

While You Are Watching Your TV, Your TV is Watching *You*

By [Rhoda Wilson](#) On [March 6, 2023](#),

<https://expose-news.com/2023/03/06/you-watch-your-tv-your-tv-watches-you/>

According to Yuval Noah Harari the “covid crisis” was a watershed moment in terms of surveillance and personal data. During a panel discussion at the 2020 Athens Democracy Forum, Harari was asked what his fears and concerns about digital surveillance were. He said televisions not only know what we’re watching but could also know how we feel while watching it.



The 2020 Athens Democracy Forum was held on 30 September 30 – 2 October 2020, as a virtual event. The Forum was organised for the second year by the Democracy & Culture Foundation, in association with The New York Times and under the Patronage of H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Ms. Katerina Sakellaropoulou.

When people look back at the “covid crisis,” Harari told the Forum’s panel, the thing they will remember is that this was the moment everything went digital, when everything became monitored and “that we agreed to be surveilled all the time. This is the moment when surveillance started going under the skin ... I think the big process that’s happening right now in the world is the ability to hack humans to understand deeply what’s happening within you ... Having the ability to really monitor people under the skin this is the biggest game changer of all,” he said. Further into the discussion, he described emotions such as anger as a “biological phenomena ... a biological pattern in your body.”

With this kind of surveillance, of what’s happening under the skin, “you watch the big president, a big leader, gives a speech on television,” he said, and “the television could be monitoring you and knowing whether you’re angry or not, just by analysing the cues, the biological cues, coming from your body... *“So now people are now watching us online all over the world – this conversation now – maybe even right now the people who are watching us are being watched and analysed. It’s not just that we know you’re watching this ... we also know how you feel.”*

Athens Democracy Forum: Panel Discussion: Technology and the Future of Democracy,
3 October 2020 (51 mins): <https://youtu.be/W2z2dufityI> -->



To begin to understand the power of surveillance through our televisions (“TV”) and how it’s done, it’s worth reading an essay written in 2018 by Ananda Mitra and published in *IntechOpen* ([intechopen.com/about-intechopen](https://www.intechopen.com/about-intechopen)) in 2019. In her essay, Mitra argued that TV, originally the conduit for offering passive narratives to the audience, is transforming into a tool that can watch over the audience and construct a dynamic narrative of the audience, thus operating as a tool for surveillance. The following are excerpts from Mitra’s essay. You can read her full essay ‘*The Future of Television*’ [HERE](https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/65647) (<https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/65647>).

Watched by TV. In February 2018, an analysis by the reputed magazine *Consumer Reports* announced that their testing revealed that ...

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