# On The Internet: The Next Chapter in a Genealogy of Subjecthood

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis evaluates the condition of the modern subject. In order to understand what constitutes the subject, how it becomes subjectified and what agency it has, I look to three main theorists who offer unique paradigmatic interpretations.

The first, in Chapter One, is Thomas Friedman, whose theory of globalization, as a mostly positive process of flattening the world's economic and political playing fields through communicative technologies, occupies the contemporary theory of the subject. However, I take issue with Friedman's cheery, uncritical depiction and look to two critical social theorists to provide an analysis that remedies his flaws.

Chapter Two seeks to update Foucault's conceptions of surveillance and discipline. Given contemporary National Security Agency surveillance tactics, I argue the modern surveillance state has now found a new target in the *digital body,* which is a new site for the expression of disciplinary power. The surveillance state has become even larger and more problematic than in Foucault's world through constructing subjects that are constantly monitored in their every day interactions. The late-modern 'panopticon' has entered private spaces, making them potentially penetrable by the law and disciplining institutions. This has implications for subjects' privacy and the individual liberties safeguarded by the US Constitution. More than this, the Internet represents a new sphere where power disciplines, operates on, and constitutes subjects without their even knowing it.

Chapter Three seeks to update Marx's conceptions of alienation and exploitation. I argue that the Internet is a new terrain for capitalist exploitation. The Internet serves capitalism's consumption goals. A new late-modern digital bourgeoisie has emerged who exploits Internet subjects by profiting from the surplus value they yield online. Internet subjects thus engage in *digital labor* that makes them exploitable by both traditional capitalists and late-modern data brokers. Due to the overuse of social media, subjects are also alienated from each other and their 'species being' in a world where almost everything is mediated through a virtual screen, and engagements with the sensuous world have become increasingly sidelined. Capitalism has found new expression and established unique exploitive relations on the Internet.

I conclude by raising further questions and suggesting future areas of study. If we are to continue on this genealogy of subjecthood, what types of digital resistances are available that could complicate my analysis of the Internet's harms? What should be the next chapter to continue the genealogy of subjecthood I have attempted to start? How should we go about conceiving of our digital subject's future—both its positive and negative aspects?

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**CHAPTER ONE**
**THE DIGITAL ERA: A SUNNY GLOBALIZED VIEW**

In 2005, elite Pulitzer Prize winning New York Times journalist, Thomas L. Friedman proclaimed, that because of the vast interconnections of business, ideas, and knowledge, the world has lost its hierarchical nature, making it more 'flat' than round. The world's flatness has two sets of implications. On the one hand, Friedman is awed by this "incredible new era," where a "tale of technology and geoeconomics is fundamentally reshaping our lives," empowering people from "Boston to Bangalore and Beijing" (Friedman). On the other, Friedman is anxious about a decline of American exceptionalism as China and India quickly outpace the US. Friedman presents what I refer to as the 'sunny side' of globalization, criticizing the US for not living up to the full potential of globalization's 'sunny side.' He does not indict the globalization system itself; nor does he consider any of its critical implications or question the character of its challenges. To Friedman, the US must stave off the prospect that "people in China and India are starving for your jobs" (Ibid).

While America's decline due to the reordering of international power is one possible consequence of our new globalized world, there are many more critical consequences of the technological moment. I argue in this chapter that the main one is the various coerced subjectivities for individuals abroad and in the US as a result of globalization's capitalist ideology. Friedman presents one interpretation of the current moment and the technological, economic, political shifts that have accommodated a change internationally. I will explicate Friedman's interpretation of the benefits—its 'sunny side' before showing how his mild criticism is misguided. Friedman's advocacy of globalized, capitalist expansion misses the real threats that face individuals in an ever-expanding technological society.

Friedman cites the birth of his "eureka moment" in his conversation with Nandan Nilekani, the C.E.O of Infosys Technologies in Bangalore. Infosys is an Indian based multinational "global leader of consulting, technology, and outsourcing solutions." (Infosys Technologies) Friedman describes Infosys' global video- conference room, where Infosys "holds virtual meetings of the key players from its entire global supply chain for any project at any time on [its] supersize screen (Friedman). Friedman observes that the room has eight clocks labeled U.S. West U.S. East, G.M.T, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan Australia, which summed up the Infosy's 24/7/365 workday. The conference room symbolizes the essence of the globalized marketplace, where technology and commerce converge amongst international players with speed, efficiency, and ease. The conference room with its clocks signifies the logic that motivates globalized development—endlessly available communication amongst "key players" during all times of day, all times of year.

According to Friedman, technological innovation has 'leveled the playing field' for non-Western states to compete with the US and Europe, which have traditionally dominated capitalist markets. In effect, people, ideas, business, and commerce are connected in seamless ways that mark a fundamental reordering of the global sphere and how various players participate. Nikelani explained to Friedman that over the past decade, a massive investment in broadband technology connected the world. These 'digital railroads' benefitted 'foreigners' such as India. As a result, "India got a free ride," and the world was connected through a digital infrastructure. According to Nikelani, another force suddenly came together around 2000. "Computers became cheaper and dispersed all over the world, and there was an explosion of e-mail software, search engines like Google and proprietary software that can chop up any piece of work and send one part to Boston, one part to Bangalore and one part to Beijing, making it easy for anyone to do remote

development" (qtd. in Friedman). The consequence, in Friedman's view is a new degree of freedom to the way intellectual work is conducted. This signals "a new milestone in human progress and a great opportunity for India and the world—the fact that we had made the world flat!" (Ibid)

Further along in this "tale of technology," Friedman divides history in three distinct phases: Globalization 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. According to his compartmentalization, "Globalization 1.0 (1492 to 1800) shrank the world from a size large to a size medium and the dynamic force in that era was countries globalizing for resources and imperialist conquest. Globalization 2.0 (1800 to 2000) shrank the world from a size medium to a size small, and it was spearheaded by companies globalizing for markets and labor. Globalization 3.0 (which started around 2000) is shrinking the world from a size small to a size tiny and flattening the playing field" (Ibid). Friedman interprets this process as having been building for a long time. Globalization is thus not only beneficial, but also, linear, natural, and necessary. By conceiving of history in terms of "globalization," a word whose first known use was in 1951, (Merriam-Webster) Friedman implies that the process was inevitable. Friedman's phases suggest that globalization had naturally modified itself based on the technologies of the day and had pushed itself forward without a consciousness of its aims. This interpretation, when combined with an emphasis on the 'sunny-side' of globalization, also makes it difficult to indict. If globalization is a productive phenomenon and if its progression is natural, how can it be challenged? Moreover, if globalization today is the continuation of a process of globalization in times past, its previous phases under the name of "imperial conquest" are also stripped of their problematic character. This analysis reveals the extent to which Friedman endorses dominant political and economic systems without looking critically at their effects.

Furthermore, Friedman qualifies these globalization phases with two further characteristics regarding who drives and benefits from globalization. "And while the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 is individuals and small groups globalizing" (Friedman). Globalization 3.0 is not only a natural progression; it is also a source for the empowerment of individuals, who are now compelled to be active in the capitalist order. The second positive characteristic of Globalization 3.0 is the unlikely individuals it has empowered. While Globalization 1.0 and 2.0 were driven by European and American companies, "Globalization 3.0 is driven by a much more diverse—non-Western, nonwhite—group of individuals…with every color of the human rainbow take part" (Ibid). Therefore, according to Friedman, globalization is natural and universally empowering. The current moment is characterized by a fundamental reordering of the hierarchies of the world and has potential to produce opportunities for global equality.

**Globalization and the Individual**

Friedman provides no critical analysis of the separation between corporation and individual. He has a simplistic view of what it means to be human. Individuals are never conceived of as pressured, and constrained by particular institutions or discourses. Rather, they are represented as free-floating agents who are able and willing to reap globalization's benefits. This assumes that because certain non-Western individuals now have a more significant place in the corporation, this must mean that they too have become liberated. Many have challenged the liberating effects of so called 'progress' on third world individuals. According to Samir Amin, before modernity individuals were recognizable only by and through their status in the family, clan or society (Amin). However, with capitalism, "the ideology of the modern world affirms the

rights of the individual over and against society. This signals the potential for permanent

aggressiveness in the relation between individuals. Ultimately, the capitalist ethic, "long live

competition, may the strong win" has "devastating effects" that "only result in horror" (Ibid).

This reality of aggressiveness and capitalist destruction goes unnoticed by Friedman's

"profound," "exciting," interpretation of this "incredible new era of innovation."

Admittedly, Friedman makes a few attempts to refer to potential disadvantages of

Globalization 3.0. However, Friedman's downsides are not the inequalities between the 3rd and

1st worlds, the disparities between rich and poor within the 3rd and 1st worlds themselves, the

mistreatment of workers in 'globalized' corporate sweatshops, or the loss of privacy garnered

from technological misuses. Instead, he recognizes downsides as the deeds of actors who are

already at the fringe of society: for example, Osama bin Laden, who connected terrorist

knowledge pools together through his al Qaeda network, and teenage hackers, who produce

computer viruses. Friedman's identification of "terrorists" and "hackers" as the downside to

globalization demonstrates that he looks at the world from the vantage point of big business,

capitalist interests, and state power. If Friedman wrote from the referent of a Bangladeshi

sweatshop worker, the calculus of globalization's downside would not be limited to such an

equation.

Unacknowledged by Friedman, the fact that corporate entities in China and India have

improved does not mean the vast majority of individual lives have. Thus, for every tech-savvy,

corporate C.E.O like, Nandan Nilekani, there are millions more third world citizens who toil in

factories making the products that sustain the globalized system. In fact, more than simply

'toiling,' as Amin has suggested, extreme capitalism, best encapsulated by globalization, results

in "horror." India, and China, the two nations Friedman repeatedly cites to demonstrate the

'sunny-side' of globalization, nations that have gotten a "free ride" from globalization's infrastructure, have also become notorious for human rights abuses in recent years.

Bangladesh, another site of globalization's supposed benefits, has experienced many deaths at corporate factories. On November 24, 2012 the Dhaka Fire broke out in Bangladesh killing approximately 117 people and injuring at least 200. Among the items discovered were, "children's shorts with Wal-Mart's Faded Glory label, sweaters marked "Disney Pixar," shorts with hip-hop star Sean Combs' ENYCE tag…and Sears was listed in the account books" (Ahmed). Then, on April 24, 2013 the Rana Plaza, an eight story commercial building collapsed in a sub-district of Dhaka, killing over 1,200 people, injuring 2,515, making it the worst "garment factory tragedy in history" (Chamberlain). Like the Dhaka fire, the Rana Plaza had a factory where contractors made products for Western corporations—(oh the flatness!)

Part of Bangladesh's problem is the lack of fire safety and workers rights. Despite the fact that some responsibility lies with this and other third world governments, the power lies with the Western retailers. This is because "the price pressure these buyers put on factories undermines any prospect that factories will undertake the costly repairs and renovations that are necessary to make these buildings safe" (Manik and Yardley). Because of capitalist profit maximizing logics, 3rd world factories feel pressured to cut corners and ignore safety violations. Wal-Mart has refused to sign agreements to improve worker's rights and safeguard their security. After the Rana Plaza fire, a number of Western corporations agreed to a legally binding provision that covers "independent safety inspections with public reports, mandatory repairs and renovations and a vital role for workers and their unions" (Chamberlain). Wal-Mart did not sign the agreement, opting to create its own, which was non-legally binding. Thus, globalization is

not all about educated, technologically astute businessmen sitting in conference rooms with flat-screen televisions and world clocks.

Chinese workers have suffered similar capitalist fates. China Labor Watch has alleged that three Pegatron Factories, which supply Apple products, have violated international and Chinese laws, including underage labor, contract violations and excessive working hours ("Apple Faces New Worker Abuse Claims"). Chinese workers in Apple associated factories suffered a spate of suicides. "Violations claimed by China Labor Watch include insufficient wages, poor working conditions, poor living conditions, difficulty taking leave, abuse by management and environmental pollution" (Ibid). All such consequences are ignored by Friedman's cheery declaration that "three billion people who were out of the game walked, and often ran onto the playing field" (Friedman). Friedman dismisses the notion that not everyone is a Nandan Nilekani. "Sure, not all three billion can collaborate and compete. In fact, for most people the world is not yet flat at all. But even if we're talking about only 10 percent, that's 300 million people" (Ibid). Thus while Friedman initially claims that "three billion people" of the world's "human rainbow" are "running onto the playing field," when he is forced to confront the fact that not all 3 billion truly have these opportunities, he focuses on a *portion* of the people who *could* benefit. Friedman would likely respond that the trend line is moving in the direction of regional equality, but this response evades the social and economic problems spawn by the globalization system. His claim that at least "300 million" are being liberated misrepresents the condition of their lives. Friedman interprets globalization as bestowing gifts upon a once impoverished 3rd world. This interpretation does not evaluate the realities of the continued poverty and exploitation caused by increasingly 'efficient' labor.

**Globalization and the US State**

Despite his explicit affirmation of 3<sup>rd</sup> world 'benefits,' Friedman's implicit bias towards Western corporations indicates a suspect political agenda. Stephen Marshall identifies Friedman as the scribe of the "new capitalist revolution" (Marshall). Marshall indicts Friedman for not portraying an objective reality and for being bogged by his liberal US- hegemonic agenda. Marshall critiques Friedman's 2003 support of the Iraq War, when the latter argued Iraq was "the most radical-liberal revolutionary war the U.S. has ever launched—a war of choice to install some democracy in the heart of the Arab Muslim world" ("Its No Vietnam"). Friedman depicted the war according to a liberal, American capitalist standard of 'benefit.'

Friedman uses his platform not only to educate millions of US readers to the benefits of capitalism and globalization, but also to *omit* certain factors from the public consciousness. He presents the "sunny-side" of globalization and its potential to undermine US exceptionalism, but then insists that US citizens have the agency to solve these issues. We are urged to work harder and faster to keep our standard of living, but as Marshall points out, "this is never applied to the realm of US foreign policy and how it might be shaped by these new threats to US supremacy" (Marshall). Friedman appears to be writing for and about the individual, but given his political agenda and his analysis of globalization's benefits and drawbacks, combined with an omission of the benefits to Western governments, Friedman also writes to advance powerful state interests.

Thus, "a sort of delusional picture of globalization is presented, one in which the government plays no role whatsoever. And in this omission, in this obscuring of such an obvious force in world finance, we are given a hint at the lengths to which Friedman will go to deny the truth" (Ibid). Marshall reveals how Friedman denies the state to advance its interests. Friedman's cheery tone, "flattened" metaphor, and political agenda sends "the message that government is

driven by a mission to liberate and democratize the world, the vast majority of whom will, like post-Saddam Iraqis, joyfully embrace American style capitalism" (Ibid).

Friedman argues that the international order has shifted from the Cold War era, when the race for innovation was posited as an objective to "build a strong state," to the current objective "to build strong individuals" (Friedman). This depiction of the mutual exclusivity of the individual and the state is flawed. A divorce between the state and individual reveals the need for a more critical method of analysis to fill this gap. Conceiving of a shift from state-centric to individually driven objectives, where individual agency is enhanced via technological empowerment, denies the ways in which technology has brought the state and the individual dangerously closer, particularly by enhancing the state's control over the individual through surveillance. In fact, Friedman's very conception of technology as a force of 'individuality,' blurs and distorts the reality of the state's hold on the individual. Because technology is easily accessible and readily used by individuals throughout the globe, sometimes in ways that produce their economic gains, enlarge their personal interactions, and cater to their self-identified desires, it often appears as a self-pursued benefit. Yet, this very notion of the freedom of the individual from the state helps obscure and enable the state's use of technology to exact power over the technologically liberated 'individual.'

Despite the fact that technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones are productive inventions that have improved human life in many ways, they also serve as convenient tools for the surveillance state. Contrary to Friedman's depiction, the National Security Agency's (NSA) program, which is the case study of my second chapter, operates under political discourses of "strengthening the state" to dismantle terrorist networks, which justify its program and potential legal overreach. Hence, the aim of "strengthening the state" has not at all been buried with the

Cold War and in fact is at the forefront of the current moment. Not only is strengthening the state the core ideological and strategic drive of the current era, but also discourses claiming to "strengthen the individual" support the very logic that sustains state power. Strengthening the state appears to be neutral, tilted in favor of protecting the free individual, while covert, top-secret state programs actually penetrate this supposed independent, liberated, individual. This is why neither Friedman's depiction of the current order nor his interpretation of the current moment's threats is enough to capture an understanding of the individual condition and the operations of political and social forces.

In short, Friedman's cheery interpretation has many flaws. The most significant is his misrepresentation of the source of globalization's challenges. For Friedman, the challenge is America's ambition and education gaps, given the evidence that China and India are moving ahead. This demonstrates Friedman's bias and vantage point—he is worried about the future of US capitalists and big business, while ignoring the role and interests of state institutions that also implicitly motivate his project. He also ignores globalization's implications for the third world and 99% in the 1st world. Ultimately, Friedman's conception of the individual and identity formation is profoundly uncritical. He takes the individual as given, as if the corporate and state forces of power consistently operating upon it do so only from the outside and for the good.

Yet Friedman is right that the world *has* fundamentally changed. Such change is most evident in the technologies that influence and shape the character of individual life. Technology has forged vast global and interpersonal connections and redefined the ways in which individuals understand themselves. More than just conference rooms filled with flat screen televisions, or cables that connect international global players, technology has become a pervasive part of daily life for much of the world. What is the dark underside of this metamorphosis?

**The Downside of the Digital Era**

Despite the positive gains technology has made for individuals and society, there is a downside to it that centers on its abuse by states and corporations. China is known for withholding access to technology from its citizens in the form of Internet censorship and site monitoring. Other states, in response to the seemingly positive benefits of technology such as political dissent in the Arab Spring, have also taken steps to restrict the ease with which individuals use technology to organize. Likewise, more recent events in the US, such as the 2013 exposure of the National Security Agency's (NSA) mass surveillance program and the 2013 legal trial of Chelsea Manning's WikiLeaks disclosures, have raised questions about the future of privacy rights and the role of state institutions in appropriating technology for 'security' purposes. Together these instances illustrate tactics of a state's withholding technology (in China, Egypt, Syria, Libya) or surveilling through technology (in the US). The former is an explicit case of the regulation and discipline of citizens, while the latter is a more secretive method of control. Both types of state actions help create subjects, because both define acceptable behavior and regulate activity. Subject-creation in this new age is even more complicated. For example, while subjects appear to themselves and to Friedman to be self-driven, autonomous agents in determining the conditions of their subjecthood, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter quantify and publicize their users' social interactions, bringing friendship within the realms of 'commodity fetishism.' These digital practices also alienate people from the sensuous world and from accessing their 'species being.' Moreover, capital has penetrated the Internet in a way that marks this landscape as a new expression of capitalist exploitation and alienation. These digital tools that are freely sought by individuals as a productive or entertaining part of their everyday life add a new layer to an already deeply

entrenched commodity culture. The technological era has produced a vast and complex nexus of coercion, assimilation, disciplining, surveillance, mystification, and subject-creation.

Correspondingly, there is a lack of critical scholarship on the implications of technology for subject-formation. It is still early to fully tell the effects of figures such as Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and the 'hactivist' group Anonymous, on the national consciousness and whether national security practices will change to enhance privacy. We lack an analysis of how technological development intersects with subject creation and systems of power.

The two most prominent critical theories of modern subjectivity under conditions of oppression are those of Michel Foucault and Karl Marx. To theorize the contemporary subject, I start with these thinkers and then show how today's subjects fall within these analyses at different points and under different conditions of contemporary life. My core argument is that a 'new subject' has emerged in the twenty-first century, with mixed implications for the freedom of the subject and the organizations of social/political life. Through researching specific instances of technological advancement/controversy/abuse, I argue that the modern subject requires a reworking of now partly outdated critical theories of subject formation. The greatest qualitative shift requiring theoretical innovation is the construction of a '*digital body*' that gets acted upon by typical forces of power such as state surveillance and capitalist consumption. While Marx was concerned with material class relations, and Foucault was concerned with bio-power and modern individuals, our contemporary *economy of power relations* directs power at the *digital body*, which is the late-modern target of power, surveillance, and corporate targeting. The digital body is disciplined, alienated, and exploited on the new sphere of the Internet.

**A Note on a Potential Contradiction**

Before continuing, I must deal with a potential contradiction that arises from considering Foucaultian and Marxist interpretations alongside one another. Foucault and Marx have different main targets of critique. Marx targets the relations that are rooted in the capitalist exploitative mode of production. Foucault targets power relations that infuse the whole of society and its institutions and discursive practices such as the state, the psychiatric hospital, and the family. While subjects are continuously subjected and constituted by both these forces, the more problematic contradiction arises when one considers each theorist's take on the human condition. In critiquing the alienation inspired by capitalism, Marx also envisions a world without alienation: for Marx, the right kind of social relations would eradicate alienation. But for Foucault, there is no analogous un-alienated, un-subjected human. Instead, power continuously acts to constitute subjects from the moment of their birth; no one exists outside of power relations, disciplining, or societal norms. In Foucault's world, resistance strategies can potentially work to contest these relations, but total liberation is impossible. Thus for Marx, the idea of estrangement implies the possibility for un-estrangement, but for Foucault, the very idea of power relations implies the inability for escape. In effect, these two fundamental ontologies are in some ways at odds with each other.

Yet, it is my assumption throughout this thesis that even if the two are mutually exclusive in their visions of the human condition, they are both useful in what they contribute to our understanding of late-modern subjecthood. Putting the two alongside each other does not invalidate either. Instead, they strengthen one another by showing the various forces at work and the conditions each force precipitates. An analysis that builds on both Foucault's critique of surveillance and Marx's critique of capital allows us to grasp the consequences on the late-

modern digital subject. I seek not to resolve the contradiction between Foucault and Marx but rather to benefit from the positive contributions of both thinkers. Both theorists present different interpretations that together illuminate the contemporary world in which neither the state nor capital is the only source of subjecthood. Moreover, I seek to show that the Internet landscape calls for theories of both the state and capital because both forces work to constitute the subject within this domain. An analysis of the late-modern Internet subject that does not attend to either the state or capital could not capture the complexity of the late-modern digital condition.

**Roadmap**

In the next two chapters I seek to answer the following questions. How has technological transformation changed or undermined some of the premises of critical social theories of oppression? How does the new twenty-first century subject require us to rework Foucault and Marx's analyses of subjectivity? Finally, given the fundamental shift in subjecthood, wherein the individual has a more central and seemingly autonomous role in her own embrace of the very conditions of her subjecthood, and given the positive role of technology in inspiring social networks, how might the digital body become a force for resistance?

This thesis attempts to study what constitutes subjecthood in the modern, developed world. I continue my evaluation of the condition of subjectivity by looking at the two main forces that subject it: the state and capital. Chapter Two evaluates Foucault's concepts of discipline, surveillance, and governmentality. To serve as an example for how this concept operates in modern life I focus on the NSA and its use of surveillance. Chapter Three considers the condition of alienation and exploitation today. This chapter focuses on social networks and corporate Internet targeting to explore how alienation and exploitation need to be reworked to understand interpersonal relationships and the role of capitalism on subjecthood. Thus, Chapter

Two considers technology in the context of state security practices, and Chapter Three considers technology in the context of personal social networking and consumerism. My first main category of power is the state, and my second is capitalism. The final chapter suggests future avenues of study and questions of resistance that must be answered if we are to have a thorough genealogy of the modern economy of power relations. What is next? Where does my analysis of the dark side of subjecthood leave society and the thinkers who attempt to theorize upon these conditions?

**CHAPTER TWO**
**THE LATE-MODERN DIGITAL BODY: FOUCAULT AND SURVEILLANCE**
**PRACTICES**

This chapter evaluates the condition of the subject with regard to the state. I first will

articulate the historical and legal adaptations that led to this condition. I then will analyze the

role of the state from a Foucaultian frame of analysis, making use of its surveillance and

governmentality concepts. I take the NSA's Prism program as my main case study to evaluate

the character of modern subjectivities. This analysis will reveal how the state and technology

interact to produce a historically unique, late-modern Western subject, where power is exacted

upon the *digital body*. I argue that while the way power produces subjects today is generally

consistent with Foucault's articulation of power and surveillance, technology has enabled the

development of a surveillance state with a new sphere of expression on the Internet. This new

sphere is an ever larger and more complicated arena for surveillance than Foucault foreshadowed

in the 1970's. I should begin by making clear the fact that Foucault's portrait of modern

discipline clashes with liberal portraits of modernity, all of which center on the rise of the free

individual. Foucault envisions a world where disciplinary power constitutes a subject's total

being, and leaves hardly any room for individuals who are 'free' in the sense of existing 'outside

of power.' Foucault writes in part to undermine liberal conceptions of modernity, and my

analysis upholds his skepticism here.

Michel Foucault argues that despite the rise of parliamentary institutions and enlarged

conceptions of political liberty, modern society has undergone a darker counter-movement.

Power is a relational set of practices that operates within institutions such as the army, school,

hospital, prison, and factory to regulate and control the body. Time, space, and movement are

regulated in a 'political anatomy' of detail to construct a subject that is 'disciplined and

practiced.' The aim of disciplining is to produce an obedient subject with maximum efficiency. As such, "discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (*Discipline and Punish* 138). Thus, individuals are made 'docile' and 'utilized' to maintain order in liberal society.

While discipline operates in part through institutions, modern life functions through producing a consciousness of self-disciplining. Gone are the days of sovereign power with its violent spectacles to punish deviant behavior. Governing has become more than just "forcing people to do what the governor wants" (Lemke). Rather, "power is productive. It produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (*Discipline and Punish* 194) where subjects must obey the rule of law. Discipline is so deeply entrenched in society that "the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular" (Bartky 285). Discipline is a way of being in liberal modern society wherein individuals are self-regulating agents.

Central to Foucault's analysis of discipline is what he coins 'the art of distributions,' a set of techniques that produce subjected and practiced bodies. These techniques are 'enclosure,' 'partitioning,' 'functional sites,' and 'rank,' which order space and time, and closely monitor and direct bodies. The effect of this ordering is to elicit proper modes of conduct. The subject is made docile by being directed to act in accordance with specific regulations, and from this, her maximum utility is extracted. By enclosing, partitioning, and organizing space in multiplicities and ranks, the disciplinarian produces subjects who behave in 'beneficial' ways for the disciplinarian's ends.

The first element, enclosure, is "the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself" (*Discipline & Punish* 144). Foucault points to boarding schools, military barracks, and factories of the eighteenth century to display how all regulated institutions

could be compared with one another: "the factory was explicitly compared with the monastery, the fortress, a walled town" (142) to produce subjects in spaces that were homogenous within, yet heterogeneous from outside spaces. The aim of these enclosed spaces is to maximize advantages and neutralize inconveniences such as interruptions of work. For example, the more the factory is ordered within itself and as separate from outside spaces, the more utility is extracted from the workers.

The second element is *partition,* where people are "divided into as many sections as there are elements to be divided" (143). Foucault gives the example of the monastic cell, where beds are arranged and closed so that each individual has his own space and each space has its own individual. Partition enables the monitoring of whether the person is properly occupying the space in comparison with the spaces around it. The disciplinarian supervises conduct to determine its quality. Unwanted absences and concentrations in groups are always visible, which also produces a consciousness within subjects that makes them self-regulate their behavior to avoid penalty.

Next is the establishment of *functional sites*, which are useful spaces that secure the aims of the institution. Eighteenth century hospitals, for example, isolated contagious patients and separated beds so that it could effectively treat people. Discipline produced a "medically useful space" (144). Likewise, factories distributed bodies to elicit their utility. Distribution was articulated as the function of the factory's "production machinery" that necessitated separation and special arrangements for production. The assembly line "was made up of a series of workshops specified according to each broad type of operation: for the printers, the handlers, the engravers, the dryers" (145).

The fourth element is *rank,* which arranges, transforms, and stratifies bodies. Rank circulates individuals in a network of relation for comparison with one another. This enables disciplinary surveillance and motivates self-regulation amongst subjects. For example, in eighteenth-century classrooms, pupils were ranked according to their academic performance, their age groups, and the difficulty of their questions. Rank identifies a hierarchy of knowledge or ability and expresses the distribution of values or merits. This element, along with all the others, restricts individuals to their own effective space and also motivates their self-regulation.

Information technologies such as the Internet, cell phones and social media, initially appear to be counter to Foucault's art of distributions. This is because the late-modern individual exists in new spaces where power is not always directed at the physical body. Individual behavior appears to be less regulated, as technology has given rise to more opportunities for self-expression, modes of communication, and speech. But, as I will show, discipline has now found a new expression in the *Internet terrain* and a new target in the *digital body*.

With revision, Foucault's analysis of power relations can be applied to the current genealogy of subjecthood, where the Internet comprises the fundamental shift in our current order. The very technologies that appear to liberate individuality are appropriated by the state and are used as a more secretive method of control. Our subjecthoods have extended into a new digital arena that conveys our identities to others, establishes meaning for our lives, forges our social relations, and now also makes us recognizable subjects to the law. Particular programs and events in recent US history have shaped this modern surveilled condition.

**What is the NSA Prism Program?**

"Prism" stands for Planning Tool for Resource Integration, Synchronization, and Management. It is a National Security Agency (NSA) program, which "allows officials to collect

material including search history, the content of emails, file transfers, photos, and live chats"

from Internet service providers and companies (Greenwald and MacAskill). Beginning in 2007

with information sharing between the NSA and Microsoft, until 2012, Prism expanded to include

Google, Facebook, Apple, and other US Internet giants, "covering the vast majority of online

email, search, video and communications networks" (Ibid). The program was "classified as top

secret" and was only revealed when leaked to *The Guardian* and *Washington Post* newspapers

on Wednesday June 5, 2013. The leaker was self-identified as Edward Snowden, a computer

specialist, former CIA employee, and NSA contractor from the technology-consulting firm Booz

Allen Hamilton. The following chart is document from a 41-slide PowerPoint presentation used

to train intelligence operatives on the capabilities of the program, leaked by Snowden. The slide

indicates the various companies from which the NSA received information, as well as the years

they first became part of Prism.
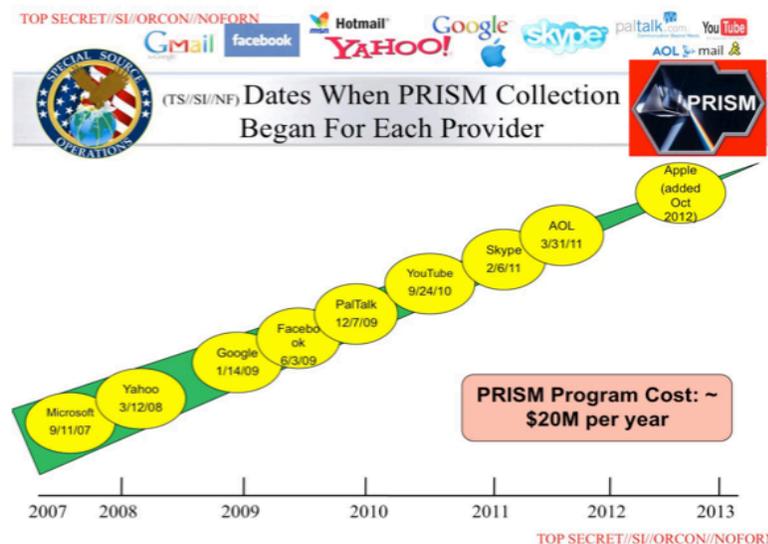


Chart 1: Greenwald, Glenn, and Ewen MacAskill. "NSA Prism program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and
others." *the guardian* 06 Jun 2013, Web. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data>.

The program began in 2007 and ramped up in the later part of the decade. The

technological proliferation in the social world made it possible, and the subsequent 9/11 anti-

terror efforts undertaken by the US government made it desirable. The following section charts

what I refer to as two major "NSA enablers."

**Enabler #1: Increased Technological Use**

With the proliferation of the Internet, social networking, and mobile phones, as well as

the increased access vast numbers of individuals have gained to such technologies due to lower

prices and higher demand, the NSA seized upon the technological moment. According to a PEW

Research Center study, as of May 2013, "91% of American adults have a cell phone" and "56%

have a smartphone" (PEW). Cell phone use had its first major rise between April 2008, when it

was at 75% of all American adults and April 2009, when it jumped to 85% of all American

adults. Between April 2009 and September 2013, cell phone use remained high, above 80%. The

chart also shows general increases in other gadgets, such as, laptops and e-readers, except for

mp3 players, games and desktop computers that became more outmoded as a result of the

versatility of smartphone's.
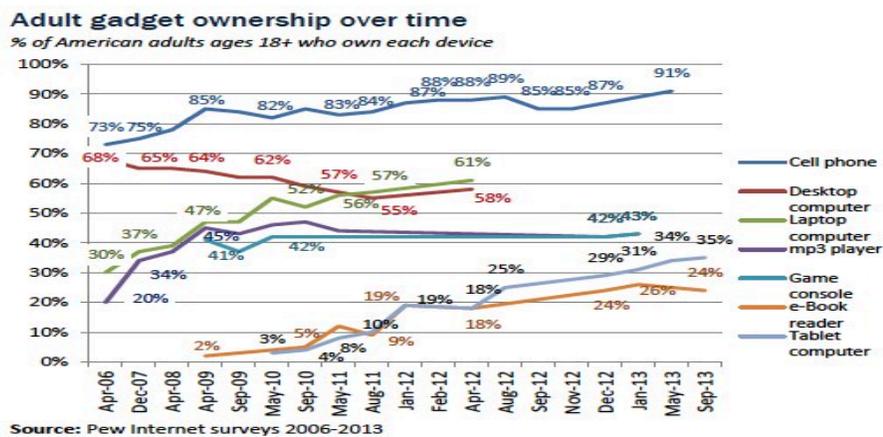


Chart 2: "Pew Internet Surveys 2006-2013." *PEW Research Center*. Web. <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/>

Furthermore, Smartphones have diversified the capacities of cell phones. Activities such

as sending text messages, accessing the internet, downloading apps, and 'sharing your location'

comprise a vast set of data on individual life that may now be extracted by authorities. The

following chart indicates these activities and their social use to contextualize the NSA's recent

'incentive' to act upon the digital data available in the social world.

**Cell phone activities**
*The % of cell phone owners who use their cell phone to...*

| | |
|---|---|
| 81 | send or receive text messages |
| 60 | access the internet |
| 52 | send or receive email |
| 50 | download apps |
| 49 | get directions, recommendations, or other location-based information |
| 48 | listen to music |
| 21 | participate in a video call or video chat |
| 8 | "check in" or share your location |

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=2,076 cell phone owners. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all cell phone owners is +/- 2.4 percentage points.

Chart 3: "Pew Internet Surveys 2006-2013." *PEW Research Center*. Nap.. Web. 3 Dec 2013.
<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/>

Thus, technology has served as an enabler of individual life and every day operations, but

it also has enabled the growth of state surveillance programs. The state has been quick to use

technology to enhance its intelligence and the methods with which it governs.

**Enabler #2: Post 9/11 Anti-Terror Frenzy**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks prompted certain legal adaptations concerning

terrorism, which paved the road for the NSA's surveillance programs. Due to their magnitude,

the attacks catalyzed a relentless counter-terror response. The attacks caused approximately

3,000 immediate deaths including those in and around the World Trade Center in NYC, those at

the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and those who were on board the four planes that crashed.

Others died years later from exposure to dust near the attacks, while an additional 1,140 first

responders have since been diagnosed with cancer (Evans). During his address, President George

W. Bush reassured, "our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured and to take

every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attack"

(Bush). Thus, from the very day of the terrorist attack, the national government began its anti-terror security mission.

The "search for those who are behind these evil attacks" (Bush) began immediately, accompanied by a resolve that the US "will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these attacks and those who harbor them" (Ibid). This lack of "distinction" is significant with regard to surveillance and its implications for privacy and civil liberties. President Bush's declaration foreshadowed expansions of surveillance techniques that monitors individuals not necessarily considered terror suspects, but instead, people whose communications are interpreted as a potential 'aid' in terror 'investigations.'

Prism's "three hops provision" has received significant criticism. This is because, according to *The Guardian*, "you don't need to be a terror suspect to have your communication data analyzed by the NSA. The agency is allowed to travel 'three hops' from its targets—who could be people who talk to people who talk to people who talk to you. Facebook, where the typical user has 190 friends, shows how three degrees of separation gets you to a network bigger than the population of Colorado" ("Three Degrees of Separation"). Intense data gathering became the strategy to hunt for terrorists who are mobile, internationally dispersed individuals. As NSA director, General Keith B. Alexander put it, "rather than collect a single needle in a haystack, let's collect the whole haystack. Collect it all, tag it, and store it and whatever it is you want, you go searching for it" (qtd. in Nakashima and Warrick). The potential monitoring of *all* American citizens has raised questions about the constitutionality of the NSA program and reveals the increasing presence of the surveillance state.

Two major pieces of legislation enacted in the past decade have shaped the legality of surveillance procedures: the PATRIOT Act of 2001 and the FISA Amendment Act of 2008. Both

laws have expanded the role of the surveillance state. I will briefly outline each law and then discuss two major impacts of the laws that characterize the state/subject relation today: the reduction in democratic checks and balances, and the reduction of privacy rights.

**I) Legislation #1: PATRIOT ACT**

The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act, more commonly known as the USA PATRIOT Act, was a primary piece of legislation adopted to remedy failures in pre-9/11 anti-terror efforts. The House passed the bill on October 24, 2001, and the Senate agreed to the House's changes on the same day with bipartisan support. President George W. Bush signed the bill into law on October 26, 2001 (Doyle). In 2011, President Obama approved the extension of certain provisions.

The goal of the Act is to "strengthen domestic security and broaden the powers of law-enforcement agencies with regards to identifying and stopping terrorists" (Grablanowski). The act enhances domestic security against terrorism, expands surveillance procedures, tightens border security, and removes obstacles to investigating terrorism. For example, it permits roving wiretap, which allows "federal authorities to listen in on conversations of foreign suspects even when they change phones or locations" without the need for a new warrant (Mascaro). It also allows government agencies to gather intelligence information from both US and non-US citizens and made gaining foreign intelligence information the "significant" rather than the "sole" purpose of FISA surveillance. This change in definition increased the pool of people who qualify to be surveilled. The law also allows intelligence agencies to demand communications from cable companies, which set the stage for the collaboration between corporate service providers and the NSA in the Prism program.

**II) Legislation #2: FISA Amendment Act of 2008**

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) was enacted with the purpose of ensuring that "the US government would be barred from ever monitoring the electronic communications of Americans without first obtaining an individualized warrant from the FISA court" (Greenwald). Yet, in 2001, President Bush "secretly authorized eavesdropping on the international calls of Americans without any warrants from the FISA Court" (Ibid). Rather than punish President Bush's actions, in 2008 Congress enacted a diluted FISA law—the FISA Amendments Act of 2008 (FAA). Under the FAA, no warrants are needed for the NSA to eavesdrop on a wide array of calls, emails, and online chats involving US citizens. Individual warrants are needed to monitor calls when both parties to the communication are domestic, but no warrant is necessary when one party is American and the other is *assumed* to be a foreign national. Yet, as Yale Law professor Jack Balkin explained, "these programs may inevitably include many phone calls involving Americans, who may have absolutely no connection to terrorism or to Al Qaeda" (qtd. in Greenwald). Thus, the new surveillance powers granted to the NSA expands its authority in ways that are potentially incompatible with privacy rights and the Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable searches and seizures.

**Implication I: Expanded Surveillance with Reduced Checks and Balances**

While PATRIOT diminished the role of the federal judges in monitoring surveillance activities and administering warrants, the FISA 2008 law created a façade court. The NSA has used the FISA Court established under the Act in 1978, as a tool for its surveillance procedures. The Court has demonstrated an unquestioned allegiance to the NSA's requests, operating more as a government 'rubber stamp,' than a legitimate check.

The FISA Court acts as an arm to the NSA in multiple ways. First, the Court only approves the NSA's annual report on "general procedures for how it decides on whom it can eavesdrop without a warrant," not the individual persons who are to be surveilled (Greenwald). The NSA then issues directives to Internet and telephone companies with no external oversight on who is being chosen or whether the NSA is upholding the guidelines it has submitted to the FISA Court. In fact, the court approves 99% of its surveillance warrants (Sledge). In 2012 alone, "not a single warrant request out of 1,800 was denied. In its entire history, the FISA court has rejected only 11 of 33,900 requests…that's a rate of .03 percent" (Eichelberger). Second, NSA analysts have broad and unbounded discretion in determining who will be surveilled. One NSA training briefing leaked by Snowden bragged, before the FISA Amendment Act, "you had to have probable cause to believe that the target was a foreign power or agent of a foreign power. Here all you need is a reasonable belief that the target is outside of the United States" (Greenwald). The briefing insists, "cast your search wide, don't feel as though you have to have something in every category" (Ibid). The FISC does not know whom the NSA is targeting, why, or for how long. It only annually approves general procedures and relies on the discretion of NSA analysts that at least one of their targets is likely outside of the US. When it is forced to approve individual warrants FISC does so with an unquestioned allegiance to NSA requests.

Through enhancing their capabilities without balancing by courts, such agencies are gradually turning into a quasi-fourth branch of government with the sole function of surveillance. The subversion of the traditional checks and balances system by this new branch indicates a perverse adaptation of our governing structure. Power operates to surveil with more licenses than it had before. Maintaining and expanding Foucault's panopticon, which I describe below, has become the premier goal of governance above and beyond other objectives. It is the Internet

landscape and digital body that now respectively serve as the new arena and object of disciplining power over daily life.

**Implication II: Privacy Rights and Questionable Constitutionality**

Given these adaptations, there is reason to believe the NSA's surveillance activities could be a threat to privacy rights and individual liberties, modifying the US government in ways contrary to the Constitution. Despite the fact that individuals use technology to chase celebrity, and in the process make public that which ought to be private, the US federal government's exploitation of this trend is unnerving. The NSA's capacity to read, monitor, and store our digital communications including live chats, photos, and login passwords, represents a potential blow to our privacy and the use of our communications in ways unintended by us. The state may appropriate our personal information to incriminate us in novel ways, making technology a permanent instrument of law enforcement. Systems such as Prism provide law enforcement with a database to search for criminal activity, where no such database existed before. "Digitization and the explosion of social network technology have changed law enforcement's calculus" (Donohue) in gathering intelligence on citizens to include technological communications.

Allowing technology to dictate and in some instances replace police work is potentially very dangerous in other ways beside the loss of privacy. An incident with the UK's Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), a surveillance system of live public video feeds indicates this danger. When David Mery "entered a tube station wearing a jacket in warm weather, an algorithm monitoring the CCTV brought him to the attention of a human operator as someone suspicious…the police arrested him, searched him, asked him to explain every scrap of paper in his flat…Mery is still on file as a potential terrorist eight years later, and can't get a visa to travel abroad" ("The NSA's Prism"). This incident reveals how the rampant use of surveillance

techniques and hypersensitivity to terrorism could wrongfully criminalize law-abiding citizens in their daily lives. One need only to apply this to the larger and more obscure sphere of digital data collection, wherein our NSA example resides. Mery's wrongful arrest that led to dramatic consequences for the rest of his life was motivated by a computer algorithm and then exploited by a series of human suspicions and errors. The digital data the NSA collects has potential to be taken out of context, interpreted, and incorrectly pursued by both technology [algorithms, etc] and humans. The consequences for citizens and their freedoms, reputations, and trust in government could be just as, if not even more, drastic.

Moreover, the fact that FISC ordered Verizon to provide information on calls made by each subscriber over a three month period raises questions of the law's compliance with FISA requirements that individuals monitored are likely foreign and relevant to an investigation. The NSA's overuse of surveillance tactics represents potential unconstitutional action, privacy violations, and a growing power that is unlimited by checks and balances. This overuse also represents the unlikely effectiveness of such tactics. How can every call that every American Verizon customer makes be relevant to an ongoing investigation?

**A Return to Foucault**

Given the recent expansion of surveillance techniques in monitoring US citizens, a return to Foucault's theorizing on the surveillance-state apparatus seems apt. This section will answer the following questions. First, how does each element of the art of distributions resurface in the NSA program? Second, how do these elements produce discipline in the Foucaultian sense? And third, how does the NSA example break in important ways from Foucault's frame of analysis to produce the unique subject under twenty-first century conditions? My claim is that Foucault's

arts of distribution and disciplining power are taking place today, yet they do so in two ways that are distinct from the disciplining institutions he described.

First, the specific techniques of Foucault's disciplines are no longer enacted in a highly regulated physical institution but instead in a digital nebula without any physically defined space. Because technology is the primary medium with which surveillance is enacted in my late-modern example, disciplining has reached an intensification gestured at but unarticulated by Foucault. Foucault examines Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, an eighteenth century institutional structure designed for prisons so inmates always think they are being observed. Foucault was aware that the panopticon is "polyvalent in its application" such that it "can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons" (*Discipline & Punish* 205). Today modern society has produced yet another and more totalizing panopticon application. The digital contents that are left from our online interactions get surveilled, organized, ranked, and potentially used against us to exact punishment. The Internet is a new panopticon, but it is not institutional in the physical or material sense. Rather, this type of panopticon application follows us everywhere we go, every time we use a cell phone, or log onto the Internet. Because the Internet is used so pervasively in daily life, and because the disciplinarian can observe it at any time or from anywhere, subjects are vulnerable to unending surveillance and discipline.

Second, discipline occurs through surveillance by creating a consciousness both amongst terrorist networks that they are being watched and upon ordinary Americans that they are at risk of being watched. Yet the arts of distribution techniques of enclosing, partitioning, and ranking occur only *after* the subject has been surveilled and only for the disciplinarian to see in his/her NSA files. Data on the subject's digital activities—its *digital body* gets enclosed, partitioned, and ranked. While Foucault's prisoners were conscious that their bodies had to be conducted in a

certain way (do not attempt an escape from the cell for fear of the guard in the watchtower), modern subjects have only a suspicion that they are under surveillance. The disciplining space is no longer highly organized and enclosed from the outset, surveilling instead, our disorganized digital bodies. But because these digital bi-products often represent us as individuals and are highly personal, private activities conveying the meanings we construct for ourselves, the NSA's use of this material is significant. Our digital personas represent our identities. The state's seizure of these extensions of ourselves constitutes power's new attempts to regulate the self and confirms Foucault's ultimate argument that there is no escape from power.

Furthermore, a peculiarly late-modern contradiction is enabled by the production of technology as a disciplining mechanism. The NSA seeks the presence of individuals in society at large who are disciplined in Foucault's typical sense: subjects who exhibit docility and civilized behaviors that comply with the rule of law. Yet, the NSA also needs subjects to exist in their non-enclosed, non-partitioned, social-digital spaces, making phone calls, sending emails, moving from one location to the next, so that networks can be identified. It is only from these non-defined, non-known spaces and non-disciplined activities that the NSA gathers its meaningful information. Only *after* surveillance occurs can NSA analysts take up the task of defining, partitioning, and regulating the digital body. Thus, subjects do not experience regulated time/space/activity in the way that prisoners in cells, or workers in factory workstations, do. The disciplining activity that once occurred through observation and regulation of bodily activity now occurs after a suspicion of deviant behavior has emerged. Subjects are constituted by the same Foucaultian distributions, but the disciplinarian of our day seeks a subject that is free-floating, and non-regulated, who uses her own cell phone at her own time and will, not a factory worker who arrives at precisely 6:00 AM, begins work by 6:04 and takes lunch at 12:01. Additionally, in

this economy of power relations, subjects are always also docile in a different sense as a result of their being blindly compliant with surveillance practices and the daily disciplinary power that targets their digital conduct. Docility is exhibited as subjects use their cell phones or email excessively, assuming it is in their own benefit, but these very activities are constantly vulnerable to surveillance.

The modern surveillance state conforms to the spirit of Foucaultian social critique in that it indicates a disciplinary society where "inspection functions ceaselessly" (195). The NSA's 'gathering the whole haystack' logic conveys the ideal of governing through ceaseless inspection. All must be watched, all must be known. Prism is yet another example of the late-modern panopticon, in which special unities arrange to "make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately" (200).

**A Thought Experiment: The Art of Distributions Applied to the NSA's Subjects**

To remind my reader, the first element of the art of distributions is *enclosure*, in which space is defined and parameters are set within it to establish proper conduct. By creating a space that is homogenous within itself, yet heterogeneous from outside spaces, subjects become productive and disciplined. That which occurs in an enclosed space is directed, organized, and associated with particular behaviors that distinguish it from the outside.

At first glance enclosed space appears to be irrelevant to the Prism program, because subjects exist in their own locales, making phone calls and sending messages at their own pace. Yet, enclosure is still a method of eliciting discipline. The NSA encloses subject's digital bodies once they have been surveilled and moved into homogenous digital files in the NSA office. Thus, the process of 'discipline' has shifted to a time after activities occur. Furthermore, anywhere a call is made, a text is sent, a videoconference is held—whether from our homes, our

bedrooms, or places of work—have become readily penetrable spaces from which information can be extracted without our awareness. In turn, those seemingly private and personal interactions have become potentially punishable activities and those spaces from which they were surveilled have now become enclosed by the NSA.

Moreover, the NSA's actions meet the aims of 'enclosure.' The logic behind gathering data is to collect as much as possible and enclose it so that it can be analyzed for trends, stored, and manipulated. People and their bodies are no longer the only aim of disciplining; rather, the products of their psyches and human interactions—their digital bodies— are what must be enclosed. The NSA's Prism program structures data and space differently from the way the data is produced and conceived of in every day life. The purpose and meaning of sending a text or a Facebook message to a friend is different for the subject from what it is for the NSA analyst. Thus, the space constructed by the NSA is "homogenous" and closed in on itself, as files and reports replicate one another and follow a highly organized structure. However, the NSA's files on subjects are also simultaneously "heterogeneous to all others" (141) —particularly to those spaces and intentions from which the information first emerged. The homogenization/ heterogeneity organization of space echoes Foucault's articulation, but in the new digital spaces, institutional discipline begins after the digital body has performed its activity, not before.

Not only are data and the products of the subject's interactions enclosed in digital space; such a space is highly *partitioned* so that a vision of digital bodies is always possible. The disciplinarian must supervise conduct, "to assess it, judge it and know its qualities or merits" (143). Partitioning resurfaces with respect to the data that is compartmentalized according to the individuals being tracked. "When the NSA reviews a communication it believes merits further investigation, it issues what it calls a report; 2,000 of which are issued every month (Greenwald

and MacAskill). Thus, the production of a report on individuals signals their partitioning into files for monitoring.

Furthermore, the vast number of reports—77,000 in total— supports the notion that partitioning occurs only in relation to the supervision of the whole. The NSA seeks abundant amounts of data, following the art of distributions logic by seeking to organize "*multiplicity*." Foucault, speaking of the timetables that emerged in seventeenth century factories, writes "in the form of disciplinary distribution, the table has the function of treating multiplicity itself, distributing it and deriving from it as many effects as possible. Disciplinary tactics are situated on the axis that links the singular and the multiple. It allows both the characterization of the individual as individual and the ordering of a given multiplicity" (*Discipline and Punish* 149). The NSA's Prism program is the twenty-first century digital timetable. It allows the individual to be characterized, surveilled, and evaluated, but also ordered in a given multiplicity. To intercept terrorist threats connections must be made and networks must be evaluated. Individuals are essential to the extent that they are monitored within the context of the multiplicity the NSA defines as suspicious and therefore deserving of surveillance. To choose only fifty people to surveil would follow neither the NSA's anti-terror logic nor the logic of power in the Foucaultian sense. Organizing digital multiplicity in the twenty-first century digital space is just as essential as it was in the eighteenth century factory.

Yet ultimately "discipline is the art of *rank*…it individualizes bodies…but distributes them and circulates them in a network of arrangements" (146). After the Edward Snowden leaks, Gen. Keith Alexander retorted, "if you think that we would listen to everybody's telephone calls and read everybody's emails to connect the dots, that would be a waste of our resources" (Tucille). Thus, multiplicity as evidenced by understanding connections and

evaluating how individuals relate to one another is essential, but what is most essential is the authority's ability to rank subjects—to determine the biggest threats.

In short, the NSA can gather information about our personal lives that make us potentially punishable by the law, and it applies the type of disciplining power that once was used to organize the factory or the classroom to modern private life. Due to the proliferation of technology and the role it plays in every day life, disciplining penetrates our daily interactions and redefines our personal spaces. Such spaces are now conceived of both legally and epistemologically as penetrable, observable, and potentially criminalized.

The psychic effects of this type of surveilling-disciplining power are even greater than those articulated by Foucault. Psychic effects upon the modern subject have occurred on two seemingly contradictory fronts: first, the fear of terrorism, and second, the fear of being spied on. Althusser has argued that ideology constitutes subjecthood through a process of interpellation, wherein subjects recognize themselves as subjects of a particular kind (Althusser). The US's anti-terror discourses and actions have fostered an ideology of defensive nationalism and patriotism. Identification of subjects as 'American' has occurred via defining 'American' as that which it is not: a terrorist. Americans are free, modern, and tolerant, while terrorists are Muslim, poor, patriarchal, and savages who blow themselves up for their religion. Public rhetoric, political actions, cultural depictions, and a process known as "threat inflation" have sustained such conceptions. Americans have experienced heightened fear at the prospect of terrorist attacks, and this fear, while arguably justified, has been exaggerated by US governmental discourses. The US has engaged in "threat inflation" to justify its aggressive approach toward terrorism (Cramer and Thrall) producing a fearful consciousness amongst citizens. This fear assures subject's docility and obedience to the law and the state's policies. This docility then

aligns subjects ideologically with the state and dissuades them from questioning its authority/ anti-terror decisions. Thus, subjects become compliant, serve in the military, pay higher taxes, etc., all as an effect of the state's power and disciplining practices (particularly tactics of fear) that operate upon them. In effect, threat inflation has produced subjects with docility-utility, and this has legitimated the NSA's surveillance programs.

Yet, fears of terrorism have not prevented subjects from fears of being 'spied on.' Despite the fact that the American public would not have known about the Prism program without Snowden's leaks, citizens have long been aware of surveillance techniques and paranoid about the misuses of technology by authorities. For example, as early as 2003, George W. Bush's secret spying program was leaked, and the PATRIOT Act that expanded surveillance techniques was public from the moment it was passed. Thus, subjects do not know specifically if, how, or when they are being spied on, but government spying has incited their fear, which is consistent with disciplinary practices of self-regulation.

In fact, it is this condition of *ambiguity* about whether one is being spied on or not that characterizes modern discipline along Foucaultian lines. Foucault maintained that Bentham's panopticon is an effective disciplinary tool because "it promotes a conscious and permanent state of visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (*Discipline and Punish* 201). Prisoners must be partitioned and observed, and they must have a consciousness of being surveilled at all times. The central observation tower must loom over all prisoners, but prisoners must never be able to tell whether someone is actually inside. Power must be "visible but unverifiable" (201). The effect is that power reproduces itself within the subject. Because she is conscious of being watched, the subject regulates her behavior to prevent punishment. The same is true for the modern day subject using her cell phone. Individuals are conscious that the NSA is

collecting digital data but do not know whether or not the NSA is collecting their personal data or has any use for it. This ambiguity is central. The lack of clarity between whether one is being surveilled or not, motivates fear, self-questioning, and likely self-regulation. These late-modern surveillance techniques may become permanent new disciplinary tactics. Just as Bentham's panoptic structure replaced "the heaviness of the old house of security" with "its fortress-like architecture and locks and chains" (302), perhaps fears and uncertainties of surveillance will replace traditional methods of discipline. If government agencies continue to engage highly covert surveillance that is somewhat acknowledged but never verified for individuals, subjects may begin to self-regulate themselves in unforeseen ways. This is especially likely should citizens become criminalized as a direct result of information gathered by programs like Prism.

**Surveillance in Exchange for Security?**

Some have argued that the NSA is merely attempting to strike a balance between respecting privacy and enabling security. Indeed, thinkers from Hobbes to Freud have contemplated societies consent to the state's monopoly on violence in exchange for the protections of a liberal society. It is true that we no longer live in a 'solitary, poor, nasty and brutish' state of nature and that certain securities in the US are a possible consequence of the political institutions and military-industrial complex that has developed. Yet this view reproduces the self-disciplining logic Foucault articulated.

Arguments that a certain level of surveillance is necessary to ensure security, indicate how invested our society has become in the disciplining power structure because such logics assume that disciplining through surveillance is the most effective organization of power. That citizens accept the fact that their 'big brother' is watching resembles Bentham's prisoner who accepts that the inspector is watching and chooses to self-regulate

his behavior as a result. In fact, accepting losses of privacy in the name of countering-terrorism is itself an exercise of self-regulation and a subscription to the state's omniscience in knowing what is best for its citizens. Those who operate under this logic 'interpellate' their subjecthood to a putatively all-knowing state. While subjects on the whole are wary of government encroachment, most accept it as a necessary protection of US liberal democracy today. Thus we are complicit with the disciplining structures that have constituted the modern subject from its birth.

Yet, ascribing to the over-bearing power of the state in the name of security is not the only force at work that has so far enabled the phenomenon of widespread surveillance programs. Perhaps it is instead the rampant use of technology that motivates a willingness to forgo ideals of privacy. Perhaps it is something in the appeal of technology that has disrupted older ways of being and has caught subjects, governments, and society at large, off guard, making everyone unsure of how to adjust to the late-modern technological time. The following chapter will shift to a discussion of the Internet and capital. Making corporations my target, I that there is much to be critical of in the way technology has been appropriated by subjects.

**CHAPTER THREE:**
**LATE MODERN DIGITAL LABOR: MARX AND SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Karl Marx offers a materialist interpretation of historical development. In so doing, he famously critiques class relations and capitalist social organizations. For Marx, "history, particularly under modern capitalism, is seen as a story of man's alienation in his life as a producer, and communism is presented as the final transcendence of alienation via a revolution against private property" (Tucker 66). Marx divides modern society into two classes: the property owners (bourgeoisie) and the property-less workers (proletariat). Political economy must understand these class relations and the role of private property in generating exploitation and alienation for workers as they produce commodities and wealth for capitalists.

This chapter updates evaluates the condition of the subject on the Internet in late-modern capitalism to update the Marxist mode of theorizing. Initially, many activities on the Internet appear to be outside of a Marxist framework. There is no dispute that there are non-economic, non-exploited relations on the Internet. For example, Wikipedia is a non-profit, collaboratively edited, digital encyclopedia servicing millions of users worldwide. Ordinary users can edit Wikipedia and contribute to the public's collective knowledge. This type of engagement is a daily attempt by over 31 million volunteer editors to exist outside commodity relations. In 2008, Wikipedia was estimated as the accumulation of "100 million hours of human thought" (Shirky). This figure includes every page, edit, and line of code put into the site's creation until 2008, and as the site grows daily, no doubt, millions more hours have been added in the past five years. Thus, Wikipedia has well over 100 million hours of volunteer, unpaid labor conducted to increase access to knowledge and share information with others. Similarly, Creative Commons is another non-profit organization that offers copyright licenses for free, allowing owners to communicate to the public which rights they reserve and which they wave. This allows owners to

control how they want to share their work and gives flexibility to those who want to use the work. Wikipedia for example, has a creative commons license, as do millions of photographs posted on Flickr. This licensing system shares knowledge, art, music, and the results of one's labor for the sake of 'sharing' more than for the sake of 'profiting.' Indeed, there are innumerable social media communications that benefit people's lives and facilitate non-capitalist relations. Friends communicating on Facebook, lost family members reconnecting, and scholars sharing ideas, are just a few among an infinite number of uses that are not for capitalist ends. Not everything on the Internet is done for capital and not everything is exploitable or alienating. However, society has underestimated the extent to which capital *does* penetrate the web in insidious ways that are very rarely perceived by the ordinary user or society on the whole. Common public discourses generally conceive of the Internet as positive, communal, and empowering. While all of this is true to a certain extent, I seek to explore the less discussed drawbacks on the Internet: how capitalist harms reproduce themselves in this sphere, and how the Internet has actually generated its own unique forms of exploitation and alienation that transcend Marx's pre-digital analysis.

The Internet, like the factory, is a realm that mostly suits the needs of capitalism. There are two main ways in which Internet subjects are reproduced as traditional capitalist subjects. First, all of the physical devices on which subjects work, such as their smartphones or computers, are products of capitalism that subjects have privately bought to gain access to the web. Participation in the Internet sphere necessitates a capitalist subject who buys products, software, and gadgets. Second, the Internet is an accessible and ever-expanding realm of consumption where products are daily marketed and sold. Capitalists use the Internet to make a profit, and subjects are turned into capitalist subjects who are enabled to consume. Consumption proliferates

through giant corporate websites such as Amazon, and millions of other sites that sell their products online at any time of day or night with a few simple clicks of a mouse. These two points reveal how the Internet facilitates an already existing capitalist economy that has found a new expression on the web.

Additionally, particular processes have emerged that make the Internet a uniqu*e* late-modern expression of capitalism. The first is that subjects now engage in what I call '*digital labor*.' This refers to all of the activity that occurs when a subject logs on to the Internet—for whatever purpose: recreational, educational or consumptive. From this, a new type of capitalists who refer to themselves as 'data brokers,' have emerged. This digital bourgeoisie *exploits* Internet subjects by making a profit off of the surplus value subject's unwitting digital labor produces. This type of exploitation is consistent with the labor process Marx described, but is updated as it happens solely on the Internet landscape.

The second uniquely late-modern process is the *alienation* that occurs as a result of people's interaction with social media. Internet subjects are alienated to such a great extent that they do not even consider their activity as digital labor. They are also alienated from the products they produce, from each other, and from their 'species being.' Throughout this chapter my arguments regarding alienation assume that something in the human condition has been fundamentally altered and that this change is not an entirely positive one. An obsession with virtually representing oneself to others and chasing celebrity via social media has encroached upon social life. People are often attached to their digital devices while in public: at movie theatres, concerts, in libraries, classrooms, or simply in a room with friends. These digitally driven interactions remove oneself from her surroundings and invert her relations to a constant communication with her virtual world while simultaneously leaving the physical world around

her on the sidelines. A form of narcissism has also emerged where the amount of likes on an Instagram picture signals one's status and perpetuates one's fascination with crafting digital identities. Interactions mediated through a screen are increasingly becoming interpreted as more valuable to oneself than those that occur through engagement in the physical world. I attempt to gesture at this change in the human condition through making use of Marx's concept of species being. I recognize however, that my work is only the beginning of what should be further study into this new phenomenon and that while Marx's species being is potentially outdated or flawed in its own ways, it provides the best starting vocabulary for grappling with the human condition.

**Marx's Species Being, Alienation, and Exploitation**

Marx refers to human nature as man's "species being," which is man's creative processes. Humans have purposes, designs, and plans that change over time. These capacities for creation represent a type of consciousness in humans that exceeds mere instinct. Free, conscious, and often social activity is the character of human beings, making them unique from other species. Animals perform labor, but their labor is the result of instinct, not creativity. For example, "a spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver" and a bee constructs her "cells like that of an architect" (*Capital, Volume One* 344). But "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (344). Thus, it is in the conscious, creative "working-up of the objective world" that man "proves himself to be a species being" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 76). The worker becomes alienated when he produces commodities for the capitalist, who determines the character, duration, and extent of work. Work is no longer directed or 'owned' by the worker to actuate his species-being, instead the worker only owns his labor power, his ability to work, which the capitalist buys in exchange for a wage.

Therein is revealed the first *alienation of the "worker's relationship to the products of his labor"* (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 73). The more the worker produces, the more his labor contributes to the objective world, the less he, himself, is worth and the less belongs to him. The worker puts his life, time, and effort into an object that does not belong to him. The product of labor has become congealed in a material object, which confronts the worker as something alien to him. The worker becomes a slave to his object as he receives work that denies him his species being, and as he decreases in value with the more he produces.

Second is *alienation "within the producing activity itself"* (73). Marx reasons that if the worker faces the product of his labor as a stranger, then the act of production must also estrange the worker from himself. Production is "the activity of alienation" (74). During work the worker is "unhappy," he "denies himself," he does "not feel at home," but rather, he feels "outside himself" (74). This is because work is "not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor" (74). Work is external from the worker. During the working day, laboring does not belong to the worker, and as a result, the worker himself belongs to the capitalist during his labor day. "The worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self," (74) therefore within the act of production the worker is alienated.

Third, is *alienation from the worker's species being*. The process of work is characterized as an activity of suffering that takes up all of the worker's energy. The worker lives a life without activity other than alienated labor, which "neither depends on nor belongs to him" (75). "Estranged labor estranges the species from man. It turns for him the life of the species into a means of individual life" (75). Individual life in its abstract, estranged form appears to be the purpose of life over and against man's species being. The labor demanded of the impoverished, tired proletariat denies him of his species character, which is free, conscious, creative activity.

Fourth is *man's estrangement from man.* Marx writes, "what applies to man's relation to his work, to the product of his labor and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labor and object of labor" (77). Because man is estranged from his species being, man is estranged in his relationship with other men. Man views all other men in accordance with his position as a worker. The proletariat is alienated from the bourgeoisie because the product of his labor does not belong to him, but instead belongs to the capitalist. While the worker's activity is a "torment" to him, to the capitalist it is a "delight" (78). The subject is thus alienated, and unable to actuate his species being and human relationships.

According to Marx, the workers' *exploitation* is related to, but different from his alienation. Capitalists buy the workers' labor for a wage. The laborers produce products with use values. But the capitalist wants to make a profit, so he needs the result of production to be first, a commodity that can be sold for exchange and second, a commodity whose value is greater than the means of production (materials) and labor power he purchased to make the commodity (*Capital, Volume One* 350). The capitalist must extract *surplus-value*. Exploitation is the taking of surplus labor produced by the worker without giving full exchange for his hours. The capitalist requires "a process through which he receives objectified labor time, i.e., value without exchange" (*The Grundisse* 249). Thus exploitation occurs as a result of the capitalist selling the worker's surplus labor, which has been congealed in the commodity, without giving equivalent compensation. In effect, while alienation and exploitation are related to each other in that they both stem from labor, the two conditions are separate in how they arise. This is true for the relationship between digital alienation and exploitation, which are related but distinct. Before explicating this distinction, one must first understand the process of labor on the Internet.

**What is digital labor and what are its products?**

My argument in this chapter is contingent upon a concept of intellectual 'digital labor.' It constitutes everything we do on the Internet: every click, post, and upload, and, every website we visit, or social network we join. Digital labor is the act of sharing information, literature, photographs, opinions, politics, forging relationships, publishing books and articles, collaborating, critiquing, buying, selling, etc. I interpret this activity as a new late-modern kind of 'labor' for two key reasons.

First, it is activity of an intellectual and personal nature, involving time and energy like other forms of labor. Internet labor can sometimes fit under Marx's species being in that it involves creative, conscious processes wherein individual's work on the world around them. While Marx wrote about the conscious, creative working-up of *nature*, late-modern individuals work-up the digital terrain around them in highly imaginative, complex, and creative ways. However, while on the one hand digital labor is creative and enables engagement with our late-modern species being, on the other hand, it is this very activity that often alienates us from the species being Marx articulated—from our sensuous world and nature. The more we work-up of our digital world while in a sense creative, generative, and conscious, the less we come to work-up of our physical world. Still, the fact that subjects consciously 'create' on the Internet reveals that the activities conducted there are a new late-modern form of labor.

The second reason this type of activity should be considered a late-modern form of labor is because it often produces many types of products. Understanding the variation amongst these products is key to understanding the difference between exploitation and alienation. The first kind of product is realized in social media. This product can be a Facebook profile, a perfectly crafted blog, or another digital artifact of one's creative faculties on the Internet. These 'social

media products' involve much of the conscious creativity I articulated above. Yet, often their effect is to yield *mystification and alienation* between people, the sensuous world, and 'species being.' For example, one's ability to self-represent on the Internet and to consciously craft an identity through uploading particular Instagram pictures or posting certain Facebook statuses mystifies the individual to herself and those to whom this outward projection is received.

Digital files are the second type of product resulting from Internet labor. The subject does not produce this product directly, but instead, it is garnered through a collection of the information received on the subject from her Internet activity. This labor/product relation is responsible for the subject's digital *exploitation*. Data brokers "collect, analyze, and package some of our most sensitive personal information and sell it as a commodity to each other, to advertisers, even the government often without our direct knowledge" (Kroft). These late-modern 'digital bourgeoisie' exploit labor in ways like and unlike Marx's factory owner. Like the factory owner, they sell our surplus value to make a profit. Data brokers need the personal information they gather on us to reproduce themselves, perpetuate their part in the late-modern capitalist system, and make their profit. Unlike the factory owner, they make a profit off labor performed entirely without a wage—labor that the laborers themselves do not see as labor.

**Consumption/Production On the Internet**

As discussed, the Internet represents many *producing* capacities. Digital labor produces our social media profiles, as well as the files capitalists use to exploit our surplus value. The Internet also represents a sphere of consumption: a digital agora for exchange. It is a hub for buying and selling products, making it an additional marketplace for capitalist *consumption*. Amazon, the Internet's largest distributor, serves 137 million customers a week. And with its annual revenue of $34 billion, Amazon's wealth is larger than the GDP's of half the world's

countries including Rwanda and Sierra Leone (Hyatt, 2014). With colossal corporate web services such as Amazon, and millions of other smaller websites the Internet has magnified the 'effectiveness' of capitalist consumption.

Thus, the types of alienation that Marx associated with the realm of production now also exist in a realm where consumption proliferates. This new realm facilitates the alienation consumer's feel to physical capitalist products as it is an ever more obscured method of consumption. An Amazon product that has been shipped from across the world in a matter of days appears ever more alien for consumers, obscuring the congealed labor-time that was put into it. The digital transactions that occur with a few simple clicks of a mouse further alienates the consumer from understanding the true nature of labor that was put into the product.

Moreover, the Internet wields a *mystical* power over subjects that makes them ever more susceptible to corporate exploitations. Subjects interpret themselves as free agents, constructing online presences about and for themselves. One's time spent on the Internet is viewed as self-directed, fruitful, and often outside the capitalist framework, as people communicate with friends, blog about their thoughts, and, research their interests. Yet, corporate interests constantly inundate subjects. Internet activities are monitored for targeting, their shopping is done online, and technology is always updating, compelling them to buy more. Individuals appear to be autonomous, self-producing agents, but Internet subjects have become a new type of proletariat and consumer of commodities.

**The Internet: The Latest Tool for the Production of 'The Society of the Spectacle'**

We now live in a media-driven and intensely connected age. With the proliferation of smartphones and mobile applications (apps), individuals are seamlessly connected anytime and anywhere. Options for how to connect are boundless. There is email for long textual

communications, Twitter for short 140 character microblogging, Snapchat for 10 second digital image flashers, Instagram for pictures, Vine for short videos, Tumblr for (re)blogging, Skype for video communication, Voxer for walkie-talkie communication, LinkedIN for professional networking—and for online dating, Tinder, OkCupid, Match.com, and hundreds more differentiated by religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, & location. There is SoundCloud for music sharing, Youtube for video posting, GrubHub to tell you what to eat, Google Maps to tell you where to go and how to get there, NikeCalorieCounter to discipline your diet, and lest we not forget the Monarch of all digital communications, the mammoth of 'self-expression': Facebook. Using these platforms, subjects endlessly 'check-in,' 'comment,' 'post,' 'update,' 'like,' 'follow,' 'tweet,' 'tag,' 'share,' 'read,' 'buy', and 'sell.' Apps create desires, satisfy needs, provide tools for recreation, afford communication, offer advice and administer education.

These digital devices and methods of communication are elements of a capitalist economy. All major corporations—Walmart, Target, Gap, restaurant chains, even local stores—have apps to provide discounts, keep wish lists, store prices, order instantly, and provide any other thinkable function that contributes to the capitalist machine. And, apps cost money! There is a plethora of free and cheap apps, most often addicting games that let users share their score and connect with others. But apps can also range up to $1000. For a mere $100, you can purchase "Sexy Finger Print Test HD" which "lets you find out your 'sexy score.' The app claims it can tell you the perfect time to meet members of the opposite sex.

Image 1: Casciano, Luca. Sexy Finger Print Test HD (Version 2.0) [Mobile Application Software] Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sexy-finger-print-test-hd/id400075016?mt=8>

This "Sexy Finger Print Test" is the ideal app to describe the condition of our digitally crazed culture. This app sits at the juncture of the capitalist and narcissistic impulses of the modern subject, and the corporate willingness to attend to, exploit, (and create in the first place) both. The app expresses the contemporary logic of seeking technology as a source of authority that tells you what to do, when to do it, who to do it with, and how it should be done. A "sexy score" from this digital informant reflects society's need for validation in all pursuits—especially those that relate to aesthetics, or dating.

Moreover, human interaction itself, including when to engage or approach members of the opposite sex (thus far, this app is heteronormative), is specifically dictated for the subject by this ostensibly omniscient and scientific technological gadget. The app suggests that we need to scan our finger to a phone to give us a numerical measure instructing us when to talk to someone to whom we might be attracted. Further, the app's claim that you should 'use it once a day to get the best and quickest results' reveals a societal willingness to obsess over technology to guide our lives. The app sold over *1 million downloads* in its first 180 days, indicating a demand for the product. iPhone screens are not even capable of scanning fingerprints, thus revealing how blindsided subject's are in trusting technology as an authoritative source. Furthermore, the app is rated for ages '9 and over,' as opposed to the other potential age categories of '12 and over' or '17 and over,' as if 9 year old children should determine their "sexy rating" and be told by their

digital gadget when to talk to members of the opposite sex. Finally, the app, which attempts to inform and replace social skills, is a rather steep $100, indicating both a capitalist impulse to profit from social anxieties and a societal willingness to supply a demand for such markets.

Written in 1967, Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle foreshadowed the condition of modern technologically-dependent subjects. Debord writes, "in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation" (Debord). Today's subject uses technology to produce constant representations for her Facebook friends and Twitter followers to view. Each post, status update, and picture is carefully chosen to project an image onto her digitally constructed world.

Debord argues that while capitalism transformed being into having, the modern day spectacle transforms having into appearing (Debord). This is ever more true for the Internet subject, who carefully constructs her various social networks to project an outward appearance, which sometimes alienates the subject from herself, and those to whom this digital appearance is directed. When a subject uses an Instagram filter, for example, and edits her picture, she is digitally working up of the world around her by using her creativity and tastes to construct something. Yet, this process is actually alienating in that creativity is not done for oneself, but rather, to sustain a fetishized appearance.

**The Fetishization of Social Media Profiles**

In "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society," Marx critiques the bourgeoisie mentality that money represents a person's worth or abilities. Marx writes, "the extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my properties and essential powers— the properties and powers of its possessor" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 103).

Capability is no longer contingent upon one's individuality, but instead upon one's wealth. For example, according to Marx, if a person is "ugly" he can buy "the most beautiful of women" and therefore appear to not be ugly (103). This is true of social media, but instead of only money representing people's capabilities and falsely substituting their individuality, social capital is an additional force that signifies capability and identity. Consider an individual who has very little friends in the real world. Editing a few pictures, and sending a few hundred Facebook requests to random users (who will likely accept the request because they too are in search of as many 'friends' as they can get) will make this individual appear as if she has many friends. A level of status, which may not necessarily reflect the person's genuine life, is therefore created. People use their social media profiles to make them appear as if they live a lavish lifestyle, artistic interests, or possess qualities that are an exaggeration of their offline reality. For Marx, a person may be "bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and therefore so is its possessor" (103). This perspective is akin to social media. A person may be bad, dishonest, or unscrupulous, but Instagram likes and a long list of Facebook friends are honored, and therefore so too are its possessors. Social media has become the late-modern medium for "turning an image into reality and reality into a mere image" (105).

One might argue that social media's ability to dictate appearances may actually *emancipate* subjects from class restrictions or capital, which typically is what signified a person's status. It appears as if subjects do not need money to invert reality as did Marx's "ugly man" who *buys* beautiful women, but instead late-modern subjects only need a smartphone and a well-crafted Facebook profile, or harmonious Instagram filters, to achieve the status that money once accorded. However, this point is severely mistaken for several reasons.

First, instead of social media *replacing* money as the force that signifies one's capabilities and honor, social media actually works *in conjunction with* money to support wealth as the ideal for one's life. Thus, social media does not emancipate people from economic relations, but instead supports these relations. Social media has become a new venue through which money is flaunted and fetishized. For example, status is still derived from driving a Lamborghini. But now, instead of receiving acknowledgement for this materialistic possession only on the road, you can receive the same status recognition—(even more, because you can reach a larger audience at once) by posting pictures of your Lamborghini to your Facebook page. The more lavish pictures one has, or the more 'likes' one receives, the more status is associated with that person. Now, this person drives a Lamborghini *and* has 500 picture likes, and 2,000 Facebook friends! One's associations and possessions both material and digital are flaunted on social media, whether or not this reflects the person's actual attributes, such as, his appealing personality, or whether these associations are a consequence of his ability to send out a lot of Facebook requests. Either way, the social media user is made to *appear* as if he is popular, rich, and well liked. Thus, self-construction on social media often occurs along materialistic class lines as a new venue in which to fetishize wealth—rather than as a tool to emancipate people from status associated with money. Moreover, the very impulse that is often present on social media to conjure up an image of wealth reveals the internalization of a capitalist ideal.

Second, social media can actually heighten class distinctions that are already existent in the real world. Even though I argue that almost everything is filtered on social media, enabling people to appear however they want to, there is a potential limit to one's digital capabilities. For example, consider a hypothetical Facebook user named John. If all of John's 'Facebook friends' are featured in pictures on yachts, but he is not because he does not have access to that material

possession in real life, the difference between John and his 'Facebook friends' may become heightened, and he may *appear* inferior. Contrary to widespread depictions of social media as empowering, the digital persona may reflect the inequalities that are already present rather than diminish them. Thus, social media can highlight and expose economic disparities even while it allows users to construct their own appearance.

Third, social media can never eliminate economic disparities in the real world *even if* it sometimes *blurs* one's class position. It is possible that one can appear to be rich online, or appear to be popular, but once the person 'logs off' the Internet, she is still pitted against the harsh realities of her physical, material life. For example, there are many youth with a level of 'micro-celebrity' on the Internet, accumulating millions of Instagram followers; but once they put down their smartphones, they are still just children who must listen to their parents, go to school, and try to make something of their future. Their status on social media thus establishes a contradiction between their online identity and offline reality. The development of such a gaping disparity between one's virtual persona and one's offline identity, produces an illusion that falsely substitutes for their lived experience that cannot so easily be filtered away.

And fourth, claims that social media can in any way replace or supplant economic relations, fall into the very social media fetishization I indict because it conceives of these tools/ spaces as independent and having their own mystical power. Now, instead of money being the main entity infused with mystical power, as Marx articulated, social media is an additional mystical force. In fact, it is mystical to such an extent that it actually appears to magically subvert or emancipate subjects from the very capitalist system that bind them to their real life hardships and Internet alienations in the first place! Ultimately, social media's properties appear to become the individual's properties; an image becomes reality and reality becomes an image.

Yet, paradoxically the Internet is the pre-eminent late-modern sphere where clicking, posting, and contributing leads to a perspective of oneself as existing outside the capitalist order. A user who writes a blog post about her vacation on the beach appears to be autonomously producing a representation of herself for herself and those with whom she shares her blog. But, she is potentially making herself into a representational spectacle, where what she 'has' is transformed into what 'appears.' Does she really share images and create ideas on the blog for her own purposes, or is it an attempt to produce a representation of herself as 'having,' as living a luxurious lifestyle for her social media friends to see and envy? Her time at the beach no longer exists in the sensuous realm with sand and water and those who enjoyed them with her, but rather, it has now become a digital product that contributes to her need for social validation (as well as help corporations target ads to her). Internet users consistently update their social networks about their lives, losing the reality that what they do does not need to be obsessively shared with others. These users often lose the pleasures of direct experience by almost immediately mediating that experience for non-present viewers. As depicted in the image below, people at concerts are often more focused on watching the concert through their tiny iPhone screens to capture a video, rather than experiencing the concert on the live physical stage before them, or sharing the experience with the companions around them. People invert their experience into a relation between themselves and their phones. Then, this inversion gets shared with their social media network to construct an outward image as having a good time—further subverting them from the realities of their experience that was really spent looking at their screen.
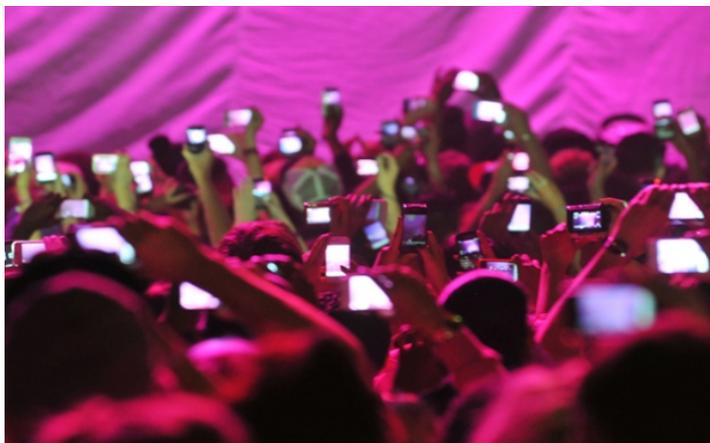
Image 2: Green, Andy. "The 10 Most Annoying Concert Behaviors." 14 July 2013: Web.
<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-10-most-annoying-concert-behaviors-20130114>

**Corporate Exploits: Tracking Online Behavior for Ad Targeting**

A uniquely late-modern capitalist directs the exploitation of digital subjects on the

Internet. These new capitalists are called 'data brokers,' and their sole business is to "suck up

your personal data, repackage it and sell it to the highest bidder" (Bartlett). Whenever we visit a

website, dozens of third party websites track our visit and collect our clicking patterns, our IP

address, and the personal information we reveal to the website such as our name, date of birth,

address, etc. As subjects surf the web, "thousands of third-party cookies' track [their] browsing

habits" (Ibid) including seemingly innocuous information such as shopping, musical preferences,

and holiday destinations. Companies generate 'lists' of data that are then sold to millions of

advertisement companies to target specific ads at us while we surf the web. 'Data brokers' such

as Google, or Acxiom, (the largest data broker company with a $1.15 billion revenue), store and

sell this value as a profit. This data represents the results of our digital Intellectual labor; our

conscious, creative activities on the Internet that are done completely for free! This is a new

adaptation of Marx's "exploitation" in which the laborer was paid a wage and forced to work

more than he or she needed to so the capitalist could extract surplus value. These data broker

companies are receiving surplus value without having to pay for necessary value because they do not pay a wage to the digital laborers at all.

Some argue that companies like Google, which provides a widely used search engine and email service, need to gather and sell our data to advertisers to keep these services free. However, this logic reveals how this behavior is a late-modern digital version of Marx's exploitation. It is akin to saying something like, 'capitalists need to pay lower wages to stay in business so they can continue to give us products.' Just because the consumer might benefit in some way does not make it unproblematic from either a moral or Marxist standard.

Furthermore, the information sold is highly personal, making this type of profiting behavior even more insidious. Not only are these new capitalists selling our surplus labor, but our surplus labor is increasingly becoming us and representing who we are—both on and off the Internet. There are "all sorts of companies peddling sensitive personalized information. 'Statlistics' advertises lists of gay and lesbian adults, 'Paramount Lists' offers lists of people with alcohol, sexual and gambling addictions and people desperate to get out of debt, 'Exact Data' is brokering the names of people who had sexually transmitted disease" (qtd. in Kroft). Thus, the fact that these companies are extracting our surplus labor that we conduct for free and profiting on it reveals a late-modern adaptation of exploitation. More than this, the fact that what is being sold is our personal information and identities, represents a perverse unique modern adaptation of exploitation. This also reveals how alienated we are during this process to which we contribute without realizing the loss of self we suffer. Furthermore, the selling of this personal information to corporations or even the government can have obvious negative consequences on our privacy that should be taken up by further studies.

**Late-Modern Internet Alienation**

This section details the expression of capitalism on the Internet in the context of Marx's four types of alienation. The relationship between the new Internet 'digital worker' and the capitalist reveals Marx's first *alienation of the worker from the product of his labor*. The more the subject spends of himself in creating his own 'digital labor' on the Internet, the more powerful the capitalist becomes. The capitalist becomes powerful because he receives valuable information on the intellectual laborer and markets products more effectively. For example, the more a bride-to-be researches "weddings" in Google, the more companies selling wedding gowns, rings, flowers, and catering venues benefit. These companies are consistent with traditional capitalists who seek to make a profit, but the third party, data-brokers, who sell the bride's data represent a new capitalist that causes a unique form of exploitation.

Marx referred to a laborer's product as a physical commodity from which he is alienated. However, through voluntary 'Internet labor,' the laborer produces a product that is not only not hers, but also, a product that she is *unaware* is not hers. Indeed, the 'digital laborer' has no idea what she has produced, for whom she has produced it, the 'shelf life' of her product and, how long the capitalist will exploit it. "A huge chunk of what you've ever looked at on the Internet is sitting in databases all across the world. The line separating all that it might say about you, good or bad, is as thin as the letters of your name. If and when that wall breaks down, the numbers may overwhelm the name. The unconsciously created profile may mean more than the self I've sought to build" (Madrigal). Thus, the product transcends Marx's physical commodity as it is produced without the laborer's knowledge, at all times of day or whenever she uses the Internet for her own seeming use. The laborer has virtually no respite from this secretive, constant exploitation. Moreover, this digital product is kept for endless future capitalist appropriation!

Furthermore, this condition, which relies on the appropriation of labor without the subject's consciousness, is exploitative in a different way than for Marx's factory worker. When discussing alienation from products, Marx wrote, "the worker becomes a slave of his object, first in that he receives an object of labor, i.e., in that he receives work; and secondly in that he receives means of subsistence. Therefore it enables him to exist as a worker and second as a physical subject" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 73). The modern worker is still a 'slave of his object' but receives neither 'work' nor the means of his subsistence through a wage. "Typical Facebook users expect no monetary compensation (i.e., wages) for the information they produce; however, this information given its utility in identifying appropriate targets for various sorts of marketers, constitutes the primary profit model of these companies" (Rey).

A counter-argument must be dealt with before proceeding. Some would argue that this targeting system is efficient and benefits consumers whose consumption is more accessible. However, arguments about the efficiency of the capitalist system do not exempt it from criticism. Just as the steam engine and assembly line were industrialization's innovations that appeared to 'benefit' societies, but from a Marxist perspective were shown to exploit the proletariat, the Internet's targeting tools are late modern-capitalism's innovations that appear to increase efficiency, but actually also increase exploitation. We should not consider as a benefit the fact that when we click on a website, our personal details are recorded in files and then aggregated to corporations that target advertisements to create consumption desires in us.

The second form of alienation, from the *producing activity*, is slightly more complex. As discussed, the worker conducts her Internet behavior voluntarily. Thus, labor is not quite "forced, and coerced" as it was for Marx's factory worker (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 74). Although, given the secretive uses of the subject's digital labor, the autonomy in her Internet

decision is dubious. "Early Facebook employee Jeff Hammerbacher said, the best minds of our generation are thinking about how to make people click ads" (qtd. in Madrigal) revealing how 'digital labor' is to some degree coerced.

Corporate tracking aside, the subject is alienated *during her Internet activity* in other personal-social ways. Marx writes, during the laborer's life, "the worker no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions" (74). Because of the psychological and social hold of the Internet on subjects, the realm of sensuous bodily life and of "animal functions" becomes even less important/ more alien to subjects as they become more consumed by Internet interactions. Obsessive Internet use makes it harder to engage the sensuous world because of how engrossing the Internet is in daily life. Often, if a person does not have access to her phone or Internet service, she feels distressed and unsettled. This anxiety associated with a loss of digital connectivity is becoming a norm for most members of our digitally connected society. There are also diagnosed Internet-spawned pathologies including, "online sexual compulsivity, Internet gambling, MySpace addiction and video game addiction, which the American Medical Association estimates five million children suffer from" (Young and de Abreu). Subjects thus have become alienated from precisely the pleasures Marx endorsed, as the natural or sensuous physical world around oneself often becomes irrelevant.

To the extent that the costs of the virtual replace the sensuous, the late-modern subject condition has lost something fundamental. The Internet used to excess blocks out experiences of the sensuous world. While subjects appear to be expressing their senses on the Internet—catering to their interests and tastes, viewing art, writing blogs, they are really also engaging activities that estrange them from daily physical life. The Internet complicates the existence of man as a social being because, on the one hand, it generates social engagement: people can communicate,

arrange social meetings, exchange information, and so on. But, on the other, the Internet isolates

users from direct and unmediated social engagement. Typical Internet subjects are alienated

during their Internet activities, as they create heavily constructed, often superficial appearances

for themselves online. This constructs identity according to perceptions of social norms that

comply with standards of status. Human interaction itself is severely compromised in favor of

online interaction, with subjects often checking their smartphones rather than being physically

present in social situations.



Image 3: Harper, Michael. "Pew Survey Shows Mobile Internet Use Soaring Among Teens." *Red Orbit* 13 Mar 2013: Web.
<http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1112802449/pew-study-teen-mobile-internet-use-soaring-031313/>

The third form of alienation is from the subject's *species being*. Marx wrote estranged

labor "turns for him the life of the species into a means of individual life" (75). As indicated in

Image 3, modern technology often turns social life into individual life, wherein the fetishization

of technology invades social contexts. Internet 'digital labor' serves as a means to an individual

life wherein an outward image is heavily constructed. Man is estranged from his self-conscious

creative and thoughtful nature, as people become almost robotically glued to their technological

devices rather than engaged in the sensuous and social worlds around them.

Flowing form this is the estrangement of *man from other men.* For Marx, the proletariat

associated with other humans in accordance with his position as a worker. Now, the late-modern

Internet subject associates with other humans increasingly in accordance with his position as an Internet user. This association is of course, always conjoined with the capitalist relations within which the subject already exists, which are exaggerated on the Internet domain. One's class position of course, is still relevant in determining how people relate to each other, but now, a new force is also at play. Because subjects are estranged from their species being in that their Internet interactions/personas are fetishized in their own minds, they are therefore estranged from each other. Subjects view other people in terms of their status on the Internet, as well as for a means to their own social media celebrity. For example, friends are expected to 'like' each other's Facebook posts as a public display of their real life friendship even if they do not *actually* like the post independently. People have thus begun relating to each other along the lines of digital-friendship obligations and relations. This is just one example of many that indicates the late-modern alienation of "*man from man,*" which arises because we have fetishized the Internet to the point that we have estranged ourselves from ourselves.

What should we make of the diminished role of traditional interpersonal relationships, loss of face-to-face communications, proliferation of pornographic ads, bombardment of consumerist advertisements on webpages, monitoring of our digital content for advertisement targeting, and, surveillance of our digital communications? In this new domain of capitalist expression, not only has a new type of exploited labor emerged but also an intensification of the alienation Marx deplored has surfaced. No longer are factories the only site of alienation; now, personalized digital spaces are a key domain in which people are alienated from themselves and others. This severity is great because of the Internet's covert and seemingly benign, clean nature, where no factory grease is evident to help identify who is being exploited and who suffers most from alienation!

The current technological moment appears to be liberating. Political campaigns, governmental organizations, non-profits, and charities conduct worthy activities on the Internet. All these uses, however, contribute to concealing the more insidious potentialities of the Internet. These effects include, but are not limited to, its hold on our psyches, disruption of face-to-face social organizations, heightened exposure of youth to pedophilic activity, cyber-bullying, personal and corporate fraud, trafficking narcotics, and much more. Yet, while people are aware of the 'dark corners' of the Internet where pedophiles roam, they often focus on the Internet's 'positive' qualities. The Internet exhibits a 'fetish'-like quality, wherein people worship the object of human creation while being blindly subjected to its alienating and exploitative effects. Some might point to the fact that subjects sometimes [partially] own their means of production, such as the computer on which they write, but this argument sustains the fetishization of the Internet, by making it appear self-authorized and thereby harmless. The fact that we may own hardware and software of a means of production that in truth has mastered us is what makes the Internet a domain of alienations whose insidious qualities are harder to detect.

Certainly not all Internet activity is capitalist or alienating. However, the Internet's habitation in daily life obscures the alienation and exploitation that occur daily. Since Marx's time, society has moved through three phases: the production of material commodities, the production of material abundance, and finally, the production of digital abundance. "Of course, material conditions are no less significant and no less real, but they are, increasingly augmented—that is, encoded or overlayed- both figuratively and literally, with digital information" (Rey). Digital abundance is the new chapter in the genealogy of subjects, characterizing one critical aspect in the current economy of power relations.

While I have attempted to capture the current technological paradigm by updating certain elements of the Marxist theoretical vocabulary, it remains true that the Internet no less than the factory is a site of capitalism and adapts itself to suit its needs. Historically, segments of society have challenged capitalism through political activism and revolution, which centered on people gathering together, communicating, and revolting. Given the Internet's potential as a space for communication and horizontal integration, could it offer itself as a locale for a modern revolution—against the total realities of capitalism both digital and material? My conclusion points to some contemporary examples of digital resistance that critical theorists should evaluate to complete this new chapter in the genealogy on subjecthood.

**CONCLUSION:**
**CAN POSITIVE CHANGE BE ON THE HORIZON FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER IN**
**SUBJECTHOOD'S GENEALOGY?**

My goal in this thesis has been to offer an interpretation of a new 'economy of power relations.' The word 'economy' denotes the current forces of power and their impact on how subjecthood is produced and experienced. I have sought to display the 'dark side' of humanity's transition to the current technological moment, to add our contemporary chapter in the genealogy on subjecthood. I regarded the Internet as the site of the symbolic and physical convergence of economic, political, and social forces that turns humans into particular kinds of subjects today.

I began by critiquing Thomas Friedman's cheery interpretation of globalization. Friedman argues that technology has allowed third world nations to be economically competitive with first world nations. He coins this competition, which he assumes to be more efficient for capitalist advancement, the 'flattening of the world.' I chastised Friedman for evading the state's and capital's role in producing continued poverty, surveillance, alienation, and exploitation. The modern experience of subjecthood elicited by the state and capital must be investigated to understand the challenges of contemporary humanity. Informed by this position, I then turned from this global perspective to the subject in late-modern capitalist societies, where Internet use occupies most of daily life for most individuals.

To arrive at a more thorough understanding of what makes today's subject a subject, I first evaluated the state's role in this new 'economy of power relations.' I turned to Michel Foucault, who offers a vocabulary for capturing the current condition from the vantage of power and institutions. Foucault's extrapolation of surveillance practices in producing recognizable subjects contributed to an investigation of the NSA's surveillance behaviors. I strove to update Foucault's 'arts of distributions,' considering the Internet as a new space in which modern

disciplinary power is employed. The object of discipline on the Internet is not the physical body but the digital body, on which the state uses techniques similar to those used on Foucault's physical subject in the prison, factory, and army. Digital space is enclosed, partitioned, organized in a multiplicity, and ranked. The aim is to produce subjects whose actions are docile and useful to the state in its anti-terror goals as well as to continue the state's more general mission of maintaining power over its citizens.

In Chapter Three, I evaluated capital's role in the late-modern economy of power relations. I argued that Marx explains how the mode of production that organizes society produces exploitation and alienation. Realizing that the current capitalist mode of production still produces the harms Marx articulated, I set out to update Marx for the Internet sphere. Marx's main categories of analysis are labor and production; mine are consumption, *plus* a new kind of digital production. I strove to consider how the Internet produces its own unique type of alienation and exploitation. Corporations such as Google exploit unpaid labor on the Internet, while alienation via social networking has fundamentally altered the way people relate to each other and experience the sensuous world. Marx provided a vocabulary to understand humankind's species being, I have shown how late-modern capitalism, through the Internet has further alienated us from this species being.

In both chapters, I argued that Foucault and Marx provide a fruitful critical take on society that still is relevant. The surveillance/power of Foucault's framework still exists in the physical world with the Internet serving as a new tool in this process. The exploitation associated with capitalism of Marx's framework still exists in the physical world and on the Internet, with corporations such as Google exploiting unpaid digital labor and with social networking distorting sensuous relationships and human engagement. Both theories are useful in evaluating how the

Internet has added to the harms they identify, at the same time that the Internet reveals itself to have generated its own unique harms that neither theory anticipated.

**Potential Future Areas of Study**

I have largely ignored the positive potentialities of contemporary subjectivities on the Internet, and thus I have side-stepped the ways the Internet may challenge these very forces of subjection. Yes, the Internet has made it easier to be surveilled and targeted to serve the agendas of the powerful. But can it offer itself also as a terrain for resistance? Can it forge new horizontal relationships among people in both the digital landscape and the social world that subvert the very power dynamics with which I take issue? While the Internet has enabled the NSA to surveil subjects with new ease, it is also the platform through which Edward Snowden was able to make the world aware of this behavior. While Google has targeted ads to consumers for more efficient consumption, social media was the platform by which Arab Spring protestors organized. And while the state with its suggested SOPA and PIPA bills has attempted to regulate the Internet in favor of corporate profit, the hacktivist group Anonymous used the Internet as a medium to retaliate in a uniquely late-modern way.

Further study into this genealogy of power relations should evaluate whether there is light on the Internet's horizon. Studies should seek to answer the following questions. Can the Internet be a tool for horizontal collaboration and long-term social, political, economic improvement in the material world? Who would lead the movement? Would such resistances require an 'elite' level of knowledge (technical computer knowledge, for example), or would it be accessible to the masses? Could resistance spill over into the physical world and the public square, or will it be contained within the Internet as its own battleground? What would a social theory of the Internet as a battleground look like and how would power respond? The last question is key because, as

Foucault argues, resistance is never a question of total liberation or a complete escape from power structures; rather, resistance is a question of strategy and counter-strategy. Challenging power involves a reciprocal process wherein the subject produces a new counter-discourse or institutes a new type of behavior that for a moment challenges the power relationship. Then, power always has a counter-move to re-subjectify the subject and continue/(re)direct its overall aim. Thus, while the Internet could be a potential space for resistance, theorists would need to be alert to the interplay of strategies between these modern resisters and the responses on the part of the powers they seek to challenge.

Before continuing, I must note that I have intentionally chosen to omit Edward Snowden as a suggestion for digital resistance studies. Snowden while unquestionably brave, and the very reason this thesis along with most of its critical claims were made possible, is *not* an emblematic figure of what future resistances will look like. Snowden represents an elite member of the intelligence community, the very security apparatus I have critiqued, who just happened to go rogue. He is the exception rather than the rule. Nor perhaps, does he reflect what we should strive for in resistance. Valorizing one figure who leaked information because he had access and elite knowledge (as well as highly technical skills) to enable his actions, may not be what theorists should model digital empowerment on. Resistances should focus on igniting the ordinary individual to action, not one hero who dramatically changed the course of history and in the process lost his freedom as a US citizen and potentially compromised US national security. What could be fruitful to consider are the grassroots and mainstream responses to Snowden's actions on social media, through lobbying efforts, or in public demonstrations. However, as far as suggesting Edward Snowden as his own category of analysis, future studies should not be so narrow.

**Examples of Modern Resistances for which Foucault's Theorizing Might Prove Useful**

Some examples of what Foucaultian resistance would look like today include local, strategic, micro Internet actions that question what is now sanctioned as acceptable identity, behavior, and discourse. Foucault's theory could be useful in understanding digital struggles that challenge that which makes the subject recognizable. For example, loosely coordinated, international 'hactivist' individuals who identify with the moniker 'Anonymous' have produced counter-knowledges, and discourses in their challenges to power. The "group" is not a collectivity in a traditional sense, as it resists analytical categories that would help one understand their "ethics, sociology or history. " Instead, Anonymous is "a name currently called into being to coordinate a range of disconnected actions, from trolling to political protests" (Coleman, 2011). This very name, 'Anonymous,' affirms a goal to exist outside of the given power structure: its members literally strive to be entirely unrecognizable, entirely "anonymous." Individuals in any geographic or social-political location can identify as part of Anonymous, and many "nodes" have popped up "in India, Romania and the Philippines" (Coleman, 2013) as well as throughout the US and UK. Individuals who identify with Anonymous maintain their anonymity on the Internet as well as in public by wearing masks at events. 'Anonymous' does not have one political agenda or ideology, but it has formed branches that engage political questions. What once used to be a group of coordinated Internet pranks became more explicitly political when some branches of Anonymous began protesting the Church of Scientology in 2008. Then, "by September 2010 another distinct political arm emerged as Operation Payback to protest the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and months later this arm shifted its energies to Wikileaks" (Coleman, 2011).

Anonymous is highly diffuse in its location and agenda, but those who identify as Anonymous generally unite by engaging late-modern digital tactics marked by particular counter-knowledges, strategies, and discourses to challenge various power structures. For example, those who identify as Anonymous have adapted their own language. One example is the phrase, 'do it for the lulz,' which stands for do it for the 'laugh out loud.' "The lulz is not the anesthetic humor that makes days go by easier, it's humor that heightens contradictions. The lulz is laughter with pain in it. It forces you to consider injustice and hypocrisy, whichever side of it you are on in that moment" (Norton). Anonymous also has devised the term 'd0xing,' to describe one of their favored resistance strategies. To 'd0x' is to release 'documents' that usually indict specific individuals, to shame them on the Internet. Anonymous thus has constructed its own vocabulary and unique set of strategies, which challenge, disrupt, and rearrange dominant discourses to produce a counter-culture and a communal ideology.

In addition to evading legibility as recognizable Internet subjects, Anonymous counters the very harms this thesis has taken issue with, struggling directly against the state and corporation. On January 19, 2012, for example, the US Department of Justice shut down Megaupload, a file sharing website that allowed users to download music, movies, and television shows for free. Anonymous resisted the state's regulation over Internet activity and its imposition of law on the Internet terrain by launching a denial-of-service (DDoS) attack against ten high-profile government and music industry websites. Some of which included the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Justice (DOJ), the Motion Pictures Association of America and the Recording Industry of America (Segal). A DDoS attack "directs a flood of traffic to a website and temporarily crashes it by overwhelming its servers" (Ibid). Just fifteen minutes after the government shut down the Megaupload site, Anonymous launched its attack,

indicating the agility of its digital strategy. The attack was successful, as the ten websites were shut down for hours, stirring great surprise and attention. For those few hours, the participants challenged the behaviors of law-abiding citizens and instituted local, calculated, digital actions that reversed the passivity of Internet subjects.

Anonymous has also launched digital campaigns in response to revelations of the NSA's Prism program, publically claiming a 'war' on the government's anti-privacy behavior. The group created digital forums to contest the surveillance program and inspire freedom of speech. In December 2010 Anonymous also launched 'Operation Avenge Assange,' attacking the websites of Amazon, PayPal, and Mastercard. These sites were targeted in retaliation against their anti-Wikileaks behaviors, such as the freezing of donations, and other services to Wikileaks (Coleman). Anonymous demonstrated its willingness and ability to attack powerful corporate and state institutions to resist surveillance practices and endorse freedom on the Internet.

**Examples of Modern Resistances for which Marx's Theorizing Might Prove Useful**

Theorists interested in taking up questions of Marxist-style revolutions that are aided by the Internet could consider the January 18, 2012 'Google/Wikipedia Blackouts.' This event challenged government regulations of the Internet similar to those opposed by Anonymous, but it did so in such a way that Marx's theory might appreciate. The Wikipedia/Google blackouts resembled what a *mass digital revolution* would look like, as the 'Internet proletariats,' the millions of ordinary Internet users, participated in the 'struggle.' Google, Wikipedia, and 115,000 other websites intentionally blacked out their content in protest against two Congressional Bills: Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA).

The state in conjunction with the entertainment industry sought to prevent websites from providing copyrighted media, such as music and movies for free download. The laws would have

prevented search engines from providing links to infringing websites, and required Internet service providers to block access to these websites. This would have put a costly and timely burden on the search engines and Internet service providers to identify the sites or face potential penalization. As such, these Internet companies launched the digital protest. The result of that singular day of 2.4 million SOPA related tweets, 4.5 million signatures on a Google petition, and 3 million emails to Congress, was that the laws were not passed. Admittedly, these behaviors, which attempted to reform policy, were not close to an 'anti-capitalist revolution' but they did still engage the Internet proletariat within its Internet factory.

Of course Marx could be useful in identifying the *drawbacks* of such a digital resistance, because, it was still very corporate after all. Google, one of the most powerful corporations in the world, and the other Internet companies that led the movement had distinctly capitalist agendas. Google did not want the burden of identifying websites that offer copyrighted material, and removing the links from their search engine. Essentially, Google, which represents a kind of 'digital bourgeoisie,' could be said to have tricked the 'digital proletariat' into complying with its capitalist agenda. Google was not necessarily opposed to the content of the laws or the philosophy of state encroachment on the Internet. It did not consider the law's provisions as a reduction of content sharing, communication, and creative expression on the Internet. Quite the opposite, the powerful corporations leading the movement sought to re-subjectify citizens to the law: to pass the responsibility over to the state. This Internet resistance raises questions about whether subjects can have a truly organic movement that resists corporate interests.

Another possible expression of modern resistance for an updated Marxism to review would be the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring represents a popular mass movement that is similar in shape (although not content) to the proletariat mass revolution Marx envisioned. It is also

uniquely late-modern because thousands of protestors used the Internet to facilitate organization in the public square. However, these masses did not have the goal of abolishing private property; instead they had very capitalist aims of industrializing their nations and ushering in capitalist development. Yet, it is difficult to definitively predict Marx's take on the diffuse movements, in part because the groups within them did not have any one singular goal. Some may have protested to usher in capitalism, while others might have hoped for anti-capitalist ends. Marx may even have analyzed the movement as a necessary step in the history of development, in which capitalist industrialization comes prior and paves the way to socialism. While I do not attempt to provide a Marxist interpretation of this vast and complicated nexus of events in history, an updated Marxist theory could help gauge both the benefits and drawbacks of these Internet-affiliated examples of resistances.

**Lingering Drawbacks of Both Theories—What really needs to be updated**

While Foucault and Marx offer suggestive concepts of resistance, future theorizing would need to deal with one major gap that neither theorist would be able to fill. Marx presented a theory of *class relations*, and Foucault a theory of *bodily relations*. The modern moment would require a theory of *digital bodies*. In a June 1975 interview, Foucault said, "whereas today political and economic demands are coming to be made more on behalf of the wage-earner's body than on the wage-earners class, one seldom hears the former being discussed as such" (*dd2qqedge* 58). But while Marx took wage-labor as his category of analysis, and Foucault focused on the wage-earner body, contemporary forms of power and experiences of subjecthood transcend both. In the interest of state power, the NSA now seeks to surveil all aspects of the digital body, while the corporation seeks to benefit economically from digital labor. The digital body is now what alienates us from sensuous life, and from that which makes us social human

beings. Theorists who continue my project of updating subjecthood's genealogy must grapple

with this new phase.

Studies that take up this task can search for ways in which digital bodies could transcend

or reject the power relations that make them digital bodies in the first place. For example,

changing one's Internet privacy settings to avoid surveillance could be a strategy to bypass one's

'digital body' being exploited by the state and corporation. If people are able to exist

anonymously on the Internet, their subjecthoods may evade these power relations, or at least

challenge them in meaningful ways. Yet, there also may be drawbacks to this untraceable,

anonymous digital existence, including illegal and immoral activity that makes one ponder

whether the identification and punishment of illegality should sometimes be endorsed.
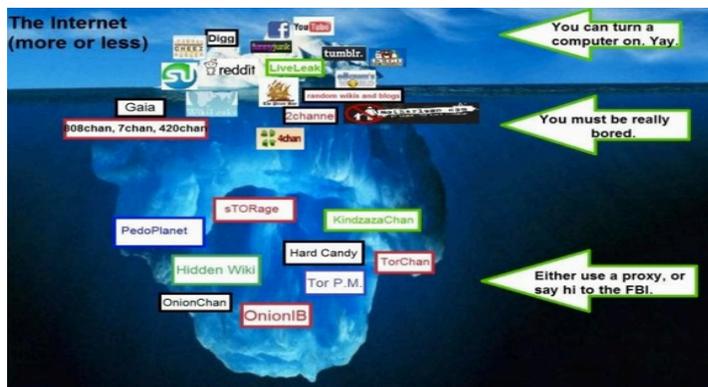


Williams, Tim. "The Ultimate Guide To The Deep Web." *Sick Chirpse* 10 Sep 2013, n. pag. Web. 23 Mar. 2014.
<http://www.sickchirpse.com/deep-web-guide/>.

For example, in concealed underground Internet communities, existing in lower regions

of the Internet called the "deep web," individuals use highly technological and secretive methods

of access. The Internet is like the Earth, with different strata where different matter exists. Only

0.03% of the Internet is accessible through using popular search engines such as Google

(Kroski). Most of the rest of the Internet is the 'deep web.' This is the third layer of the iceberg

depicted above. To get to these deep web communities you cannot use Internet browsers such as

Safari or Firefox. Instead you must use anonymous Internet browsers. The most well-known

deep web browser is called Tor, but a host of others exist, each requiring specific knowledge. When using Tor, "you are truly anonymous and your location cannot be picked up and neither can your browsing habits. Nothing you do in the deep web can be monitored making the deep web a more attractive option for Internet users—those who know about it at least" (Williams).

In these highly secretive and difficult-to-access spaces exists unsought behaviors that resist recognizable subjecthoods. Yet because these locations are anonymous and untraceable, the freedom from typical Internet subjecthood they offer allows users to engage illegal, and immoral behavior. For example, on the deep web, pornography proliferates, drugs are sold with untraceable Internet currency, and people offer advice on how to commit crime. "But it's also one of the few places you can go to escape brothers Little and Big" (Bartlett). This "deep," dark, secret corner of the Internet has managed thus far to be largely impenetrable by law and exists outside of Internet subjecthood, but it has done so in a way that is harmful to society.

Additionally, there is yet another layer—the "shadow web" that is so 'deep' it is not even shown in the iceberg graphic depicted above. This location is more difficult to access and requires sophisticated tech-savvy steps. In a blog entitled "a warning to those thinking about accessing the shadow web," an anonymous blogger called "kenlluck," describes how she/he only found out about it by talking to a person at work. kenlluck says she/he came across live graphic footage of skinning, mutilation, "corpsefucking"; instructions on how to make a DIY roadside bomb; a marketplace to buy and sell stolen identities; leaked war documents, and diplomatic cables (kenlluck). The level of anonymity and secrecy on this Internet space allows individuals to be unrecognizable both in that they cannot be surveilled or tracked and in that they can engage illegal, non-penalized activity.

**The Indefiniteness of Struggle: A Question of Strategy and Counter Strategy**

The dark corners of the Internet, such as the deep web, beg for theoretical (and legal) exploration, but they have not *yet* been penetrated by the law. While one can never escape all relations of power in the surface Internet, in this particular space a new existence is, for the moment, possible. But, this begs the question of *when* these corners will be penetrated and come under the rule of law, in both a digital surveillance sense (by the NSA, for example) and a typical penal sense (when indictments will be made against users). A few smart, technological savvy computer scientists at the NSA, FBI, or CIA could find these secret, digital platforms and bring them under the rule of law. Then, these subjects would be re-subjected by the state. Furthermore, the drawbacks of these un-surveilled spaces raise questions about the normative benefit of surveillance in certain circumstances. While it is difficult to say what Foucault's take on 'the law' would be in this situation, an updated critical theory should reflect upon these instances in which law might be endorsed, and whether such instances complicate Foucault's analysis on the whole. Could the deep web indicate the legitimacy of the law, and the social value of surveillance practices?

Still, Foucault's overarching argument on resistance is that wherever power exists, resistance exists alongside it. Foucault conceives of power as a relationship between forces that can never be fully escaped. As such, resistance never represents the end of power or the total liberation of subjects. In an interview with the editorial collective of *Les revoltes logiques,* he states that "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised…it exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated into global strategies" (*Power and Strategies* 142). Resisting power thus is

a matter not of escaping power but instead of multiple, global strategies applied specifically. The

Internet confirms this truth. On the Internet, as in physical life, power and resistance live

alongside each other simultaneously. All the examples I have suggested in this conclusion

indicate different types of resistances. People use the Internet as a tool for resisting oppressions

daily—a blog entry to reject racism, a Facebook comment to indict patriarchy, a petition

circulated to prevent the construction of a Walmart— are all very micro, commonplace Internet

examples that express resisting behaviors against daily power struggles. These Internet

expressions often affect the physical world outside of the Internet. Social injustices inform

Internet resistances that then inform social change on a daily basis. Simultaneously, however, as

this thesis has shown, power exists unyieldingly on the Internet through surveillance, and

corporate targeting. Given these constantly present forces on the backdrop of the Internet

domain, could it ever be an authentically beneficial tool for positive social change? Can we ever

get passed the social media fetishization that is such a part of daily life and culture? Can we ever

move beyond exploitation by data brokers when it is what makes the Google search engine and

our email free? Foucault says that struggle must be analyzed "as episodes in a war, where the

grid for deciphering them should be that of strategy and tactic" ("The Eye of Power" 164). For

example, eighteenth century Europe saw a panic against childhood masturbation. "Via the

medium of families, though not at their initiative, a system of control of sexuality, an

objectivisation of sexuality allied to corporal persecution was established over the bodies of

children" ("Body/Power" 56). Sexuality became a category of analysis needing to be controlled

and techniques of power in various institutions laid claim to the task of disciplining sexual

bodies. Then, because "sexuality, through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern,

surveillance and control, engender[ed] at the same time an intensification of each individual's

desire, for, in and over his body" and there was "the revolt of the sexual body" (56-57). Individuals devised strategies to experience their desire for and over bodies. But then, forces of power used counter-strategies to adapt to these liberations. "Responding precisely to the revolt of the body, we find a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control of stimulation. 'Get dressed—but be slim, good-looking, tanned!'" (57) New strategies and norms carried out discipline upon the fit and beautiful body. Power moved from repressing subjects to creating subjects that served a utility. Discipline imposed beauty on bodies so subjects could be utilized for capitalist profit. Thus, "for each move by an adversary, there is an answering one by the other. One has to recognize the indefiniteness of the struggle" (57).

The Internet demonstrates the 'indefiniteness of struggle' as it is generative and conducive to innovation, which explains its rapid scope and pace of proliferation. This is why on any given day there are over 2 billion daily Internet users, why 144 billion emails are sent daily, and why there are 1 billion Facebook users ("More Than 2 Billion"). This is even why the Internet compelled Thomas Friedman to call the world "flat." The Internet is highly adaptive, innovative, and conducive to manipulation by various sectors of society. It has connected people, generated creativity, and placed itself permanently in the life of billions. As such, it exemplifies the vast potential for indefinite strategy and counter-strategy: for *indefinite struggle*.

It was my goal in this thesis to ponder upon the experience of subjects in our late modern 'economy of power relations' and reveal the 'dark side' to humanity's digital transition. I have shown how typical power structures such as the state with its surveillance, and capital with its alienation/exploitation have found new expression in the new Internet sphere. This concluding chapter has pointed to the next chapter that needs to be written in a genealogy of this kind.

Future studies should take up questions of the positive potentiality within this economy of power relations in our contemporary milieu, and the possibility for resistances and counter-resistances to daily struggles against state power, surveillance, corporate exploitation, or other social injustices. A project that explores these questions, however, must keep in mind the indefiniteness of struggle and the way in which the Internet upholds this reality.

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