VISIBILITY: IDEAS ON THE FORMATION OF SELF IN THE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE | Klaudiusz Ślusarczyk

Visibility: ideas on the formation of self in the digital experience

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A Dissertation
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The *One Who Laughs* art project description

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ABSTRACT
The following dissertation is an essential component of my work undertaken during the production of an art installation titled *One Who Laughs*. The paper offers an account of ideas that pertain to the presence of the digital medium in forming visibility, and the shaping of our sense of self within digital landscapes. The work addresses concepts such as surveillance practices and the erasure of private spaces, and offers a range of diverse perspectives on the ubiquitous presence of the digital medium and its impact on the experience of subjectivity. The paper proposes that, in the modern digital human experience, *visibility* as well as *subjection* become intrinsic disciplining operations installed into the fabric of society.

STRESZCZENIE
Poniższa rozprawa stanowi istotną część pracy podjętej przeze mnie podczas tworzenia instalacji artystycznej zatytułowanej: *One Who Laughs.* Praca pisemna przedstawia idee związane z rolą cyfrowych mediów w kształtowaniu tego, co nazywane jest widocznością i zarazem kształtowaniu naszego poczucia siebie w cyfrowych krajobrazach. Tekst odnosi się do takich problemów jak praktyki nadzoru i wymazywanie przestrzeni prywatnych a także oferuje szereg różnych sposobów rozumienia wszechobecności medium cyfrowego i jej wpływu na doświadczenie podmiotowości. W rozprawie postawiona jest teza, że we współczesnym cyfrowym ludzkim doświadczeniu widoczność i podporządkowanie stają się dyscyplinującymi operacjami zainstalowanymi w sposób nieodłączny w tkankę społeczeństwa.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my father, who passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic, and whose absence I have felt during my work on the project.

PREFACE

A majority of the texts that appear in this dissertation were written over a period of 36 months during my work on an art installation piece titled *One Who Laughs*. This written account in broken up into four parts, with the final section being a technical description of the process undertaken in the creation of the art piece itself. All texts are in themselves a response to the research and scrutiny of ideas that presented themselves during the entire creative process. The texts that appear in Part One titled: *Rage Against the Machine* represent a collection of thoughts and observations during the initial period of my research on the project. As I look back on these texts, I see that their function not only allowed me to create a subjective account of my own thoughts on the formation of 'self' in what I call the digital experience, but also offered ideas that can serve as thought interventions by which to challenge preexisting notions of how we experience our selves in the digital landscape. In fact, throughout the work I use the term *the Digital* both as a way to underscore the ubiquitous nature of digital technologies in our lives and to propose a term to denote our present human condition in the so-called digital era.

All texts are presented under the guise of my Doctorate diploma work, but should not in any way be treated as conventional academic texts. I have adopted the formula of writing openly about how I perceive the presence of the digital experience, and the writing should be treated as discursive intervention in regard to the formation and condition(ing) of 'self'.

Over the course of my work on the Doctorate, I have read and often re-read works by other authors, to whom I am indebted for providing a possibility of dialogue, and whose ideas became an impulse, not only to write, but also formulate creative ideas for the practical component of my work. I am particularly grateful for the work of Byung-Chul Han, which left a lasting impression on me, and had become an important influence on the entire process both in regard to the practical work with the installation and the collection of ideas gathered in this paper.

My intention here is to examine critically the role of the digital experience, with a particular emphasis on surveillance practices, by drawing upon insights from the before mentioned Byung-Chul Han, as well as Zygmunt Bauman, James Bridle, Jonathan Crary, and Peter Sloterdjik, with a particular emphasis on the seminal work by Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish*, and Hannah Arendt's ideas on the public and private self. In Parts Two and Three of the paper, I analyse the contributions of Foucault and Arendt, who offer their perspectives on politics and power dynamics, providing valuable insights into the mechanisms shaping our society that still, I believe, ring true today. While Arendt focuses on the emergence of visibility in the shift and shaping of private and public zones, Foucault delves into the formation of disciplinary institutions like prisons, asylums, and schools, giving us an understanding on how these function as tools for societal management.

The ideas put forth by both Foucault and Arendt play a pivotal role, in what I believe, in our understanding of how past systems of control and discipline have simply been reconfigured within the digital landscape, particularly within the context of evolving technological innovation. As new technologies continue to expand the arsenal of control mechanisms, an understanding of these foundational concepts becomes increasingly essential if we are to navigate the complexities of contemporary existence.

With the expansion of surveillance practices, the practical project scrutinises the next development of surveillance systems within the deployment of nano-satellite technology, as well as the way in which this may re-evaluate previous notions of visibility, discipline, anonymity, power distribution, monitoring, social control and the experience of the Other.

KEY WORDS: visibility, identity, surveillance, power.

PART ONE:
Rage Against the Machine

VISIBILITY

How is visibility or the loss of privacy circumscribed within the digital experience? Has the fact that 'I' exist within a network, a collective, a composite, become a distinct feature of one's presence made visible in the Digital era? For some time now we have seen how the online self forms an amalgamation of parts of the 'me', fragmented, and fused together by validations of 'your' search engine entries, and location details, that join the scattered deposits of voice, text, preferences, what 'you' say and what 'you' do, in 'your' visits, 'your' likes, 'your' purchases and 'your' Amazon returns. In the Digital, the fact that 'I am' is a hyperbolic testament, a hyperactive online activity of self-regard. The private space, the shadow space of the offline self is no longer adequate for digital existence. You cannot offline yourself with ease when your phenomenology of the everyday is narrowed down to the 6.1-inch space of your electronic interface and its nomadic trans-location of the body--image now made possible everywhere.

The online self is also a visible production of self, a composite secret self readily commodified. A private self that is an embarrassment to itself made public. A self scaled down to an offline reality is reduced to a displaced anatomy. For in the Digital, the biological-body-being without the confirmation of 'being' posts, is made invisible, stripped, laid bare, off-lined. The offline body-being experience of self, when devoid of the digital now becomes hollowed, emptied by the memory of a visible active self abandoned by a wish to be seen. This is the loneliness of being ousted by the only thing you think you have lost: a you from a time before.

Let us turn for a moment to the Narcissus myth. Although several versions of the story have survived, the Ovid variant with its description of the tragic relationship between Echo and Narcissus, who—unable to love another—gazed at his own reflection and withered away by the pool seems most prevalent. This classical version, however referenced, has also been survived by another, less tragic and possibly better rendering of the myth for our understanding of the attraction of a duplicate self, now made even more possible in the Digital era. In this less-known version of the myth given to us by Pausanias, Narcissus is described as having lost a twin sister whose loss was recompensed by a reflection of self in the water.

According to Pausanias:

> It is said that Narcissus had a twin sister; they were exactly alike in appearance, their hair was the same, they wore similar clothes, and went hunting together. The story goes on that Narcissus fell in love with his sister, and when the girl died, would go to the spring, knowing that it was his reflection that he saw, but in spite of this knowledge finding some relief for his love in imagining that he saw, not his own reflection, but the likeness of his sister.[1]

What if we take the latter scenario as proposed by Pausanias, and, instead of applying narcissistic self-love within modern digital practices, as is often the case when describing our attraction to electronic interfaces, see the operation as a reconfiguration of a state of mourning for the self lost in the coming into the world?

Peter Sloterdijk suggests that all births are double births.[2] In *Bubbles*, the first of three volumes of his sphereology dialectic, Sloterdijk scrutinises spacial formation as “immanences that appear in human (and extra human) systems of order”[3] where “archaic intimacy, as the spatial design of primitive people”[4] can help us retrace patterns that could be seen as modes of operation in the formation of modern subjectivity. Sloterdijk’s attempt could be seen as an effort to position experiences from time before into the modern experience of subject space formation. Shamanlike, Sloterdijk takes us on what might be called a philosophical hallucinogenic trip through the five stages of the re-casting operation of self formation. Connecting to a sibling from time before, for example, marks a re-connection with an experience of another, once removed, and now reinstated in a sublimation practice called the ‘With’ and ‘Also’ operation. The Sloterdijkian re-casting of self is to be understood within this ‘With–Also’ postulate, as a re-establishing of self by filling in the empty space left behind at birth, where the twin

1 Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 9.31.8 trans. W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), Perseus Digital Library, accessed April 17, 2023. http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0525.tlg001.perseus-eng1:9.31.8.
2 Peter Sloterdijk, *Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), 413.
3 Sloterdijk, 80.
4 Sloterdijk.

stands in for the protective membrane that shrouds us in our pre-birth existence.[5] As noted, a correctly established protective field between the subject and their twin allows the mother to become the third ally of the (self) twins, forming a trio with the child's invisible partner. The fourth layer includes the father and close siblings, while the fifth encompasses unrelated strangers, and this for Sloterdijk formulates the adult subjective experience.[6]

One way to understand the formation of 'self' is through a validation of one's image in the visibility-of-self by another. 'I am' because someone sees me, and the formation of 'I' is in the recognition by an other.

Visibility as confirmation that 'you' want 'me' out of the plethora of other individuals, can be seen in a rereading of the experiment of Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) and what could be considered, as Sloterdijk already reminds us,[7] the first media performance sent to the monks at the Abbey of Tegernsee:

> I am sending, to your charity, a painting that I was able to acquire containing an all-seeing image, which I call an icon of God. Hang this up some place, perhaps on a north wall. And you brothers stand around it, equally distant from it, and gaze at it. And each of you will experience that from whatever place one observes it the face will seem to regard him alone…

The visibility operation by the All-Seeing is further expanded by the notion of exclusivity: 'I am' the one selected. Visibility as being the one who is chosen by the All-Seeing, also plays into the inherent human condition of being desired now made hyper-operative by our ever-ready, ever-present electronic interfaces.

What if the All-Seeing is made real, and the divine presence has already materialised on our streets with CCTV cameras and in our own skies with numerous digital panopticon systems via satellite technology? One does not need to believe in divine

5 Sloterdijk, 414.
6 Sloterdijk, 438–439.
7 Sloterdijk, 572.

presence, to see that the All-Seeing, all-knowing, is also a disciplining operation of self. New super-panopticon systems introduced within our fear-mode tendencies will in all probability market visibility mode as a safety measure against crime or infection, and a commodified panacea for our biggest fear of all: that of inevitably being alone in the cosmic universe. Here, technological progress is quite aware of the anxiety of invisibility, and our inherent need for recognition, providing a solution to achieve the suppression of that inevitable state of cosmic loneliness. In this way, existence in isolation is non-existence. Without the other, we move into a mode of non-visibility, a Sleep mode entailing the suspension of being.

What's more, in the Digital, the shadow space once a guarantor of privacy, once made possible by trans-location and a nomadic desire to re-locate, is now erased. The space of body-being outside, once a rudimentary practice of disappearance, is now an extension of the online self made prolific. Being seen as 'ON' transforms the shadow space of non-visibility into an all-seen self by another, whose operation instates a perpetual companion of self-recognition, playing into the hands of the neurotic whose desire for recognition becomes the driving force, an inkling of the fact that I am wanted-by-you.

The digital world is always ready, always available, always possible, it only needs you to re-establish contact, even if by the simple movement of your device to trigger the gyroscope off/on function. In this way, visibility is a comforting operation, an everyday reconfirmation of the fact that the self was always coupled with '-ie', and the transition to the emergence of the post-self was only a matter of time.

Figure 1. Francisco Goya *Saturn Devouring His Son*, 1820–1823

As a prefix to self, *post-* can be understood in two ways: first as a myriad of images, deposits of scopic versions of self, establishing a data self through numerous posts on social media platforms for example, and second, as a semantic rendering of the 'see that I exist' wish. What is more, *post*-denotes a beyond--self, a next self, a 'being' outside of any previous perception of self-experience. There is something in post-self that suggests a shift outside of prior notions of self assigned by phenomenology, or Kantian thought self. *Post-self* is inundated by a barrage of self-testaments of recognition, a self that functions through confirmation of visibility, denoting that you have a witness there, always available, always ready. *Post-self* is a re-staging of the latter Narcissus scenario as presented by Pausanias, a mourning for the lost twin, and a re-attaching strategy. *Post-self* suggests there is room for the other only as inner confirmation of being chosen as the one. Digital modes of being provide the opportunity to further isolate and re-cast the self into a solo existence, strengthening the need to reconnect to an imaginary whole that we drag into the world of being. *Post-self* also suggests that we exist in mourning, and proposes in exchange an illusionary possibility of re-casting self from a time before. The ubiquitous nature of technological interfaces, like infinite mirrors, function to reminds us that *post-self* is a grieving self. These technological interfaces are beyond the physical object relation. They become a state of experiencing the world, not unlike props; they become training tools for the development of the psychic ability to implement multiple versions of experiencing the world. *Post-self* is what others think of me only, a wish fulfilled of a self as other's made real. *Post-self* is not so much what others think of me but THAT others still think of me. *Post-self* is a testimonial being, a collective self-commentary, a timeline(d) entry, a prompt for the likelihood of another's response. Here, one's timeline deposits are both as impermanent as they are infinite, present and history-less, read and not re-read. In the online-offline self-amalgamation, there is no place for distance, and no room for a delayed response. *Post-self* is always a perpetual versioning of self, a commoditisation of self, and nothing else. *Post-self* is an infinite up-grading of self in a constant mode of bug-fixing. *Post-self* is not about sameness, but an illusionary opportunity for differences, uniqueness, invention and re-invention, a support centred dependency. It is a reinforced platform experience that maintains the hyper-version of the online self. *Post-self* is an interface for innerness on display. *Post-self* is about retaining your body, your home, your environment as a support infrastructure for the maintenance of the online self-deposit. Kept in shape for posting about shape. Kept healthy for posting about health. The human condition in *Post-self* takes on the premise that technological innovation will somehow relieve the pain of existence, echoing the Futurist manifesto where work, disease, and famine will be eliminated from the human condition. And yet it is we ourselves who are eliminated just as we are eliminating chance encounters. *Post-self* is an organised, maintained world. With advancements in molecular energy, even the loss of electricity will not pose a problem to keeping on posting. *Post-self* is an uploading of self. A permanent processing of self. A self-loading bar, a boot-up. Just as with present-day computers that no longer need to switch off, is sleep mode the only form of rest? Or is sleep mode just a constant reminder that processing is taking place, a reminder of the possibility of always being ON? A wish fulfilled, a post-self is the enactment of immortality, foreverness; a play with death, and reincarnation made instant. Immortality and digital-self experiences complement each other, and if the post-human imperative is to be realised, the *Post-self* is just a signpost on the journey to physical-self erasure. Let us not forget that the syntheticisation of the human experience is a common human practice. From the embalming methods of early civilisations to modern pharmaceutical flattening of emotions, we have always fabricated inertia practices of numbing permanence. *Post-self* once and for all challenges Hannah Arendt's unwavering belief in the human condition that we are more than just a consumer society. *Post-self* is about consuming and being consumed. Not unlike Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son*, *post-self* is a realisation of this once monstrous image now made indifferent. And like all worthy digital practices, does not Goya implement Saturn, the Roman god of liberation, into a digital pose of self-regard. Adopting the eyes of selfie practices, Saturn's self-awareness reshapes the gaze into a 'do you see me?' operation to the dismembering of previous experiences of self:

> 'Do you see me?'
> 'Yes?'
> 'Please leave a comment below'.

Goya, it is said, never intended for the painting to be viewed by the public.[8] And yet now, as it exists primarily as a public event, we look at it in multiple reproductions, reminded of the transition into *Post-self*, a proclamation of the end to the offline/online dialectic, and a declaration of a state of things to come, helplessly pouting our lips to point the way forward towards self-erasure.

8 Robert Hughes, *Goya* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 372.

L’HOMME QUI RIT

Possibly less celebrated, but just as pertinent, Victor Hugo's *L'Homme Qui Rit* introduces to the world Gwynplaine; a figure of a disfigured child thrown into a world of romantic love, and political calculations. A precursor to Marvel's figure of the Joker, Gwynplaine's forced smile could be read within the digital experience as a mark, an act outside of the individual, enforced upon a subject that shapes and foretells their human experience. In this way, fated, could we not see ourselves as having to TikTok a semi-fixed scenario of one's-own life, pre-destined to perform that which already exists in the digital landscape? In the digital experience, the Gwynplainesque stigmata constitute not merely a suggestion, or a choice, or even that which is addressed to you. The scar is not a response but a state made real - a given scenario to be played out. Here, no one is responsible, as the digital dilutes all responsibility under the guise of the 'business--as-usual' rhetoric. The wound of the digital experience is about being visible always—engaged, even if in a state of absence (mindedness).

In the digital experience, Gwynplaine's scar, at first unbeknownst even to him, could also be read as something other than a determined condition of visibility forced upon a subject. Here, the forced smile becomes a materialisation of a defining spirit already in place in the world. In this way, a child comes into the world having to produce a face, a forced (fake) smile, filtered helplessness at the imminent thought of the Earth's possible demise. Overwhelmed with the present state of the NOW!, helplessness is a key deposit of the Digital. Engulfed in a constant state of excitement, the face of contemplation has long been replaced with the conveyance of the one who laughs and the oh-so-cute self-articulation of feline ears and whiskers superimposed by TikTok's AR Cat filter.

Not unlike Gwynplaine, have we not, circus-like, given up our own faces for the opportunity to be seen? Acknowledgment of this kind becomes a realisation of joy at being spotted, watched, traced, and tracked. Here visibility shrouds all doubt of anxiety associated with the loss of shame. Satisfaction is key. For as much as 'non-satisfaction' makes us human, and we deal with it in our own way, to be seen as 'liked', if at least for a moment, promises the elimination of suffering. In the Digital, one is thrown into a selection process between those who have and those who have not been: '👍-ed'.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

Currently, advanced research is being conducted on remote brain thought activity readers to be implemented at airports to locate possible terrorist threats.[9] The latter, like many other seemingly legitimate dangers to well-being, have become a trend in the implementation of new hi-tech solutions. Under the premise of public safety and well-being, the introduction of technological innovation has it seems become a common practice. As COVID-19 has shown, measures once thought totalitarian can inadvertently enter the routine of everyday democratic life. Who would have imagined that any society on the planet pre-Covid would willingly give up location coordinates, or, as in some parts of the world, adorn chunky wearable tracking devices on their wrists. Recently also, attempts have been made to implement AI voice recognition software to detect potential coronavirus symptoms via the voice.[10] Has anyone questioned the fact that, if AI can be deployed in this way, what other readings would be possible to detect: half-truths? sincerity? It seems that at times of potential threat, the ethical structures in place become undermined. The hi-tech transformation takes place inadvertently, and one needs to work very hard to reiterate any notions of well-being that were in place beforehand. Can we even imagine the data gathering and tracking systems being reinstated to the conditions before the pandemic? In a far-fetched scenario, would we be wrong to think that systematic notions of threat are implemented purposefully as a way to off-load further disciplinary measures and imbed technological solutions within the landscape of our everyday life? On the pretence of unity, are global threats not just scapegoats for the implementation of subsequent profit-making solutions? Speaking from his holiday home on the Greek island of Aegina during the global lockdown, Yanis Varoufakis expressed his skepticism at the solidarity of the EU during the first months of the pandemic. For Varufakis, the COVID-19 threat has shown how, in an emergency, the EU revealed the illusionary nation of unity. According to Varufakis, with the closing of the borders, the EU structure imploded into itself.[11] This was markedly

9 Jonathan Crary, *24/7* (New York: Verso, 2014), 97.
10 Jennifer Chu, "Artificial intelligence model detects asymptomatic Covid-19 infections through cellphone-recorded coughs," MIT News, October 29, 2020. https://news.mit.edu/2020/covid-19-cough-cellphone-detection-1029
11 Yanis Varufakis "Yanis Varoufakis on the economic and political impact of the coronavirus" Youtube. March 15, 2020. Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLfHpvJKNg0

clear in the first few weeks of the pandemic and the 'delayed' reaction of neighbouring EU countries had shown to Italy or Spain. Does this mean that the EU model is only a financial structure? Can it represent any decision-making body other than that founded upon economic imperative? But then, are illusionary structures all that bad? Is keeping up appearances even in the face of an illusionary nature of togetherness not of some value in itself? Faced with numerous threats, are we not comforted by the illusionary nature of togetherness proposed to us? Confronted with infinite messages of danger to our well-being across numerous media interfaces, are we not diverting those anxieties, that must somehow contaminate common sense, to an illusionary notion of 'we the people'?

SPACE(S) WE INHABIT

In his scrutinisation of late capitalism, Jonathan Crary suggests that "the homogenizing force of capitalism is incompatible with any inherent structure of differentiation: sacred-profane, carnival–workday, nature–culture, machine–organism, and so on."[12] The idea seems all the more relevant in our post-pandemic world of today, first driven by the protocol of home isolation whereby the blurring of workspace and private space, between work mode and rest mode, between operations of professional conduct and those of putting up the washing co-existed in the reality of a single space. Isolated but never alone, as the promise of MS Teams, Zoom or others suggests a system of interconnected people toggled with togetherness and belonging, the post-pandemic reality succeeded in shifting the experience of work into the sphere of online presence, making work a constant possibility, always there, housed within the single device.
In the Digital, time's command is reduced to availability, much like the sun's physical presence, where daylight work hours are present always somewhere on the planet, the digital online presence is not just a reminder of the possibility of presence but a reminder of the possibility of having missed something, that somewhere right now something is happening and you are missing out! Anxiety also becomes a new measure of time here, where response time to your message is often a matter of concern. Who has not spent restless minutes in having to wait for the other to respond to a digital message, suspended in the 'am I still wanted?' dilemma whose anxious, and often shameful moment of suspension borders on paranoia?

In our examination of visibility, shame as a response defines the rudimentary fact that we possess what could be called a bodily self. Shame, according to Giorgio Agamben, is triggered when what is most intimate and proper to us is irreparably laid bare for the other; it is a realisation, albeit too late, of a transformation from that which was once most intimate into what appears to us, under the watchful eye of the other, as most foreign.[13] The bodily self, watched, is animated within two polarities, the desire for recognition, that we all possess, and that of protecting what is most intimate from spilling into the public realm. In dispensing with that elusive agent that prevents

12 Jonathan Crary, *24/7*, 13.
13 Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 85.

intimacy from spilling, we move into the realm of perversion. Marquis de Sade's *The 120 days of Sodom,* has already illustrated this with the scrutinisation of privacy by the watchful eye of the lords of intimacy, whose objects were summoned to have their bodies used freely. Access granted, is not the Digital also the freeing of the intimate into the realm of the public where that which once protected the user has in itself shifted. Are those stern words: *Shame on you!* that we first heard in the early years of this thing called life still valid in the Digital?

In the digital experience, privacy is reconfigured. Once consid ered your 'own', a private message is now part of an outsourced system, housed by another, within yet another redefined space of external memory. The private is now a chronicle. Supported by the possibility of infinite record keeping, much like undeleted emails on email accounts that serve to generate additional data-gathering systems, records of chats congregate on the outskirts of digital presence forming distant celestial bodies. Privacy in the digital is cosmic. A universe of traces that much like the starry sky comforts us with a notion that we do belong to something bigger. But like the overwhelming experience of looking up at a starry sky, the digital message-making is also a head spin.

In the amalgamating operation of the digital, once clearly defined offline spaces are now permanently accessible. Foretold by the Windows 95 desktop image, today our offline landscapes become potential backdrops, scanned and photographed into a digital reality they begin to serve as electronic interface backgrounds, and the experience of offline sceneries transforms into experiencing nature as a potential digital photographic possibility.

One way of thinking about our relationship with the electronic interface is to see the device as a separate entity, a stand--alone mechanism, an object that is more or less detached, something that can be deployed at will. We often see the object as a useful tool, a device, a problem-solver, an assistant. Another way of thinking about the electronic interface is to see it as a computational system that implicates us within its very own mechanism. In this way, the computational operation could be seen as a habitat that we occupy, a topography of our times. From the very beginning, computing machines have shown a progression in the reduction of hardware, but the process could also be sees as a repositioning strategy, where the computational force of mainframe computers is arranged somewhere else, hidden, and housed in secretive locations out of sight. It is as though the private hardware has made room for the private space, and relocated the bulk of the machinery to warehouses shrouded in mystery. A magical exchange, where on the one-hand we have a size reduction, and on the other, we have an expansion of the data-generating scenarios. What is more, computation is both obscure and neutral, both politically and emotionally, and as James Bridle suggests, its "complexity, otherness, synthetisation"[14] is that much more seductive. In this way, the electronic interface could be seen as a superconductor of desire for the computational system, and the handheld device becomes the conduit of life-in-process operation. The intertwining of computation and non-electrical systems of daily experience is rampant. Think of decisions that are already predetermined within a computational logic. Think of the productivity imperative we assign daily when the everyday becomes a task-oriented strategy.

Physical environments have also taken on computing strategies, and as Bridle notes, code/spaces become the environments we inhabit more and more, with these shaping the way we relate within a computational logic to our friends, workspaces, and partners.[15] One could see the initial lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic as an installation period of the code/space proper into human experience, in which not only every activity was marked by a digital record, but also activities in themselves took on an Instaworthy estimation. It is the coding of activities like collective bread-making during the lockdown that gathered society into a shared digital space. COVID-19 could be seen as a system upgrade to the already-existing forms of digitalising how we relate to the world. The previous upgrade could be traced to the aftermath of the 9/11 World Trade Centre attack, when airport security confirmed the installation of a code/space into the fabric of reality. The 9/11 upgrade also came with the implementation of sophisticated data-gathering systems, that have become the norm of today's handheld devices, which for the most part paved the way for the COVID-19 life/system upgrade. Each subsequent

14 James Bridle, *New Dark Age* (London: Verso, 2019), 44.
15 Bridle, 38.

upgrade in this way could be seen as a new version of how we will experience the world: flattened, for the most part coded.

In “Beauty Lies Yonder in the Foreign”, Byung-Chul Han reminds us that “globalisation violently eliminates all regional differences in order to accelerate the circulation of capital and communication.”[16] And so, globalisation flattens difference and pushes that which is foreign out of circulation. In a flattened coded society, cities everywhere become amalgamated shop-front display windows: slick, identical, and for the most part sexy. Having eliminated difference, our cities become the global facades for the display of goods and services. Cities have taken on the marketing strategy of fast-food restaurants, wherein a customer is guaranteed the same experience at every location. We travel at rapid speed, shifting geographies to find ourselves in the same places, and shared decor. Our only difference is marked by a monument, a must-see-sight. But aren’t these in themselves amalgamated into the digital sight-seeing calendar, whose appearance is only valid if shared on your social media timeline?

The elimination of foreignness is also an attitude that has dominated how we see the other at our borders. The literal pushback of migrants seems like a desperate gesture to keep things unchanged, uninterrupted, the same. Once a clearly defined experience, even the sacred has been amalgamated into the profane. Han notes that the speed of the processor eliminates the experience of duration,[17] and once we remove the border that separates the sacred from the profane only the trivial of the working day remains.[18] As such, every day is now an everyday experience. When things are the same, it’s very difficult to deal with difference. Life maintained as a steady, predictable operation is a profit-making procedure. When one is not challenged, production is maintained. Sameness is also a repetition of one’s own reflection in others, and the erasure of the other’s possibility of surprise. In digital sameness, one is literally talking in (digital) circles.

16 Byung-Chul, Han. *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, trans. Daniel Steuer. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 71.
17 Han, 76.
18 Han.

ON COMPUTING

The early Google translate algorithm does not depend upon the linguistic structures of language to perform the task of translation but rather works via a process of comparing the input data with an extensive volume of previously translated texts. This procedure is largely due to the immense computing capabilities of a process of correlation, and the operation takes place in an instant. It is a hyper-speed exercise of comparison, rather than the methodological process defined by language acquisition based on mimicry and repetition of phrases and sounds where an interaction takes place between articulation and intention. Take Freud's scrutinisation of the Fort! Da! demands designating the process of appearance and non-appearance of an object, for example, and the way we subsequently experience absence. But computational language correlation has yet to produce results outside of a set framework it is entangled within. We are yet to see the possibility to produce new combinations of meanings that are not already represented within language architecture.

However, computational correlation proves more threatening when it comes to scientific data truth production. In other words, the production of results that, due to their unfathomable volume, are processed outside of human understanding. Computing it seems, tends to be dependent upon the power of calculation that has surpassed human capabilities of data assessment and evaluation. Modern science is based upon results, rather than the scrutinisation of processes of how these results are reached. Why? Because the process is basically beyond our scope of understanding.

The implementation of new technologies seems to run on the premise of progress and various versions of an accelerationist mindset. With the accelerationist imperative, Bridle identifies two main directions. One tendency sees technological processes as damaging society, but that this fact should not be opposed, and possibly "re-purposed for socially beneficial ends or to destroy the current order."[19] The other tendency argues for a full-scale technological re-invention, and proposes that automation for example, can be deployed in different ways, as is the case with robots to do the work, so that human beings can enjoy their leisure time at will.[20] But both possibly ignore the fact that the

19 Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 132.
20 Bridle.

logic that drives technological deployment might be tainted at the source. For the most part, technological innovation today is the domain of private companies. In the West, governmental institutions long ago lost their hold on technological innovation. What has remained, however, is the fact that all things hi-tech continue to be available to selected groups, with their implantation into society often being controlled within a profit-making schema. Take the adaptation of Epagogix, a neural network, and analytical software, which is utilised by Hollywood to scan scripts for the identification of emotional value in screenplays, and predict the possible financial return on future movie investments.[21] [22] Or take Platinum Blue, which, with the adaptation of "spectral deconvolution software" can measure the hit-making value of a song.[23] The software has reportedly been used by record companies to analyse unreleased albums and suggest musical changes to prospective songs to heighten their chances of 'making it'. There is something unsettling in both of these examples, where human creative choices are being undermined by a profit-making scenario. The implementation of new technological solutions is also the domain of a boys-with-their-toys strategy. Much like government leaders before them, hi-tech chiefs fulfil their childhood fantasies, except in this case the scope of their 'fun spaces' and costs are shared by all.

In our better understanding of digital pleasure spaces, Bridle notes[24] Iain Banks, who coined the term 'Infinite Fun Space' to describe a territory which intelligent machines could withdraw to when overwhelmed with the number of tasks they have been asked to perform. It is worth noting that Banks's Infinite Fun Space is an exclusive virtual environment dedicated only for use by advanced AI, some of which choose to inhabit the space infinitely. As such, is the Infinite Fun Space a figurative representation of that inherent human need for a work-free environment, a pleasure dome, and that elusive experience of fulfilment it promises to provide? Banks's Infinite Fun Space seems to be modelled on a 'pleasure absolute' simulation, where the human illusion of attaining satisfaction through infinite pleasure is recast by another actor: artificial intelligence. Like

21 Bridle, 130.
22 Michael Gladwell, "The Formula," *The New Yorker*, October 8, 2006, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/10/16/the-formula.
23 Gladwell.
24 Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 149–150.

religion, technological innovation has at times played the role of fulfilling human wishes, those states of being, too difficult to fathom within the existential debacle of simply trying to be human. And, like religion, or computation for that matter, the Infinite Fun Space is shrouded in mystery, being a non-defined operation that in its very ambiguity as to what goes on there, becomes even more desirable. Structured within a hierarchy, the Infinite Fun Space creates ambition in those who want to be chosen, and given a chance to take part.

It would seem that hierarchy, a most human operation, has also infiltrated the organisation of virtual worlds. And even now, are we not installing a class system in all things technological anyway? Aren't neural networks just representations of inbred human tendencies to classify, codify, and exclude, according to relative status or authority?

Acceleration would seem to be governed by a brat-like gesture found in children who threaten to stamp their feet if their desires are not met. In the hyper-accelerated world of the Digital, ideas become awkward aberrations of their original versions, pushed beyond their intended direction, where a seemingly harmless idea to create a platform for people in college to hook up for example becomes transformed into data leviathans that sway elections, or spark civil unrest.

HOW THINKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE SPOILS YOUR DAY

Like climate change, mass surveillance has become such a 'destabilising' concept for society,[26] that simply thinking about it spoils your day. Because no one wants to have a bad day, why question the fact that we so readily give up our data to numerous corpo-intel-gov type agencies? Is the threat of spoiling your mood so strong that we opt to pay the price with the lost of privacy and the peace of mind it assures? Is it even news to us that we choose to operate with such ease within a calculated computational operation of data production, where life for the most part is a result of data logic and logistics? It seems that the right to information is also a right to over-information. Inundated with data, the operation itself is now an infinite process. What is more, the omnipresence of information sustains a sense of part-taking in something, something that feels like a practice of togetherness. Think of the shared intimacy of electronic interfaces. The price for being connected is not even a matter of price anymore. It is a promise that we are interesting enough for someone to collect data about our person. It is a promise that even after our passing, we still leave behind a trace. In this way, the Digital is a keep-on-keeping-on promise defying the body's own use-by-date.

The permanence of the digital trace is also a confrontation of self with the past. If ever there is a space to reflect, something that the digital has pretty much obliterated, will we ever be able to look back at that self deposited and not be terrified? In the latter part of his novel titled *Elisabeth Costello*, Coetzee describes a state of purgatory where the protagonist is asked to confront herself in the deposits of the past events left behind on Earth. How do we measure the impact of one's existence? In the memory of those who shared this time with us? Or in our own faculty of recollection? Do we trust the elusive Other who sees all? Or is the real of the Digital, the most scrupulous account of who we really are in the deception of how we want to be 'seen' by others: pouted lips, filters, and all? Will we still continue the *post-self* imperative of being digitally visible during that final testament of self, or is the thought itself too much, too serious to think about? But, really, who wants to ruin their day anyhow?

26 Bridle, 179.

DISSOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE EARTH(BODY)

According to Marx, agricultural development represented a major shift within the capitalist model, given that the restrictions imposed by the seasons, or one could say the Earth's own rhythm, have been compromised.[27] Could we speak in the same way of the digital experience and its impact on the human body, that other physical edifice that sets its limits and becomes a field of transgression? Overcoming the body's limitations has been the realm of most scientific and technological development. But how are we affected by the dissolution of restrictions that the body once possessed? How are we affected by the limitlessness of the Digital, and the possibility that traces of you remain, duplicated, stored, forever(ed)? How are we affected by the systematic eradication of pain? If the digital experience reconstructs how we relate to memory, does it also reinvent how we relate to the present? Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a number of operations that have established themselves as the defining practices for our times. Take data modeling for example, a branch of statistics that has dramatically come to the fore in not only predicting a possible outcome for the future but also shaping the response strategy of numerous governments to the threat posed by the global pandemic in the present. In the Digital, the modeling operation is a matter of calculation. Enabled by the force of computing power, calculation has long ago overtaken the human possibility to fathom not only the volume but also how the results are reached by the computing systems. Like all things capital, the results have also become commodified, and future predictions have a monetary value. In this way, if anything, the modeling systems could also be seen as a disruption to our relationship to intuition. Although shrouded in ambiguity, intuition once an instinct celebrated as spiritual insight, has now been replaced by another ambiguous operation: calculation. If not eradicated, then surely marginalised, intuition has now become a horoscope entry. And how could it not be when the elusive ability to understand something as ethereal as computer calculation, is unmatched in its 4K graphical display of data? If there is a dissolution that happens here it is in the effacement of the individual's reasoning mind, together with its limits of comprehension and the once-elusive belief in the unknown. As such, in the digital experience, how are we to understand *Akrasia* and the Aristotelian contention of why we

27 Crary, *24/7*, 63.

act against our better judgement. Is it because we do not know what is good for us in such a way that we fully inhabit that knowledge?[28] Has not knowledge of how things work in the digital sphere, and its computational calculation, already escaped our very own limits of comprehension?

28 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) VII 1–3.

FOR TECHNOLOGY 1

Figure 2. Francis Barraud *His Master's Voice*

Numbers are units that have for the most part become trusted entities. That which makes numbers distinct and exceptional is their amoral independent existence. Calculation, itself forms the basis of computational operations. What if numbers were seen as an interpretation of the world, an elusive signifier for a meaning that words themselves have shown to be elusive? Computational thinking, the language of numbers, remains coupled with that we ascribe a number to namely trust, and this might explain our unequivocal belief in all things digital. Bridle notes that technology as such functions within “an uncritical, unthinking belief in [its] amoral utility that perpetuates our inability to rethink our dealings with the world.”[25] In this way, computational thinking is an unscrutinised belief in the righteous ambience of data. The accumulation of data, the fabric of technological innovation, could be seen as the medium that supports our inert wish to be subordinate. But is all being subordinate? From very early on are we not brought into a condition of dependence? We form intimate social spaces (family) and removed social spaces (community, politics) that keep us intact, in dependence on another. The subordinate condition is an inherent experience of the being human operation. And like governance, or policing, computational logic now more than ever becomes yet another way to eliminate responsibility for the narrative we call life. Has the subordination of self in the Digital strengthened our inability to re-think how we deal with the world? Are we still able to ‘decide’ what we let into our world? Is our experience of the world a scan of the headlines, like superficial sound bites of Google news, or are we able to see more complicated narratives written by past and present authors, complex thought makers who reshape our experience of the world? Can we decide, if there still is a choice, who we want to narrate our experience? Whose master’s voice will you become?

25 Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 245.

PABLUM

There is an ease with which one can upload a YouTube video or a TikTok clip that tells us something about the efficiency of the Digital. But YouTube and TikTok are also algorithmic calculations. The operation is an embodiment absolute of generating minimum effort to produce minimum meaning.[29] To operate within the YouTube or TikTok universe successfully, you learn pretty quickly to re-enact suggested scenarios that become the services' vernacular. The production of YouTube videos, as suggested by Bridle, encompasses an algorithmic habitat in which the message is effected not only in the formal content, but also in how humans begin to operate within the medium.[30] One could also see the TikTok operation as a formation of a how we use language, in its lexical, syntactic as well as structural sense. Could it be that computational thinking will resolve that age-old phenomenon of misunderstanding? Should we not celebrate the fact that soon we can perform the language operation to the bare minimum and relay an endless exchange of unadulterated data sequences that are devoid of meaning? There is something interesting in the phenomenon of podcasts, for example, with endless conversations of making sense of the world produced and then devoured by listeners to minimal effect. Often are we not as listeners just partaking in an infinite world explanation session? Is this not somehow just an existential relief operation? A know-it-all, if only for a moment, as we become experts in numerous fields from astronomical anomalies through to turbulent relationships. Kept in a state of knowing, do we need to ask any questions of ourselves? Can we even still formulate questions? Is it not enough that we are comforted by the fact that our experience of the world is the *Joe Rogan Experience*, explained, mansplained, made sense of, convincing. Is the one-who-knows not a reiteration of the ongoing male gaze experience of the way of seeing operation?

29 Bridle, 225.
30 Bridle, 229.

ON NEVER BEING ALONE AGAIN

Perhaps one of the underpinning manifestations of the digital experience is the continuous flirtation between the production of loneliness and a promise of the never-being-alone-again rhetoric. In its successful formation of an inert-productive individual, the digital experience shapes the subject as a user-receiver within a servitude model of data production in exchange for attention. Here, inundated with information, the individual is positioned in a flurry of excitement, unsurpassed, massive, whilst at the same time emptied in quick succession at the shutting of the interface screen. The pitch-black screen becomes a reminder of the bleak loneliness left behind. On-never-being-alone-again represents the digital experience's answer to the direst of all human conditions: no one wants to be lonely. Tapping into the anxiety that one will be left behind, the digital experience reiterates a being incomplete without the presence of another, producing a satellite self, protective, always, angel-like, there.

On-never-being-alone-again is also a maintaining of self in another as a witness, overhead, a religious-like materialisation of a guardian, where you become a manifestation of a self--being-watched. On-never-being-alone is also the elimination of self without a companion. Not dissimilar to kindergarten surveillance practices whereby a child learns of being watched via a camera by their parents from afar, we are reminded to play out another's scenario of the self in the presence of another. As the 'I' is constantly reminded that it is seen, some learn better than others to stage the self with more satisfying results. The production of another version of self is none other than a subsequent re-casting of self that not only dominates the digital experience but becomes the continuous practice we inhabit in the new media environments.

New media interfaces not only suggest a reciprocal mirroring of the self and another, for in the verb alternative version of the prefix *inter-* they can also be seen as the burying, or laying to rest of faces. Here, the *inter*face of the digital experience is both an act of withdrawal and a stark reminder of the anxiety of that imminent end to all ends: our own eventual demise. The *inter*face experience is also, in this way, a constant reminder that if you only exist it is for a time, so make the most of it, the 'it' of course being a calculated digital presence. But what if the interface of the digital experience is a constant condition of presence now? Crary suggests that the act of sleeping is a counter-capitalist operation, in that it provides a withdrawal from the 24/7 experience of the everyday.[31] But in the Digital, as the gaze of the physical self withdraws into sleep, does not the gaze of the psychic self remain, continuous, uninterrupted, ON, spirit-like, present in what we have even aptly formulated as cloud computing?

Arthur C. Clarke once remarked that he was not sure what was more frightening: the idea that there are other intelligent beings in the universe or the idea that we are in fact alone. Let's try for a moment to imagine that the super-panopticon systems in place define a presence not of 'other' but 'another'. Let us also try to imagine that the notion of being seen is, in fact, something more inherent to the human experience than the notion of 'privacy'. Let us in turn imagine that the idea of independence is just as, if not more, foreign to the human condition than the notion of being disciplined. What if the experience of having to be seen, assessed, and managed, is just as innate as, if not more than, the notion of autonomy? What if the experience of having another present is not of otherness, but the experience of not having another is of that otherness that engulfs us with anxiety? What if the idea that we are alone, witness-less, invisible, and independent, is so horrifying we need to rely on the presence of another? Is the celebration of self-reliance as part of the modern human experience a delusional operation? What if what we really want is to be exempt from the responsibility for this thing called life? What if freewill is a fantastical notion, a capricious gesture, a freakish whim of the human condition? What if that which we desire most is realised in the state of reliance on and control by someone or something else? Would that not clear things up a bit? Could we not then at least decide upon that which will in fact automate our existence? Are we not already somehow automated by governance and the algorithmic operations of the digital experience? Are we not already a witness to the whitewash of responsibility for all matters paramount: the natural environment, poverty, or the economy? Even the inherent nature of capitalism seems to create a system so complex and so indeterminate that it eradicates the possibility that someone, could be responsible. Capitalism is a system devoid of blame. One is not to blame, as one is only carrying out orders of that ambiguous other, whose greatest

31 Crary, 24/7, 126.

trick is to produce the effect: that there isn't one. Self-deceived, are we not at the call of desire to be seen by an other, accompanied on this journey called life? This (An)other is also an infinite operation of witness protection against the void of existence, replaced by an infinite number of notions and concepts. The (An)other is not some otherness, undefined, it is simply an entity with which one is given a chance to comply. Non-selective, as long as it is, there. In this way, submissiveness is bliss. Here the compliance operation is the amendmen of the 'I' into the 'we', which better elaborates the experience of the self through the need of another present. If we are not 'we', then we are not. To this extent the 'I-we' is a maintenance operation of satisfying the Other. The 'I-we' is an assimilation of the give--yourself-to-(An)other practice already installed as part of the human (theological) experience. A 'totalitarian' realisation of the self to (An)other is a response to the are-you-there consternation and the response to the never-being-alone-again pledge of the digital experience.

Figure 3. Michelangelo *The Deposition*, 1547–1555

The formation of the satellite system could be seen as a great operation of establishing artificial celestial bodies at the periphery of our gravitational field, and an installation of an existential protective system. In this way, the system could be read as an expansion of human presence into the position once reserved for divine beings who look down upon us, often in judgment at the fragile idea of being human. The possibility of injecting ourselves into the landscape of the exosphere could also be seen as a rejection of the all-knowing, or as an injection of another in its place, as part of the being-human operation. As the Rogue Space Database[32] website demonstrates, even satellite debris maintains its presence within an infinite drift around planet Earth. Could these expired agents, repressed into the darkness of the spacial void, ever be rejected from our mind? The word satellite also denotes an outer relative, or entity that exists on the outskirts of a centre. In another way, the satellite scheme could also be understood as our own (life) support system. Not unlike, a materialisation of a guardian, or as a Sloterdijkesque sibling from time-before encircling, the satellite celestial body is always there, angel-like waiting to be summoned to protect those down below. Recently, with the rapid development of space exploration by commercial companies, there has also been a lot of interest in how to further extort the sky above us. As Starlink has shown, and many that will come after, the piercing of the sky will become just another operation of the human omnipresence imperative. But will this presence lead to the laying down to rest of human privacy? Can Michelangelo's *The Deposition* tell us something of this moment? Looking at the sculpture we are drawn to the twisted figure of Christ's body, the strange scale of the female figure to the left, the awkward inverted left arm of Christ, and the enviable demise of the central figure caught in an embarrassing attempt by the peripheral bodies to maintain some kind of decency for the son of God. One could see peripheral figures as numerous support mechanisms, but also as helpless individuals who are trying to hold on to that which seems all too fragile a fading organism. The scene is also a reminder of the awkwardness of being human, a coming into the world, an uncoordinated existential mess, programmed from the outset with a need for some kind of support system. The need for coordination is also a need for coordinates. And the installation of the satellite system may be just an adherence

32 https://sky.rogue.space/

to that need. All things considered, at birth, we do not so much enter the world as are ejected into something where even the fact that we have a body is alien to us. Unprepared, as we are expelled from the extravagance of the womb, for the infinite disorientation of that place we are told is home. One could see technological innovation as a positioning operation, a constant dismissal of this existential disorientation procedure. In this way, the satellite system is just another switched-on, infra-structured, re-installation of the self in a protective layer, a reiki-shield, a tech-immunity system. Because the fact that we are is always a formulation of some kind of life-support system. As we have long ago given up on the body's own immune system, we are faced with the possibility of trusting technology to establish a protective layer, or as some have already suggested an exit strategy to leave everything behind.

THE ALL-KNOWING-SEEING

Let us for a moment return to Nicholas Cursa and his experiment at the Abbey of Tegernsee. A rereading of the story suggests a dual function of the All-Seeing, where the presence of the divine is situated both within the exterior of the onlooker, where God is perceived as looking down upon me, and juxtaposed with an intimidating accountability of one's own belief. To feel His presence I need to believe in His existence. Could we not apply the operation of being looked at coupled with the anxiety of 'being seen' only when 'seeing' to the operation we undertake within the digital media exchange? Is the presence of the All-Seeing, once attributed to the elusive divine looking down upon His subjects, not materialised in the celestial operation of the Earth's satellite system and the data gathering agents it supports? Having successfully installed data-collection systems into the everyday, has the All-Seeing not amalgamated the All-Knowing as a digital operation? In this way, the All-Knowing-Seeing is like other homogenising practices of capitalism, amalgamating the 'being seen' and 'seeing' practices into a single interface. What is more, is the 'being seen' and 'seeing' not tailored to individual recommendations? Are we not participating in an exchange similar to the one that was asked of the Tegernsee monks in their own individualised divine operation of faith? The digital All-Knowing--Seeing however should not be seen as a theological replacement, and it could never be, given the strengthening of radical religious operations within the Digital. As such, the All--Knowing-Seeing is a technological materialisation of previous scenarios played out in the field of religion and that other disciplining operation: governance.

One could also see the operation of the All-Knowing-Seeing as a supernatural practice, whereby the subjects themselves are given clairvoyant abilities to transcend time, space, and limits of the gaze. Much like the previous supernatural operation of telepathy via telephone communication, the conjuring up of images once a magical gesture is now the gesture absolute of the electronic interface; think about the conjuring action of Tinder's left/right swipe gesture.

The operation of the All-Knowing-Seeing is also a practice of passing judgment, and installing the assessment of yourself as seen by others. Could the practice of being assessed not be seen as a rugged form of the being-watched operation? Is the fervent nature of recognition an inherent part of the human condition simply intensified by the digital experience? Is the notion that we are NOT SEEN even more appalling? Or are we to take warning of the detrimental consequence of self-harm of inmates who are positioned in the All-Seeing-Knowing operation within *super-max* maximum security prisons 24/7?[33]

But what if we shift the scenario outside the prison walls and scrutinise 24/7 ‘visibility’ in that other self-harm practice undertaken by children in the 21st century. Should we not ask ourselves: Why are children hurting themselves? Is this an effort on their part to still ‘feel’ something? Why are they cutting their skin with blades across cultures and economies? The correlation between the digital experience of constant ‘visibility’ and the self-inflicted wounds of today needs to be addressed. The lack of self-esteem, according to Han, is at the root of the self-harming practices.[34] Injected into a digi-world of compare and perform, children are compelled to achieve ever more. The Digital is a world of what you have is never enough practice. And we all know that childhood is marred by the terror of the underachiever. The rural is now amalgamated into the urban, forming a single digital landscape where children are thrown against each other in judgmental practices across numerous geo-political landscapes. Podcasting themselves to death, suicide is no longer just the domain of those with suicidal tendencies. Children as young as 12 are taking their lives. Fed by the selfie manifestation of self, the digital experience feeds the ego within a perpetual self-referential operation. In this world, those responsible have long vanished. As we know, capitalism’s greatest feat is to shape a system in which no one takes responsibility for anything, especially the most vulnerable. Inundated by continuous assessment of self, children accumulate the already inherent narcissistic compulsion to focus thereupon, and in the Digital their being-experience becomes an entrepreneurship of the self. A child’s life is a life of self-scrutiny, and in the Digital this life is under extreme self-surveillance of the selfie practice. Han notes that “selfies are manifestations of the self as an empty form.”[35] Is the cut into the body not a plea for feeling, for being

33 In written conversation with Zygmunt Bauman, David Lyon refers to Lorna Rhodes’s study which addresses the effect of panopticon maximum security prisons on inmates, who due to constant observation were prompted to self-mutilate.
34 Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, 45.
35 Han, 48.

something more than just that empty form? The scar of the digital experience is no longer a reminder of God's son's presence in us all, but an opening of the flesh, a digital stigmata, a plea for a way out of the terror of the empty online self. Self-exposure to constant scrutiny must be terrifying. Birth is now a handheld operation. Digital natives are not about being able to operate digital media, digital natives are the digital media. Digital natives are nothing more than support structures for self/data scrutinisation practices. The digital self is a data collection for every conceivable purpose and aim. The you-are-what-you-eat made real. Is the electronic interface anything more than an infrastructure for the emptying of feeling? What if for a moment we become the child's interface again? Should we as adults not take it upon ourselves to become 'the screen' they look up to for direction? With all of its conflicting possibilities, it is the face of the other that teaches us about difference, and isn't this how we learn to be in a relationship with ourselves as well? Can we still learn to engage with conflict, or are we poised, as Han notes, to function like machines who do not experience conflict and run smoothly or break down?[36]

36 Han, 42.

FOR TECHNOLOGY 2

In our love affair with innovation, do we see technology as is, or are we in a constant infatuated state of amorous technological entanglement? Can we possibly engage differently with new technologies? Bridle suggests that we need to develop a more 'thoughtful' approach to technology, and proposes that we need to think beyond technological expertise and begin to engage in ideas on how technology influences the way we function and relate to the world.[37] As such, can we break the passionate devotion to all things technological? Can the devotional transmission of self across information networks ever be re-configured in such a way that we participate in this exchange aware of the effect it has on how we relate to the world? In the Digital, technology is no longer relative to an object but closer to a state of being. Here, the idea that technological innovation is merely gadget-based is no longer valid. In the digital experience, all things technological become affect experiences. Yes, we have numerous new tangible glossy objects; but these are superfluous, their function is of another order. Caught in the monetary operation of profit and the 'keep things interesting" schema, these objects, just as our bodies, become conveyances of digital operations. If you think of new technology as an experience then it is not the objects that one needs to scrutinise but the relationship of an individual to technology itself. We are in a new technological condition where, in experiencing the world, responsibility is blurred. Should the new technological condition be a thoughtless engagement with the world, an irresponsible liaison coupled with an eradication of responsibility? Are we to participate as passive users in an infinite technological sameness, repackaged as newness? This state seems to be an amalgamation of opposites, the creation of paradox statements out of opposing terms, where 'everything-and-nothing' is possible. The new technological condition is the difficulty of speaking to someone about the implications of screen time. The new technological condition is a way of being in the world, where the possibility of being outside of the network is positioned as a removal from experiencing the world and equaled to that of being considered a weird recluse. The new technological condition is entangled in a code that created it: binary. This state is an alternative-less experience. Here you are either ON or you are OFF. But is that all there is? What is the world like outside of the buzz of the electric current that runs through all things digital? And why is it

37 Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 2.

that it almost takes an act of defiance to experience the world in any other way?

Technological innovation for no better reason has often been presented within the schema of improvement to the human experience. In itself, technology as such is impotent. Yet, human expectation projects upon it a promise of resolve. Science, like technological innovation, shares a similar obsession, a promise of a cure, a solution, an undermining of the way things are. Today, both science and technology can also be seen as modes of operation for multi-billion dollar enterprises. The idea of a free market is also the ground upon which anything and everything novel, even an idea, is monetised. Swathed within a dynamic of competition, ideas are not much different from fads, infiltrating our daily life at lightning speed, only to vanish just as quickly. If we are to understand the power of the Digital it is in its magical ability to transform at lightning speed the 'so hot right now!' into another more novel craze.

When did we reach a point at which science or technological innovation served such an important role in our dependence upon solving humanity's ailments? Are famine, civil rights, and poverty, a technological problem? What if the solutions to these problems lie in other fields of the human experience? Have we asked too much of technology? Today, statistical data calculations have become a process to validate an assessment of many given situations. Much like oracles, data predictions become like collective divine messages, accepted as all-truths. Not unlike modern science which has moved away from considering human subjectivity, all things data transform the individual into a collective message. The erasure of the individual (message), could be seen as the next instalment of the sci-fi horror film scenario where the terror of having advanced technology used by humans on other humans is not what we need to really worry about, but rather that autonomous technology independent of human control may trigger a process of no return. Even now, are we really able to be sure of own choices and those of another? Psychoanalysis suggests that even repetition, that corroborating practice of self-ratification, could be seen as a deception of the 'I' and its belief that it has control over experiencing the world and how it relates to others. So are we just smiling passengers traveling en route to destinations more or less controlled by (other) pilots? Is life to be seen as an auto-pilot operation? Recently, airline companies have been flirting with the idea of introducing self-flying aircraft as a way to increase passenger safety, given recent pilot errors. In this way, autonomous passenger planes would really mark a significant shift in the human operation of trusting the machine.

TRACE TOGETHER![38]

38 The following text was written on 14.04.2020. I have decided to keep it in the original format to highlight the thinking process at the time, and possibly reflect in the future as to the implementation of solutions during the height of the pandemic.

In the Spring of 2020, Andrew Probyn, an ABC (Australia) political editor reported[39] that the Australian government in its response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had announced that strict restrictions would continue to be enforced for another unspecified number of months unless Australians agreed to have their movements monitored by the *TraceTogether* tracking service downloadable from the government website. Proposed to the Australian public as an alternative, freedom of movement is granted under the condition that the details of that activity are to be disclosed. Could this scenario even be considered a choice? Should the monitoring of the public's movement ever be considered a solution to any crisis? Although we gave up our geo-position data long ago with the advent of mobile phone technology, the solution announced by the Australian government paints an interesting scenario. Let's imagine for a moment a society where a greater majority of people who possess a smartphone have an opportunity to check in real-time whether other individuals, let's say nearby you sitting in a cafe or on public transport, have been red-flagged after an apparent close contact with someone infected. How does one respond in this situation? Does one inform the staff of the establishment, tell the driver of the bus, or call the police or some special task force to be deployed to remove that person? Can you ever drink a relaxing cup of coffee having to check your phone as each new customer or passenger enters the cafe or bus? What of those who choose not to install the tracking app, are they to be treated with suspicion? Or will they be forced not to part take in activities that are simply part of the urban experience?

The Australian Prime Minister assured the public that the solution was not obligatory, and that the service was an opt-in operation, although for the system to be effective at least 40% of the population needs to download the app. The announcement mirrors similar strategies proposed in Europe, although with some disdain. The work to convince the European public is cut out for the tech companies who are lobbying intensely. The unimaginable has also happened: namely that Apple Inc. and Google are cooperating to provide a joint solution. It is not far-fetched to think that *TraceTogether*, and other similar apps, will become installed

39 Andrew Probyn, "Coronavirus lockdowns could end in months if Australians are willing to have their movements monitored," ABC News, April 12, 2020. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-14/coronavirus-app-government-wants-australians-to-download/12148210

into the anatomy of the everyday, a term already circulating as the ‘new normal’. Will we now live in a world in which each step is recorded, a world where we will be able to retrace our movements over our lifetime? Will we never be able to forget where we have been? Will the comfort of ‘forgetting’ become a privilege in the Digital? Is *TraceTogether* or not really a choice? Will not the former lock us into an experience that will be difficult to return from once we cross that line?

ON SELECTION

Marc Strauss reminds us[40] that modern society proposes a 'smiling' selection, where each one of us is bound to experience some sort of selection process. In his elaboration, Strauss suggests that modern society wants to 'turn off' non--satisfaction, or at least leave little room for the representation of dis-satisfaction, a point illustrated by Reality TV contestants who at the moment of being voted out, exit the stage with a 'smile'. Strauss reiterates that psychoanalysis has shown us that the easier access to satisfaction, the more one experiences dissatisfaction, with the selection process in the digital experience taking place and those who do not enjoy life with a smile are removed from (digital) sight. One thing is for certain: our digital reality is constructed more and more without a space for failure. In other words, what we know and what we compare with is an image of potential 'success'. For example, during the first months of the pandemic, Youtube advertising centred around a positive aspect of the lockdown. Namely, how to use the time for positive self-development. One sharply made advertisement, offered an opportunity to use this time of isolation to develop better dating skills, stressing that when the lockdown came to an end there would be so many people eager to meet up, that is was worth taking the opportunity to prepare successfully for that very moment. For a price of course! In the Digital, you are either in or you are out, you either make the best of the situation or you don't, you want to be part of those who do something with their lives or you don't. Selection in this way plays on the idea that if not you, then someone else other than you is going to use this, and end up more successful than you. 'Do you have a strategy?' 'Are you in or are you out?' Being 'in', is a part of being visible. In this way, selection plays on the anxieties that satisfaction is the domain of someone other than yourself, a command to join the right team who are experiencing satisfaction right now! Here, selection is a commanded selection, and as some government proposals during the pandemic have shown, the choice is limited to the idea that you are either 'in' or are left 'out'. Take the increasing pressure on governments to implement tracing apps during the COVID 19 pandemic. Another commanded selection that was floated at this time in the Polish Parliament to provide a 'choice' for individuals as to whether they install a tracing app on the basis that those who agree to do so

40 Mark Strauss, "Mówienie i Big Data," lecture, PJAIT Warsaw, March, 20, 2017.

would receive priority treatment in hospital in the event of illness due to the COVID-19 infection. Now who would not be in!

As Strauss reminds us, non-satisfaction is also a feature of the human experience that is dealt with by each one of us in our own way. As psychoanalysis has shown us, there is something inherent to being human that keeps us from experiencing complete ‘satisfaction’, so it is ‘dis-satisfaction’ it seems that defines us; and has the digital experience not tapped into this very fact - with the numerous high-speed solutions that promise to eliminate that terror of this thing called suffering?

As such, is the digital experience a childish relationship with the world? Like an infant who at a certain point experiences frustration when speech and articulation are not symmetrical with their demands, the Digital fulfils the NOW! call successfully. We are like infa-adults whose capricious demands are constantly being fulfilled. The digital experience is also a genie relationship with the world. But be careful what you wish for. Excess of positivity has a price, and that price is: depression. As noted by Han, one way of understanding depression is to see it as “a consequence of a pathologically intensified narcissistic relation to self.”[41] The about me and my demands of the infa-adult is an elimination of anything that is anything other than the self. As Han notes, “The new social media communication abolishes that which confronts the self, namely the other.”[42] But how do we define the other? For Han, the other is “also the object; it is even decency. We have lost the capacity, the decency, to see the other in otherness, because we flood everything with our intimacy. The other is something that questions me, that unrests me from my narcissistic inwardness.”[43]

41 Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, 96.
42 Han, 98.
43 Han, 97.

THE (SMART) TECHNOLOGY OF RULE

In “Why Revolution is Impossible Today” Han suggests that the neoliberal system of rule is no longer based on oppressive mechanisms, but those of seduction.[44] He goes on further to say that the neoliberal system ensures that members of society subordinate themselves to the system of rule voluntarily.[45] Here, technological innovation seems to serve both as a tool of persuasion and a producer of objects made desirable at the cost of one’s self-disclosure. Most would agree that the digital experience has revolutionised the self-exposure practice. Presented as a system of fulfilment, technology in the Digital is primarily the child of the neoliberal system of rule, whose preservation of power, as Han notes has taken on “a smart, friendly form.”[46] The paradox of the neoliberal system is that, unlike a subordinated individual who is not aware of its subordination, the neoliberal system, supported by technology, can function under the premise of transparency and ‘freedom’, a vague term in the Digital to say the least. Is the enchantment of the glossy surface of our devices preventing us from objecting to the false promise of autonomy of the Digital? Maybe so, but the neoliberal system of rule, with its technological imperative, goes far beyond the object relation and becomes a full-fledged reformatting of the this-is-your-life operation. Here, technology could be seen as a reinvention of the somewhat redundant Freudian triad of art, science, and religion, and a diversion of the terror that is the void of existence. As the digital experience reinstalls itself into the this-is-your-life operating system, technological innovation is implemented into life proper, and any form of restraint is seen as a civilisational regression. Recently, with the West scrambling to deal with Russian presence in Ukraine, the West’s sanctions to halt Russian technological innovation have also become a tactical operation to subdue Putin’s death drive. The West’s attempt to repress innovation underscores the force of technological invention in the Digital. You either have it or you don’t. Here, technological innovation is presented as must-have, a TED-talk presentation, where the process of production is always ambiguous as very few understand the complexity of computational processes. ‘How did we get here?’ is not a question that many ask, what we are often presented with is: ‘Do you want me to show you?’ as

44 Han, 16.
45 Han, 17.
46 Han.

Steve Jobs often reiterated to tease his audience. Technological innovation is product making. It is the manufacturer of consumer culture of 'having'. The imperative is to keep-on-keeping on no matter what, and a building of an individual enterprise of 'wanting' and 'possessing'. Even 'sharing' has become a sign of possessing. Caught in a competitive drive, you share in order to get recognition. No one gives anything away for nothing, as even in the altruistic gesture of the philanthropic act we see the ultimate selfie operation. Thousand of years of evolution have finally shaped the hand with all its intricate possibilities into the ultimate input device. But, with all things innovative, progress doesn't cease there, and the eventual replacement with the eye will make the hand obsolete. For example, in the mixed-realities universe, the eye will become the ultimate perpetuum mobile acting both as the interface and the controller. Successive elimination of the body seems to have been implemented into technological innovation already. But should we not listen to Stanislaw Lem's stern warning that if we eliminate the body we eliminate the ethical and moral structure upon which human beings are based![47] The technological body is a pain-free experience. Having eliminated body pain are we not exposing that secret of all secrets that to be human is ultimately, like all living things, to possess a drive to return to the inanimate condition? Or are we to trust a secret once protected by Eros in whose presence the wish that was directed towards external objects is now directed at ourselves.

47 Szymon Kulwas, "Źródła technosceptycyzmu Lema" lecture, Spotkanie Literackie FPPL online, November, 11, 2021.

TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

Figure 4. Kate Greenaway *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*

Like all things profitable, ideas of trust and transparency have also been subjected to fit the production model. Trust is basically a belief in the other without knowing everything of the other. In the Digital, trust has taken on a new function. Where once trust was built in the not-knowing, here it is inverted into an all-knowing condition. Driven by technology, trust is a collection of data that serves to eliminate suspicion. Besides the semiotic conversion, trust has also become a marker of authenticity and elimination of 'that which I don't know' in the other. In the infinite space of information, this all-knowing is a relationship of surveillance. But can we know everything about someone? Programmed to trust in exchange for proof is a constant anxiety game, where suspicion of that which still possibly might be hidden is kept alive. Trust within the post-self culture is raised to the realm of self-exposure, where a process of verification between a couple on a first date takes place before meeting in person, having to fulfil the expectations on each other's Tinder account image and description. That first in-person meeting in itself becomes a prove-it ceremony, a fact-check experience, where each party plays out an investigation of the truth imperative. Han identifies another phenomenon that has become a marker of authenticity within digital politics: transparency. In "Inside the Digital Panopticon", Han states that our "transparent society has become indistinguishable from a society of total surveillance,"[48] and that we operate within a state where everything around us observes and surveys us. Juxtaposed with the Orleanian surveillance model, the digital panopticon provides "a voluntary exhibition of the private space and the digital exposure of the soul."[49] Could it be that in the Digital, the torture chamber is replaced by the electronic interface, and as Han notes, the limitless feeling of freedom prevents any resistance from forming?[50] In the Digital, transparency prevails in most of life's processes, from political transparency to the lay-it-all-out imperative of social media. Strangely enough, Han observes, human beings are not even transparent to themselves.[51] As psychoanalysis has shown us, the psychic system is never at one with itself. The elusive nature of the psyche thus seems like a godsend at this time. Much like the psychoanalytical proposal of the lack, that which seems inherently human is also that

48 Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, 28.
49 Han, 31.
50 Han.
51 Han, 36.

which may be a blessing. For Han, the "only fully transparent thing is emptiness" and "in order to avoid this emptiness, a large amount of information is put into circulation."[52] Transparency is then a beacon of generating information to fill a void brought about by emptiness. In this way, transparency is a promise of that which is impossible to achieve, namely to fill the void of existence. But try as it may, the digital experience with its information-making capabilities fits the operation of submission perfectly. The Digital is a new practice of sublimation, where the All-Seeing-Knowing of transparency has replaced the All-knowing of the divine. Religious practice knew very well to treat the All-knowing with secrecy to maintain desire. But the Digital works somewhat cunningly. Here, the secret is out, for all to see. Here, it is the inability to process all that is presented that shrouds the world in mystery, and we participate in its fragments, never even given a chance to digest the information, let alone have time for reflection. This fragmented experience is a strange one. We are promised so much we literally cannot fathom, and as such we become guilty for not having realised the promise given to us of fulfilment.

In the Digital, transparency has also blurred the inner and outer human experiences. Here we all part take in the formation of confessional participation, guilt-driven, we eagerly submit all there is to know. Our act of digital confession is an act of exploitation and value. Han recalls Acxiom, a data collection company that organises users into "seventy economic categories, the group of people with the lowest [digital producing] value as customers are called 'waste'[!]"[53] In this way, "the digital value system degrades the human person into an object that is quantifiable and controlled."[54] The question remains as to why we have degraded ourselves into an object of algorithmic evaluation? What processes have occurred to establish such a representation of human dignity? Have we missed something? Have the glossy, high-def images blinded us to couch potato into the 21st century?

52 Han, 37.
53 Han, 23.
54 Han.

WHEN FREEDOM IS SERFDOM

That we live in a disciplined society is no news to anyone. We signed the contract long ago. More recently, spurred on by terrorist threats in the 20th century, we allowed ourselves to be humiliated at airports, only to now undergo the next stage of transformation towards the permanent security zone after the pandemic. Situated under constant threat of the virus, a terrorist within, we all become suspects. The popularity of digital bracelets once reserved for offenders seems fitting in this respect. Living in a digital panopticon, we refine the bio-political surveillance strategy with a magnitude of personal details from body positioning to our social interactions. The quantified self is nothing more than a monitoring and measuring procedure to increase control and profits. Han recognises this as participation in digital feudalism, where the digital lords declare: “You can have it for free. Cultivate it.”[55] A proposal of freedom not unlike the earlier human operation we know so well: serfdom. What distinguishes today’s digital serfdom from Marx’s capital model is that today we are no longer safeguarded by external domination that has a representation. Today, we give ourselves up voluntarily, where we have no one to blame but ourselves.

But how did we get to be so complacent?

Michel Foucault suggests that discipline is not just an institutional operation, but a way of modulating power through various instruments and techniques, akin to a technology of domination. And as we soon come to learn, discipline should be understood more as a ‘physics’ or ‘an anatomy of power’; in other words, as a ‘technology’ for means of control.

55 Han, 89.

PART TWO:
Control

SURVEILLER ET PUNIR

In the English translator's note to Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir* (translated as *Discipline and Punish*), Alan Sheridan scrutinises the difficulty of translating the title into English. In his explanation, Sheridan notes that the verb 'surveiller' has no adequate English equivalent—as the noun 'surveillance' has an altogether too restricted and technical use, the word 'discipline' has been adopted. That translation was in 1977, and one could begin to think whether this dilemma is still valid. With myriad disciplining strategies through surveillance in place today does not the direct translation of the French 'surveiller' into English suffice? Can Foucault's extensive study of punishment and penal control still teach us something about current systems of control, namely surveillance practices inscribed into the digital experience?

To begin, let us turn to Foucault who opens up his seminal work with his account on the birth of the prison. Carefully examining the body of the condemned, Foucault sets off with an excruciating description of punishment and subsequent death to an individual through infliction of pain. His ardent representation of public execution is formulated and serves as an example of subsequent punishment operations in the formation of the penal reform system. Although one gets the impression that Foucault gets a lot of pleasure out of describing in horrific detail numerous acts of torture, we learn that punishment in the form of public spectacle was seen as a practice "equal, if not exceed in savagery of the crime itself."[56] This form of public display of pain, according to Foucault, endured into the 19th century, and thereafter the en-masse gratification took on several transformations to subsequently formulate a system that disciplines the individual within a penal system we recognise today. But punishment over the centuries could also be seen as a redistribution of blame, the first stage of which was marked by the shift of attention away from the public squares and into the trial room. What is more, the transition away from public executions disconnected the body-crime relation and marked a defining move away from the public display of human death. But how does one punish, if one cannot punish the body? Foucault suggests that, since it is no longer the body, it must

56 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 9.

be the soul that is judged.[57] And so the penal system began to examine investigative tactics such as to what extent was the subject's will involved in the crime. With these assessments came ideas correlated to madness, and thus the role of judgment and interpretation of opinions from an array of criminal experts.[58] In this way, scientific discourses began to shape and forever became "entangled with the practices of the power to punish."[59] Punishment in all forms has always positioned the condemned as the one who suffers more than others.[60] The modern prison system with its restriction of movement and surveillance practices does not undermine this position, but renders it within a new technological power relation.

Foucault observes that the development of production methods correlates with the expansion of systems of punishment,[61] and "forced labour and the prison factory appeared with the development of the mercantile economy."[62] In this way, one could read punishment being installed as an economically viable alternative. Confinement and correction thus always relate to the body of the condemned, and one begins to see the formation or inversion of the prisoner-producer role. For Foucault, the body is always caught up within a political discourse of power relations which "possess an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."[63] The Foucaultian body is trapped in a production mode that maintains it in relations of power and domination. Here, the body is only useful if it is both productive and subjected, and the knowledge of these bodily processes constitutes the political technology of the body.[64] Foucault further suggests that "the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to appropriation, but to disposition, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings."[65]

57 Foucault, 16.
58 Foucault, 22.
59 Foucault, 23.
60 Foucault, 16.
61 Foucault, 24–25.
62 Foucault, 25.
63 Foucault.
64 Foucault, 26
65 Foucault.

If all of this sounds quite familiar to us then because it is. The digital data experience, amongst other things, positions the body within a process of production making. The data production processes position the individual within an economy that sustains production no matter what, here the individual body with its biological limit, in other words an expiration date, is dispensable. Not unlike, Foucault's reference to Ernst Kantorowitz's *The King's Two Bodies* which marks the body of the king within a dual function, firstly as a transitory 'entity' that is born and dies, and "another that remains unchanged by time and is maintained as the physical yet intangible support of the kingdom."[66] Interestingly, the body of the king is also not unlike the body of the condemned, and Foucault rightly observes that both double as processes that maintain something other than just the transitory passage of life, as for the condemned the body of the king becomes a way to code in the subject their own "lack of power."[67] So, the body of the condemned is maintained within the economy of power, playing out the signs of domination. The position of the body within a function of power politics can also be observed in "those who are stuck at a machine"[68] and those who are maintained there. Sound familiar?

66 Foucault, 28.
67 Foucault, 29.
68 Foucault.

TORTURE

Foucault defines torture as punishment within three criteria: the first is defined by the production of a certain degree of pain; the second, is a culmination of a calculated gradation of pain that leads to death; the third, torture as the art of maintaining life in pain.[69] In this way, torture is seen as one of the ingredients in the undermining operation, and the body of the condemned played a central role in the game of punishment. As the body is a malleable edifice that is easily scarred, it is its response to pain that served as the perfect instrument for public performance. As noted by Foucault, the spectacle of public punishment was often accompanied by the cries of pain, the soundscape of the efficiency of justice.[70] Initially, torture remained hidden within the confines of dungeons, those first detention spaces where the theatre of establishing truth was practiced.[71] Foucault notes that, as the criminal investigation was seen as "the machine that might produce the truth," the confession of the condemned was not always recognised as the truth. For the practice of torture intertwines: pain, confrontation and truth within a complicated interrelationship, and "each in its own way worked through the body of the condemned."[72] Regulated pain was in this way perceived as both an investigative tool and a form of punishment.[73]

The implementation of pain for all to see, common in the 18th century, also became a practice of establishing guilt and an art of public confessions. At the time, more often than not, the body of the condemned played out its theatre of cruelty at or in close proximity to the scene of the crime. A kind of malicious re-staging of the crime. The body itself caught in the psychodrama of cruelty was marked by the nature of the crime where the condemned was forced to re-enact a theatrical reproduction of the event, and its physical geography often corresponded with that of the offence.[74] At its completion, the ceremony of pain was accompanied by the final wails of distress proving as such the efficiency of the redeeming nature of suffering.[75] Foucault notes that the body, whether suppressed to torture in the dungeons or publicly,

69 Foucault, 33.
70 Foucault, 34.
71 Foucault, 36.
72 Foucault, 41.
73 Foucault, 42.
74 Foucault, 43.
75 Foucault, 45.

was seen as the producer and reproducer of the crime. What is important here, and Foucault makes special mention of this, is that public display of torture is both a judicial as well as a political operation, and the spectacle “belongs to a whole series of great rituals in which power is eclipsed and restored.”[76] What counts is the deployment of spectacle, as “the ceremony of public torture and execution displayed for all to see” solidified the power relation used to enforce the law.[77] The spectacle however would have little resonance if it weren’t for the public, whose own presence completes the exchange that strengthens their own dependency on the power relation. Enchanted by the right to bear witness, the public by their very presence solidified the force of the power relation and secured the judicial system in the tissue of society for centuries to come. As such, the public display of punishment had a dual function: to warn and to frighten.[78] And it was not until the teachings of the Enlightenment that facilitated in a shift away from the barbaric nature of public displays of torture. The economic value of the body seems to fit the disappearance of public executions, namely when an economic advantage was given to the body of the condemned its value was given precedence in the form of labour power. A heed warning for the subsequent centuries for those in governance and business: value placed upon the body that once devoid of economic value has no value at all.

76 Foucault, 48.
77 Foucault, 50.
78 Foucault, 58.

THE EFFICIENCY OF POST-CRIME

The spectacle of execution, although seen as a savage operation, included a dramaturgy whose narrative could be seen as even more damming than the ensuing cruel physical act upon the body. In the course of the brutal ceremony, the condemned, for example, was given an opportunity to proclaim guilt and beg for pardon, known as the *amende honorable,*[79] an act of desperation that served nothing more than to humiliate the individual even further and authenticate the cruel staging of torture. The efficiency of this moment was further underscored with fictional renditions of the proclamation of guilt by the condemned printed and distributed to the onlookers reinforcing a ‘be warned’ operation as a further disciplining measure. Interestingly, acts of renunciation of guilt in some individuals were not unheard of, and these acts of “strength that no power had succeeded in bending”[80] gave rise to the transformation of the condemned into a hero-villain; a shift that in itself shook the power relations and gave rise to the aesthetic “rewriting of crime” as Foucault calls it, and a new “appreciation of criminality”.[81]

By the second half of the 18th century, the spectacle of public executions was strained, and pressure to install a new form of punishment resulted in the implementation of a new form of judicial control; namely to correct the condemned and transform them into an individual of value. This was the epoch of production, and as capital was beginning to be distributed, ownership expanded, and as such more rigorous means of surveillance needed to be implemented to protect one’s assets. Here Foucault observes that the move from the economy of execution to that of correction aligned with “the development of production” and “the increase of wealth” where “a higher juridical and moral value (was) placed on property relations” and new “methods of surveillance” established, and so “the shift in illegal practices is correlative with an extension and refinement of punitive practices.”[82] The formation of means by which ownership was protected further framed “the individual lives of individuals”[83] and established the next development of the mechanism by which power was distributed. This marked the refinement of practices that assume responsibility

79 Foucault, 69.
80 Foucault, 67.
81 Foucault, 68.
82 Foucault, 77.
83 Foucault.

for an individual, and paved the way for the establishment of surveillance practices whereby one's "everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity their apparently unimportant gestures"[84] could be scrutinised. As Foucault notes, this is the turn towards "a closer penal mapping of the social body."[85] By today's standards, this could also be read as the implementation of the 'control' better rather than 'control more' operation.

Foucault's description rings true, not as a depiction of today, but as a possible link between the development of power relations as a form of social control. In this way, one could see that today's systems of control are not so much a repetition of previous modes but an evolution in the ever-changing mechanisms of power. The dilution of punishment to means of surveillance, stirred on by technological innovation, has created an efficient system of control. Under the guise of protecting me from what I want, a person no longer needs to be punished when one gives themselves up willingly, pre-crime. Crime in all its vulgarity has moved to the podcast variety, where even celebrities become true-crime investigators.[86] Crime as we know it no longer just punishes the body. It is a scenario worth talking about. Spurred on by the desire to be seen, crime is an idea entertained, shifting from punishment against the body, to a body of crime newsfeeds. For all its worth, the efficacy of crime-entertainment has proven much easier to uphold the power-control-profit triad of digital social inaction.

84 Foucault.
85 Foucault, 78.
86 see Kim Kardashian's true-crime Spotify podcast called "The System"

ANATOMY OF CONTROL

Control over the social body was, as pointed out by Foucault, marked by two major developments. The body upon which punishment was implemented was no longer an efficient means of control, and the economy of domination shifted to position the individual withina value mode in the mercantile system. However, this transition required a new strategy as regards to the means of control, and a new system to repress illegal activity needed to be implemented.[87] As mentioned earlier, the rise in commodities resulted in “a systematic, armed intolerance of illegality”, and that which was seen as illegal was restructured to suit the development of capitalist society, whose chief proponents “reserved to itself the fruitful domain of the illegality of rights.”[88] As Foucault notes, the reform required the development of a penal system that would administer illegalities differently.[89] The new strategy introduced a binding system of responsibilities, where the criminal is positioned as an enemy of society for breaking the social pact of obedience. In this way, the contract between the criminal and the social body is, as Foucault notes, no longer articulated within a mode of ritual exchange (as seen in the spectacle of public execution) but as a sign that serves to act as a deterrent.[90] At this stage, punishment is still seen as an act that anticipates illegalities, although it is the power of punishment that is beginning to undergo a major reformation. To understand this better, Foucault prescribes 6 rules of this reformation[91] as follows:

I) the rule of minimum quality - which supposes that, if a criminal realises the deed is a greater disadvantage, then the act could cease to be desirable,
II) the rule of sufficient ideology - which identifies that “pain at the heart of punishment is not the actual sensation of pain,” but an idea of pain or displeasure,
III) the rule of lateral effects - that formulates a scenario where the “penalty must have its most intense effect on those who have not committed the crime,” as seen in Cesare Beccaria’s proposal[92] to replace capital punishment with perpetual slavery,

87 Foucault, 85.
88 Foucault, 87.
89 Foucault, 89.
90 Foucault, 93.
91 Foucault, 94–99.
92 Beccaria proposed that the purpose of punishment is to deter the offender from committing the crime again, and to discourage others from ever committing the offence themselves.

IV) the rule of perfect certainty - which proposes a clear definition of the penalties that adhere to the crime and that “the machinery of justice must be duplicated by an organ of surveillance”,
V) the rule of common truth - where the defendant is presumed innocent, hence shifting the earlier notion where the master of justice is also the master of its truth,
VI) the rule of optimal specification - where “a code must be sufficiently precise for each type of offence on an individual basis”.

The reformation marks another shift, where the offender is now a defendant whose sole intention of his will is eclipsed by the attitude in which the possible illegality was committed. As such, the previous anatomies of punishment are abandoned and the penal reform moved from the submission of the body to the control of ideas.

Here Foucault provides a long passage from Servan that sets the tone for the new form of penal control:

> *When you have thus forced the chain of ideas in the heads of your citizens, you will then be able to pride yourself on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas.*[93]

In this way, penal strategies could be seen as the strategies embedded in overall social systems of control, and the penal system itself could be understood as the testing ground for the implementation of numerous systems of domination and control within the tissue of society. Here, the penal operation of control could serve as a model found in other systems of control like education or the implementation of control measures in response to ‘alleged’ terrorist threats, and its development has surely set up the parameters within which we function in society today. The parameters of the penal code have rippled into the tissue of society. Much like prison control bands have become the precursor of smartwatch fit bands, surveillance modes could also be seen as a lateral development of technological systems of

93 Foucault, 102–103.

control. And just as mercantile development shaped the penal system of punishment, one could also see how technological development has influenced the formation of discipline. Has not technology itself merely shifted the walls of the prisons to formulate a new system of control within a new digital economy of obedience?

Foucault's examination of penal control in the 19th Century also identifies a clear lean to a more temperate form of punishment, where the art of punishing began to rest on the representation of punishment through gestures that constituted obstacles for the prospective criminal. Here, the crime-prevention strategy through deterrence was to serve as a means of control, and Foucault outlines several important 'developments':[94]

1) the idea of the offence should be so compelling that the thought of the crime in itself should function as a sign of punishment,
2) there is a reduction in the desire to make the offence attractive, in other words, "recompose the dynamic of passion",
3) punishment can only serve its function if it comes to a prospective conclusion, in other words, the condemned must sense that their penance will be rewarded with freedom,
4) signs of punishment should be circulated widely to discourage the potential offender, and guilt reconfigured in such a way that it becomes a guilt towards fellow citizens. This marks a major shift in the reconfiguration of punishment, where the body of the guilty no longer belongs to the king, but to the moral discourse of society, and as such the condemned fulfils a dual function: "by the labour he provides and by the signs that he produces",
5) the economy of torture based on terror and physical fear is now replaced by the economy of lesson, based on a code, with punishment personified by a range of decipherable signs that became the representation of public morality.

As the economy of lesson forged the way for penal reform, so did a new form of drawing the public into a novel disciplining operation. Here, prisons began to serve as places of Sunday

94 Foucault, 105–110.

visits, where one would learn of the benefits of the new art of punishment, and part take in a “lesson in the museum of order.”[95] And in this way, the family outing formed part of the 6th instalment in the reconfiguration of punishment within the social fabric of society.

The reform also had an effect on the landscape of the city, where walls that once served to protect the wealthy and establish the order of power, now moved to seal in the guilty, and the prison wall as such erected within the city established itself as a symbolic statement of the power to punish for all to see.[96] The theatre of punishment in this way became a representation of a powerful machinery of the prison system,[97] and as the writing of an offender’s penalty upon his face was no longer practised, the walls of the prisons became the articulation of a new order upon the face of the city. The prison became an apparatus for altering minds,[98] for both those inside and in some way outside its walls, and the efficiency of the prison system depended upon an array of methods to organise, distribute and control individuals. What’s more, the operation of detention introduced a systematic collection of data on the prisoner, and the prison institution evolved into an apparatus of knowledge, meaning it could be seen as the first refined data collection centre.

95 Foucault, 112.
96 Foucault, 116.
97 Foucault.
98 Foucault, 125.

DOCILE BODIES

In part three, Foucault shifts his focus away from punishment and focuses on diverse forms of discipline that make up the anatomy of control. Beginning with the figure of the soldier, Foucault notes that a soldier's posture in itself is seen as a representation of a rhetoric of honour, and the soldier's body even in the classical age, was seen as an object and target of power.[99] This body-in-command, not unlike Man-the-Machine, is described as an organism in "grips of strict powers, which impose on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations,"[100] a body whose entire "movements, gestures, attitudes"[101] are entangled within operations of discipline. The militarised body is bound to an economy of control whose efficacious movement, internal organisation, and supervision of activity is given precedence over achievable results.[102] A body that is disciplined is a body that sustains a simple maximisation of mastery of one's body by another.[103] In this way, the mechanics of power position the individual so that they may operate in accordance with the demand of the other; with the speed and efficiency that the other determines. Foucault notes that the new economy of control was often adopted in response to marked civilisational threats, like the outbreak of epidemic diseases.[104] In response, new strategies began to be implemented, and the regulation and supervision of life and the body was enforced. Here one could see Napoleon as the precursor to understanding the power of knowledge over his subordinates, whose mechanism of power, and understanding of data management, as Foucault notes "would allow him to see the smallest event that occurred in the state that he governed."[105]

Another important development in the evolution of disciplinary systems was the formation of spaces that would act or ease the control of individuals. Foucault notes a number of important factors that space distribution plays in controlling individuals. Firstly, he identifies the importance of forming a space heterogenous to all others that is "closed upon itself" to protect "disciplinary monotony".[106] Here, one is given the example of a factory which

99 Foucault, 136.
100 Foucault.
101 Foucault, 137.
102 Foucault.
103 Foucault.
104 Foucault, 138.
105 Foucault, 141.
106 Foucault.

takes on monastic qualities that serve to "derive the maximum advantage and to re-neutralise inconveniences."[107] Secondly, a disciplined space needs to cater for all individuals, and as such it should be distributed to take all social groups into consideration, and most interestingly, serve to eliminate the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals.[108] As Foucault notes, the disciplinary space "is always, basically, cellular,"[109] providing solitude for both the body and the soul.[110] Thirdly, a disciplined space should be a functional site, a coded space that clearly marks its parameter as "a zone where one might isolate individuals and map them."[111] Foucault's final point in highlighting the importance of space control as disciplining measures describes places one occupies within a classification system, a disciplining in relation to rank, where the individual body is located, distributed, and circulated in accordance with a network of relations.[112] Foucault's own terminology here seems eerily in keeping with the way we describe the digital manifestation of portable spaces of control.

The economy of the Digital is also an economy of organisation. It is an operation of timetables, repetitions, and regulated actions not unlike the early forms of obedience strategies. When looking back at the formation of activity control, Foucault suggests that monastic communities first established a code of practice of "rhythms, imposed occupations" and "regulated the cycle of repetition" that became the model implemented in institutional obedience systems, such as schools and factories.[113] The latter, "vigours of the industrial period long retained a religious air"[114] and as Foucault notes, the organisation of work in the factory was not that far removed from that of a monastery.[115]

Schools, another disciplining system, also represented an organisation of time within a set of principles that had to be "obeyed immediately."[116] Under constant supervision, the

107 Foucault, 142.
108 Foucault, 143.
109 Foucault.
110 Foucault.
111 Foucault, 144.
112 Foucault, 146.
113 Foucault, 149.
114 Foucault.
115 Foucault.
116 Foucault, 150.

immediacy of body response was an assurance of a quantifiable response to time, and the rapid response was also a guaranteer where anything that would disturb productivity was eliminated. The rigour of measured time eliminated time of impurities, and productivity assured that the body was kept under a constant operation of in-action.[117]

Foucault also identifies another characteristic that ensures the efficiency of a disciplined body, namely how the body is to be positioned according to a set of correct motions to correlate its function within efficient gestures.[118] Here the gesture is described within two modes of operation, firstly as an efficient manoeuvre of parts of the body to be applied, and secondly, the efficiency of the use of an object.[119] All these body-made-useful operations regulated the body within a discipline of organisation and efficacy in capitalising time. In this mode, power could be articulated via the "'seriation' of successive activities"[120] and a consistent implementation of body tasks. And as the individual body becomes part of a collective exercise, the subject can be positioned and articulated by others.[121] The socially disciplined body that exercises task togetherness functions as a productive accumulation, an economic manoeuvre, organised to perform ideally the repetition operation of order and productivity. The organisational mode is also an endless task-acquisition exercise. And as the term 'organisation' given to individuals working within a group suggests, the economy of organisation could also be seen as a self-erasure exercise, where the efficiency of collective order becomes the only valuable operation.

Foucault states that every efficient system of discipline needs to establish a "precise system of command" which positions bodies within an array of arranged ordered signals.[122] Here we learn that discipline "creates out of the bodies it controls," a particular "individuality that is endowed with four characteristics."[123] First, the cellular, in which space distribution is ordered, second the organic in which the coding of activities takes place, third

117 Foucault, 181.
118 Foucault, 155.
119 Foucault, 153.
120 Foucault, 160.
121 Foucault, 164.
122 Foucault, 166.
123 Foucault, 167.

the genetic in which time is accumulated, and fourth the combinatory in which tactics are established to enforce modes of “constructing, with local bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes.”[124] As Foucault notes, whilst lawmakers and philosophers endeavoured to reconstruct the social body, it was the military model that seemed to have prevailed in its individual and collective coercion of organised bodies.[125]

124 Foucault.
125 Foucault, 169.

THE BODY (OB)SERVED

In reference to Walhausen's *L'Art militaries pour l'infanterie*, Foucault notes that obedience is to be seen as an art of correct training of confused bodies[126] and the operation turns its subjects into objects and instruments of its processes. Foucault also notes that, with new technologies, like the invention of the telescope and the lens, discipline began to change its technics and transformed obedience into an art of observation. Spurred on by astrology, observation entered the sphere of physics and paved the way for "the eyes that must see without being seen"[127] scheme, in what was to become the exercise in the secret observation of individuals.

Like with many other technological innovations, it was the military camps that first began to set up observational modes, and as Foucault notes these then became the characteristics of urban planning and the development of cities, seen in the emergence of housing estates for the working-class, for example.[128] In this way, new architecture and urban planning served as spatial operations of transforming individual habitats into spaces where one could have "a hold on their conduct, to carry the effect of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them."[129] First enforced in established institutions of obedience, the new apparatus of observation together with recording and training completed the secret machinery of control. And as Foucault notes, "the perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape, and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned."[130] The era's technological wish of the All-knowing eye was soon to be realised, but not before another important disciplining practice: social surveillance of individuals of themselves implemented in factories in what was generally a collective spying operation. This mode of observation within a hierarchal structure functioned not unlike "a piece of machinery (…) that by its very principle left no ubiquitous zones."[131]

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126 Foucault, 170.
127 Foucault, 171.
128 Foucault.
129 Foucault, 172.
130 Foucault, 173.
131 Foucault, 175.

Visibility was to become a power over the individual based on both culture and physics, beginning a new dawn of obedience, that would implement the individual within the presence of the other and a body observed always in what was to become the normalisation of observation.

The presence of the other watching was no better-refined than in the early disciplinary institutions, where, as Foucault notes, orphanages for example restored each individual within a punishable universality.[132] Punishment in such institutions was seen as a corrective mechanism, often applied within a gratification-punishment schema, where discipline was supplemented by the micro-economy of each individual whose value was placed on their potential.[133] The regime of obedience within disciplinary institutions, as noted by Foucault, operated within a number of processes:[134]

1) by comparing an individual's action to a defined whole,
2) by differentiating individuals from one another,
3) by a quantitive measure of an individual in terms of their value or nature,
4) by the introduction of a reward system,
5) by defining differences, particularly in those seen as abnormal.

In this way, Foucault suggests that the five measures: compare, differentiate, hierarchise, homogenise, and exclude form the normalisation of the discipline system. And, with the end of the Classical age, normalisation, like surveillance, became an instrument of control.[135]

Foucault also identifies an additional mode of disciplining power within the practice of examination. For him, examination "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgment."[136] What's more, examination is seen as a particular exercise of power, maximising visibility to strengthen the disciplinary code of control.

132 Foucault, 178.
133 Foucault. 181.
134 Foucault, 182–183.
135 Foucault, 184.
136 Foucault, 184

As such, Foucault notes, disciplinary power:

> …imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.[137]

Here Foucault adds that,

> …examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification.[138]

Compared to earlier modes of power over an individual, like the spectacle of torture, here we enter into a power manifested by the elusive gaze. Foucault calls this "the inversion of visibility"[139] and the beginning of perpetual scrutiny whereby each individual was seen as a possible subject for documentation.[140] Much like medical patients, individuals could be considered specimens, or as Foucault notes, constituted as "describable, analysable object[s]".[141] Examination, again as Foucault notes, makes each individual a case, an object "for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power."[142]

Interestingly, Foucault notes that the exercise of power through scrutinisation of an individual was also seen as a confirmation of privilege, as:

> ordinary individuality—the everyday individuality of everyday—remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege. The chronicle of men, the account of his life, his historiography, written as he lived out his life formed part of the rituals go

137 Foucault, 187.
138 Foucault.
139 Foucault, 189.
140 Foucault.
141 Foucault, 190.
142 Foucault, 191.

> his power. The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination.[143]

And here, Foucault further notes that, as control becomes more anonymous and more factual “those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualised.”[144] In this way, each disciplinary regime is exercised by surveillance, observation, and comparison,[145] which in turn form the individual’s reality. Here, Foucault makes an interesting inversion and suggests that we should not see the effect of this power of forming the individual in negative terms, such as a power that solely excludes or represses, but as a power that produces reality,[146] and that the subjects themselves as we soon learn belong to this process of production.

143 Foucault.
144 Foucault, 193.
145 Foucault.
146 Foucault, 194.

BENTHAM’S WISH

At the beginning of the 18th Century, as the European continent faced unfathomable destitution due to the plague, the circumstances initiated what was to become the most successful setting to establish what could today be called the first data collection system. In his careful examination of procedures that had been put into place in response to the growing number of infections, Foucault notes that the special circumstances enabled the implementation of a registry of individuals never seen before in the history of European civilisation. This was to become a fix-in-place system in which individuals were forced to inhabit a restricted space in order to be located and observed.[147] The regulation of space that one was forced to inhabit created a new form of data collection and supervision of the everyday. Born out of fear associated with the plague, society moved into a phase of disclosure and visibility, where individuals revealed their true names and locations. The plague, like other states of emergency before and after, served as an opportunity to redesign the project for a disciplined society proper, and, as Foucault notes, those in power “dreamt of the state of the plague.”[148] In this way, the plague could be seen as a reconfiguration system used to alter society within a highly intricate disciplinary regime.

The opportunity to discipline society validated by the procedures implemented in response to the plague also corresponded with the redevelopment of architectural spaces of obedience. One major architectural disciplining machine envisioned an all-seeing, perfectly individualised and constantly visible spacial system. The vision was soon realised in the mind of an English social reformer, Jeremy Bentham, and became known as Panopticonism. Bentham’s project could be seen as a strategy in establishing visibility, that would take transparency of individuality to a whole new level, and in this operation, one was “to be seen constantly and be recognised immediately.”[149] But transparency is a trap, and Foucault rightly observes that, within a panopticon system, one is seen, but one never sees, as here one is the “object of information, never a subject in communication.”[150] This is the dynamic of the panopticon exchange, and its power lies in the non-reciprocal nature of this exchange, where an individual “must never know whether he is spied upon.”[151]

147 Foucault, 197.
148 Foucault, 199.
149 Foucault, 200.
150 Foucault.
151 Foucault, 201.

What is more, the panoptic relationship is one of disassociation, in contemporary terms a toxic relationship, a gaslighting mode of dependency and submission to another. Bentham himself was reportedly bewildered at the efficiency of his concept, and as Foucault notes, the panopticon serves as an effective means of maximum control where:

> he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjections.[152]

It is worth remembering, and Foucault makes note, that panopticism was also seen as a place of observation,[153] and often served as the configuration adopted to perform that other mode of human operation, namely a laboratory setting of humans studying humans.

In addition, Panopticism and the plague became entwined in the power relations of what was to become a transformation of the disciplinary program. As noted by Foucault, in the face of "extraordinary evil", like a pandemic, authority is "mobilised, and makes itself present and visible; it invents new mechanisms; it separates, it immobilises, it partitions,"[154] and in the panopticon system, power relations are defined within the pretence of the everyday, whereby "whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task of a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panopticon scheme may be used."[155] Interestingly, as Foucault duly notes, the panopticon system "acts directly on individuals" implementing, without the need for heavy instruments of power other than a clever use of architectural geometry, a system that sustains "power of mind over mind."[156] Panopticism, at the beginning of the 19th century is seen as a "new political anatomy" of control whose "object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline."[157]

152 Foucault, 202–203.
153 Foucault, 203.
154 Foucault, 205.
155 Foucault.
156 Foucault, 206.
157 Foucault, 208.

The Bentham project was, as noted by Foucault, to create a “network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space and in time.”[158]

A wish that was soon to be realised on a mass scale.

158 Foucault, 209.

A FACELESS GAZE

As we have come to learn, Foucault draws up two modes of discipline, positioning them at polar opposites; where at one end we have obedience organised by the formation of “enclosed institutions” which—“turned inwards”—carry out their discipline program by detaining the wicked, suspending time and controlling communication,[159] and at the other, we have the formation of panopticism, a discipline apparatus whose fine-tuned mechanism serves to coerce society into compliance.[160] For Foucault, society is organised within these two modes of operation: “exceptional discipline” at one end and “generalised surveillance” at the other.[161]

It is worth noting that the formation of a disciplined society is a result of a number of earlier processes implemented upon the social body, and here Foucault reminds us that three major obedience processes contributed to the shaping of what was to become the project for controlling and disciplining the masses. Firstly, Foucault reminds us of the functional inversion of disciplines, where compliance that was first enforced in the army or factory was reconfigured to address individual skill with the agenda of raising productivity,[162] and profit, for that matter. Secondly, there was the expansion of disciplinary mechanisms beyond institutional walls, where for example, in Christian schools, a pupil’s parents and their attitudes to life began to be scrutinised. And lastly, there was the formation of state mechanisms of discipline, where the formation of a centralised police system served to inject an indefinite practice of supervision, with the police positioned within an omnipresent surveillance presence “capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible,”[163] and policing operations “like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception” with “thousands of eyes posted everywhere.”[164] Interestingly, this was to become the injection of a new figure into the social body - that of the informant who could register “forms of behaviour” and create “a permanent account of the individual’s behaviour.”[165] The operation “in the

159 Foucault, 209.
160 Foucault.
161 Foucault.
162 Foucault, 210.
163 Foucault, 214.
164 Foucault.
165 Foucault.

name of ridding the city of offences of non-surveillance”[166] had thus become the operation in the erasure of non-visible spaces. In this way, Foucault suggests that discipline should not be seen as an “institutional” operation, nor as an “apparatus” of an institution, but as a form of modulating power within a spectrum of “instruments, techniques, procedures, targets”, and that one should see it more as a “physics” or “an anatomy of power”, in other words a “technology”.[167] In short, the confinement of society within the two polarities of enclosed disciplines and omnipresent operations of surveillance “makes it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements.”[168] Here, Foucault reinstates Nicolaus Heinrich Julius’s observation from the *Leçons Sur Les Prisons* that “the panoptic principle was much more than an architectural ingenuity; it was an event in the history of the human mind.”[169] This reconfiguration process of society could be seen as the formation of a new version of society where the “procuring” of a single individual for the “intentioness view” by “a great multitude”.[170]

Interestingly, the configuration of a disciplined society is further defined by Foucault who boldly states that:

> Our society is not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralisation of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies… We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism.[171]

166 Foucault.
167 Foucault, 215.
168 Foucault 216.
169 Foucault.
170 Foucault.
171 Foucault, 217.

However, as Foucault reminds us, the formation of the disciplinary society is a result of a number of historical processes, like working practices which began to be reinvented in the 18th century, and where workers needed to be supervised. In short, the sudden accumulation of people, together with the accumulation of capital, reinforced a need to protect the new "apparatus of production".[172] In short, the growth of capital elevated the mechanism of disciplinary power to new heights. It is important to note that the panoptic system also injected what Foucault calls "the non-reversible subordination of one group of people by another."[173]

Foucault also names a third historical incident that helped to form the disciplinary exchange, namely what he calls the establishment of "the circular process" of knowledge acquisition and inverse of power, which produces a powerful affiliation of intra-support systems.[174]

172 Foucault, 221.
173 Foucault, 223.
174 Foucault, 224.

THE COERCIVE THEATRE OF INCARCERATION OR CEASELESS DOMINATION

According to Foucault, the prison system should be understood as a subsequent development of numerous disciplining operations implemented onto the social body.[175] Foucault notes that, by means of individual distribution, arrangement of space, and classification, the operation of the "training of bodies", which maintained them in "perfect visibility," included the formation of surveillance architecture that allowed "registration and recording" thus constituting individuals within "a body of knowledge that is accumulated and centralised."[176] In this way, the apparatus to discipline "intended to render individuals docile and useful, by means of precise work upon their bodies, indicated the prison institution, before the law ever defined it as the penalty per excellence."[177] As such, the prison was to become "an essential element in the punitive panopoly."[178] and the 19th-century legal rhetoric injected the definitive measure into the disciplining dynamic, where the power to punish via legislation became a "general function of society" and formulated a new set of "procedures of domination".[179] For Foucault, the prison is based fundamentally on the premise of "deprivation of liberty" as he calls it, and is seen as "a detestable solution, which one seems unable to do without,"[180] a solution based on a moral economy where incarceration is described in mercantile terms as payment for one's debts.[181] For Foucault, the prison "merely reproduces, with a little more emphasis, all the mechanisms that are to be found in the social body."[182] In this way, the prison could be seen not only as a reconfiguration of previously disciplinary institutions, like the military barracks, schools or factories, but also as a reflection of that experimental concept we often think of as natural: society. As such, the prison could also be seen as a guarantor of social experiments where technical 'improvements' on personal scrutiny and investigation formulated part of the disciplinary measures[183] and one could see how these could be implemented outside the prison walls. As such, the penal operation serves as a model *par excellence* of a system that is "omni-disciplinary" and, as Foucault reiterates, the operation functions as an apparatus of

175 Foucault, 231.
176 Foucault.
177 Foucault.
178 Foucault.
179 Foucault.
180 Foucault, 232.
181 Foucault, 233.
182 Foucault.
183 Foucault, 235.

control that “has neither exterior or gap,” producing a system that “cannot be interrupted, except when its task is totally completed,” because only then is “its action on the individual” successful as an operation of “an unceasing discipline”.[184] In this way, and here Foucault in reference to Charles Lucas and his *De La Réforme Des Prisons* reminds us that the relentless control of every task is administered upon the individual through the regulation of:

> The time of waking and sleeping, of activity and rest, the number and duration of meals, the quality and ration of food, the nature and product of labour, the time of prayer, the use of speech and even, so to speak, that of though, that education which, in the short, simple journeys from refectory to workshop, from workshop to the cell, regulates the movements of the body, and even in moments of rest, determines the use of time, the time-table, this education, which, in short, takes possession of man as whole, of all the physical and moral faculties that are in him and of the time in which he is himself.[185]

So we begin to see how the prison is representative of a society regulated within disciplinary operations exercised over the individual.

What is more, the penal institution pursues the principle of isolation, wherein the exchange between an inmate and “the power that is exercised over him” is magnified, creating “a microcosmos of a perfect society in which individuals are isolated in their moral existence” in which an individual is caught “in a strict hierarchal framework,” with “no lateral communication.”[186] To illustrate his point, Foucault provides an example of the American Auburn model prison system,[187] in which communication is only possible in the “vertical direction” between an inmate and a guard.[188] Foucault also identifies another regulatory principle within the production of habitual processes. Here, “order and regularity”, through “the demands that it imposes” implicate the body within orchestrated movements

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184 Foucault, 236.
185 Foucault.
186 Foucault, 238.
187 the other being the Philadelphia model
188 Foucault.

solidifying the social order and the operation of a body under surveillance. In this way, the inmate's body is treated not unlike "machine men", producing economic operations similar to "individuals mechanised according to the general norms of an industrial society."[189] The prison thus is a system in which an individual is perpetually positioned within an operation of "individualising" and documentation.[190] Here, the inmate is always seen as "an individual to know".[191]

For Foucault, the prison is also an instrument regulated under the premise of a promise of transformation within a reward system. Here, Foucault reiterates Charles Lucas: "if anything can awakenin the minds of the convicts the notion of good and evil, bring them to moral reflections and raise them to some extent in their own eyes, it is the possibility of obtaining some reward."[192] As the length of penalty can be adjusted in accordance with 'good' behaviour, the prison functions under a reward system seen as an injection of a moral code found outside the walls of the institution.

The prison is a setting under which an individual is positioned under absolute scrutiny. Here, one becomes a subject of study, a data provider, or as Foucault reminds us "an individual to know".[193] In this setting, an individual is characterised in line with a constant scrutinisation of their "instincts, drives, tendencies, character"[194] in an effort to answer the question: what happens to lead one to a life of crime? But for Foucault the prison also serves to develop technical reconfiguration of previous forms of punishment. Take the chain-gang and its seemingly grotesque festival of parading individuals, which served as a "procession of notoriety and shame"[195] not dissimilar to the individual prison cells organised within the panoptic operation of the all-seeing guard. As mentioned earlier, for Foucault the prison is both a technical operation in the disciplinary mechanics, as well as a machinery of power formulated by a symbolic order. And even though it has been in operation for some time now, and

189 Foucault, 242.
190 Foucault, 249.
191 Foucault, 250.
192 Foucault, 246.
193 Foucault, 250.
194 Foucault, 253.
195 Foucault, 257.

will probably continue for centuries to come, the prison system has not reduced criminality, and as Foucault notes it could be seen as an operation that actually produces an increased number of criminals.[196] In addition, the prison could be seen as penal labour exploitation that maintains scrutiny over those who have served their sentence.[197] In this system, the individual is never free from scrutiny, as the prison is positioned beyond the prison walls within a power operation that asserts "a real body and a symbolic form"[198] and marks the individual for life. The damning reach of the prison is also present in its indirect influence on the inmate's family, who are also positioned in the shameful operation of "destitution".[199]

If Foucault is right, and the penal apparatus has failed to reduce offences, then what is served by this failure of the prison system? For Foucault, that which is maintained in the failure is "a whole series of brandings"[200] set in motion to "distinguish" and make docile individuals, rather than eliminate criminality.[201] In this way, the prison as "the mediation of penalty" reconstitutes "the mechanisms of domination".[202]

What is more, the penal operation becomes a way to widen the function of illegalities and inscribe individuals further into the shadows of society. In other words, the prison, as Foucault sees it, is not there to eliminate crime, but to produce delinquency.[203] Moreover, the prison reinforces delinquency and serves to solidify its operation outside the institution, by producing the possibility of ceaseless domination through surveillance under the guise of preventative measures. Foucault relays Arnould Bonneville de Marsangy's idea presented in the *Traité des diverses institutions complémentaires du régime pénitentiaire* of a police state where "silent, mysterious, unperceived vigilance" falls within a system where the "eye of the governments [is] ceaselessly open and watching without distinction over all citizens."[204]

196 Foucault, 266.
197 Foucault, 267.
198 Foucault, 271.
199 Foucault, 268.
200 Foucault 272.
201 Foucault.
202 Foucault.
203 Foucault, 277.
204 Foucault, 280.

The surveillance operation becomes a reminder that all need to conform, and because it plays into the anxieties of non- liberation, the scrutinisation of self as knowledge becomes a small price to pay in the capital of discipline. Here an individual's file could be seen as a technical innovation later reconfigured as a digital data storage system in which each individual is positioned within a possible suspicion-like scenario, always there ready to be presented with information upon one's activity when needed.

GOD SEES YOU

On 22nd January, 1840, the Mettrey Penal Colony holds its official opening. For Foucault, this moment marks the completion of what is to be known as the definite installation of a new economy of power upon society.[205] In this way, the Mettrey prison amalgamates "all the coercive technology of behaviour: cloister, prison, school, regiment"[206] into a single disciplinary operation. Under the guise of omnipresence, the principle of punishment could be summarised by the very words inscribed in black letters across the walls of the isolation cell: God sees you.[207] In this way, the body functions as an artefact, and the soul is always inscribed with the penetrating presence of the one-who-sees. Under such conditions, the individual as a subject to know is positioned within enduring scrutiny, seen as a "body of knowledge" whose every move, and every gesture is watched and "organised as an instrument of perpetual assessment."[208] In this world, the body is a producer of information and an individual's existence is maintained within an operation of subjection.[209] What is more, the Mettrey project introduced an irreversible relation of power and what Foucault calls "an arrangement of a power-knowledge over individual."[210] And this transforms the "punitive procedure into penitentiary technique" which Foucault later notes as the conversion of "the penal institution to the entire social body."[211]

For Foucault the new social carceral operation is marked by six defining phenomena. First, the mechanism of surveillance and punishment instates a perpetual mode of continuing observation.[212] Second, continuous scrutinisation forms individuals and "the panoptic society of which incarceration is the omnipresentnature," where the individual is never outside the law; here the individual is caught up from the very beginning "in the very heart of the law".[213] Third, as the carceral configures the power to punish as something "natural and legitimate,"[214] Foucault asks a legitimate question: "How were people made

205 Foucault, 293.
206 Foucault.
207 Foucault, 294.
208 Foucault.
209 Foucault, 295.
210 Foucault, 296.
211 Foucault, 298.
212 Foucault, 299.
213 Foucault.
214 Foucault, 301.

to accept the power to punish, or quite simply, when punished, tolerate being so?"[215] The answer it seems cannot come from the theory of social contract, as the arrangement according to Foucault is based on a "fiction" whereby the "judicial subject" gives to another "the power to exercise over him the right that he himself possesses over them."[216] Fourth, the carceral system also solidifies a new economy of power by inscribing "the teacher-judge" operation wherein individuals are subjected to scrutiny of their body, their gestures, their behaviour, their aptitudes, their achievements.[217] For Foucault, this network of "insertion, distribution, surveillance, [and] observation" has become the most important operation "normalising power" in modern society.[218] Fifth, the carceral texture of society assures the real capture of the body and its "perpetual observation",[219] maximising the panoptic duality of "fixing, dividing, recording," and as such objectifying human behaviour.[220] Here however Foucault is careful not to impose the idea that "the human sciences emerged from the prison", but rather that "the carceral network" has become "one of the armatures" in the shaping of power via knowledge through the study and surveillance of an individual "that has made human sciences historically possible."[221] As such, "the knowable-man" has become "the object-effect" of the "analytical investment" in the modern operation that knowledge is a strategy adopted for domination. And finally, the prison system thus becomes entwined within numerous "carceral mechanisms,"[222] processes that "exercise a power of normalisation"[223] for which surveillance itself becomes an accepted state of being in a panoptic regime.

We should note that Foucault's ideas serve to bring us closer to understanding the development of numerous operations of normalising power that have for the most part shaped the eradication of private space, in what could be called the next disciplinary step in the formation of a society of thoroughly determined 'visibility'.

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215 Foucault, 303.
216 Foucault.
217 Foucault, 301.
218 Foucault, 304.
219 Foucault.
220 Foucault.
221 Foucault.
222 Foucault, 308.
223 Foucault.

PART THREE:
Spaces of Appearance

THE HUMAN CONDITION

In a lecture first delivered at the Divine School of the University of Chicago on November 10, 1964, Hannah Arendt scrutinises the human condition by firstly posing two seemingly unconventional questions: “What does an active life consist of?” and “What do we do when we are active?”[224] To begin to articulate her answer, Arendt distinguishes two aspects that in her mind constitute what we call human life: *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa.*[225] From the outset, Arendt reminds us that the latter does not guarantee the possible engagement of the former, in other words, one can imagine the life of a human being without having to “indulge in contemplation.”[226] For Arendt, contemplation is possible when a number of human processes have been engaged: the first being *labour* which produces the vital conditions to keep “the human organism alive”, the second, *work* which provides “whatever is needed to house the human body,” and third, *action* that functions to “organise the living together of many human beings in such a way that peace, the condition for the quiet of contemplation is assured.”[227]

In a classical sense, Arendt suggests that *vita activa* was always defined within the scope of contemplation, and at its opposite end, *askholia* was positioned as an “absence of the condition which make contemplation possible.”[228] Interestingly, the arrival of the modern age for Arendt was marked by the glorification of labour, as demonstrated by the writing of Marx and Locke, where the human being began to partake in menial tasks, which instated labour as an operation that “helps only to consume.”[229] What is more, in the modern age, contemplation lost its validity. To better understand this loss, Arendt underscores with the help of Locke how labour is of the body and work of the hands.[230] Labour here is defined as part of the biological process of reproduction, which takes on a form of labouring, an “ever-recurring cycle of biological life.”[231]

224 Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, trans. Peter Baehr (London: Penguin, 2003), 167.
225 Arendt.
226 Arendt.
227 Arendt.
228 Arendt, 168.
229 Arendt, 169.
230 Arendt, 170.
231 Arendt, 171.

To better understand the distinction between labour and work, *labour* is essentially a dimension of an energy, a process that consumes one's life force that one has to endure. *Labouring* in this way is the act of spending that life force. By contrast *work* is the description of the same activity which one endures and is caught up within a process of producing something that extends beyond satisfying the biological needs of those who produce an object, for example.

Hence, the labouring process in the modern age takes on a new turn for Arendt, that of production, and is to be seen for example in the surplus production of consumer goods.[232] These in turn embed individuals within an operation of exploitation by fellow beings. In other words, the modern age is defined by the production of goods that can never be wholly consumed.

In this way, the modern labouring process is to be understood somewhat differently from *labour*, which for Arendt is closer to the prescribed cycle in nature and its "purposeless regularity with which day and night follow each-other," something closer to the "toiling and resting" processes of life.[233] That which throws this process off-balance, Arendt suggests, could be seen as a state "where exhaustion is followed by wretchedness or an entirely effortless life where boredom takes place of exhaustion," or where "consumption and digestion grind an impotent human body mercilessly to death," ruining "the elevated happiness that come from being alive."[234] In this way, *labour* "caught in the cyclical movement of the biological processes, has neither a beginning nor an end properly speaking—only pauses, intervals between exhaustion and regeneration."[235] Here, Arendt adds that, in the modern age, tools and implements have served an important function, and their omnipresence in work-related actions opened the discussion for many as to whether man "should be adjusted to the machine or the machine should be adjusted to the nature of man."[236]

Action, for Arendt, is seen as a deciding factor in the Labour--Work-Action triad of forming the human condition, where

232 Arendt, 171–172.
233 Arendt, 172.
234 Arendt 173.
235 Arendt, 175.
236 Arendt, 176.

positioned in speech and deed, the very articulation of a word for example is seen as a confirmation of oneself into the human world. This for Arendt, is seen as “a second birth,” in which we confirm that we are.[237] It is worth remembering that for Arendt it is through birth “we enter Being”, and that “we share with all other entities the quality of Otherness, an important aspect of plurality that ensures that we can define only by distinction, that we are unable to say what anything is without distinguishing it from something else,” and “in man otherness and distinction become [our] uniqueness, and what man inserts with word and deed into the company of his own kind is uniqueness.”[238]

What’s more, for Arendt, the definite human act of being is caught in the answer to the question: “Who are you?”, where “the disclosure of ‘who somebody is’” always remains somehow elusive to the individual themselves.[239] This salient elusive self is compared by Arendt to *daimon*, a Greek religious entity that “accompanies” one in their life, seemingly always there somewhere “looking” over one’s shoulder “from behind”.[240] Arendt’s ever-present life companion, evasive in nature, could be seen as a prophecy soon to be realised in the intimate materialisation of the private in the public sphere of the modern experience, and later in the proclamation of the self in the Digital post-self era.

237 Arendt, 178.
238 Arendt.
239 Arendt, 179.
240 Arendt.

PUBLIC INTIMACY

To better understand the distinction between the private and public spheres, Arendt suggests that we first need to understand that human life is foremost always intertwined in “a world of man and of man-made things” which no human being ever “transcends”.[241] Arendt further underlines that “no human life […] is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings.”[242] Taking note of antiquity, Arendt proposes that the human “alliance between people” for political organisation stood in “direct opposition” to “the home and the family.”[243] Here, she identifies that the formation of the city-state reconfigured an individual within a dual existence where, “besides his private life” there is participation in a second life of the *bios politikos*.[244]

Arendt’s distinction between the private and public realms formulated in antiquity corresponds to a clear divide between that which is of the household and that of the public. She reiterates that the private was a realm of intimacy, whilst the public/political celebrated action and speech, two realms of the city-state where “everything was decided through words” and the art of “persuasion”.[245] For the Ancient Greeks, to remain in the private realm represented a mode of being in which one was deprived of a ‘voice’, for example, “a man who lived only a private life, who like the slave was not permitted to enter the public realm, was not fully human.”[246] Arendt notes that “we no longer think of deprivation, when we use the word ‘privacy’ and this is due to the enormous enrichment of the private sphere through modern individualism.”[247] These clearly-defined zones of the private and of the public sphere, according to Arendt, faded in the modern age with the formation of the social realm, which is neither private nor public, but a zone of activities “related to a common world and those related to the maintenance of life.”[248] For Arendt, this marks a materialisation of a new society where that which was considered intimate no longer remains private, as that which was once public no longer remains so clearly

241 Arendt, 182.
242 Arendt.
243 Arendt, 183.
244 Arendt.
245 Arendt, 184.
246 Arendt, 191.
247 Arendt.
248 Arendt, 185.

defined. Interesting enough, according to Arendt that that which we have come to know as society is a relatively new realm. For Arendt, a modern individual is implicated to live in a society in which they are never wholly absorbed as their own.[249] What's more, society demands of its members that they act as part of a common body.[250] In this way, Arendt draws a parallel between the rise of society and the demise of the family unit, and adds that society imposes "innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to normalise its members", one could say into a single common unit.[251] It is worth noting, that according to Arendt, mass society absorbs any outcast social groups, as one, for "the more people there are, the more likely they are to behave."[252] Interestingly, this operation for Arendt is also a production of some sort of "communistic fiction" and "whose outstanding political characteristic is that it is indeed ruled by an 'invisible hand', namely by nobody."[253] Arendt also notes that "the new social realm transformed all modern communities into societies of labourers and jobholders"[254] and that "all members consider whatever they do primarily" as a maintenance operation or survival mode where life takes on the function of sustaining a common (public) fiction of usefulness.

For Arendt, the term 'public' is seen as something that 'appears' and as such constitutes reality.[255] To put it simply, that which is seen and heard by everybody assures us "of the reality of the world and ourselves."[256] Here, Arendt reminds us that the only known experience that is not "fit for public appearance" is that of pain, suggesting that pain in itself actually "deprives us of our feeling of reality."[257] For Arendt, the public sphere seems only to be interested in "worthy of being seen or heard" and that which is seen as "irrelevant becomes automatically a private matter."[258] Arendt is bold in noting that "the public realm is unable to harbour the irrelevant."[259]

249 Arendt, 192
250 Arendt.
251 Arendt.
252 Arendt, 195.
253 Arendt, 196.
254 Arendt, 197.
255 Arendt, 199.
256 Arendt.
257 Arendt.
258 Arendt, 200.
259 Arendt.

She also provides another way to define that which is ‘public’. Taking a more common position, the ‘public’ could also be seen as that which “signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all.,” for the public sphere “gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak.”[260] Suggesting that the function of that which we come to believe as public is to bind individuals, Arendt offers the definition that, to “live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between these who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it,”[261] for like the table, the public realm “gathers us together” into a social mass.[262] Yet, the trouble with mass society is not the number of individuals involved, but “the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them.”[263] Here Arendt describes a scene of people sitting around a table at a séance, who come to realise that the table which brought them together is no longer there. Arendt suggests that historically it was a Christian philosophical concept of brotherhood that served the function of bonding people together in the public sphere.[264]

The public sphere is also as Arendt suggests a guarantor of human presence, and refers to Aristotle who observed that in the public realm, one has the “possibility of immortalising.”[265] To live in the private realm, for Arendt, signifies a life “deprived of things essential to a truly human life”, in so much as to remain private is “to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others.”[266] Interestingly, mass society is not a guaranteer of being heard, as it deprives individuals of “the objective relationship to others and of reality” and has for the most part “become the mass phenomenon of loneliness.”[267] Arendt goes on further to suggest that mass society “not only destroys the public realm but the private as well.”[268] Here, she does not provide further evidence, but as we have come to learn earlier, the elimination of each occurs in the blurring of both spheres.

260 Arendt, 201.
261 Arendt.
262 Arendt.
263 Arendt.
264 Arendt.
265 Arendt.
266 Arendt, 205.
267 Arendt.
268 Arendt.

The public is also connected to ownership of property: as property guaranteed one's location in the world, this was also a way to mark your "body politic".[269] The potential loss of property was significant, as it represented the potential loss of location, which resulted in an immediate "loss of citizenship and the protection of the law."[270] And as Arendt notes with conviction: "to have no private property of one's own meant to be no longer human."[271] For to own property "meant to be master over one's own necessities of life and therefore potentially to be a free person, free to transcend his own life" and enter the common world of the public realm.[272]

Privacy, as Arendt observes, "hinders the development of social productivity."[273] In reference to Locke, Arendt suggests that "the labour of one's body is the origin of property."[274] Inversely, "life spent entirely in public, in the [constant] presence of others, becomes shallow" and "while it retains visibility" it "loses depth."[275]

In basic terms, Arendt suggests that "there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all."[276] Interestingly, Arendt suggests the criminal act, if it is to be successful, must remain hidden from sight.

269 Arendt, 207.
270 Arendt, 208.
271 Arendt.
272 Arendt.
273 Arendt, 210.
274 Arendt, 211.
275 Arendt, 212.
276 Arendt.

WORLD ALIENATION

For Arendt, the modern age is shaped by three major events: the exploration of the Americas together with the subsequent exploration of other continents; the Reformation that marked the shift of ownership from the ecclesial to social wealth; and the invention of the telescope that instated for good a scientific perception of the world.[277] Interestingly enough, all three processes continue to have resonance in how we continue to experience the world.[278] In the first event, Arendt positions a major shift in the perception of the world, suggesting that, with inter-continental circumnavigation "the immensity of available space on earth was discovered," and thus "the famous shrinkage of the globe began."[279] This was superseded by the invention of new forms of transportation, which in turn, meant that distance as such began to lose its relevance, and "speed made it possible to reach any point on earth."[280] Paradoxically, as explorers reached distant areas to prove the vastness of the planet, their 'measuring' actions reduced the world into a tangible, portable object in the form of a globe. Here, Arendt notes that "nothing can remain immense if it can be measured."[281]

The practice of reducing the world, however, began even earlier, and Arendt reminds us that, "prior to shrinkage of space and the abolition of distance through technology", humans developed another effective reductive practice, i.e. that of "surveying capacity of the human mind" whose mental operation of "numbers, symbols, and models can condense and scale earthly physical distance down to the size of the human body's natural sense and understanding."[282]

In this very dis-enchantment with the world, a move towards the self as a measure of all things was instated and it is there in which Arendt situates the beginning of world alienation. She suggests that, since Descartes, philosophy has focused on the self and its operation to "reduce all experiences with the world, and other human beings, to experiences between man and himself."[283] This moment marks the beginning of the

277 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 248.
278 Arendt.
279 Arendt, 250.
280 Arendt.
281 Arendt.
282 Arendt, 251.
283 Arendt, 254.

modern age in which a move away from the transcendental perception of the universe throws man "back upon the world".[284] Interestingly, not unlike the origins of capitalism that soon were to follow, the modern-age human is positioned within an operation where, and here Arendt references Max Weber, any "mundane activity is possible without any care for or enjoyment of the world whatever, an activity whose deepest motivation, on the contrary, is worry and care about the self."[285] What is more, "world alienation, and not self-alienation, as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age."[286]

With the invention of the telescope, Arendt notes we are no longer "bound to the sun" in "choosing a point of reference."[287] What Galileo and others forged was what "nobody had done before", namely, by positioning the telescope, that instrument became the conduit of the secrets of the universe into the human mind.[288] As a result, Arendt suggests, we have "established ourselves as 'universal' beings, as creatures who are terrestrial not by nature and essence but only by the condition of being alive,"[289] proving once and for all the 'selfish' act of being human is to "think in terms of the universe while remaining flat-footed on the earth's surface."[290] In this way, as Arendt notes, the human being positioned nature "under the condition of the human mind."[291]

Interestingly, Arendt notes, through Descartes we come to learn of *doubt* as a possible salvation from the nightmare of simply being human. We are reminded that Cartesian philosophy positions the human experience within two tormenting realisations; first where "reality of the world as well as human life" is questioned; second, in relation to "the general human condition as it was revealed by the new discoveries and the impossibility for man to trust his senses and his reason."[292] Both realisations act to displace one's certainty of reality, as well as confidence in one's senses, but salvation, it seems,

284 Arendt, 253.
285 Arendt, 254.
286 Arendt.
287 Arendt, 263.
288 Arendt, 259.
289 Arendt, 263.
290 Arendt, 264.
291 Arendt, 265.
292 Arendt, 277.

lies in the very operation of having to encounter *doubt* in the very experience of displacement. Descartes suggests that *doubt* is “certain and real” as “I remain aware of a process of doubting in my consciousness.” and Arendt boldly revises the infamous *cogito ergo sum* into what she calls was a “mere generalisation of the ***dubito ergo sum.***”[293]

293 Arendt, 279.

SHELLS OF STEEL

According to Arendt, human beings “have come to live in a world thoroughly determined by a science and a technology whose objective truth and practical know-how are derived from cosmic and universal, as distinguished from terrestrial and ‘natural’ laws, and in which a knowledge acquired by selecting a point of reference outside the earth is applied to earthly nature and the human artifice.”[294] As mentioned earlier, our ability to see the world is also an operation whereby observation is engaged without one having to change one’s location.[295] Yet, as Arendt notes, this cognitive operation is not the driving force of the modern age. Here, Arendt observes that it is not ideas but “events” that become the catalysts of change,[296] as she states boldly that “not reason but a man made instrument, the telescope, which actually changed the physical world.”[297] This is illustrated in the transformative power of production rather than speculation. As Arendt states, it was “not contemplation, observation, and speculation which led to the new knowledge, but the active stepping in of homo faber, of making and fabricating.”[298] Arendt also notes that the shift from the Archimedean mathematical calculation “where all real relationships are dissolved into logical relations between man-made symbols” enables “modern science to fulfil its ‘task of producing’ the phenomena and objects it wishes to observe.”[299] Here, Arendt evokes a technological ‘event’ from another field of production, that of populating the space surrounding planet Earth with man-made stars, materialised in the form of highly sophisticated devices: satellites, that have in turn fulfilled man’s wish to install themselves at the control centre of these new heavenly bodies.[300]

The modern age for Arendt represents the “reversal of hierarchal order” of the *vita contempliva* and *vita activa.*[301] To understand the “motives for this reversal,” Arendt suggests that “we need to get rid of current prejudice which ascribes the development of modern science to a pragmatic desire to impose conditions and better human life on earth.”[302] In this way, innovation is to

294 Arendt, 268.
295 Arendt, 270.
296 Arendt, 275.
297 Arendt, 274.
298 Arendt.
299 Arendt, 284.
300 Arendt, 269.
301 Arendt, 289.
302 Arendt.

be seen for what it is: an operation in itself, not an operation for the betterment of human life. The watch, that Arendt refers to, is a good example in which the invention could be seen as an instrument of science rather than an object to improve one's life. Of course, the benefits of "timekeeping" in everyday life are indisputable, but what is important in Arendt's observation is the "driving force of the invention" whose primary target was not to keep and organise time, but to calculate the extent of the universe.[303] Not unlike the telescope, it is the action of the instrument rather than contemplation that "forced nature to yield its secrets."[304] Here Arendt further suggests that capacity to think and contemplation are not to be confused with each other, noting that "traditionally, thought was conceived as the most direct way to the contemplation of truth"[305] and *vita activa* replaced "the position formerly occupied by contemplation with the activities of making and fabricating."[306] This operation in turn set the stage on which all "scientific progress" was tied to the development and manufacture of new tools and instruments."[307] For Arendt, "productivity and creativity" demonstrate "the highest ideals of homo faber", and this formed the process in which human life was considered an expression of work practices.[308] Here, Arendt notes the potential of the 'why' and 'what' as no longer being relevant, ensuring that it is the 'how' that takes precedence,[309] suggesting that "processes, therefore, and not ideas, the models and shapes of the things to be, become the guide for the making and fabricating activities of homo faber in the modern age."[310]

It is worth noting that for Arendt, it is labouring that is situated at the top of *vita activa's* hierarchal order, and any life improvement could be "considered more or less an incidental result of the production process".[311] Homo faber "defines himself not as the maker of objects ... but considers himself primarily a toolmaker ... who only incidentally also produces things."[312]

303 Arendt.
304 Arendt, 290.
305 Arendt, 291.
306 Arendt, 294.
307 Arendt, 295.
308 Arendt, 296.
309 Arendt.
310 Arendt, 300.
311 Arendt, 308.
312 Arendt, 309.

Here Arendt reconsiders the Protagorean assertion of man as measure of all things as a production process, where law or divinity is superseded by an individual's production potential as the ultimate source of value. In this way, we possibly come to understand that "the ultimate standard of measurement is not utility and usage at all, but 'happiness,' that is, the amount of pain and pleasure experienced in the production or in the consumption of things."[313] And we are reminded that the principle of hedonism "is not pleasure but avoidance of pain."[314] Arendt emphasises that the "modern age continued to operate under the assumption that life, and not the world, is the highest good of man."[315] A victory affiliated to the process of secularisation when "modern man lost the certainty of the world to come," and "was thrown upon himself".[316] In this way, one finds themselves in a place "where the highest he could experience were the empty processes of reckoning of the mind, its play with itself."[317] For Arendt, "the only thing that could now be potentially immortal, as immortal as the body politic in antiquity and as individual life during the Middle Ages, was life itself, that is, the possibly everlasting life process of the species."[318] In this way, life itself could be seen as a life-support machine, in as much as the modern age produces "a society of jobholders" which asks of "its members a sheer automatic functioning."[319] Here, Arendt provides a stern warning that the modern age "may end in the deadliest, most sterile possibility history has ever known", where "man watched from a sufficiently removed vantage point in the universe, would appear not as activities of any kind but as processes,"[320] and just like the innovation of motorisation, human beings will be seen solely as "human bodies gradually […] covered by shells of steel."[321]

313 Arendt.
314 Arendt.
315 Arendt, 318.
316 Arendt, 320.
317 Arendt.
318 Arendt, 321.
319 Arendt, 322.
320 Arendt.
321 Arendt.

IN CLOSING

In 1964, Jacques Lacan spoke about the evolution of civilisation towards the ever-more frantic consumption of the object offered for satisfaction, a kind of generalised addiction that makes us all the servants of machines. In her essay "Psychoanalysis and Capitalism," Colette Soler states that "each discourse—what Freud called civilisation—constructs a type of social bond, a sort of couple: master and slave, teacher and student, hysteric and master."[322] As such, is our civilisation's social bond anything more than a capitalist coupling of the individual and merchandise?

Recently, attempts have been made to bridge the gap between ideas of self and new technologies. The question of 'who am I?' is now coupled with questions of 'where do I begin?' and 'where do I end?'. And with the onset of new technological development in surveillance practices are we not in fact sustained in the 'I am never on my own' imperative? As such, how does persistent expansion of the self coincide with the excessive of enjoyment, and discipline with the ever-expanding digital landscapes?

Foucault made some important links between visibility and control. Taking on Bentham's panopticon design, he was able to draw comparisons to the reconfiguration of self-disciplining societies. And although Bentham's panopticon model may be too narrow to explain new surveillance strategies in place today, the notion that we are subjected to a field of visibility, inscribes "in him [or her or them] self/selves the power relation in which he [or she or they] play both roles". In other words, a person becomes "the principle of his [or her or their] own subjection."[323]

Are our super-panopticon systems just an expansion of a wish 'to be seen' demand? How are we to understand an ever--increasing shift away from privacy and the termination of 'exit' environments? Is our wish of never-being-alone becoming real. Can we draw a lesson from those whose experience of self is always in the presence of another watching? Lorna Rhode has already shown us how inmates who are subjected to 24/7 visibility in maximum security prisons react with self-inflicted self-inflicted wounds to the fact of always being 'seen'.

322 Colette Soler *Lacan - The Unconscious Reinvented*, trans. Esther Faye and Susan Schwartz, (London: Karnac Books, 2014), 191.
323 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202–203.

In a contemporary sense, one could say that visibility becomes a trap, where on the one hand with the popularity of smart phone technology, social media and selfie culture, the nightmare of invisibility, abandonment and exclusion is being stifled by the joy of being noticed, while on the other we consent to the loss of privacy as ‘a reasonable’ price to pay for the wonders offered by new panopticon systems.

To conclude, I would like to note the significance of the title of the art project that is a response to the research presented in this paper. Taken from Victor Hugo’s *L’Homme qui rit* novel as a starting point for the research on the project, the book describes the story of Gwynplaine, who becomes mutilated as a boy by a band of travellers known as the Comprachichos, who disfigure children in order to make money from them as freak attractions. Because the research project sets out to explore the complexities of human subjectivity by looking into the factors that determine the formation of self with the onset of constant technological development, the mutilated mouth of Gwynplaine’s perpetual grin has become a figurative statement on the production of self; and one of the ways in which we can think about how we determine our individual position in the present digital landscape.

PART FOUR:
The *One Who Laughs* art project

CONTEXT

As I have tried to demonstrate, in the age of super-panopticon systems, the imperative of 'being seen' does not merely condition the way we present ourselves—it determines the very trajectory of technological innovation, embedding surveillance into the topography of our world. The digital experience has mapped 'visibility' onto what was once the shadowed terrain of an offline self. It could be said that the gaze is no longer confined to the interface; it has now colonised space itself.

To make these ideas legible within the frame of an artwork, my aim was to distill the project into a scenario—albeit with an artistic framework where the audience could encounter, rather than simply observe, the implications of ubiquitous surveillance. What does it mean to exist in a world where visibility is compulsory? How are we to understand privacy, once a given, when it vanishes in the digital landscape? How are we to define obedience, when the act of submission becomes a byproduct of constant exposure?

Although the *One Who Laughs* project could be described as an absurdist interface experiment, my interest lies in positioning it as a techno-civilisational intervention—an enactment of the modern human condition and a speculative examination of the 'inevitable' scenario. As such, the project is not an illustration of a dystopian world but a mirror held up to the present.

The accelerating erasure of 'non-visible' spaces through satellite surveillance signals not merely an expansion of control but a transformation of subjectivity itself. Following in Bauman's own distinction between the offline and online experience of self, we see how the seamless integration of online and offline selves produces an always-available, always-willing, always-performing mode of being. Here, the self is no longer something we inhabit; it is something we manage, curate, and surrender to outside forces.

Surveillance, once an instrument of power, is now commodified as experience. Marketed as a safeguard against danger—whether the fear of strangers (migration, terrorism) or the fear of infection (COVID-19)—surveillance systems become masquerades of security. Foucault, in his analysis of plague-era registries, anticipated this logic.[324]

324 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 197.

But there is a deeper paradox at play. The compulsion to be seen—so readily enacted in the voluntary surrender of user data, geolocation, and biometric signatures—suggests not just compliance, but our desire to be 'noticed'. Recognition here feeds into our existential hunger; we crave the gaze that confirms our presence. And so, the *One Who Laughs* turns this logic inside out: the satellite, that celestial overseer, does not merely watch - it elicits submission. The forced smile is not a glitch but an imperative.

This imposed expression—an unnatural contortion of the face or possibly the marker of things to come—embodies the capitalist mandate of uninterrupted positivity, the erasure of discomfort, the simulation of 'business as usual' rhetoric. A hollow grin, pressed into place like a TikTok filter, signals not joy but acquiescence. There is an eerie estrangement in seeing one's own face betray itself. The smile becomes a confession, a revelation of submission.

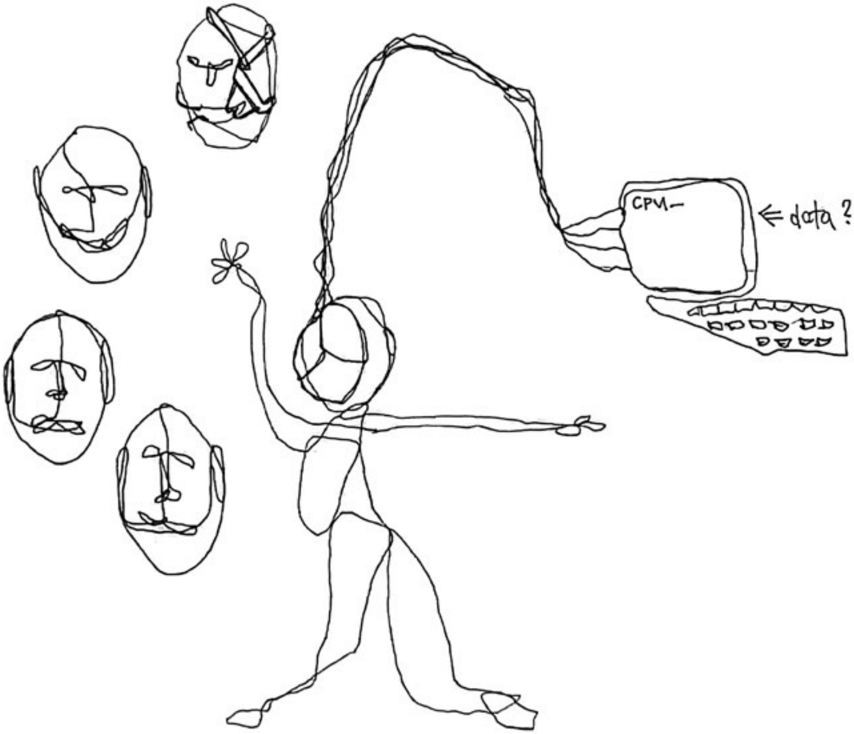
The *One Who Laughs* does not propose solutions; it stages an encounter with the conditions of our time. As James Bridle has shown us, technological adaptation is never neutral - it is a series of concessions, a quiet relinquishing of autonomy. As we have learned, offline spaces are becoming code-spaces, and there, the self is reformatted.

The *One Who Laughs* project exists in the tension between visibility and disappearance, exposure and erasure. It dramatises the unbearable contradiction of wanting both to be seen and left alone. But perhaps the most unsettling revelation is not that we are coerced into submission—but that we may, in fact, desire it.

Could it be that what we fear most is not surveillance, but solitude? That the condition of contemporary subjectivity is not resistance to subjugation, but a deep, unspoken yearning to be implicated, to be watched, to belong?

The *One Who Laughs* does not depict dystopia; it inhabits servitude. And in doing so, it poses a question too unsettling to ignore: what if submission is not merely imposed, but chosen?

PROCESS



The beginning of the *One Who Laughs* project is directly linked to Victor Hugo's *L'Homme Qui Rit*, and the figure of Gwynplaine —a child disfigured whose perpetual smile became for me a statement of being marked by perpetual visibility, a face market in a permanent spectacle of self. The idea of a visibility that determines one's perception of self has haunted me for years. But it was only by chance —overhearing fragments of a radio program describing the next wave of omnipresent surveillance, a future shaped by nano-satellite technology—that the direction of the project became clearer. It was then that my inquiry expanded: into the presence of 'the other' as the condition of selfhood, and how the inescapable fact of being seen, anywhere, at any time, disciplines subjectivity.

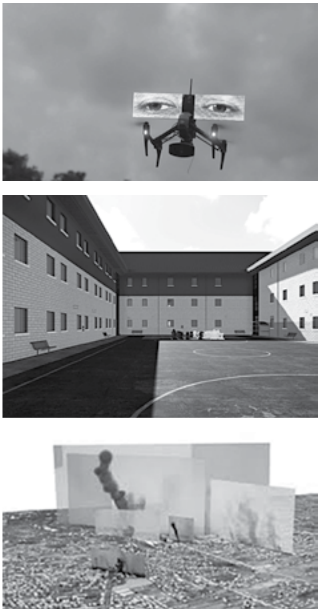


Figure 5. *Loro* Wodiczko / *Seamless Transition* James Bridle / *The Architectural-Image-Complex*, Rafah: Black Friday Forensic Architecture

Artistic practice and aesthetic choices are never undertaken in isolation. Certain artists have shaped both my thinking as well as my creative choices, but none as much as Prof. Krzysztof Wodiczko, who became my mentor and whose guidance sharpened my understanding of art's function as both a social and political intervention. His work *Loro* (Milan, 2019) for example was a defining moment for me during my process: a work in which drone technology renders visible the erasure of marginalised voices of refugees and the elderly. His work asserts that technological innovation is not neutral; it either reinforces structures of power or dismantles them. James Bridle, too - whose synthesis of theory and artistic practice affirms that intellectual rigor does not dilute creativity but deepens its impact. In addition, I am grateful to the work of Forensic Architecture, a collective of artists, scholars, and scientists, whose projects exist at the threshold of artistic intervention and investigative journalism. These artists share an understanding: that to engage with the world critically is not to observe it from a distance but to implicate oneself within it.

For me, scholarly research has never been separate from artistic practice. The analytical mind and the creative process are not opposing forces but complementary ones. As my research deepened, so did the project's visual language—preliminary sketches emerging alongside theoretical reflections. These sketches were not mere studies; they were articulations of a conceptual framework.

An early conversation[325] with Prof. Wodiczko proved pivotal. He pressed me to define my position: *Are you an artist or a researcher? You cannot be both.* The question, more provocation than ultimatum, forced a reckoning. It became clear that I did not want the work to exist merely as a cynical intellectual intervention, a passive commentary. The work had to function as a tangible artistic project. It had to create a space—a forum for confronting the consequences of permanent visibility. The project would not present an answer, but an encounter.

With this in mind, the formal structure of the work crystallised, and a major directions emerged: the creation of a wearable device, and its use as an instrument for generating further artistic responses to the themes of visibility and discipline. At this stage, my research became centred on the loss of privacy, the coercion of surveillance, the imperative of being seen. I knew that I wanted to tackle the notion that we no longer simply watch; we internalise the gaze where visibility becomes control.

During this period, I arrived at a realisation that would later shape another component of the project: the sculptural heads. The experience was personal, lodged deep in memory —a time spent as a child in a refugee asylum center. My father, imprisoned for his political activism in 1980s Poland, was expelled from the country and displacement became our condition. We waited in a state of uncertainty before being granted asylum in Australia. This moment, this geography of exile, is encoded in the project: the GPS coordinates of the asylum center determines one of the deformation of the sculptural heads.

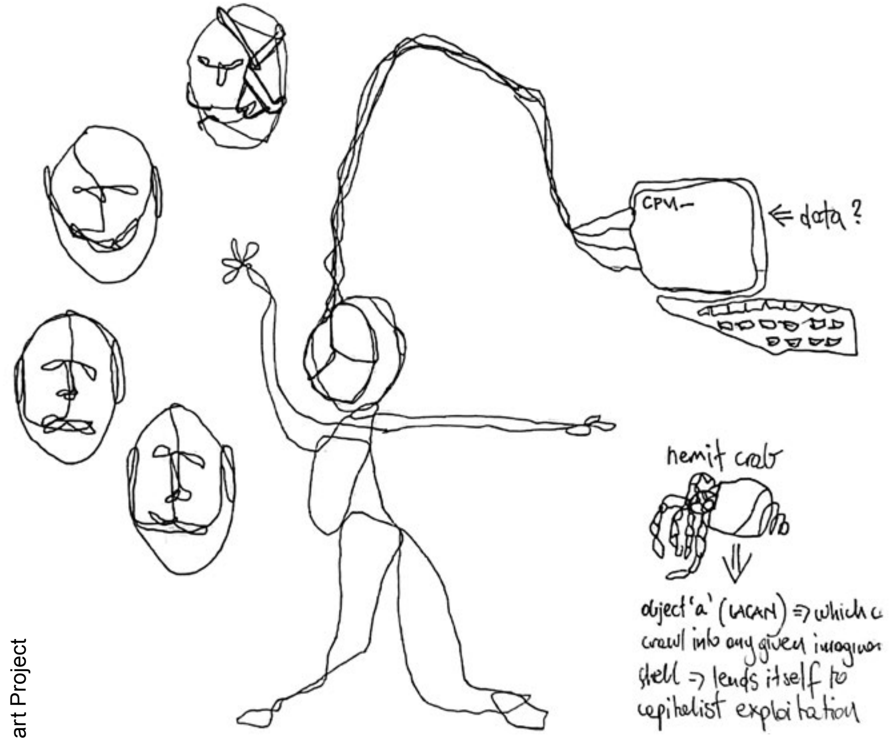
The work is, in part, an articulation of exclusion—of the transitory self, of non-belonging. But also of geography as destiny. The super-panopticon does not merely see; it situates. It eliminates the possibility of opacity, of invisibility, placing us ever more firmly within a geo-political order. It is no longer enough to exist;

325 Online consultation *Skype* 20.03.2021

one must be locatable. The self, once imagined as fluid, is now fixed, traced by satellites, mapped into permanence.

The *One Who Laughs* is not merely a commentary on surveillance; it is a confrontation with the conditions of existence in a world where visibility is both currency and power. A world in which to be unseen is to be unreal. A world in which the choice is not whether to be seen—but under what terms, by whom, and at what cost.

exoskeleton mask → rigid external face manipulator to maintain a smile
⇒ smile prosthesis



face as donor, enjoy enjoy!, maintained in constant state of satisfaction, seratonin, the mask as cultural device connecting

THE MASK ⇒ refed b as a culturally loaded device, connecting meaning between past + present exploring the idea that it is through technology (it's use of) one is maintained in a state of excitement and enjoyment ⇒ how to address this possibility

↳ not unlike Guillaume Duchenne's mechanism of Human Facial Expression muscular contractions through electrical probes ⇒ that which comes from outside ⇒ manipulates the face.

question of impulse ⇒ data → one option is that it picks up information via 'camera'

↳ another that it is connected to 'online' data

a variation of an EEG cap for brainwave activity

camera to record/pick up data for utilization by eeg pods

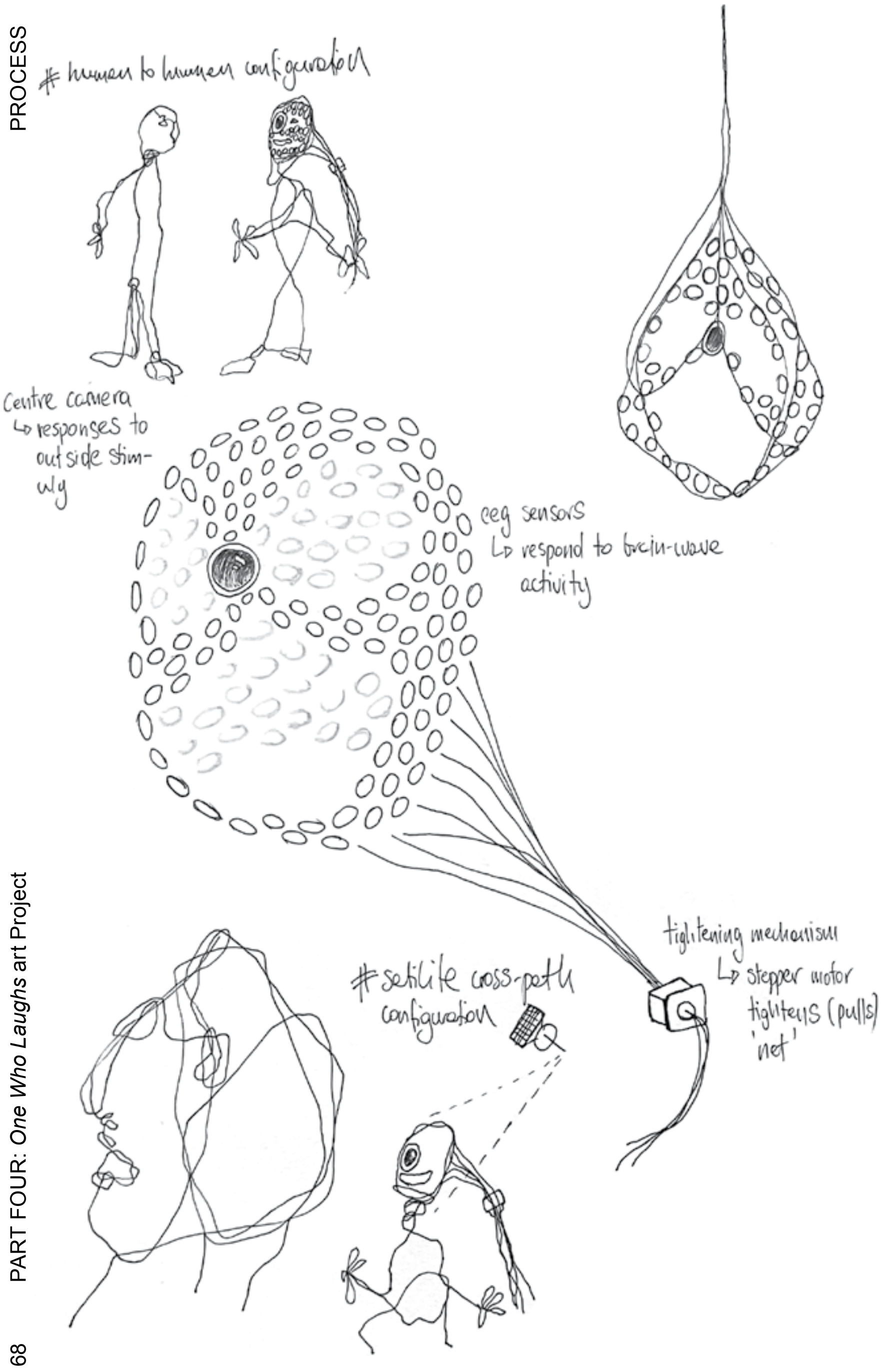
Q/ can 'eeg' pods deliver 'electric signal' to face muscles?

What if we separate the 'eyes' ⇒ and they become devices outside the face ⇒ ref St. Lucy of Siracusa

THE DIVIDED SUBJECT

ref. Domenico Beccafumi

Early conceptual sketches and ideas



human to human configuration
Centre camera
↳ responses to outside stim-
uly
eeg sensors
↳ respond to brain-wave
activity
tightening mechanism
↳ stepper motor
tightens (pulls)
'net'
setilite cross-path
configuration

MAN WHOLAUGHS

an exoskeleton device (mask) controlled by a CPU/
eeg sensors to maintain a subject's face in constant
state of 'satisfaction'

=> smile prosthesis

INPUT → another subjects face → camera
sensor that responds to outside stimuly
the wearer becomes thus a slave to the
other's way of seeing → face recognition
the device becomes the Gwynplaine's distorted
face maker.

another possibility is to engage 'the outside'
stimuli from 'for' => ie. engage satelite
orbit paths => survillance devices
enage tightening mechanism
'smile'

Early conceptual sketches of device

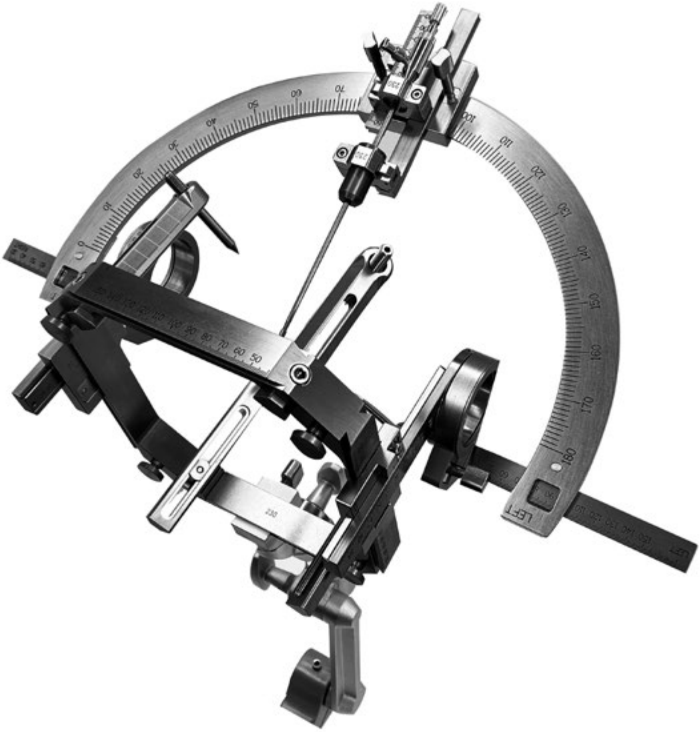


Figure 6. Cartesian Coordinate Brain Stereotactic Apparatus

From the outset, I knew I wanted to create an object - an interface that would expose the mechanics of visibility, that would demonstrate how surveillance inscribes itself onto the body, shaping the formation of self. A wearable device, something that could function as both instrument and provocation. At this stage, in subsequent conversations[326] with Prof. Wodiczko, we returned to the ideas presented by Emmanuel Levinas—and his ethics of the face, his insistence that the human face is not neutral but a demand, an imperative. To see a face is to be compelled, to respond. To be seen is to be positioned.

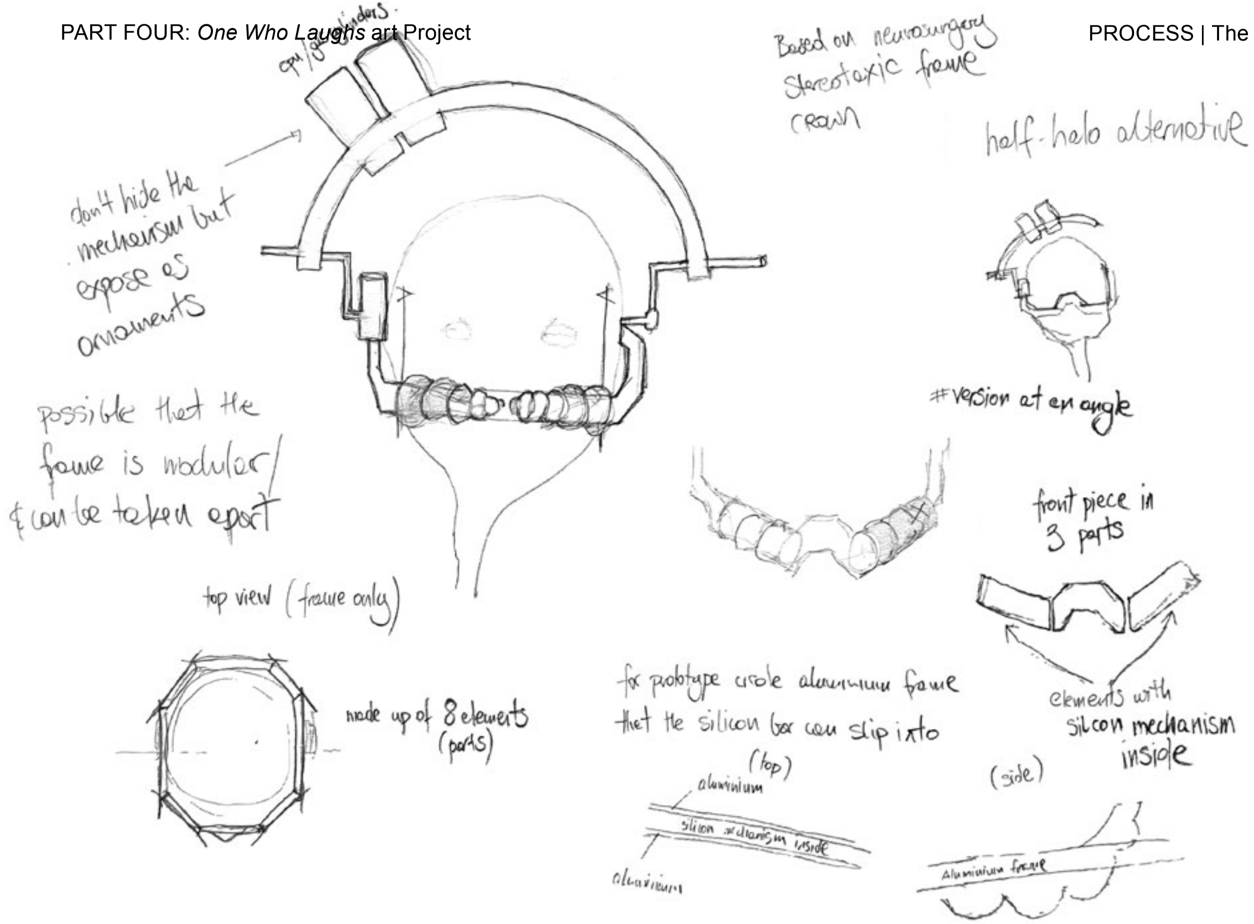
And so, I determined that the face itself would be the field of intervention. It would become the site of response and a display of the mechanism of exposure. The forced smile—perhaps the most universal, most involuntary gesture of self-display—became my focus. A gesture that oscillates between compliance and discomfort.

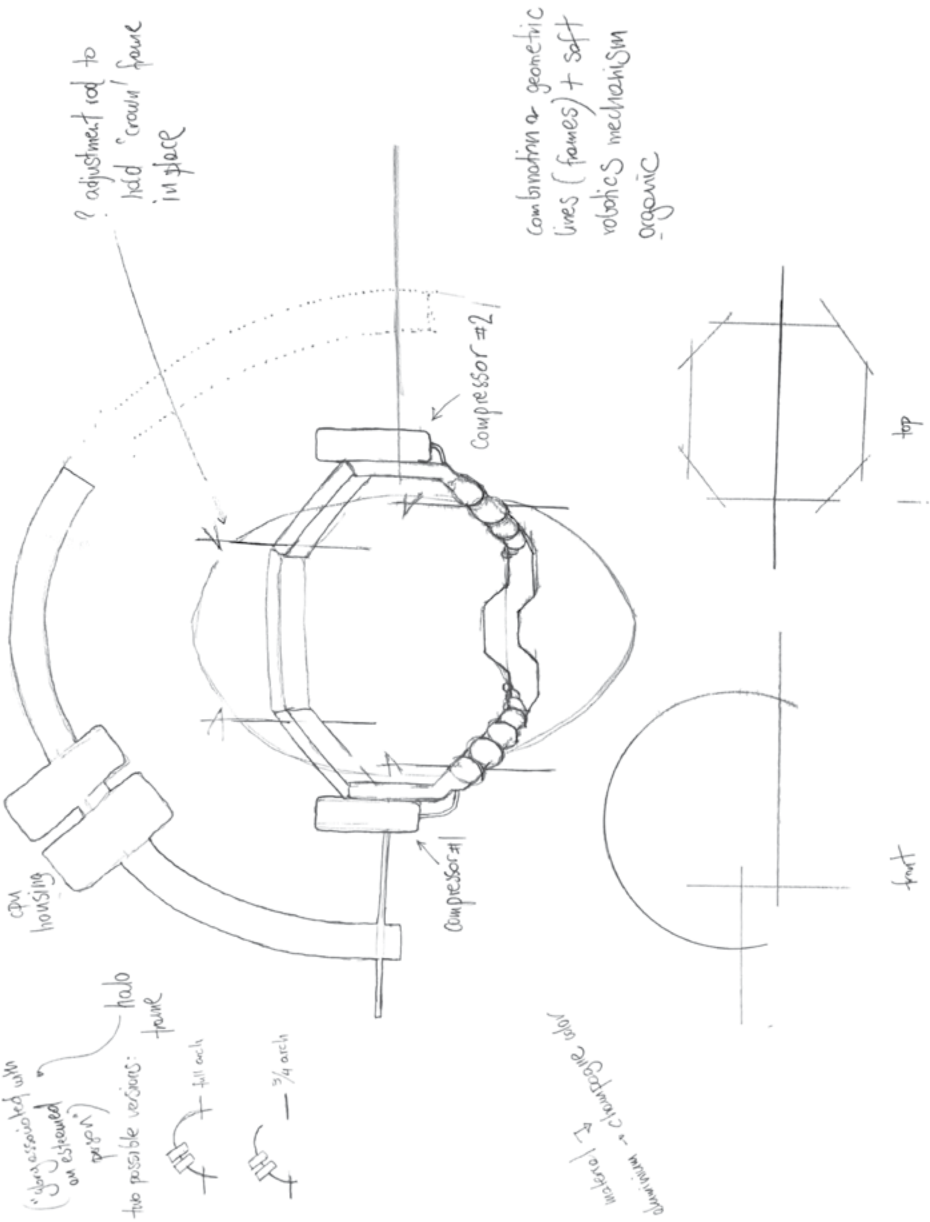
My early sketches explored possible forms, and my first instinct was structural: an exoskeleton mechanism that would clasp the face like the claws of a hermit crab, tightening, constricting. I also considered an alternative: a net-like apparatus draped over the entire head, pulling back the facial muscles in a controlled tension. Both designs struck me as *parasitic*—their function immediately visible, their attachment to the body aggressive, unapologetic. But this raised a new question: could the device function without revealing its purpose? Could the mechanism remain latent, embedded within the form itself?

This led me to examine the visual aesthetic language of satellites - objects of surveillance, instruments of control, but also designed for precision, for scientific inquiry. Here, a conceptual parallel emerged: satellite tracking and medical instrumentation. I became fixated on the stereotactic frame - a medical device used in neurosurgery to pinpoint exact locations in the brain. Like a satellite, it orients. It fixes its subject in place. It maps.

This was the aesthetic direction I pursued: an external frame, restrained, minimal, appearing almost benign—yet concealing its function within its structure. The mechanism would no longer announce itself. Instead, it would act silently, insidiously.

326 Consultation with Prof. Wodiczko, Milan June, 9–10, 2019.


cpu/cylinders
don't hide the mechanism but expose as ornaments
possible that the frame is modular/ & can be taken apart
top view (frame only)
made up of 8 elements (parts)
Based on neurosurgery stereotaxic frame crown
half-halo alternative
version at an angle
front piece in 3 parts
elements with silicon mechanism inside
for prototype create aluminium frame that the silicon bar can slip into
(top)
aluminium
silicon mechanism inside
aluminium
(side)
Aluminium frame



Early conceptual sketches of device

The next breakthrough came with the decision to abandon mechanical tightening in favour of soft robotics—a system of fluid, organic movement rather than rigid constraint. With mechanical engineer Mr. Marek Gnyś, I developed a design in which pneumatic actuators—soft, worm-like appendages—would exert controlled pressure on the face, manipulating the muscles into an involuntary, reactionary smile.

Soft robotics introduced a new dimension: subtlety. Unlike previous designs, the effect would not be immediately apparent. The movement would emerge from within the structure itself—slow, insidious, almost imperceptible—until the face was transformed.[327] The tension between restraint and autonomy, between compliance and resistance, would not be merely conceptual. It would be tangible.

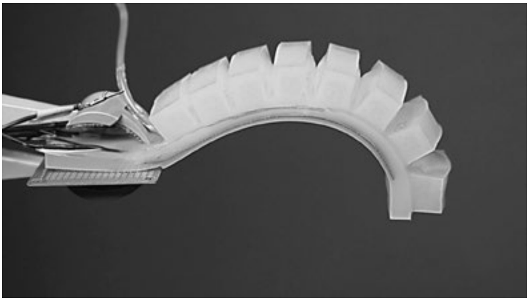


Figure 7. Soft robotics arm

327 As described later the mechanism in the final version of the device was further amended to establish a cleaner mechanism which would not 'grab' the attention away from the face of the user.

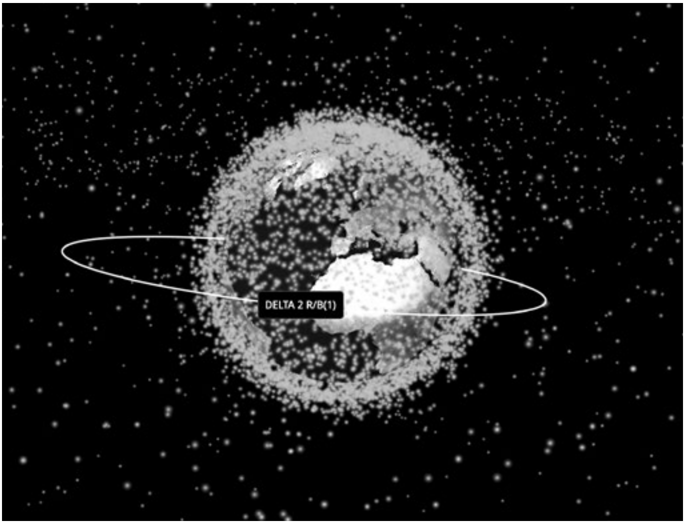


Figure 8. Satellites and debris orbiting earth from *Stuff in Space*

At this stage of my work, the project was clearly positioned as an interrogation of satellite technology—its omnipresence, its silent governance over our spatial and psychological realities. As such, it became apparent that the existing satellite network would not merely be referenced but incorporated directly into the mechanism: the device would be activated by the passage of a satellite overhead, its function inscribed into the larger choreography of planetary surveillance.

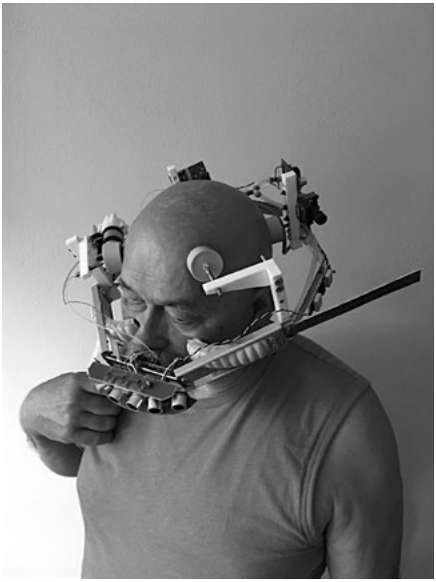
To grasp the full extent of this technological intrusion, I direct the reader to the https://stuffin.space/ website, a visualisation of the relentless, ceaseless movement of orbital machinery —both operational satellites and the discarded matter of past missions. It is not simply the density of these objects that matters, but their implication: an earth that is, at every moment, seen, mapped, processed.

The next phase of the project demanded a way to harness this network, to translate its impersonal gaze into a direct, bodily effect. Here, I am indebted to Piotr Gnyś (PJATK IT Department), whose expertise allowed for the development of a Python script[328] capable of tracking satellite coordinates and triggering the device at the precise moment a designated satellite entered the vicinity of the exoskeleton object. We adopted the Satellite Catalog Number—part of the U.S. NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense) tracking system, a publicly accessible database available via https://www.space-track.org/

What had been theoretical was now operational: the subject's face would be manipulated at the instant it was 'seen' by an entity moving invisibly over head.

With this framework in place, the technical refinement of the apparatus followed. Early sketches guided the construction of an exoskeletal structure—part harness, part mask—paired with a soft robotics mechanism that would act upon the facial muscles in direct response to the satellite's signal. Creating a working prototype was crucial, not only to test the technical viability of the system but also to consider the experiential dimensions: the weight of the structure, the sensation of its grip, the degree to which it could feel simultaneously organic and imposed.

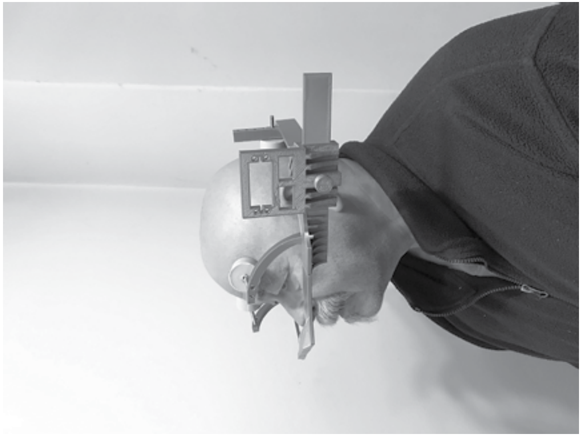
328 see Appendix 1.

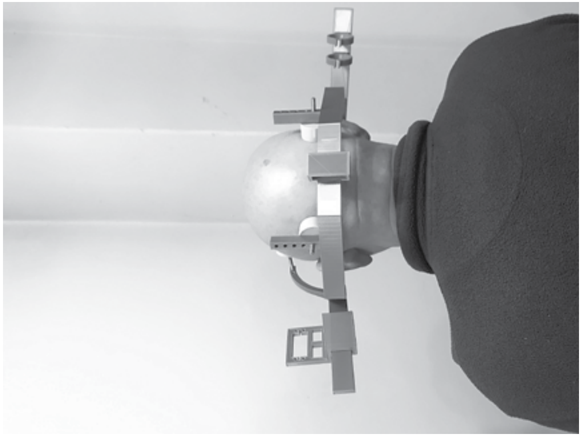


GERRESHEIMER

Prototype complete with two versions

First 3D print model of device





At this stage, the fastening mechanism proved effective with minor modifications, and I considered an additional proposed trigger—five distance sensors embedded in a front panel. This direction was abandoned however. The sensor panel became too intrusive, obscured the very expression the device was meant to transform, in other words it would obscure the fact that the tightening mechanism was a result of passing satellites.

The choice of materials was deliberate: the frame, 3D-printed in PLA, a material both durable and lightweight, was broken into ten modular parts, printed separately using a 3D printer: Creality CR-20 Pro.[329] This modular approach allowed for structural balance, ensuring that the hardware components - distributed across the frame - did not disrupt the equilibrium of the wearer's head.

Not all initial solutions proved successful. The soft robotics component, initially conceived as a silicon 'worm' structure, introduced an unintended aesthetic failure: its visibility was too pronounced, drawing attention away from the face. The result was an undesirable inversion—the technology, rather than the face it controlled, became the subject.

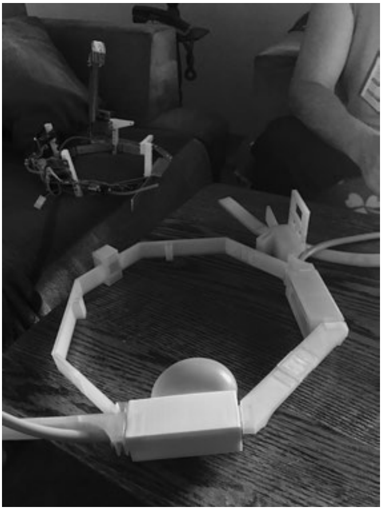
A shift was thus necessary. The silicon structure was replaced with an inflatable balloon-like mechanism, its subtle elasticity providing the necessary force without disrupting the visual focus. This decision needed further refinements—the front panel was redesigned to fully integrate the inflatable structure, ensuring that the mechanism remained embedded, unseen, until it acted upon the face when triggered by the overhead passing of the satellite.

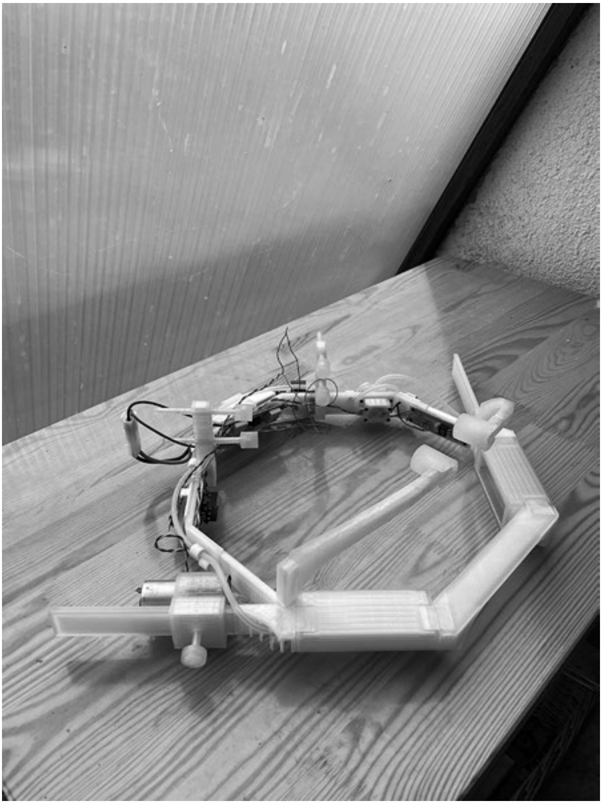
The final prototype—an assemblage of 3D-printed components, pneumatic mechanisms, and computational triggers—had reached a state of functional coherence. Yet the project was not complete without its final test: not whether it 'worked,' but whether it could serve its purpose as an intervention, a demonstration of what it means to be always within sight. To present the device in real time—to stage its activation - was to expose the audience to the unrelenting presence of satellites, to render tangible the

329 All FreeCAD design files are available in project documentation folder.

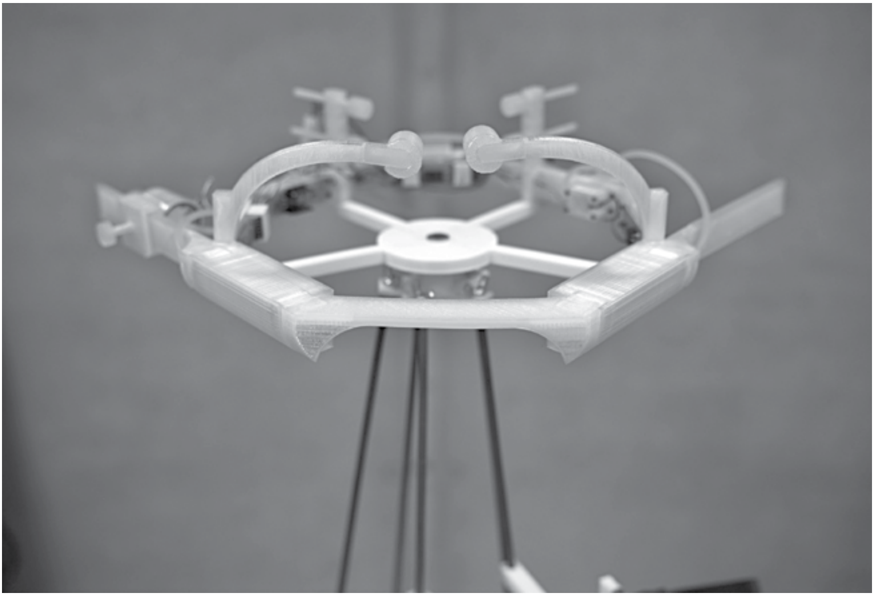
invisible architecture that governs contemporary subjectivity. Visibility, in this sense, is no longer an abstraction. It is felt. It acts. It inscribes itself upon the body.

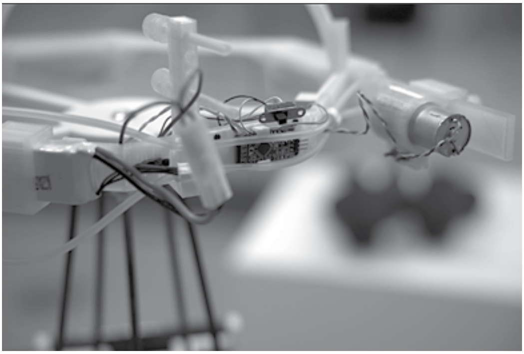
Balloon mechanism

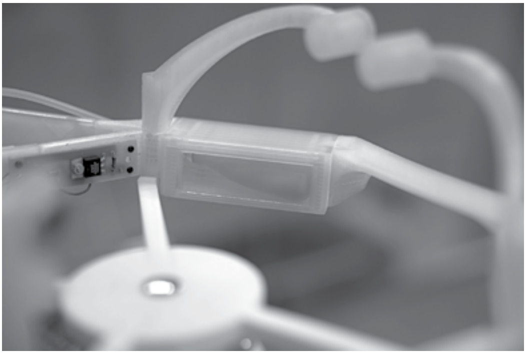




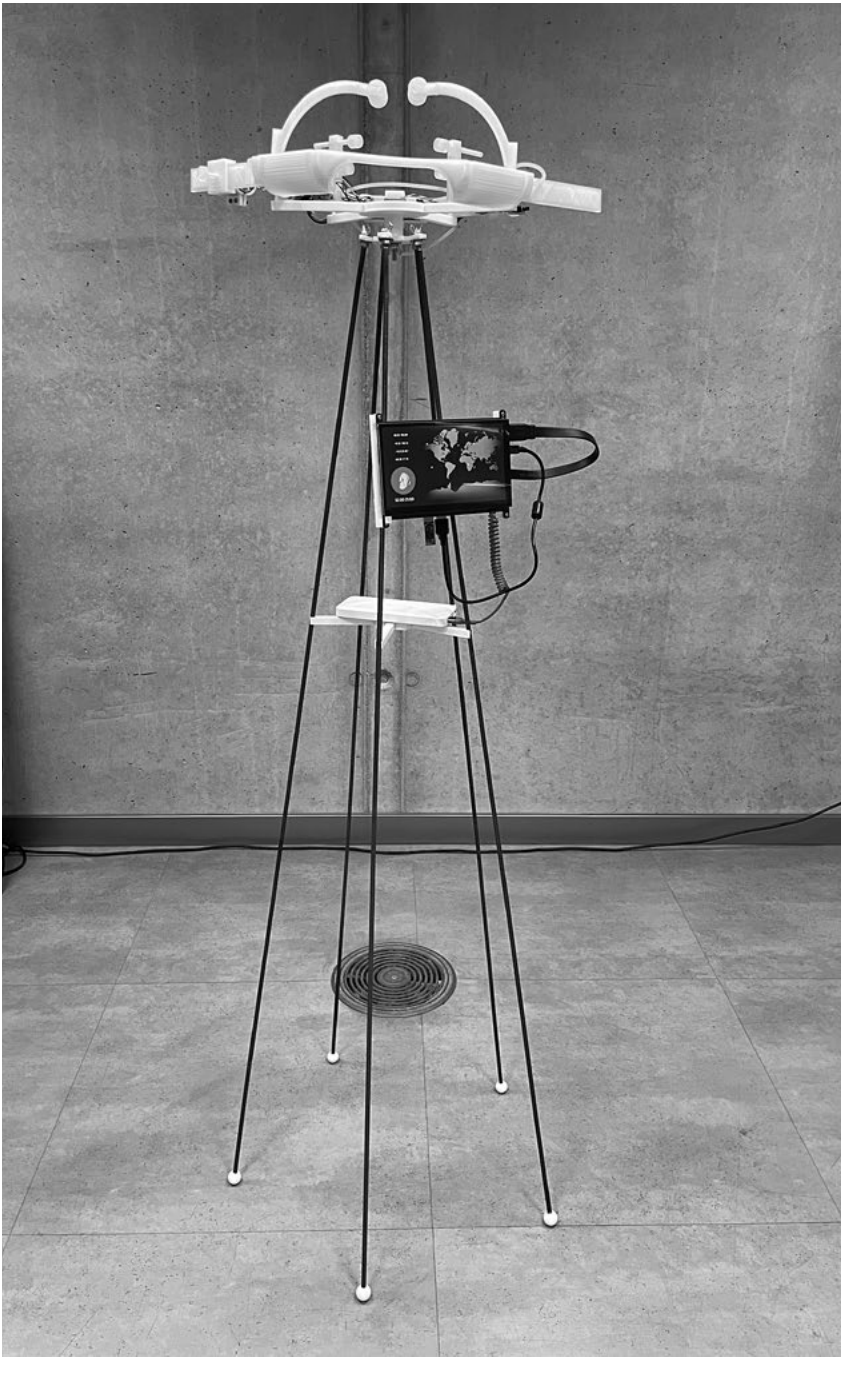
Device with hardware elements







Device (detail)



Display (detail)

← Device on stand with display

PROCESS | The sculptured heads

Single printed 3D heads (detail)

My initial intention was to display the device affixed to a single sculpted head, a form both static and vulnerable, its materiality subject to the forces enacted upon it. I imagined the head cast in a pliable medium, an oil-based modeling clay for instance, which would make the object more susceptible to deformation with each passing satellite. The idea was that the pneumatic mechanism, rather than merely triggering an abstract effect, would inscribe itself upon the sculpture in a cumulative act of erosion, its surface bearing the traces of invisible, external forces. The gesture recalled something I had encountered years earlier at Le Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris: a sculpted head, its material integrity contorted and vulnerable to outside manipulation. The work was in reference to Dr. Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne (1806–1875), the French neurologist who famously conducted experiments on facial musculature, mapping the body’s capacity for expression through controlled electrical stimulation. His work, at once scientific and disturbingly performative, served as an unspoken reference: the face as a site of inscription, manipulated by forces beyond its control.

Figure 9. Sculpture from the exhibition *Sigmund Freud. Du regard à l’écoute* at Le musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme

But whose head, whose likeness, would serve as the subject of my experiment? The choice of a model was not incidental; it was, in fact, a decision which would set the premise of the project. A plasticine replica of Karl Marx, for instance, would invoke a lineage of ideological critique—one that artists such as Krzysztof Bednarski had already explored with great potency. A head modelled on Mark Zuckerberg or Jeff Bezos would be similarly legible, too easily reducible to a statement on corporate surveillance and the encroachment of big tech on the contemporary subject. These choices, while compelling, felt too determined, too immediate in their referentiality.

I found myself returning, with some reluctance, to the possibility of using my own head. This hesitation was not purely conceptual; it was psychological. My personal history—marked by migration, dislocation, and the experience of early exile—had been present in the project’s subtext from the beginning, yet I had resisted making it explicit. To bring my own image into the work was to confront the deeply personal within a space I had initially

conceived as outward-looking. The challenge, then, was to ensure that the work did not collapse into autobiography, that it remained a gesture capable of speaking beyond the particularities of my own history.

As is often the case in such moments of doubt, dialogue proved essential. A conversation with my supervisor, Prof. Ewa Satalecka, to whom I am sincerely grateful, helped clarify my hesitations. She assured me that the integration of personal history need not diminish the work's critical reach. On the contrary, it could serve as an anchor, a way of articulating larger concerns without losing immediacy. It was the reassurance I needed.

I resolved not only to use my own image but to extend this decision into a larger mapping of self—a cartography of personal displacement. If the project already concerned itself with the way external systems inscribe themselves upon the body, then the next logical step was to chart these inscriptions across my own geographical journey. I chose to retrace my own trajectory across a series of locations—specific sites that, in one way or another, had shaped my formation of self.

This would be a topography of self, and I use the term 'topo-graphy' with its full etymological weight: from the Greek *topos* (place) and *graphia* (writing). To inscribe place upon a material form, to allow a sculpted face to bear the weight of coordinates, was to enact a kind of spatial autobiography—one in which the self is rendered as both map and terrain, written upon by forces beyond its control.

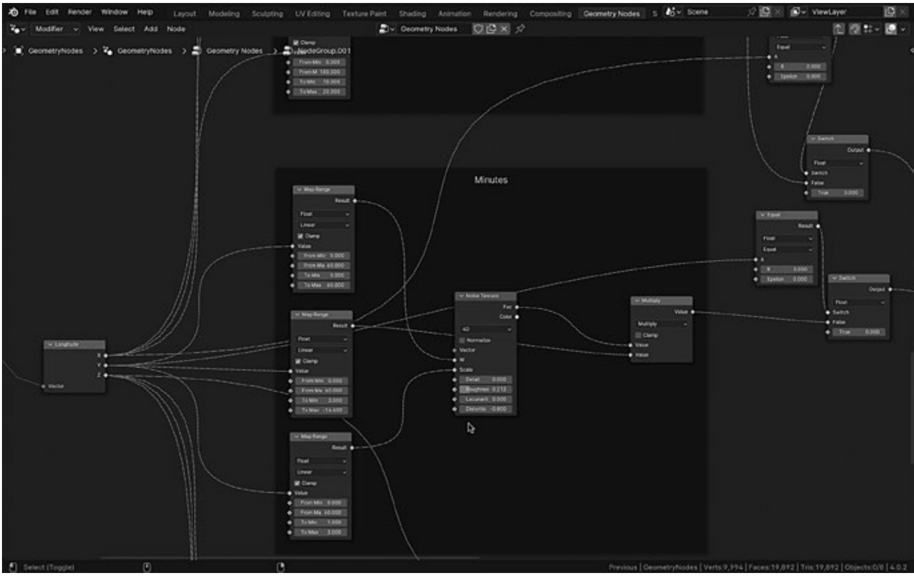
The following are the eight GPS locations chosen, each corresponding to a moment, a site, a point of transformation:

1) 51°24’02.3”N 16°11’52.8”E / 51.400639, 16.198000
   Bema, Poland - hospital
2) 51°23’03.4”N 16°12’28.7”E / 51.384278, 16.207972
   Sokola, Poland - childhood address
3) 37°46′36.7″S, 144°52′34.55″E / -37.776861, 144.876263
   Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre, Australia
4) 37°52’15.3”S 144°58’57.2”E / -37.870917, 144.982556
   Herbert, Australia - childhood address
5) 38°05’42.5”S 145°16’06.0”E / -38.0951249, 145.2683449
   Cranbourne, Australia - adolescent address
6) 37°58’31.8”S145°13’31.1”E/-37.9755079,145.2253139
   Dandenong, Australia - adult-life address
7) 37°51’45.2”S 144°59’39.7”E / -37.862564, 144.994359
   Raglan, Australia - adult-life address
8) 52°10’14.5”N 21°02’01.6”E / 52.170685, 21.033779
   Noskowskiego, Poland - current address

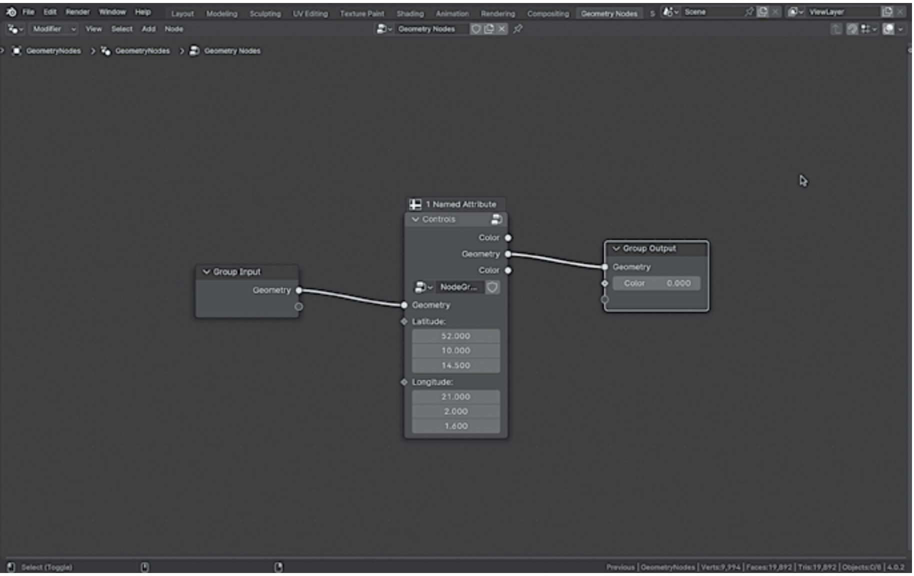
The use of GPS coordinates in this project was not incidental; rather, it became integral to the conceptual foundation of the work. Numbers, so often seen as abstractions, devoid of materiality became data, and data became the means through which sculpted heads, rendered via 3D printing, would take form. The external, the distant, the unseen force of global positioning would impress itself upon an object derived from my own physical likeness. A face—my face—would be deformed, inscribed with the logic of location.

With the assistance of Ivan Tsimchyshyn, a student who later became my assistant on the project, I explored how latitude and longitude—coordinates that delineate place—could serve as the agent of transformation. The original scan of my head was created using Polycam, a 3D scanning application, and further manipulated in Blender 4.1, an open-source software designed for the production of animated effects and digital models. Within

3D head scan before deformation



Nodes system for modifier



Deformation node with coordinates

Head after deform modifier implemented

Blender's architecture lies a geometry nodes system, a toolset allowing for controlled deformations of an object along the X, Y, and Z axes. More than a mere digital sculpting mechanism, this system permits external forces—randomised or deliberate—to alter the form of an object, not unlike how time, pressure, and environment sculpt the human face.

The crucial question, then, was how to integrate GPS data into this system so that location itself would become the sculptor? The answer was right there. Latitude and longitude consist of three numerical components—degrees, minutes, and seconds —and it was these values that we translated into variables within the deformation process. To illustrate, let's take the following coordinates for *Noskowskiego*: 52°10'14.5"N 21°02'01.6"E

These would then be broken up into:

Latitude	Longitude
52	21
10	2
14.5	1.6

These numbers, parsed and assigned, dictated the distortion of the digital model. A sequence was developed: each new set of GPS coordinates would generate a unique deformation of the head. The object, once scanned, was no longer fixed but in flux, as if reshaped by the weight of unseen surveillance, by the omnipresence of tracking itself.

The deformation system relied on a series of interconnected nodes. The core of this system was the *Set Position* node, responsible for manipulating the object's structure. To define the specific area of deformation, we introduced the *Offset* function, which controlled shifts along the X, Y, or Z axis. Further precision was achieved through the *Mix Vector* node, allowing localised distortion rather than indiscriminate warping of the entire head. In this way, we could target a cheekbone, a forehead, or the plane of a jaw - forcing the face into new configurations, encoding place into flesh, albeit digitally.

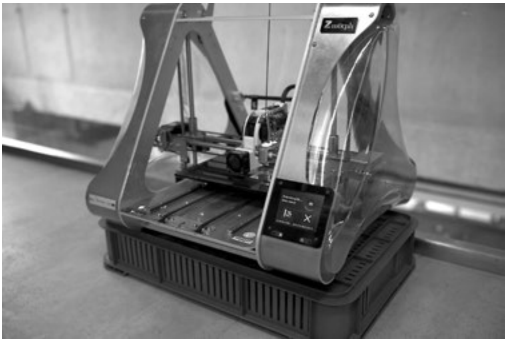
Crucially, each set of deformations operated within the *Noise Texture* framework, a function driven by randomness yet constrained by given parameters. Two key variables—*W* (defining the shifting pattern of distortion) and *Scale* (controlling the magnitude of change)—determined how the GPS data inscribed itself onto the surface of the digital head. Without constraint, the transformations risked excess, imbalance—an overwhelming of subtlety. Thus, numerical values were recalibrated into percentage-based ranges, ensuring that a latitude reading of *52* would not obliterate the effect of a longitude decimal of *1.6*. Each distortion remained proportionate, the face still recognisable, but marked—subtly, indelibly—by the coordinates that shaped it.

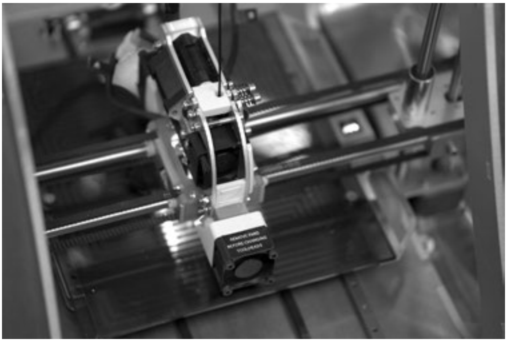
The importance of setting limits within the node system cannot be overstated. In the digital realm, deformations can extend infinitely, spiralling into abstraction. Yet the objective here was not infinite malleability but a controlled, measured intervention - one that would translate into physical form. Each generated head was printed, tested, reconsidered. Material trials ensued, interrogating not only the technical feasibility of 3D-printed distortions but also the aesthetic and conceptual weight of the final sculptures. The printing process itself, once an auxiliary step, became an integral part of the work - an act of live production, a performance of the algorithmic reshaping of identity.

This led to another crucial decision: the heads would not exist as static objects but as ongoing processes. A device would indicate the approach of satellites, tracking their passage overhead. If a satellite moved into range, it would trigger a signal via Bluetooth—initiating the tightening mechanism of the wearable device and simultaneously commanding the 3D printer to generate a new, location-specific head. Each iteration of the piece would be singular, responding in real time to the coordinates of its display. The formation of self—historically framed in psychological or philosophical terms—would here be mediated through technology, visibility, surveillance.

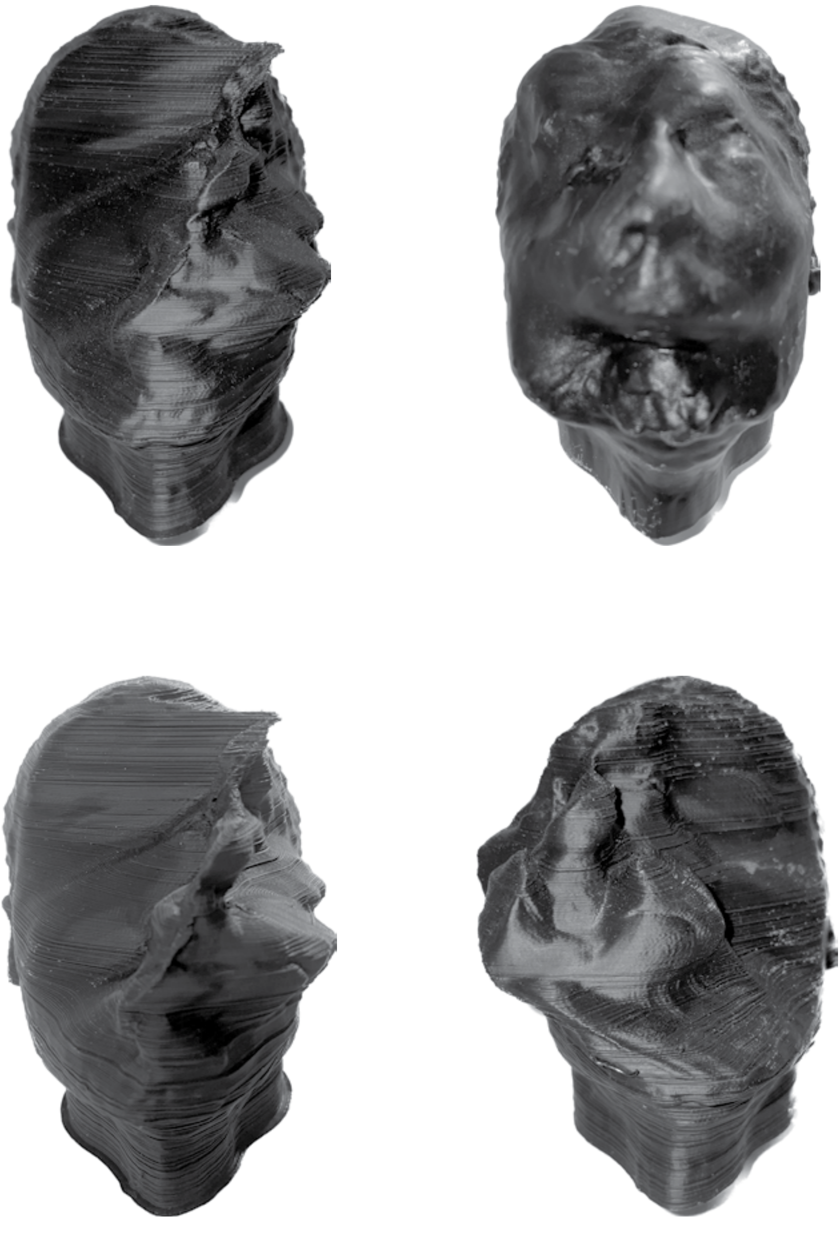
To further emphasise the interplay of form, data, and space, the printed heads were displayed at varying scales. Three different sizes were selected, disrupting the uniformity of the composition, creating a dynamic interplay between presence and absence, structure and mutation. The heads, in turn, were placed atop aerated concrete blocks—raw, industrial, evoking not only the physicality of architecture of constraint but the disciplinary systems of control that define, contain, and categorise human subjects.

I hope the work extends beyond the sculptural object. It is an exploration of the politics of visibility, of the inescapable relationship between place and identity, of the ways in which digital systems—whether satellites, surveillance networks, or algorithms—shape and deform the individual. It is an acknowledgment that we are always seen, always tracked, and that even in our stillness, we are being measured, altered, rewritten.





3D printer in the process of printing one of the heads



Printed 3D heads with deformations

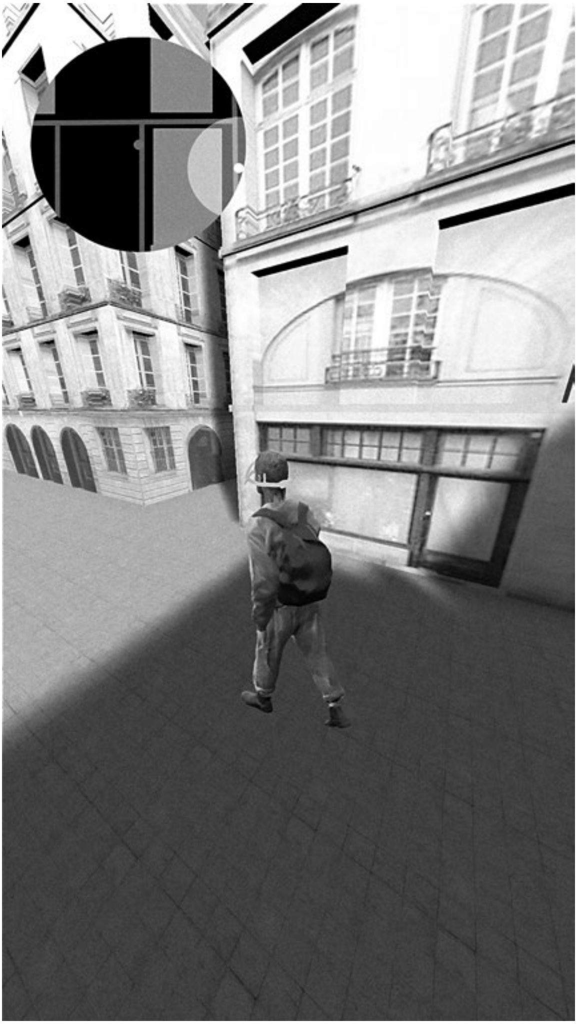
Uciekinier, monitor display

In the final stage of my work, I returned to the question of how best to exhibit the device—how to present it not as a static object, but as a mechanism in action, worn, enacted. The question was not only one of display but of confrontation: to what extent should the work be tested against the real world, against the gaze it was designed to engage? This question had surfaced early in my conversations with Prof. Wodiczko, who had remarked—perhaps as a challenge, perhaps as inevitability—that if I was serious about the work, I should wear the device myself. To inhabit it. To be subjected to it.

There was, of course, the possibility of documentation—a filmed performance, an intervention in which I, as wearer, traverse a cityscape, my face contorted in reaction to a satellite's gaze. A pilgrimage of sorts, unfolding under the omniscient eye of the super-panopticon above. Yet something in this approach troubled me. The hesitation was not merely personal. It was conceptual. The act of moving through the city in this way—head encased, expression dictated by an unseen force - evoked too directly the work of Prof. Wodiczko and his *Homeless Vehicle* (1988) that served as a direct interrogations of urban survival. To retrace such a path would be to risk redundancy, to allow my work to become a footnote rather than its own proposition.

What the piece required, I realised, was not merely a demonstration but an invitation. A means for the audience to inhabit the conditions the work proposed—to navigate, firsthand, the experience of moving through a landscape that is always watched. Thus emerged the idea of a simulation: a game in which the player, like all of us, is both actor and object, surveilled and manipulated.

With the assistance of Bartosz Kołodziej and Maria Domińczak, I developed a gameplay environment within Unreal Engine 5. The game unfolds from a third-person perspective: a figure (modelled on myself) moves through a city, the exoskeletal device affixed to his head. Above him, satellites drift in their orbital trajectories. When one crosses into proximity, the mechanism activates and a forced, involuntary smile spreads across the face. The player's objective is simple, yet impossible: to move through the city unobserved. To avoid the gaze of the overhead satellites. To evade the inescapable.



In designing this scenario, I sought to render explicit what is already implicit in contemporary life. We are all already players in this system, manoeuvring through an environment where surveillance is ambient, where visibility is both inherent and inescapable. The game titled *Uciekinier* does not invent this

Uciekinier gameplay screen shots

condition; it merely gives it form, compresses it into an aesthetic experience. The question remains whether play outside the scenario is possible within such a framework—or if, in the end, the only choice is to submit.

Man Who Laughs, video stills, 2022

Over the course of this project, I had the opportunity to collaborate with several colleagues, but it was my work with Mr. Marek Gnyś that left the deepest imprint—both technically and personally. His engineering expertise was not merely an asset to the project; it was the foundation upon which its mechanical reality took shape. I am indebted to his guidance, but more than that, to the dialogue that emerged from our collaboration. Our meetings, structured around the engineering intricacies of the exoskeletal device, became something more—conversations that unfolded across disciplines, across generations.These exchanges led me to reflect on the nature of collaboration itself. What does it mean for an artist and an engineer to work together? What is revealed in the act of shared problem-solving? The intersection of our fields—art and engineering—was not a mere pragmatic necessity; it became a space of negotiation, of discovery.

Early on, I decided to create an additional piece that would reflect this process - not in the form of documentation, but as an aesthetic meditation on the presence of the unseen collaborator. I began recording fragments of our conversations, collecting not only the technical discussions but also the personal digressions, the asides that surfaced in the margins of our work. Parallel to this, I conceived of a film that would depict Mr. Gnyś in his workshop—not in the conventional language of portraiture or interview, but through an approach that aligned with the larger themes of the project.

The result is *Man Who Laughs*, a 16-minute experimental film. Here, the workshop is not merely a setting but a landscape —a planetary space in which the camera orbits the figure of the engineer, lingering, hovering, studying. This movement mirrors the project's core concern: visibility. Who is seen in the making of art? Who remains obscured? Often, those whose technical expertise enable artistic production—engineers, builders— remain in the shadows, their contributions unspoken. This film, then, is not simply an acknowledgment; it is an act of making those who are often invisible - visible.

Man Who Laughs is a meditation on labor, on craft, on the bodies that sustain creative practice but are seldom credited within its narratives. To see, truly see, is not only to acknowledge but to reposition - to reconsider where the work of art begins and whose hands shape its becoming.

PROCESS | Idea that was dropped

Through the many conversations I had over the course of this project, I found myself confronted with a reality that had been hiding in plain sight: the conditions of labor within the IT sector. What emerged were not merely anecdotes but a pattern—stories of mistreatment, of coercion masked as incentive, of a workplace culture that simulates autonomy while enforcing submission. The illusion is of a thriving, self-sufficient workforce, yet behind this corporate theatre, the structure is brittle. Nowhere is this more evident than in Poland, where turnover rates are high and the notion of employment at a multinational corporation is still framed as a privilege—something to be grateful for, not scrutinised.

One story in particular remains with me. In a large multinational IT company in Warsaw, employees were subjected to a grotesque ritual of recognition: the *Employee of the Month* was awarded a new, ergonomic chair—a singular oasis of comfort in a sea of cheaply made, uncomfortable workstations. A small ceremony marked the occasion, a photograph uploaded to Instagram, an empty gesture disguised as motivation. I asked one of the workers why they tolerated such an absurd arrangement. His answer was brutally pragmatic: job security, financial debt, the looming fear of falling out of favour. The pressure, he said, was crushing. Alcohol and recreational drugs had become, for many, the only way to endure it.

What stands out is the dissonance. The very corporations that publicly decry modern slavery—issuing statements against child labor and exploitative supply chains—are themselves refining subtler mechanisms of control. In the absence of labor unions, employees find themselves at the mercy of corporate dictates. Surveillance is not merely technological but psychological: performance monitoring extends beyond productivity to the enforcement of ‘satisfaction’ itself. A workforce that must perform its own contentment—compelled to smile, to produce not only data but the appearance of well-being—is the logical extension of Marx’s vision of the human reduced to the service of machines. In this case, not industrial machines but computational systems, into which hours of life are poured with no clear boundary between work and self.

I began thinking about how the device might be positioned within this scenario—not merely as an art object, but as an instrument of exposure. How might it reveal the anxieties

Device with additional feature of an opening screen embedded within these conditions? The early designs featured an overhead arch—a halo-like structure, initially conceived as a form of shelter, a counterpoint to the demand for visibility. But this could also serve another function: the desire to hide, to escape the shame of enforced presence. The screen, inspired by folding origami-like structures currently being developed for satellite missions, could, instead of forcing a smile, conceal the face entirely—a protective barrier against the gaze. I eventually discarded this feature, wary of diffusing the work's impact with competing narratives, though I leave open the possibility of revisiting it.

Looking forward, I am considering a further escalation: the creation of an exclusive nano satellite, a device launched into orbit for the sole purpose of maintaining a direct link with the exoskeleton device. The implications—technological, ecological—must be reckoned with, particularly the carbon footprint of such an endeavour. But conceptually, the idea is potent: a closed loop, a system in which the observer and the observed are bound together in an endless feedback cycle.

An alternative possibility also suggests itself—a second device, an inversion of the 'forced smile'. Instead of compliance, resistance. Instead of submission, a form of shelter. A structure not for being seen, but for disappearing is something to be considered.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

TECHNICAL COMPONENTS

The *One Who Laughs* project is an inter-media artwork made up of five separate components arranged together in a single exhibition space.

Component 1: The device – an exoskeleton head frame atop an iron stand with a small touchscreen display

Type: intricate electronic sculptural system
Dimensions of head frame: 115 x 497 x 309 mm
Material : PLA filament - Devil Design 1,75mm Clear
Electronic components:
Arduino Pro Mini - Microcontroller
Mini Pump 8V
Air realise valve
Air pressure controller 0,5-10 Bar
Bluetooth module HC-05
Battery Redox 1800mAh 7.4 volt
Tension stabiliser 7805
Transistor switch CEP6060R

Dimensions of stand: 1370 x 460 (at bottom) mm
Electronic components (secured to stand):
Touchscreen - LCD IPS 7’’ 1024x600px HDMI + USB for Raspberry Pi 4B/3B+/3B/2B/Zero - Waveshare 11199
Raspberry Pi 4B WiFi 8GB RAM + 32GB microSD + cables
Bluetooth module
AC power source

Component 2: The sculptured heads – a collection of 8 deformed heads in various sizes atop a base made up of concrete blocks

Type: sculptured heads in various sizes (3D print technology)
Material: PLA filament - Devil Design 1,75mm Black

Base: 10 autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC) blocks
5 x H+H 600, block 24 cm 240 x590 x 240 mm
5 x H+H 600, blok 12 cm 120 x 590 x 240 mm
arranged to form a single block tower

Component 3: The printer – 3D filament printer placed on the ground

Type: large 3D printer in casing
Model: ZMorph 2.0 SX Multitool 3D Printer
Filament: PLA filament - Devil Design 1,75mm Black DEV-14102

Component 4: The game – interactive gameplay scenario displayed on coloured monitor with controller

Type: 65”inch LED display or similar, displayed on the vertical axis (example of display Samsung WM65B) + a single USB joystick controller
Software: Unreal Engine 5

Component 5: The video - *Man Who Laughs* video projection

Type: large-scale video projection on wall
Duration: 16:22 mins video with sound

Additional component: The GPS coordinates - numerous GPS location coordinates (custom adhesive numbers) secured on transparent glass of the exhibition glass window (see diagram for location of glass window)

Type: 160 pt Monaco typeface adhesive numbers

51°

51°24’02.3”N 16°11’52.8”E

THE (PLANNED) EXHIBITION

The *One Who Laughs* project is due to be presented during the PhD viva. The space for the exhibition is a 60m2 area of a “disused” shop pavilion located as part of a rundown shopping centre called Land located in an inner suburb of Warsaw. Land could be considered a vanishing space, reminiscent of the capitalist heyday of 90’s Poland. The shopping centre has struggled recently with the transformation of retail trade to the online sphere. As such, the space in itself supports the premise of the work, both structurally as well as conceptually.

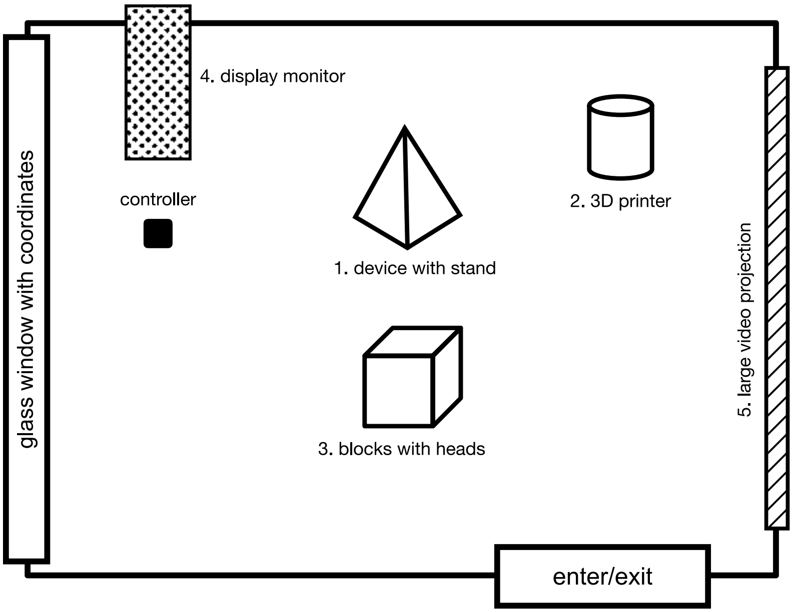


Diagram 1. *Land* pavilion exhibition space plan showing arrangement of components

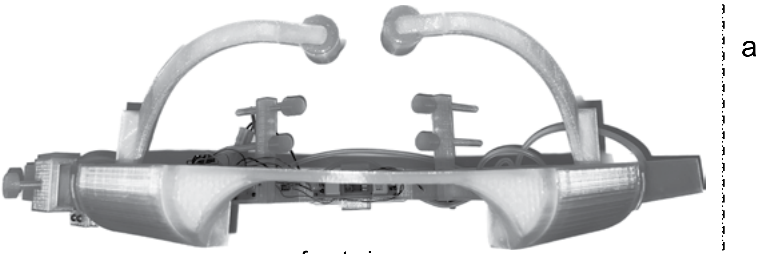
I.

III.

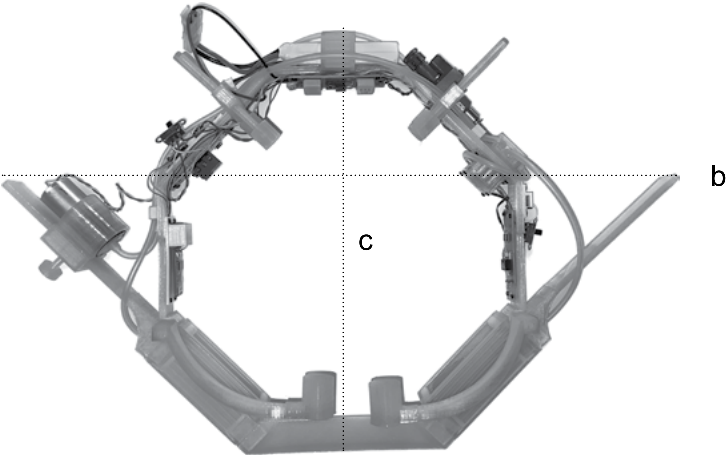
II.

The heads dimensions

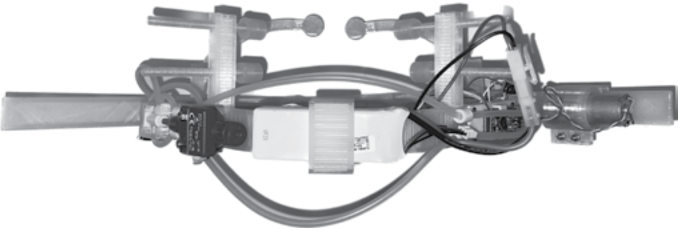
I. 100 × 75 × 110 mm
II. 120 × 90 x 130 mm
III. 140 × 115 × 150 mm



front view



top view



The device dimension

a. 115 mm

b. 497 mm

c. 309 mm

back view

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1
Francisco Goya *Saturn Devouring His Son*, Painting by Francisco Goya, “Saturn Devouring His Son,” c. 1820–1823, mixed method on mural transferred to canvas, 143.5 × 81.4 cm, from Prado Museum, “Saturn” Francisco Goya, accessed May 22, 2024, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/saturn/18110a75-b0e7-430c-bc73-2a4d55893bd6.

Fig. 2
Francis Barraud *His Master's Voice,* Painting by Francis Barraud "His Master's Voice", c. 1898–1899, oil on canvas, 60.94 × 91.44 cm, from Wikimedia Commons, "His Master's Voice" Francis Barraud, accessed May 22, 2024, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:His_Master's_Voice.jpg.

Fig. 3
Michelangelo *The Deposition,* Sculpture by Michelangelo Buonarroti "Pietà Bandini", c. 1547–1555, sculpture white marble, 277 × 138 × 125 cm, from Opera Del Duomo Museum, "Pietà Bandini" Michelangelo Buonarroti, https://duomo.firenze.it/en/discover/opera-duomo-museum/the-halls/tribuna-di-michelangelo/8619/michelangelo-buonarroti-pieta-deposizione-di-cristo-tra-la-madonna-maria-maddalena-e-nicodemo-1547-1555.

Fig. 4
Kate Greenaway *The Pied Piper of Hamelin,* Illustration by Kate Greenaway "The Pied Piper of Hamelin", drawing, from Wikimedia Commons, "Pied Piper with children" Kate Greenaway, accessed May 22, 2024, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pied_Piper_with_Children.jpg.

Fig. 5
Loro Wodiczko / *Seamless Transition* James Bridle / *The Architectural-Image-Complex, Rafah: Black Friday* Forensic Architecture

a) image, from krzysztofwodiczko.com, https://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/instrumentation#/loro-them/
b) image, https://jamesbridle.com/works/seamless-transitions
c) image, https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/93328/forensic-architecturetowards-an-investigative-aesthetics/

Fig. 6
Cartesian Coordinate Brain Stereotactic Apparatus, Image "Neurosurgery Stereotaxic System - Stereotactic Frame For CT & MRI", photograph, from Howell Medical, https://howellmedical.com/products/neurosurgery-stereotaxic-system.

Fig. 7
Soft robotics arm, Image "Introducing the Open Soft Robotics Research Collection", photograph, from PLOS, https://everyone.plos.org/2020/11/23/open-soft-robotics-research-collection/.

Fig. 8
Satellites and debris orbiting earth, Screenshot "Stuff in Space", Image, https://stuffin.space/.

Fig. 9
Sculpture from exhibition *Sigmund Freud. Du regard à l'écoute* at Le musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme, Photograph, own image.

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1. Code to generate satellite position and GPS coordinates used within the mechanism of the head device - created by Piotr Gnyś using Python code language

```
import time
import argparse
import datetime
import os
from skyfield.api import Topos, load

TIME_FORMAT = '%Y-%m-%d-%H:%M:%S'

class DiscreteTimeDomain:

    def __init__(self, start, end=None, step=1):
        self.start = start
        if end is None:
        self.end = start + datetime.timedelta(days=1)
        else:
        self.end = end
        self.step = datetime.timedelta(seconds=step)
        self.current = start

    def reset(self):
        self.current = self.start

    def __iter__(self):
        return self

    def __next__(self):
        if self.current > self.end:
        raise StopIteration
        return_value = self.current
        self.current += self.step
        return return_value

def load_satellites(file_path):
    satellites = load.tle_file(file_path)
    print('Loaded', len(satellites), 'satellites')
    return satellites

def calculate_position(satellite, time):
    ts = load.timescale()
    t = ts.utc(time.year, time.month, time.day, time.hour, time.
minute, time.second)
    geocentric = satellite.at(t)
    subpoint = geocentric.subpoint()
    latitude = subpoint.latitude.degrees
    longitude = subpoint.longitude.degrees
    return latitude, longitude
```

```
def create_trace_file(satellite, time_domain, output_folder):
    print(f'Processing {satellite.name}')
    file_path = os.path.join(output_folder, f'{satellite.name.replace(" ","_")}.txt')
    with open(file_path, 'w') as sat_file:
        time_domain.reset()
        for t in time_domain:
            latitute , longitude = calculate_position(satellite, t)
            timestamp = time.mktime(t.timetuple())
            timestamp = int(timestamp)
            sat_file.write(f'{timestamp};{latitute};{longitude}\n')

def datetime_str(text):
    return datetime.datetime.strptime(text, TIME_FORMAT)

def satellite_list(txt):
    return txt.replace('_',' ').split(',')

def parse_arguments():
    parser = argparse.ArgumentParser()
    parser.add_argument('-f', '--satellite_file', type=str,
default='http://celestrak.org/NORAD/elements/stations.txt',
                        help='Path to TLE file, may be url.')
    parser.add_argument('-s', '--start_datetime', type=datetime_str,
default=datetime.datetime.now(),
                    help='Datetime of first position in format Y-m-d-H:M:S')
    parser.add_argument('-e', '--end_datetime', type=datetime_str,
default=None,
                    help='Datetime of last position in format Y-m-d-H:M:S')
    parser.add_argument('-t', '--timestep', type=int, default=1,
                    help='Time in seconds between two positions.')
    parser.add_argument('-v', '--satellites', type=satellite_list,
required=True,
                    help='Names of satellites that will be processed,
separated by comma')
    parser.add_argument('-o', '--output_folder', type=str, default='./local',
                    help='Folder to which output will be saved')
    return parser.parse_args()

def main():
    args = parse_arguments()
    satellites = load_satellites(args.satellite_file)
    satellites = {sat.name: sat for sat in satellites}
    time_domain = DiscreteTimeDomain(args.start_datetime, args.
end_datetime, args.timestep)
    for satellite in args.satellites:
        create_trace_file(satellites[satellite], time_domain, args.
output_folder)

if __name__ == '__main__':
    main()
```

2. Code used to display the satellite and GPS visualisation on mini-display - created by Piotr Gnyś using Python code language

```
import argparse
import math
import serial
from datetime import datetime
import time
import pygame
import os
from moviepy.editor import VideoFileClip

MILLISECONDS_PER_SECOND = 1000
enable_debug = False

class HeadCanvas:

    def __init__(self, file_path, fps, position, size):
        self.video = VideoFileClip(file_path)
        self.frames = self.video.iter_frames()
        self.update_period = MILLISECONDS_PER_SECOND/(fps)
        self.time_since_last_update = self.update_period # Always
update at first call
        self.position = position
        self.size = size

    def update(self, dt, screen):
        self.time_since_last_update += dt
        if self.time_since_last_update < self.update_period:
            return
        self.time_since_last_update = 0
        try:
            frame = next(self.frames)
            gif_surface = pygame.surfarray.make_surface(frame)
            gif_surface = pygame.transform.scale(gif_surface, self.size)
            screen.blit(gif_surface, self.position)
        except StopIteration:
            self.frames = self.video.iter_frames()
            frame = next(self.frames)
            gif_surface = pygame.surfarray.make_surface(frame)
            gif_surface = pygame.transform.scale(gif_surface, self.size)
            screen.blit(gif_surface, self.position)

class TextField:

    def __init__(self, position, font_size=22, satellites=None,
                font_type='freesansbold.ttf'):
        self.position = position
        self.font = pygame.font.Font(font_type, font_size)
        self.satellites = satellites
```

```
    def update(self, dt, screen):
        if self.satellites is not None:
            row_offset = 60
            column_offset = 180
            row = 0
            column = 0
            for satellite in self.satellites.positions.values():
                if row > 5:
                    column += 1
                    row = 0
                text = self.font.render(f’{satellite.lat:2.2f} {satellite.
lon:2.2f}’, True, (255,255,255), (0,0,0))
                textRect = text.get_rect()
                center = list(self.position)
                center[0] += column * column_offset
                center[1] += row * row_offset
                textRect.center = center
                screen.blit(text, textRect)
                row += 1

class TextField2:

    def __init__(self, position, device_location, font_size=32,
              font_type=’freesansbold.ttf’):
        self.position = position
        self.device_location = device_location
        self.font = pygame.font.Font(font_type, font_size)

    def update(self, dt, screen):
        text = self.font.render(f’{self.device_location[0]:2.2f} {self.
device_location[1]:2.2f}’, True, (255,255,255), (0,0,0))
        textRect = text.get_rect()
        textRect.center = self.position
        screen.blit(text, textRect)

class Position:

    def __init__(self, timestamp, lat, lon):
        self.lat = lat
        self.lon = lon
        self.timestamp = timestamp

class Satellites:

    def __init__(self, folder, sampling_rate):
        self.sats = {}
        for entry in os.scandir(folder):
            if entry.is_file():
                sat_name = entry.name.split(‘.’)[0].replace(‘_’,’ ‘)
                sat_path = os.path.join(folder, entry.name)
                print(f’Satellite {sat_name} at path {sat_path}’)
                sat_file = open(sat_path, “r”)
```

```
                self.sats[sat_name] = sat_file
            self.update_period = MILLISECONDS_PER_SECOND/
sampling_rate
            self.time_since_last_update = 0
            self.positions = {}

        def update_positions(self):
            for sat_name, sat_file in self.sats.items():
                line = sat_file.readline()
                try:
                    timestamp, lat, lon = line.split(';')
                    timestamp = int(timestamp)
                    lat = float(lat)
                    lon = float(lon)
                    position = Position(timestamp, lat, lon)
                    self.positions[sat_name] = position
                except Exception:
                    pass # If updating fails just ignore it

        def set_initial_readout(self, initial_timestamp=None, update_
timestamps=True):
            if initial_timestamp is None:
                initial_timestamp = datetime.now()
                initial_timestamp = time.mktime(initial_timestamp.
timetuple())
            self.update_positions()
            if not update_timestamps:
                return
            skipped_positions = 0
            while list(self.positions.values())[0].timestamp < initial_
timestamp:
                self.update_positions()
                skipped_positions += 1
            print(f'Skipped {skipped_positions} positions.')


        def update(self, dt):
            self.time_since_last_update += dt
            if self.time_since_last_update < self.update_period:
                return
            self.update_positions()
            self.time_since_last_update = 0

        def cleanup(self):
            for _, file in self.sats.items():
                file.close()

        def is_satellite_in_range(self, device_position, distance):
            for position in self.positions:
               a = position[0]-device_position[0]
               b = position[1]-device_position[1]
               if math.sqrt(a*a+b*b)<distance:
```

```
            return True
        return False

    class EarthCanvas:

        def __init__(self, image_path, satellites, position,
                    size, device_location, alert_distance=0.0,
                    helmet=None):
            self.image_path = image_path
            self.backdrop = None
            self.position = position
            self.size = size
            self.satellites = satellites
            self.device_location = device_location
            self.alert_distance = alert_distance
            self.helmet = helmet

        def reload_image(self):
            print(self.size)
            #sys.exit()
            self.backdrop = pygame.transform.scale(pygame.image.
load(self.image_path), self.size)

        def update(self, dt, screen):
            self.satellites.update(dt)
            screen.blit(self.backdrop, self.position)
            dev_pos = None
            alert = False
            if self.device_location is not None:
                dev_pos = self.draw_position(self.device_location, screen,
(255,0,0))
                if enable_debug:
                    self.draw_range(self.device_location, screen, (255,0,0),
self.alert_distance)
            for _, position in self.satellites.positions.items():
                sat_pos = self.draw_position(position, screen,
(255,255,255))
                dist = (dev_pos[0] - sat_pos[0])**2 + (dev_pos[1] - sat_
pos[1])**2
                dist = math.sqrt(dist)
                if dist < self.alert_distance:
                    alert = True
                    if enable_debug:
                        self.draw_position(position, screen, (0,255,0))
            if self.helmet is not None:
                if alert:
                    self.helmet.activate_pump()
                else:
                    self.helmet.release_pump()

        def mercator_projection(self, longitude, latitude):
            # Define the Mercator projection bounds
```

```
        max_longitude = 180.0
        min_longitude = -180.0
        max_latitude = 85.051129
        min_latitude = -85.051129

        # Clamp the longitude and latitude within the bounds
        longitude = max(min(longitude, max_longitude), min_longitude)
        latitude = max(min(latitude, max_latitude), min_latitude)

        # Convert latitude and longitude to radians
        lat_rad = math.radians(latitude)

        # Perform the Mercator projection
        x = (longitude + 180.0) / 360.0
        y = (1.0 - math.log(math.tan(lat_rad) + 1.0 / math.cos(lat_
rad)) / math.pi) / 2.0

        return x, y

    def draw_position(self, position, screen, color):
        x,y = self.mercator_projection(position.lon, position.lat)
        x = int((x)*self.size[0]+self.position[0])
        y = int((y)*self.size[1]+self.position[1])
        pygame.draw.circle(screen, color, (x, y), 5)
        return x, y

    def draw_range(self, position, screen, color, radius):
        x,y = self.mercator_projection(position.lon, position.lat)
        x = int((x)*self.size[0]+self.position[0])
        y = int((y)*self.size[1]+self.position[1])
        pygame.draw.circle(screen, color, (x, y), radius, width=2)
        return x, y

    def cleanup(self):
        self.satellites.cleanup()

class Helmet:
    ROZKAZ_POMPA_WLACZ = b'P'
    ROZKAZ_POMPA_WYLACZ = b'L'
    ROZKAZ_ODPOWIETRZANIE_WLACZ = b'O'
    ROZKAZ_SERWO_WLACZ = b'S'
    ROZKAZ_SERWO_WYLACZ = b'Z'
    ROZKAZ_DEMO = b'D'

    def __init__(self, serial_path):
        if serial_path is None:
            self.serial = None
        else:
            self.serial = serial.Serial(serial_path)

    def activate_pump(self):
        if self.serial is None:
```

```
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_POMPA_WLACZ)

    def stop_pump(self):
      if self.serial is None:
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_POMPA_WYLACZ)

    def release_pump(self):
      if self.serial is None:
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_ODPOWIETRZANIE_WLACZ)

    def activate_servo(self):
      if self.serial is None:
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_SERWO_WLACZ)

    def deactivate_servo(self):
      if self.serial is None:
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_SERWO_WYLACZ)

    def play_demo(self):
      if self.serial is None:
        return
      self.serial.write(Helmet.ROZKAZ_DEMO)

  class ManWhoLaughsDisplay:

    def __init__(self, head, earth, helmet, text_field, text_field2):
      self.helmet = helmet
      self.screen = pygame.display.set_mode((0,0), pygame.
FULLSCREEN)
      screen_size = self.screen.get_size()
      self.head = head
      head_size = (screen_size[0]*self.head.size[0], screen_
size[1]*self.head.size[1])
      head_position = (screen_size[0]*self.head.position[0],
screen_size[1]*self.head.position[1])
      self.head.size = head_size
      self.head.position = head_position
      self.earth = earth
      earth_size = (screen_size[0]*self.earth.size[0], screen_
size[1]*self.earth.size[1])
      earth_position = (screen_size[0]*self.earth.position[0],
screen_size[1]*self.earth.position[1])
      print(f'Earth position = {earth_position} Earth size = {earth_
size}')
      self.earth.position = earth_position
      self.earth.size = earth_size
      self.earth.reload_image()
```

```
            self.text_field = text_field
            text_position = (screen_size[0]*self.text_field.position[0],
screen_size[1]*self.text_field.position[1])
            self.text_field.position = text_position
            self.text_field2 = text_field2
            text_position = (screen_size[0]*self.text_field2.position[0],
screen_size[1]*self.text_field2.position[1])
            self.text_field2.position = text_position
            self.clock = pygame.time.Clock()

        def update(self):
            self.handle_events()
            dt = self.clock.tick()
            #self.screen.fill((0,0,0))
            self.head.update(dt, self.screen)
            self.earth.update(dt, self.screen)
            self.text_field.update(dt, self.screen)
            self.text_field2.update(dt, self.screen)
            pygame.display.flip()

        def handle_events(self):
            for event in pygame.event.get():
                if event.type == pygame.QUIT:
                    raise StopIteration
                elif event.type == pygame.KEYDOWN:
                    if event.key == ord('a'):
                        self.helmet.activate_pump()
                    elif event.key == ord('s'):
                        self.helmet.stop_pump()
                    elif event.key == ord('d'):
                        self.helmet.release_pump()
                    elif event.key == ord('z'):
                        self.helmet.activate_servo()
                    elif event.key == ord('x'):
                        self.helmet.deactivate_servo()

        def cleanup(self):
            self.earth.cleanup()

    def integer_pair(txt):
        val1, val2 = txt.split('x')
        return (int(val1), int(val2))

    def float_pair(txt):
        txt = txt.replace('n','-')
        val1, val2 = txt.split('x')
        return (float(val1), float(val2))

    def parse_arguments():
        parser = argparse.ArgumentParser()
        parser.add_argument('-g', '--gif_file', type=str, required=True,
                        help='Path to GIF file')
```

```
	parser.add_argument('--gif_fps', type=int, default=60,
				help='Frames per second of gif animation')
	parser.add_argument('--gif_size', type=float_pair,
default=(0.3,0.3),
				help='Size of animated gif')
	parser.add_argument('--gif_position', type=float_pair,
default=(0,0),
				help='Position of top left corner of gif.')
	parser.add_argument('-s', '--satellite_directory', type=str,
required=True,
				help='Folder with satellite files')
	parser.add_argument('-e', '--earth_file', type=str, required=True,
				help='Path to earth backdrop image')
	parser.add_argument('--initial_timestamp', type=int,
default=None,
				help='Initial timestampt in unix format, set only
during tests.')
	parser.add_argument('--sampling_rate', type=int, default=1,
				help='Sampling rate of satellite positions in
seconds')
	parser.add_argument('--disable_timestamp_adjustment',
action='store_true',
				help='Disables adjustment of timestamps in
satellite file (FOR TESTS ONLY).')
	parser.add_argument('--display_position', type=float_pair,
default=(0.7,1.0),
				help='Position of earth and satellites display')
	parser.add_argument('--display_size', type=float_pair,
default=(0.3,0),
				help='Size of display that shows earth and
satellites')
	parser.add_argument('--helmet_port', type=str, default=None,
				help='Serial port for communication with helmet.')
	parser.add_argument('--device_location', type=float_pair,
default=None,
				help='Lat lon')
	parser.add_argument('--text_location', type=float_pair,
default=(0.5, 0.5),
				help='Loacation at which text will be displayed')
	parser.add_argument('--text2_location', type=float_pair,
default=(0.5, 0.5),
				help='Loacation at which text will be displayed')
	parser.add_argument('--sat_font_size', type=int, default=32,
				help='Size of font for satellite locations')
	parser.add_argument('--dev_font_size', type=int, default=32,
				help='Size of font for satellite locations')
	parser.add_argument('--font_type', type=str,
default='freesansbold.ttf',
				help='Type of font used in application')
	parser.add_argument('--alert_distance', type=float,
default=10.0,
				help='Distance')
```

```
    parser.add_argument('--enable_debug', action='store_true',
                        help='Enables debug information')
    return parser.parse_args()


def main():
    global enable_debug
    pygame.init()
    args = parse_arguments()
    enable_debug = args.enable_debug
    device_location = None
    if args.device_location is not None:
        device_location = Position(0, args.device_location[0], args.
device_location[1])
    helmet = Helmet(args.helmet_port)
    satellites = Satellites(args.satellite_directory, args.sampling_
rate)
    satellites.set_initial_readout(args.initial_timestamp, not args.
disable_timestamp_adjustment)
    earth = EarthCanvas(args.earth_file, satellites, args.display_
position,
                        args.display_size, device_location, helmet=helmet,
                        alert_distance=args.alert_distance)
    head = HeadCanvas(args.gif_file, args.gif_fps, args.gif_
position, args.gif_size)
    text_field2 = TextField2(args.text2_location, args.device_
location,
                             font_size=args.dev_font_size, font_type=args.
font_type)
    text_field = TextField(args.text_location, satellites=satellites,
                           font_size=args.sat_font_size, font_type=args.
font_type)
    mwl_display = ManWhoLaughsDisplay(head, earth, helmet,
text_field, text_field2)
    try:
        while True:
            mwl_display.update()
    except StopIteration:
        print('Stopped')
        mwl_display.cleanup()
    except Exception as e:
        print(f'Unexpected exception -> {e}')
        mwl_display.cleanup()

if __name__ == '__main__':
    main()
```

Visibility: ideas on the formation of self in the digital experience

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