

# A systematic review on Internet technology and individual politics

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**Abstract.** The discussion of disciplinary power is central to Foucault's theory of power, and he presents a multifaceted perspective and a unique approach to this disciplinary power as distinct from traditional power, providing an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of its application and its utility in society at the time and in the past, as well as a preliminary outlook on its fundamental continuation. In the Internet age, the effectiveness of discipline has not diminished at all, and the use of Internet technology has enabled the full penetration of society and the deep discipline of individuals, allowing for the unprecedented development of individual politics in order to promote social development and progress in the new era. Discipline is achieved through internet technology, which operates on the model of panopticons, and provides the basis for the regulation and manipulation of individuals in society. In the Internet era, individuals no longer have the single attribute of being domesticated by power, but have the dual attribute of being the subject of discipline and the object of discipline. The decentralized nature of the Internet has unleashed more power for individuals in this new era, prompting the extension and development of the original disciplinary power, while giving rise to new forms of discipline in which individuals discipline each other, which has greatly contributed to the development of disciplinary power in contemporary society. At the same time, the Internet has given rise to a plurality of ideologies and has used a range of technologies to create and guide the dominant ideology; it has used social media platforms and other forms to delegate more power to individuals, while at the same time promoting a new type of workforce that brings all individuals at the social level into the workforce and makes the most of it at a lower cost in order to promote the progress and development of modern society as a whole.

**Keywords:** Discipline; disciplinary power; Internet technology; Individual politics; social development.

## 1. Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, Internet information technology began to be used in various fields. With the progress and development of society, the Internet has become one of the most influential technological products for individuals in modern society, and its penetration and manipulation of individuals has reached an unprecedented intensity. In his study of modes of power, Foucault suggests that, unlike traditional sovereign rule, the power of micro-precise control over the individual body is an important way for disciplined societies to achieve political ends. In Foucault's articulation of disciplinary power, it is no longer seen as a negative and oppressive force, but as a positive body politic technique, a social function, a political strategy [1]. The discussion of discipline has shifted from its origins as a penal system to its application to a wide range of social institutions, and the utility of discipline is expanding. In the mid to late 18th century, discipline spread and was used in hospitals, the military and other fixed places where large numbers of individuals were aggregated, and became the main technical means of reshaping and reinforcing the body politic. Changes in political strategy were always closely linked to the times in which they took place, and the generalization of discipline and its powerful development were closely linked to the social values it brought. Through discipline, individuals are disciplined and manipulated to become efficient and productive for all times, making them effective "screws" in the social production mechanism. The author argues that the surveillance function of Internet technology, which operates on the model of panopticons, is the basis for individual manipulation, and that this function is also the common result of the socialization of Internet technology and its application to the political sphere. The use of

Internet technology has led to a new peak of individual politics, and with it a series of positive and negative social utilities. Based on Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, this article provides an in-depth discussion and analysis of the body politic in modern society under the penetration of Internet technology.

## **2. Research methods**

The author's reading and in-depth analysis of books related to Foucault's theory of discipline to comprehend the core of the theory. On the basis of observing social phenomena and analyzing real societies, the relevant theories are understood. At the same time, by reading a large number of books on topics such as Internet technology and political economy, Internet technology and its socialization, and disciplinary power, the author explores the deeper connotations and literature on disciplinary theory and Internet politics, understands the normative meaning of the relevant content, and forms a systematic and comprehensive perception of the research topic to avoid one-sided views.

## **3. Internet technology and individual politics in a new era**

### **3.1 A model of the Internet realization of surveillance of individuals - panoramic open-viewism**

Internet technology, as an inevitable product of social development at a given time, was not born with a surveillance function. The function of surveillance of individuals is a joint result of the socialization of Internet technology and its application in the political sphere, and panopticons provides a precise operational model for the surveillance, penetration and domestication of individuals by Internet technology. Foucault's study of panopticons stems from Jeremy Bentham's panoramic open-view prisons, where the horizontal invisibility of the building and the vertical total transparency of the building make the inmates believe they are under surveillance at all times and thus remain in a constant state of obedience. Thus, Foucault argues that power has control over the individual not through surveillance itself, but the possibility of surveillance. "The fictitious and not very real relation of assuming that one is being watched automatically produces a real power of subjugation"[2]. And the aim of panopticons goes far beyond surveillance; It is to shape and manipulate the individual through surveillance, to maximise the utility of the body as an atom for socio-economic development. The advent of the internet has enabled power to operate at its best in society at a much lower cost. This hidden, invisible and subtle power is attached to internet technology, which enables full surveillance of individuals as the technology develops and spreads.

In terms of technology, internet monitoring mainly uses network listening and communication analysis technology to keep track of individuals in real time, including all aspects of their lives, emotions, studies and work, covering almost all aspects of their lives without missing a beat. And with the help of internet technology, panoramic open-viewism has become more efficient and imperceptible to the regulation and domination of the individual body than ever before. It is no longer about watching and being watched in a fixed place, but enables continuous and permanent surveillance at a social level, so that individualized strategies can be developed to operate on individuals and maximise their effectiveness. "The panoramic model has not disappeared or lost any of its identity and is destined to spread throughout society; its mission is to become a universal function" [3]. The centre of power is more hidden, yet more powerful, than in any previous era. Individuals, monitored and disciplined by power, become a new type of workforce for socio-economic development and are constantly being built into efficient production machines.

### **3.2 Internet technology and individual politics**

#### **3.2.1 The duality of individual identity**

The "decentralized" nature of Internet technology allows the individual to no longer have the single role of the ruled in a one-way hierarchy of ruling power, but to have the dual role of both the exerciser

and the exercised, meaning that the individual is both the subject and the object of discipline in the dissemination of disciplinary power in the new society. The flat governance model of the Internet era highlights the interaction and collaboration of different actors, focusing on mutual coordination between different subjects, cooperation based on coordination and trust mechanisms, and maintaining their continuous interaction [4]. With the advent of the Internet, the privileged centre has been deconstructed and every ordinary individual has an equal status of information exchange thanks to the specific technology of the Internet. Discipline still exists, and with the deconstruction of traditional centre of power, disciplinary powers in society are developing and growing. The subject of regulation in the Internet society has shifted from the original single ruling elite group to a shared responsibility between the general public and the elite ruling group. Individuals express their political opinions and various distinctive voices through the democratized and liberalized online media, and through the dissemination of the Internet and the aggregation of technological processors, new disciplines are formed that originate from the individual and are finely processed, which in turn act on the individual and impose new constraints on him or her. In this process, individuals both exercise the power to regulate others and are influenced by the words and actions of others. The duality of individual identity makes the subject of power in the 'central watchtower' less fixed and more of an ordinary individual in any society [5].

### **3.2.2 Internet technology facilitates the spread of disciplinary powers**

Before internet technology was widely used in all aspects of society, a society under disciplinary power was already taking shape. The surveillance capabilities, decentralization and powerful dissemination of Internet technology have allowed disciplinary power to spread throughout modern society at an unprecedentedly rapid rate, making it the most dominant type of power. Foucault argues that the fruit of discipline for individual discipline lies in its use of three instruments: hierarchical surveillance, normative adjudication and inspection. Exhaustive standardized settings, strict mutual supervision, a pyramidal hierarchical arrangement, nit-picking and repeated checks come together to create perfect power.[6]. In the 18th century, established institutions such as the army, schools and hospitals, which brought together large numbers of individuals, began to use the effectiveness of disciplinary powers to monitor and control individuals. The perfect barracks design, where soldiers can be seen at a glance, the classroom design, where teachers can monitor the behaviour of their students, and the ward design, where doctors can observe the condition of their patients at all times, enable the individual soldier, student and patient to be monitored at all times, and their bodies to be trained, reshaped and stimulated through a scientific training system, a compact assessment system and repeated checks. Until the advent of Internet technology, discipline was replicable by virtue of the replicability of its model in all fixed locations, while expanding horizontally by linking each individual at the centre. For example, schools began to monitor and assess not only their students, but also their parents and families. However, the development of disciplinary power at this stage was still limited by the boundaries of its space, the subject of power was mostly fixed and the proportion of disciplinary power to sovereign power was indistinguishable.

At the end of the 20th century, Internet information technology, a hybrid derived from military strategy, scientific research, and technological industries, was applied on a larger scale to various fields, with various industries such as merchandising, higher education, and transportation being influenced by the Internet [7]. And the powerful communication capabilities of Internet technology have rapidly achieved coverage of the whole of society. The original disciplinary powers are still in play, but with the advent of the Internet, the original spatial limitations are gradually being breached and discipline is no longer confined to a specific place, but combined with the panoramic surveillance of the Internet to achieve borderless and unhindered dissemination. The "decentralized" nature of Internet technology has allowed each individual to become the subject of surveillance, rather than a passive recipient of surveillance, and the original fixed subject has gradually been replaced by multiple, decentralized subjects.

#### **4. Internet technologies and changing ideologies**

The Internet's inclusiveness has given rise to a plurality of ideologies at the societal level, and through the rapid diffusion and wide reach of technology, it has enabled the rapid coalescence and development of different ideologies (including those originally on the margins), thus influencing the social structure and achieving an impact on society through the power of individual coalescence. The emergence of the internet has given individuals a basic and equal opportunity to have their voices heard, giving different individuals the right to speak out and to participate in political governance through the internet. The voices of previously marginalized groups are rapidly coalescing and developing in the Internet context, forming a new social ideology that is no longer a social force to be ignored in the past. As in recent years, with the rapid development of feminism and gender equality ideologies through the Internet, there is a new awareness of women's power in society, laying the groundwork for the awakening and development of women's self-awareness. While new ideologies are developing, existing ideologies are still thriving and the Internet provides a wide arena for the development of different ideologies, combining with the penetration of technology at a societal level to change and reshape the social fabric.

The Internet not only nurtures a plurality of ideologies, but also integrates and disseminates the mainstream ideology of the new era through its own control function, in order to meet the development needs of the new society. In other words, although the Internet is decentralized and pluralistic in nature, it can still be manipulated to a certain extent because of its essential properties as a technology. The Internet seems to have given people unprecedented "freedom" in the dissemination of information, but this is in fact an illusion created by the Internet's algorithms [8]. The Internet has the function of integrating and filtering, emphasizing and weakening ideologies, making specific ideologies the dominant ideology. Take contemporary consumerism, a hot topic at this stage of existence, as an example. Through its deep penetration within individuals and its wide audience, the internet has used exaggerated media propaganda, herd mentality, pervasive marketing, personalized capturing and pushing to achieve guidance on individual consumption attitudes, at one point making various types of lending software commonplace to contemporary youth groups, leading them to overspend and developing a mainstream concept of consumption aimed at showing off and enjoyment. Based on the collection and analysis of consumer spending data, the home can carve out a picture of the human subject consisting of search and online purchases, which merchants use to achieve management and control of consumer buying behaviour [9]. Consumers appear to be freer, but they are not free to choose their own goods. The transformation of social ideology in the context of the Internet is evolving rapidly, and technology is guiding mainstream ideology more effectively, more subtly and more deeply than ever before.

#### **5. Highly developed disciplinary powers and a new type of workforce**

The rapid development of disciplinary power through Internet technology in contemporary society has seen its regulation of individuals evolve from external and institutional regulation to permeable regulation, self-regulation and self-management in the context of the Internet, making use of individuals at a lower cost and higher efficiency, making them the most appropriate new workforce for the development of modern society. In his book, Foucault mentions that the guidance, training and enslavement of criminals during the slave period, and not just mere execution or the use of torture on the body, was intended to make use of the positive utility of the individual's body by manipulating it into a labour force to be applied to social production. As the German sociologists Rusche and Kirchheimer have argued in *Punishment and Social Structure*, the system of punishment should be linked to the corresponding system of production. The development of discipline has also long since ceased to be confined to discussions of control of the body or soul in the field of criminal law, but has seeped into all aspects of society, affecting human society in a deathless manner. In many cases, people fill in information voluntarily; they are both sources and recorders of information [10]. In the context of the Internet, individuals voluntarily participate in the discipline and supervision of

themselves, and consciously achieve self-management and self-cultivation. The function of the Internet is to extend the "invisible hand" of discipline to all parts of society through its own technology, and to tighten, sort and manipulate individuals into a new type of workforce that is always sitting at the front line of the assembly line, by means of the thin, imperceptible threads of mainstream ideology and mutual discipline between individuals.

Unlike the previous feudal period, the period of slavery, and the industrial period of mass machine production, the demands of the Internet age on labour are no longer concentrated in specific places at specific times, but rather the forms of labour are broken down into small, subtle pieces, scattered throughout life, allowing people to work without choice and without spontaneity. It is a series of connected changes, in the form of labour, in the place where it is done, in the time when it is done, in the people who work it, and so on. Cyberworkers are not only professionals working in communications and information technology, but also every ordinary person, you and I. In the era of digital capitalism, online surveillance is not only about "captivity" (not losing customers) and control, but also about transforming them into "digital laborers" who continuously provide digital labour for the accumulation and appreciation of digital capital [11]. This transformation is not only a transformation of the information technology sector, but also means that the Internet, through the individual regulation of various means, makes it possible to produce content voluntarily and democratically, depriving the individual of the products of his or her labour unconditionally and incorporating all individuals at the social level into the new workforce for economic or political development as a whole.

## 6. Conclusions

The discussion of disciplinary power in modern society has always been closely linked to Internet technology, which is the vehicle for its full diffusion and penetration in society, and in the process derives and develops the political and social functions of Internet technology itself. Even in the Internet society, the proliferation and development of disciplinary power is still based on the use of Internet technology to discipline and manipulate individuals in order to achieve the ultimate goal of political and social development. Based on Foucault's theory of power, this article argues that the development of disciplinary power and the discipline of individuals is an important means of fulfilling the political and economic functions of individuals in modern society, and that internet technology plays an important role in this. The author finds that the design of the circular prison building, which Foucault mentions in his article about the detention of criminals, is still a physical model for the surveillance of individuals in the Internet era. This building not only enables the surveillance of individuals by the supervisor in the centre of power in a fixed place, but can also be applied to the Internet to achieve a comprehensive surveillance without borders and barriers covering the whole society. The difference is that the supervisee's powers are slightly expanded, with the power to monitor and discipline others in specific areas. Secondly, with the help of Internet technology, individuals in society have more decentralized power to speak, to be informed, to have a voice, etc. The decentralization of Internet technology has also allowed individuals to develop from being a single recipient of disciplinary power to being both the disciplinarian and the disciplined. But this does not mean that individuals have a voice in the control of their own destiny and social development. As Curran says, technology does not create entirely new social changes; it is subservient to the logic of history [12]. Internet technologies have deconstructed the traditional centre of privilege and reduced the sovereign power concentrated in specific elite groups, allowing for an unprecedented development of disciplinary power in this context. But the nature of the implementation of power has still not changed much, and the centre of technology remains in the hands of particular groups. As discussed above, Internet technology has given rise to a plurality of ideologies, but it also processes and guides mainstream ideology in a more subtle and subdued way, using everyday penetration to effect change in individual minds. Another direct utility of the disciplinary power acting on individuals through internet technology is to change the form of labour and prompt the development

of a new type of workforce. Expanding the scope of the labour force to include individuals at the social level, making them work voluntarily and permanently, and plundering the fruits of their labour at minimal cost, provides a constant source of motivation for social development. A systematic review of Internet technology and individual politics based on power theory provides a new way of thinking about the study of the socialization of Internet technology and the study of political utility. This article takes a neutral and objective perspective on the utility of disciplinary power for individuals through the evolution of the Internet, with a view to informing the proper application of technology and self-power by individuals and the rational development of power in the Internet era.

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