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Article

Being Watched Watching Watchers Watch: Determining the Digitized Future While Profitably Modulating Preemption (at the Airport)

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Abstract

Gilles Deleuze once wrote in “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992) that in the future (our present) our societies would be controlled or “disciplined” using subtly unobtrusive and strategically applied forms of “modulation.” That is, the rigid physical enclosures of Foucault’s disciplinary society would inevitably yield to more flexible, immaterial, and imperceptible forms of modulation that continually respond and adapt to life’s unpredictability. In this paper I describe how the use of naked body scanners at today’s airport is a most suitable expression of this dematerialized form of discipline, seeming at the same moment to both threaten *and* protect privacy, to be both non-intrusive and invasive, to both prepare for and determine seemingly unknowable but inevitable futures.

The flying public, meanwhile, is caught in the confusing middle, not knowing what to believe. They find themselves trapped in an undefined surveillance grid that both threatens and protects their freedoms. Will the scanners see through clothing and catch underwear-bombs, or won’t they? Will security agents scan, save, and distribute their naked images or won’t they? The public is left with questions rather than answers. This whole (visual) apparatus which was designed to create clarity and transparency seems opaque.

I suggest, then, that the opacity both of the issues at stake as well as of the scanned images of our naked bodies, confounds our categories and challenges long taken for granted social conventions about, for example, habeas corpus, privacy, security, the present, the future, potentiality, etc. Appearances, it seems, are still deceiving – even if what’s being made to appear are high-resolution scans of our naked bodies.

*A community is infinitely more brutalized by the habitual employment of punishment,
than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime.*

Oscar Wilde

Gilles Deleuze once wrote in, “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992), that in the future (our present) societies would be controlled or “disciplined” using subtly unobtrusive and strategically applied forms of “modulation.” That is, what were once the rigid physical enclosures of Foucault’s disciplinary society would inevitably yield to more flexible, immaterial, and imperceptible forms of modulation that continually respond to, adapt to, and even predetermine life’s unpredictability. In today’s post-Deleuzean world, naked body scanners are a suitably ambiguous expression of this dematerialized form of discipline,

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seeming at the same moment to both threaten *and* protect privacy, to be both non-intrusive and outrageously invasive, to both preempt and determine unknowable but inevitable futures.

The flying public, then, is caught in the confusing middle of these paradoxes of preemption, not knowing what to believe or what to think. They find themselves trapped in an undefined surveillance grid that at once actively threatens and protects their freedoms. They are left wondering: Will the scanners see through clothing and catch underwear-bombs, or won't they? Will security agents scan, save, and distribute their naked images or won't they? Is having their naked picture taken a good thing, or does it cross the lines of decency and their expectations for privacy? Are the interests being served by these surveillance technologies their own or someone else's? The public is too often left with more questions than answers, more ambiguities and anxieties than understanding. In the case of naked body scanners and other technologies of surveilling the whole (visual) apparatus seems opaque. Indeed, the implementation of surveillance/security protocols are themselves modulated and constantly changing, often leaving scholars, policy makers, and commentators trailing behind in their efforts to describe and critique new ways today's disciplined subjects are being formed.

In light of these developments, I argue that the opacity both of the issues at stake as well as of the scanned images of our naked bodies confounds our categories and challenges long taken for granted social conventions about, for example, habeas corpus, privacy, security, the present, the future, potentiality, etc. I suggest, also, that this confounding of categories routinely contributes to a generalized *increase* in insecurity: airport environments become infused with anxiety; air passengers are made to prove their innocence by submitting to surveillance regimes that degrade and harass; citizens' rights are removed as security protocols are intensified, etc. This increase in insecurity, as I will describe, is seized upon by those demanding increases in security. Most troubling, perhaps, is that increases in insecurity become profit making opportunities at, literally, citizens' expense. Indeed, surveillance products like naked body scanners become solutions that get trotted out for problems that may or may not exist as profit-seeking security contractors learn to conceive of insecurities and unknown futures as opportunities for the creation of profitable, new markets. Appearances, it seems, are still deceiving – even if what's being made to appear are high-resolution scans of our naked bodies.

Preemptive exposure

November 24th, 2010, was declared “National Opt-Out Day” for anyone selected to undergo naked body scanning on their way through airport security in the United States. A protest website was created (<http://www.optoutday.com/>) and Twitter feeds were initiated and continue to be updated (<http://twitter.com/#!/nationaloptout>); at the same time, YouTube videos of scanners in action and “enhanced” pat-down procedures went viral. The day of protest was organized to confront ongoing processes of increasingly invasive security/surveillance “creep” at airports in the United States and around the world (Lyon 2006; Marx 2005; Salter 2007). What travelers were opting-out of was the opportunity to have their bodies zapped by either radiation-emitting “backscatter” X-ray machines or, alternatively, DNA-unzipping “millimetre-wave” scanners (Alexandrov et al. 2009). At the time the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine described naked body scanning as securitizing “stupidity” (Goldberg 2010). Passengers were also opting-out of having their naked image viewed by an unseen security-officer seated alone in a room with a computer monitor and an “exposure” of their nakedness, genitals, scars, and surgeries in full view.

“National Opt-Out Day” was prompted in part by the exposure given to naked body scanners by alarmist alternative online media outlets like Matt Drudge's *The Drudge Report* and Alex Jones' *Infowars.com*, both of which began aggressively linking to grainy home videos of Transport Security Officials (TSA) in the United States scanning and groping children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. These videos, having gone viral on *YouTube*, stoked burgeoning outrage at the security and surveillance practices that were read by the public as having gone one step too far. The emergence of online outrage, in turn, drew

the attention of the mainstream media, culminating in Washington officials having to defend or modify the latest airport security protocols (Parker 2010).

L-3 Millimetre-Wave Scanners (photo by author).

Civil liberties organizations also joined the fray, with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) urging the US Congress to prohibit this technology, stating that “[p]assengers expect privacy underneath their clothing and should not be required to display highly personal details of their bodies – such as evidence of mastectomies, colostomy appliances, penile implants, catheter tubes, and the size of their breasts or genitals – as a prerequisite to boarding a plane” (ACLU 2008). As Van Munster and others have pointed out, requiring civilians to pass through strip-searches (whether digitized or not) and groping procedures previously reserved for criminal suspects and convicts implies that “everybody is a suspect” (2004: 151). And as Aradau and Van Munster repeatedly point out, while profiling remains a necessary part of combating what gets defined as terrorism, the targets of profiling are “increasingly” becoming “arbitrary” and “blurred”; as they explain, today anyone can qualify as a potential terrorist: “Terrorists can be unemployed or employed, poor or not so poor, young or old, legal residents or citizens, illegal migrants or tourists. Uncertainty slowly extends profiling to the entirety of the population” (2007: 104). Since the uproar surrounding “National Opt-Out Day” scholars and theorists have responded to the naked body scanners by suggesting, for instance, that these allegedly noninvasive virtual strip searches represent “a troubling trend” that finds the state’s disciplinary powers being consolidated, as Magnet and Rodgers suggest, “through increasingly covert and concealed surveillance practices” (2011: 2).

But by opting out of the naked scanner option, travellers found themselves jumping from the frying pan into the fire. On August 27th, 2010 the TSA began implementing “enhanced pat down” procedures designed, according to online speculation, to be so invasive that they effectively function as punishment or discipline for those who choose to “opt out” of the scanners. While the TSA coyly avoids the issue, the internet is abuzz with reports that TSA officials use open-palmed groping of testicles, buttocks, and breasts on adults and children in their effort to create safety through officially sanctioned forms of what in any other circumstance would qualify as sexual assault. The *Atlantic Monthly*’s Jeffrey Goldberg recently reported on his experience of the enhanced pat-down as follows:

At [the airport], I told the officer who directed me to the back-scatter that I preferred a pat-down. ... When I made this request, a number of TSA officers, to my surprise, began laughing. I asked why. One of them ... said that the rules were changing shortly, and that I would soon understand why the back-scatter was preferable to the manual search. ... “[T]omorrow,” [the TSA officer giggled,] “we’re going to start searching your crotch area ... and you’re not going to like it.”

“What am I not going to like?” I asked.

“We have to search up your thighs and between your legs until we meet resistance,” he explained.

“Resistance?” I asked.

“Your testicles,” he explained. (2010)

A similar story is that of an American news reporter whose three-year-old daughter can be seen on YouTube kicking and screaming “Don’t touch me” as TSA officers squeeze and frisk her flailing arms and legs (Alberts 2010). When questioned about the practice of inappropriately touching small children James Marchand, TSA Regional Security Director, sounds shockingly inappropriate by describing how TSA officials trick the child into complying with the inappropriate touching by fooling them into thinking they’re playing a “game”: “You try to make it as best you can for that child to come through.... You ask the child to put their arms up in some way, and if you can come up with some kind of ‘game’ that you’re trying to play with the child then it makes it a lot easier” (YouTube 2010).

The sexual molestation implications of the enhanced pat-downs are also highlighted by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) who have issued a travel advisory declaring that they have “nothing to do with security” and are about “ritualizing the process of making Americans submit to complete degradation at the hands of authority figures, no matter what level of humiliation that process encompasses”; the advisory concludes by stating that if we allow the government to “get away with groping your children’s genitals there’s no limit to the abuse they will subsequently engage in” (2010). In response to the Opt-Out movement, the TSA went into damage control, with TSA Administrator John Pistole declaring: “On the eve of a major national holiday and less than one year after Al Qaida’s failed attack last Christmas Day, it is irresponsible for a group to suggest travelers opt out of the very screening that could prevent an attack” (Knox 2010). At least in the United States, opting-out remains an option – passengers in the UK have the choice either to get irradiated and digitally-nude or to miss their flight (Travis & Milmo 2010).

Creating appearances

Naked body scanners – what the United States’ Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) call “whole body imaging” or “advanced imaging technology” (TSA.gov) and what the online community has cheekily called “nude-o-scopes” – are, according to the TSA website, blog, and Twitter account, “safe for all passengers, including children, pregnant women, and individuals with medical implants” (TSA.gov). As Blogger Bob – an official TSA blogger – explained in April, 2008: “These images are friendly enough to post in a preschool. Heck,” he goes on “[they] could even make the cover of *Reader’s Digest* and not offend anybody” (TSA Blog 2008). The UK’s *Guardian* took quite a different view, reporting that naked body scanners break child pornography laws, or the Protection of Children Act of 1978, “under which it is illegal to create an indecent image or a ‘pseudo-image’ of a child” (Travis 2010).

In addition to the pornographic potential of naked body scanners, many argue that their surveillance abilities themselves are basically ineffective. Israeli security expert Rafi Sela, for example, suggests that naked body scanners are “useless” (Schmidt 2010). In Sela’s view, North Americans are content with high-tech “security theatre” (Schneier 2003) that effectively enhances the status quo because, as he sees things: “Americans and Canadians are nice people and they will do anything because they were told to do so and because they don’t know any different” (Kelly 2009). The ineffectiveness of the naked scanning machines was again confirmed when, on November 16th, 2010 German airports began reporting that their newly acquired naked body scanners couldn’t even see through folds and pleats in clothing (*The Local* 2010). Such allegations have been more recently supported by research that suggests that backscatter machines are close to useless when faced with, for example, large objects with tapered edges (which are rendered by the scanners as bodily contours), wires (which are too narrow to be picked up), or sharp objects placed on the side of the scanned body (which effectively disappear). Indeed, as researchers Kaufman and Carlson argue, even if X-ray exposure were to be “increased significantly, normal anatomy would make a dangerous amount of plastic explosive with tapered edges difficult if not impossible to detect” (2010: 73). And as I will discuss later on, the effectiveness of biometrically-driven surveillance technologies is further brought into question by the degree to which the potential for outsized financial profits are driving the implementation of contemporary or experimental surveillance technologies as much as, or in coordination with, government policy. As David Lyon explains: “Combined with the quest of governments, especially the United States, to find new means of amassing personal information, and technology companies urgently seeking new markets, the prospects are poor for carefully assessing the promise of biometrics to increase national security” (2008: 40).

The widespread use of naked body scanners was ushered in following the alleged attack on the United States by the underwear bomber on Christmas Day, 2009 (Shachtman 2009). As former Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff argued to the *Washington Post*, as he made the rounds of major television networks: “You’ve got to find some way of detecting things in parts of the body that aren’t easy to get at.... It’s either pat-downs or imaging” (Eggen et al. 2009). Of course, as already discussed, the scanners are unable to see under skin folds or into body cavities. Something else Chertoff failed to mention at the time was that one of the two firms who had been authorized to provide the TSA with naked body scanners – Rapiscan – was a client of his own security consulting firm – the Chertoff Group (Kindy 2010). Prior to the underwear bomber event Rapiscan was awarded an “Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity” contract by the TSA worth \$173 million. L-3, the other naked body scanner manufacturer – the seventh-largest defense contractor in the United States – was awarded a \$165 million contract four days after the failed Christmas Day event.

Canada’s response to the underwear bomber incident was to follow the lead of the United States and install millimetre-wave scanners. Canadian transport Minister John Baird announced on January 5, 2010 that the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) would install 44 millimetre-wave scanners in Canadian airports and Canadian Privacy Commissioner Jennifer Stoddart assured Canadians that appropriate safety and privacy measures had been taken (Stoddart 2010). The Canadian public’s reaction to the naked body scanners was comparatively muted and was even initially positive. Indeed, shortly after the news that widespread naked scanner implementation was forthcoming, Angus Reid did a poll of Canadians in January, 2010, just weeks after the underwear bomber incident. The pollsters asked Canadians: “From what you have seen, read or heard, do you support or oppose the use of these airport scanners to screen all passengers flying to and from Canada?” (Angus Reid 2010: 2). Overwhelmingly, Canadians were supportive, with 74% of Canadians being at least “moderately supportive” of being photographed naked.

Of course, the question posed by Angus Reid does not provide those polled with any information about radiation, image retention, cost, photographing children, effectiveness, and so on. Rather, Canadian respondents to this poll were likely basing their answers on the seemingly innocuous, low resolution, and

grainy images of naked bodies being circulated by the media – images provided by the TSA and the naked body scanner manufacturers themselves. So while having the right to vote on whether or not they think the naked scanners are a good idea created the *appearance* of democratic choice, the reality is that in both the United States and Canada the government's corporate-friendly *decision* to deploy these scanners had already occurred without public consultation.

But creating appearances are what the naked body scanners are all about. Appearances of security, appearances of “bold” and decisive action, appearances of risk, appearances of “for your own good-ness,” appearances of rights being protected. It is, however, the deceiving nature of these appearances that is most alarming, particularly the deceiving nature of the images being *made to appear* by the layers of security bent on revealing images and knowledges about us that we ourselves likely have never seen and that we, under any other circumstances, would never desire to be revealed. Alarming also is how the logics of preemption used to support the implementation of outrageously invasive surveillance regimes can be leveraged by politicians and corporations in pursuit of profit and as a means of manufacturing new markets for enabling capital expansion.

Preempting dissent by disavowing Deleuze

Naked body scanners and the security environments they express and produce can be understood as yet another permutation of the politics and strategies of preemption (Amoore and de Goede 2008; Anderson 2010; de Goede and Randalls 2009). As research in this area has revealed, preemptive strategies of governance as initiated by the state and the security apparatus that they support (and that supports them) paves the way for the implementation of new and unproven security imperatives. Additionally, however, the politics of preemption unwittingly relies on an ontological commitment to a *misreading* of what Deleuze would describe as “virtualities” (1994), or what can more practically be understood as the *potentialities* that condition and give rise to actual events (Massumi 2010, 2009, 2007, 2005a, 2005b). That is, without realizing it today's state/security apparatus operates according to what Deleuze would regard as an ontologically impossible logic of clairvoyance, a logic that requires citizens to trust that our politicians and security experts can see the future and that the future is knowable. Of course, the future they envision is a dangerous one.

By decreeing that it can know the unknowable, the state/security apparatus enacts a set of security protocols premised on the coercive power that comes from being able to mandate preemptive action in response to unknowable futures. Moreover, these protocols gain legitimacy based on particular ontological commitments about the nature of reality – for instance, the relationship of the present to potentiality and to the future. I want to point out too that these ontological commitments are in direct conflict with those of Deleuze whose ontological commitments can be – and were – used to expose the tactics of power and coercion deployed by state/security assemblages to “modulate” citizens and other “*dividuals*” (Deleuze 1992: 5). So while it may be true that the state/security apparatus isn't at all interested in the finer points of DeleuzoGuattarian philosophy, its unwitting reversal of Deleuzean ontological logic contributes to a popular image of the world that understands the future to be something that can be controlled, managed, identified, inevitable, and pre-determined. This ontological reversal contributes to the consolidation of state/security assemblage power structures whose legitimacy derives from creating narratives that unwittingly completely misread and disavow the emancipatory potential of the ontological commitment to virtuality as outlined by Deleuze (and Guattari) (1987).

Of course, as theorists such as Elmer and Opel (2006) have warned, the state/security apparatus' logic of preemption *should* be regarded with suspicion and must be regarded as a sort of technology in its own right, one designed to produce prescribed social, political, and market-driven ends. That is, rather than encouraging and enabling the emergence of novel futures – and creative responses to those futures – contemporary security logics premised upon initiating preemptive action in fact work to *disable* potentials

and variables by determining, in advance and by decree, what the future will become and how we must prepare for its inevitability (2006). As Aradau puts it, preparedness exercises premised on clairvoyant logics of preemption “do not create something new, they do not organize subjects with a view to radical change, but rehearse in a ritual play that which has already been set out as inevitable: the ‘next terrorist attack’” (2010: 4).

This attempt to determine the future by the state/security apparatus also works to stifle protest by leapfrogging it, by rendering controversies moot since the future has been foreclosed. Moreover, the inevitability of catastrophic futures operates retroactively on the present (but without actually existing) to necessitate that we commit our energies and efforts to preparing for them today. As Elmer and Opel explain, logics of preemption allow state and security actors to invoke “a predetermined inevitable future that requires military and police action”; moreover, this requirement renders dissenting opinion irrelevant and deviant since, after all, the future (and what is needed to prepare for it) is a foregone conclusion:

Through the preemptive lens the future becomes an inevitable series of events, elevating “fate” to an agent of historical evolution. Rational free will, as a motivating factor in social and political change, by comparison, is not only futile, it becomes potentially life threatening. Preemptive politics thus raises serious questions about the power of political leaders (as visionaries of publicly unforeseeable dangers) and political protest as an indefinite form of collusion or appeasement. (2006: 479–80)

For Deleuze (and Guattari), on the other hand, the future is much less knowable: it discloses what it can do after the fact. For them the future is an open, unknowable, and unactualized zone of pure potential that, in time, generates the conditions necessary for actualization. For Deleuze the virtual realm exists in a sort of feedback-loop-relationship with the actual: “the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged” (1994: 209). As Deleuze explains: “The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual” (1994: 209). So for Deleuze, the virtual is – like the actual – fully real but not knowable in advance. The virtual, then, can be understood as the engine of the actual (and vice versa) and the actual and virtual realms can be thought of as responding to one another in a problem/solution sort of way, such that the virtual realm responds to and creates the problems that define the actual (and vice versa). Deleuze explains that the virtual “possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved: it is the problem which orientates, conditions, and engenders solutions” but that these solutions do “not resemble the conditions of the problem” (1994: 212). For Deleuze (and Guattari – although I’m not quoting from their collaborative works here), then, it is unknowable virtual forces that generate or make possible both the problems and the solutions that compose our everyday lives.

Crucially, Deleuze and Guattari recognize that the actualizations that virtualities condition not only cannot be predicted in advance, but do not even resemble the virtualities that contribute to their emergence. Indeed, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s ontological commitments, to suggest that actualizations can be known in advance is the height of folly since actualizations (virtualization’s effects) can only be recognized as having been possible (as opposed to their having been potential) after they have occurred. In fact, to suggest otherwise would be dangerous. As Deleuze explains, there is a danger that the virtual “could be confused with the possible”:

The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a “realization.” By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself. (1994: 211)

My point, then, is that policies of preemption – policies that provide the ontological impetus for, amongst other things, the public's accepting and footing the bill for the implementation of naked body scanners – must be understood as part of an ontologically-based system of beliefs and actions that can be used to serve the purposes of those in position to declare what is being preempted. That is, policies and practices of preemption function to foreclose potential and determine becomings not by securing or predicting the future, but by securing and defining the present. So while The Critical Approaches to Security in Europe Collective (C.A.S.E.) admirably contests the idea that scholarly research on these matters can be “detached from political contingency and action,” and challenge the “illusion” that the “critique of texts does not produce [...] political effects or resistance” (2006: 445), it is equally important to contest – in my view – the notion that preemptive security practices can be separated from the machinations of sovereign sources of power (and, as I will be arguing: credit, finance, and neoliberalism) intent, not only, on securing the future from catastrophe, but on securing the present from pursuing or acting on any subversive or undesirable power-resisting potentials. As de Goede and Randalls argue, the idea that sovereigns (or anyone else) have access to accurate “imaginings” of “actionable futures” (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero, Van Munster 2008: 152) must be questioned since the preemptive actions that get imposed on populations work to “depoliticize and delegitimize debate”; this delegitimation of debate – and corresponding preempting of dissent – has, they argue, the potential to “bring the unimaginable into being” (2009: 859). For de Goede and Randalls, “[r]econceiving precautionary politics is thus vital if we are to engage ethically with the world” (2009: 859). In other words, the onus falls on scholars of surveillance and security to foreground the fallacies of preemptive logics designed to depoliticize the present.

When isn't the exception?

Surveillance and security policies premised on preemption require the imposition of security protocols designed to prevent catastrophic futures that seem probable given the less than stable circumstances of the present. That being the case, preventing the threats of tomorrow requires that today's and tomorrow's presents remain impossibly constant. Practices of preemption, then, can be seen as working as much to *maintain* the status quo as they do to prevent inevitable futures, since for the inevitable to remain inevitable over time the present must remain effectively constant (or at least the variables that currently condition the inevitability of imminent catastrophe must be made stable). Preemptive logics also compel us to spend our passing present attempting to solve or prevent unknown future which, in turn, short-circuits our ability to engage in transformative politics today (i.e. by focusing on preparing for future catastrophes we are unable to transform current conditions that may be contributing to the alleged inevitabilities of tomorrow). Aradau and Van Munster describe the situation as follows: “When allied with precautionary risk management, exceptionalism reinforces the status quo and the continuity of the present against struggles for transformation and social justice” (2009: 697). That being the case, the inevitability of catastrophes necessitates that extraordinary security practices that were initially described as “exceptions” (Agamben 1998) become, instead, everyday security practices that remain constant in order to secure the present from the “inevitable.”

The state/security apparatus' ability to transform exceptions into norms – or at least to transform “the norm” into a permanently modulated state of exception – begs the question: When *isn't* the exception? Or, at what point did the churning of states of exception become the norm? Furthermore, when does the normalization of exception-making become an outrage? And when does the normalization of outrage demand resistance? Moreover, at what state of the process do we (citizens, policy makers, academics, theorists) begin engaging in some preemptive prognosticating and connecting-of-the-dots of our own by asking questions like: What other interests are at play beyond security interests? Where are these processes of preemption and production of exceptions leading? Who benefits? What is the endgame? Is there an endgame? Do perpetual preemptions and exceptions contribute to our collective ability to pursue freedom or emancipatory projects? Do they contribute to our ability to promote diversity (Pugliese 2011)?

Justice? Equality? Democracy? Sustainability? Security? What surveillance technique will be cause for alarm? When does the preparation for catastrophe itself *become catastrophic*?

Futures markets and the selling of surveillance

One of the effects of on-again-off-again security extremes, states of exception, and politics of preemption is that they create innumerable new openings for new capital markets to leverage instability and infinitely imaginable potential catastrophes to their advantage. We saw this already with Chertoff's involvement with, and promotion of, Rapiscan. Indeed, financial actors – whether those actors are politicians with an eye on post-political career opportunities or defense contractors seeking to create and then exploit new markets – are in position to manipulate instability, catastrophe, exceptions, and preemptions to open up arbitrage opportunities where profits can be made on the spreads (even if the spreads' existence are functions of managed beliefs rather than facts). Terror and securitization, then, can be very good for business.

The state/security apparatus' commitment to preemptive action – to securing an unknown future – brings new financial markets into being. These markets create conditions ripe for financial actors to profit from the infinite potential to concoct “solutions” to the not-necessarily-actualizable risks of the future, not to mention the arbitrage opportunities generated by instability (risk-on, risk-off). By investing in insecurity, market actors in the security/surveillance sector secure investment. Perversely, in the case of state-funded security contracts, citizens both pay for the expansion of the surveillance state while also being constituted as its targets. What, then, is being secured if not marketing opportunities, profits, and the apparent need for ever more security and surveillance contracts going to the private sector? As Klauser, Ruegg, and November point out in Mark Salter's *Politics at the Airport* (2005):

the question at stake is not simply whether to choose between security or privacy. The question, in fact, comes from a different direction. It is deeply embedded in the process of global security politics recalibration, which reveals itself as having put in place a series of mechanisms that reorder security politics toward economic goals. (2005: 123)

The reordering of security politics as a market-making mechanism, as a pretext for the pursuit of economic goals leads Klauser, Ruegg, and November to argue that security practices can't only be evaluated or described as being designed for protection, preemption, and catastrophe prevention, but must be understood also as being the constitutive building blocks of new markets and outsized profits. This reality compels them to ask:

How are security strategies embedded within and co-produced through a complex network of local; national; international; and public and private actors, interests, and domains of expertise? How are these networks developing and circulating across diverse private and public spheres, resulting in the production of security models as expert “exemplars” for more general use, which are increasingly influencing local decisions? In which ways, and to what degree, are trends of commercialization subtly pushed forward beneath these developments, associated with specific discourses and measures of security politics? (2005: 123)

The extension of the security market – and the marketing of (in)security – necessitates that all civilians be re-cast as potential suspects and potential victims. In so doing, the entirety of the public is transformed into a target market for surveillance and security products. That the security market is being promoted as necessary, as good for us, and as protection from unrealized but inevitable futures to populations weaned on over a decade of post-9/11 terror, demonstrates the lack of compunction of security and defence contractors in their pursuit of profit and shareholder value. As Muller explains:

As this collection [Salter's *Politics at the Airport*] attests, the politics of/at the airport, though cloaked in the discourse of the "war on terror" and related risks, dangers and insecurities, tends to take shape along the lines of more stable and long-standing trends associated with market imperatives, capital flows, social sorting, and related aesthetics. (2008: 138)

The idea that the emergence of our current risk society, bent as it is on preemption for our own protection, can also be understood as an extension of neoliberalism's penchant for securitization and market-making is perhaps most strongly articulated by Melinda Cooper who, in 2004, made the case that the war on terror was in fact a profit-driven reallocation of capital away from the speculative profits made during the tech-boom of the 1990s to the emerging area of post-9/11 techno-surveillance. Cooper argues that:

in retrospect, it seems clear that the war on terror was as much a political response to the downturn of the new economy as to the terrorist attacks of September 11. Bush's answer to the technophilic optimism of the Clinton era was an equally megalomaniac plan for indefinite war, encompassing the whole globe within his strategic vision. As the economist Christian Marazzi (2002: 154) has put it, "the war against terrorism represents the continuation of the New Economy by other means. (2004: 2-3)¹

Viewed through a financial rather than a political or security lens the war on terror's imposition on civilian populations of never-ending technologies and techniques of surveillance that until recently (post-9/11) would have seemed outrageous, begins to take on a different – and more ominous – hue. Cooper pursues the economic logic of the war on terror by suggesting that perhaps what's at stake "in the neo-liberal model of risk" is precisely not "prediction as such (which implies some kind of ability to predetermine and therefore prevent or at least insure against the advent of the future)" but "pre-emption, where the point is precisely to continually generate the conditions of emergent catastrophe, in order to profit from it" (2004: 8). Assuming that to be the case it follows that the "strategic goal" of the politics of preemption and risk – from a disciplinary and neoliberal perspective – "is no longer to protect the present from the future, but rather to respond preemptively to the unpredictable risk, even if this means willing it to happen"; Cooper calls this model the "'venture capital' model of war," since "the greater the risks taken, the higher the profit to be made" (2004: 13). In other words, our potential to prepare preemptively for risks (and for some to profit from our preparedness) is only limited by our ability to imagine risks that are adequately convincing. According to Cooper's venture capital model of war, in a time of terror unscrupulous profit seekers take advantage of apparently exceptional circumstance in order to extract profit from markets that they create, that they sell to the public as desirable and necessary, and that they get the taxpayer to pay for. Terror, indefinite war, and imminent catastrophe are transformed into "an inexhaustible source of speculative profits"; as she explains: "When the threat of terrorism is established as a tradeable high-risk investment, we know that it has indeed become inevitable, however uncertain its time and place" (2004: 14).

¹ Cooper goes on to draw parallels between the tech-boom of Clinton and the war on terror of Bush as follows: "The difference between Clintonian neo-liberalism and Bush's neo-conservatism is not structural then: both economies mobilize speculative affect, attuning it to the advent of the unpredictable, alerting it to the imminence of unknown risk. What has changed is the affective valence of 'our' relation to the future-from euphoria to panic to fear, or rather alertness (a state of fear without foreseeable end). Where the celebrants of the new economic growth reassured investors that there was no end to innovation, holding hope aloft with a constant barrage of short-lived promises, the neo-conservatives want to convince us that there is no end to danger, that the war against terror can only be indefinite in time and scale. Shifting its bets in response to the rising wave of fear, venture capital has flowed out of the dot-coms and into start-up security companies, while information and biotech start-ups have refashioned themselves as defence contractors in the fight against cyber- and bio-terrorism. In the wake of September 11, permanent warfare has become the new driving force behind US economic growth, feeding off itself as it generates a seemingly inexhaustible demand for security services of all kinds" (2004: 3).

Looking at people looking at people looking

So how, then, do the naked body scanners instantiate a logic of preemption? How do airline passengers get inculcated into the naked body scanner-based perpetual state of exception? In the rest of the article I will deal more specifically with these questions by focusing on the securitized and coercive environments created once naked body scanners begin to be present, installed, and used in today's airports. My suggestion is that with the installation of naked body scanners another layer is added to the performative space of the security staging area. Moreover, my argument will be that naked body scanners compel passengers to *perform submissiveness* – through gestures, movement, self-exposure – in the face of authority, to perform non-resistance in the face of outrageous – and exceptional – demands (demands that find passengers having to reveal their genitals and bodily dismorphoses or that require that they allow themselves to be physically accosted in ways that would be unacceptable in any less “exceptional” circumstance). I suggest, then, that the scanner staging area creates a performance space of multiple forms of “securitization” (of both bodies and profits), a space that weaves together an interdependent and mutually reinforcing web of securitized visibility.

As I've been arguing, the naked body scanners (and accompanying “enhanced pat-downs”) are currently the apogee of a particular logic of securitization and airport “spectatorship” (Adey 2007) premised upon pre-emptive intervention (de Goede and Randall 2009), the assumed sovereignty of the visual sense (Amoore 2007), biometrically and algorithmically mediated data mining (Lyon 2009), remote sensing (Adey 2009), confessional complexes (Salter 2007), and absolute safety through security. This is a logic designed to delegitimize concepts like privacy, liberty, or dignity.

The naked body scanner phenomenon, then, is motivated by an effort not only to make risks visible – through an “aesthetics of transparency” (Hall 2009) – but by an effort to compel everyone – citizen and security agent alike – to submit *willingly* to a logic of absolute exposure, a logic enacted already through the use of clear, sealable bags into which passengers must place their flight-appropriate vials of liquids and gels. That is, complete visibility and transparency – demanded by the variegated components of the distributed panopticon (Crandall 2005) – is achieved by participants acting *in concert* towards a greater good – a total security system designed, at all costs, to abolish hints of threats before they become whispers (let alone reality). The airport and body scanner environment, as Barad would say, “intra-act” (Aradau 2010; Barad 2007) with dominant narratives about security and preemption to produce a necessary response to a potential, and seemingly inevitable, catastrophe. Indeed, the mere presence of the scanners during the security check endows them with legitimacy as they participate in actively reshaping the whole security environment – the anxieties of the travelers, the apparent expertise and power of the security staff, the apparent efficacy of the security measures, etc. As Aradau has suggested, material objects – such as body scanners – need to be reconceived as being “co-constitutive of reality rather than as a distinct form. [...] Things] are themselves agential and emerge in relation with material-discursive practices” (2010: 494); she goes on to observe with Barad that: “Subject and object, matter and meaning do not exist separately and do not come to inter-act, but are both formed and transformed through intra-action” (2010: 498). The security environment, then, intra-acts to construct and reinforce passenger subjectivities and systems of belief, requiring, for instance, that passengers submit to authority in the presence of new and imposing technology. This environment, in turn, renders the potential airline passengers collectively guilty until they are allowed to perform their innocence for the naked body scanners that reconstruct them as “bare life” (Agamben 1998; Aradau 2009).

Upon entering the screening area, airline passengers are in the process of attempting to pass through yet another layer of security in the ever-more-intrusive surveillant assemblage (Haggerty & Ericson 2000). The screening area – a sort of milder version of Agamben's “zone of indistinction” (Aradau & Van Munster 2009: 693) – is also a social space wherein the act of looking and being looked at, the act of looking at others looking, and the act of looking for lookers who are looking from concealed rooms

creates a space where passengers and TSA officials are together relying on what is *seen* to define what is *normal*. The screening area operationalizes the opportunity to generate interdependent and reciprocal relationships of visibility: we and the security agents must negotiate a continuous feedback loop of exposure and disclosure, we become both voyeur and exhibitionist. The experience is one of being watched, watching, watching watchers watch, and watching watchers watch watchers. We are compelled, at once to conceal and to expose, to become both visible and invisible in an effort to pass through the process with our dwindling rights and diminished dignity intact. So while TSA officials stare and scan, stare and scan in search of anomalies, we stare out both at those doing the staring and those being stared at in an attempt to discern – especially prior to the naked body scan – how to render ourselves invisible, unnoticed, imperceptible.

Magnet and Rodgers point out that our willingness to comply with the scanning regimen is, in part, consistent with the “gee whiz” sort of cultural associations we have with X-ray vision. In their view there is a “neato” factor and a sense of familiarity (and inevitability?) about our future-infused present being one where submission to see-through vision machines almost seems natural. As Magnet and Rodgers explain, naked body scanners reference “longstanding cultural and science fictional preoccupations with X-ray eyes”; this preoccupation with X-ray eyes requires, in turn, that security personnel obscure the:

pleasure taken in rendering [...] bodies visible as well as mystifying the process by which particular bodies are made hypervisible and others made invisible. This is a process that we have elsewhere termed “surveillant scopophilia”; that is, new technologies provide opportunities for pleasure in looking in ways connected to their surveillance. (2011: 3)

The feedback loops of looking, exposure, surveillance, concealing, imagery, and anxiety present within the scanning screening area operate together to create a sort of stable environment – one where all activities reciprocally support one another – that, if disturbed, reacts decisively to quell the disruption. Moreover, the move to maximize reciprocal visualizations in the airport screening process – particularly visualizations of the human body, of flesh itself – overturns the previous set of airport security protocols that focused discretely on metallic object sensors and baggage inspection. Today, in addition to our luggage being inspected as it passes through a concealed chamber full of X-rays, our bodies are on display as being on display when we step into the glassed-in space of the transparency machines – on display for both security personal, who gaze at our nakedness, and for other passengers, who witness us spread our legs and raise our arms above our head in a performative pose only recently reserved for those under arrest or surrendering to authority. Today’s security protocols have shifted from scanning the *metalscape* to performatively probing the *meatscape*.

The performative nature of looking and being looked at is not lost on TSA central planners who, in an online article entitled “Building Security Force Multipliers” describe how visually performing and staging security theater serves to create the impression that safety and security are being maintained by the TSA’s deployment of Visible Intermodal Protection and Response (VIPR) teams whose *raison d’être* is to be publicly visible by providing “random, announced, high-visibility surge[s] into a transit agency, in addition to enhancing agency resources during special events” (TSA n.d.). As the TSA explains: “More than 50 mass transit deployments have occurred since the program was initiated in December 2005. Regional planning and execution is increasing the frequency of deployments and enhancing local expertise, thereby increasing the terrorism deterrent effect” (TSA n.d.). As the TSA explains, VIPR teams use surprise and sudden visual appearances to “introduce an element of unpredictability to disrupt potential terrorist planning activities” (TSA 2007). Of course, what is similarly disrupted are the normal patterns of people going about their everyday lives since with the sudden appearance of VIPR teams they instantly find their day to day routines becoming extraordinary as the securitized states of exception infiltrate the public sphere and everyday schedules.

Scanners, storage, and security: He-said-she-said

As the naked scanners were being rolled out in the United States the TSA attempted to calm the public by stating that “whole body imaging” is “not equivalent to photography” and does “not present sufficient details that the image could be used for personal identification” (TSA 2008, 3). They insisted also that the machines could not save, store, transmit, or print the apparently innocuous images they generated. This, it turns out, does not seem to be the case. Indeed, according to the procurement specifications for naked body scanners they have been designed from the beginning with both of these very capabilities built in. Since the TSA’s early statements – statements that attempted to make these visioning machines appear unproblematically benign – they have changed their story, admitting that the ability to save and send images exists for test purposes only and is disabled once sent to customers. This, of course, was also revealed – in one well known instance – to be false when 35,000 images were saved in a machine at a Florida courthouse (these images were shown to the public on November 16th by the website *Gizmodo*, who requested the images using the Freedom of Information Act) (*Gizmodo* 2010). Indeed, in the procurement specifications for “whole body imaging devices for checkpoint operations” the U.S. Department of Homeland Security itself *requires* that, in “test mode,” naked scanning machines be capable of “exporting image data in real time” and of providing a mechanism for “high-speed transfer of image data” over computer networks (TSA 2008a: 5). Allegedly, “test mode” is deactivated when the machines are used on the public.

Privacy protection and making illusions visible

The deceiving appearances systematically produced by these machines and their procurers are, perhaps, secondary to these machine’s ability to transform inconvenient things like civil rights and personal privacy protection into illusions. Indeed, the Fourth Amendment in the American Constitution reads like a quaint ideal in our era of voyeuristic violation; it states that the right of American citizens “to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated”; similarly, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that Canadian citizens have the right “to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure” and must not be “arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.”

While the American “border search exception” does exempt the search of travellers and their possessions from many Fourth Amendment criteria, border security officers are only permitted to conduct searches of people’s bodies – strip and cavity searches and involuntary X-ray scans, for example – if there is reasonable suspicion that the traveller is concealing restricted items – contraband. That is, body searches of any sort at the border must still abide by the “reasonableness requirements” of the Fourth Amendment, requirements that balance the searched individual’s privacy and dignity interests against the government’s search interests.

In light of naked body scanners and enhanced pat-down procedures transforming privacy rights into illusions, a number of groups, such as the “Electronic Privacy Information Center,” have stated that the routine use of naked body scanners at airports violates the Fourth Amendment, the Privacy Act, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and the Video Voyeurism Prevention Act (Meserve and Ahlers 2010). Freedom, as the ACLU reminds us on their homepage, isn’t able to protect itself. These days, however, freedom appears to be the proverbial frog in a pot of water, a pot which the security/surveillant assemblage is bringing slowly to a boil so the frog doesn’t get wise and jump out of the pot while it can. In other words, while people assume, or are told, their submission to authority contributes to their own security, public safety, and best interests, they too easily forget that the road to a surveillance police state is paved with minute acts of complicity, and obedient, if delusional, good intentions. As history has shown time and again, civilians become “slave-ilians,” and democracies become police states when rights and freedoms are slowly chipped away in the name of a common good or a security concern. One element is

introduced at a time, allowed to become the “new normal,” before the experts demand that further intrusions, restrictions, and punishments be added to the mix.

Looking is not touching and participating in full dis-clothes-sure

As alluded to earlier, the naked body scanner regime is grounded and enabled by a belief in the sovereign power of the visual, a belief in the power, accuracy, and truth-telling ability of visuality and visualization itself (Bal 2003; Mitchell 1994). The vigilant visuality (Amoore 2007) of this scopic regime is paradoxically sold to the public as both all-seeing and privacy-enhancing. This achievement is met, in part, by the belief that looking is the opposite of touching and, especially, that remote looking can at once enhance the security of the public and protect the privacy of the individual. As the TSA explains, Whole Body Imaging (WBI) “creates an image of the full body, showing the surface of the skin and revealing objects that are on the body, not in the body”; the revealing nature of this invasion of privacy, they argue, is mitigated by the remoteness of the voyeur who, “isolated” in an unseen chamber, is not able to interact directly with the individual (TSA 2008b: 2). The TSA goes on: “remote viewing and no image retention are strong privacy protections that permit security benefits to be achieved” before adding that the TSA will update this directive “as needed if there is a decision to utilize one or both of these WBI technologies beyond pilot operations in several airports” (TSA 2008b: 9).

The assumption here is that having our naked bodies irradiated, scanned, photographed, digitally enhanced, and looked at remotely by an unseen security operative is not only more effective, but less invasive, than face-to-face and body-to-body contact with an actual human: “By using passenger imaging technology, TSA expects to be able to [inspect the individual] quickly, and without physical contact” (TSA 2008b: 3). This line of reasoning is further bolstered by TSA claims that faces and genitals will be blurred using digital algorithms to further enhance passenger privacy (whether or not this is the case remains unclear in practice). In the final instance, of course, the public’s ability to know what is known about them is itself “blurred,” perpetuating the ambiguity surrounding these issues, the anxiety they experience, and the sovereign authority of those doing the surveilling and securing.

While it is true that some may find the remoteness of the TSA’s voyeurism (relatively) comforting, the implications of acquiescing to an unseen and remote surveillance and scanning regime are profound. Indeed, submitting to an invisible and all-seeing security system is, effectively, to facilitate progress toward an ever more invasive and pervasive surveillance state. Towards a “new normal” perpetual state of exception where total exposure and total submission to the security and governing apparatus is the only way to satiate the state/security assemblage’s desire for omniscopic power. That is, by capitulating to the argument that unseen, remote surveillance technologies are privacy *enhancing* we allow ourselves to go along with what this scopic regime demanded all along – that we *willingly* expose ourselves, that we *willingly* raise our arms in order to submit to a regime of power whose desires are most comprehensively achieved by allowing *us* to grant *it* permission to pursue – or achieve – totalizing control.

Indeed, perhaps those who are subject to the invisible gaze of security find themselves clamouring to expose themselves in order to remain invisible, in order to reveal that they are not a threat, that they are not a risk, that they are not an anomaly, that they are not worthy of attention or further inspection. Complete exposure, then, becomes the only way to reveal innocence. Of course, the whole naked scanner surveillance assemblage seduces us into believing that we can pass below the surveillance radar by allegedly anonymizing us, digitally altering us, transforming our bodies into representational bits and bytes. But regardless of whether digitally altering our identities anonymizes us or merely digitizes our identities, the surveillance event comes only *after* we *choose* to expose ourselves, after we’ve acquiesced to power’s conditions. So as the process operates according to its own logic our ability to reveal our anonymity and transparency seems to become a way for us to protect ourselves from the risks posed by the security system itself. We expose ourselves – participating in full dis-clothes-sure – not to demonstrate

that we pose no risk to the flying public, but to avoid the risk posed by the forces doing the scanning, groping, frisking, and interrogating – the forces allegedly employed to keep us safe. We are complicit, then, in the production of our own invisibility, in our becoming digitally dematerialized, and in facilitating power's desire for mastery by allowing it to carve us up and expose us to digital probes. As Amoore and Hall explain, the deconstruction and digitization of our physical, emotional, and affective selves is par for the course for regimes intent on effectively actualizing the imposition of power and subjugation, they write:

the process of rendering visible and capturing that visibility is never wholly separate from the desire to master, or humiliate, or make vulnerable. [Scanning naked bodies], then, is a form of technological vivisection, a digitised dismembering, through which bodies are “somatically opened” and subjects erased simultaneously; the person is reduced to a transparency, like baggage, evacuated of vitality and materiality. Put simply, dissections have always ambivalently combined seduction with revulsion, violence with the promise of safety; and these aporia continue to haunt contemporary digitised dissections. (2009: 452)

Surveilling the (guilty) future

What, then, does the future hold for these processes of digitized dissection? According to a recent conversation I had with a security agent at Schiphol, it's only a matter of time before the well-worn metal detectors at airport security gates are removed, leaving naked body scanners as the only option for overwhelmingly compliant airline passengers. It seems, then, that unless travellers and citizens refuse these security measures, one thing the body scanners will have revealed will be the existence of millions of docile, malleable, and submissive “subjects”; they will have revealed the successful completion of an experiment in human behaviour; they will have provided an answer to the question: “Will the vast majority of people willingly line up to be digitally stripped in front of government security officers?” The answer, worryingly, will be an unequivocal “Yes.”

Of course, the logic at work through these behavioural experiments will not be finished; full transparency, after all, has yet to be achieved. Indeed, what we could term “Operation Transparency” is already moving beyond our material bodies to the immaterial world of our thoughts, affects, ideas, intentions, and finally our affects of affects – our feelings about our feelings, our thoughts about our thoughts.

As mobility theorist Peter Adey explains:

the TSA has recently launched its working project ‘Hostile Intent’, [recently renamed “FAST” – [Future Attribute Screening Technology](#)] the current zenith of behavioural monitoring and profiling, under the remit and development of the Science and Technology Directorate, whose ultimate aim is “to develop a non-invasive, remote, culturally independent, automated intent and deception detection system” (King 2007: 1). The TSA's calls for manufacturer, industry, and academic solutions suggests a new reach of behaviour detection observation, sometimes referred to as suspicious behaviour detection. (2009: 282)

Our bodies' capacity to reveal intent – the future! – complements the state/security apparatus' desire to pursue security logics bent on pre-emption. Having revealed our bodies, our bodies will now be called upon to reveal our thoughts about the future. Adey points to Frank and Ekman who describe the body as being viewed as “a kind of vessel over which the owner occasionally relinquishes control of the contents, disclosed through nonverbal behaviours such as facial expression” (Frank and Ekman 1997).

According to this emergent form of pre-emptive securitization, remote sensing equipment and algorithmic calculation will be trained on somatic cues and affective dispositions in order to scan – in real time – things like: pulse rate, temperature, anxiety, restlessness, and even brain activity. These technologies will inevitably be sold to the public merely as non-invasive extensions of remote, privacy-enhancing surveillance systems that, reassuringly, won't even have human operators on the other end. Once these mind- and body-reading scanning systems are up and running their very automation will ensure that our guilt and penchant for confession will have been projected into the future, secured for use by the authorities of tomorrow. Indeed, the focus on guilt and “bad conscience” will only have been intensified in so far as these somatically-focused machines will be trained directly on our guilty thoughts (and their somatic expression).

Gilles Deleuze once wrote in, “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992), that in the future (our present) our societies would be controlled or “disciplined” using subtly unobtrusive and strategically applied forms of “modulation.” Foucault's disciplinary society, Deleuze predicted, would yield to more flexible, immaterial, and imperceptible forms of modulation that continually respond and adapt to life's unpredictability. While full-body scanners are a most suitable expression of this dematerialized form of disciplining, seeming at the same moment both to threaten *and* protect privacy, to be both non-intrusive and invasive, they do not, in fact, modulate “life's unpredictability”; rather, present and future surveillance assemblages depend far more on life's *predictability*, on people's penchant to acquiesce to power's demands and genuflect to those who claim authority. Deleuze's “society of control,” then, does not adjust itself – modulate itself – after the fact – modulation is not done in response to the past; rather, Deleuze's “society of control” modulates the future in the present in order to preempt dissent by determining the future's direction. Surveillance machine's of the future will not so much be called upon to modulate complexity but, I would like to suggest, will themselves be technologically complex in order to attend to life's simplicity, to the predictable ways life affects and is affected, to the minimal inputs needed for life to be modulated and directed. Regardless, power's desire for absolute visibility and total transparency will continue to be limitless, and the propensity for unscrupulous individuals to go to any lengths to “secure” profit will go on in perpetuity. Having surveilled the present and emergent landscape of visualization, appearances, illusion, and exposure it doesn't seem a stretch to conclude, in light of the transparent trajectory of today's technologies of preemption, that we can see the future after all.

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