

Are Prisons Computers?

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Introduction

“To be the prisoner of someone’s dream, this is possibly horror in its pure state.”

-Gilles Deleuze, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*

As personal computers swiftly invaded homes, offices, and schools at the dusk of the 20th century—parsing and processing the world within the algorithmic churn of word processors, internet browsers, and desktop environments—visual culture overflowed with diverse images of computation that sought to make sense of the networked machines precipitously blinking to life all around. Inundated by the bundles of fiber-optics, flickers of monitors, and packages of software that ever more densely populated everyday life, each of these prophetic images struggled to glimpse the contours of a coming digital future by imagining it in ever more pixelated detail. Some hoped that this imagination would accelerate these futures’ arrival, while others hoped it would reveal opportunities to cut the cord before they had a chance to finish booting up and coming online.

The programmers, researchers, and managers of Silicon Valley dreamt of digital tsunamis that would wash over and erode the prevailing hierarchies, institutions, and categories of the analog world, and thus clear the way for the information superhighways, global villages, and online malls of a digital one. This Californian fantasy cohered around the vision of a programmable society built upon cybernetic regulation and compulsory transparency that would hurl the global economy into new cycles of networked capture and extraction, digitized dispossession and accumulation.¹ A world of code and capital—of perpetual technological advancement and market expansion—seemingly had every reason to emerge as the hegemonic image of digitality, but it was ultimately another vision of computation that came to outpace the dreams of software companies and suffuse our cultural imagination instead.

Throughout a still-rising sea of visual culture’s objects, digital technologies have largely been imagined not as harbingers of connectivity, liberation, and speed, but as the architecture and infrastructure for new kinds of prisons built upon digitized capture, confinement, and control. Whether envisioning virtual worlds that imprison their users (*Tron* (1982), *Cyber Vengeance* (1995),

¹ See Tiqqun’s *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* for a theorization of this political fantasy.

The Matrix (1999), *Black Mirror* (2011-) or prisons whose methods of confinement had been fully digitized (*THX 1138* (1971), *Fortress* (1993), *Cube* (1997), *Lockout* (2012), *Made For Love* (2021), *Oxygène* (2021)), these works collectively developed a political theory of the digital which postulated that networked computers wouldn't liberate us from but rather would only digitally update the analog forms of domination and control that had already been long at work subordinating and subjugating life. Emerging from a cultural aperture shaped by digital dreams and carceral nightmares, these works reflexively and anxiously posed the question: "*Are computers prisons?*"

In tandem with visual culture, the theorization of the digital as a carceral technology was also being elaborated by theorists and philosophers. Most notable in this regard is the *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, a concise essay where Gilles Deleuze theorizes that spaces of discipline and confinement such as the prison would be eclipsed by spaces of control defined by computational "system(s) of variable geometry the language of which is numerical."² Deleuze plotted the historical and political trajectory of a digitality that wouldn't abolish prisons and other disciplinary institutions so much as it would translate them into a control paradigm built upon networked and algorithmic forms, echoing the cultural imagination of digitality as a nascent form of carcerality. The theorization of the digital as a form of capture would later arrive at its metaphysical extreme in the work of the philosopher Nick Bostrom, whose thought experiments advanced the theory that our lives are nothing more than the outputs of advanced computer-simulations.³ In imagining a pixelated Plato's cave where computation ontologically precedes reality, Bostrom recuperated Silicon Valley's fantasy of a perpetually advancing and expanding digitality by synthesizing it with the carceral imagination of the digital developed throughout visual culture.

Perhaps the question "*Are computers prisons?*" has been so numerously posed simply because it is asked in a world where prisons are already so numerous. At times it can even be tempting to conclude that the carceral imagination of the digital is less theoretical than it is descriptive, simply recounting the technical evolution of control and domination that has appended digital technologies to an already vast arsenal of otherwise analog structures, architectures, techniques, and forms.⁴

We could easily stop here, feeling somewhat satisfied with an imagination of the digital as a historical supplement to the carceral, but this would be to only draw a single dimension of a far more complex diagram of power. It is certainly clear that the question "*Are computers prisons?*" arises from the manifestly carceral texture of the networked present, from which the past can appear as a vast accumulation of prisons and the future can appear as a vast accumulation of

² "Postscript on the Societies of Control," pg. 4

³ See "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?" <https://www.simulation-argument.com/simulation.pdf>

⁴ The cultural imagination of the digital-as-carceral moves beyond description into theory only when it, in the same critical spirit as Deleuze's postscript, strives to exceed the present and conceptualize the movement between what held power over life yesterday and what may hold power over life tomorrow.

digital technologies being installed throughout every one of them. However, by approaching the present as a collision between a carcerality with its own complex history and a digitality that flickers into existence without one, as if it were immaculately conceived in the suburban office parks of Silicon Valley, the question risks occluding more than it reveals.

If we wanted to begin to draw a more complete diagram, we would have to introduce a new temporal fold to this question by charting how the carceral twists and turns alongside the digital not only in the future but in the past as well, historically accounting not only for how *electronic computers would come to express the logic of the prison in novel digital forms* but also for how *the prison was a formal expression of the digital long before the appearance of electronic computers*. In other words, any meaningful response to the question “*Are computers prisons?*” requires that we ask “*Are prisons computers?*” as well.

What follows aims to draw a diagram of the historical relationship between the digital and the carceral and between discipline and control, and in so doing it will also strive to chart the new political methods and critical modes that might be gained along the way. This diagrammatic approach to carcerality and digitality is divided into four sections:

- (i) *The Coils of a Prison* rereads Foucault as a thinker of the digital, approaches *Discipline and Punish* as a work that theorizes disciplinarity as digital, and posits that disciplinary domination is premised upon digital separation.
- (ii) *The Acceleration of Discipline* reevaluates Deleuze’s *Postscript on the Societies of Control* based upon the understanding that discipline was already digital, and posits that control power is nothing more than disciplinary power that has been automated and accelerated.
- (iii) *The Subjects of Automation* plots the political consequences of the acceleration of discipline by focussing on the question of subjectivity in Foucault’s writing on panopticism and docility, retheorizes the panopticon as a network with communicative dimensions, and posits that both discipline and control share a political horizon of the automation of the subject.
- (iv) *The Abolition of Separation* revisits Deleuze’s and Foucault’s political work in the Prison Information Group (*Le Groupe d'information sur les prisons*, or GIP) and reflects on a theory of prison abolition oriented against carceral digitality.

This text is ultimately invested in theorizing the formal continuities between digitality and carcerality in order to help clarify *a history of the future*. The past is more complex than the present, and any present alignment of power cannot capture, suppress, or neutralize all of the past expressions of

revolt that persist as remainders of and threats to ongoing histories of domination. In this sense, consider what follows to be an exploration of a history in search of a future that does not resemble it.

The Coils of a Prison

“For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall. Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on.”

-Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

In Franz Kafka's short story *An Imperial Message*, the Emperor dispatches a messenger to deliver his dying words to you, “a tiny shadow,” his most distant subject who lives at the empire's periphery.⁵ The messenger has been granted free passage through the empire, but he nonetheless finds himself impeded by the innumerable dwellings, courtyards, and stairwells of palaces that encircle one another in a cascading, seemingly endless fashion. The Emperor's power is in some sense communicative, relying upon his ability to send commands and orders to his imperial subjects, yet the palatial architecture over which his power rules also diminishes its effect: every addition to the palace only produces a need for additional communication, as every new imperial fold requires that the Emperor's power be able to unfold slightly further. Each new division calls for further circulation. Regardless of how quickly the messenger flees he only finds himself surrounded again and again, “the royal capital city, the centre of the world, is still there in front of him,” and while he dreams that “if there were an open field, how he would fly along,” his fate is to spend the rest of his life swiftly circulating through the infinite enclosures of an infinite empire.⁶

Throughout *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault's theoretical account of confinement and discipline, a tension appears that formally and logically resembles the one that Kafka narrativized more than half a century before. Wherever Foucault locates disciplinary spaces (prisons, hospitals, schools, etc.) that confine their subjects, “enclosed institution(s), established on the edges of society, turned inwards towards negative functions,” he always unearths a corresponding circulation of disciplinary power that courses within and ultimately beyond the limits of those enclosures, “functional mechanism(s) that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come.”⁷ Foucault understands the formal inconsistency between a confinement that closes itself inward and a circulation that spirals outward as a productive one, culminating in “complex spaces that are at

⁵ An Imperial Message, <https://www.kafka-online.info/an-imperial-message.html>

⁶ An Imperial Message, <https://www.kafka-online.info/an-imperial-message.html>

⁷ Discipline and Punish, pg. 209

*once architectural, functional and hierarchical ... that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links..."*⁸

This intimate relationship between hardened enclosures and accelerating circulations is threaded through all of the thinking in *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault identifies instance after instance when discipline constitutes itself architecturally only to swiftly detonate into "a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or in time."⁹ The physics of disciplinary power is animated everywhere by this implosive-explosive synthesis, pushing Foucault to ultimately arrive at the conclusion that disciplinary institutions "have a certain tendency to become 'de-institutionalized', to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a 'free' state ... broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted..."¹⁰

In each case, disciplinary institutions arise as architectural focal points of power's operation and experimentation only so power can then reticulate out through all of social reality; the enclosure of each interior seamlessly manages to also unfold onto what surrounds it. In this way, every prison confines criminals only to project a diffuse criminality to be policed and documented on the streets beyond it, every school confines students only to produce the specter of delinquency that must be monitored and contained in neighborhoods and parks, and every hospital confines patients only to give rise to a sense of public health in need of pervasive surveillance and intervention. Discipline thus isn't reducible to any particular "institution nor with an apparatus," but rather branches out as a diffuse collection of "instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets ... a technology" which infiltrates life generally.¹¹

Reflecting on Foucault's legacy following his death, Deleuze remarked that while "*Foucault has often been treated as above all the thinker of confinement,*" his theorization of disciplinary institutions such as the prison always referred back to a "flexible and mobile function, a controlled circulation, a whole network that also crosses free areas and can learn to dispense with prison" that plunge those institutions into crisis.¹² Deleuze argued that Foucault had only been able to so comprehensively theorize disciplinary power because we were already departing from its grip, writing that *Discipline and Punish* described the "history of what we are slowly ceasing to be" and that we now must turn our attention instead towards the new forms of power "taking shape in attitudes of open and constant control that are very different from the recent closed disciplines."¹³ In the circulating bits and bytes of networked computers, in the "coils of a serpent" that

⁸ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 148

⁹ *Discipline and Punish*, pgs. 116, 217, 216

¹⁰ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 211

¹¹ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 215

¹² Foucault, pgs. 42-3

¹³ *Two Regimes of Madness*, pgs. 345-6

vertiginously undulated all around, Deleuze saw the twilight of discipline and the dawn of a computational, networked, and digitized form of power that he called *control*.¹⁴

If we hope to meaningfully reply to the question “*Are prisons computers?*” and begin to chart a divergent history of the future, we must contend with the ways in which the digital *coils of a serpent* envisaged by Deleuze are not entirely novel, but rather can already be discerned in what we might call the *coils of a prison* that wound through disciplinary societies. This will require reinterpreting *Discipline and Punish* as a theoretical excavation of a *digitality* that lurks everywhere in *technologies of discipline and detention*, and ultimately embracing Foucault as a thinker of the digital. This approach will not pursue the conclusion that everything was always already digital, an inversion of Silicon Valley’s promethean mantra that “*everything is becoming digital*” which would only depoliticize and dehistoricize digitality as such, but rather will aim to chart a *political history of the carceral and the digital* in Foucault’s thought as a means of plotting digitality’s and carcerality’s *shared political future*. This diagrammatic method aims to expose the ideological and material territory of the digital, and also to accentuate what cannot be neatly resolved within or totally integrated into such a diagram of power and thus remains a threat to it.

In tracing the lineaments of a digitality that runs interrupted through discipline and control, this analysis necessarily works against a periodization premised upon a definitive historical and formal break between discipline and control, that understands discipline as analog and control as digital, and that imagines discipline as obsolete and control as ascendant. This will instead explore a disciplinary power that was not *rendered extinct* by the digital technologies and networked computers that Deleuze identified as the technical infrastructure of control power so much as disciplinary power was itself an *incipient realization* of the digital forms that would later be materially instantiated as silicon processors, electronic storage, and network routers in the second half of the 20th century.

Foucault avoids explicitly using *the digital* as a concept in *Discipline and Punish*, and so this analysis must begin by unearthing a digitality in the subterranean currents of his project. In the exegetic underground, we can begin to discern a formal continuity between discipline and control that courses everywhere through the carceral machinery and political lexicon that populates Foucault’s thought. Throughout the 18th century, *disciplinary technologies* arise everywhere as *digital technologies*, taking form in what Foucault describes as vast networks of *circuits, calculations, partitions, variables, communications, codes, and operations*.

In the opening pages of the chapter that theorizes disciplinary power, Foucault outlines the linguistic, conceptual, and logical armature of a carceral digitality that facilitates “*a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement*.”¹⁵ Foucault notes that all disciplinary

¹⁴ “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 7

¹⁵ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 137

technologies are premised upon “a *meticulous tactical partitioning*,” a technology of separation that parses, sorts, and organizes life into digital units—discrete, demarcated, discontinuous—that together constitute a new political project premised on the *digital abstraction* of life.¹⁶ This digitality facilitated by diverse forms of partition serves as the foundation for an analytical and manipulatable space that aims to “*provide a hold over this whole mobile, swarming mass*” of life, first disintegrating the social world into discrete entities and then reintegrating them within the coordinates and circuits of disciplinary power.¹⁷ This disciplinary digitality “*found in the prison its privileged locus of realization*,” where processes of “*individualization and totalization*” effectuated the carceral apprehension and codification of life in one gesture and the calculated computation and circulation of life in another.¹⁸

In disciplinary societies, detention is digital not only in the sense that prisoners and cells are *literally numbered* and managed on that numerical basis—organizing the day according to strictly regimented and programmed schedules, recording prisoner behavior in coded records and tables, transferring ranked prisoners between hierarchical cell blocks, and so on—but more fundamentally because a prison is a “*mechanism that pins down and partitions*” the world into individuated elements which it then “*compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes*” on the basis of that uniform individuation.¹⁹ This “*fixing, dividing, (and) recording*” operates in spatial and temporal dimensions, sorting prisoners across secure control units as well as monitoring prisoners’ movements according to activity timetables as a means of calibrating punishments, dividing the day and the prison into standardized units so as to better impose a standardized order upon it.²⁰ Life rendered digital by power is life that power can compute, record, and circulate on that basis.

The partitions of disciplinary power thus effectuate a *digital separability* that is the basis for a *digital commensurability*, in which an abstract equality imposed upon heterogeneous things allows them to be evaluated, organized, computed, and acted upon by diverse systems using shared sets of homogeneous codes. This digitality isn’t simply the *digital* of what we now refer to as *digital media*, but rather more fundamentally concerns the way in which the world can be divided into discrete entities on numerical and linguistic bases.²¹ Because partitions necessarily differentiate on binary terms—always *including* and *excluding*, discriminating between *this* and *that territory*, differentiating between *these* and *those lives*, or in set theory, demarcating between *A* and

¹⁶ Discipline and Punish, pg. 198

¹⁷ Discipline and Punish, pg. 144

¹⁸ Discipline and Punish, pg. 249

¹⁹ Discipline and Punish, pgs. 183, 144

²⁰ Discipline and Punish, pg. 313

²¹ See the *Golden Age of Analog* by Alexander R. Galloway for a more thorough exploration of the formal specificities of the digital where he notes “*The digital is the capacity to divide things and make distinctions between them. Thus, the digital appears to be quite explicitly a form of abstraction, if not simply abstraction as such.*” (229)

its complement *A'*—every partition contributes to the constitution of *digital worlds* that are segmented rather than smooth, divided rather than continuous, partitioned rather than open.²²

Foucault notes that the digital commensurability which arises from disciplinary partitioning is “*the first condition for the control and use of an ensemble of distinct elements*” that capture “*the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements.*”²³ Only after differentiating and partitioning lives on a digital basis can disciplinary power arise “*as an intermediary between them, linking them together ... making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant element*” within the totality of a carceral network.²⁴ Disciplinary technologies of partition *divide and render life discrete* only in order to subsequently *subsume and reunify life* within its own economies and taxonomies of power, individuating and isolating lives within a digital commensurability only so power can begin “*circulating the same calculated, mechanical and discreet methods*” from one life to another.²⁵

Separation is thus the condition of possibility for the circulation of disciplinary power, in which every partition imposed between lives also acts as a conduit for channeling power over life. This process individuates and sorts “*bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations,*” determining a dynamically shifting “*place one occupies in a classification, the point at which a line and a column intersect.*”²⁶ Once incorporated into the tables and classes of carceral data, disciplinary power can begin to “*set up useful communications*” between lives as well as “*interrupt others,*” imposing itself as a network over lives that become fixed as nodal points.²⁷ Disciplinary power further localizes itself and increases its resolution, fragmenting the world into smaller and smaller components like a particle accelerator, only as a means of generalizing its application, constructing “*homogeneous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body.*”²⁸ This contraction of power’s focus facilitates a corresponding expansion of power’s

²² In Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker’s book *The Exploit*, they note that all data is instantiated only through individuation, digital cuts that separate on a quantitative basis so that what has been separated can be integrated uniformly in systems of computation: “*The process of instantiating and defining data is better understood as a process of individuation ... certain artifices are used to ‘sculpt’ undifferentiated data into discrete units or words, the most basic of which is the convention of collecting of eight binary bits into a byte. And beyond this, computer languages are designed with detailed technologies of individuation whereby specific mathematical values, such as a segment of memory, are given over to artificially designated types...*” (46) For more on digital (as opposed to analog) computation, see Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*, where she notes that digitality always arises against the noise of the analog world, in which “*the digit, in other words, often treats a quantity as a discrete number, its accuracy resulting from a cut in a signal.*” (142)

²³ Discipline and Punish, pgs. 149, 170

²⁴ Discipline and Punish, pg. 216

²⁵ Discipline and Punish, pg. 303

²⁶ Discipline and Punish, pg. 145-6

²⁷ Discipline and Punish, pg. 143

²⁸ Discipline and Punish, pg. 80

circulation, in which the digital partitioning of lives according to “*ever more subtle variables*” makes it possible to more totally capture life within the coordinates of a carceral system and exert power over life across the nodes of a carceral network.²⁹

The carceral digitality that arises from the partition is the logical and formal engine of disciplinary power, forming the reticular filaments of a “*subtle, graduated carceral net*” that separates as it subsumes.³⁰ Just as in Kafka’s short story, where every new discrete division of the palace only increases the totalizing reach of its circulatory capture, wherever the drowning tides of disciplinary power rise a digitality can be seen effervescently churning below as the compressed and confined pockets of what was once open atmosphere. Building upon an understanding of digital separation as the formal underpinning of disciplinary subjugation, we can now go on to diagram the technical elaboration of this digitality as it unfolds in the historical movement between discipline and control.

The Acceleration of Discipline

“It’s a peculiar apparatus,’ said the Officer to the Traveller, gazing with a certain admiration at the device ... ‘Up to this point I had to do some work by hand, but from now on the apparatus should work entirely on its own.’”

-Franz Kafka, *In The Penal Colony*

While the prison has most often been the technology associated with discipline and the computer has most often been the technology associated with control, Deleuze clarifies in a conversation with Antonio Negri that “*one can of course see how each kind of society corresponds to a particular kind of machine ... but the machines don’t explain anything, you have to analyze the collective arrangements of which the machines are just one component.*”³¹ If control societies are in some sense distinct from disciplinary societies, and technologies and machines do not ultimately determine different social structures, then we have to pursue a different method to account for the *collective arrangements* that Deleuze thought exemplified the historical difference between discipline and control.

Throughout the postscript, Deleuze identifies several features of control societies that he thinks formally set them apart from the disciplinary societies that preceded them. While disciplinary enclosures “*are molds, distinct castings*” that are analogical, control operates through numerical

²⁹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 101

³⁰ Discipline and Punish, pg. 297

³¹ “Control and Becoming,”

<https://thefunambulist.net/editorials/philosophy-control-and-becoming-a-conversation-between-toni-negri-and-gilles-deleuze>

modulation, acting as a digital “*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.*”³² Disciplinary power is “*of long duration, infinite and discontinuous*” while control power is “*short-term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit.*”³³ Discipline extracts individuals from the mass, while control extracts individual data from individuals.

Deleuze’s historical account describes life in disciplinary societies as moving serially through distinct cellular enclosures (from the hospital, to the home, to the school, and then perhaps to the factory, the prison, or the barracks, etc.), while in control societies life experiences the hospital, the school, the factory, and the prison continuously as computational processes running openly on networks. In each case, control pushes disciplinary institutions out of their enclosures into a “*progressive and dispersed installation of a new system of domination*” where the prison is reimagined as wireless ankle monitors, the hospital as health tracking apps, and the school as endless online classes.³⁴ The descriptions of life under discipline and control that appear in the postscript have been repeated almost verbatim in almost every subsequent theorization and periodization of control societies but, in placing all of its emphasis on the apparent formal novelty of control, Deleuze’s account fails to grasp control’s indebtedness to and continuity with a digitality that had already been instantiated historically as discipline.

While the postscript repeatedly comments that disciplinary institutions are in a generalized crisis and are “*finished, whatever the length of their expiration periods,*” here we must begin to set ourselves apart from Deleuze by taking the position that disciplinary power isn’t on its way to obsolescence so much as it is being instantiated in novel technical systems and forms as control power.³⁵ If control emerges from and is continuous with discipline, then what remains new in Deleuze’s theorization? It’s not digitality, which arises from the profuse and diffuse partitioning of disciplinary power, nor is it computation, which was already being enacted everywhere in disciplinary apparatuses’ operations, circulations, abstractions, and calculations. Rather, what remains truly new about control and what ultimately distinguishes it from discipline is only a *matter of speed* afforded by the *automation of the digital*.

Electronic computers’ capacity to process, store, and retrieve information at far faster rates than human computers allowed for the disciplinary computation of life to be accelerated because it *automated* the data capture and processing which previously had to be done by hand. The manual procedures of writing, registration, and calculation that disciplinary power relied upon were time and labor intensive, and thus the speed of carceral society was economically and politically

³² “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 4

³³ “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 6

³⁴ “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 7

³⁵ “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 4

constrained by the number of police, prison staff, and bureaucrats that could be employed and put to use at any particular time.

At the historical advent of discipline, digital capture and computation were undertaken corporeally and thus moved at corporeal speeds, mobilizing procedures which were incredibly time and labor intensive in order to ensure disciplinary power was “*coding (individuals’) continuous behaviour ... forming around them an apparatus of observation, registration and recording, constituting on them a body of knowledge that is accumulated and centralized.*”³⁶ The automated speed of electronic computers accelerated this digital process dramatically in two fashions, both by exceptionally increasing the rate at which information could be captured and processed (and thus increasing the responsiveness and fidelity of power in the dimension of time) and by vastly multiplying and decentralizing the sites at which data could be collected, circulated, and stored (and thus generalizing the application of power across the dimension of space).

Prior to the automation of electronic computers, prison data was produced by guards and police and processed by courts and clerks as part of a centralized documentary system that included at a minimum a “*description of the criminal ... arrest warrants issued by the assize courts, a description included in prison committal registers, copies of the registers of assize courts and courts of summary jurisdiction ... an alphabetical index containing summaries of these registers ... (and) a system of individual cards or reports, which facilitated the integration of new data...*”³⁷ While the digitality imposed by discipline was the condition of possibility for disciplinary power, the rate and scope of digitization was infrastructurally constrained by its reliance on human labor. Following the automation of the digital, a range of technologies including surveillance cameras, digital certificates, smartphone apps, blockchains, social media accounts, biometric ids, and electronic payments could ever more finely capture and compute life as data with far less human labor, oversight, or intervention, shifting the execution of power from masses of humans to multitudes of machines.

The automation afforded by electronic machines also opened the way for an *interoperability* to be established through the use of protocols—shared digital languages which facilitate the automated communication between computers—which made it possible for heterogeneous forms of surveillance and control to be executed interchangeably and concurrently.³⁸ While Foucault makes clear that “*the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a*

³⁶ Discipline and Punish, pg. 231

³⁷ Discipline and Punish, pg. 281

³⁸ Protocols allow for heterogeneous systems to communicate with one another in shared languages on networks. If in control societies the tendency is always to increase communication, transparency, and feedback, protocols are the technical means through which that tendency is realized. In *Protocol*, Alexander R. Galloway notes that “*the ultimate goal of the Internet protocols is totality. The virtues of the Internet are robustness, contingency, interoperability, flexibility, heterogeneity, pantheism. Accept everything, no matter what source, sender, or destination.*” (42)

centralization of knowledge” in disciplinary societies, this circulation was limited by the diverse observational practices and recording techniques of different disciplinary institutions prior to automation.³⁹ While distinct forms of disciplinary power share a great deal formally—Foucault often noted the striking resemblance that could be observed between prisons, schools, hospitals, factories, and barracks—their coded records (pupils’ marks, medical records, prison conduct reports) were not standardized and thus could not easily circulate across or be analyzed between distinct disciplinary institutions which each had their own administrative economies and taxonomies.⁴⁰

Networked machines communicating on the automated basis of shared protocols allowed for information to be circulated and analyzed without distinguishing between where data was coming from or what produced it, bringing heterogeneous technologies together into a networked unity achieved through interoperability. The interoperability of electronic computers is itself a consequence of their automation, in which the exchange of information can occur with comparatively little need for human oversight or intervention due to the automatic routing of packets facilitated by protocols. In other words, electronic computers allowed not only computation and data capture but *communication itself* to be automated, which had profound spatial and temporal consequences for the operations and expressions of power. This automation, and the resulting temporal acceleration and spatial multiplication of power’s operations, is precisely what Deleuze recognized as control.

Discipline arose as hegemonic regime of power not because of any sudden discovery but as a culmination of “*a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method.*”⁴¹ The brutal forms of domination imposed upon Western colonies, the policing of crime in cities, the control and management of factory labor, and the oversight and classification deployed in prisons all served as sites of dispersed experimentation for the elaboration of these forms of power which later came to be generalized, all of which were intimately shaped by their attendant racialized and sexualized forms. The acceleration of discipline into control took shape in an equally dispersed and complex way, arising as a result of technical developments that emerged throughout the economy and society in an unorchestrated yet progressive fashion

³⁹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 217

⁴⁰ Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish* that disciplinary power relied upon “*the physical code of signalling, the medical code of symptoms, the educational or military code of conduct or performance. These codes were still very crude, both in quality and quantity, but they marked a first stage in the 'formalization' of the individual within power relations.*” (189-90)

⁴¹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 138

built upon the formal logic of digitality.⁴² In order to continue tracing this acceleration, we can look to the historical policing of sex work as one site where this technical elaboration took place.

In the section on illegality and delinquency in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault outlines how the policing of brothels was a central laboratory for the development of disciplinary power. Whereas sex work had taken place as an unregulated practice which occurred diffusely throughout social space as an open form of criminality, by legally prohibiting it in public and de facto tolerating its existence in the enclosed space of the brothel sex work could be policed in a “*constant and uniform*” fashion and “*would not be able to escape surveillance.*”⁴³ In the same manner as the prison, the brothel operates as a partition that confines sex work to its architectural interiority, providing a means through which authorities could police sex work within the brothel as well as sexuality more generally on the streets beyond it. In other words, the constriction of sex work to the brothel became a means of monitoring and regulating its economies and illegalities, just as it enabled broader mechanisms of surveillance and policing to be deployed to monitor and control sexual practices generally.⁴⁴ This disciplinary control of sex work thus follows Foucault’s theorization of the implosive-explosive synthesis of disciplinary power, in which partition and discretization facilitate a corresponding reticulation and generalization across the whole social field, establishing vast nets of nodes and connections for the execution of power’s oversight and operations.

The automation of the digital allowed for the policing of sex work to be accelerated and generalized further, where in addition to the brothel the online platform became a site for partitioning, facilitating, and policing sex work. Web sites and applications which allow sex workers to stream live videos, arrange paid encounters, and sell products both multiplies the spatial dimensions of sex work while also facilitating an intensification of the forms of observation and control that are imposed upon it. The technical multiplication of the partition coincides with a multiplication of the circulation of controls and surveillance, both freeing it from the enclosure of the

⁴² Even though it won’t be possible to fully articulate this theory in this text, it nonetheless remains worthwhile to suggest that colonial and capitalist world history is a digital history, manifest as the experimentation with and imposition of new forms of partition that cut the world into ever smaller enclaves that serve as stores of accumulation and sites of capture. In this sense, the walls of the prison, the fortifications of the colony, the borders of the nation state, the class divisions of the economy, and the metadata of online platforms could all be understood as particular technologies of a common system built upon digital abstraction, partition, and subjugation.

⁴³ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 322

⁴⁴ In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault also notes that the toleration and enclosure of illegalized delinquent practices such as sex work created new forms of economic exploitation and profit through the regulation of their illicit economies as well as new forms of control: “*the existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices, which one manages to supervise, while extracting from it an illicit profit through elements, themselves illegal, but rendered manipulable by their organization in delinquency. This organization is an instrument for administering and exploiting illegalities.*” (280)

brothel while magnifying the degree to which it is surveillable, manipulatable, and policable.⁴⁵ As sex work is spatially partitioned on the basis of the brothel and informatically partitioned on the basis of the platform, the “*generalized policing that it authorizes, constitutes a means of perpetual surveillance of the population: an apparatus that makes it possible to supervise, through the delinquents themselves, the whole social field. Delinquency functions as a political observatory.*”⁴⁶ The control and surveillance of sex work online in this sense comes to facilitate the control and surveillance of everything that happens online in a digitally partitioned and automated fashion.⁴⁷

The automation of the digital produced a new spatio-temporal arrangement of power which Deleuze identified as control because it *accelerated the computational and communicative processes of discipline*. In the temporal register, the automated collection and processing of information transformed the *long durations* and *distinct castings* of discipline into the *rapid refreshes* and *self-deforming casts* of control. In the spatial register, the automated communication and circulation of information transformed the *discontinuous and localized* application of disciplinary power into the *continuous and generalized* application of control power. Control thus wasn't the consequence of digitization or computation, but of digitization's and computation's execution at the speed of silicon microprocessors and network switches. Tied together by a digitality that stretches from the cells of the prison to the cells of database tables, *control is nothing more than discipline effectuated at automated speeds*.

The Subjects of Automation

“In a dream, God declared to him the secret purpose of his life and work; Dante, in wonderment, knew at last who and what he was and blessed the bitterness of his life. Tradition relates that, upon waking, he felt that he had received and lost an infinite thing,

⁴⁵ In *This is Not a Program*, Tiqqun notes that an ideal apparatus ensures that “*nothing moves that isn't both incontestably 'free' and strictly classified, identified, individuated in exhaustive files of digitized registrations.*” (151)

⁴⁶ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 281

⁴⁷ Throughout this text I've neglected to address the economic operations of discipline and control in favor of exploring their political dimensions. Both discipline and control share efficiency as their horizon, in which political domination is a means through which capitalist accumulation is ensured. For example, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault notes that discipline always aims to “*establish a direct proportion between 'surplus power' and 'surplus production.'*,” in which the means of production are balanced with the means of control. (206) Furthermore, Foucault argued that prisons developed as a response to the economic costs of repressing revolts and insurrections, that “*(the prison was invented) to ultimately obtain a differential result, namely, prisons permitted them to eliminate, as dangerous, a select portion of the population, yet without this elimination having catastrophic economic consequences, as in the case of invading insurgent regions*” (*Intolerable*, 268). For more work in this area, see Tiqqun's “Critical Metaphysics as a Science of Apparatuses” in *This Is Not a Program* and Jason Read's “Postscript as Preface: Theorizing Control After Deleuze” which approaches debt as a convergence of political and economic power: <https://coilsoftheserpent.org/2020/11/postscript-as-preface/>

something that he would not be able to recuperate or even glimpse, for the machinery of the world is much too complex for the simplicity of men.”

-Jorge Luis Borges, *Inferno, I*, 32

In order to begin mapping the political consequences of the *digitized acceleration of discipline into control*, we can follow the historical development of different forms of subjection and subjectification in Foucault's theorization of panopticism. Reflecting on Jeremy Bentham's architectural plans for the panopticon, a circular prison which allows guards to observe every prisoner at will but where prisoners are not able to discern if they are being observed, Foucault notes that the carceral gaze was intended to compel prisoners to surveill and discipline themselves, and thus remake themselves as disciplinary subjects. In this sense, the panopticon was designed to produce prisoners that are both *objects* and *subjects* of power, in which the imprisoned subject is compelled to supervise themselves as an object of the prison.

This conjunctive objectification and subjectification functionally *integrates prisoners into the prison's operations of power*, an arrangement where *“the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint, to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasing its own points of contact.”*⁴⁸ In the panoptic prison, the *digital partitioning of life* effectuated by disciplinary technologies is expressed again as a *digital partition within each life*, in which each prisoner *“becomes the principle of his own subjection,”* neatly integrating the objective mode of *policing lives* into the subjective mode of *lives that police themselves*.⁴⁹

Conceptualized as a design for prisons, the panopticon was actually only very rarely used as an actual architectural plan for prison construction.⁵⁰ The historical importance of the panopticon thus does not lie in its material instantiation, but rather in the ways that it has emerged as an *ideal model* and *conceptual structure* which was then imposed upon many material dimensions of social life, working as an eminently flexible technology that was *“polyvalent in its applications ... Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a*

⁴⁸ Discipline and Punish, pg. 206

⁴⁹ Discipline and Punish, pgs. 202-3

⁵⁰ In *Dark Matters*, Simone Browne theorizes the development of the panopticon as being tied to the colonial slave trade, where she notes that the fact that *“somewhere along a journey that ends in The Panopticon; or, The Inspection House Jeremy Bentham traveled with ‘18 young Negresses (slaves)’ guides me to question the ways that the captive black female body asks us to conceptualize the links between race, gender, slavery, and surveillance. In other words, how must we grapple with the Panopticon, with the knowledge that somewhere within the history of its formation are eighteen ‘young Negresses’ held ‘under the hatches’?”* (32) The colonial process has always served as a laboratory for new technologies of domination and control, and one could certainly look to Palestine or to the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla where networked technologies are being developed as a contemporary extension of these histories of colonial violence.

*particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used.*⁵¹ This schematic and formal polyvalence is what allowed for panopticism “to spread throughout the social body” and “become a generalized function,” escaping the spatial limits of any particular architectural form and percolating through all of social life.⁵² Panopticism is thus not a technology of incarceration as much as it is a form of power that “programmes, at the level of an elementary and easily transferable mechanism, the basic functioning of a society penetrated through and through with disciplinary mechanisms,” reshaping subjectivity and social relations as it is increasingly installed and integrated within them.⁵³

Reflecting on Jeremy Bentham’s writings, scholarship on the panopticon has almost always described it exclusively in terms of observation, characterizing it as a technology structured by visual exposure and concealed oversight. What has been fatally missed in these characterizations were Bentham’s plans for a network of speaking tubes that would allow for a guard to audibly communicate with each prisoner at will. The panopticon thus would act not just as an *observatory*, but also as a *network of communication* where Bentham noted that:

*“(orders could be) circulated instantaneously, with the utmost facility, to the greatest distance. Even the intervention of the local inspector is not necessary: a call from a speaking trumpet brings the remotest prisoner to the front of his cell, where he may be seen by the customer, as well as heard. Under each speaking-trumpet hangs a list of the prisoners to whose cells it corresponds. The names are on separate cards, which are shifted as often as a prisoner happens to be shifted from cell to cell...”*⁵⁴

While the panopticon has been principally understood as an architecture premised upon *optical supervision*, Bentham’s plans for a network of speaking tubes in the panopticon significantly complicates this picture by introducing a *communicative dimension* to the prison that should push us to substantively reevaluate the conceptual limits of panopticism.

Whereas the panopticon’s observational structure is premised on the unidirectional flow of visual information from the prisoner to the guard, in which the imprisoned subject can be seen by the guards but cannot see the guards watching them, the prison’s communicative structure facilitated by its speaking tubes allows for information to flow back and forth between the prisoner and guard in the form of spoken messages, and thus creates the possibility of implementing more responsive and elaborate forms of intervention and control.⁵⁵ The communicative architecture of

⁵¹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 205

⁵² Discipline and Punish, pg. 207

⁵³ Discipline and Punish, pg. 209

⁵⁴ The Panopticon Writings, pg. 112

⁵⁵ Bentham’s design for the panopticon’s speaking tubes was inspired by an invention of his contemporary John Joseph Merlin which allowed masters to mechanically transmit orders to their servants in their houses. Modeled on the pantograph, by moving a marker over a tablet containing a list of orders in one room a corresponding marker in another room would move as well which would allow servants to receive their master’s commands at a distance. Bentham noted in *The Panopticon Writings* that this technology was

the panopticon forms a *centralized network of circuits* between the central guard tower and each prisoner, in which the prisoner is subjected to persistent surveillance but also must persistently remain ready to respond and reply to a guard's messages. The digital partitioning of prisoners into cells thus not only drives prisoners to *supervise themselves* because they are *visually exposed*, but also compels them to *remain receptive and responsive* to commands and queries because they are *communicatively exposed* as nodes of a carceral network.⁵⁶ Disciplinary power thus facilitates a form of subjectification structured by both observation and communication, facilitating a recursive *informatic capture* and *networked control* which would later come to be theorized as the science of cybernetics.⁵⁷

The communicative dimension of the prison to some degree resembles the forms of informatic domination which were present elsewhere in disciplinary societies—exemplified as the confession of crimes to the court, the confession of sins to the priest, the confession of symptoms to the doctor, or the confession of dreams to the psychoanalyst—in which subjects were compelled to reveal their inner selves so their behavior could be modified on the basis of what they had divulged. The true technical innovation of Bentham's design was thus not the imposition of observation or communication as such, but the articulation of observation and communication as *centralized networks*, a distributed form which Foucault noted "*makes any apparatus of power more intense*" as a result of "*its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms.*"⁵⁸ The panopticon was appealing as an ideal model not only because of its subjectifying function but also because of its *efficiency*, allowing fewer guards to exert power over greater numbers of prisoners in a network of observation and communication. By rendering power never *always and everywhere at work* but *always and everywhere present as a potential*, networks made the exercise of power more efficient and more diffuse.

Bentham wrote that while the observational power of the panopticon was intended to negate the prisoner's opacity and render them wholly transparent to observation, its communicative power was intended to negate the prisoner's capacity to think, noting that "*action scarcely follows thought*" and that a quicker "*execution might here be made to follow upon command.*"⁵⁹ Prisoners who were expected to surveil themselves still *needed time* to contemplate

"limited to the few orders (each tablet) can be made to hold" and that the communication between master and servant was "*not reciprocal,*" which is why he decided to implement a network of tubes instead. (110)

⁵⁶ While elaborating on Foucault's writing of panopticism, Deleuze notes in *Two Regimes of Madness* that "*each apparatus has its regimen of light, the way it falls, softens and spreads, distributing the visible and the invisible, generating or eliminating an object...*" (339) This is certainly true in the panopticon, where light moves from the periphery to the center in order to expose prisoners to the gaze of the observant guard, but it is equally true of the computer networks which Deleuze theorized would be central to the enactment of control power, where light circulates as discrete pulses across fiber-optic lines in far more diffuse, circuitous, and relentless fashions.

⁵⁷ See Tiqqun's *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*.

⁵⁸ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 206

⁵⁹ *The Panopticon Writings*, pg. 112

their relation to the panopticon in order to fully constitute themselves as the disciplinary subjects of panoptic surveillance, and thus the need to think represented a barrier to power's efficiency. Bentham thus imagined that the elimination of contemplation in favor of communication would render power more immediate, imagining prisoners not only as *subjects that surveill themselves as objects* but as *objects that are subjected to the communication of networks*.⁶⁰

The communicative structure of Bentham's design should lead us to retheorize the prison and disciplinary power more generally as not only being structured by a *panopticism*, but by what we can call a *panreticularity*, in which everything is persistently subsumed within and exposed to the communication of networks. Just as earlier we had to depart from Deleuze in order to properly theorize the digital continuity between discipline and control, here we have to begin to depart from Foucault in order to fully theorize the way in which the disciplinary subject was not simply the subject of observation, but the subject of communication as well.⁶¹ In so doing, we will be able to outline the panoptic and the panreticular as complementary modalities of a shared historical movement that began as discipline and then accelerated into control, a movement which above all else pursues the *automation of politics* through the *automation of the subject*.

In order to begin diagramming panreticular power and the automation of the subject, we can again turn to *Discipline and Punish* and explore Foucault's theorization of the *docile body* in order to chart how docility emerges not simply as a result of observation but of networked communication and computation. Foucault defines the disciplines as "*projects of docility*," noting that a "*body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved*."⁶² Disciplinary power is thus interested in "*the formation of a relation*" that makes life "*more obedient as it becomes more useful*," just as it conversely makes life more useful as it becomes more obedient.⁶³ Through the production of docile life, discipline aims to "*obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost, ... bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, ... (and ultimately) increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system*."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ This integration of a life into a machine has been theorized by Deleuze and Guattari as a form of machinic enslavement, which Maurizio Lazzarato explicates in this way: "*The individual and the machine are sets of elements, affects, organs, flux and functions, all of which operate on the same level ... The functions, organs, and strengths of man are connected with certain functions, organs and strengths of the technical machine and together they constitute an arrangement*." <https://transversal.at/transversal/1106/lazzarato/en>

⁶¹ I've chosen not to address the debates concerning the distinction between *individuality* and *dividuality* that Deleuze theorized as a formal distinction between discipline and control. Here however it is worth noting that under both discipline and control lives are simultaneously constituted as individual subjects (coherent, stable, coded) and decomposed into dividual elements (sampled, circulated, banked), the only difference being the speed through which these processes are executed. Machinic enslavement can again prove useful in clarifying the conjunctive logic of individuality and dividuality, in which a life can have its subjectivity reinforced even as it is being dividually integrated as a component of a larger machine.

⁶² *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 136

⁶³ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 138

⁶⁴ *Discipline and Punish*, pg. 218

Docile technologies are digital and disciplinary technologies that subordinate life by dividing it into ever more minute elements, having as their horizon the goal of becoming an *"infinitesimal power"* which nonetheless operates upon all things.⁶⁵ This focus on the infinitesimal is applied to the body as well as its gestures and actions, transforming power into a form of *"uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result ... according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement."*⁶⁶ As a result of these transformations, discipline and docility emerge as *"an economic or technical rationality"* that facilitates the *"calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite,"* operating upon the smallest fragments of each particular life while expanding as a totality that is intended to encompass all life.⁶⁷

Above all else, a docile life is a life that has been subjected to a *"precise system of command"* that places *"bodies in a little world of signals to each of which is attached a single, obligatory response."*⁶⁸ This *little world of signals* treats each life not as a subject but simply as a component of a larger system within which a life's value does not arise from its *"understanding"* but only from *"perceiving the signal and reacting to it immediately, according to a more or less artificial, prearranged code."*⁶⁹ In other words, what Foucault calls a *docile life* is perhaps better described as a *reticulated life*, a life reimagined as communicatively receiving and responding to the commands and codes of networks in an automated fashion. Just as we saw in the panopticon, corresponding processes of observation and communication join *"the analysable body to the manipulable body"* in a network of power, in one gesture capturing and partitioning life digitally and in another corresponding gesture subjecting that life to a networked power.⁷⁰

This *"machinery of power that explores (life), breaks it down and rearranges it"* desires to produce a subject that is capable of undertaking its own productive activity, but which remains subordinated to the communicative domination and dynamics of the larger system.⁷¹ This form of power thus does not aim to simply exert itself upon life, but rather aims to technically integrate it totally as simply another functional component of its operations, *"making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through these power relations."*⁷² In other words, the imposition of the network form aspires to produce *automated subjects*, subjects that are subordinated to the networked world of signals they are subsumed with, that are *"punctuated and*

⁶⁵ Discipline and Punish, pg. 137

⁶⁶ Discipline and Punish, pg. 137

⁶⁷ Discipline and Punish, pg. 140

⁶⁸ Discipline and Punish, pg. 166

⁶⁹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 166

⁷⁰ Discipline and Punish, pg. 136

⁷¹ Discipline and Punish, pg. 138

⁷² Discipline and Punish, pgs. 206-7

sustained by injunctions” in which each order “*does not need to be explained or formulated; it must trigger off the required behaviour and that is enough.*”⁷³

The digital continuity between discipline and control, the acceleration of discipline into control, and the automation of the subject can be traced in the historical development of policing more broadly, which was shaped by a technical evolution that began with the prison and arrives today in the nascent field of nanotechnology. In the 18th century, Foucault notes that police power emerged conjunctively with prisons to transform “*the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert, a long, hierarchized network.*”⁷⁴ By patrolling space and tracking individuals’ behaviors, police observations were “*accumulated in a series of reports and registers; throughout the eighteenth century, an immense police text increasingly covered society by means of a complex documentary organization.*”⁷⁵ Police acted in this way as the *sensors of a carceral computer*, capturing data about individuals and populations which could be analyzed and processed, and also acted as *the executors of carceral programs*, following orders and performing operations on a coded population based on the data that had been produced.

Foucault noted that at their advent police were meant to “*bear ‘over everything,’*” both observing and acting upon the totality of social life, bearing everywhere over “*the dust of events, actions, behaviour, opinions - ‘everything that happens.’*”⁷⁶ This policing of *dust* has recently found a new technical expression in experimental research into *smart dust*, a networked powder of nanocomputers and nanosensors that can be diffusely spread over the surface of environments in order to imperceptibly capture and circulate data.⁷⁷ The modes of computation and circulation effectuated by police in the 18th century, manifest as “*thousands of eyes posted everywhere,*” is thus presently being experimentally redesigned as a perceptual and communicative system that can be installed across the whole surface of the material environment and social world, enabled by the digitized automation and interoperability of emerging nanotechnologies.⁷⁸

Smart dust can be understood as a particular moment of a technical and historical evolution which brings the practice of policing and the objects of policing ever closer together, perpetually racing towards the fantasy of a world that is composed only of police watching over only themselves. Power’s desire to automate the subject is thus ultimately a desire to make the

⁷³ Discipline and Punish, pg. 166

⁷⁴ Discipline and Punish, pg. 214

⁷⁵ Discipline and Punish, pg. 214

⁷⁶ Discipline and Punish, pg. 213

⁷⁷ DARPA funded research into Smart Dust technology at UC Berkeley, resulting in the publication of *Emerging Challenges: Mobile Networking for Smart Dust* that notes that “*Smart Dust may be deployed for stealthy monitoring of a hostile environment ... (and) could be used for perimeter surveillance, or to detect the presence of chemical or biological agents on a battlefield.*” <https://ee.stanford.edu/~jmk/pubs/jcn.00.pdf>

⁷⁸ Discipline and Punish, pg. 213

subject and object of power converge totally, to force the map and territory to wholly bleed into one another, producing a situation in which power's resolution has grown so fine and its operation has grown so immense that it recursively subordinates itself for the rest of time.⁷⁹ This is the telos of both discipline and control: the technical integration and political unification of the guard and the prisoner.

Here at the conclusion of this section of the text, we are finally prepared to respond to the question "Are Prisons Computers?" with a concise yes. We might even rewind to where we began and suggest that visual culture saw the carceral in the digital so vividly because it already unconsciously understood the digitality that coursed through disciplinary power long before the arrival of electronic computers. On this basis, it's even possible to imagine new approaches to films such as *Zero For Conduct* (*Zéro de conduite*, 1933), *The Hole* (*Le Trou*, 1960), or *The Battle of Algiers* (*La battaglia di Algeri*, 1966) which theorize them on the terms of power's inherent digitality. However, drawing out the digital continuities between discipline and control is fruitful only so long as it tells us something new about resisting and revolting against disciplinary and control power. In the postscript, Deleuze notes that within every regime of power "*liberating and enslaving forces confront one another*," and that the task always remains not to "*fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons*."⁸⁰ How might an understanding of the prison as a digital technology help inform our search for new weapons? What has drawing this diagram of power exposed about what remains explosive in society?

The Abolition of Separation

*"Dr. Gibbs: What we plan to do is to turn something into nothing, and then back again ...
'Here goes something; here comes nothing!'"*

-Steven Lisberger, *Tron*

In Deleuze's book on Foucault, he notes that "*there is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance ... it is on the basis of the 'struggles' of each age, and the style of these struggles, that we can understand the succession of diagrams or the way in which they become linked up again above and beyond the discontinuities*."⁸¹ Everything that follows here is invested in precisely this project of understanding what remains creative and free (and thus dangerous), even as the conjunctive historical movement of the digital and the carceral suffocates

⁷⁹ While smartdust remains experimental and is not being actively deployed, it nonetheless is a technology which reveals the subordinating logic of carceral digitality.

⁸⁰ "Postscript on the Societies of Control," pg. 4

⁸¹ Foucault, pgs. 37-8

and strangles all around. One place we can begin to search for some of these free and unbound points, and begin to link them together with our present context, is in the work of the Prison Information Group (*Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons*, or GIP) which was active in France between 1970-80.

In the wake of several prison riots and the global revolts of 1968, the GIP was formed to investigate the conditions of prisons, publicize prisoners' writings, support prison struggles, and theorize prison abolition. Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, H  l  ne Cixous, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean-Paul Sartre were all involved, writing texts, visiting prison facilities, smuggling out texts and questionnaires from prisoners, and going to demonstrations. The GIP undertook their investigations not simply as a means of elucidating the carceral apparatus but more importantly as a means of pursuing its abolition. As Foucault makes clear in an announcement that accompanied the launch of the GIP's first inquiry, their work intended to link up various prisoner struggles with one another as well as link prisoners with those struggling beyond the prison walls: *"we want to enable (prisoners), through our inquiry, to communicate among themselves, to transmit what they know, and to speak from prison to prison, from cell to cell ... These experiences, these isolated revolts must be transformed into common knowledge and coordinated practice. We do not conduct our inquiry in order to accumulate knowledge, but to heighten our intolerance and make it an active intolerance. Let us become people intolerant of prisons..."*⁸²

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* was first published in French in 1975, about half way through the course of the GIP's existence, and can be read as being tightly bound theoretically and politically to the group's investigations and actions. What is distinct about the GIP's writings however is that they emerged from engagements between members of the GIP and prisoners (rather than between Foucault and his various archives), and thus offers a more complex diagram of prison life and struggles of the period. Across the texts produced by the GIP that are collected in the anthology *"Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group (1970-1980),"* we can trace a collectively articulated theory of abolition being developed across a constellation of essays, interviews, statements, and communiques, a theory that addresses both the formal role of separation in carceral society and the abolitionist and insurrectionary practices that developed in response.

As we've already diagrammatically theorized earlier in this text, the carceral is constituted by a series of digital partitions which are the condition of possibility for the realization of carceral networks, beginning in the regime of discipline and then accelerating (through the automation of the digital) into the contemporary regime of control. Drawing upon the GIP's writings, we can introduce additional historical specificity and formal detail to our understanding of how these digital partitions were articulated architecturally, subjectively, and politically, working to separate lives profusely as a means of subsuming society generally.

⁸² "On Prisons," *Intolerable*, pg. 66

In an interview with Foucault conducted following his visit to Attica in the United States, he describes the separation that formally defines prison life: *“what appeared most terrifying to me at Attica was the strange relationship between the periphery and the inner part. I mean the double game of bars: those that separate the prison from the outside and those that, inside the prison, set apart each of the individual cells.”*⁸³ This doubled separation, between prisoners as well as between prisoners and society, is reflective of the digital structure of the carceral we explored earlier, in which each new partition effectuates a new form of reticulated domination premised upon what has been partitioned. Here and elsewhere we don’t see a singular binary split being drawn, but rather a persistent multiplication of digital separations as the modality through which power is elaborated and expanded historically. Separation unsurprisingly emerges as the essential form of the carceral for the GIP, who note that *“order in prison does not lie in the hands of the guards. It rests in the division that the administration maintains between the prisoners.”*⁸⁴

The divisions between prisoners, and between prisons and society, were reflected also informatically in the production, preservation, and circulation of criminal records which allowed for forms of policing and repression to extend beyond the delimited space and time of formal incarceration.⁸⁵ In the preface to GIP’s first publication, we find out that after circulating thousands of questionnaires within France’s prisons they learned that *“among the immediate demands of prisoners and their families, the abolition of criminal records assumes first rank ... With a criminal record, there is no release, there are only reprieves,”* and thus decided that *“the abolition of criminal records will be the theme of our next campaign.”*⁸⁶ Even in this early stage, the GIP already began to identify the informatic separations that extended beyond the architectural domination of the prison system, imposing forms of carceral hierarchy, order, and division upon the population as a means of dominating it more supplely and particularly.

In addition to these architectural and informatic separations, the GIP also analyzed the forms of subjective division which emerged within prisons and prison struggles that helped to sustain carceral power. Foucault identifies the *“separation between the common-law offenders and political prisoners”* as a limit imposed upon prison struggles, a form of separation produced by labor unions and Maoist groups who held a position that Foucault summarized as: *“We do not want to be assimilated with the common-law criminals, we do not want our image to be mixed with theirs in the opinion of people, and we ask to be treated like political prisoners with the rights of political prisoners.”*⁸⁷ This subjective identity of the political prisoner established a category of prisoner still aligned with the bourgeois order and distinct from the forms of common criminality

⁸³ “On Attica,” *Intolerable*, pg. 294

⁸⁴ “Pleven Eliminates the Detainees Christmas Packages,” *Intolerable*, pg. 221

⁸⁵ For an analysis of the visual economy and technical production of criminality in France, see Allan Sekula’s indispensable essay “The Body and the Archive.”

⁸⁶ “Intolerable I: Investigation into Twenty Prisons,” *Intolerable*, pgs. 91-2

⁸⁷ “On Attica,” *Intolerable*, pg. 299

(sex work, drug use/transaction, theft, etc.) that were morally denounced by it, a subjective division which was reproduced by prison authorities who imposed different forms of domination on political prisoners than they did upon the general prison population. The subjective separation between the political prisoner and the common one reinforced and normalized carceral violence by defining only recognizedly political forms of domination and violence as unjust, and effectively divided (and thus effectively neutralized) prison struggles.

The partition that is ultimately most central to the operations of carceral digitality are the divisions constituted on the basis of race, which the GIP identified principally in the repression of Blacks in the United States and Algerians in France. The GIP was founded in the wake of and deeply informed by an Algerian-led prison revolt at La Santé which was violently repressed in 1967, and the GIP wrote extensively about the Attica prison revolt and George Jackson's murder in the San Quentin Prison in the United States as well.⁸⁸ The GIP understood colonial and racist partitions as being central to the operations of prisons and carcerality more generally, leading Daniel Defert to simply state: "*The foundation of the penitentiary regime is racism, division.*"⁸⁹ The GIP identified antiblack racism's centrality to policing in the United States, the repression of southern workers in Northern Italy's factories, and the colonial repression of Algerians in France as all part of the generalized logic of the carceral that extended far beyond the architecture of the prison itself. Racism was the form of separation which suffused all other separations in society.

Building upon this analysis, the GIP concluded that the carceral world, the colonial world, and the capitalist world were all bound together in their racialized and sexualized modes of separation that always tended to express themselves in more particular and more total fashions. The marginalization and separation of prisoners was understood as only one expression of a carceral logic that imposed itself across all of society on the basis of the separations that composed it. From the very beginning the GIP had been organized around such an analysis, stating in their manifesto that "*none of us is sure to escape prison. Today less than ever. Police control is tightening its grip around day-to-day life: in the street and on the highways; around foreigners and youths; the criminalization of free speech has resurfaced; and antidrug measures only increase arbitrary constraints.*"⁹⁰ In a statement published by Foucault after a demonstration outside of La Santé was violently repressed by police, he noted that "*the street is in the process of becoming a domain reserved for the police ... The prison begins well in advance of its gates. The*

⁸⁸ It's quite difficult to overstate the theoretical and political importance of George Jackson, the Black Panthers, and the Black radical tradition more generally for the work of the GIP, as well as for Deleuze's and Foucault's thought. The GIP had screened films about Attica and the Soledad prison where Jackson was held, and published an extensive text critically analyzing Jackson's murder where they noted that he had helped to organize an abolitionist and revolutionary movement where "*from both sides of the walls, the prisons' army and the people's army are preparing themselves for the same war of liberation,*" noting that within the prison Jackson had "*put his theory of communism into everyday practice.*" ("The Assassination Coverup, After the Assassination, and Jackson's Place in the Prison Movement," *Intolerable*, pgs. 156-57)

⁸⁹ "On What Does the Penitentiary System Rely?," *Intolerable*, pg. 216

⁹⁰ "GIP Manifesto," *Intolerable*, pg. 64

minute you leave your house."⁹¹ This generalization of policing across all of space should not be read as a claim that everyone is equally policed, but rather that the hierarchies that structure all social life and which are maintained by police necessitate the policing of all of society.

Reflecting on a prison revolt in the Toul prison in 1971, an event which also deeply influenced the GIP's theoretical and organizational work, Foucault saw a new struggle forming that did not simply seek to escape from the forms of separation that had been imposed upon prison life but rather was oriented against the forms of separations themselves, aiming to undo the divisions between prisons and society as well as between groups of prisoners.⁹² Foucault wrote that the prisoners in Toul "*did not jump the wall; they formed a barricade. They confined themselves within a prison of which they were now masters, and from which they chased the administration: no one could enter without their express permission. They occupied it like one occupies a factory, a place of struggle ... They inverted the functions of the wall, the bars, and imprisonment itself.*"⁹³ Locating this revolt as part of a constellation of revolts in the United States, Italy, and France, Foucault concludes that by undoing the separations between prisoners who had been divided along the lines of race, criminal offense, and class, those who had revolted in Toul "*became a collective force ... and it is in this way that they entered into a struggle*" oriented against the logic of partition that is the formal basis of carcerality.⁹⁴

All of these collected observations on the nature of carceral separation—along with insights drawn from the contemporaneous work of the Women's Liberation Movement (*Mouvement de Liberation des Femmes*), the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action (*Front Homosexual d'Action Revolutionnaire*), the Black Panthers, and the revolutionary group Continuous Struggle (*Lotta Continua*) in Italy—led the GIP to conclude that the struggle against prisons could not simply focus on the prison itself but must extend across all of society, aspiring to abolish all "*sites of police control, (the) seizure of delinquents, (and) the judicial apparatus's differential treatment based on social differences.*"⁹⁵ While the prison was thus one architectural expression of a carceral society, reforming or dismantling prisons alone would not be sufficient for dismantling the carceral logic that expresses itself polyvalently across many diverse forms.

When asked to reflect on the question of an ideal prison (a notion he rejected along with prison reform), Foucault wrote that "*currently, in our system, marginalization is effected by prisons. This marginalization will not automatically disappear by abolishing the prison. Society would quite simply institute another means.*"⁹⁶ The GIP thus concluded that the abolition of prisons involves

⁹¹ "The Prison Is Everywhere," *Intolerable*, pg. 68

⁹² The revolt in Toul was waged against the prison warden Georges Galiana, who had previously overseen prisoners in colonial Algeria.

⁹³ "To Escape Their Prison," *Intolerable*, pg. 234

⁹⁴ "To Escape Their Prison," *Intolerable*, pg. 235

⁹⁵ "The Second Front (The Neighborhoods)," *Intolerable*, pg. 327

⁹⁶ "The Great Confinement," *Intolerable*, pg. 277

nothing less than the abolition of the society that produced them, as perhaps most clearly expressed by Jean-Marie Domenach when he wrote that prison abolition is not only a question of tearing down prison walls, but of “*destroying the carceral universe.*”⁹⁷

Across the archive of GIP’s work, an analysis steadily builds of a carceral digitality that aspires to perpetually establish new forms of partition—architectural, informatic, subjective, and otherwise—in order to increase its resolution and express itself more totally in networked fashions. There are also a set of abolitionist practices that emerge within the GIP as well as more broadly in conversation with adjacent movements and prisoners. Drawing upon this constellation of analyses, prison actions and revolts, and the GIP’s militant research and organizing, how might we begin to move from theorizing this carceral universe to theorizing its abolition, from theorizing a society constituted as a dense matrix of separations to theorizing its destruction?

We could begin by briefly returning to Deleuze, who speculatively proposed several models of revolting against control in the postscript. Based upon his formal analysis of control as numerical and modulatory, Deleuze notes that revolts against control may take shape in “*jamming ... piracy and the introduction of viruses.*”⁹⁸ These forms of revolt respond to the informatic and circulatory structure of control, but are lacking in two significant ways. First, Deleuze’s proposals fail to address the logic of separation that underpins carceral technologies, and thus respond to the *circulation and acceleration of discipline* but not the formal digitality that underpins the partitions of both discipline and control. Second, Deleuze’s postscript overinvests in the formal novelty of control as well as its imagined capacity to supersede the forms of power that preceded it, disciplinary and otherwise, and thus overlooks the persistence of other forms of domination and thus the continued relevance of forms of struggle against them.⁹⁹ The historical appearance of wireless ankle-monitors has not meant the historical disappearance of prisons, after all.

In their theorization of cybernetics, the collective Tiqqun proposes their own repertoire which they propose can undo the circulatory and recursive structure of power. Tiqqun’s theory of revolt is expressed across two forms, *panic* and *opacity*, which are conjunctively oriented towards facilitating escapes from and attacks upon systems of cybernetic power. For Tiqqun, panic produced situations within which “*communities detach from the social body conceived as a totality and want to escape from it. But since they are still its captives physically and socially they are obliged to attack it.*”¹⁰⁰ This form of escape which necessitates an attack is oriented towards cultivating what Tiqqun calls zones of opacity, where life can “*circulate and experiment freely*

⁹⁷ “To Have Done with Prisons,” *Intolerable*, pg. 342

⁹⁸ “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” pg. 4

⁹⁹ This critique was echoed quite clearly by Jasbir Puar in a recent exchange with Ezekiel Dixon-Román: “*Many have concerns about privileging only a Deleuzian perspective, given that Deleuze pronounced some thirty years ago that hacking is replacing striking.*”

<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/123/436945/mass-debilitation-and-algorithmic-governance/>

¹⁰⁰ *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, pg. 124

without conducting the Empire's information flows ... to recreate the conditions for a possible experiment, an experiment that is not immediately squashed by a binary machine."¹⁰¹ The cultivation of opacity is described as a means of withdrawing from power and making possible new offenses, of creating zones that *"will be at the same time a nucleus on the basis of which to experiment and a cloud that spreads panic in the whole imperial system."*¹⁰² Tiqqun's work here brings us much closer to a theory of what abolishing a carceral digitality would formally resemble, but because they don't address carcerality or the history of separation explicitly in *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* we here must try to carry their thought in new directions.

How might we begin to build upon Tiqqun's theorization of an escape that necessitates an offensive, and of an opaque form of offense that is itself a line of flight, considered in light of Foucault's theorization of a carceral digitality and the GIP's work on separation?¹⁰³ In a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault, they consider the formal modes and processes involved in revolting against the carceral system. At the end of their exchange, Foucault describes the way in which a struggle that emerges against a particularized form of domination and separation can take on an insurrectionary and abolitionist character directed against all of society: *"Women, prisoners, conscripted soldiers, hospital patients, and homosexuals have now begun a specific struggle against the particularized form of power, the constraints and controls that are exerted over them. Such struggles are actually involved in the revolutionary movement to the degree that they are radical, uncompromising, and nonreformist, and refuse any attempt at arriving at a new disposition of the same power."*¹⁰⁴

While general and totalizing in its application, carceral digitality always expresses itself in highly particularized forms, operating on the basis of sexualized, racialized, classed, and other forms of differentiation produced and sustained by its reticulated matrix of formal partitions. Foucault suggests here that while struggle may arise initially against the particularized forms of power that one finds oneself subjected to, that people must in some sense fight from where they are and from within the forms they live, the lurking tendency of all struggle is nonetheless to turn towards the abolition of power as such. For Foucault, every struggle against a constituted power thus always threatens to spill uncontrollably into a struggle to destitute power.¹⁰⁵ Deleuze responds to and builds upon Foucault's insight by adding that *"we are unable to approach (power) in any of*

¹⁰¹ *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, pg. 161

¹⁰² *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, pg. 162

¹⁰³ Tiqqun note in *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* that *"the effects of control are more powerful in the periphery nearest to the zone of offensive opacity that is created, around the fluctuating region. Consequently, the size of the base will have to be all the larger as the control is increased."* (164) The centrality of zones of opacity, and their vulnerability to intensifying controls and their attendant digital partitions and cybernetic mechanisms, is why the GIP's theorization of the partition and a theorization of carceral digitality more generally is so needed.

¹⁰⁴ "Intellectuals and Power," *Intolerable*, pg. 289

¹⁰⁵ For more on destitution, see "Destituent Power: An Incomplete Timeline"
<https://destituencies.com/2020/destituent-power-an-incomplete-timeline/>

its applications without revealing its diffuse character, so that we are necessarily led—on the basis of the most insignificant demand—to the desire to blow it up completely.”¹⁰⁶ This path from resisting a particular expression of power to detonating the general logic of power suggests a way to add additional dimensions to Tiqqun’s theory of revolt.

As explored earlier, disciplinary power develops as an implosive-explosive synthesis, through which partitions subdivide and implode the world into ever more compact nodes, cells, and enclaves which then ignite a corresponding explosion of techniques and forms of power that percolate and combust throughout the entirety of the social world. Everything collapses into discrete points before reticulating out into the flows and circuits of networked computation and communication. Between Tiqqun, Foucault, and Deleuze, we see something like a formal inversion of this process being proposed and theorized, in which the implosive-explosive synthesis of discipline and control is undone by an explosion of the partitioned world and an implosion of networked communication. This explosive-implosive revolt is a formal inversion of the implosive-explosive synthesis of the carceral universe, but also retains an asymmetry to it. The transformation of the world into something digitally discrete and reticularly subsumed is interrupted and undone by explosive assaults on separation and implosive escapes from communication, but those assaults and escapes also suggest the potential of a form of life beyond the separation and communication of the carceral universe which are not found in the formal composition of discipline or control.

This explosive-implosive revolt against implosive-explosive domination emerges as a kind of synthesis of Foucault’s and Deleuze’s thought. While Foucault’s analysis always in some sense privileged power as a means of exposing possible modes of revolt, Deleuze privileged revolt as a means of exposing the operations of power. After Foucault’s death, Deleuze explained in an interview that *“what surprised Foucault was that faced with all of these powers, all of their deviousness and hypocrisy, we can still resist. My surprise is the opposite. It is flowing everywhere and governments are able to block it. We approached the problem from opposite directions.”*¹⁰⁷ Between these two thinkers we thus see the forms of flight that power bears down upon and the forms of domination that life flees from, revealing the philosophical and practical necessity of escape and attack described by Tiqqun.

If we accept Foucault’s and Deleuze’s theorization of revolt which they developed based upon their work in the GIP, and thus understand that every form of struggle necessarily opens a path towards more generalized insurrectionary forms and creates opportunities for asymmetric attacks, how might we imagine these struggles linking up with another in a way that doesn’t allow them to be so quickly and readily captured within the circuits of communication and technologies

¹⁰⁶ “Intellectuals and Power,” *Intolerable*, pg. 289

¹⁰⁷ “Foucault and Prisons,” *Intolerable*, pgs. 389-90

of separation that are everywhere at work in a carceral digitality?¹⁰⁸ Here we can return again to the revolt in Toul as a model, which the GIP was drawn to precisely because it managed to interrupt the flows that characterized prison life and carceral power while also remaining open and thus breaking apart the logic of the digital formalized in the separations of the prison.

Foucault understood the revolt at Toul as being linked up with other revolts such as the Algerian-led uprising at La Santé and the Attica uprising, and also as creating new linkages with the abolitionist movements that worked outside of the prison walls: “*something happened, passing from prisons to the outside and from the outside into prisons*” placing groups such as the GIP among “*this whole ensemble*” of abolitionist struggle.¹⁰⁹ This passage opened between and beyond prisons was a *form of communication* that did not become subsumed by the communicative networks of power that suffused society, but rather generated the conditions for a circulation to occur that emerged as a threat to the circulation of power. In other words, Toul represented the possibility of a connection and a circulation that was not totalizing, and thus remained formally distinct to the totalized power it opposed.

In his conversation with Foucault, Deleuze notes that “*practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall ... (the goal is) a system of relays within a larger sphere, within a multiplicity of parts that are both theoretical and practical.*”¹¹⁰ He then builds upon this analysis by clarifying that “*as soon as a theory is enmeshed in a particular point, we realize that it will never possess the slightest practical importance unless it can erupt in a totally different area.*”¹¹¹ This relay cultivated between theories and practices as well as the necessity to continue erupting suggests a method of communicating the explosive-implosive revolt without allowing it be captured in the totalizing processes that define carceral digitality, creating the conditions for what Tiqqun describes as an “*intensification of their relations*” that “*will bring about an irreversible disequilibrium*” that threatens the totalized organization of power.¹¹²

The explosive-implosive revolt always emerges against the background of the total automation of the subject, which remains the horizon of disciplinary and control power and aspires

¹⁰⁸ In a conversation with Antonio Negri on control, Deleuze notes that communication itself has become captured by power, and thus revolt requires that we “*hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control.*” This particular section was also cited by Tiqqun in their conceptualization of opacity.

<https://thefunambulist.net/editorials/philosophy-control-and-becoming-a-conversation-between-toni-negri-and-gilles-deleuze>

¹⁰⁹ “Struggles Around Prisons,” *Intolerable*, pg. 371

¹¹⁰ “Intellectuals and Power,” *Intolerable*, pgs. 279-80

¹¹¹ “Intellectuals and Power,” *Intolerable*, pg. 282

¹¹² *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, pg. 163

to implode life into discrete elements and nodes so that an explosion of networked commands and controls can be executed upon it. As an assault on the carceral digitality that structures discipline and control, the explosive-implosive revolt thus involves two corresponding gestures. The first gesture is *an attack on the partition itself* as the form which organizes carceral society as a discrete series of spaces, data points, and subjectivities. This is not an assault upon the difference of life as such (a difference which is ineradicable and infinite), but rather upon *the digital forms of difference* imposed as partitions upon life which facilitate the perpetual identification, subjectification, and domination of carceral digitality. As theorized by the GIP and put into practice by the prisoners at Toul, the attack on the partitions of carceral digitality is typically expressed first against the particularized expressions of power life finds itself living within, in their racialized and sexualized forms, but that these struggles must always be understood as means of opening the way towards the project of an expanding insurrection and abolition.

The second gesture is a flight away from communication and into the autonomy that composes all life. This is the autonomy of creativity, desire, and thought, the autonomy that is opposed and asymmetric to life's automation. This flight must remain always *out of communication* with carceral digitality, lest it find itself subsumed and captured within processes of partition, subjectification, and circulation that sustain the carceral universe. It is a form of flight that, as Deleuze writes, must remain an active flight "*in the political sense, like George Jackson, where one doesn't flee without looking for weapons, without attacking.*"¹¹³ Most crucially, it is a form of flight that must generate its own communications and circulations which constitute zones of opacity apart from carceral society, a form of flight that must search for, cultivate, and multiply new forms, collective and autonomous, to live within.

This is what ultimately distinguishes resistance and reform from revolt and abolition: resistance and reform are struggles waged against power on the basis of the partitions power has imposed, while revolt and abolition desire to *flee from and attack the partition itself* as the form that organizes the carceral universe. Abolition, understood in this way, is thus not only a project of ridding the world of prisons and all of the digital partitions that compose it, but of cultivating a life that intensifies and multiplies an incommensurability with the separations it aspires to escape and destroy. Abolition entails nothing less than an uncompromising separation from the world of digital separation.

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¹¹³ "On the Letters of 'H. M.,'" *Intolerable*, pg. 192

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