

# CONTROL, SURVEILLANCE AND SUBJECTIVE COMMODIFICATION ON FACEBOOK

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## ABSTRACT

Control, Surveillance and Subjective Commodification on Facebook

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This thesis is a theoretical study of Facebook's surveillance project. It begins by taking one of the predominant organizational forms of modern surveillance, Foucaultian panopticism, and examining the ways in which its form, along with Foucault's broader model of the disciplinary society, is realized, remixed and extended by Facebook's virtual form. Following this evaluation, the remainder of the thesis proposes a model to augment this panoptical analysis.

The first part of this model uses Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of the rhizome to explain the structural design and advantages of Facebook's network, while the second part deploys Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon's concept of "liquid surveillance" as a means to explain how Facebook fosters seductive conditions of self-surveillance. The thesis concludes that older forms of control, new forms of seduction and the utility of advanced technologies are responsible in tandem for the undeniably widespread success of Facebook's surveillance project.

keywords: Facebook, Foucault, Deleuze, Bauman, rhizome, surveillance, post-panopticism, liquid modernity

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spirit of theoretical provocation that I credit with the direction my research has taken. His encyclopedic knowledge of continental philosophy also provided much of my footing for this project, and for that I thank him. Without his exceptional introduction to the philosophy of Deleuze, this thesis would not have been possible.

“Stability is always actually metastability, a controlled state of volatility. No body can really *be* molar. Bodies are *made* molar, with varying degrees of success. The reactive agents of molarization—the world’s judges and petty gods incarnate—are dissipative individuals gone bad. They are dissipative individuals who have been subjected, and resentfully subject others in turn.”

Brian Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1992)

“Personal relationships are the fundamental unit of our society. Relationships are how we discover new ideas, understand our world and ultimately derive long-term happiness. At Facebook, we build tools to help people connect with the people they want and share what they want, and by doing this we are extending people’s capacity to build and maintain relationships.

People sharing more — even if just with their close friends or families — creates a more open culture and leads to a better understanding of the lives and perspectives of others. We believe that this creates a greater number of stronger relationships between people, and that it helps people get exposed to a greater number of diverse perspectives.

By helping people form these connections, we hope to rewire the way people spread and consume information. We think the world’s information infrastructure should resemble the social graph — a network built from the bottom up or peer-to-peer, rather than the monolithic, top-down structure that has existed to date. We also believe that giving people control over what they share is a fundamental principle of this rewiring.”

Mark Zuckerberg, letter to the Securities & Exchange Commission (February 2012)

“There is no need to fear or hope, only to find new weapons.”

Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992)

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## Powers of Banality

The criticism that the study of Facebook engenders is the greatest proof of its continued and increasing value. Facebook in 2014 is regarded in many cases, popularly anyway, as critically banal, a facet of cultural existence (at least in the West) on par with any other quotidian dimension of a “normal” social life. It is a very convenient virtual overlay, providing a common form of both individual expression as well as collective social play that does not seem superficially remarkable at all; on a superficial level, Facebook represents our largely preexistent social relations, and hence Facebook is often regarded as unremarkable, apart from the occasional remark in the news media cycle in which we are reminded, yet again, of the surveillance cost of Facebook.

Facebook is unremarkable in a broader technocultural sense because we as a society have been acculturated to accept technology’s growing reorganization of our lives as natural and good, part of the narrative of techno-utopianism that dominates the twenty-first century and positions all increases in technological capability as positive. Facebook applies this rhetoric to great effect because its reorganization of social life takes on the seductive guise of innocuous replication, a simple “moving online” of social relations for greater convenience, or “connectivity”. If this were the case, the study of Facebook would perhaps be superfluous. Unfortunately for us, Facebook is far from altruistic.

Far from just moving our banal social lives online, Facebook inflects this process of virtual reorganization with an ideology containing the exploitative capitalist practices of disciplinary labour; an insulating discourse of techno-utopianism; and a consumerist vision of social relations that attempts to merge the seductively convenient virtual form of standardized interface and network structure with the multivalent and unpredictable

social needs of human subjects. To make an understatement, it has been quite successful in this project. Facebook has so seduced the Western world that it has become normalized, its massive convenience obscuring its complete incursion into every aspect of subjective existence. There is nothing natural or banal about the reality of Facebook and its conditions of total surveillance, which pervade any and all uses of its network.

Indeed, the greatest success of Facebook is its minimization of its commercial surveillance reality. Facebook is deeply structured to be a very efficient vacuum for data capture and commodification. All aspects of the profile, and all communicative or interactive channels, are designed to extract and capture information from users that can then be organized into commodified sets of marketing data for advertisers to buy. Facebook is transparent in this mission, at least in its explicit Terms of Service, which plainly outlines Facebook's terms of sovereign economic control over all information on its network.

For content that is covered by intellectual property rights, like photos and videos (IP content), you specifically give us the following permission, subject to your privacy and application settings: you grant us a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook (IP License). This IP License ends when you delete your IP content or your account unless your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it.

Facebook Terms of Service, July 2014

It has never been a secret that the selling of this data is how Facebook sustains itself economically and hence as a corporation it is not contentious to suggest that surveillance is Facebook's *raison d'être*. According to its public mission statements, rhetoric and the superficial appearance of its network, however, Facebook's mission instead lies in the

technological improvement of social connection and extending the abilities of people to communicate and express themselves.

If Facebook does enhance subjective expression or social play, it is only within a narrowly defined context of consumerism, what Zygmunt Bauman has termed our era of “liquid life,” a state where everything (including friendship) can be subjected to capitalistic takeover and commodification. More fundamentally, any of this convenience (or anything else that Facebook may do beyond surveillance) is incidental to the collection of data, a part of the surveillance imperative that informs every design decision and possible action on the network. Facebook’s conveniences form a seductive disguise for its overarching surveillance project. We can see this not only in Facebook’s essential corporate logic, but through a critical analysis of its structure. This critical analysis is the subject of my thesis, an interdisciplinary project that proposes a framework of philosophical and theoretical conceptions of surveillance which, in concert, hopefully provide a more nuanced understanding of Facebook’s complex and emergent form of control. It is a highly advanced form of control that has successfully buried an entire field of surveillance beneath the seductive convenience of technology, and reorganized part of the fabric of that society to labour in service of this surveillance. That this ongoing phenomenon is regarded as banal, normal and unworthy of study by many is proof of just how entrenched and powerful it has become.

The power of banality is not unique to Facebook, of course. Countless societal institutions and other cultural forms are immunized against widespread criticism, serious reform or problematization because they are considered “normal” and good, or at least not problematic enough to be worth serious consideration. The troubling difference with

Facebook is that one can find a collective benefit in most of these other manifestations—the entire formal education system, for example, is a highly disciplinary and problematic aspect of society that is still subscribed to widely because there is a perceived collective benefit, one worth the possible costs—but not in Facebook.

Facebook's only "benefit" is a seductive form of social interaction, organization and expression, one that replicates and virtually extends existing forms of interaction, expression, and organization. The cost for this is that all aspects of Facebook centre on a goal of total surveillance; further, that this surveillance is always absolutely legitimated and its findings always under the total control of the watcher. Facebook's primary motivation is capitalistic, and this illuminates the galling dimension of its rise. In exchange for a level of seductive technological convenience that duplicitously hides its surveillance reality, Facebook has engineered a massive reorganization of society under a new form of control that is not purposed to benefit anything but the Facebook corporation. To my mind, this is eminently worth study and the banal (if not valorized) position it has assumed in our society, despite the extraordinarily dystopian conditions it imposes, only cements the urgent need for its analysis.

## Chapter One

### Panoptical Remix

In this chapter I will demonstrate that panopticism remains useful, but increasingly fractured, in its deployment as part of contemporary surveillance systems, using Facebook as my primary example. Whilst panopticism still accounts, obviously, for the panoptical dimensions of Facebook's surveillance regime, it is no longer a complete through line for understanding the system as a whole. Facebook also includes structural elements which, as I will demonstrate later in the thesis, are post-panoptical.<sup>1</sup> I therefore suggest that panopticism has become, in some cases, less a predominant theoretical model of surveillance in society than a crucial aspect of a far more expansive control regime, of which Facebook provides a clear example; this is not a new idea in surveillance studies, for example Haggerty has called the preponderance of panoptical models "oppressive."<sup>2</sup> Facebook also, however, illustrates the continued vitality of the panoptical model and demonstrates how its organizational principles can be extended and remixed in virtual spaces.

Facebook's control structure allows the network to consensually surveil their users for profit while disciplining them to use Facebook in ways which maximize this profit-oriented surveillance. I am using discipline here in general terms, as in a systemic conditioning to produce a desired "normalized" subject. Facebook is indeed highly disciplinary, and much of this chapter is devoted to analyzing the panoptical instances of this discipline. The point here is not that panopticism has been completely outmoded, but

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<sup>1</sup> A broad term which will be explicated throughout the thesis; for now, it refers to a term used by Roy Boyne to generally describe the growing number of models that problematize the use of panopticism as a model for analysing surveillance organization in society.

<sup>2</sup> Haggerty, K. (2006). Tear down the walls: On demolishing the panopticon. In D. Lyon (Ed.), *Theorizing surveillance: The panopticon and beyond* (pp. 23-46). Cambridge, UK: Polity. p. 23

that its form has been extended, and augmented in places by new forms of post-panoptical control.

A crucial component of these post-panoptical developments, as well as the extension and deployment of panoptical principles, is the digital form that Facebook takes within a virtual space. Virtual spaces, such as online networks, are able to deploy and enhance panoptical surveillance, as this chapter will demonstrate, but also allows for new forms of control and new ways to strengthen the surveillance regime in general. One brief example of this for Facebook, which is explicated in the second chapter, is an increased resilience against disruptions, i.e. the networked state of Facebook allows it to seamlessly and automatically adjust its surveillance mechanisms and overall structure to maintain the same level of stability when users do not behave in a favourable way for surveillance, such as “de-friending.”

### **Facebook and the Condition of Virtuality**

As will become increasingly clear, Facebook is fundamentally engaged within the condition of virtuality, and any theoretical framework addressing Facebook's surveillance must therefore account for this virtual dimension first and foremost. In her description of virtuality, Hayles states that:

Technical artifacts help to make an information theoretic view part of everyday life. From ATMs to the Internet, from the morphing programs in *Terminator II* to the sophisticated visualization programs used to guide microsurgeries, information is increasingly perceived as interpenetrating material forms. Especially for users who may not know the material processes involved, the impression is created that pattern is predominant over presence. From here it is a small step to perceiving information as more mobile, more important, *more essential* than material forms. When this

impression becomes part of your cultural mindset, you have entered the condition of virtuality.<sup>3</sup>

Facebook is a product of the condition of virtuality; as part of this, it is further invested in reinforcing the hierarchical dominance of the informational pattern over material presence, a shift that is foundational to the rise of the virtual in society. With the rise of virtuality as a cultural mindset, presence and absence become lesser issues in a world that is increasingly unconcerned with materiality, where the perception that patterned information is “more important, more essential than material forms”<sup>4</sup> becomes the dominant view. Facebook works extremely hard to promote the perception that subjective expression and social play are made better, improved by being reconstructed digitally within the Facebook network. The archival capacity, the virtual network design which can connect users instantly, the seductive broadcasting capabilities, and equally seductive synoptical viewership capacity are all convenient features of the Facebook network that promote the “mobility” of the informational as superior to material presence, i.e. the actual experiences being recorded. The idea that recording social experiences to be re-presented on Facebook is equally as important as the experiences themselves is both a fundamental part of Facebook’s success and symptomatic of the condition of virtuality at work.

The material presence being eroded away here is the subject who uses Facebook, as well as their lived experiences. In a seductively convenient design, augmented with rhetoric of virtuous “connectivity”, Facebook encourages the virtualization of subjectivity, social relations and subjective expression; further, Facebook encourages

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<sup>3</sup> Hayles, N. K. (1999). *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press. p. 19

<sup>4</sup> Hayles (1999) p. 19

social play as such to occur within its virtual space, almost entirely divorcing the idea of presence from social play. Facebook has been very successful in this venture and it is difficult to imagine that its rise as a dominant form of social organization has not had a widespread effect in promoting the idea that the pattern, the informational--the archival Facebook profile with its organized network of “friends” that help power an algorithmically curated feed of content—is interpenetrating, and perhaps becoming more vital, than presence, i.e. the subject and subjective experiences that constitute Facebook.

Hayles proceeds to dissect the condition of virtuality and elaborates a number of falsehoods that the perceived superiority of the virtual rests upon. Elementally, information always relies upon some form of material base in order to substantiate itself and further, this material base must transmit information efficiently in order for the information to retain its power. As Hayles rightly points out, information which is outdated or irrelevant due to non-transmissibility is quickly marginalized. Further, the culturally unequal dichotomy between information and materiality is not a wholly new concept created by the advent of virtual technologies, but part of a lineage of false dichotomization. Hayles explains this point by deconstructing the dichotomies which inform the concepts of information and materiality: pattern/randomness and presence/absence, respectively. In each case there is valorization, with patterns being placed above randomness and presence above absence, which in turn makes patterns of information considered more valuable than random information, and considering the immaterial, or later the informational, more vital than the material. Hayles concludes this point by stating that as the informational has displaced materiality, its foundational dichotomy of pattern/randomness has replaced the presence/absence dichotomy. In other

words, the condition of virtuality minimizes concerns over the material and immaterial in culture, and instead replaces it with a concern over the patterning of information, of ordering the virtual rather than the material.<sup>5</sup>

Facebook represents a manifestation of the cultural condition of virtuality which valorizes the Facebook social network above the embodied subject and the subject's social experiences, encouraging them to be captured informationally and placed into the virtual network in an ordered, archival fashion. Facebook desires to capture individual subjectivity, recreating it as closely as possible on the network via a proprietary profile structure. Then it instigates an ongoing process of perpetual capture, archiving the subject's experiences to be finally re-presented in a virtual Facebook form in order for that subjectivity and subjective experience to be surveiled and commodified. This is presented as seductively convenient for the user, a means of universal social organization and experiential archiving, facilitated through ever more advanced and seamless technology.

It is fairly clear how this runs parallel with Hayles's analysis of the condition of virtuality. On the most basic level, and in complete line with Hayles's critique, Facebook valorizes the informational over the material despite requiring material presence both to exist and to sustain its surveillance. Facebook requires material infrastructure to substantiate its informational form. More critically however, it also needs its users have constant material experiences in order to generate information based on those experiences that can then be captured in a virtualized, commodifiable form. Moving further along this analysis of virtuality, Facebook also requires materiality in order to capture and receive

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<sup>5</sup> Hayles, N.K. (1999). The condition of virtuality. In P. Lunenberg (Ed.), *The digital dialectic* (pp. 68-94). Cambridge: MIT Press.

this information in a timely fashion. Indeed, Facebook would be far less successful if it did not have technologies to work with which provide a highly efficient space for the near-instantaneous capture, transmission and re-presentation of subjective identity and social experience. This is only achieved because of material capturing devices, primarily smartphones, which translate material experience into informational product and, due to the ubiquitous material infrastructure of the Internet, allows that information to be instantly transmitted. Finally, Facebook helps to displace materiality from cultural discourse by implicitly and explicitly promoting virtual reconstructions of identity and social experience, based upon captured information, as comparable or perhaps superior to one's material subjectivity and social experiences. It is fairly clear at this point that Facebook is heavily invested in the rhetoric of virtuality both ideologically and practically, and that this will be critical to understanding the post-panoptical facets of Facebook's surveillance network, as well as its remixed deployment of panoptical organization.

It is useful at this juncture, where claims of Facebook "capturing subjectivity" may seem alarmist and overly broad, to examine what Hayles perceives as the similarities between the liberal humanist subject and the cybernetic posthuman. As we will see, Facebook profiles are a clear example of an ongoing shift in subjective representation toward the virtual, consciously away from material representation; this may explain the surprisingly uncomplicated nature of Facebook's success and scope. Hayles states that:

Indeed, one could argue that the erasure of embodiment is a feature common to *both* the liberal humanist subject and the cybernetic posthuman. Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject *possessed* a body but was not usually represented as *being* a body.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hayles, Posthuman (1999) p. 5

Hayles here points out that a commonality between the embodied subject of liberal humanism and the virtualizing posthuman may be that *neither* value embodiment terribly, and certainly not over the ephemeral mind. Liberal humanism theorizes the body and mind as hierarchical, with the immaterial mind valorized above the body, a rhetoric that Facebook implicitly advances. This is all to say that Facebook's promotion of the profile as valorized despite its disembodiment is not necessarily a new development, and its success (because it is very well-designed) is not surprising in this respect.

Drawing on feminist scholarship, Hayles argues that under the sign of this universal humanist subject, all embodied markers of difference, such as race and gender, would have to be ignored in order to maintain the universality of the liberal humanist subject.<sup>7</sup> That this universality is a prevailing humanist stance, despite such obvious problems, is strong evidence for Hayles that the humanist subject is far less concerned with the demonstrable differentiations of embodiment (at least within culture), and instead valorizes the theoretical universality of the rational mind. For Hayles, this problem is only exacerbated by a cybernetic world that is rapidly virtualizing, bringing with it a rhetorical discourse which reinforces and accelerates the valorization of disembodiment. Facebook is an integral part of this accelerating process, and in large part this explains its massive success and unsurprising emergence.

### **Panoptical Deployment in Virtual Space**

The Facebook network's first function is to re-present embodied subjects, as well

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<sup>7</sup> Hayles, Posthuman (1999) p. 6

as their social relations, through its networked profile system. Once this is accomplished, the primary function of the network activates: the continuous capturing/disseminating<sup>8</sup> of the subject's lived experiences through a multimedia and communication capturing<sup>9</sup> apparatus that is designed to recreate these experiences within the Facebook network as accurately and instantaneously as possible, and then distribute it to the most algorithmically interested users. In essence, Facebook has provided a space to observe the virtualization process engaging in the wholesale reorganization of subjectivity, as well as subjective experience and expression, into a surveillance-based factory, limited only by the extent of the network's ability to capture and capacity to seduce users into self-surveillance which produces data as a commodity. Facebook facilitates this reorganization in the highly attractive and convenient form of the Facebook network. The consensual price of this convenience is that everything passing through the Facebook network is susceptible to surveillance and commodification.

The task of this analysis will be then to model these intertwined structures of surveillance and commodification. I do not claim to dispense with panopticism as a framework of theoretical surveillance studies, in general or in the case of Facebook. However, I do see appreciable changes emerging in its utility as a general model of societal surveillance, especially as near-total virtuality becomes more and more pronounced as the space of organization for surveillance. I am hardly the first person to make this suggestion in general terms. Zygmunt Bauman, for example, takes a

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<sup>8</sup> These processes happen near-instantaneously.

<sup>9</sup> "Capture" used in conjunction with Facebook should be understood to articulate both the multimedia capture of subjective experience that Facebook encourages and facilitates, e.g. seamless cellphone photo uploading or creating an interface space for all-purpose life status updates, but also "captured" as in sealed in, controlled—content uploaded to Facebook is legally the property of Facebook, is immediately archived by the network and disseminated by it.

perspective similar to my own that the Panopticon “is alive and well, armed in fact with (electronically enhanced, ‘cyborgized’) muscles so mighty that Bentham or even Foucault could not and would not have imagined them—but it has clearly stopped being the universal pattern or strategy of domination that both those authors believed it was in their times,”<sup>10</sup> and indeed there is a growing literature in surveillance studies that ranges from overtly rebellious to considerately re-evaluative,<sup>11</sup> debating the relevance of panopticism in the study of contemporary surveillance. I occasion Facebook’s emergence as a fruitful opportunity to first examine the deployment of panopticism in a virtual network space, and also to test a potential model that could augment panopticism when evaluating Facebook.

To take an example of how a classical surveillance model like panopticism can be remixed by virtual deployment, I will briefly evaluate Facebook in terms of the panoptical viewership model and Thomas Mathiesen's landmark inversion of that model, synopticism.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the panoptical model theorizes surveillance as organized around the elite central authority with the power to surveil the many, Mathiesen's inversion, purposed for the digital age, suggests a mass media model where the many may surveil the elite few; contemporary Internet celebrity culture is an example of this, with masses of spectators focused on the continuous surveillance of the elite few celebrities who profit from the constant and massive public exposure, which increases their fame. Facebook remixes both of these viewership models by articulating them simultaneously.

The panoptical understanding of Facebook here is useful and immediately

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<sup>10</sup> Bauman, Z., & Lyon, D. (2013). *Liquid surveillance: A conversation*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. p. 53

<sup>11</sup> Lyon, D. (Ed.) (2006). *Theorizing surveillance: The panopticon and beyond*. Devon, UK: Willan.

<sup>12</sup> Mathiesen, T. (1997). The viewer society: Michel Foucault’s ‘panopticon’ revisited. *Theoretical Criminology*, 1 (2) pp. 215-234

apparent: Facebook has a central security apparatus with a panoptical gaze that can examine any aspect of a Facebook “subject,” e.g. their private messages, account data, etc. with the sovereign power to ban, or exile, a user from Facebook. However, Facebook, when understood as a surveillance system, always articulates a synoptic function as well. The individual Facebook user always has a level of synoptic surveillance power, i.e. the ability to surveil their personal Facebook network of contacts. Collectively, the synoptical surveillance of individual Facebook users comprises the other function of panoptical surveillance: co-surveillance by the inmates. On Facebook, however, it is utilized for seductive rather than disciplinary purposes, as my analysis will reveal in the third chapter.

Civility and order on the Facebook network are maintained in part by Facebook's omniscient security apparatus and by its users, co-surveilling and informing upon one another.<sup>13</sup> The key difference between this co-surveillance and the co-surveillance of the inmates articulated in “Panopticism” is the voluntary and playfully social dimensions that broadly constitute the conditions and practices, respectively, of Facebook's surveillance. This user agency, that Facebook is voluntary and its surveillance is derived from actions that are playfully social, is critical for the success on Facebook's surveillance, and the synoptical viewership Facebook allows its users is one of its primary means of encouraging interaction that can be surveilled. Facebook users have the ability to surveil whomever they choose within their network, whereas the Panopticon's prisoners may only look where they are told as part of the disciplinary surveillance system. The disciplinary power revealed here when examining Facebook's surveillance architecture

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<sup>13</sup> Facebook's volume of content and users means it heavily relies upon users to report abuses of the network.

demonstrates how a virtual surveillance system can deploy traditional surveillance techniques in new fashions that potentially extend those techniques and even render them pleasurably seductive

Panoptical and synoptical viewership models cannot fully account for the organization of Facebook's surveillance on their own because they occur simultaneously between users and the central power that foregrounds the network as part of a larger control scheme. As we will see going forward, within this new control scheme disciplinary and panoptical techniques are indeed observable and prominent, but are repurposed and no longer predominant. Thus, they do not describe an overall viewership model but articulations of a different, emerging model.

Panopticism manifests in Facebook as part of a much larger surveillance design in which discipline is softened to a level of near-imperceptibility and surveillance is seductively voluntary, and total as a result. Sovereignty is, through this seductive volunteerism, reintroduced as the stabilizing force of security in this new disciplinary arrangement. This disciplinary system is largely comprised of Facebook's virtual interface, which limits user interaction and autonomy to the practices that Facebook desires of its subject; virtualized algorithms that enact external surveillance and which *are* imperceptible; pre-existing social discipline such as civility and manners; and finally, the legal Terms of Service, which all users must agree to as part of the registration process and through which Facebook legitimates its sovereignty, establishing its conditions of total control

A crucial aspect of the Terms of Service is the reservation of sovereign power, the ability to make judgment, to punish, to exile (ban), to otherwise potentially exert absolute

power at a given moment. As I have alluded, Facebook deploys within this sovereign network a panoptically comparable central authority; Facebook has security teams and automated security algorithms that are capable of watching the entire Facebook network. The Foucaultian panoptical model contends that the central tower materially exists in some form and imposes a normalizing presence, even if it may be successfully vanished within society and forgotten about by the subjects. The virtual state of Facebook requires a similar presence in the form of its interface, but its virtual state allows it a new level of material minimalism despite the absolute control that interfaces enact, creating an environment where all possible action is by design. Foucault summarizes, via Bentham, the functioning of this panoptical power:

[Bentham argues that] the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment.<sup>14</sup>

The interface is the spatial prison, curtailing possible action to be only what Facebook desires and fixing the subjects in place, and the tower is the security and surveillance administration of Facebook. In Facebook's case, however, its virtual structure makes that particular panoptical instance of the "tower" functionally invisible, even beyond the normalized "disappearance" of the material tower in a panoptical schema (which is what happens in the case of interface, normalizing into the uncritical background through uncritical use). This demonstrates how virtual technology enhances and extends panoptical organization by further decreasing visibility while increasing the level of possible control. Facebook's actual instances of surveillance are also visually

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<sup>14</sup> Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. New York: Pantheon. p. 201

unperceivable, and it instead uses interface as the only, and exceptionally minimized, form of visible discipline. The Terms of Service is perceivable, and can indeed be examined and scrutinized at any time, but is not apparent or visible as a form of control unless it is actualized in order to punish or otherwise assert Facebook's sovereign power. In large part this is because the illusion of user agency is crucial for Facebook in order to encourage its users to freely share data about their life and lifestyle, and so all surveillance and discipline on the network must be as close to invisible as possible.

Pre-existing social discipline (manners, conceptions of civility) is the final prong of Facebook's disciplinary structure, relying both on the user's own internalized social discipline (internalized well before Facebook use begins) in tandem with the Terms of Service. The Terms of Service are important because, as part of its juridical legitimization of Facebook's sovereign control over the network, it codifies Facebook's particularly strong belief in civility as a condition of existence on the network. Pre-existing social discipline therefore exists on Facebook in an informal form, as well as a formal, codified minimum of behavioral standards. The Terms of Service can therefore be used to formally discipline if the subject is not pre-disciplined enough in terms of civility; Facebook, in this sense, relies heavily on preexistent processes of interpellation<sup>15</sup> in order to begin its project.

Facebook's central security apparatus thus represents an extremely powerful manifestation of the panoptical tower in terms of its imperceptibility and also in its ability to maintain that imperceptibility while enacting instances of overt discipline. The virtual

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<sup>15</sup> A term used by Louis Althusser to describe the process by which individuals are constructed as ideological subjects through the institutions they inhabit. See Althusser, L. (1971). *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*. In *"Lenin and Philosophy" and other essays* (pp.127-185). New York: Monthly Review Press.

state that Facebook exists in allows for an imperceptible “tower” and, indeed, the security administration does not tangibly exist for users unless it absolutely must exercise itself in order to enact overt discipline (punishments, such as account suspension) or even rarer exercises of sovereign power, such as the exiling ban. Outside of these comparatively rare occurrences, the security apparatus is fully virtual and therefore invisible to users from registration onward. Further, the exercise of sovereign or disciplinary power is tailored to be as minimal as possible, affecting only the profile(s) Facebook wants and always receding back into complete invisibility, instantly, at the moment of action. Virtual technologies enable a hitherto for unimagined level of punitive precision and softness.

How might we square the spatial arrangement of the panoptical prison with the virtual network of Facebook? Much as the virtual potentially “cyborgizes” (to borrow Bauman’s term) and enhances the power of a “central tower,” rendering it functionally invisible from inception, it equally extends the disciplinary potential of the spatial arrangement of the “inmates,” the users of Facebook. One feature that Foucault frequently returns to in his theoretical conception of panopticism is the structured hierarchy, that “[the panoptical arrangement] is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization.”<sup>16</sup> This points more specifically toward another example of how Facebook’s virtuality is leveraged to deploy panoptical organization in newer, stronger ways.

The control that interface design enables allows for a level of spatial control that is absolute, and can guarantee that Facebook users never perceive how they are being sorted, ranked, scanned, disseminated, and in other words stratified. Instead, they only

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 204

see the interface, a fairly new form of spatial control that not only serves to curtail all possible user actions to conform to the ideology of the system, but also serves to mask deepening surveillance practices, such as the algorithms scanning everything that passes through the interface barrier into the surveillance system of Facebook. Part of Chapter 2 will explicate a Deleuzian understanding of this stratification within Facebook's sortation system; for now, this serves as a basic example of just how deeply panoptical discipline can be vanished within virtual space, to the point where it is impossible to even perceive the algorithmic processes of hierarchy and stratification that constantly intertwine all other activity on Facebook. Panoptical institutions all eventually attempt to minimize their subject's ability to perceive disciplinary processes at work, but virtual technology enables, in some instances, an instant invisibility.

Facebook is always foregrounded by the "central" Facebook authority that has omniscient power over the Facebook network. The Terms of Service ensure that the central power is always legitimated with total surveillance and disciplinary authority, realized through a new, technologically emboldened form of the panoptical gaze, one without the possibility of constraint or transparency reforms of any sort. This is because its opacity, and all other dimensions of Facebook's central authority, is rendered legitimate through its consensual Terms of Service.

The network's social nature makes its terms of sovereignty and absolute surveillance far less instinctually perceptible than in an explicitly or even subtly disciplinary context; social play is not threatening and the virtual capturing that underscores all action on Facebook is not, as I have said, necessarily apparent as it is largely imperceptible. Furthermore, and perhaps far more essentially, Facebook's

environment is simply designed to be as nonthreatening as possible, both in terms of other users and Facebook itself. The use of Facebook by users is not in and of itself about surveillance either, which adds to the innocuous environment that Facebook cultivates in order to encourage as much self-surveillance as possible from its users. The Panopticon's tower may normalize in the inmates a sort of invisibility after a period of time, where they may become accustomed to its presence, but it remains visible to maintain its surveillance power and certainly in order to actually exercise it; Foucault summarizes this process: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power;...he becomes the principle of his own subjection."<sup>17</sup> Facebook's virtual state, along with its voluntary nature and play-based activity, affords it an immediately invisible and unverified status, a marriage of sovereign authority and extended panoptical principles.

The primary difference between the deployment of panoptical organization in the Facebook network and Foucault's societal panopticism is that Foucault's is a model of extremely broad disciplinary organization for the sake of productive discipline across society that provides a theoretically collective (if massively unequal) benefit, whereas Facebook's deployment of panoptical principles represents a narrow manifestation of select panoptical elements, extended and empowered by virtual technology, focused on a single goal and augmented by other post-panoptical forms of control. Therefore, it is important to closely examine how Facebook fits, or challenges, the motivations and goals that Foucault sets out within the panoptical model.

One of the motivating forces for the societal dissemination of disciplinary power

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<sup>17</sup> Foucault (1977) pp. 202-203

is that it is constantly productive, "...now [the disciplines] were being asked to play a positive role, for they were becoming able to do so, to increase the possible utility of individuals."<sup>18</sup> Through the disciplines, the citizen-inmates can be productively corrected, moulded, idealized and filtered to suit the distinct needs of that disciplinary society, whether it is in the military, education system, medical system, etc. Facebook, and consequently Facebook's surveillance, is not organized around a succession of disciplinary institutions as such, but rather what I term for my purposes "social play," a key component of Facebook's post-panoptical control schema. This control is designed to produce a single sort of ideal Facebook user, and to keep them within Facebook permanently.

I will develop the parameters of this control schema in chapters two and three, describing the conditions of structural and cultural discipline on Facebook. For now, it entails an informal disciplinary protocol that Facebook users are normalized to enact which comprises pre-existing social norms (manners and other social discipline) as well as the panoptical discipline imposed by the user interface, and foregrounded by the formally legitimating Terms of Service. Alongside this, Facebook's mechanisms of cultural control, developed more specifically in the third chapter as mechanisms of seduction, attempt to calibrate expression and interaction on its network to be oriented always toward efficient surveillance and commodification rather than any sort of subjective or experiential authenticity.<sup>19</sup> This schema is designed, in distinction from panopticism, not to create broadly productive and disciplined citizens, but to create a

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 210

<sup>19</sup> Facebook's mission statement to the Securities and Exchange Commission at the time of its Initial Public Offering offers an explicit and clearly ideological statement by Mark Zuckerberg, one repeatedly emphasising the motivations of authentic social connection that ostensibly drive Facebook. See Zuckerberg, M. (2012). *Letter from Mark Zuckerberg*. The Securities and Exchange Commission.

specifically ideal Facebook subject who is normalized to valorize Facebook above the material and thus voluntarily have their material life, experiences and subjectivity captured by the Facebook network, with a cost of absolute surveillance. Panopticism disperses as a widespread organizational form, directed by the needs of the disciplinary society writ large; the organizational form of Facebook's discipline, as of yet unnamed but containing an observable deployment of panoptical principles, has a far narrower goal that is achieved through a form not strictly bound by panoptical parameters and serves only Facebook's needs.

On Facebook, social play happens on an individual and collective level.

Individually, the Facebook user's social play begins at registration where they are invited to fill out a standard Facebook profile which is designed to capture personal data that comprises the user's sense of subjective self. This individualization aligns with one of Foucault's statements on panopticism, that the individualization, the stratification and the generally hierarchical design of the Panopticon, found throughout disciplinary societies in general, is critical for surveillance, "one finds in the programme of the Panopticon a similar [to a menagerie] concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space."<sup>20</sup> Facebook, as we have already seen, however, is capable of achieving this individualization within a network that produces no immediately perceptible structural hierarchy, at least for its users. It is capable of doing this because of its seductive mechanisms of gaining consensual sovereignty and its network design's basis in social play, as well as its advanced virtual technology which affords it a new virtual level of obscurantism: the ability to hide behind

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<sup>20</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 203

interface.

Users actively help Facebook attempt to digitally reconstruct their subjective self, using personal information, life updates, photographs, etc. Rather than imposing an external stratification, as the disciplinary society does (by promotion, achievement, grading) Facebook, via its users, captures pre-existing individualization, reconstructing social identities and relations in a surveillable structure. We have seen a similar phenomenon previously with Facebook's capturing and codifying of what are essentially pre-existing civil norms in its Terms of Service. This is both a more intimate and seamless method of establishing the basic conditions for surveillance.

Further to Facebook's spatial qualities, unlike the artificial arraying of prison cells in a panoptical configuration, the Facebook profiles network themselves in more organic and enjoyable arrays (friendships and other social groupings like event pages) in the pursuit of the social play which characterizes using Facebook. Indeed, building a substantial "friend" network is a fundamental component of being able to use Facebook as intended (as well as participating in its cultural norms) and serves to create interlinked arrays that can be surveilled without the external intervention of any central power on Facebook's part, and without the overt appearance of surveillance or discipline. Any instances of surveillance, stratification or other forms of "policing" on Facebook are handled by imperceptible algorithms. As I mentioned, the Facebook network is organized so that there is no intervention necessary on the central power's part to surveil the users; it is an automated system, powered algorithmically. Users, by dint of their everyday use of Facebook, provide a level of voluntary organization that can only be achieved in a highly seductive environment. This points, once again, to a new form of control, one that shifts

the security and surveillance onus to the user consensually through the seduction of technological convenience.

I noted earlier in the chapter that Facebook's social play model articulates an individual and collective component, something that bears further expansion. Indeed, the individual play establishes the initial conditions of surveillance but the collective play enacts and perpetuates it. The collective play that I refer to is quite simply the everyday functioning of Facebook: people creating and commenting on (semi-)public content for viewing within their friend network, whether this is statements/opinions, shared content or social interaction. The collective social play of Facebook is essentially a highly mediatized and virtualized form of traditional social play, made possible by the initial and continued individualization of using Facebook for individual social play. Indeed, the collective social play of Facebook would not be possible without the continuous process of individualization, e.g. updating statuses, profile photographs, relationship data, giving new opinions, or adding new content that spurs the collective socializing. This socializing commonly manifests in the form of collective commentary (“comments” or “likes”) about the individual content. All of this social play, due to the technologically advanced, virtual state of the entire Facebook network is able to be captured, recorded and analyzed as it occurs. It is then algorithmically disseminated for commentary from possibly interested users, encouraging the continuation of self- and co-surveillance on the network; it is further scanned for any value as marketing or advertising data.

An important effect of the disciplinary society when organized through panopticism is the eventual expansion of policing mechanisms. Foucault notes that as the disciplinary society expands and panopticism becomes a predominant form of organized

power the need to scrutinize, and therefore the need for more methods of policing, will be potentially very expansive, expensive and intrusive.<sup>21</sup> This does not necessarily mean more human police; rather, as panoptical discipline spreads, its manifestations (such as modern schools and hospitals) will have various and increasing “policing” requirements and needs. In Facebook's case, this is another example of Facebook deploying panoptical organization in an extended, virtual form. Facebook's use for such a scrutinizing police force would mostly be to manage the massive amount of social content its users generate and attempt to surveil/sort it for the News Feed, according to individual user interest, in order to encourage them to engage with the social content for further collective social play. Such expansion in the most basic sense of the word is unnecessary because virtual algorithms do not have spatial limitations the way, for example, that a prison must be physically expanded, and therefore require more guards in order to house and secure more inmates.

These algorithms are the chief tools of Facebook's sovereign panoptical organization. The algorithms can be modified in terms of their priorities, what they are specifically sorting and how, but the ontological purpose of Facebook's “police” mechanisms is constant and unchanging: total panoptical surveillance, sweeping all network content for sortation according to a commercial surveillance agenda. While these algorithms may be modulated, their fundamental purpose is as immutable as Facebook's own. This is the most important example of how Facebook uses its sovereign virtual state and techno-juridical power to extend the organization of panoptical power to include total surveillance at the centre. This algorithmic surveillance occurs parallel to any and all

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<sup>21</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 214

activity on the Facebook network, unfailingly and with total legitimacy because of the Terms of Service.

These algorithms are not perceptibly disciplinary, and so insofar as these algorithms are part of Facebook's equivalent of a police force,<sup>22</sup> they must be separated into two distinct elements of panoptically understood policing. First is surveillance: Facebook's network automatically and constantly captures and scrutinizes all content using algorithms, bypassing the need for a literal expansion of policing resources and maintaining the "invisible" status of its central power, hiding this aspect of Facebook's disciplinary structure entirely. Second is the explicitly corrective function of the police. Facebook employs a team of people to monitor content for violations, but these are forwarded to them by the algorithms or user informants.

We can begin to see how Facebook partially bypasses the expansion of the police force that is necessary in a strictly panoptical arrangement. It does so by only policing within its highly specified sovereign network, unlike a broadening panoptical model, giving it a far narrower focus than a model like late panopticism, which accounts for the common organization of surveillance across all of the disciplinary society. By leveraging its advanced technological capacity Facebook also places much of the burden of the policing it does have to do upon its algorithms and users, which neutralizes the threat of necessary, constant expansion.

Foucault notes that policing power is most effective when rendered as invisible as possible, something completely hidden algorithms accomplish well. The fact that all facets of any infraction (due to them all occurring within the virtual network) are

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<sup>22</sup> Only ever part because ultimately, Facebook must still defer to the state-sanctioned police, with the power to arrest in the most serious cases; Facebook is not a juridical system unto itself, as self-contained as it may appear to be in most cases. It must rely on older, external forms of policing in some cases.

contained, controlled and legally owned by Facebook, gives another alarming indication of the new sovereignty of a virtual policing design: complete authority within a domain of absolute surveillance. It is clear that Facebook engages in an emergent form of virtual sovereign policing that is focused upon a narrow set of unchanging goals with absolute authority to unceasingly carry out that policing, made possible through technologies of total virtualization. This is quite different than policing mechanisms as described in a strictly panoptical model, wherein policing is multivalent according to disciplinary need; taking innumerable forms (material and not); expanding as panopticism does, ultimately creating many different policing forms; and requiring the resources (whether these be people, or not) to run them. Facebook's unmovable aim of capturing marketable data for resale to the advertising industry, as well as its leveraging of the condition of virtuality and seductively playful design allows it to deploy a form of 'cyborgized' panoptical policing that enjoys greater reach, legitimacy and efficiency without the same long-term risks and demands of a panoptical model, such as increasing resources and possible reformatory pressures.

Facebook's ability to unify formerly disparate disciplinary functions such as panoptical surveillance and policing, under a sovereign authority whose users are almost never capable of perceiving its existence (and certainly its extent), also bypasses another of Foucault's observations of the growing disciplinary society. Foucault contends that policing principles generalize across the disciplines; this is because policing mechanisms always proliferate in the disciplinary society (albeit in increasingly softened and various forms) but always as an independent organ, a separate policing apparatus with its own

ideology.<sup>23</sup> This is different in Facebook's case, due to its ability to house all the disciplinary organs it requires—monitoring, surveilling, analyzing, measuring, policing, etc.—within a single, monopolistic entity that controls all facets of the network's security and surveillance operations. The various policing mechanisms that Facebook requires are unified as the sovereign centre of the network, rather than a coordination of separate, possibly (un-)cooperative elements such as the guards, the informants or the police. Further, there is no concern that the surveillance organs responsible for identification, surveillance, capturing or analyzing within the Facebook network will develop ideological self-awareness or power hunger because they are all integrated as part of the fully virtualized central power that always foregrounds the entire Facebook network with techno-juridical sovereignty.

The architecture of Facebook's surveillance is now sketched along clear lines of virtual panoptical organization with some extension, modification and exception. By existing in a state of virtual interface, Facebook leverages the broader cultural condition of virtuality to institute a surveillance network based upon the seductive idea of virtualizing identity and social relations for greater convenience. The networked collective that forms from all of these virtually reconstructed identities, called “the Facebook network,” functions through individual and collective social play for ultimately commercial purposes. It is stabilized by a sovereign authority which, as part of its control, deploys a technologically extended form of panoptical surveillance. The network, and its surveillance, grows through the continuous social play that characterizes the quotidian use of the network, and so the conditions of existence on the network, as well as its very

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 215

design, are revealed as conditions of surveillance and the economic growth of surveillance. Therefore, surveillance should be considered a defining and required feature of life on Facebook. These conditions for total surveillance are then enacted via the constant process of individualization that Facebook structures its registration and ongoing use of the network around, providing a stream of information about the user that is always capturable. In terms of the design, most of the possible actions on the network (facilitated through the interface) are structured to force these self-/co-surveillance processes as the only possible means of engagement with the network; “sharing” and “liking” are two examples of this, both principal means of Facebook interactivity that have a myriad of surveillance consequences whenever they are used.

Facebook, despite its seductive design, still requires a degree of discipline in order to properly stabilize its network and sustain itself, whether this is a pre-existing social discipline or the minimal disciplining of the interface, which always orients possible actions toward the ideological goal of its designer. Because Facebook is interested in the capturing of, and ongoing facilitation of, autonomous social play, its only explicit disciplinary requirement is the same discipline its users already enter into every social situation with: social discipline, the notions of “civility,” “manners” etc. that are ingrained in some form in every socialized subject. This is accomplished through the Terms of Service, wherein Facebook codifies its perception of social discipline. The only other disciplinary functions on Facebook are aimed at either stabilizing the security of the network (other sections of the Terms of Service; user informing, built into the interface; algorithms), or producing the ideal Facebook subject who valorizes Facebook and

submits all aspects of subjectivity and experience to the Facebook network for representation.

Much of Facebook's proprietary "Terms of Service" reads as a social contract that treats the Facebook network as a public space, requiring the same level of courtesy expected in most public spaces.<sup>24</sup> This is in contrast to other public forums on the Internet, which adhere to a strict principle of radical free speech that does not include any requirement of any social discipline.<sup>25</sup> This policy allows Facebook to maintain a basic framework of social discipline that is minimally noticeable and ostensibly only exists to formally reinforce pre-existing disciplinary norms. The result is the continuation of the unverifiable and invisible status of Facebook's central power. Facebook does not have to engage in investigative work, or any other forms of confrontational policing besides the administration of punishment. It is offloaded to users and automated technology, for the most part.

The consent to the Terms of Service is a key component of a previously discussed aspect of Facebook's surveillance: the voluntary nature of the Facebook network. Users not only voluntarily use Facebook as such, but must agree to use Facebook according to the terms and conditions set forth by Facebook. Facebook's reliance on volunteerism is absolutely critical in this sense for understanding the inability of the panoptical model to fully map the disciplinary design of the Facebook network. The fact that the Facebook network's population is sustained entirely voluntarily, each user filtered through a proprietary registration and Terms of Service to become a profile within, and to then

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<sup>24</sup> Facebook, "Terms of Service" (2014)

<sup>25</sup> For a good discussion of this principle of radical free speech on the Internet, see Knuttila, L. (2011). User unknown: 4chan, anonymity and contingency. *First Monday*, 16 (10).

continually self-surveil is what ultimately causes its design to problematize the use of panopticism as the sole means of theoretical evaluation.

One of the crucial developments of a disciplinary society is, according to Foucault, the re-emergence of the panoptical tower, now dispersed among the ‘disciplines’ of society. Foucault argues that with panopticism established as the common form of organized surveillance power across society's various disciplinary institutions, the central power of those institutions, such as the school board, the medical board, the police services board etc., is eventually made “visible,” or otherwise subject to public scrutiny. Public school board meetings or other ostensibly “transparent” public sites in which to view and interact with the mechanisms of power in society are examples of this in practice. Foucault summarizes: “The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole.”<sup>26</sup> To extend that metaphor to Facebook's “seeing machine”: the room might not exist and certainly cannot be found on a map. There is no public scrutiny or external pressure possible from individual users because Facebook's voluntary nature, facilitated through its contractual Terms of Service, ensures that it can remain a monolithic and inaccessible sovereign power that serves its own interests through its surveillance practices, rather than through a panoptical arrangement which, as Foucault notes, eventually disperses through the disciplinary society in order to spread its productive capacity and act as a system of continuous refinement for the collective.<sup>27</sup> Facebook is instead invested in its surveillance interests, to maintain an efficient virtual space for that surveillance and ultimately profit as a

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<sup>26</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 207

<sup>27</sup> Ibid pp. 209-210

capitalist corporation. Thus, it has no need or desire to disperse or re-emerge in society as transparent or productive beyond its self-interests. This immunizes Facebook against panopticism's potential issues, such as eventual reformatory pressures, while still allowing for the deployment and complete legitimization of extensive panoptical practices.

### **Sovereignty, Security and Labour on Facebook**

Part of the remarkability of Facebook's structure lies in the fact that it is able to secure its network rigidly and with absolute authority without having an overtly disciplinary appearance. Part of this has been discussed in terms of the disciplinary softening that virtual design in general, and Facebook's seductively enjoyable surveillance environment specifically, allows for, but not in terms of punishment. How does Facebook's foregrounded and omnipresent central power remain virtualized, unverified and invisible when it must actually exercise visible and explicit disciplinary power to suspend, ban, block or report to the police a delinquent account? I have discussed how the virtual condition of Facebook makes its exercise of disciplinary or sovereign power instantaneous, but these exercises of power are still felt by the affected users and can therefore never be *wholly* invisible.

The answer to this question means a return to evaluating Facebook's virtual state, as well as the individual social play practices of its users. Facebook's ability to exercise disciplinary power while maintaining its virtualized status as almost entirely invisible and permanently unverified relies heavily upon its virtual state. Facebook, as I have discussed extensively, does not need expansive policing mechanisms to sort through its network for

content to populate the News Feeds of individual users, nor does it require that same policing force to find objectionable content. Instead, Facebook leverages the captured and virtual nature of all of its network content and employs algorithms that can scan the content of user conversations and uploaded materials automatically;<sup>28</sup> theoretically, flagged material is then examined by a live human and disciplinary action is possibly taken without any literal expansion, i.e. no “additional algorithms” are ever necessary, so to speak. This is the most common method of policing but rarely triggers much disciplinary action; typically the algorithms on their own simply serve to erase blacklisted media that they detect on the network

The second, and more common, method of triggering explicit disciplinary action on Facebook is via individual users reporting one another to Facebook's central authority.<sup>29</sup> While informants as a concept are certainly capable of being accounted for within panopticism, the virtual state that Facebook exists in allows for a technological seamlessness that surpasses the classical notion of informants. It collapses the informing subject, the record of informing, the police, the scene of the crime and the accused under a single, virtual entity. We can see this as another deployment of panoptical organization that is possibly perfected by advanced virtual technology. Because of the virtual nature of the Facebook network--containing as it does all players and elements of an informing transaction--and Facebook's constant processes of relocating all network information into

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<sup>28</sup> Facebook provides their own outline of their technologies and practices related to content scanning for security purposes, see Facebook, “Meet the Safety Team” (2014) For a discussion of Facebook’s automated content scanning for economic purposes, see Klosowski, T. (2013, April 11). How Facebook uses your data to target ads, even offline. Retrieved January 22, 2014 from Lifehacker.

<sup>29</sup> An overview of Facebook’s highly structured user reporting system can be found in Kerr, D. (2012, June 9). Facebook illustrates the rabbit hole of user reports. Retrieved February 7, 2014 from CNET.

its virtual archive using that advanced technology, the informant can instantaneously identify the suspect, produce evidence, re-create the scene of the crime and have effectively signed an affidavit at an instant. This is all instantly archived and at the disposal of the central authority, and firmly within the sovereign parameters of the Terms of Service. Facebook is then authorized to act as it sees fit in terms of its disciplinary code.

Facebook is heavy-handed in applying its security policies and as a central authority is not generally regarded as proactive unless it receives reports from users; this makes sense as any censorship has the potential to undermine the enjoyment, therefore security, of the network but conversely, mass user complaints could signal mass discontent, an equal problem. The evidence of this, that Facebook's security is massively proactive when reacting to user informing and otherwise fairly inert can be seen in the various censorship controversies that it has been embroiled in throughout its history, demonstrating a willingness to act with enough loud voices but otherwise capable of being extremely permissive.<sup>30</sup> What we can see from this reactive tendency to user informing but otherwise passivity toward infractions is a shift of the security onus to the user, rendering Facebook further unverifiable even when actually enacting discipline, such as deleting "objectionable" content. If content was deleted, it is because it was reported. Who might have reported it, how many people, and the extent and nature of the complaint are all unknown. Facebook reacts without comment, but the reasoning is always implicitly the same: that it was reported and they judged the report valid. This is in contrast to the panoptical arrangement that is invested in the central authority both

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<sup>30</sup> For an example of Facebook's myriad censorship controversies, see Arrington, M. (2007, November 22). Is Facebook really censoring search when it suits them?. Retrieved March 19, 2014, from TechCrunch.

being able to exert a normalizing presence alongside the ability to exert punitive disciplinary force, if necessary, that reinforces its authority.<sup>31</sup> Facebook, however, has an entirely invisible and largely absent central authority that is invested in maintaining a complete imperceptibility that allows it to pervade the network omnipresently for surveillance but is never forced into disciplinary confrontation. Instead, it relies upon the technological power of its virtual state, its juridical Terms of Service, and the negative dimension of its user's social play, e.g. disagreement, offense, etc. This is facilitated through an informant system in order to stabilize the network against security threats to either the network's technical stability or to a user's enjoyment of the network. That a user enjoys Facebook is, of course, a critical component of them using Facebook and thus, being surveillable. User enjoyment should be considered a critical security interest for Facebook, and a key component of a "stable" Facebook network.

A brief, but important, note that Foucault makes in "Panopticism" and that I would like to reformulate here regards the integration of panoptical surveillance into the disciplinary society, and the application of its productive output--disciplined citizenry--to the schema of mass production. This integration and application in Foucault's reading is initially accelerated through necessity by industrial capitalism.<sup>32</sup> This connection to the development of industrial capitalism ties a possible motive to the initial development of the disciplinary society: the need for more efficient discipline. The establishment of a capitalistic motive in early panopticism helps us determine the ways in which capitalistic motivations ultimately inform much of Facebook. In this reading of early disciplinary deployment in society, Marxist economic theory accounts for the first motivation of the

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<sup>31</sup> Foucault (1977) emphasizes the constant imposition of corrective power that is essential to the successful functioning of the disciplinary society

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p. 221

disciplinary society to create a disciplined economic engine. In Facebook's contemporary case, labour along with power has become increasingly virtualized and softened. The possible economic motivations of the early disciplinary society are still applicable to the narrow, capitalistic goals of Facebook, however. A model that is capable of explaining the economic motivation of virtual surveillance on Facebook and its discipline must account for its equally virtualized labour conditions as well.

Beginning prominently with Hardt and Negri, and continued by many others,<sup>33</sup> theories have emerged which argue that capitalism has shifted into a new phase that divorces production from visible labour, focusing instead on cognition and other immaterial products as the locus of capital and surplus value production, a phase called "cognitive capitalism." In terms of the labour practices involved in this phase, Hardt and Negri introduce the concept of immaterial labour, defined by Silvia Federici as "labor that produces non-physical objects—codes, data, symbols, images, ideas, knowledges, subjectivities, social relations."<sup>34</sup> It is the latter two categories in Federici's definition that best illuminate why this concept accurately describes the conditions of labour that Facebook's design imposes upon its users. Immaterial labour is labour that occurs passively and perhaps unknowingly, wherein formerly uncommodified activities (like social interaction) are commodified and converted into immaterial labour, at once social play and value production.<sup>35</sup> Facebook users engage continuously in a form of immaterial labour through their use of the network. The everyday use of the network actualizes the

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<sup>33</sup> An excellent collection on the topics of cognitive capitalism and immaterial labour can be found in Peters, M., & Bulut, E. (Eds.) (2011). *Cognitive capitalism, education, and digital labor*. New York: Peter Lang.

<sup>34</sup> Federici, S. (2011). On affective labour. In M.A. Peters & E. Bulut (Eds.), *Cognitive capitalism, education and digital labor* (pp. 57-75). New York: Peter Lang. p. 59

<sup>35</sup> Coté, M. & Pybus, J. (2011). Learning to immaterial labour 2.0: Facebook and social networks. In M.A. Peters & E. Bulut (Eds.), *Cognitive capitalism, education and digital labor* (pp. 169-193). New York: Peter Lang.

conditions of surveillance which capture the commodifiable personal data that Facebook sells in order to be profitable. All uses of Facebook that are sincere, or otherwise conform to Facebook's control schema, thereby co-constitute instances of surveillance and commodification. Therefore, the vast majority (if not all) of Facebook use is immaterially labourious.

Facebook provides a site to observe what Hardt and Negri see as the logical conclusion of the immaterialization of labour, "In place of the former divisions, Negri and Hardt envision a Gargantuan process of social reproduction such that every articulation of social life becomes a point of production and society itself becomes an immense work-machine producing value for capital but also knowledges, cultures, subjectivities."<sup>36</sup> Facebook achieves this on a miniaturized, virtual scale within its own proprietary form, and Federici's description could equally serve as a factual description of the conditions of social life on Facebook as it could as a description of the possible endgame of the immaterialization of labour. It has been quite clear that there is a general economic motivation behind the organization of Facebook's surveillance practices—how could there not be, as it is a corporation—but immaterial labour provides the theoretical language to describe the actual processes of labour and production on Facebook. On a basic level, the personal information is inputted by the user-labourers constantly and is then surveilled by the automated system to be finally sold by Facebook *en masse* to interested parties, such as advertisers.<sup>37</sup> These are processes of immaterial labour that, thanks to Facebook's highly seductive design, it is very efficient at maintaining.

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<sup>36</sup> Federici (2011) p. 60

<sup>37</sup> Facebook estimates that upwards of 88% of its revenue is derived from advertising. See Melanson, D. (2013, July 24). Facebook reports \$1.81 billion in revenue for Q2 2013, 1.15 billion monthly active users. Retrieved March 15, 2014 from Engadget.

As I have mentioned, it is imperative for Facebook's economic model that the data it collects be assured as "authentic." This is Facebook's equivalent of worker discipline, which offers a compelling explanation of why Facebook must ensure an extremely stringent sort of identity policing among its users, such as the prohibition of pseudonyms and parody accounts. It also helps explain the virtually softened way in which it engages security and problems of "stability," a term I have mentioned, but will now expand upon in terms of Facebook's unique security needs. The legal nature of the Facebook's Terms of Service and its resultant sovereign power--actualized in an exceptionally robust virtual form--guarantees this stability.

Facebook's structure is designed to constantly capture all information that the user submits to Facebook's virtual network; further, Facebook disciplines its users with a granular level of control<sup>38</sup> to use the network in ways that maximize surveillability.<sup>39</sup> In equal measure, Facebook secures its network against traditionally understood cyberthreats, as well as threats that are unique to its own social security concerns, such as authenticity. Finally, Facebook disciplines its users with a form of cultural control, as yet undefined, that maximizes their surveillability and potential commodification.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the production schema of immaterial labour, much like industrial capitalism understood along panoptical lines, maps onto the virtual surveillance architecture of Facebook as a general economic motive. Further, it explains the admittedly obvious parallel economic motivation for Facebook's surveillance system, i.e. surveillance is the engine, an integral part of the action of immaterial labour for Facebook. Even the minimal disciplinary force

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<sup>38</sup> I am referring here to the absolute control that digital designers enjoy over interface design.

<sup>39</sup> The focus of chapter 2 will be attempting to model how Facebook structures its network to facilitate maximum surveillability.

<sup>40</sup> The focus of chapter 3 will be an analysis of the function of cultural control on Facebook, and its orientation toward maximizing surveillability.

that Facebook must actively integrate into its surveillance architecture is accounted for by the need to ensure the security of immaterial labour production on the network.

Authenticity is, as I have said, a unique security concern for Facebook. In order for Facebook's harvesting of personal and experiential data to function it must be accurate for interested parties. The network must be composed of profiles that are controlled not by a computer to deliver spam or viruses but a person who is interested in utilizing the Facebook network as intended. The intention is for the user to re-present their subjective selves within Facebook's curated form, creating an individual, highly tailored and assuredly "authentic" marketing profile that can be commodified by Facebook. The intended use of the network is self/co-surveillance by the user, a practice that is ultimately economically productive for Facebook. Users are meant to engage with the network without anonymity or pseudonymity, constructively adding new content and socializing, thereby providing "authentic" data that can be surveilled, captured and reconstituted as a set of advertising data. An idle, duplicitous or destructively antisocial profile is not beneficial economically, or in any sense really, for Facebook. In this sense then Facebook does not only contend with the more obvious external security threats of viruses, exploits, spambots etc., but also the internal security threat of inauthenticity, a concept which is anathema to their economic model. To this end, Facebook rigorously ensures the identity integrity of its network, and is notoriously strict regarding "fake" profiles that are not facsimiles of the user.

Finally, the social security of Facebook users--that they feel safe and comfortable using Facebook in the manner that Facebook desires--is integral for the success of Facebook's surveillance project. This constitutes another unique security challenge for

Facebook. The voluntary nature of Facebook use means that the ongoing surveillance must rely on ongoing volunteerism that is uncensored, or at least as limited in its self-censorship as possible, in order to ensure authenticity. Beyond being uncensored, however, Facebook also desires that user engagement with the network be as frequent as possible in order to capture economically marketable information; recall Hayles's point about the power of information being tied to the speed of its material transmission. In this case the material is the human subject who must, for their marketing information to retain greatest commercial value, tell Facebook about them and their life as soon as new information is available. This requires that Facebook maintain a virtual space that is stable, free of threat and above all always seductively enjoyable for users, therefore secure for Facebook's economic interests.

The productive motivation behind integrating pre-existing social discipline into Facebook's immaterial labour production becomes clearer in light of this analysis of general economic motive. Facebook's perception of civility and social norms are codified by the Terms of Service, replicating this pre-existing discipline juridically within the network's common spaces. This makes sense as it is where the individual and collective social play, and hence the commerce of Facebook, takes place. The panoptical model cannot fully account for this particular deployment of panoptical organization; Facebook's appropriation of an existing disciplinary form is neither external nor an imposition *because* it is pre-existent, re-enforced within the network and made juridical, but never new and already consensual and entrenched.<sup>41</sup> As we will see in the third chapter, one of the greatest efficiencies of virtual control is its ability to integrate older

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<sup>41</sup> Insofar as one is able to consent to a social contract that one is born into.

forms (such as social discipline) for greater power. The integration of social discipline, in a codified virtual form, is one such example of that. Most critically, these are conditions of existence on the network, made mandatory through registration and impossible to avoid within the network.

Within the Foucaultian panoptical model there is an eventual softening of discipline; indeed, it has been noted that the effectiveness of the traditionally understood panoptical deployment of discipline seems tied to the increasing softness of its implementation.<sup>42</sup> This culminates, as I have said, in the central panoptical power's reappearance as an ostensibly transparent engine of a productive disciplinary society, a society that now willingly participates in the panoptical program. The school board system and its legislated, mandatory public meetings is one modern example. This further entrenches and extends the normalcy of the panoptical society by making its subjects feel invested in it. In contrast, Facebook leverages its techno-judicial framework to remain constantly opaque and virtualized while reserving sovereign power that is consented to because it is a condition of user existence on the Facebook network; as explored more in the third chapter, this condition is made attractive because of the highly seductive conveniences of social existence on Facebook. More critically is that this sovereign discipline is only ever apparent to users at the moment of punishment and, due to its largely immaterial state, does not telegraph itself and then makes itself invisible again, resulting in a soft discipline that is imperceptible by anyone but the affected. Furthermore, because of its seductive nature it is also immunized against the possible pressures and reforms of the society it seeks to surveil. The virtual technology that

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<sup>42</sup> David Lyon uses the example of supermax prison as a brutally implemented panoptic model that tends to engender equally brutal resistance. See Bauman and Lyon (2013) p. 4-7

enables this radical disciplinary form simply was not available to be theorized during Foucault's time, and could not therefore be expected to be contained within "Panopticism." However, it is panoptical all the same, extended and perhaps brought to a crescendo by advanced digital technology aimed at the seduction and total surveillance of human identity and social organization.

This chapter will conclude with an examination of the disciplinary criteria that Foucault sets out near the end of "Panopticism." This criteria more than any other section of *Discipline & Punish* has convinced me of the need to re-evaluate the predominant position of panopticism within the study of surveillance, particularly contemporary surveillance situations such as Facebook. Facebook easily meets the disciplinary criteria, which is probably not surprising as we have seen numerous examples now of Facebook's deployment and occasional remixing of panoptical or other Foucaultian forms of discipline to great effect.

The first tenet of the disciplinary criteria states that the disciplinary society functions in order "...to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses)"<sup>43</sup> which could easily serve as an accurate description of the benefits of the Facebook network's virtual structure. Repeatedly I have stressed the virtual entrenchment of Facebook's central power, which achieves a lower "cost" in Foucaultian terms than the panoptical configuration, bound as it is by far more visible forms of material surveillance and discipline. I have also demonstrated that the leverage of virtuality, alongside the

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault (1977) outlines the disciplinary criteria, pp. 218-219

seductive structure of Facebook's network, enables Facebook to manifest a new form of panoptical power by foregrounding it with juridically legitimated and consensual sovereignty. The Terms of Service allow Facebook to bypass the imposition of a new form of discipline that could engender new forms of resistance, instead utilizing pre-existing and highly entrenched discipline in a manner that is counter to the externally imposed nature of the disciplines within a panoptically organized society. The end result is that Facebook bypasses the confrontational, and thereafter possibly resistive or reformatory pressures of the disciplinary society. It does this while maintaining a surveillance system that affords it stable, sovereign power and the ability to govern its network with an absolute orientation toward the surveillability and commodifiability of its users.

The third part of the disciplinary criteria makes explicit Foucault's observation about the productive motivation of the disciplinary society, something I have already discussed as being markedly parallel to Facebook's ultimate motivations: "thirdly, to link this 'economic' growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system."<sup>44</sup> Facebook's successful capturing and analyzing of its surveilled material allows it to sustain itself economically. This general corporate sustenance also, obviously, sustains the material surveillance system: Facebook is able to maintain what minimal material presence it requires to grow its network (buying new servers, hiring staff, etc.). It is also able to constantly refine the interface of its network to be more enticing to users, and to more efficiently capture information. It is

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<sup>44</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 220

able to refine the capture and sortation apparatus to better, and hopefully more comprehensively, gather subjective data that can then be collated as advertising information. The economic output of the surveillance that the Facebook network engages in is re-invested in the infrastructure, allowing it to create better designed, more surveillable Facebook subjects (“increasing the docility,” in Foucault’s terms) as well as increasing the utility of the system by constantly refining its surveillance capacity. Facebook’s virtual nature allows it to bring together disparate elements of the disciplinary society’s panoptical arrangement (such as the policing apparatus) and control all aspects of its surveillance architecture under a consensual and sovereign authority that calls to mind Bauman’s image of the “cyborgized” Panopticon, rendered more powerful by virtual technology than Foucault or Bentham could have thought possible.

I have demonstrated extensively that Facebook’s network reaches new levels, in scope and efficiency, of panoptical organization. This aligns with the second criterion of an established disciplinary society that Foucault outlines: “secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval.”<sup>45</sup> Facebook, being an example of a new form of sovereign surveillance network that instead functions based upon voluntary use and social play, is able to maximize its surveillance power far beyond where it would be able to utilizing more traditional, more materially panoptical and overtly disciplinary tactics. By not placing any noticeable surveillance onus on the user, due in large part to virtualizing technology and a design of seductive convenience, the extent of Facebook’s success in terms of its surveillance is simply the users’ ultimate interest and willingness to engage

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<sup>45</sup> Foucault (1977) p. 219

with the network by sharing surveillable information and content. There is no overt disciplinary coercion necessary because the everyday functioning of the Facebook network is entirely based around voluntary, and seductively enjoyable, collective and individual surveillance, all of which creates a continuous stream of capturable and commodifiable information. Whereas an exercise of overt discipline may be understood as a confrontational binary that can succeed or fail based upon its desired normalizing effects and whether it achieves them, the voluntary design of the Facebook network places its disciplinary success on a spectrum of user engagement, and failure as nearly impossible. There is no such thing as a failed Facebook profile in surveillance terms, it can simply be measured relative to how actively it participates in social play (fulfilling the conditions of surveillance) and in how much it participates in growing, or strengthening, the network by posting content and adding friends, otherwise building the structure of the network. Regardless of whether the Facebook user is particularly active or inactive, their presence on the network, that they have voluntarily registered and become complicit in Facebook's highly successful surveillance architecture without much (if any) overtly coercive disciplinary power exercised by Facebook, constitutes a victory for its surveillance project and signals, to my view, the need for the theoretical re-evaluation of contemporary surveillance systems.

## Chapter 2

### Deleuzean Surveillance

#### **Rhizomatic and Arborescent Organization**

This chapter will explore a new surveillance framework, following chapter one's conclusion that Facebook only manifests as partly panoptical. This alternate framework accounts for the established panoptical aspects of Facebook's surveillance, as well as the new forms of structural control that Facebook employs. I derive this framework primarily from several concepts found in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Facebook's network structure bears strong resemblance to an arborescent pseudomultiplicity, and this chapter is devoted to first unpacking this dense term, and then examining precisely how Facebook fits the profile of an arborescent pseudomultiplicity or not. This will be very useful in better understanding the organization and deployment of Facebook's surveillance. However, before examining the idea of the arborescent pseudomultiplicity and how it may apply to Facebook, it is necessary to examine the theoretical components of this concept; further, to understand how the Facebook network works in relation to the individual elements that constitute the arborescent pseudomultiplicity. These concepts are: "the rhizome", "arborification", "the multiplicity", and "the pseudomultiplicity".

The first section, or plateau, of *A Thousand Plateaus* is a detailed introduction to the concept of the rhizome and its theoretical other, the root-tree. For Deleuze and Guattari, the root-tree schema is emblematic of how much of society organizes its knowledge and understanding of that knowledge; they argue that the metaphor of the tree

has “dominated Western reality”<sup>46</sup> to its detriment. Deleuze and Guattari are critical of the problems they perceive this model to be continuously reproducing. The essential problem of the tree-root schema, for Deleuze and Guattari, is that it is deeply and rigidly structured, hierarchical by design and inherently genealogical; it always contains a narrativized history that can be theoretically traced and reproduced. These qualities are essentially what are meant by the term “arborescent,” and the terms “arborize,” “arborification” or “arborified” refers to the conversion process of reorganizing a form into one informed by arborescent principles. Deleuze and Guattari criticize this system for creating inequality by, for example, producing such hierarchical binaries as the ideal speaker-listener.<sup>47</sup>

The ideal speaker-listener is a binary which positions one subject as the ideal speaker (for an educational example, a teacher) and one as the ideal listener (a student) in a hierarchical configuration that manifests across society. This occurs as part of the arborescent schema’s attempt to order the organization of knowledge in society, often through a transmission hierarchy. In Facebook’s case, it is the principle around which all user-to-user action is structured. It is also intrinsic to Facebook’s network design. Every individual user is presented with an interface that structures their experience as both the ideal speaker and listener. Everything they post is potentially disseminated to everyone within their network (and their friends’ networks), and the Facebook user experience as an ideal listener revolves around the curated delivery of content based upon the individual user’s algorithmically perceived desire. The synoptical power mentioned in the first chapter is useful here to further illustrate this principle. Facebook affords its users the

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<sup>46</sup> Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 18

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 7

ability to browse the network and select who they want to “friend,” which of their friends they want to see content from, and a whole other host of personalized features to make each Facebook user experience Facebook as the primary user, both as content producer and consumer. This serves to mask the fact that all Facebook subjects are always also *objects* of Facebook’s total surveillance gaze alongside any allowed subjectivity. The sortation algorithms, which further idealize the “listening,” or media consumption, experience on Facebook, entrench the perception of primacy by constantly validating it. This also amounts to an arborizing of social relations into a standardized and highly ordered structure, with set ways of “connecting” as “friends” on Facebook, all of which are ultimately aimed at surveillance. This universal user experience has the cumulative effect, one that will be expanded in the third chapter, of fostering a self-centered user culture that normalizes deep self-surveillance as the primary mode of interaction with the network. This is an ingenious symptom of the self-centered design of the individual user interface and one that obviously serves Facebook’s goals very well.<sup>48</sup>

In Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of arborescence, the deference to a fixed, hierarchical genealogy leads to a pattern of tracing and reproducing knowledge rather than exploring new thought and possibilities. The root-tree schema impedes freedom and possibility, stratifies and “fixes a point, plots an order.”<sup>49</sup> These issues, among others, lead Deleuze and Guattari to propose an alternate, rhizomatic schema for organizing knowledge and understanding. I will note, however, that while the rhizomatic schema contrasts the arborescent schema in many notable ways, it does not directly oppose it, nor

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<sup>48</sup> This is obviously not a perfect illusion as users can, of course, be denied their friend request. But the ease, level of access and general consumerist design of what I later term “friendshopping” on Facebook still fosters a self-centered sense of primacy in each individual user.

<sup>49</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pp. 2-3

are they wholly incompatible or firmly divisible; this will be especially important later when examining the Facebook network within the “rhizomatic”<sup>50</sup> framework I am developing.

Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari makes it quite clear that a root-tree schema may have some rhizomatic potential, though its characteristic tendency to set things within a hierarchy neutralizes this potential. This neutralization occurs by always attempting to arborify the rhizome upon its occasional appearance in an arborescent system, rendering it rhizomorphic instead. Deleuze employs the term rhizomorphic (as I will) to describe instances that may demonstrate rhizomatic tendencies but are still ultimately fixed by an arborescent system. Notably, the truly rhizomatic schema is still not immune to the problems of arborescence<sup>51</sup> and in my view more often than not, a structure, upon analysis, will likely demonstrate rhizomorphic attributes rather than purely rhizomatic autonomy or arborescent order. A rhizomorphic schema, for example, can still constitute its own hierarchies even if they are not a fundamental part of the rhizomatic structure, in the same way that they are embedded in tree logic. Deleuze and Guattari are quite clear in their language that the “despotic channels”<sup>52</sup> of the arborescent schema may still occur in a rhizomatic organization, hence the necessity of the intermediary rhizomorphic concept. Deleuze and Guattari see the rhizomatic model as potentially emancipatory and critical to evolving past a hierarchical model of organizing knowledge or understanding.

What then differentiates the rhizomatic model from the arborescent? Foremost, an opposition to hierarchical order and the subsequent establishment of a genealogy;

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<sup>50</sup> We will shortly see the inaccuracy of this term for Facebook

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explains the overlap of rhizomatic and arborescent systems on p.2

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Deleuze and Guattari in fact characterize the rhizome explicitly as antigenealogy.<sup>53</sup> Its structure, such as it may have one in order to constitute itself, not only lacks a hierarchical order but actively resists ordering and any sort of stable semiotic chains<sup>54</sup> of meaning that could “root” it.

The concepts of de/re-territorialization are fundamental to the rhizome and to potential rhizomatic resistance against arborification. Straightforward enough, these concepts refer to the breakdown of pre-existent parameters of order and structure (deterritorialization) and the establishment of brand new parameters (reterritorialization) all at once. A common example of this is the changing of political borders: this action constitutes both a deterritorialization, when the borders are altered from their fixed state and reterritorialization when new borders are immediately established in the wake of the old. These concepts are intertwined and should be considered overlapping processes within a rhizomatic context; Deleuze and Guattari state: “how could movements of deterritorialization and processes of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another?”<sup>55</sup> There are no parameters on the semiotic connections and disconnections a rhizome might make at a given moment, “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections”<sup>56</sup> and so is always in flux. This ceaseless flux not only characterizes the rhizome but also adds to our understanding of how rhizomatic resistance to arborification occurs. For Deleuze and Guattari,

That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy [in the rhizome], even in the rudimentary form of good and bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still the danger that you will encounter organizations that

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<sup>53</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 21

<sup>54</sup> Ibid p. 7-9

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p. 8-9

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 7

restratify everything, formations that restore power to the signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions.<sup>57</sup>

What they describe here are situations that occur routinely within a rhizomatic schema which would be far more difficult to achieve within an arborescent schema. The hierarchical order of the root-tree model works to neutralize the potential for a spontaneous restratification of any sign within that hierarchy. The re-investment of power in a suppressed signifier is one of Deleuze and Guattari's examples used to describe this. Deleuze and Guattari make sure to demonstrate here that there are many concrete examples of rhizomatic resistance in history, noting the resurgence of European fascism in the early twentieth century in particular, to assure us that our world is not nearly as overwhelmingly arborescent as it may seem. This is, first and foremost, a warning regarding the problems of attempting to establish, stabilize and maintain an arborescent system; rhizomatic restratification, like the quick rise of European fascism as a popular organization of state power in the early twentieth century, may occur as a potentially dangerous form of resistance.

The rhizomatic mode is an organizational form that Deleuze and Guattari find clearly emancipatory in comparison to the arborescent; because of its constant minority position, however, it requires equally constant vigilance due to the overwhelming historic pressure of the root-tree mode. In terms of Facebook, we will see this tension between the ordering of arborescence and the freedom of the rhizomatic be consciously manipulated under an emerging regime of control that deploys useful rhizomatic principles while arborizing the emancipatory (and therefore dangerous) elements of these principles.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid p. 9

## **Facebook as Pseudomultiplicity**

Facebook profiles, governed by human subjects within a rigidly ordered system, can also always be considered “Facebook rhizomorphs;” this denotes a unit of the Facebook network demonstrating arborized rhizomatic attributes within an arborescent system which, in this case, we can conceive of as the Facebook network. Individual user profiles are the primarily make up Facebook rhizomorphs, however this category also includes any subjectively controlled node embedded in the network, including event pages, celebrity pages, group pages, etc. Anything that upon creation has a persistent and irrevocable (without total destruction) connection on the Facebook network, and is controlled by a user in order to be active, is a Facebook rhizomorph. This is contrasted with the infrastructural elements of the network, which are functionally autonomous, such as the algorithms that sort content and disseminate it constantly.

Facebook rhizomorphs are constructed through a proprietary form of control exerted by the Facebook network that I will discuss in greater detail in the third chapter. For immediate purposes, this construction happens primarily through the three aforementioned disciplinary or control vectors. These are: the terms of service, the user interface and pre-existing social discipline. Recall in chapter one the discussion of social discipline, a form of discipline that all Facebook users carry onto the network from their pre-Facebook social interactions; this includes subjective conceptions of manners and civility. Through these preconceived notions of civility, users of Facebook are pre-disciplined into how to interact with one another. The Terms of Service establishes the Facebook’s network sovereign control over user content, and the user interface passively

carves out the level of rhizomatic autonomy a Facebook rhizomorph enjoys. As we shall see, the interface plays an integral role in dictating precisely how rhizomatic the Facebook rhizomorph is permitted to be.

As it turns out, the rhizomatic potential of a Facebook rhizomorph is severely limited and exists in a highly arborescent structure that is typically being oriented toward maximizing surveillability.<sup>58</sup> I will now analyze Facebook from the most common user perspective of an individual user profile. From this point of view, I will demonstrate how the potentially rhizomatic qualities of the Facebook profile design are in a constant state of arborification, and therefore rendered rhizomorphic, in order to be as surveillable as possible for the Facebook network. Indeed, we will see that the Facebook network employs rhizomatic attributes in part as a model of efficient surveillance. This occurs while establishing an overriding schema of arborescence that stabilizes the Facebook rhizome into an unmoving rhizomorphic unit within the network. In terms of a surveillance model, this is very useful for understanding how Facebook utilizes useful characteristics of the rhizome to grow and enhance its surveillance reach while minimizing its risk.

Before examining how Facebook rhizomorphs interact with one another, I will examine the attributes of an isolated Facebook rhizomorph, presuming it to have no connections apart from the network infrastructure that co-constitutes it. This is the theoretical state of a Facebook profile when it has first been created on the network; admittedly, Facebook attempts even before the registration process is complete to suggest that the new user “find friends” to connect with, and so in practice a completely

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<sup>58</sup> Alexander Galloway makes a very similar case regarding the foundational protocols of the Internet, such as TCP/IP and DNS, as forms of decentralized control. See Galloway, A. R. (2004). *Protocol: How control exists after decentralization*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

unconnected Facebook profile rarely exists. This is, however, the theoretically default state of an individual user on the network. The isolation of the unconnected user profile allows me to again highlight the initial arborification of a Facebook profile's rhizomatic potential through the immediate establishment of the ideal speaker-listener. The user, who is represented by the Facebook rhizomorph, is immediately established through the interface as the ideal speaker-listener. The interface, and the allowable use of the network itself, is geared toward an individual user's self-centered production and consumption of information: through content sharing; through equally self-centered content consumption; through the synoptical surveillance ability Facebook allows its users.

The arborescent processes overlaying Facebook's rhizomatic features are not immediately apparent when examining many Facebook rhizomes networked together, as the majority of Facebook users typically experience, because the News Feed is cunningly rhizomorphic. The News Feed appears to democratize the otherwise self-centered activities of individual users by sorting and collating many users content together and then disseminating the content for collective social play as a customized feed of information, tailored according to the usage patterns of the individual user. This is another example of how the ideal speaker-listener binary manifests in the everyday functionality of Facebook, constantly idealizing the delivery of content according to perceived user desire.

Engagement with the News Feed includes activities such as simple affirmations like 'liking,' affirmative tracked content retransmission ("sharing") and commenting, all of which is at least partially oriented toward the capture of surveillance data. The reason for this emphasis on interaction is simple: the more subjective engagement and

interaction that occurs on Facebook, the more data is generated to be surveilled. The self-centered position of the user is constantly maintained through the News Feed in that the dissemination of content is always algorithmically tailored to individual user interest,<sup>59</sup> arborifying the potential of what could be a far more democratic and authentically rhizomatic technology. This further reinforces the individual user as the ideal speaker-listener since the structure that surveils all content on Facebook tailors the delivered content to suit the individual. Using the interface to “centre” each rhizomorph in a position where they are heavily pressured to perceive themselves as the ideal speaker-listener immediately arborizes the emancipatory potential of the design by designing a hierarchical and self-centered perspective as the only mode of interaction with the network.

In practice, this makes Facebook extremely attractive to users as the self-centering design of the interface encourages self-expression and social play as the primary modes of interaction with the network in a very convenient form. This is ideal for Facebook’s aim to capture a broad range of subjective data, collated under each user profile, which provides specific demographic information in order to connect all subjective information back to an authenticated “real” person, to establish the clearest possible target for advertising and other forms of seduction. In turn, the user behaviors that generate this data are normalized as common practice.

Everyone’s experience on Facebook is standardized with common channels of connectivity and interaction. As a result it allows one to get constant feedback that seems

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<sup>59</sup> Carlson, N. (2014, February 13). The hard truth about how the Facebook News Feed works now. Retrieved March 16, 2014, from Business Insider. See also Facebook Help Center (2014) for current, official documentation explaining how the News Feed is supposed to function and its stated purpose as articulated by Facebook.

to be directed at oneself as the ideal listener, but it is simply the product of every user being centered by the interface design as the ideal speaker and listener, promoting a constant loop of individualistic sharing, receiving and interacting that is then collectivized and disseminated by the network to help sustain a social atmosphere. These interactions are far more often positive than not, in part due to the interface structure, which in turn encourages more use. The complete absence of a complementary “dislike” button for the affirmative and omnipresent “like” button is one small example of this which has, to my view, a wide effect in promoting positivity/connectivity as the chief virtue of Facebook use.

When the everyday motion of the Facebook network is examined on a macrocosmic level, propelled by all of its users’ rhizomorphic activities, it demonstrates clear rhizomatic attributes despite an overarching arborescent structure, further cementing not just the users, but the network itself as rhizomorphic, despite its ultimate surveillance agenda; as will increasingly become clear, this is because Facebook must allow some rhizomatic agency in order to convince users to use Facebook. The algorithmic News Feed, though arborified with its commercial agenda, still sorts and serves content based on algorithmically perceived connections and priorities that are always changing, such as who the user might be most interested in seeing content from, or what they are actually doing on the network. However, the algorithms delivering this content are geared toward maximizing user interest in order to derive better surveillance data, giving it an ultimately arborescent character. Regardless of the arborescent quality of establishing priority and hierarchy, however, this algorithmic action still relies upon a very useful rhizomatic quality:

“[A rhizome] ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural and cognitive: there is no language in itself ... There is no ideal speaker-listener”<sup>60</sup>

This demonstrates the scope of possible rhizomatic connection, and provides a clearer reasoning behind Facebook’s appropriation of rhizomatic principles for its network and surveillance design. Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the semiotic chains that rhizomes move between covers all of the terrain that any mode of knowledge organization would need to be capable of accounting for. This makes sense as Deleuze and Guattari seem to suggest that a rhizomatic mode of understanding could supplant the dominant arborescent schema; it makes equal sense then that the Facebook network would utilize rhizomatic principles, under an arborescent schema, to organize its users and their content for surveillance. The scope of Facebook’s surveillance ambition is potentially as extensive as any mode of knowledge organization would aim to be. Facebook wishes to capture as much information about a user’s experiences and sense of subjectivity as possible and so the rhizomorphic schema makes absolute sense for this process of capture. The rhizomatic principles that Facebook utilizes gives it the flexibility to collect anything it desires as content. Users are encouraged to post all manner of material, from opinions or other people’s writing, to any imagery Facebook does not deem offensive under the Terms of Service. The rhizome’s utility as a mode of emancipatory organization provides the core explanation for Facebook’s use of it: the parameters are usefully all-encompassing and infinitely mutable. The rhizomorphic design of Facebook allows an individual user to share a range of content, spanning almost any conceivable aspect of their subjective selves, co-constituting the rhizomorphic profile

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<sup>60</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 7

with the network infrastructure through initial registration and continued use within the network; this co-constitutive relationship is materialized, and mediated, through the interface. Naturally, one cannot partake in the network without passing through the registration process in order to fill out a profile and be reconstituted as a Facebook rhizomorph.

Facebook's rhizomorphic design does not produce a visibly perceptible hierarchy and this encourages users to more freely share anything without perceptible sortation or stratification pressures, such as exists on social networks predicated more on having high "follower" counts. Of course, the processes of stratification and other sorts of control still occur in an imperceptible dimension that Deleuze and Guattari term the "supplemental dimension"; Deleuze and Guattari consider external control to be inherently supplemental, so much so that it should be theorized as existing in its own imposed dimension. We can conceive of this in Facebook as a more concrete technological layer, no less supplemental in its control: the stratifying algorithms, the fixing of interface design, the ordering of possible connections, all of which serve to control users to various degrees. Ultimately, this is all aimed toward what Deleuze and Guattari conceive of as a unique, theoretical form of "unity."<sup>61</sup> The process of establishing this unity and overlaying the supplemental dimension is called the "overcode"; while the overcode is the process which, in part, imposes the supplemental dimension, as it is a form of control it must be simultaneously considered as existing *within* the supplemental dimension as well. Overcoding will be discussed in greater detail later when evaluating Facebook as a pseudomultiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari articulate their specific use of the term "unity"

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<sup>61</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pp. 8-9 for a complete explanation of the relationship between overcoding and the rhizome.

in two successive folds: first, that this concept of unifying means to first establish standardized units that are capable of being spatialized, which neutralizes a truly rhizomatic design's emancipatory potential. Secondly, the overcode then serves to unify what has now been established as units into an ordered and constant mass, embedded with genealogical tree-root logic.

Deleuze and Guattari are very clear that human beings are naturally a rhizomatic multiplicity from a molecular level upward,<sup>62</sup> which is incompatible with a calculated mode of organization such as Facebook's rhizomorphism. Overcoding serves, in Facebook's case, as a process to discourage the expression of the rhizomatic aspects of its users which are not conducive to its surveillance environment. Facebook desires particular information about its users; there are, however, many sorts of subjective data which would conceivably be uninteresting or useless for Facebook, and so the overcoding process serves to pare down the subject within the network structure, to be constituted as a rhizomorph that is defined in large part by the marketable data that Facebook wants to capture. Facebook's desire for such a broad swath of user data makes some rhizomatic attributes very useful for collection and organization of data, but truly rhizomatic parameters<sup>63</sup> are infinitely broad. There is plenty of information that may be meaningful to a user's sense of self but is uninteresting to Facebook's market-driven surveillance model and therefore not included in the interface design to be a distinct part of the user profile. For example, there is space in the profile for media brand preferences but nothing for a user's less marketer-friendly perception of their own mental health.

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<sup>62</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 33

<sup>63</sup> Theoretically, there are none.

The interface especially serves to overcode a unit structure onto Facebook users by establishing common channels of expression and connection, e.g. the profile form, the messaging system and the modes of interaction and connection such as “friendship,” “liking,” etc. which are all universal in the Facebook user experience. Further evidence of this being a unit structure is the practice of multiple accounts and fake accounts being grounds for immediate banning. Overcoding makes Facebook users quantifiable and within clear structural parameters that are fixed beyond their control, like the interface and Terms of Service. This unit structure also serves to encourage unification (the second aspect of Deleuzean unity) among users; confining Facebook users to the same channels of communication and interface parameters, with equally identical means of individual expression, makes them all theoretically accessible to one another and capable of constant potential connection, or unification. This is what constitutes Facebook “friendship,” a persistent connection linking two standardized Facebook rhizomorphs, creating more mutual “friends” and other linkages; we can now view this process of network growth in more accurate theoretical terms as an example of Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of unity.

The rhizome is ceaselessly re- and de-territorializing, described by Deleuze and Guattari in terms of connection to other rhizomes. Processes of connection and disconnection inform several of the principles of the rhizome which Deleuze and Guattari propose. Aspects of these rhizomatic principles have been mentioned throughout this chapter but will now be explained specifically in terms of Facebook. These principles are very important for understanding why, in terms of surveillance on Facebook, the

rhizomorphic model would be so attractive. The first two principles I would like to draw attention to are simultaneously articulated by Deleuze,

1 and 2. Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of the rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root which plots a point, fixes an order.<sup>64</sup>

We see Deleuze and Guattari here describing the rhizome's broad connective faculties and its need to compulsively engage in connection or disconnection. Deleuze and Guattari stress that a rhizome *must* ceaselessly re- and de-territorialize. Not only must it do this because of its rhizomatic character, it must also do this to try and stave off arborification. In this sense, it may be fair to suggest that the stability of the rhizome is inherently tied to it maintaining a semiotic instability that serves as its resistance to the ever-encroaching root-tree model.

This compulsion to (dis)connect aligns with another characteristic of the rhizome that has been already discussed in depth: the rhizome's open-endedness, its capacity to contain any form of knowledge and understanding that may require a structure of organization, without rendering it genealogical. This open applicability is emancipatory for Deleuze and Guattari and very useful for Facebook as a capturing mechanism when overcoded with a supplemental dimension of control.

To summarise the overcoding we have seen thus far: the design of Facebook's interface, its user policies, as well as the culture of connectivity and sharing that it promotes--among many other factors--are responsible for overcoding a rhizomatic human subject with a layer of control, rendering it an arborescent and standardized Facebook rhizomorph. These rhizomorphs are quantifiable, spatializable and surveillable according to the unit structure that Facebook has devised for its network. These units, through such

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<sup>64</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 7

controls as the profile structure, are structured to behave in order to increase unification (and thence surveillance) and exist in conditions which seductively encourage self-surveillance. Because Facebook's surveillance is profit-oriented, it then prioritizes capturing marketable subjective information about its units (like brand preferences and preferred content to share) making these the prominent features of every profile, or unit. The sortation algorithms impose an imperceptible stratification that prioritizes certain aspects of subjectivity over others and ultimately denies the rhizomatic potential of Facebook's open-ended platform. Facebook's platform, which has the capacity to employ sincerely rhizomatic tactics of connection, instead favours a profitable, arborescent scheme instead. Common channels of connection are critical to this design, as we will shortly see.

There is an intermediate step between initial registration and beginning to use Facebook that encourages users to "find friends," a practice involving the input of identifying information into Facebook's database by the registrant--usually email addresses or phone numbers--that may be tied to other profiles and signal a pre-registration connection of some sort. In other words: to locate, before the newly overcoded rhizomorph begins using Facebook, other rhizomorphs to establish a connection with, in a process which Facebook terms finding "friendship." Presuming that this is at least somewhat successful, i.e. that a user going through the Facebook registration process identifies at least one potential user whose rhizomorph they could connect to, they will then enter the Facebook network already networked and potentially co-surveilled. Of course, all Facebook rhizomorphs are intrinsically networked by being bound upon registration to the infrastructure of Facebook, from the physical servers that

constitute the slight material reality of the rhizomorph to the amorphous, virtually sovereign administration that exerts potentially total control at all times; even if they never have any “friends,” the network still indexes their rhizomorph for search.

The ideal speaker-listener status of the user is first established in the registration process by the “find friends” step. The crucial point here is that from a user’s perspective their Facebook rhizomorph is always established first and foremost and *then* seeks out connection. The individual user is always made to feel primacy over the rest of the Facebook network, both infrastructure and other users, through its rhizomorphic design that promotes a perception of primacy which in turn engenders a potential view of emancipation and agency within a truthfully hierarchical sortation machine.

We can take these two points, the embedded infrastructural position of all Facebook rhizomorphs within the network, and the establishment of the individual primacy of each rhizomorph, to demonstrate how Facebook arborifies a key principle of the rhizomatic mode. The principle of connectivity is maintained in that users are constantly encouraged to gather more “friends,” either explicitly<sup>65</sup> or implicitly via, for example, the constant presence on the interface of the “Find Friends” button on the interface. However, the principle of connectivity is always arborified within the Facebook infrastructure (recall the limited and standardised channels of interaction), and thus is actually quite narrow in terms of connective possibility.

Interface aside, pressure to gather more connections, and rhizomorphically grow the network as a result, occurs mainly due to the culture promoted on Facebook of valorized connectivity, of more connectivity being good and a sign of positive social

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<sup>65</sup> For example, the network will send out occasional unsolicited emails inquiring if a given user “knows” another user and would then like to establish a rhizomorphic link to them.

status. Indeed, Facebook “friend collecting” has been studied as a cultural practice that is valorized by those who sincerely value “Facebook friendship” as a metric of social status or those who, for example, see a different value in it such as establishing as many “useful” (economically, socially, politically) contacts as possible. This user philosophy could be seen as a different “networking” practice, commonly associated with the neoliberal business world, applied rhizomorphically through a virtual platform that tacitly encourages it and provides an intuitive space for it.<sup>66</sup> The proof of friend collecting as a powerful mass cultural force on Facebook, regardless of whatever motivates the practice individually, can be seen in the scope of engagement and criticism with the concept in the popular press.<sup>67</sup>

The rhizomatic principle of connectivity is built into the construction of an ideal Facebook rhizomorph. A strong desire for connection is encouraged both structurally and culturally; this cultural point is expanded in the third chapter. For now, everything about the process of “connection” on Facebook is arborified most fundamentally and inescapably by its structure. It is useful here to return to my point that Facebook rhizomorphs always exist as infrastructural embeds first and foremost within the Facebook network. This is the original relationship for any Facebook rhizomorph, a

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<sup>66</sup> Arguably, Facebook is ideologically in agreement with any practice that promotes connectivity and still falls within the allowable uses of its network. Different cultural practices coming together on Facebook to help its overall aim of increasing its connectivity is a good example of a concept developed in the third chapter, “enmeshment”.

<sup>67</sup> The friend collecting phenomenon has been studied for both a long time and from a variety of perspectives, from addiction potential to social etiquette. See: Bartz, A., & Ehrlich, B. (2012, March 1). Beware the Facebook “friend collector”. Retrieved March 14, 2014, from CNN. Goodchild, S. (2008, August 22). The women addicted to Facebook friendships. Retrieved March 25, 2014, from The London Evening Standard. Highfield, R., Fleming, N. (2007, September 12). Facebook study reveals users 'trophy friends'. Retrieved April 5, 2014 from The Telegraph.

biunivocal relationship<sup>68</sup> that first materializes on a molecular level within servers owned by the Facebook corporation; because of this, users on Facebook are always subject to the code that the same company owns and imposes, most tangibly in the form of interface; the registration process is also similarly governed by Facebook. The significance of this is that there is an instantaneous, unseen and irrevocable arborification of rhizomatic nature of the Facebook user at the point of creation.

The relationship described here is a static connection that destroys rhizomatic potential in clear Deleuzian terms. It establishes stratification by embedding the rhizomorph within the network on all levels; it establishes an order, a hierarchy where the network writ large and its infrastructure will always control the rhizomorph structurally, and exert further pressure on the user's behaviour. Absent the network's existence and the rhizomorph vanishes as well as it cannot constitute itself separately. Another example is the material user, who is functionally irrelevant in an instance of disciplinary profile suspension or deletion. Further, there is absolutely no line of flight, no ability to de-territorialize or re-stratify because of the rigid and unilateral interface. This is a universal phenomenon for Facebook rhizomorphs, it is part of the global moment of overcode that standardises and establishes unit structure within the network. This is the arborification, and therefore destruction, of the principle of heterogeneity that is inherent to the authentic rhizome. Connection remains as a part of the rhizomatic life of a Facebook rhizomorph, as users may still express their will to (dis)connect as they please, but the interface structure imposes homogenous parameters of connection, and there is little to no possible

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<sup>68</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pp. 8-9 describe biunivocal relationships, derived from mathematics, as an unequal relationship between two terms that are connected *because* of one of those terms. The seemingly divided (the rhizomorph and the invisible network infrastructure) are in fact bound together on the basis of the network's constitution and infrastructural support of the rhizomorph. This presents an appearance of the rhizomatic, i.e. the rhizomorphic, but in fact engages in arborescent unity.

deviance from the arborescent schema that Facebook embeds its rhizomorphs within as a result.

Moving away from the initial rhizomorph-infrastructure stratification, we see the same processes taking place in the visible user-to-user connection as well. In a user-to-user connection, commonly termed a “Facebook friendship,” the same overcoding processes of stratification and the fixing of a static, relational order occur. The stratification process is in fact more insidiously transparent in this instance. Whereas there are many overt indications of the original rhizomorph-infrastructure stratification (such as the Terms of Service, which explains it in an explicitly legal framework), the stratification of a user-to-user connection is algorithmic and therefore hidden beyond the visible interface.

Recall the social sortation algorithms of the News Feed which select content based on algorithmic perception of user interest and potential engagement. That this happens constantly, that every piece of content is analyzed and disseminated based upon individual user interest, is an essentially imperceptible stratification. Algorithms on the Facebook network stratify each user-to-user connection according to its perception of that connection; based upon user-to-user engagement, such as posting on each profile’s Timeline, or messaging frequency, or any number of possible metrics, the network stratifies each connection, prioritizing the dissemination of content on a user-by-user basis. This stratification, due to its algorithmic nature, is always in flux and can be modulated by the algorithm, and the algorithm by Facebook. The connection never exits this control schema and is always potentially subject to sortation. The algorithm itself is rhizomorphic, as it exhibits the rhizomatic capacity of constantly de-/re-territorializing

and establishing new stratifications through altering its perception of each fixed connection<sup>69</sup> on the network. However, it is divorced from any user agency by being a part of the infrastructure, imperceptible and untouchable by users. Instead, it is in the service of a corporate surveillance agenda that orients its sortation toward maximizing the surveillance and surveillability of its users.

There is a rhizomatic principle that is left largely intact by the Facebook network's process of overcoding because it is useful to the network's stability and maintaining the consistency of its surveillance in spite of user agency,

4. Principle of asignifying rupture: against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines... Every rhizome contains line of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees.<sup>70</sup>

In part, the rhizome is emancipatory because its unconstrained, free-flowing connections makes a collective of rhizomes (termed a "multiplicity" by Deleuze and Guattari) resistant to divisive ruptures, or unifying "power takeovers" by dominating signs.<sup>71</sup> Because pure rhizomes are independent and constantly reconfiguring themselves along, new lines of segmentation or stratification, it is difficult to engineer any sort of schism as there is no unity to rupture. Likewise, the constant processes of realignment that

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<sup>69</sup> Not under discussion explicitly here, but it is important to note that Facebook establishes all individual instances of connection on the network as biunivocal; a three-pronged "friendship" connection or anything outside of a binary configuration is not structurally possible within the interface, and those two-pronged friendships are always constituted on the basis of one of those "friends" requesting to connect to the other first; conversely, the recipient always has the power of rejection or acceptance. Though the requested user can of course deny the request, if a connection *is* made, there is primacy embedded in it. This creates a hierarchy that cannot be re-stratified, because the status of a "Facebook friendship" is an arborized binary that either exists in a prefabricated, standard form, or ceases to exist (de-friending). It cannot be reorganized, or certainly restratified, by the users. This severe restriction in the ability of users to (dis)connect rhizomatically is a symptom of severe arborescence.

<sup>70</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 9

<sup>71</sup> Ibid p. 9-10

differentiate each rhizome are naturally resistant to the arborescent schema, which seeks to freeze the various lines drawn between rhizomes.

I have discussed at length the establishment of a standardised unit structure that the Facebook network utilizes in order to overcode its users into rhizomorphs, but it also simultaneously establishes a more convention unity in the sense of unification, a “Oneness” which is equally arborescent. For Facebook, we can conceive of this through the Facebook rhizomorph’s original position as an infrastructural embed that is secondary to the central Facebook administration, as well as the standardisation of Facebook “friendship” through common channels of connectivity. All new Facebook connections constitute momentum toward Deleuzian unity by engaging both in establishing a standardised unit structure and further establishing a fixed, classical unity between said units by embedding them all within a centralized surveillance infrastructure.

There is also a practical effect of this ever-increasing unification: it grows the network, adding more rhizomorphic connections, and thus increasing the volume of surveillance data. It insulates the network against structural rupture in a form of resistance resembling an inverted form of Deleuze and Guattari’s description of rhizomatic resistance against the root-tree schema. The rhizomatic multiplicity resists arborification due to its principle of asignifying rupture, i.e. it inherently resists semiotic stability and thus rupture becomes difficult without a visible,<sup>72</sup> pre-existing and stable unity to divide; the rupture, in other words, signifies little to nothing without established unity. In Facebook’s case, the overcode process (especially the establishment of

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<sup>72</sup> Of course in truth there is total unity on the Facebook network, else the total panoptical power to surveil would not exist. The seductive power of an individual user to “choose” their friends, as well as those who are not chosen being partially walled off within the network, helps foster an illusion of structural individuality among profiles. In truth, the only individuality is whatever remains of the individual, post-overcode.

interface) produces such a homogeneous unity that, on a network scale, users are ultimately reducible to assigned numbers. For a user who has several hundred structurally identical “friend” connections in their micro-network within the broader Facebook network it is statistically insignificant to Facebook even if a few dozen of these “friends” simultaneously exercise their limited capacity for deterritorialization and “defriend,” i.e. structurally disconnect,<sup>73</sup> from that user. It will not affect the structural integrity of either the user’s micro-network, or the broader Facebook network at all, and certainly not the surveillance.

In terms of the culture of Facebook, involuntarily losing several dozen “friends” at once would be an extremely aberrant event as “de-friending” is not a normalized practice on Facebook. Again, this is symptomatic of Facebook’s aim of Deleuzian unity, where deterritorialization is either discouraged or rendered structurally impossible<sup>74</sup> and wherein network connectivity (or unification) is acculturated in users as virtuous. The user experience is not functionally affected: the algorithms adjust the connectivity metrics, recovering seamlessly. The remaining connections automatically realign so that the algorithms can seamlessly continue sorting the remaining content that will continue to be disseminated to the user. The most visible shift would be a minute structural adjustment that is nothing more than an assigned number, or superficial cultural marker, outside of a surveillance context: The number of “friends” counted would drop slightly for that profile. Other statistics derived from this, such as “mutual friends” across other

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<sup>73</sup> As much as they are able to within the context of the network infrastructure.

<sup>74</sup> Recall the practice of “friend collecting”: the number of connections is generally expected to grow, not shrink. The convenience of algorithmic technology that automates most social interaction of Facebook, via the News Feed, makes friend collection both easy and its own reward, i.e. the News Feed makes maintaining these connections very simple, and the more connections that are made, the more efficiently and expansively the sortation algorithms will work, and the more curated content that will be delivered to the end user.

user profiles, would also have to be adjusted (or more precisely, re-territorialized) according to the segmentation and rupture that this hypothetical disconnection brings, again a fairly effortless and technologically automated task. Standardising technology is what makes this process of recovery seamless, leveraging the rhizomatic principle of asignifying rupture to assure constant network stability, regardless of the exercises of user agency that Facebook users are allowed. While there are many allowances of agency for Facebook users, and obviously the exercise of agency is critical to the self-expression that Facebook desires of its subjects, it is only within a structure that massively arborizes any rhizomatic potential that these exercises of agency may otherwise entail.

With rhizomorphic resistance, Facebook recovers from disconnection without issue, not due to a principle of heterogeneity but rather a principle of homogeneic redundancy. By homogeneic redundancy, I refer again to the standardisation of the Facebook rhizomorph and the interchangeability its construction engenders. To return to the “mass de-friending” example: if the exact same number of rhizomorphs, different users, however, connected to the mass de-friended rhizomorph and restored their previous quantitative level of connectivity, it would not matter structurally or functionally that these are new user subjectivities who are connecting, as far as Facebook is concerned. The algorithms proceed to sort regardless, always foregrounded with an arborescent mission to maximize user enjoyment and engagement. These transactions that are couched in terms of “friendship” by Facebook are easily, if cynically, reducible to the numerical, statistical adjustments of a counting machine that has no need to consider the “authentic,” or at least original, subject that ostensibly informs and controls the rhizomorphic profile.

Subjective information is captured by Facebook primarily for the purposes of surveillance, not to re-create that self with any objective of authentic reconstruction. Facebook's registration process is constructed to establish the arborified rhizome, bound by the Terms of Service and interface, down to the physical servers that Facebook exists on, also owned by Facebook Inc.. Structural and cultural pressures on the user orient them to seek out connection, the interface design centering them as the original source of connection and establishing the perceived primacy of the individual user, forming part of what Deleuze and Guattari term the ideal speaker-listener binary; its purpose within Facebook establishes permanent conditions for massive self-surveillance, as well as promoting continuous engagement with the seemingly synoptical<sup>75</sup> News Feed. The News Feed promotes extensive self-surveillance as well as co-surveillance of other rhizomorphs through browsing and interaction. That this happens universally to all users of Facebook, that this overcode always establishes the standard rhizomorph form, and that they are oriented toward unification, constitutes Deleuzian unity. The overcode fixes the possible lines of flight, which can be observed on the Facebook network through the rigidly structured communication channels, which severely limit a Facebook user's connective or disconnective potential. All connection on Facebook is designed as a standardised connection that is biunivocal, and therefore always embedded with the logic of the ideal speaker-listener binary because of this. The macrocosmic effect of standardisation is that all connection on the network serves to create further unification; the microcosmic effect of the ideal speaker-listener status of each user is that the perception of individual primacy is always reinforced. In both cases all users' potential

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<sup>75</sup> Seemingly synoptical because the overcode may centre the user's perspective in what appears to them a central, and therefore powerful, position within a panoptic configuration (viewing and interacting with the News Feed) but in truth they are simply part of an even broader control arrangement.

actions are oriented toward increasing their surveillability, and whatever limited room for de-territorialization is allowed is so limited that it affects no meaningful change in the network if it is exercised. This creates an efficient, stable structure to be scanned algorithmically for useful information that has already been captured with total sovereign authority by the same system, as we have already seen.

### **The Significance of the Pseudomultiplicity**

To recall, ruptures are very difficult within a rhizomatic multiplicity because of the disunity that the rhizomatic mode is characterized in part by. With Facebook's network, it is the registration process that turns each possibly emancipatory rhizome into an arborified rhizomorph that then stabilizes within the network by becoming part of a unit structure principled on homogeneous redundancy, an inverted form of the principle of asignifying rupture. This structural design is then actualized through a completely standardized interface. We can understand this principle of homogeneous redundancy by hearkening back to the example of new users replacing past disconnections in the social catastrophe scenario. An individual user (or even many users at once) disconnecting from any other node represents little more for the network than a numeric shift, one that can be corrected by any other rhizomorph establishing new connections in place of the old. The realignment of this sorting, facilitated by the algorithmic controls, completes this process of recovery. The subject, the user who co-constitutes the rhizomorph is again revealed as largely irrelevant. This user irrelevance to the network's structure and function, whether it is a process of de- or re-territorialization, whether it is "friending" or "defriending,"

demonstrates Facebook's standardisation of subjectivity into an interchangeable piece of a unified and ordered multiplicity.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Facebook requires users to individuate themselves constantly in order to affect self-surveillance that is attractive to advertisers. This is still true, and as we have extensively seen now, occurs constantly through all use of Facebook by the users. This is also why the establishment, and constant maintenance, of the biunivocal speaker-listener binary in every single connection on the network is so key: it maintains the seductive perception of individual primacy within an arborifying structure (the digital interface) that overcodes subjectivity on the basis of what constitutes marketable data by, for example, appearing to centre the user in a position of synoptical power. Through the registration process ("find your friends"), interface ("Find Friends urges the interface, constantly), or the narrativizing and deeply genealogical Timeline, Facebook rhizomorphs are strongly oriented toward surveillance, existing on a network that offers an attractive social platform offering a perception of individualistic primacy alongside a convenient form for social play, and the actualization of that primacy. The reality, however, is not primacy but that of a standardised unit that, for Facebook at least, represents a commodifiable data set that is reducible to the numeric.

Facebook is, at least in part, an arborescent pseudomultiplicity. We can see that the tree-root schema informs all aspects of its network's seemingly rhizomatic, but truthfully rhizomorphic structure; further, that in each aspect of the structure a motivation derived from a desire to more efficiently surveil can always be recovered, even if it runs parallel to more sincere motivations like creating a safer or more fun social space. The Facebook network is designed with overcoded rhizomatic principles that are structured in

order to serve as a fluid, yet centrally controlled, surveillance architecture. This fluidly rhizomatic architecture operates within an arborescent structure built upon principles of homogeneity, hierarchy and centrality, ordering the rhizomatic human subject into the standardised, controllably rhizomorphic subjective form of the Facebook user.

As a collective of rhizomes constitutes a multiplicity, the arborified rhizome constitutes the pseudomultiplicity. Rhizomes totally constitute the multiplicity, generating an appearance of a collective or multiplicity whilst always resisting unity through anti-genealogical organization; thus, it is characterized as not just a multiplicity, but a rhizomatic multiplicity. The rhizomes are the constitution, as well as the defining attribute, of the multiplicity; this is what Deleuze means by the pseudomultiplicity being “exposed as arborescent”<sup>76</sup> by the multiplicity. The rhizomatic counters the arborescent and so the schema of control behind the overcoding of the multiplicity into a pseudomultiplicity is revealed as the root-tree schema. It is the arborescent pseudomultiplicity and is named as such because, much as with the rhizomatic multiplicity, it is arborescence that it both the constitution and character of the pseudomultiplicity.

Facebook is similarly revealed as not just a pseudomultiplicity, a network that claims an ideology of connecting individuals when it in fact converts subjects into standardised units to network them in a homogeneic surveillance configuration. The Facebook pseudomultiplicity is also informed constitutionally by arborescence, in which it overcodes a specific level of agency granted to its users through a series of modulated

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<sup>76</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) p. 8

controls:<sup>77</sup> registration, which begins the overcode process establishing conditions of consensual sovereign control and creating the initial profile form; the interface, which allows Facebook to “centre” the user as appearing to be primary and establishing the ideal speaker-listener status of the user while beginning surveillance simultaneously; and mechanisms of consumer seduction, used to attain equally total consent to this surveillance. Each user is being disciplined by a technologically advanced and highly refined schema of virtual control. From a material level to the highly controlled overcoding process on a techno-subjective level, the Facebook rhizomorph is rigidly channelled to engage in a deep form of self-surveillance, the capturing mechanism of which converts any and all network usage into a potential product to be sold. Facebook is clearly a pseudomultiplicity, and this marks Facebook as indisputably arborescent. Arborescence is an essential characteristic of the pseudomultiplicity as the rhizomatic is to the multiplicity.

Facebook is an arborescent pseudomultiplicity but, as I alluded early, this is still, along with the panoptical uses found within the pseudomultiplicity, an incomplete model of Facebook’s surveillance. Arborescence is a large factor in this control, but total arborescence is not possible on Facebook without extinguishing all user agency and compromising the network’s seductive qualities, thus risking the overall stability of the surveillance project. Facebook cannot arborize, at least fully, the actions of a conscious user while maintaining an environment that seductively encourages self-surveillance. This total arborification is difficult to conceive (in large part because Facebook would never do it) but could be theorized as involving strict terms of censorship that forces all

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<sup>77</sup> Deleuze describes the emerging, post-Foucaultian societies of control as a series of ever-shifting modulations. See Deleuze, G. (1994). Postscript on the societies of control. *October*, 59 pp. 3-7.

interaction to be explicitly tied to marketable data, a development which would likely undermine much of Facebook's appeal and by extension its surveillance value.

Facebook can channel its interface structure toward surveillance and organize the interface around arborescence to limit autonomy; it can also leverage sovereign and disciplinary power, through the Terms of Service, to curtail undesirable user behaviour that may discourage connectivity; and as we will see in the third chapter, it can use these structures to foster control on a cultural level as well. However, it cannot, without risking the security of its surveillance operation, take a purely structural approach to fostering ideal surveillance conditions. Users must be allowed a level of agency that is extended more powerfully in Facebook's virtual space and thus extremely seductive to use; this agency is itself a form of control, yes, but not one that can dictate action. Facebook must engage with user culture in more subtle ways in order to further condition its network environment to be primarily concerned with immaterially labourious self-surveillance, beyond the practical limits of structural control within a social network.

The unique character of Facebook's control schema cannot be comfortably situated either in just panopticism or the disciplinary society as a model of control. Likewise, though highly useful, the arborescent schema does not fully account for the control that the Facebook network exerts over its user culture. Facebook manipulates its user's behaviours through the rhizomorphic form of the profile, and other interface elements, to be oriented toward maximizing surveillability. Through analysis we have seen that this involves the deployment of a remixed panoptical system as a critical element in maintaining attractive conditions for self-surveillance. This panoptical organization is rendered more powerful in a digital form and is capable of manifesting in

newly extended, remixed ways. We have also seen that the rhizomorphic schema is capable of modelling Facebook's network structure while incorporating the panoptical elements. Finally, we have seen that the arborescent regime, especially its overcoding of the ideal speaker-listener binary and establishment of Deleuzean unity, is an integral part of the network's stability and successful surveillance. This is all useful in providing a taxonomy of Facebook's network structure, but its utility for comprehension ends, or at least becomes severely limited, the moment that Facebook users actually use Facebook to replicate their largely<sup>78</sup> rhizomatic social relations. The structures that arborify the network so rigidly and effectively would signal the death of Facebook's attractiveness to users if it applied the same rigidity to its user culture, and thus a new form of control must be included to complete a model of Facebook's surveillance project.

The Facebook network's surveillance is predicated upon voluntary social play. It must be fun and able to host a mimetically competent structure that is capable of virtualizing analog social play so that it is re-presented as accurate, convenient and above all enjoyable to participate in online. A major part of this success must be the user's perception of authenticity, a sense that these interactions are as "real" as analog ones and thus worth replicating or enacting on the network. Ultimately then, the sort of arborification Facebook prefers for its network structure, which in practical terms would involve the deployment of strict legal terms of censorship allowing only commodifiable speech, is unrealistic for controlling the actual usage of the network because it would hinder the truly dominant Facebook ideology of maximizing surveillance. Nevertheless, despite its preferred structural control style being more hindrance than help in terms of

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<sup>78</sup> Apart from pre-existing social discipline that they bring onto the network, untouched by the overcode process due to its utility in establishing control.

modulating user culture the Facebook network is still wildly successful as a surveillance system; this is because it is a wildly successful social network. There is therefore clearly an absent aspect of this model, one accounting for the pervasive qualities of seduction that have appeared throughout the analysis thus far.

Naturally, part of this success is due to its wide scope of what Facebook desires to capture—recall the poetic quotation from Deleuze and Guattari that provided an image of this scope—but it is also successful in modulating its users to engage routinely in maintaining their rhizomorph through the profile, Timeline, and other interface elements. This amounts in practice (the practice known as “facebooking”) to virtually replicating life in as close to real-time as possible through mediatisation, an immensely labourious practice that has become part of the typical social experience for many. This cannot be explained through overcoding, as overcoding does not address the rhizomatic cultural forces that manifest within the structure other than that they are generally arborified. Facebook’s user culture cannot be simply arborified through structural imposition without destroying the economic value of user activity, and therefore how it is so successfully channelled for surveillance has not yet been fully accounted for yet.

The process of overcoding can be conceived of as existing in the supplemental dimension, in which the arborescent regime overcodes and unifies a multiplicity, resulting in a pseudomultiplicity. In Facebook’s case, the supplemental dimension is represented by the virtualized controls that the network uses to render users rhizomorphic, such as the interface as well as all other aspects of control that I have mentioned. However, at this juncture I would like to expand the parameters of the supplemental dimension and reduce the overcode process from the dominant paradigm to

one part of a larger overlay of control, much the same as chapter one re-positioned panopticism as ultimately one facet of a larger, unnamed schema; the panoptical dimensions of Facebook can be neatly placed under the same “supplemental dimension” as the overcode. This dimension is also capable of maintaining a dormant, but always reserved, authority that my analysis derives principally from Foucault, while actively exerting control across structure (arborescence) and, as well, is capable of modulating (or, as we shall see, seducing) the culture of Facebook, further controlling user practices and orienting them toward surveillability.

## Chapter 3

### Friendshopping

#### The Seduction of Liquidity on Facebook

In 2000, Roy Boyne published a critique of the continued predominance of the panoptical model entitled “Post-Panopticism,”<sup>79</sup> which outlines what have come to be regarded as some of the primary theoretical arguments against the use of panopticism as a singular model of surveillance analysis in contemporary society.<sup>80</sup> These arguments are framed as manifestations of a society that has outgrown panopticism; one such argument is that mechanisms of seduction have outmoded older forms of discipline, such as panopticism. Facebook, as a widespread example of contemporary surveillance, provides an object of analysis that is equally useful when applied against Boyne’s proposals in “Post-Panopticism” as Foucault’s in “Panopticism.” Chief among the post-panoptical models that Boyne identifies is Zygmunt Bauman’s theory of liquid modernity, a theory he has developed extensively and with particular interest toward its role in reshaping surveillance through seduction. Bauman has also argued for the displacement of panopticism as the dominant theoretical paradigm of surveillance studies.<sup>81</sup>

Analyzing Facebook in terms of the panoptical model proved useful for illuminating the extent and parameters of panoptical deployment on the Facebook network. This, in turn, led to the second chapter’s proposal that a model based in principles of rhizomatic and arborescent knowledge organization may better flesh out the network structure of Facebook and how it is designed for greater levels of control,

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<sup>79</sup> Boyne, R. (2000). Post-panopticism. *Economy and Society*, 29 (3) pp. 285-307.

<sup>80</sup> Lyon extensively paraphrases Boyne’s arguments as part of his survey of criticism against panopticism, See Lyon, D. (2007). *Surveillance studies: an overview*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. p. 59-61

<sup>81</sup> Bauman and Lyon (2013) p. 120-122

surveillance and commodification. While a Deleuzean model of surveillance does prove to augment the panoptical model in Facebook's case, it reaches an appreciable limit at the point of agency. My Deleuzean topography of Facebook can model the network structure, demonstrating how Facebook is designed to encourage maximum user surveillability, but how the free actions of the users are made to self- and co-surveil beyond structural pressure is left unexplained. An arborescent schema cannot extend meaningfully to the user culture of Facebook without alienating users and risking the stability<sup>82</sup> of the network and its surveillance. User culture on Facebook is highly structured, but not through external imposition by Facebook; recall that with the most overt and constant disciplinary force on Facebook, civility, the human subject is already interpellated through various disciplinary institutions into being well-mannered long before they begin using Facebook.

I have touched upon an example of this cultural pressure, "friend collecting," but did not place it in this analytic context. I believe it may prove a useful example of the user culture that Facebook cultivates in order to most efficiently actualize its structural conditions of surveillance. Bauman's concept of liquid modernity is my starting point to clarify this problem.

Broadly speaking, the theory of the "liquid modernity" characterizes a shift that Bauman sees from the rigidly structured "solid" society, which desires to produce disciplined subjects that can effectively labour through a set system of disciplinary organizations that society is filtered through,<sup>83</sup> to a society characterized by a much softer, more pervasive and less apparent form of control; this takes the form of constant,

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<sup>82</sup> Recall that user enjoyment is a fundamental part of the security and stability of the Facebook network.

<sup>83</sup> Examples include the school, the workplace, and cultural constructions of "family", institutions that are essentially inescapable facets of being a subject in contemporary society.

modulated consumer seduction. Bauman terms this the condition of liquidity modernity in contrast to the solid status of earlier modernity.<sup>84</sup> Rather than being disciplined through a system of institutional disciplines into normalized subjects that are then oriented toward constant participation in the ideological goal of the system, consumer seduction functions quite differently, and more pervasively, toward the same end,

Most of us are socially and culturally trained and shaped as sensation-seekers and gatherers, rather than producers and soldiers. Constant openness for new sensations and greed for ever new experience, always stronger and deeper than before, is a condition sine qua non of being amenable to seduction. It is not 'health' with its connotation of a steady state, of an immobile target on which all properly trained bodies converge – but 'fitness', implying being always on the move or ready to move, capacity for imbibing and digesting ever-greater volumes of stimuli, flexibility and resistance to all closure, that grasps the quality expected from the experience-collector, the quality that indeed she or he must possess to seek and absorb sensations.<sup>85</sup>

Liquid modernity opens everything up to consumerist seduction, massively extending capitalist power with new forms of commodification. One of Bauman's examples of this is the shift from "health", the ideal of being healthy as such, to "fitness", an ideal of being healthy as well as a desire to achieve a particular cultural construction of being "in shape." In Bauman's example, there is a shift in western society from health discipline, e.g. vaccination programs, general health guidelines and disease control etc., to a consumerist mode which he calls fitness.<sup>86</sup> Atop the old programs of disciplinary health<sup>87</sup> a new paradigm of seductive, market-based control emerges. It is no longer enough to simply be healthy as such; a whole new market segment emerges as a condition of

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<sup>84</sup> For a detailed analysis of liquid modernity in the context of consumerism and consumer seduction, see Bauman, Z. (2005). *Liquid life*. Cambridge, UK: Polity. p. 80-89

<sup>85</sup> p. 23 in Bauman, Z. (1999). On postmodern uses of sex. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15 (1) pp. 19-33.

<sup>86</sup> Bauman (2005) p. 95-96

<sup>87</sup> Lyon and Bauman (2013) p. 128-129 observe that old and new modes of control enmesh and transfer efficiently in a liquid environment.

“fitness.” Gym memberships to access training technology, private fitness training to access expert help, and fitness clothing designed to aid the process are three examples of commodities that spring to mind in the consumer category of fitness.<sup>88</sup> In exchange, one is promised both a technological advantage (through buying more commodities in order to be fit) as well as the ability to take on a favourable identity, i.e. a “fit” person. Of course, as Lyon and Bauman note, none of the disciplinary force of the health regime is lost, it is simply overlaid by consumerist seduction. The impetus to stay healthy is still intact; there is simply a concurrent process of seductive commodification that occurs as well, extending the capitalistic potential from simply maintaining a healthy labourer to doing this while generating a whole new market segment. Bauman draws a connection between policing and this production of desire, explicitly suggesting the generation of market segments as a form of control; each new market segment represents another chance to further ensnare the liquid subject, or freshly seduce new ones, in a process of rampant commodification and of keeping the subject within the liquid regime.<sup>89</sup> This overlay of consumerist seduction, while not replacing, does ideologically displace discipline from the centre of societal control, hence Bauman’s position that panopticism has diminished in organizational dominance, if not commonality.<sup>90</sup>

A challenge that this phase of liquid consumer seduction faces, at least in this phase of Bauman’s analysis, is expending a lot of resources.<sup>91</sup> It is no small task, says Bauman, to constantly generate new market segments or other categories of consumer

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<sup>88</sup> It is useful to note here that in all three examples, the overall goal is access to something. Deleuze (1992) pp. 3-6 makes the case that societies of control are chiefly characterized by controlling access, rather than the disciplinary society which is characterized by advancement through enclosure.

<sup>89</sup> Bauman and Lyon (2013) p. 57

<sup>90</sup> Ibid pp. 56-57

<sup>91</sup> Ibid p. 124

seduction. This process means the constant analyzing culture for exploitable points of possible commodification, and then enacting a process of seduction—examples could include advertising, promotion, the promise of convenience and improvement—in order to actualize those points of liquid commodification and then crystallize them within cultural discourse as positive. Bauman suggests that we have entered third stage to mitigate this expenditure: exploiting the already seduced liquid consumers, as well as ever-advancing technological capacity, to readily give up new commodifiable desires without the need for seduction; in an online context, consumers mostly give up this information through their consent to widespread data collection and surveillance.<sup>92</sup> Bauman gives the example of Amazon’s incredible prescience in suggesting purchases based upon past buying history as an example; already accustomed to dataveillance,<sup>93</sup> users are normalized to surrender their buying history in exchange for the massive convenience Amazon provides. Thus, the onus is implicitly placed upon the user to produce new categories, categories that can be even more guaranteed to be successful as they are ostensibly generated from the consumer themselves. Advanced online monitoring technologies, which enables this dataveillance, allows the surveillance onus to be placed upon the consumer almost invisibly, with minimal cost to the producer and minimal effort (to the point of imperceptibility) by the cognitive labourer.

Facebook applies this logic to social play and, in Baumanian terms, is attempting the liquefaction of social relations. The above has provided a general theoretical map of liquid modernity that may now be mapped onto Facebook to demonstrate its cultural

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<sup>92</sup> Bauman and Lyon (2013) p. 125

<sup>93</sup> A term in surveillance studies denoting surveillance that is specifically oriented toward the standardised collection of certain data, e.g. Amazon’s archival of all purchases, or Facebook’s total data collection of all network content.

processes of orienting its user's practices toward surveillance. Facebook engages in what Bauman and Lyon develop from Bauman's theory of liquid modernity, as well as Lyon's considerable surveillance scholarship, as "liquid surveillance." Lyon makes it clear that liquid surveillance is not a particular model of organizational surveillance, à la panopticism, but is rather an orientation that suggests the direction surveillance may be shifting in;<sup>94</sup> it suggests how surveillance may reconstitute itself in a liquid modern world. Lyon argues that surveillance has realigned itself to the demands of liquid modernity's producers, and as a result,

Surveillance spreads in hitherto unimaginable ways, responding to and reproducing liquidity. Without a fixed container, but jolted by "security" demands and tipped by technology companies' insistent marketing, surveillance spills out all over.<sup>95</sup>

Facebook gives us an excellent case study in liquid surveillance and the proliferation of Bauman's third stage of subject-generated consumer seduction. Facebook provides an extremely convenient platform for mass social interaction, as well as for constant self-identification and expression. All of this is only available on the condition that Facebook be granted techno-judicial sovereignty over all network content, including everything that constitutes a Facebook profile. In exchange for social convenience, users have agreed universally to liquefy their social relations and mediatize their subjectivity along highly commodifiable lines. Anything done on Facebook is subject to potential commodification, all content is constantly algorithmically sorted and disseminated, existing social connections are used to suggest new ones, and everything said is scanned for possible hints as to purchasing habits and desires to be sold to interested parties.

All activity on Facebook is liquid, a possible commodity, and its surveillance is

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<sup>94</sup> Bauman and Lyon (2013) pp. 2-3

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

likewise organized around this commodification. Facebook's surveillance is not generally concerned with the punitive or more corrective dimension of the "solid" surveillance world. However, it always reserves that authority, even more so given its sovereign terms. This harkens back to Lyon and Bauman's points that older forms of discipline and new forms of control intertwine effectively, and while they may displace each other can still function usefully in a concurrent fashion. In Facebook's case, the panoptical gaze is deployed in an extended, occasionally remixed way. It is the technologically perfected instrument of liquid surveillance. The virtual algorithms, capable of "spilling" across any and all Facebook content for sortation/dissemination, panoptically sweep the network totally and constantly in order to generate useful advertising data, with consensual sovereign impunity and, as a result, impenetrable opacity.

Facebook contributes to the liquefaction of social relations by utilizing the principles of consumerist seduction to extend and accelerate its processes of surveillance and commodification; these processes are predicated on users engaging in a proprietary form of hyper-surveilled social play called facebooking. From the registration process (the first part of facebooking) onward, adding Facebook friends is aggressively marketed in manners similar to other consumer goods. Much as the Amazon user's past purchasing history to suggest possible new ones, Facebook uses pre-existing email contacts (that the user inputs at Facebook's request) to scan the network to determine if that information that may be connected to a profile. Then, the network suggests users, based on identification with those email addresses, to pre-connect as Facebook "friends" with before even completing the registration process. The encouragement to acquire more friends continues with all usage of Facebook: any new connection leads to new

suggestions of more possible connections, forever asking “do you know?” various users. The “Find Friends” button provides an additional, permanent<sup>96</sup> window to “shop” for more Facebook friends based upon the data a user has available (names, email addresses, cell phone numbers, etc.). Facebook’s publically stated ideology of connectivity, of wanting to connect the world, informally codifies and lays plain the agglomerating design of attaining “friendship” on Facebook.<sup>97</sup>

“Friendship” and connectivity are conjoined concepts in Facebook’s ideological discourse: Facebook friends are connections, all user-to-user instances of connection are termed “friendship”; therefore, all connectivity in this sense constitutes an increase in friendship, thus increasing Facebook connectivity is good and social, intrinsically tied to the adjoining concepts of “having friends” and “being liked.” Any intimate associations with friendship or any other criteria for the term “friend” are semiotically stamped out by Facebook’s standardizations. Friendship is reframed as a catchall term for user-to-user connection within Facebook, and this has led to speculation about the value of Facebook friendship.<sup>98</sup> This also reduces friendship to a branding term for Facebook.

Facebook fosters connectivity as a virtue in part because the functioning of surveillance is more efficient in this case with greater connectivity. It is not difficult to imagine then why it may be convenient (and clearly, highly effective) to brand

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<sup>96</sup> Recall that the “Find Friends” button is embedded in the interface and therefore a persistent element of all Facebook use.

<sup>97</sup> See Zuckerberg (2012)

<sup>98</sup> In a newspaper piece, Julian Kilker uses community, formerly associated with close geographical bounds, as another term that has been re-framed by technological change. See Przybys, J. (2011, January 3). Facebook changing the meaning of friendship. Retrieved March 25, 2014 from The Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Alex Pattakos and Elaine Dundon have written a popular essay offering an Aristotelian argument against Facebook friendship’s authenticity, terming them “shallow social connections” instead. See Dundon, E., & Pattakos, A. (2010, October 12). The meaning of friendship in a social networked world. Retrieved February 19, 2014, from Fast Company.

connectivity as friendship instead. This is extremely seductive language, connoting the analogue intimacy of friendship alongside the convenience of virtual social networking. As well, the interface leverages the convenience of online shopping design to market Facebook as both a suitable, authentic host for previously material social relations in a potentially more convenient virtual form. This marketing also suggests that using Facebook as such constitutes an analogous experience to being social in general, even if it is not explicitly replicating an analogue social experience. An example of this is the wholly invented act of “liking.” The language throughout Facebook’s interface also reinforces this, equating the connection of rhizomorphic Facebook profiles with making “friends”; the act of posting new content, or re-posting others as “sharing”; asking whether a user “knows” various profiles, as if one could ever know a data double.<sup>99</sup> The language employed throughout the interface orients the user toward the seductive (and constantly reinforced) belief that Facebook is an authentic digital recreation of their social world, made more convenient, accessible and extensive through, as Facebook’s rhetoric frames it, the utopian power of technology.

As we have seen in chapters one and two, however, the structure and goals of Facebook are not entirely conducive to its seductive claims. The arborescent structure of the Facebook network is designed to create the most efficient surveillance space possible, not the most authentic social space. There is insufficient room in this thesis to taxonomise the myriad ways in which Facebook sacrifices social authenticity for greater surveillability, but a past example may provide a starting point. “Friend collecting,” whether it is in fact the general character of social play on Facebook, or simply the

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<sup>99</sup> A term denoting a composite of data that is tied explicitly to a human subject, attempting to use the data gathered to create a specific sort of ‘double’ containing surveilled information about the subject.

behavior of a minority of hardcore users, is at minimum symptomatic of the anxiety surrounding inauthenticity on Facebook at large. If friend collection is not the norm, there is certainly no limit (structural or cultural) on the number of Facebook friends a profile may have.<sup>100</sup> I do not believe in being prescriptive about individual user practices and so this is not at all meant to be critical of the friend collecting phenomenon, if it does exist; in fact, even if it was the norm I do not find it, in and of itself, to be problematic. Rather it is the underlying control schema that potentially valorizes and normalizes the practice, as well as most practices on Facebook, that I find to be problematic.

Alongside the establishment of the ideal speaker-listener binary, which we can now categorize as a mechanism of seduction, there is also the establishment and maintenance of the “filter bubble”, another mechanism of seduction in Facebook’s design. Eli Pariser describes the filter bubble as a result of the algorithmic technologies that attempt to include only what it perceives the user to desire. Simply put, when Amazon determines what product a user wants it is also determines products that it believes the user necessarily does *not* want. This phenomenon occurs very similarly on Facebook, with the network including and excluding profiles to suggest as possible “friends” based on algorithmic perception of desire.<sup>101</sup> Pariser critiques the existence of the filter bubble based upon what he sees as its complicity in maintaining ignorance and ideology by filtering out opposing or disagreeable viewpoints from a “disinterested” user. I view Facebook’s manifestation of the filter bubble as symptomatic evidence of Facebook’s prioritization of seductive consumerism over authentic social relations.

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<sup>100</sup> While this statistic is hardly an indictment, the Pew Research Center found the average number of Facebook friends to be 338 in February 2014. See Sedghi, A. (2014, February 4). Facebook: 10 years of social networking, by the numbers. Retrieved March 25, 2014 from The Guardian.

<sup>101</sup> Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. New York: Penguin.

Facebook's product is unimaginably detailed advertising information that can be tied to extremely well-simulated and constantly updated data doubles; these doubles, built around the Facebook profile and News Feed also serve as a content delivery platform for the advertisers who buy the data in order to create and target the advertisements.<sup>102</sup> In this sense there is a particular agenda in the connectivity that Facebook wants and it is to maintain the authenticity of the data double, to constantly be maintaining the material-virtual coherence of the subject and its digital reconstruction on Facebook; this is one reason that the instantaneity of cell phones, their ability to capture and transmit media to the Internet in speeds increasingly closer to real-time, has become strategically invaluable for Facebook. In another example of this commitment to data authenticity, Facebook will never suggest a possible connection without it perceiving that there may be an already materially pre-existing (if extremely tangential) degree of connection; in Facebook's case, maintaining the authenticity of the data collected trumps the drive to grow surveillance generally.

As Facebook relies upon its users to re-present themselves within Facebook's consumer-oriented profile structure, so too does it proactively encourage these processes. Facebook frames the acquisition of friends on its network as a never-ending process through persistent interface elements and other seductive techniques. This is in much the same way the liquid consumer society functions in general, first constantly creating new market segments and then shifting the onus of producing new market segments onto consumers who are already placated by constant consumerism and have an acculturated desire for ever-greater consumerist convenience as a result.

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<sup>102</sup> Another persistent element of the Facebook interface is space for advertisements to be generated.

Indeed, users enter onto Facebook already heavily placated liquid consumers, and the registration process quickly proves this point through its seamless and explicit establishment of sovereign terms of control in exchange for access to an extremely seductive form of social convenience. All information on the network is subject to liquid surveillance, surveillance designed to commodify subjectivities in expansive new ways. This is consented to by users in exchange for a convenient platform for social play and organization, designed in an overall consumerist structure. Facebook's contribution to the liquid consumer society is the liquefaction of social relations through sortation and surveillance technologies, turning social play into an ongoing process of immaterial labour as all interactions and connections are constantly surveilled for marketable data.

Like all successful liquid producers, Facebook is in a constant process of making this process of liquefaction more efficient. It can be seen through its techniques of encouraging users to always be in a process of increasing connectivity, a form of cultural control; it can be seen in the establishment of the ideal speaker-listener and the filter bubble, two design principles enshrining the perception of primacy for each user through the interface and algorithms; it can be further seen in the structure of every connection on the network being designed as biunivocal, reinforcing that primacy; it can be seen in the synoptical power that Facebook seduces its users with through the algorithmic News Feed, encouraging constant self- and co-surveillance; finally, it can be seen in the generally consumerist design of the interface. These techniques, in aggregate, foster a liquid consumer mode of social relations that renders friendship, and the process of becoming friends, into what I term "friendshopping". Identities are packaged according to market parameters, and these packages are presented as both attractive datasets for paying

advertisers and as a streamlined (standardized) and highly convenient mode of social play, social play that also serves as a self-perpetuating surveillance engine.

### **Overflow**

Another technique that is critical in making Facebook's liquefaction more efficient is corporate acquisition. Corporate acquisitions, such as those of visual social network Instagram in 2012, and WhatsApp--a messaging service that has surpassed the global volume of SMS text messaging--in 2014,<sup>103</sup> principally serve to expand the overflow of Facebook's liquid surveillance, in turn producing new means of seduction and surveillance. Instagram is a visual social network, now owned by Facebook Inc., which is entirely distinct and has a far narrower scope than the Facebook network. Its content consists of photos that are, as a condition of the media's existence on the network, further mediatized through a process known as "instagramming." Instagramming is an involuntary<sup>104</sup> practice of post-processing uploaded photos through Instagram's proprietary photo editing interface, mostly famous for its color filters, which all photos must go through in order to be posted to Instagram. Instagram also, as part of post-processing, standardizes the size of the photo and therefore image cropping is an almost unavoidable part of the process of instagramming unless a photo is taken through the Instagram interface, which is itself highly symptomatic of successful interface disciplining.

Instagram is built primarily as a mobile application that is designed to be used by smartphones, and the tracking capacity of a smartphone gives its photos a seductive

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<sup>103</sup> Heatley, D. (2014, January 21). WhatsApp surpasses global SMS volume. Retrieved March 25, 2014, from Strategy Eye.

<sup>104</sup> Insofar as there is no way to simply post an unedited photo to Instagram; the non-instagrammed photo on Instagram is impossible by design.

capacity for embedding its media with detailed surveillance information; this in turn demonstrates Instagram's utility as a force of liquid surveillance, as well another layer of seduction for Facebook. Smartphones, being standardly equipped with redundant forms of geotracking such as WiFi, cellular networks, GPS networks etc., are extremely capable at tagging all photos with real-time geolocation data. This is typically in the form of a timestamp, GPS coordinates, and the use of databases to determine place based upon those coordinates.<sup>105</sup> The seductive benefit to the liquid consumer here is a largely automated process of digital storybooking. Every photo that is taken and placed on the network is instantly narrativized through this tracking, fixed in a time/place by a host of data attached to the photo, such as time/location information; this is combined with mandatory user curation and the standardization of all network content, which ultimately orients the user toward producing an Instagram profile that is an idealized visual narrative of their life. In exchange for this production (and surrendering its terms of ownership), users are provided a convenient platform to publicly storybook, in an effortlessly standardized aesthetic form, whatever aspects of their lives they wish to idealize.

Given that Facebook had begun their process of liquefying social relations in a virtual surveillance space long before Instagram's debut in 2010, it is unsurprising perhaps that Instagram became a massive success that was quickly consumed by Facebook. Whereas Facebook liquefies social relations, Instagram liquefies personal history or narrative. Facebook's concern is the liquefaction of social relations for surveillance ends (hence, liquid surveillance). Interaction on Instagram is nearly nonexistent in comparison, a rudimentary comment system with most interaction in the

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<sup>105</sup> Such is the sophistication of geotracking that social networks like Foursquare have long since emerged, dedicated solely to geotracking people voluntarily based upon their 'checking in' with the network in *specific buildings*.

form of individual consumption through viewing “instagrammed” photos. This provides the essential rationale for Facebook’s acquisition of Instagram: the expansion of possible surveillance.

The populations of Instagram and Facebook’s feeds have the same parameters: an Instagram user’s feed is populated by their segmented micro-network of connections, the same as a Facebook user’s is populated by their Facebook “friends.” The scopes of content captured reflect the vastly different priorities though. The volume of data Facebook generates is so multivalent and all-encompassing of subjective experience, at least within a market-oriented structure, that it would be impossible or undesirable for the individual user to parse the sum total of its micronetwork at any given time. Instagram users upload a fragment of the volume of information, and only a single type of media (photos), making complete saturation and consumption of content possible. Whereas Facebook desires to possess a massive swath of social data, and then algorithmically disseminate it as part of a seductive scheme to entice further network use, Instagram’s design allow it to manageably disseminate all content manageably to users; further, its seductive promise dictates that it must. It is not seductive or convenient to be presented an excerpt of an excerpt; Instagram profiles are already curated by the users, far more than is apparent on or encouraged by Facebook. Facebook profiles, and the usage of Facebook in general, are designed to encourage a torrent of many types of information to capture commodifiable subjectivity and subjective experience, as comprehensively as possible. Instagram, by design, is already sorted and curated by its users as part of using it: users select which photos to upload and then get to engage a minimal sort of creative agency in the mandatory editing process. This process renders the images

“instagrammed”, a state characterized first by the standardizing of image size and palette through the editing interface, as well as the overlay of additional data specifying different kinds of information through the practice of “hashtagging”<sup>106</sup> to better identify the content of the photo in order to enable better indexing.

In practice then, an Instagram user’s feed is populated by the sum total of their micronetwork’s content, ordered chronologically as a single timeline for the user to parse. The seductive force at play is here is the logical extension of the illusorily limited synoptical power that Facebook seduces its users with. Whereas we have seen with Facebook that algorithmic sortation effectively seduces with a pre-packaged and idealized feed of content, excerpted from all possible activity within a user’s micronetwork, Instagram presents the sum total of a user-idealized feed to great seductive effect as well. This seductive power of Instagram is revealed as an illusion of central panoptical power, rather than synoptical. Instead of the user positioned in Facebook’s mass media context—taking a sampling of all available information at a given time and enjoying the seduction of this power to choose, to view, to watch the selected mass (Facebook friends)—Instagram users are instead seduced with the illusion of the panoptical tower, a dominating view of everything within their domain, constantly. Likewise, the ideal speaker-listener effect reaches a new plateau: all information, within the purview of a user’s micronetwork, is guaranteed to be delivered to them already curated by the users who instagrammed the photos. This mandatory curation allows for a

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<sup>106</sup> Hashtags are words or phrases prefaced with the “#” symbol that serve to denote the content of a photo and/or to connote its connection to cultural trends. For example, “#CatsOfInstagram” is generally used to denote a photograph of a cat, or cats, and to connote its connection to the wide culture of cat photography on Instagram. Hashtags are a means of cultural belonging in the social media world as much as a method of immaterially labourious data indexing. On Instagram, as with most networks that use them, hashtags can be searched and all photos that are marked with a hashtag can be theoretically searched for if the hashtag is known. Hashtagging as an act of indexing is therefore, in Instagram’s context, a form of self-surveillance as well.

much smaller amount of content that Instagram can deliver to users.

It is now clear how Instagram operates according to many of the same structural<sup>107</sup> principles as Facebook, and an understanding of how this serves to “spill” the parameters of Facebook’s liquid surveillance is beginning to take shape. Instagram does not capture anything that Facebook could not—photos are a large part of media uploading on Facebook—but the purpose is markedly different. These elements of redundancy are hallmarks of overflowing liquid surveillance in a social media surveillance space, as surveillance entities with mildly differing ideological purposes seek the same information from users. Facebook, being far broader in its capturing ambitions, allows seamless batch uploading of files without any of Instagram’s standardization techniques. Why, then, buy Instagram? Because while Facebook may design itself to be as receptive to most subjective data that its users may want to upload as part of their play on the network, Facebook cannot force its users to be equally receptive in uploading their entire commodifiable existence, in representative chunks of media, to Facebook. While Facebook has been very successful at leveraging its convenient platform of social organization, it has also become ubiquitous, and because of its goal of authentic data doubling is considered a very public space that does not always engender social transparency.<sup>108</sup> Instagram, on the other hand, was not on its own nearly as commercially successful, but does have the advantage of inviting a different sort of intimate subjectivity than the public ubiquity of Facebook. The Instagram interface, structured around curation, lack of interaction and a virtualized form of storybooking, presents more of an

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<sup>108</sup> Facebook’s own research into self-censorship on the network is extensive and revealed that in 2013, 71% of Facebook users, on average, self-censored themselves; further, one-third of all content posted to the network is edited, or otherwise censored by the user. See Das, S. & Kramer, A. (2013). Self-Censorship on Facebook. In *Proceedings of the seventh international AAAI conference on weblogs and social media*.

idealized visual diary than Facebook's strictly controlled recreation of subjectivity and social relations.

In terms of surveillable data, Instagram has built a system wherein users do the much of the sortation for the network, choosing which photos to upload and how (within a limited set of options) to standardize their aesthetic. Hashtagging completes this process, embedding the manual indexing of all uploaded media as a standard, immaterially labourious user practice. Instagram does not have to algorithmically guess which data is most interesting to the user and then filter; it is all curated by the users themselves. This is both a far greater guarantee of accuracy and a more concrete example of how Instagram extends the ideal speaker-listener effect. It is extended by creating a common aesthetic language and within its confines giving users the ability to manually idealize themselves without algorithmic intervention, choosing photos (largely in real-time after taking it) and finally instagramming them. This creates a geotracked, visual diary of sorts that theoretically provides a more intimate (due to the less public, and far more curated) virtual reconstitution of subjective experience than a Facebook profile, revealing potential data that might not otherwise have reached Facebook.

And Instagram's data assuredly reaches Facebook. Indeed, at the end of 2012 Instagram became embroiled in a brief controversy when it re-aligned its privacy policies with new parent company Facebook Inc. in order to opaquely share data between the companies and to claim juridical (through modifying the Terms of Service) control over all network content,<sup>109</sup> bringing it ideologically in line with Facebook's governmentality and, by extension, its sovereignty-based surveillance paradigm. As with most efficiency-

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<sup>109</sup> See Bilton, N., & Wortham, J. (2012, December 17). What Instagram's new Terms of Service mean for you. Retrieved February 14, 2014, from The New York Times.

enhancing manifestations of liquid surveillance, of which the opaque intertwining of Facebook and Instagram could not provide a better example, there is a seductive benefit to the liquid consumer. Many users have accounts on both Instagram and Facebook, and the acquisition of Instagram by Facebook enables new structures of convenient enmeshment to become available to these users.<sup>110</sup> It is incredibly simple to link the two accounts and to then automate the Instagram network to feed all uploaded content to the linked Facebook profile. Of course, the valves of this pipeline are tightly regulated along the ideological lines of each network. An Instagram account can only feed content to Facebook; Facebook cannot upload content to Instagram because of Instagram's stricter content parameters. An Instagram account can only link to one Facebook account, presumably because this linkage provides the identity of the potentially (and typically) pseudonymous Instagram profile.<sup>111</sup> The pseudonymous profile is then revealed through this linkage, successfully incorporated into the Facebook data double as an aspect of the Instagram user's Facebook profile.

The visible manifestation of this linkage is slight in terms of user experience, typically a single Facebook photo album (often among dozens of others) titled "Instagram Photos" where all uploaded photos to Instagram are stored in parallel with the Instagram network. The automated convenience here, especially for more enthusiastic social media users, is obvious. The far less obvious, but critical, point is that we can perceive an overflow of surveillance from this acquisition. The slight structural and massive juridical

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<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting that corporate acquisition is not requisite for these structures to emerge. Twitter, a company independent of Facebook, enjoys a similar structural partnership due to the mutual benefits to both Facebook and Twitter's surveillance regimes, benefits that are much the same as the Facebook-Instagram enmeshment. It provides a different data set, linked back to a verified, data doubled profile, information that Facebook and Twitter might otherwise have not captured.

<sup>111</sup> One of the ways in which Instagram promotes a more intimate reconstitution of subjective experience is through its allowance of pseudonyms.

changes to Instagram's network and Terms of Service, respectively, point to an expansion of Facebook's surveillance program that is strongly in line with the principles of overflowing liquid surveillance. Instagram provides a new vector in which all the techniques that Facebook uses to structure its surveillance on the Facebook network can be transferred over easily by a briefly controversial policy overhaul and slight changes to the interface. Instagram has been added seamlessly to Facebook's liquid surveillance regime, covertly attempting to identify its pseudonymous users by providing many seductive reasons to link the pseudonym to an identified person via a Facebook profile.

Instagram enacts an entirely different set of controls, namely through a strictly enforced aesthetic language that achieves a similar feat to Facebook's liquefaction of social relations but for personal history and narrative. My language here as to what Instagram creates for the user, such as descriptions of instagramming as storybooking or Instagram's overall project as the liquefaction of personal narrative is not totally clear, but hopefully I am clearly drawing it in distinction from Facebook's platform of publically identifiable social organization and social play. Facebook attempts to recreate preexisting social relations in a virtual, liquefiable space that it has sovereignty over; Instagram creates a space for idealized personal narrative that is more private, personal and designed to encourage intimate curation; this is directly opposed to Facebook's far more catch-all design of subjective reconstitution. However, Instagram's space is equally liquefiable in terms of its sovereign control over its network--a sovereignty seized upon in order to align it with its new corporate owner and parent network--and in terms of the ease by which it spilled over to join Facebook's surveillance regime. A chief characteristic of the liquid surveillance paradigm is its relentless and seamless overflow,

spilling into new areas and enmeshing. The nearly imperceptible ideological alignment of the Facebook and Instagram networks, save for a short lived social media protest that briefly laid bare in the popular press the extent of Facebook's sovereignty for everyday users before they were re-seduced, is compelling evidence of this overflow and of the rapid expansion of Facebook's liquid surveillance regime in general.

### **A Moral Note on the Facebook-Instagram Enmesh**

The most alarming implicit result of this union is the compromise of possible privacy for linked Instagram users, and the moral question it entails for Instagram. To be certain, linking accounts is voluntary and entirely unnecessary to use both networks independently or concurrently. However, this volunteerism does not, to my mind, ameliorate moral criticism of Instagram for maintaining a structure designed to provide a seductively pseudonymous space for intimate subjective expression while simultaneously promoting an equally seductive capacity to unite this intimate space with a network bent on total user identification. In this sense, post-acquisition Instagram could be argued to have morally compromised itself by allowing Facebook to not only commercially acquire it but ideologically override it. With Facebook's corporate ownership of Instagram, any sort of guarantee of continued pseudonymous safety against liquid surveillance could, at minimum, be argued as suspect. When Instagram changed its Terms of Service, it made this destruction of pseudonymous safety juridical and plain. It laid claim to network sovereignty in identical fashion as its new corporate parent and, by linking itself to Facebook, compromised its existing user base's security by exposing them to a seductive and deeply enmeshed pressure to link into Facebook's totalizing surveillance network, of

which they are already likely part. In practice, this probably makes users even more likely to consent to this linkage as it is, again, very convenient. However, Facebook had this sovereign design from inception and the conditions of sovereignty have always existed as part of using it; likewise, transparent self-surveillance and a design centered on illusory panoptical/synoptical power has always constituted the primary user experience on Facebook. In other words, the seductive conditions of liquid surveillance have always been present in Facebook, its overflow has simply been growing. The same cannot be said for Instagram.

### **Facebook as Post-Panoptical**

Bauman's theory of liquid modernity provides an excellent perspective for understanding the orientation of Facebook's user culture toward surveillance ends. Bauman and Lyon's work on liquid surveillance provides a more specific framework with which to analyze surveillance within the liquid space that Facebook uses to seduce its users. Additionally, liquid surveillance helps to understand how Facebook deploys such a myriad of different surveillance techniques at once.

Fragmented elements of panopticism as well as other, older techniques derived from sovereign rule are well-suited to be absorbed and reconstituted as part of a liquid surveillance regime.<sup>112</sup> The principle of overflow enables seamless expansion, in this case through advanced virtual technology that makes structural mergers almost invisible. These techniques, some formerly organized under panopticism, become what Deleuze termed "ultrarapid, free-floating forms of control."<sup>113</sup> These forms of control, old and

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<sup>112</sup> Bauman and Lyon (2013) p. 128-129

<sup>113</sup> Deleuze (1992) p. 4

new, can be deployed freely and mutably in a liquid regime, as we have clearly seen in the design of Facebook and Instagram. Deleuze calls the control that these forms exercise, similarly to my description of Facebook's algorithms in chapter one, modulation.<sup>114</sup> Deleuze is also explicit that these new forms of control, which I have placed in a more specific Baumanian framework, may establish control partly by re-orienting past instances of structured power: "it may be that older methods, borrowed from the former societies of sovereignty, will return to the fore, but with the necessary modifications."<sup>115</sup> Deleuze's earlier observations of the societies of control reaffirm and bolster Bauman and Lyon's framework of liquid surveillance, and in turn my appraisal of Facebook. Deleuze, well prior to the emergence of entities like Facebook or Instagram, correctly perceived their conditions, movements and capacities

"...the different control mechanisms are inseparable variations, forming a system of variable geometry the language of which is numerical (which doesn't necessarily mean binary). Enclosures are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point"<sup>116</sup>

The networks are the self-deforming casts, their interface form, Terms of Service and other methods of control continuously refined. The algorithms are the sieves, with meshes that transmute across desired data points, constantly shifting and adjusting based upon new information and ideological priorities. The enclosures that Deleuze refers to are those of the older disciplinary system, which we can understand broadly as a series of subjection filters, with individuals becoming specifically moulded subjects by being structured to always be within (and moving progressively through) one disciplinary

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<sup>114</sup> Deleuze (1992) p. 4

<sup>115</sup> Ibid p. 7

<sup>116</sup> Ibid p. 4

structure to another until the subject reaches an ultimately “normal” existence, the conception of normalcy determined by the need of that particular iteration of the disciplinary society.

The control in this case results in continuous liquefaction. A social media profile, or the arborescent network structure that binds it, does not reset or fundamentally alter itself, it simply self-deforms in a constant process of improvement. In Facebook’s case, this deformation is toward the goal of improving surveillance and expanding its overflow toward capitalistic ends, through a new form of expertly designed and intensely covert immaterial labour. This surveillance regime, analyzed in a cross-sectioned framework of Deleuzean structural control and Baumanian cultural control, is revealed as far beyond the parameters of a purely panoptical understanding of surveillance, or for that matter any understanding framed entirely around the disciplinary society, arborescence, sovereignty or any of the older, “solid” models of control. Facebook and its surveillance cohort have the capacity to remix them all, taking the useful pieces and reducing them to techniques within a far broader and expanding surveillance regime that serves a far narrower aim.

## Present Conditions

For there to be a conclusion to this study, Facebook's project would need to be finished and therefore able to be subjected to a comprehensive, retrospective analysis of its surveillance program and the consequences it has had throughout society. Facebook is neither dead nor dying and so this analysis can only provide an inconclusive appraisal of its present conditions and effects, a live case study of sorts that cannot be definitely concluded. Within the limits of this analysis, however, I hope to have accomplished three tasks. First: to clearly suggest, through a case study of contemporary surveillance, that a chiefly panoptical understanding of surveillance organization in society is rapidly becoming outmoded by the ascension of virtual surveillance systems; this reaffirms a growing body of literature within theoretical surveillance studies. These liquid systems are re-appropriating principles of panopticism and other older forms of control under a new, seductive technological guise that serves to extend the parameters of possible surveillance. Elements of the panoptical paradigm remain, but they are fragmented into disparate techniques brought under a far broader regime of liquid surveillance.

Secondly: that in lieu of a surveillance model based solely upon the Panopticon, a Deleuzian model of surveillance may in some instances better capture the utility of Facebook's design and how this design alters the traditional structures of surveillance. Through their analysis of rhizomatic/arborescent organization and the resultant pseudomultiplicity, Deleuze and Guattari provide a theoretical map to model the structural principles that Facebook uses to orient its network design toward constant and

totalizing surveillance in virtual space. This surveillance is capable of capturing a wide range of subjective information due to its virtual technology, with near-total invisibility and absolute sovereignty within its network. Because of the convenience it seduces its users with, Facebook is able to attain voluntary consent to sovereign terms of control; this stabilizes its surveillance regime in more entrenched ways than older forms of control. This can be seen, for example, in late panopticism's surveillance crisis, when it is forced to become transparent, reformatory and then, following Deleuze and Bauman, outmoded. Facebook faces no such possible crisis in its present form.

The convenience that Facebook leverages for its surveillance is revealed in the third chapter to be part of an additional layer of cultural control that Bauman has developed far more broadly as the seductive condition of liquid modernity. Bauman's work can in many ways be seen as a continuation Deleuze's earlier work on a post-Foucaultian "society of control," a comparison I make explicit near the end of the chapter. Both of these theoretical paradigms—Deleuze's structural focus on societal control and rhizomorphic organization, and Bauman's concept of metastable, overflowing cultural control, framed as processes of liquefaction and states of liquidity—provide the means to analyze the conditions of surveillance on the Facebook network. Far from the traditional view of panoptically organized surveillance, Facebook is revealed as an emerging paradigm that requires the continued re-assessment of theory within surveillance studies.

It may well be that there are aspects of Facebook's surveillance regime completely absent from the Deleuzian/Baumanian framework that it has been analyzed under here, as this is a provisional and necessarily incomplete model. The point here is to

cobble a framework that can capably demonstrate the elements of contemporary surveillance organization that older models of the surveillance society are missing, or else not completely accounting for on their own. In this case, a framework has been established through the analysis of Facebook as a rhizomorphically structured surveillance regime that resembles the arborescent pseudomultiplicity of Deleuze and Guattari, and aligns with Bauman's theory of liquid modernity, further nuanced as a surveillance paradigm by him and Lyon.

For my part, I believe these conditions require a new term that covers Facebook's specific implementation of a consumer mode of social relations, with all its inauthentic and consumerist connotations. It is a mode of social interaction that positions technological convenience and processes of virtualization as intrinsically associated with the intimate and amorphous concepts of "becoming friends" and friendship. This is the liquefaction of social relations in contemporary society, which I term friendshopping. This consumerist mode of social relations operates in line with Facebook's surveillance ambitions and techno-utopian discourse; while it is original to Facebook, the social network's overwhelming success creates probable conditions for friendshopping to generalize far beyond the borders of Facebook.<sup>117</sup> While friendshopping denotes a consumerist form of social reorganization pioneered by Facebook,<sup>118</sup> its broader connotations that reframe friends as akin to standardized commodities and friendship as an undifferentiated, standardized form of social connection have the potential to reach far

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<sup>117</sup> Bauman has already examined this potential issue in terms of liquid modernity. See Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid love*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

<sup>118</sup> Older social networks have exhibited many characteristics of friendshopping, but Facebook's aim being the digital mediatisation of social relations into a consumerist form, rather than creating a new consumerist social space like MySpace or many other early online communities, is what brings it in line with Bauman's concept of liquid modernity. This ongoing process of liquefaction is a core component of friendshopping.

more pervasively into the organization of society than simply a social network. This is perhaps the most compelling reason today for the critical study of Facebook.

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