obvious case in point—I have also argued that further explanation is needed. So the challenge, alongside that of understanding synoptic effects of mass media and the deeper cultures of consumerism, is to understand the role of technological mediation of the surveillant dynamic. This is part of a more general issue in sociology and other social sciences, of integrating techno-social processes into research and theorizing. Only now are we starting to see how deeply the technological is imbricated with the social.

A second question relates to issues of hermeneutics and epistemology. The beauty of Bauman’s work is that he is willing to confront these issues; indeed, his critique of modernity and postmodernity depends in a sense upon his analysis of how hermeneutics has changed. The Marxism of an earlier Bauman gave way to a nuanced sociological epistemology, at once engaged and yet unwilling to accept any one voice as authoritative. Thus, there is always a skeptical, if not suspicious note in Bauman’s hermeneutic. Yet at the same time, even before his Levinasian “turn” to the hermeneutics of the Other in the 1990s, Bauman held onto a hope (1976:112) that, I would argue, still animates his work—despite what many, I think wrongly, see as “pessimism” (see also Lyon 1997).

That hope now inheres, I think, in the work on the Other, the hermeneutic of love or care. This is of central importance to surveillance studies. It is exactly what is missing from so many Foucault-inspired analyses of surveillance, shot-through as they are with the very suspicion that is written into the panopticon. But Foucault failed to note the way that Bentham’s deliberately secular parody of divine omniscience was entirely one-sided. It could never be anything but suspicious, grounded as it was in the motif of rational control of the most mechanical kind (Lyon 1991). My query is this: how can the (retrieved) hermeneutic of care—of love or concern for the Other—at the heart of Bauman’s work, be worked out in relation to surveillance? Even given the adiaphorization at least implicit in bureaucratic and technological surveillance, does surveillance always have to be viewed as negative? After all, for example, in some contexts it serves to guarantee certain forms of entitlement and access to appropriate persons.

The third question asks, if you will, what (or even who) is beyond the Other? Bauman’s analysis of modernity with its universal, rationally available principles that are supposed to relieve the individual of ambivalence, uncertainty, and insecurity clearly shows how this fails. The postmodern alternative, with no metaphysical grounding and no guidance outside local communities, is shown by Bauman to be an equally disastrous recipe, but he finds something rescuable from the twin collapses of modern and postmodern alternatives. Space is opened for a morality of personal responsibility. Ambivalence may still be present, but

freedom and responsibility may be found in face-to-face moral relationships. So, following Emmanuel Levinas, moral responsibility for the Other is at the existential core of the human condition.

But where is the openness to the transcendent that characterizes Levinas' approach, where he sees the "infinite in the Other"? Can an appeal to care-for-the-Other as the basis for moral responsibility survive outside the spiritual contexts that gave it birth? Clearly, this is not a question that can be discussed except in a very superficial way here. As Citlali Roviroso-Madrazo says, "Bauman is a non-religious man who writes for an ethical reader, a social thinker who dismisses the idea of a supernatural being, and yet a man whose compassion, moral integrity and moral commitment to humanity would provoke the envy of any dogmatic, religious or secular man" (Bauman 2010). There is clearly space for dialog between Bauman and people whose faith includes commitment to a healed earth and reconciled humanity but it is at present a space we shall have to "watch."

Nonetheless, Bauman's particular concern for the sufferer—the Other who has been abused and misused—is one of his strongest contributions and again, is of special significance for surveillance studies (Lyon 2001b). All too often, as studies of surveillance have encompassed new areas of concern, a focused attention to the peculiar situation of the stranger, the marginalized, stereotyped, powerless person has somehow diffused. Yet the young, black male in the downtown street (Manning 2006), the welfare mother trapped at home (Gilliom 2001) and the Middle Eastern Arab-Muslim (Webb 2007) should still in my view, be prioritized in surveillance studies.

Why should special concern be expressed, analytically, ethically, and politically, for the Other who is especially disadvantaged? Surely this dynamic, deeply embedded especially in Judaic and Christian thought, that the test of governance at any level should be concern shown for the weakest or those with voices least well heard, deserves be explored as a source of care? Perhaps all I am asking is that social and political theory—of surveillance as of other areas—at least be open to the contributions of those who find the ethics of the Other written into the most ancient of religious traditions and simultaneously expressible in very contemporary terms? It would be not a little ironic if the God for Others that Bentham wanted to write out of his secular parody and which Foucault said "made visibility a trap" gives clues for surveillance studies priorities in the twenty-first century.

### Conclusion

Zygmunt Bauman's intriguing and inspiring writings offer much for the understanding of surveillance in the twenty-first century. His overriding metaphor for the present times is liquidity; hence, for our purposes, it is worth considering what liquid surveillance might look like. It turns out that Bauman's reflections on liquidity lend both life to social analysis and a sense of urgency to the development of an ethics and a politics of surveillance.

We need a sociology of surveillance for these "times of terror," whether that terror is generated by guerilla groups or by so-called civilized states. Or, stated more expansively, we need a multidisciplinary approach to surveillance—One that does not ignore or downplay the ways that surveillance has become indispensable for everyday life and organizational efficiency but which simultaneously acknowledges that the same surveillance may have fundamental consequences for ordinary people and for a just society that are at least undesirable if not downright damaging. Such an approach calls for courage as well as analytical skill and theoretic imagination, and it is just such integrity that is found in Zygmunt Bauman's work on what I am calling liquid surveillance.

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