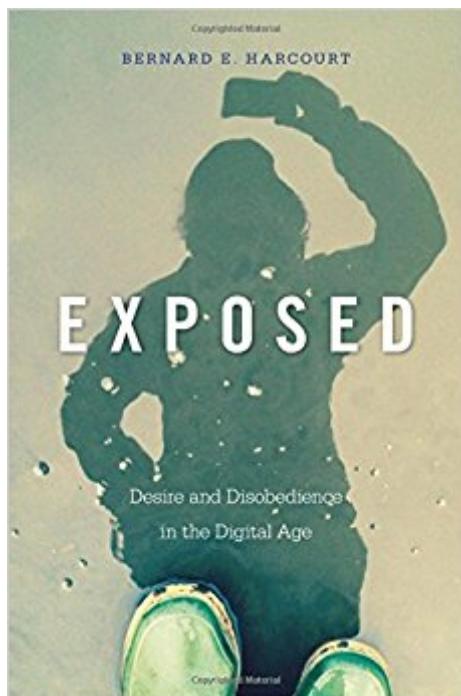


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# Exposed: Desire And Disobedience In The Digital Age



## Synopsis

Social media compile data on users, retailers mine information on consumers, Internet giants create dossiers of who we know and what we do, and intelligence agencies collect all this plus billions of communications daily. Exploiting our boundless desire to access everything all the time, digital technology is breaking down whatever boundaries still exist between the state, the market, and the private realm. Exposed offers a powerful critique of our new virtual transparency, revealing just how unfree we are becoming and how little we seem to care. Bernard Harcourt guides us through our new digital landscape, one that makes it so easy for others to monitor, profile, and shape our every desire. We are building what he calls the expository society—“a platform for unprecedented levels of exhibition, watching, and influence that is reconfiguring our political relations and reshaping our notions of what it means to be an individual.” We are not scandalized by this. To the contrary: we crave exposure and knowingly surrender our privacy and anonymity in order to tap into social networks and consumer convenience—or we give in ambivalently, despite our reservations. But we have arrived at a moment of reckoning. If we do not wish to be trapped in a steel mesh of wireless digits, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to resist. Disobedience to a regime that relies on massive data mining can take many forms, from aggressively encrypting personal information to leaking government secrets, but all will require conviction and courage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The problem, as Harcourt observes, is that where once autonomy and anonymity were part of a

humanist → ecology, privacy has now → itself been transformed into a type of good that can be traded, bought, or sold. Privacy has been privatized. Even so, many people are not particularly bothered by what faceless corporations or even governments can learn about them from their data exhaust. Many who are not celebrities or other high-profile snooping targets trust in → security through obscurity: why would anyone be interested in my personal information anyway? Harcourt's approach is illuminating. Rather than trying to resolve the argument one way or the other, he suggests that there is a new digital class distinction between two kinds of people: those who feel comfortable with implicit surveillance → because of their privilege in other spheres, and those who feel harmed because their lives are precarious anyway → they feel that they are potential targets, the usual suspects. (Steven Poole Times Literary Supplement 2015-11-18) We live in what Harcourt calls an expository society: where privacy is no longer a core value and → all the formerly coercive surveillance technology is now woven into the very fabric of our pleasure and fantasies. The force of his new book lies in his synthesis of a huge amount of history and theory, ranging from the Ancient Greeks to the twentieth century, into a persuasive picture of how and why we have stopped valuing privacy. So why don't people care more about their privacy? Harcourt's book is forceful and passionate, theoretically advanced, and persuasive about the dangers of an alliance between the government and the for-profit sector. The rigorous reader will be very satisfied by his precise use of terminology, and by the fact that he does not set up an absolute dichotomy between freedom and technology. But he also acknowledges that knowledge of these practices doesn't seem to be enough to move people to action. When Harcourt points out that wearing the Apple Watch essentially turns consumers into parolees, he gives us a very powerful way to think about our present state, one that we need more of. Because we won't care about privacy until we feel its absence as a loss, a physical limitation, an affront. (Nausicaa Renner New Republic 2015-11-18) This is a fascinating, erudite and deeply disturbing book → and yet an ultimately uplifting one, as it offers at least the beginnings of a way forward, a way in which the dystopian position in which we have put ourselves could be changed. A way in which we could start to disobey. The book is rich with detail, both in its descriptions and analysis of the surveillance state and in its analysis of the commercial operations of internet giants such as Google, Facebook and Apple → and especially the ways in which the state and private actors combine into a tentacular oligarchy → of control. (Paul Bernal Times Higher Education 2016-01-14) By documenting the nature and extent of → digital transparency, →

Harcourt does shake us up. He concludes with recommendations for resistance to data-mining, collection, and profiling. (Glenn C. Altschuler Huffington Post 2015-12-17) Harcourt draws from his background in law and political theory to understand the ways our online lives are monitored. The way we live today, according to Harcourt, with the constant Tweeting, Instagramming, emailing, and chatting, is leaving us exposed. Harcourt worries about how easily we give up personal information. Much private personal data today can be gathered through Google searches, online shopping likes, â„¢ and retweets. The information can be bought and sold through [Facebook] ads, and can be accessed by the FBI, the NSA. Through the PRISM program, the NSA can get ahold of data from Microsoft, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, and more, for \$20 million a year. (Hope Reese Tech Republic 2015-11-17) Harcourt's book, which exposes the deeply troubling implications of pervasive surveillance in an era of neoliberalism, could not be more urgent. The developed world is about to make myriad fateful decisions about the degree to which corporate and government leaders monitor us and utilize our data. I can think of no other manuscript I'd rather have leaders consider, as they make these decisions, than Harcourt's. (Frank Pasquale, University of Maryland) An impassioned plea to liberal democrats to wake up to the perils posed by the new digital technologies to their freedoms and selves. We have become a society of expositors, willingly and naively exposing our most intimate lives to the scrutiny of impersonal agencies, endangering not only our civil liberties but our identities as well. (Seyla Benhabib, Yale University) This compelling study reveals a radically new form of power to which we freely expose ourselves in a world in which state, economy, and society are no longer separate spheres. Harcourt's vision of this new digital age stands out for its sweep, its vividness, and its analytical precision. (Steven Lukes, New York University) Real and imaginary panopticons of incarceration from centuries past pale in comparison with those that surround us today. Rather than acquiescing to structures of command and surveillance by force, against our will, and in confinement, we have surrendered to them voluntarily, without duress, and at scale. The condition of willful exposure Harcourt describes in his book challenges well-worn tropes of critical theory. The expository society, as Harcourt calls this emerging assemblage of technology, practice, norms, and institutions, frustrates long-held intuitions about spectacle and surveillance, inside and outside, public and private. We live in an expository society, Harcourt writes, in a society of willful exposure and exhibition. In this perverse light, the inability to expose oneself seems like punishment. And the reward for being watchedâ„¢ liked, favored, followedâ„¢ is personal affirmation. Under the emerging regime there is no need for metal bars, cells, or

watchtowers. We enter into the hall of mirrors willingly. We demand entrance. And we expose ourselves in return. We have only begun to understand the personal and political implications of the expository society in which surveillance is both more total and more voluntary than was ever imagined. The nightmare of George Orwell's 1984 is in some ways less intrusive than the reality of 2016. Harcourt's book ultimately points to the desire at the root of our need for exposure. Exposed sounds a timely alarm about the proliferation of such seemingly banal but powerful surveillance mechanisms. We do not live under a tyrannical regime today. But Harcourt's book does identify infrastructures that have the potential to invite tyranny.

(Dennis Tenen Los Angeles Review of Books 2016-02-05) The book's power comes from a readiness to grapple with not just the structure of our super-surveillant, public-private system, but the desires that keep us compulsively interacting with it. (Pat Kane New Scientist 2015-12-02) The most socially alarming effect of the digital revolution is the state of continuous surveillance endured, with varying levels of complaisance, by everyone who uses a smartphone. Bernard Harcourt's intellectually energetic book Exposed surveys the damage inflicted on privacy by spy agencies and private corporations, encouraged by citizens who post constant online updates about themselves. Harcourt describes a new kind of psyche that seeks, through its exposed virtual self, satisfactions of approval and notoriety that it can never truly find. It exists in order to be observed. (Edward Mendelson New York Review of Books 2016-06-23)

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Was a gift for my niece, she loved it!

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