**Title**

Mass Surveillance In Society

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Sophie Calle (b. 1953). *The Hotel, Room 46*, March 4, 1983. Gelatin-silver prints and text, edition 3/4, 2 panels, 104 x 145 cm each (framed). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Partial and promised gift, The Bohen Foundation 2001.91

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Mass surveillance in Society

Defined by the Oxford dictionary, surveillance is “Supervision, close observation, [and] invigilation of individuals who are not trusted to work or go about unwatched” (Fowler and Fowler 1964: 1302). It would be unheard of for someone not to be aware of the contemporary phenomena regarding ideas such as phone tapping, phones listening to our conversations and more recently Alexa listening in to us at home. Surveillance and data storing have become common in society and frequently the core basis of discussions in many homes, business and government. CCTV was introduced to prevent criminal activity, but has evolved to prosecute criminals after the incident has happened, failing its original purpose. With data sharing and surveillance being particularly high in the UK, with "one CCTV camera for every 11 people in UK - Research shows 1.85m machines across Britain, most of them indoors and privately operated” (The Guardian, 2018), it is no wonder the complications and implications of such technology can cause people to become concerned. Where innocent criminal deterrents started, the beginning for big business had begun and the change in social norms erupted. Can we truly act how we want; say how we feel and do as we please in a world of consequence and back-tracking? A place where every word you speak has the potential to reappear at a later date with different contexts altering its meaning. Geroge Orwell’s dystopian *1984*, was way ahead of its time as the content is more relevant to modern day living with phones that can videocall and television you can speak too. Such ideas will be discussed in more detail throughout this dissertation as well as the analysis of ideas presented in Margret Attwoods novels.

As technology develops at a fast pace, society has struggled to maintain its understanding for what conflict it may bring, and we are left in the dark on the rules and laws of how we can act in society, resulting in a culture shift and change in social norms. It is apparent that many people feel oppressed as they have no place in society, or that they are being treated differently for wanting a more basic and ‘less about the money, off grid lifestyle’. The ever-changing expectations from others creates a struggle for few who are unable to conform to societies running and some individual’s thoughts and what they vocalise limited to what they deem appropriate to share around them. Sophie Calle and Cindy Sherman's work, to name a few, are bold and necessary as discussions regarding the change in human behaviour once under surveillance and again will be analysed in much more detail throughout. As many of us wish to gain some privacy, this luxury is deemed rare as a result of advances in surveillance and data. Many of us have a at least a slim understanding of the importance of privacy as technology is celebrated and expected. The following discussion will look at both the positive impact that data sharing and surveillance has, as well as the many issues it has upon social life and everyday living. It will also consider whether or not these are something I would call ‘champagne problems’ (dilemmas which when contextualised aren’t so upsetting in the grand scheme of things i.e. being upset that you can’t buy the latest phone because it’s out of stock) or serious issues which need alerting to the mass’s in order to preserve an honest representation of society true to each individual, not ruled by whoever decides they want everyone to act, play, and live a certain way.

ROOM 46

Monday February 16, 1981. *11a.m. I hear a woman's laugh coming from room 46. A quarter of an hour later, the bellboy knocks on the door, brings in breakfast for two and leaves. I go up to the room to listen. She: "Oh, this is lovely". He: "But anybody can make that". She: "This is chocolate the way I like it". (He laughs throatily.) My services are wanted elsewhere. When I come back ten minutes later, the subject of conversation is still the same. She: "I really don't know how they make that". 12:30 p.m. – The bellboy knocks on their door, takes the tray and leaves. She: "Oh, those Italians!" and "Oh, no, don't do that! I've got problems. I swear! You're too much!" I hear them kiss. She: "You shouldn't do that! I haven't been to the john this morning"...whereupon she shrieks: "Oh, I forgot to lock the door." The key turns in the lock. It's 1p.m. They're loudly making love and I go off my shift.*

Tuesday 17. *11:20a.m. I pass by room 46. I hear the woman say "I told you when we left"..., followed by silence. By 12:40p.m., they have gone out. I go in. The first thing to catch the eye is the mind-boggling pair of shoes, under the table, that blocks out everything else. I then find the following items scattered about the room: a carton of Camel cigarettes, a pair of Ray-Ban glasses, a Sony walkman with two sets of earphones, tapes (Bernard Lavilliers, The Doors), books: Eurocar, Retour à Brooklyn by Selby, Le complot du Caire, by Gerard de Villiers, La grande chasse au requin by Thompson and three comic books: Les Celtiques and Fables Venitiennes by Hugo Pratt and A Suivre, Special John Lennon. A knife and sheath, a book by M.V. Stumza on aerospace medicine, notes on the same subject and stationery with the letterhead of Carcassonne's City Hall. One of them wears striped pajamas at night, the other a black silk slip and pink bed jacket. All the clothes are hanging in the closet. In the suitcase are two pairs of women's panties, tampons, a pair of men's briefs, a tube and a jar of vaseline. The bathroom is a mess.*

Wednesday 18. *10a.m. The room is empty. They have checked out. On a piece of paper in the wastebasket is the following text, scribbled in pencil: "Ghetto, Cour de Malte et de bouche dorée. Corte del Maltese, escalier de bois, rue de l'amour, des amis, Le pont des merveilles. Sur le retour, vieux ghetto. Escalier fou. Turc rats d'égoût. N'existe plus. Maisons fenêtres murées. Cour secrète des arcanes. Candélabres. Chasseresse. Flèche. Arc. Vaches. Etoiles à six points. Un cercle. Jeune fille nue. Sol. Noms anges déchus: Samaël, Sataël, Amabel. Passage étroit de la nostalgie. Le pont de la nostalgie, Sérail des Hébreux, des belles idées. Chauve-souris dans niche albâtre." They have forgotten a pair of panties and socks that are dripping on the bathroom radiator. The towels are all over the place and the water is still running in the washbasin.*

Fig 1: *The Hotel, Room 46*

It is clear throughout history the pressure of social norms has caused individuals to feel as though they are outcasted, but as David Hockney said when technological advances came to England “I go and see anything that's visually new, any technology that's about picture-making. The technology won't make the pictures different, but someone using it will.” (Hockney, 2017), of course he was referring to the new digital art movement and the fact that you cannot run away from such ideas and methods once they have been shown to the world and so one must do their best in the situation, take full advantage and respond to the matter any way you can. This is seemingly relevant to today's new shift in society brought by advances in technology. We as artists and individuals must make the best of the situation and do our best in this ever so quickly changing society. Work with new ideas and resources rather than against them. By doing so positive outcomes occur. We can access more information than ever before and have new platforms to share our artwork for others to see and though competition is high, we have better chances of contacting and messaging freely. New technology also allows us to work in a quicker, less time-consuming ways in regards to how we store, share, edit and critique our own works. We can enter a new world of digital art where we can make masterpieces and interactive sculptures at a few strokes of our fingers. This new medium could only exist by recognising the digital possibilities new technology has to offer. Sharing our work has become easier than ever. By using memory cards, USB sticks, websites and other technology like Instagram and email where we can get quick responses from our clients and galleries and use technology to our advantage.

”As our lives become more public on social media and the border between the private and the public ever more politically contested, Calle seems increasingly like an artist whose provocations are more like premonitions.” (The Guardian, 2017) Calle’s ideology behind her work is witty, perverse and exciting. By interfering and dissecting others belongings in her photo series *The Hotel* she sparks a dialogue between surveillance and privacy. She posed as a chambermaid for a hotel for months, during that time she would take photographs of all the belongings, diaries, clothing etc... of the guests of the hotel. Making her own interpretations, leaning towards an imagined alter ego she had created for each person. It's easy to people-watch and I felt so inspired by this idea of taking it that step further. Physically finding out about the people we watch. After all, nowadays is the easiest times we could live in for secret surveillance to take place. Her persona invites herself into environments she wouldn’t have access to otherwise and her confidence to perform and photograph her findings is admirable. Some could argue her invasive approach is criminal, yet these same people are happy for business and government to have access to information about them deemed private in the illusion that the data is stored safely. With such naivety present, these individuals are unaware their data...their identity is being sold off to the biggest business in the world, meta-data collecting. Calles work links harmoniously to that of Sherman. Sherman’s work *Untitled A, B, C,* and *D* are a reminder of how we similarly choose to present ourselves differently to individuals based on what perception we want them to have of us. Although Sherman was doing this behind closed doors by taking her photographs in intimate environments showing her private side of life, so are we when we depict ourselves in a romanticised way for others when using social media i.e. Facebook, Instagram, twitter...It’s having control over what vulnerabilities we want

to show others and masking our failures in an attempt to feel more worthy in society. In an interview about her works from the *Olbricht collection,* Cindy Sherman states “I would just go in my bedroom when I was depressed and I’d turn into characters—and [my boyfriend at the time] said, ‘You should be documenting this. It’s really interesting what you’re doing.’ It had not occurred to me that I was doing anything unusual.” (Collectors Room, 2015). This was in regards to the outcome of her works which challenged her identity issues. She gives us a peek into her private life, which at the time of creating such images would have caused controversy, in the modern day such taboo is absent. The paramount aspect of her photographs is that she decides to share this side of her life, the images delve deep into parts of her that no one would have access to if she had not shared them. She continues to expand her current work/ideas via the use of Instagram, Facebook etc... In today's society nothing is a secret, with the possibilities to keep things a secret. minimal, technology has stored, released and shared data about us that we don’t even know about. The control of privacy is absent in the 21st century, making an interesting dialogue between ownership and imperviousness of one's self. As advances in social platforming become more developed and we share more parts of our identity and data, it won’t be long before software developers are able to target individuals based on their algorithms. The future is beginning to look like a dystopia where we will have our freedoms stripped from us and the technology will be so advanced that we won’t have to think for ourselves anymore because the online presence of our private life will be accessed by all. Advertisements will be so in-tune with our thinking and the internet know so much about us that they will think for us and know what we want before we want it.

It is obvious that Orwell is a critic of surveillance and dictatorship through his novels *1984* and *Animal Farm*. George Orwell: *1984* “if you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself”. *1984* was way ahead of it is time, analysing technology that didn’t even exist yet, *1984* was able to identify and criticize the many issues that newer technology brings to the world. He had this idea of ‘big brother, always watching’ (*1984*, 1949) which is very accurate in today's society. By exploring human behaviour and how one must act when being watched an interesting overview of control, dictatorship and mind games where exposed. The greatest fear that could arise, would be the isolation and discrimination of few in order to satisfy and distract the many. Whenever power prevails, there is an evident link to segregation. In the past this has been between races, religion, disability, the sexes, political opinions and anything else that can be used against an individual on mass. Government are known for altering the truth, scaremongering and out right lying to the public in order to create a reaction for an ulterior motive. Its laughable how many ‘top story news’ comes out whenever a huge government scandal, tax avoidance or government lie is exposed. The counter-argument to the critic of modern-day technology imposing on our everyday lives ia that we can use such devices to our advantage. It is easy to miss the real news amongst the fake but we have no excuse for interpreting wrong information or believing what we hear on the news as we have the technology and ability to research further and find credible sources of gathering information to justify our opinions.  Many argue, that the people who don’t want to be surveillance, can simply censor or alter information to the masses as they have the most power. If people don’t agree with other thoughts and ideas it’s becoming ever so easy to claim you are offended and as a result diminish free speech and the opinions of other. “Critics of the government’s flagship internet regulation policy are warning it could

lead to a North Korean-style censorship regime, where regulators decide which websites Britons are allowed to visit, because of how broad the proposals are." (The Guardian, 2019). By restricting information or censorship, our freedom is compromised. We must ask ourselves why certain information is not allowed to be shared with us and who imposed such regulation. It is obscene that data restrictions are being imposed on the public, and that propaganda is allowed to continue to alter people's mindsets and opinions on different ideas.

Time after time we can see extreme cases of people fighting against this and using the dark web to access sites and information their country doesn't allow and the implications of going on such websites is not only dangerous for its users but the content on some are illegal and immoral "A study by the University of Portsmouth in 2014 found that the most wanted type of content on Tor was child porn, followed by black markets for goods such as drugs, personal details and even guns." (The Sun 2019). Data bases allow the police to review what sites individuals use and how often to determine whether or not they may be committing criminal acts. Of course, some may say this imposes on the publics privacy to use the internet freely without consequence but as the internet is adapting at a faster pace than we can keep up with, such surveillance is arguably only put in place for the protection of society. There are many complications for just surveying criminals on the dark web as it is much easier to monitor than it is to convict. The issue police and government have is that if they target an illegal paedophile ring on the dark web, as bizarre as it sounds, it actually puts the children at more risk as abusers and paedophiles will just make more platforms, and make it harder to find on the internet, meaning the police are no longer able to monitor and access the criminal information and victims. Of course, there are positives in regards to the fact criminals are easily identifiable when using

such sites, but the blame that these even exist are a result of the US government. “Tor stands for ‘the onion routing project’. It was developed by the U.S. Navy for the government in the mid-1990s. But it was open-sourced in 2004, and that’s when it went public. Tor is now the dark web browser that the vast majority of people use to anonymously surf the internet.” (CNBN, 2018) The US government created tor to send and receive military information for the government, but they argue they didn’t realise how criminals could later use this platform for criminal activity. Whether this was down to naivety or idiotic, is down to personal opinion on the matter, but either way this network is to this day the biggest business in the world for criminals. As it is used for encrypting data, the police are unable to monitor it efficiently and therefor is the playground for illegal behaviour.

So how do we protect individuals without taking away their freedom? Some may dispute it is already too late as we have given up so much of our identity already, businesses can already make assumptions of our human behaviour and how we will act, and consume in different environments. Others would say there is still room for developments in regards to services, cookie preferences, and data sharing by third parties. Soon there could be a device which will not only stores our information securely but will notify us and give us the option to what information is given away and to who this information is sent too. We must value freedom of speech and self-expression within society. The public should always be entitled to disagree with someone's judgement. Judgement being the key to having justified opinions which should always be free from the possibility of arrest or conviction, once shared. Racism and sexism are topics which should not exist, due to the nature of such ideas being curated through, misinformed information and resulting in obstinate, invalid opinions. We have the ability to find valid information to form our views through the

advances in technology. Unfortunately, some still don't know how to access the real news from the fake. My hopes for the future are that technology can be used correctly to source data which informs rather than confuses. Much like an anti-virus software, there are suggestions that similar software will be available which can decide if the sources of information are reputable or not. Allowing us to share informed ideas freely, which could lead to a more harmonious lifestyle for all to live in. Where everyone has the same information and can listen to each other and evolve their own opinions when given new facts and information.

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is brave, disturbing and current. With ideas such as: censorship, control and surveillance seeping out at every given chance, her novel explores a dystopian life which has unnerving similarities in today's world where you can get arrested for an opinion or where you are photographed in the streets by tiny cameras in every corner. I feel as though this is similar to how in Germany post world war II, the government and police would record entire conversations just because individuals would make one incoherent opinion in the streets. Surveillance now is much more subtle. The main difference now being that we are all self-moderating (we moderate our own behaviours based on what is perceived to be more appealing. Although we are still being watched we are more in fear of showing our faults and unpopular opinions to the rest of the world that we end up censoring ourselves without the need for authority to do so on our behalf. We are self-moderating in the 21st century in the sense that we moderate our own behaviours. Although we are still being watched we are more in fear of showing our faults and unpopular opinions to the rest of the world that we end up surveying ourselves. This is relevant more so than not as we do not know when we are being

watched, and so we act as if we are always being watched as this is in our best interest. If we consider the idea of the panopticon, an understaffed and underfunded police force can still effectively control public behaviour to be more in line with what is socially acceptable as a result of this paranoia.  Our cameras watch us at home as well as in public spaces. I see people acting differently than in previous years, we are all trying to conform in society but by doing so we are monitoring our own behaviour and creating a world where we survey ourselves. It's the cleverest and most horrifying invention of all, a society that is too worried by others to act indifferently and so we all become compliant without a second thought. Segregation, discrimination and hierarchy are all exposed in this foreseeing dystopian world created by Atwood, reminding us of the importance our liberty and freedom holds. By taking away individuals names and in doing so isolating them is one of the most inhumane and immoral things another human can do to another. By dressing people based on their rank in society, it becomes easy to confine ideas and diminish unique traits, making the whole of humanity horribly similar. The commanders in this case have the highest authority and are able to use language which expresses themselves without consequence, in contrast to this the handmaids are stripped from their education and are given very basic tasks to complete during the days so that their creativity and thoughts are not rebellious against the society they live in.  “We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories.” (Atwood, 1985) This extract taken from the novel is more relevant now than one would hope. It explores the idea of having a private life, one where the choses you make are not condemned and have consequence...a life where you can speak without scrutiny and fear of punishment. In today's society this is too similar. We have

one end of the extreme where people thrive to portray themselves on social media as having an idealistic lifestyle, filled with expensive materialistic objects, presumably so they can fit in or gain a sense of accomplishment for living a life enforced on us by media and advertisement, some may only dream of. In juxtaposition we have the individuals who prefer to live more off grid, in a less surveyed way. Where actions do not define you and you can get away with “fucking up” every known and then and that being okay. It’s too easy to upset someone out of context and more difficult to explain yourself when you're sitting behind a screen, making decision based on fake news and naivety. Maybe there will be a day where freedom can prevail and the media giants and government decided to stop surveying us. Or maybe we continue down this path into a doomed dystopia much like Atwoods book foresees.

In contrast some people think we live in the freest times, where technological advances allow us to respond to the world in ways only possible due to these existing and that our voices can be heard that bit louder due to the many platform's individuals have to share and express themselves on a daily basis. This creates discussion, conflict and resolution, but most importantly education, all available through social media. Having the ability to connect with someone on the other side of the world with different ideas and opinions so efficiently, is simply one of the most admirable developments in recent years. Some may respond by highlighting that this information and ability to access such, is what allows harmony to prevail in the hardest of times as we can communicate, educate and validate what we say with informed information being able to share with one another with ease. The information may be hard to obtain but it is available and so many may argue that there isn’t such a problem with data sharing and surveillance , but with the idiocy and laziness of individuals who are not prepared to research, respect and address their privacy with

companies and websites for the sake of convenience, by spending a few minutes changing their settings when accessing these sites and refusing to give their identity away so easily as if it is the norm. What is evident is that these advances are no longer a thing of dreams or nightmares, they are here, they exist and they are thriving. We have on us at all times a device that has a front camera, a back camera and a listening to device which we know have been previously to spy and monitor individual's behaviour yet we allow this compromise for convenience. One can only hope we still have the ability to express ourselves as freely as I do in this writing, without someone in the powers above treading me down and having me adhere to the same views they have. For now, my voice is heard, admittedly with consequences at times, but without censorship.

*The Simulation Theory* was first hypothesised during a philosophical debate by that of René Descartes, and later by Hans Moravec. The idea is that technology has developed at such a fast rate that we are already living in a computer simulation without even knowing. 40 years ago when the game snake was at its prime, people were blown away by the graphics, and science behind making a platform to play a game such as this, just 40 years later we are now able to virtually simulate a 4D world with the use of headsets and gaming equipment, some may argue that we have passed an area of reality and merged with that of a simulation. Much like religion it is impossible to prove such believers wrong just as much as proving their ideas true. "As information itself becomes the largest business in the world, data banks know more about individual people than the people do themselves. The more the data banks record about each one of us, the less we exist" (Marshall Mcluhan, 1970). When companies are able to manipulate our lives through subtle

advertisements, making us consume and alter our lifestyles to fit social norms, we become powerless and in turn our identity is stolen. Reality is defined as “the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them... a thing that is actually experienced or seen, in contrast to what people might imagine” (2019, Oxford dictionary) But if technology allows us to use our senses to: touch, taste, smell, see and hear the line between fiction and reality becomes blurred. One could argue that although these ideas are invented and only exist in our minds, because they are so lifelike and at times, we can physically use our senses, that they shift from ideas and notions into existing realities. It’s the same with ideas in our heads. If what we know can be manipulated into something different, can a reality where we can freely think for ourselves exist?

There are current major problems happening in the country, “The Conservatives have set up a website that purports to contain Labour’s manifesto, in a bid to trick voters looking for the document. The governing party paid Google to promote the website labourmanifesto.co.uk towards the top of its results for people searching for the opposition plan.” (The Independent, 2019). When this news came to the surface there was an uproar in regards to the parties falsifying information for the public to dissect into truth by fabricating any honesty, when they knew exactly how this may affect the upcoming election. At what point do we start convicting MP’s for their exploitative use of power and at what point do they become accountable for misinforming and blatantly lying to millions of Brits? By endorsing Google with a sum of money to set up such a website and Google accepting such an offer, it's clear the presence of democracy has become redundant in the 21st century due to this lack of information. It seems politics is more so about how much an individual can deceive the public rather than help them. There has also been an evident increase in *Deep*

*Fake* videos on the internet, “The term is named for a Reddit user known as Deep Fakes who, in December 2017, used deep learning technology to edit the faces of celebrities onto people in pornographic video clips. The term, which applies to both the technologies and the videos created with it, is a portmanteau of deep learning and fake.” (Tech Target, 2018) This has developed onto creators uploading videos of Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn delivering speeches as if they are real, spreading propaganda and scaremongering the public into believing information that is entirely made up. The videos are created by members of the public with political views that differ from one another. The idea is that because they are so very realistic, some members of the UK will perceive them as truth and change their votes based on the made-up policies they appear to agree/disagree with. As many speeches and manifestos are easily accessible online, whether it be Facebook or a google search, individuals don’t tend to speculate whether the Information has come from a reliable source and so believe anything they are told. Once these convincing videos are shown to such individuals the spread of fake news continues and with a divided and unjustified election to follow, I argue that the end of politics is neigh, as there is too much external influence affecting people’s opinions and in return swaying their vote unfairly.

To conclude, I have learned through research in the previous discussion, the danger of mass surveillance lies equally with the individual sharing the data and the individual themselves. One mustn't ignore the importance of protecting their information and identity in the 21st century and should aim to educate themselves in how to better protect themselves, as the advances in technology continue. Our privacy holds our identity and in the wrong hands can alter our future and our ability

to think for ourselves through advertisements and the fear of not being able to conform and fit into society. We must not compromise ease of access against our ability to choose what information stays private. The benefits of technology are immense, its incomprehensible what possibilities lay in front of us as social platforms and gadgets excel so quickly. The public should use the advances to their advantage to better their lives, working with recent developments to keep up with the ever-changing world rather than losing sight and falling behind overlooking important aspects of our surveillance orientated world, when trying to catch up. Our main concern would be the disregard we have for the data we have ownership of. Businesses makes billions of pounds by using and selling our data and to give it out through our naivety to the serious importance of it, is not only idiotic but dangerous. When algorithms can determine our life choices and preferences we trod on a very blurry line on reality and fantasy. Being aware to the possible complications mass surveillance encapsulates, will better one's chances of remaining individual and free from external influences stealing our freedom to think for ourselves. The premonitions of Attwood, Orwell, Sherman and other creatives are our final warning to wise up to what is happening around us. This is not an idea that is in its teething stages of appearing, it is real, it is here and we must act now to prevent further damage to our identity...our lives. At what point do we become robots with flesh? Consuming, conforming, so called 'living' in a world that doesn't care about anything other than business and profit.

By exposing the worries mass surveillance has on our well-being we are able to identify the good amongst the chaos. We can do so much to improve our quality of life through the access we have on the internet. The possibilities are truly remarkable as we can sit in the comfort of our home and teach ourselves anything through

tutorials others have shared and information given to us on websites, Facebook, YouTube etc. This luxury of accessing data online is easily overlooked. When technology has become so advanced we can create virtual worlds and videos which use face mapping to create realistic portrayals of how real people look and act, our wants become needs and when the ability to search freely on the Web is compromised we forget how privileged we are to have it in the first place. Some people prefer a life of being told what to do and think and so may praise the surveillance and advertisements altered to suit them, arguing their lives have become easier. Through surveillance we are also at a point where we are more equipped to deal with terrorism, burglary and other crimes. We may not be able to prevent all crime but there is a better chance of conviction with thousands of online users able to share, locate and expose criminal activity within seconds.

To summarise, surveillance has both its advantages and disadvantages. We must expect such when working with ideas we don't fully understand and when technology proceeds at a much faster rate than we could ever expect. Read the small print, and take responsibility for where our privacy and what pieces of our identity we wish to have exposed. We are human and rather than becoming reliant on social media, we should tune into our instincts and celebrate individualism. Is it this, alongside our ability to be consciously aware that separates us from animals and more recently robots and so we must not lose touch which ourselves and protect our future by giving our privacy the respect it not only deserves but needs?

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