Discipline and Control and Covid-19

by Charles Bowen

Abstract

This article considers how the Covid-19 pandemic has problematised Deleuze's analysis of 'control' described in his "Postscript on the Societies of Control". I argue that, against Deleuze's claim that technologies of control have superseded the disciplinary technologies described by Foucault, in fact the pandemic shows us that disciplinary technologies are alive and well and existing alongside technologies of control. Through an analysis of the notion of 'machine' in Deleuze's work, I show that the arguments of the "Postscript" are problematic on a theoretical level. Instead, I claim that an alternative theory of the discipline-control relation, which Deleuze lays out in "What is a *Dispositif*?", is better able to account for the coexistence of discipline and control in the world today. I warn that we must be critical of both Deleuze's theory and Deleuze's rhetoric when he analyses contemporary society, but also that his thought remains significantly valuable as long as we are careful in how we read him.

1. Introduction

It is summer of the year 2021, and I am reading Deleuze. The Covid-19 virus has been in the world for a year and a half now and, although restrictions are starting to be lifted, there is still not much else to do. I go to make a note, but am distracted by a noise: my phone, never more than a few feet away, has lit up (of its own accord) and is trying to tell me something. "NHS COVID-19 App. You need to self-isolate immediately. You have been in close contact with someone who has coronavirus". That is all. From this moment on, I am obliged – legally, and also socially – to stay within the bounds of my two-bedroom flat for the next ten days, unless government guidelines change, as they often do. But what has happened here? The NHS app does not know who *I* am – it knows only that a Bluetooth signal from my phone has come into contact with a Bluetooth signal from another phone, and that this second signal carries the message 'Covid-positive' somewhere in its code. The notification – or 'ping' – which the app relays to my phone is nothing to do with me as a person, as an individual who lives in a two-bedroom flat and reads Deleuze, but it is nonetheless I who must avoid social contact, arrange home grocery deliveries, do lateral-flow diagnostic tests, and generally take care of myself and my relations with others. I turn to my reading, in case it can help, but realise it cannot: Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control", written towards the end of his life as a

direct and polemical engagement with contemporary society, tells me only that everything is code. I am wrong to wonder about the 'self' who is, for the next ten days, isolating, because contemporary technologies of power have found a new object: information, the circulation of a-subjective 1s and 0s. But can this be right? The "Postscript" is hugely influential, and it is hard to argue with some of its points. Nonetheless, something is off. A reduction of the 'self' of isolation to simple code – to nothing more than the ten-day countdown the app shows – is exciting, but ultimately partial, because the ping I have received produces subjective effects in 'me' that are more than just the sum of my code. Can we still use Deleuze's thought to account for these effects, or must we say that Deleuze has gone too far, and that he has left the subjective world behind altogether? In this paper I will argue for the former position, but with the proviso that doing so means, often, flatly refusing to take Deleuze at his own word.

2. Discipline and Control

Let us first consider what the "Postscript" says. The thrust of it is simple, even if this simplicity comes – due to the brevity of the piece – at the expense of some precision. Deleuze's target is, more or less directly, Foucault's theory of 'discipline' as a technology of power, as described in *Discipline and Punish*. In Foucault's analysis, following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Reforms there was – in France at least – a generalised shift from 'sovereign' power to 'disciplinary' power, which coincided with the emergence of capitalism and the industrial revolution. Sovereign power was the power of the *Ancien Régime*, under which power was localised in the figure of the "all-powerful sovereign" – the monarch or emperor – who wielded this power as an instrument against (most often) his subjects, from whom he was separated by a divinely ordained "dissymetry" (Foucault [1975] 1977: 49). This was power as superiority, extrinsic to the subjects it acted upon. In the move to disciplinary power, then, Foucault thinks that the locus of power has moved away from the sovereign and into an array of institutions or apparatuses (*dispositifs*) that no longer use power *against* their subjects, but rather invest power *in* their subjects as subjects of those institutions. These institutions include barracks, factories, schools, hospitals, and mental asylums – all of which, famously, "resemble prisons" (Foucault [1975] 1977: 228) – which 'discipline' their subjects as soldiers, workers, students, patients, madmen, and convicts, so producing the effects of subjection not through fear but through the formation of individual identities. This is power as individuation, not as extrinsic but rather now intrinsic to the soldiers, workers, and students it has subjected.

As Foucault describes it, it is this disciplinary regime that we live under now – or, at least, that we lived under as he was writing. For Deleuze, however, Foucault's analysis can only be a historical one, because since the end of the Second World War society –

again, French society – has gradually shed the disciplinary technologies Foucault describes in favour of technologies of 'control'. These new technologies no longer produce homogeneous subjects specialised for particular milieus, but rather differentiate subjects between and within themselves so as to pervade every constituent point of subjectivity. Where disciplinary power operated on individuals, that is, defining them as either 'good' subjects (in the barracks and factory) or 'bad' subjects (in the asylum and prison), the power of control operates on and produces "dividuals" who have no determinate existence at all, but come together and fall apart in different forms as demanded by the increasingly decentred capitalism of the late twentieth century (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 5). The most conspicuous marker of this shift from discipline to control is the computerisation of governance and, especially, capital, and Deleuze talks of the 'dividuation' of control above all in terms of code: "the family, the school, the army, the factory" – those fundamental disciplinary *dispositifs* – "are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner – state or private power – but coded figures – deformable and transformable – of a single corporation that now has only stockholders" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 6). This means that, whereas in disciplinary societies such *dispositifs* were arranged in determinate and predictable ways – such that the school-factory-hospital series could guide the average subject from cradle to grave – in societies of control no such *a priori* structures can exist, because technologies of control are always only "inseparable variations" that have no extrinsic relation either to their subjects or to each other, but are only determined in their effectuation (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 4). In this form, power does not invest individual subjects, but is always-already immanent to their subjectivity, because subjectivity itself, wherever it emerges, is always-already captured by capital; this is why control is so particularly dangerous for Deleuze.

Deleuze demonstrates this shift through a series of oppositions, of which I will give only an illustrative sample here. The factory of yore, he says, "was a body that contained its internal forces at a level of equilibrium", managing its workers like particles in a vessel; the modern corporation, on the other hand, "is a spirit, a gas", unconfined and determined only by the conditions to which it shapes itself (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 4). Similarly, schools – those other enclosed spaces, which take children in and release them as viable workers – are being replaced, Deleuze thinks, by "perpetual training" no longer limited to a particular time or place, "which is the surest way of delivering the school over to the corporation" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 5). If one is never finished training, that is, one is never fully formed, and so can be 'molded' again into just whichever conditions suit modern capitalism best. The mutation one finds in both factories and schools is best expressed, for Deleuze, by the form it takes in the matter of money, as discipline was always tied to "minted money that locks gold in as numerical standard", while control "relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 5). And, finally, all this corresponds to a change in the form of capitalism, from a capitalism "for production" – centred around the

factory, and the capitalist-worker relation Marx described – to a capitalism "for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 6). It is this change, ultimately, that explains the rest, as concrete commodities are replaced by stock-tickers that mark the flow of commodities regardless of the nature or integrity of the commodity itself.

3. Covid-19 and the Return of the *Dispositif*

Aspects of Deleuze's broad-stroke impression ring impressively true. In particular, his discussion of a futuristic city, originally imagined by Guattari, where "one would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighborhood, thanks to one's (dividual) electronic card that raises a given barrier" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 7) seems highly plausible in the year 2021 – even mundane. In countries such as the United Kingdom, where cash is quickly tending towards archaism and one can 'tap in' to ride public transport with the same card one buys clothes, food, and shelter with, it almost seems that goodwill is the only thing preventing banks and governments from creating just the situation Deleuze and Guattari describe. In addition, as Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Aroles (2020) have noted, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these tendencies, through the use of "Information Systems-based systems of control". In countries across the world governments have actively discouraged cash payments, and personal 'vaccine passports' stored on phones are increasingly required to enter establishments and events.

As I suggested in the introduction, however, it would be too much to say that the pandemic simply completes the programme of control Deleuze saw developing in his own time. While mechanisms of control – of dividuation and computerisation – have undoubtedly proliferated, so at the same time have individuating mechanisms of discipline – mask mandates, stay-at-home orders – intended to make us all 'subjects of the virus', homogeneous and, for better or worse, easily manipulable on a macrobiopolitical level. We must note two points here. First, this language of 'homogeneity' and 'manipulability' is not a rejection of prevention measures, in the same way that recognising the biopolitics at play in modern medicine does not mean refusing to go to a hospital. The libertarian concept of 'freedom' is, outside of the bluntest impositions of sovereign power, no concept at all. And second, in a similar vein, although we talk of mask 'mandates' and stay-at-home 'orders' these are investments of power no less than those operated by the factories and asylums of Foucault's analysis. It is true, as Foucault himself says, that "at the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism" (Foucault [1975] 1977: 177). All disciplinary mechanisms are supported by a degree of punitive force, even if, in the United Kingdom at least, fear of this force is close to nil. But it is also true, as the quote above suggests, that this degree of force in no way contradicts the 'dis-

ciplinary' thesis: individuals do not resist it, but accept it as a necessary and justified aspect of their existence as virus-subjects. Along with the new technologies of control Leclercq-Vandelannoitte and Aroles describe, then, I argue that the pandemic has also brought with it new – complementary – disciplinary technologies, which individuate us as virus-subjects in parallel with our dividuation as digitised code. It is this parallel of dividuation and individuation, which flies in the face of the arguments of the "Postscript", that I will explore here.

These concerns are not entirely new. Mark Kelly (2015) and GreggLambert (2018), even before the onset of the pandemic, raised important concerns about the universality of Deleuze's model and the inevitable decline of the disciplinary *dispositif*. According to Kelly, Deleuze simply misunderstands Foucault's concept of discipline, and so does not see that the concept of control is itself a form of discipline. This is because Deleuze understands discipline as restrictive, as "the organization of vast spaces of enclosure" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 3), whereas Kelly argues that for Foucault the shift from sovereignty to discipline entails an expansion of power through institutions *into* the individual (Kelly 2015: 153). Crucially, where Deleuze talks of discipline as the passing of the individual "from one closed environment to another" (Deleuze [1990] 1992: 3) – as though society comprised singular, cleanly structured parts – Kelly claims that for Foucault "there is no limit to how many technologies might coexist in a social formation" (Kelly 2015: 151). This is because power is not in itself structured but is, as Foucault says, "diffuse" (Foucault [1975] 1977: 26). As Deleuze would agree, it is impossible to say in advance what form power will take, because the relation between institution and individual does not correspond to the identity of either institution or individual but to a "microphysics of power" that is not reducible to either one (Foucault [1975] 1977: 26). It is for this reason that Kelly thinks the differences Deleuze sees between societies of control and disciplinary societies are "of intensity and not of type" (Kelly 2015: 155). For Kelly, the distinction between discipline and control should never have been made, and Deleuze's analysis can simply be reduced to that of Foucault.

Lambert's criticism is in some ways similar to Kelly's, in that both attempt to destabilise the overly schematic model Deleuze describes. Lambert differs from Kelly, however, in that while for Kelly control is just another iteration of discipline, for Lambert control exists alongside discipline in a much more complex relationship than Deleuze makes out. As we have seen, for Deleuze the move from sovereignty to discipline to control followed a clear historical progression: discipline began to replace sovereignty following the French Revolution, and control began to replace discipline following the Second World War. Like Kelly, Lambert criticises this on the basis that no such clear historical break can be observed, and that supposedly defunct disciplinary *dispositifs* continue to exist and even thrive 30 years after Deleuze's "Postscript" was published (Lambert 2018: 22). Both Kelly (2015: 155) and Lambert (2018: 20) reject the "teleological" view of history underpinning Deleuze's analysis. However, while for Kelly this rejection means insisting

that disciplinary mechanisms, like mechanisms of control, are open to an outside or future 'beyond themselves' – beyond the 'enclosure' Deleuze defines them by, that is – for Lambert this idea of an 'outside' is problematic whether applied to discipline or control. As Lambert reads Deleuze, the distinction between discipline and control lies precisely in this topography, whereby disciplinary *dispositifs* are spatially "closed" and *dispositifs* of control "open" (Lambert 2018: 22). For Lambert this is suspect, however, insofar as the move from discipline to control entails a "qualitative leap" that turns analysis away from the concrete and towards "science fiction" (Lambert 2018: 24). Insofar as it involves a rejection of the 'inside', that is, the idea of an 'outside' in which control would operate is untenable for concrete political analysis because it looks to an ideal or non-real extension of power beyond what actually is. For Lambert, therefore, control can never leave behind the *dispositif* as long as such *dispositifs* continue to exist – a historical fact – and as long as control cannot leave behind the concrete milieu in which it operates.

4. The Machinic *Dispositif*

If there is no 'qualitative leap', then, and with it no topographical distinction between the 'internality' of discipline and the 'externality' of control, does this mean that Lambert sees no distinction between the two? Not quite: he still recognises a contingent (as opposed to teleological) development of control in recent years, with disciplinary technologies serving as a "form of exteriority and a prehistoric past of the new mechanism of control" (Lambert 2018: 22). This sounds something like the parallelism of dividuation and individuation described above. But can control really be the 'future' of discipline if, as Lambert has convincingly shown, any leap from the present to the future is inevitably a leap into what is non-real? It is here that things get complicated, as the temporalities of the two technologies have become enmeshed in an internally differentiated present: discipline has become a past *of the now*, and control its future, but the two are not, in any absolute sense, ontologically distinct.

Deleuze's "Postscript" is, I believe, unable to account for this. Another short text, however, may be: "What is a *Dispositif*?" ([1989] 2007), originally presented at a conference on Foucault some two years before the publication of the "Postscript", treats Foucault less as a rival and more as a fellow thinker of control, whose analysis of disciplinary *dispositifs* was, according to Deleuze, intended only to explain how we (French society) have already gone beyond them. Of course, at first glance this seems to be just the same thesis as in the "Postscript". In this slightly earlier text, however, Deleuze does not talk in terms of linear historical development, but precisely in terms of the internally differentiated present we saw in Lambert's analysis above. Here, Deleuze says that *dispositifs* do exist and will continue to exist, but that their existence is not and has never been the existence of 'enclosure' he attributes to Foucault in the "Postscript". In the "Postscript", the

dispositif is structurally determined and opposed to technologies of control. In "What is a *Dispositif*?", by contrast, the *dispositif* is precisely that point at which discipline transitions into control, where the "lines of force" that constitute disciplinary power break out of their enclosure and change form, starting to work in a qualitatively different way: control (Deleuze [1989] 2007: 342). Understood in this way, the *dispositif* is not so much an entity (a hospital, for example) as a process (perhaps 'medicalisation') that is describable only in terms of its change, as a "multilinear whole" working in multiple ways at the same instant (Deleuze [1989] 2007: 338), or, in more classically Deleuze-Guattarian terminology, as a "machine" (Deleuze [1989] 2007: 339). Discipline, in this sense, is understood as a constitutive element of the 'machinic' *dispositif*: it is the 'past' of the moment of change, of the movement of power, which coexists with the 'future' of change as the condition beyond which control is always-already moving. Again, however, this is not a linear historical progression. Past and future – or past and present, since this present is itself a future-ward movement – coexist in the moment of change as conditioning and conditioned, and constitute the differential unity of this singular moment (which Deleuze would elsewhere call an 'event'). As Deleuze puts it:

> In every *dispositif*, we have to distinguish between what we are (what we already no longer are) and what we are becoming: the *part of history, the part of currentness*. History of the archive, the design of what we are and cease being while the current is the sketch of what we will become. (Deleuze [1989] 2007: 345)

There is thus a difference between discipline and control, or 'history' and 'currentness', but it is less a difference of identity than of aspect: of the two sides of the *dispositif*-event, which encompasses both what we no longer are and what we are not yet in the reciprocal relation of conditioning and conditioned.

With this rethinking of the temporality of the *dispositif* Deleuze is able to account for the material reality of power as it both constitutes disciplinary institutions and, inevitably, extends beyond them. Deleuze does this, furthermore, without falling into the non-reality of an 'outside' or 'future' detached from the 'inside' or 'past' that conditions it, which is a trap he fails to avoid in the "Postscript". We can say, therefore, that Lambert's criticisms of the "Postscript" are entirely fair, but that the "Postscript" is not the best place to look for a Deleuzian theory of the relation of discipline and control. Similarly, Kelly's criticism of the distinction between discipline and control that Deleuze makes in the "Postscript" is fair as far as that particular text goes, but saying that control simply *is* discipline misses the complexity of the differential unity of which each is, aspectively, part. We can, I argue, only understand how the Covid-19 pandemic has reconfigured the discipline-control relation through an understanding of the machinic *dispositif* described in "What is a *Dispositif*?". However, this requires understanding what precisely a 'machine' is, for Deleuze.

Two Machinisms

The problem here is that the question 'what does Deleuze mean by 'machine'?' does not have any clear answer at all. We cannot easily divide "What is a *Dispositif*?" and the "Postscript" into 'machinic' and 'non-machinic' understandings of power respectively. This is because the division between discipline and control found in the "Postscript" maps fairly directly onto the division between "social subjection" and "machinic enslavement" described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and so it seems self-defeating to claim that control is not machinic. Social subjection here is more or less the working of high industrial capitalism described by Marx, when "man, instead of working with an implement on the subject of his labour, becomes merely the motive power of an implement-machine" (Marx [1867] 2013: 259). Or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, it is the constitution of the individual "as a subject linked to a now exterior object, which can be an animal, a tool, or even a machine" (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2013: 531). This is the homogenisation of the worker – or student, or prisoner – that Foucault describes, in which any particularity on the part of that worker is effaced by their subjection to the disciplinary *dispositif* with whose power they have been invested. Nonetheless, the worker remains distinct from the machine itself, which is what ensures their replaceability and the continued turnover of "surplus labour" on which such industrial capitalism is built (Marx [1867] 2013: 439). Machinic enslavement, on the other hand, allows for no such distinction. Where social subjection sets up a hierarchy between machine and individual, machinic enslavement "is the reinvention of a machine of which human beings are constituent parts, instead of subjected workers or users" (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2013:). For Deleuze and Guattari this is what comes after the industrial capitalism of Marx and Foucault, as "recurrent and reversible 'humans-machines systems' replace the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements" (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2013: 532). In these 'humans-machines systems' there is no longer a clear distinction between human (worker) and machine, but rather, as with technologies of control in the "Postscript", a codification and computerisation of both worker and machine that dividuates both and reduces the distinction between them to a relation of differential reciprocation.

In a very clear sense, then, control is simply equivalent to machinic enslavement – and it is highly likely that Deleuze intended the discipline-control relation of the "Postscript" to mirror the social subjection-machinic enslavement relation of *A Thousand Plateaus*. The analogy is not perfect, however, for a familiar reason: that in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari insist that, even though machinic enslavement does in a sense "replace" social subjection, "subjection and enslavement constitute two coexistent poles" and "we have the privilege of undergoing the two operations simultaneously, in relation to the same things and the same events" (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2013: 533). As with discipline and control in "What is a *Dispositif*?", and unlike in the "Postscript", Deleuze

and Guattari here distinguish between the "axiomatic" of machinic enslavement, which is the abstract principle towards which subjectification tends, and the "model of realization" of social subjection, which is the material conditions in which machinic enslavement is effectuated (Deleuze & Guattari [1980] 2013: 533). Here, then, Deleuze and Guattari maintain the commitment to immanence that underpins their thought. Given the eminent affinity of control in the "Postscript" with machinic enslavement, however, it is now harder to dismiss the "Postscript" as simply dealing with a different theme altogether. Clearly control is, or purports to be, in some sense machinic; and we can hardly just say that Deleuze got his own theory wrong. So what is going on? Resolving this confusion is the final task of this paper.

The problem, I argue, is that Deleuze operates with two different conceptions of 'machinism' at different points in his work. The first, which he develops in *Bergsonism*, the *Cinema* books, and the "Postscript", is opposed to mechanism – an opposition Deleuze takes directly from Bergson, whom he quotes in *Bergsonism* as wanting to "make a machine which should triumph over mechanism" (Deleuze [1966] 1991: 107). As Deleuze defines it in *Cinema 1*, mechanism "involves closed systems, actions of contact, immobile instantaneous sections" (Deleuze [1983] 1986: 59). It is the deterministic progression of causal relations along determinate series, which in a cinematic context would imply watching the simple juxtaposition of discrete frames rather than, as is actually experienced, the development of a "machinic assemblage of movement-images" motivated by a dynamic movement that exceeds the sum of its stills (Deleuze [1983] 1986: 59). For Bergson, as Deleuze describes him, such an account ignores the vital spirit (*élan vital*) inherent in existence. Machinism is here therefore synonymous with vitalism, and refers to the force of change that mechanism excludes. This is the conception of machinism found in the "Postscript": the idea of discipline as 'enclosure' is grounded in a conception of discipline as mechanistic, and it is just this arrangement of 'closed systems' that Deleuze says is blown apart by 'machinic' technologies of control that exploit the 'openness' and 'vitality' of the dividuals they produce. With this conception of machinism it is then perhaps inevitable that control extends 'outside' of its disciplinary conditions, because the dualism this conception implies means that systems are either open or closed. The movement from mechanism to machinism is a diachronic progression that leaves mechanism behind, and so the non-reality of machinic control, divorced from its material conditions, becomes the only reality available to it.

The second conception of machinism, which Deleuze develops together with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* – and which Guattari also discusses in his solo-authored work – is not opposed to mechanism, but rather subsumes it as an essential component of machinic functioning. In these works, the criticism of mechanism described above does persist: mechanism, Deleuze and Guattari say, "abstracts [from the machine] a *structural unity* in terms of which it explains the functioning of the organism" (Deleuze & Guattari [1972] 2013: 323). However, rather than simply prioritising vitalism

over mechanism, as in the 'Bergsonian' machinism described above, for Deleuze and Guattari here both vitalism and mechanism are partial in that they solely focus *either* on the structural conditions of the machine *or* the dynamic force that transcends these conditions, and so are unable to comprehend the "interpenetration" of structure and movement except in an "extrinsic relation" that runs into the problems of dualism we have already seen (Deleuze & Guattari [1972] 2013: 324). In this sense, mechanism and vitalism must be thought together as aspects of the same machine: the "desiring-machine", which accounts for both "the role of production in desire and the role of desire in mechanics" (Deleuze & Guattari [1972] 2013: 59). This is the conception of machinism found in "What is a *Dispositif*?": not diachronic but synchronic, and hence immanent to the differential relation of conditioning and conditioned. The machinic *dispositif*, therefore, is machinic in the specifically 'Guattarian' sense. It is only when the discipline-control relation is understood as immanent to the synchronic *dispositif*-event that dividuation and individuation can exist side-by-side, as I insist they do.

Conclusion

Deleuze does, then, give us a way of thinking through the complexities of governance and power brought to light by the Covid-19 pandemic, but his "Postscript" is not the place to look. The 'Bergsonian' form of machinism on which the "Postscript" is based – vitalism at the expense of mechanism – is unable to describe technologies of control as Deleuze wants. As both Kelly and Lambert see, the teleological, diachronic progression from discipline to control fails as an account of our – of any – contemporary milieu. However, I must conclude on a cautionary note. We know that under the paradigm of 'Guattarian' machinism there can be no control without discipline, or vice versa, because each is simply the reciprocal of the other in the same *dispositif*-event. However, we have also seen that, despite this theoretical reciprocity, Deleuze and Guattari always talk in terms of a progression from discipline to control within this moment. In "What is a *Dispositif*?", as well as in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, there is, despite the synchronic theory of machinism the texts offer, an orientation towards the increasing technologisation and computerisation of the world that reaches its peak in the "Postscript". As such, the conclusions of the "Postscript" come to seem only technically problematic – which is to say that, in practice, they bear out Deleuze and Guattari's analysis quite cleanly. This is, as Iain MacKenzie says, undoubtedly a pragmatic response to the acceleration of 'dividualising' capitalism following the events of May '68 (MacKenzie: forthcoming). But what the pandemic has shown us is that the reciprocity of discipline and control has pragmatic as well as conceptual implications. Rather than talking of discipline as only a necessary precursor to control, we see that what is conditioned is also itself conditioning, and vice versa. Smartphones, perhaps the most emblematic figures of

dividuated existence today, have also become the mechanisms *par excellence* for the individuating investment of disciplinary power. The upshot of this is that the equation of control – of dividuation and computerisation – with progress and futurity is not self-evident, but always comes itself from a particular historical perspective: that in which the future seems to come faster and faster every year. I argue that we must be able to recognise this perspective as historically produced in order to consider changing configurations of power in practical as well as theoretical terms. Not just the pandemic but also climate change, resource inequality, and all their attendant social consequences – wars, demagoguery, inter- and intra-cultural conflict – may soon force us to come to terms with a world that is no longer speeding up but slowing down. In the future the problem may not be how to manage wildly deterritorialised flows, but how to make anything move at all. It is this contingency of material conditions that I have tried, above all else, to emphasise and insist upon here.

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