One Analysis of Control Societies

Cherfa

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It was like the printing press all over again. Democratic streams of information suddenly pierced through those archaic dams, vain constructions of the affluent, a waning elite, and the "system" cracked; rotting scholasticism in medieval universities, decaying industrial capitalism throughout the First World (and a perceived state-bureaucratic cognate in the Second World). One now looks at the former with the mild antiquarian curiosity of an amateur fossil collector, and it will take little time before the same is true of the latter. As the counterculture of the 1960s gentrified into the cyberculture of the 1980s, a new assemblage of mythical figures arrives on stage (Gates, Musk, Bezos, ect...), the Neo-Gutenberg; on a mission to set information free, to let the transistor rip. The "System" may have outsmarted Lenin, Mao and the IWW, but the personal computer would mark its downfall.

Almost half a century has passed since the Information Age began. Yesterday's hackers are today's CEOs; attempts to connect the globe have transmuted into colossal for-profit data harvesting schemes at best, carbon copies of brutal primitive accumulation at worst; the whole complemented by looming backdrops, lexicons of absolute climate annihilation. Occasionally, some whistleblower emerges, and exposes the misdeeds of the digital corporation, or perhaps even the war crimes of a state, enacted within an endless war; all are outraged, most continue business as usual, because, for the first time in recent memory, the machines that repress us do so not via limitations on our potential range of choices, but instead via expansions. One has been given the ability to search every nook and cranny of an all-encompassing global network, yet one cannot make use of it without being monitored, encoded, divided, and harvested by its administrators. Every night, a stateless dividual burns the blue light of the sharing economy straight into their jaded retinas, and produces a service, fully detached from any imaginable relation to reality: they do not go "home" after work, because they are never quite finished with work, and thus must never stop working. Computers may have cracked the claustrophobic environments of modernity, and yet they seem to have ushered in a darker form of power; one that is not only far more insidious in its current form than earlier iterations, but also one that functions as a warning flare—forecasting a repression unwitnessed since pre-liberal despotism.

Such a turn of events naturally leaves us with a handful of possible responses. One could double down on a reactionary past, through populism, a capitalist past (the post-war welfare state, the End of History), or even a leftist past (vanguards, syndicalism). One might even give up on any delusion of political transformation, and instead reluctantly settle for subverting the system, meekly renouncing any hopes of smashing it; subverting it from the position of all things it has yet to control. Cyberpunk, the CCRU, identity politics; many in academia did so. But it is not the path their predecessor took.

A year before the collapse of the Soviet Union, L'Autre Journal published an essay by philosopher Gilles Deleuze named Postscript on the Societies of Control, building on concepts from Foucault's earlier seminal text, Discipline and Punish. No other essay in recent memory has managed to be so ahead of its time, to demonstrate such a sober and lucid awareness of what the future holds for us; one where discipline gives in to control, where power finally transcends this set of panoptic systems it no longer requires to reproduce itself, where little is left of the line that once separated freed choice and repression. We now bathe in—orbit around a quasi-anarchic array of global circuits, that have levelled the old ways of doing things, the schools, the prisons, the factories; each is converging towards obsolescence in Deleuze's analysis, and with several decades of hindsight this has only been made clearer, both through the material realities of political economy and the contemporary paralogisms of culture-production. Playing no small part is

the urgency of the task at hand: new institutions require new forms of resistance, and these new forms of resistance must have the same rigorous understanding of what they are up against as the old anti-disciplinaries did. A form of praxis adapted to our context will need to be effective in dissolving vertical power-structures and in erecting the foundations of new horizontal potential; in this respect, Deleuze prepares us for both a renewed struggle, adapted to rapidly shifting institutions, and a constructivism of better worlds; with just enough lucidity as to avoid itself turning into the next iteration of power. And so, an analysis of control societies; decomposition of the assemblages behind control and their underlying logic, a look at their applied manifestations in financial, carceral, medical, and educational institutions, alongside the critical material conditions that embedded them into current world-structures.

⬚ — Disciplinary poles; Contingency

It is worth, for those unfamiliar, summarizing the Foucaudian analysis of disciplinary societies, or at least the way it is interpreted by Deleuze, before proceeding to examining control societies. Disciplinary society exerts both productive and repressive power (here productive and repressive do not convey any moral connotations; there are positive and negative examples of each) through an intimate relationship to knowledge. Its fundamental structures are enclosed environments, each with their own civil texts, modelled by analogy on incarceration: one enters the educational system, then the military (or the household in the case of cisgender women), then the industrial factory, with irregular stops at the hospital, or perhaps the prison. Every stage of life within a disciplinary society involves starting from scratch; since new manifestations of power implies a new set of knowledge, in an unfamiliar environment with a particular objective: to organise and administer masses of potential energy (of which the atom is the individual human subject) that form something greater than the sum of their parts. It is no mere coincidence that the first machines making use of energy, emerging from the Industrial Revolution, were key features of discipline. But this is not all. In its most known iteration (Discipline and Punish), the disciplinary blueprint is not only rigorously analysed by Foucault, but also shown to be contingent, and far less "natural" than its advocates pretend. And in order to achieve this, Foucault contrasted discipline with an anterior model. The societal model of sovereignty preceding it did not use the same constituents, nor did it have the same objectives; there was little intention to organise production, but rather to tax it. Nor did the feudal lords, or the early Leviathans, have any intention of administering and organizing life: on the contrary, they were quite content to rule on death. The things that made up a society of discipline, prisons, policing, panopticism, academic examination; none are eternal to society or intrinsic to humankind, but all fulfilled a similar function. To carefully mold our individuality, to manipulate both the dynamics of restless urban masses and the bodies of individuals that constituted said masses; in short, to split the line of normality and abnormality, not through the crude force of an antiquated Despot, but through the very malleability and clustering of his subjects.

⬚ — Finance; Soft Skills

Fast forward to the limit of the 20th century: both models previously described are converging towards obsolescence. There are whispers of "reform" everywhere, archaic colonial relations

are disintegrating, the Trentes Glorieuses soon hit a hard limit. And nothing changes at once. Nothing ever changes at once. But things begin fading from sight, the worn-down apparatchiks, the industrial zones, the revolutionary vigour of Mai 68. Year by year, the cement of new relations starts setting; Thatcher and Reagan shackle syndicalism, and industrial production hurtles towards the Global South. In short, control societies behave radically differently than discipline. We no longer deal with enclosed systems, but open environments where one's position is tracked numerically. This has been made possible because the machines that sustain our contemporary mode of production are no longer industrial apparatuses processing energy analogically: they have been replaced by computers, which process information numerically, and are inherently open systems once connected to the Internet. They are environments of variable size, because they transcend the tightly packed spaces of disciplinary locations: a computer is a medium enabled to store an unprecedented quantity of signifier-signified pairings, pairings which, under the administration of discipline, were once taxonomised and separated; yet are now entangled on a global scale and derive their meaning from worldwide semiotic traces. Analogical energy was the kernel of discipline, a kernel revolving around two poles: the individual and the mass— the former is referred to through the use of a signature unique to him, whilst his position within a mass is indicated by an administrative number. Circumscriptions had existed in France since absolutism (a period where the state mediated conflict between an aristocracy of sovereignty and a relatively disciplinary bourgeoisie), but it was the abolition of feudalism during the Revolution which created the current départements we know today, where territory is divided into numbered administrative divisions. Before computers, it was common to see bored children on excruciatingly long car rides, having memorised each departemental number, identifying which area the neighbouring cars came from, in bureaucratic fashion, as it was then mandatory to put one's home department on the license plate. In contrast, control society abandons the signature and administrative numeration in favour of cryptography: numerical codes, passwords, rather than "disciplinary watchwords". Deleuze references money to differentiate the two societal models, comparing the minted money of discipline, which latches its value onto physical gold (the Gold Standard), to the free-floating exchange rates of modern fiat currency—but this also extends to the idea of obsolete signatures and emerging passcodes. To make counterfeiting as difficult as possible, both paper money and coins must be unique, signed by the government issuing it (in the same sense that an individual's administrative signature must be a unique pattern). Yet with the development of information technology, this signature was no longer effective, and a new mechanism would be required to maintain control over the money supply. Ever since 1996, a pattern of symbols known as the EURion constellation can be seen on virtually all banknotes, and color printers (alongside programs such as Adobe Photoshop) block copying attempts if they detect this pattern: what protects money and stops counterfeit is no longer a signature, but a code/pattern that, once detected, denies access and cuts off a flow of information. In recent memory, this has been taken even further with the advent of cryptocurrency, a form of money that has no disciplinary central bank, no one central financial institution issuing it: each transaction is recorded in a continuous blockchain, and coins are transferred by signing a hash (cryptographic hash function) which contains both previous transactions and the public key of the next owner. The entire process is designed to keep third party institutions out of all transactions, and it does so through code—one must not be misled by the use of the term "signature" in the bitcoin white paper, as it is actually a digitised password, rather than the traditional signature of discipline. Encryption has created a system beyond the reach of disciplinary finance, and yet it would be

misleading to believe that we have been freed from the rigid domination of a central bank; in reality a new elite will soon fulfill the same function. The security of the blockchain may very well be breached, relatively soon, through the technique of quantum computing: one which, at time of writing, has reportedly only yielded practical results (practical meaning calculations realistically impossible for a standard supercomputer) in one instance, overseen by Google. By the time those busy celebrating the demise of archaic financial institutions come to their senses, it seems that new administrators will already be in place, ready to track their positions.

Ɛ — Dividuality; Aliasing

If cryptography replaces the signature, codes replace watchwords, it is only then logical to ask how the individual/mass distinction shifts following the advent of control society. Tackling the first half of this binary, Deleuze states that "individuals have become dividuals...". We will soon no longer have any signatures that define us, nor an administrative key, that allows discipline to locate us within a mass. If the signature was superseded by passwords and codes, and the signature once represented the individual, then there is only one logical conclusion: the individual is no longer the atom of society. They are instead divided further, into even smaller encoded constituents. A signature is analogical, and can exist at virtually any spatial perspective, yet a numerical code quantises, and leaves no room outside of the finite glyphs that constitute it. Hexadecimal systems, ASCII, or even Unicode; all codes can be reduced to a 2-base system, one where only zero and one are possible, and if sections of the individual do not tightly pack into the limits of such a system, if a certain contiguous nuance cannot be satisfyingly expressed in the digital, then it is discarded—we are left with the aliased dividual; with incomplete data loss and surplus artefacts. The property rights to your ontological being are split between various parties: search engines own your online presence ("you are what you search"), banks own your credit score, medical institutions are the proprietors of your genetic risk factors. There is a shift from relations and motion, the thermodynamic actors of discipline, to static essentialized identities: continuity, which is formally defined by relating $f(c)$ to the limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches c (and thus, because of the character of limits, implies a type of kinetic operation, always getting closer and closer, "approaching"), is replaced by discrete approximations: first difference, running sum, static numbers. Instead of regulating a continuous thermodynamic cluster, they regulate access to information: yes or no, and this not only applies to artificial codes, but biological ones as well. What was once considered to be an inalienable essence of the individual, the genome; productive forces now have the ability to splice, cut, edit this code through Cas9, CRISPR gene-editing, and the consequences of such operations shall play a crucial role in advanced control societies. Previous combat techniques focused excessively on mastering disciplinary energy, culminating in the two world wars with the advent of chemical, biological and nuclear warfare (WMDs); yet the first paradigm shifts already hinted at something new on the horizon. Whilst science fiction—in many ways the anterior mythology of control—was fashioning the future genetic supersoldier, the last sputters of the 1945 war cycle were already demonstrating the obsolescence of energy; the arrival of information. Baudrillard, in his famously provocative piece The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, outlines how a state-sponsored imperial atrocity was artificially modelled into a "war", through media-oriented simulations, repurposings of war footage, and the intentional withdrawal of information from the public sphere in the aims of legitimating military invasion. War was no longer

a Clausewitzian "duel on a larger scale", where state-sponsored belligerents amass clusters of potential energy and weaponize them in the aims of politically destroying each other: it became a computer game, a show of videos, images, flashing headlines. And its collective actors, which were once "thermodynamic" mass armies, had morphed on a societal scale. "Samples, data, markets, or banks": whichever one trialled, old logic was running out.

⬛ — Realities; New spaces

For the most part, all of what we have discussed so far has been relatively abstract. What actually happens to the institutions of discipline after the transition to control is underway? A worldwide set of protests following the extrajudicial murder of George Floyd by white police officers has brought the question of police and prison abolition to the forefront once more, but what kinds of systems shall replace these disciplinary institutions? Such a question does not stem from the same malicious intentions as those of the right-wing blockheads also asking it, who—in bad faith—seem to believe that police forces and carceral punishment precede the Big Bang itself. Rather it stems from a different concern, a much more legitimate one: will the abolition of police and prisons (something more than likely to happen at some point in time) be a triumph for freedom or its downfall? In the 1960s, a group of researchers at Harvard created a penal system they named "behavior transmitter-reinforcer", which transmitted data from a base-station antenna to volunteers carrying portable transceivers, simulating "young adult offenders". Initially suffering from a lack of interest (the federal government of the 1970s had found an alternative of notable discipline; mass incarceration), electronic tagging would kick off its first commercial applications in the 1980s, when a former sales representative of Honeywell Information Systems, Michael T. Goss, created NIMCOS, or National Incarceration Monitor and Control Services. Today, ankle monitoring based on GPS-technology is used by all fifty states, the district of Columbia, and the federal government of the United States to track (and at times constrict) the movements of pretrial convicts. The same applies to those on probation. If the more abstract characteristics of control involved a shift towards states of limbo (never being finished with something; perpetually soft rebooting, rather than fully completing a sequence of institutions and starting over from scratch with each), then the fact that this new punishment is reserved for ambiguous convicts—those awaiting their trial or on probation—speaks volumes to the nature of new control mechanisms within the criminal justice system. Electronic monitoring has also been used in many other countries, for things such as house arrest (once again, the line between closed disciplinary environments, the house and the prison, fades from view): ironically enough, one of the biggest companies to provide electronic monitoring, GEO group, also happens to operate the largest network of private prisons in the world, including many detention centers operated by ICE, who have themselves deployed GPS tracking in seven workplace raids against "illegal" immigrants. Some anticipate the technology to be able to analyse patterns of the offender deemed "suspicious", and predict criminal behaviour; a terrifyingly evident instance of panopticism, and yet the one surveilling is no longer a signed human subject. Things have shifted, and are already emerging on the other side of the Atlantic: after years of trial in South Wales, London's Metropolitan Police has deployed AI-based facial recognition technology, targeted towards "specific locations... where intelligence suggests [...] most likely to locate serious offenders". The potential biases in both selected locations to survey and datasets used to train

the neural networks are painstakingly obvious, yet once again we are presented with a solution to traditional discipline. Why use individual officers to survey a mass, when an artificial neural code has rendered them obsolete? With humans, you had the inherent tension between cognitive evolution and hard biological limits. But with neural networks, virtually any cognitive structure is within reach.

The use of electronic tagging does not stop at carceral institutions, of course. What of the other temples of discipline, the school, the hospital? Those with dementia, once confined to the asylum, share the fate of the pretrial convict, and are now being equipped with GPS-tracking ankle devices, something which has garnered backlash, as the practice has horrific consequences on both the victim's health and privacy. In Japan, some school-children wear uniforms and backpacks equipped with a special "panic" button, which, once pressed, transmits their geographical location to a security agent. A technique which, to the surprise of none, resorts to electronic monitoring. And of course one does not have to be a convict, a patient, or a student to be geographically tagged; one only needs a smartphone with GPS-enabled technology. Nor does one need to be diagnosed with dementia to experience control within the realms of healthcare—"Our current capital intensive, hospital-centric model is unsustainable and ineffective", as the World Economic Forum proclaims in their platform for the future of health and healthcare: very well, what then shall replace it? Here our triumphant avant-garde of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' prescribes nothing short of dystopia: using an uncanny "data-enabled delivery system" to provide precision prevention and personalized care delivery, two methods dependent on biological, behavioral, epidemiological and socioeconomic data extracted straight from the individuals and groups receiving care. The apparently laughable pipe dream of well-funded public healthcare, a concession yet to be fully granted even amongst developed countries, is conspicuously absent from the platform; instead one hears of 'public-private coalitions', 'new models of collaboration/ partnership'. But let us return to the school: there are other ways in which new paradigms affect educational institutions. In the second part of the essay, Logic, Deleuze states that "...perpetual training tends to replace the school, and continuous control to replace the examination." Here the English translation fails us rather miserably: "continuous control" actually refers to "contrôle continu", a practice in Education Nationale where the student is evaluated continuously on his grades and averages, rather than on his performance in a set final exam. As it would happen, the French government decided in 2018 to undertake a massive (and controversial) overhaul of the Baccalaureate, the national secondary-school diploma, one which drastically increased the weight of continuous evaluation—now representing a full 40% of the final grade; this in a supposed effort to "modernise" French education. No longer are there set academic examinations, which function as neat borders between the subdivisions of one's educational course. Other elements of the reform, such as the suppression of prepackaged faculties in favor of a "freer" open system where one chooses three specialised subjects, are evocative of control as well; you no longer adhere to a carefully administered timetable shared with a mass (your school class). The case of France is in part mirrored by global reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of distance learning, which has "freed" many students from the rigid confines of a school building— and drastically increased learning inequality. Before, your time at home was yours (setting homework aside), and your time at school belonged to the state or private company in charge of administration. At home, there seems to be no boundary between the two; instead of committing to one and starting anew in the other, one is never finished with either. VoIP services like Discord, formerly providing "Chat and text for gamers", have changed their motto to "Your place to talk",

and present an example chat on their login page that shows students sharing history notes with each other. Everything is entangled; nothing is separate, and this of course is quite conducive to a system which fluctuates from energy to information: the first roots itself in thermodynamics, whilst the second relates to signs, objects long argued by post-structuralist semioticians to be circular, self-referential, impossible to separate from each other, nor every other. Whether it is the domain of the hospital, the school, carceral punishment: connections multiply, and control dismantles the walls once erected by the disciplinaries, brick by brick.

⬚ — Matter; Intensities

We have examined the fates of several disciplinary institutions as control progressively takes over. Yet what exactly is driving this process? What material conditions made it so that control would emerge in the late 20th century? Sovereignty had very simple machines; Deleuze cites "...levers, pulleys, clocks", the first two being objects that humans act upon mechanically, whilst the last one allows a human (the clergy) to exercise sovereignty on others (calling the Third Estate to prayer). Discipline's scientific advancements, which it traced back to the Renaissance in retrospect, allowed it to produce machines capable of distributing and administering analogical energy, and as the remaining artefacts of sovereignty implied a "machinic" treatment of the working class, the proletarian wage-labourer was transformed into a discontinuous producer of energy. Here Silvia Federici's insights into the turbulent and multi-faceted developments that birthed an industrial capitalism out of tattered feudal ruins, rigorously developed in her text Caliban and the Witch, are of paramount importance. The thousands of disobedient wage-labourers and rebellious women brutally executed by an emerging set of absolutists were, in their death, the first anatomical samples; the body was mechanised, and many diagrams depict various parts as machines (the arms as those aforementioned pulleys and levers, for example). The burgeoning anatomists who ripped these bodies apart form the arborescent roots of vicious feedback loops: the common body functions as Machine, therefore its given image is Machine, and because the anatomy of the common body's image is machinic, it must "naturally" operate as Machine; so on and so for. With the zenith of capitalist relations came commodified wage-labour, decoupled from any potential relation to ecosystems: the clock became the supreme indicator of time in lieu of the natural sky, as there was a newfound compulsion to "rationalise", equalize the schedule in opposition to nature—night shifts, clock in. No more "unlucky days"; any superstition obstructing the path towards productivity shall be purged by all and any means, because productivity is no longer a means. It is the end-game. This body-thought of the time was exemplified by two philosophers on each side of the Channel, Descartes and Hobbes; the first drafts an ontology where mind, a uniquely human function, must subjugate at all cost the savage primitive body (an ontology not without its bells and whistles, of course; all human minds are not created equal), whilst the second develops an absolutist political framework to do so, one well adapted to the early modern context. The polities of modernity all operate on the same Cartesian plane, one concerned with two axes: geographical and historical. The first draws a line in the sand; between a civilized (and soon civilizing) Europe and the primitive outsides-spaces of barbary, savagery, the Oriental despot. The second draws a line in cultural time, and it does so in an undeniably contradictory manner: an opposition between the enlightened secular humanism of "modernity" and an obscurantist medieval "Dark Age". Year 1000. The Occident is plunged into an overwhelm-

ing torpor. The eyes are too weary to throw curious glances at their surroundings, the senses too exhausted to be awake. The human spirit is annihilated as after a lethal illness, humanity wants no longer to know of the world which belongs to It. Even more astonishing: even what It knew, It has inexplicably forgotten. These words are taken from Stefan Zweig's Amerigo: Story of a historical error. But the historical error in question is not the misattribution of the New World to an eponymous explorer who never truly "discovered" the Americas: it is an error of separation, when does what begin, when does what end? Do the Dark Ages begin with the Roman collapse? There was no "Roman" collapse: Byzantium lived to see the Renaissance, and 153 years of it. Did this latter period mark the beginnings of modernity? If so, one must then ask "Which renaissance?": there were three in the span of the Middle Ages alone, the Carolingian, Ottonian, and 12th century renaissances. Were these Middle Ages a manifestation of stale religious dogma or divine theological harmony? Well, starting from Luther, it depends which Church you ask. And crucially, what is it that fundamentally differentiates Renaissance and Enlightenment in terms of their actual function as the arborescent roots of modernity?

The question is one of intensities. Year 1007; the Latin word "burgensis" is first etched into a charter. Our seeds of modernity were sowed by free serfs who had successfully escaped enclosures of the feudal manor: those that live in the "borough", legally known under the Ancien Régime as the bourgeoisie. Each century, long or short, is a increment in intensities: the humanist groundwork laid by the Renaissance in the late 13th and 14th centuries (an ironically regressive set of cartographies on Greco-Roman antiquity) is coupled to an Age of Discovery, or the long 16th century; the bourgeois latch onto the Western Hemisphere and begin to erect world markets, they are now an integral part of monarchical administration. The next pair of intensifiers constitutes itself with both a theoretical draft and a tangible mise en oeuvre: first Enlightenment (the 17th and 18th centuries), then High Modernity (the long 19th century, 1789–1914). Coupled to the Reformation, our earlier motions had deterritorialized religion—but not politics: no Priest stood in between you and the Holy Spirit, yet a reified King still stood between you and the political state, and here lies that crucial difference: the merchants slip right through the grip of sovereign forces, the absolutist state is no longer sovereign enough to mediate the bourgeoisie's interest, and, paired to earlier scientific progress, the means of production are developed into a veritable productive machine, a particularly social one. It's no longer a question of operating a handful of serfs by the crass threat of corporal punishment: the ones carrying the industrial complex's weight are now mechanical aggregates, and they aren't easy to administer. Kill one to set a precedent, and you risk being outnumbered a thousand to one; manage a thousand, and you steer an unfathomable amount of alienated labour. But of course, you can only "manage" so much. And when none of the bourgeois could manage anymore, when all possible means of sublimating alienation had been exhausted from nationalistic jingoism to colonial expansion, modernity slithered into its climax; a depravedly "valid" logical conclusion. The ensuing century of hell that follows the assasination of Franz Ferdinand is often mistakenly quantified by its corpses, far in millions; a vain attempt, no amount of bodies could do so satisfyingly. There's no break between utilitarianism and the Shoah, energetic and frenetic production reaches its execrable zenith in total drab, paper is fashioned out of human skin, ripped from Auschwitz-Birkenau, yet not for long; "the costly chemicals required render the whole endeavour unprofitable, and one mustn't tolerate what is unprofitable". True, the Allies "won", and our post-war geopolitical blocs kept the game up for decades. But as the détente of the Cold War turns into a burst of inevitable collapse

for the East, the technology, the changing mindsets: everything is already in place for something new.

Our technological axioms are the products of the Second Industrial Revolution: widespread electrical power, synthetic chemicals, semiconductor alloys jointly create a three-terminal device which amplifies or cuts off a certain amount of electrical current: the transistor. This first technological shift away from discipline, a system which concerned itself only with aggregates of non-discrete dynamic energy, relies on cutting off a flow, rather than administering its properties or directions; you're no longer on or in the continuous domain of real numbers. You're either on or off: a two-element Galois field, or modulo 2 arithmetic. Addition is a XOR gate (the sum of two ones warps back to zero), multiplication is an AND gate (any null operand leads to zero): you combine transistor-based versions of them to form half-adders, and in turn combine those to form full-adders. Enough circuits piled up and the result is a binary-based machine capable of executing generalised sequences of arithmetic operations independently: the rudimentary computer. With a bit of fine-tuning, and some already well-established tech to complement, it becomes the ultimate distribution mechanism for semiotic data: speakers, pixel screens, keyboards, ect. And with the advent of the Internet, computers across continents are now entangled in a dizzying array of networks. Before this, the name of the game was administering flows of energy through rigid schedules, standardisation, and panopticism: this shifts to a process of controlling information flows, granting or denying access to them, whenever necessary. Panopticism doesn't tell you whether you're under surveillance or not; technopticism never has to tell you that you're always under surveillance. And this reality is reflected in our emerging societies, through many forms. Prior to decolonisation, the world-system in place generally centered around a supply flow of minerals and agricultural resources from export-oriented colonies to their industrialised Euro-American metropoles, running on wage-labour. Such a context encouraged individual metropoles to maintain their colonial grip on significant swathes of the Third World, and it would take the inevitable sparks of an anti-colonial malaise to make the economic losses of imperial administration outweigh its once-lucrative gains. Once the hassle reached that threshold, Western states faced the challenge of maintaining our aforementioned global supply chain in territories that belonged no longer to them, but rather to independent (albeit fragile) nation-states—and they did so through a variety of means. One of the most flagrant instances of what theorist Mark Fisher later termed "capitalist realism" was the U.S backed coup on September 11th 1973 in Chile, where Augusto Pinochet violently seized power from the democratically-elected socialist Salvador Allende, ushering in an authoritarian regime now infamous for its abominable methods of repression, and malignantly declaring to all the futility of imagining a different world. Other instances might come about less brashly: using debt, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to perpetrate the process of privatization, primitive accumulation and disintegration of traditional communal lives ongoing since the Late Middle Ages, in the English enclosures and pyres of the witch-hunt—or perhaps, far more insidiously, reaffirming these collective livelihoods as a generous concession, one made via the mechanisms of an liberal jurisprudence. But no one's guarding their ruler-drawn colonial borders anymore; at least not for long. On the contrary, international financial institutions shred any attempt to remove oneself from their newly-entangled global market: protectionist policies are struck down, throughout Africa and Asia, to make space for Western multinationals. This slots into the twilight of the Second World, a new set of nominally liberal-democratic states in Central Asia and other post-Soviet areas leads to new peripheries for global markets; whilst the remains of socialist countries either fade into isolated

obscurities of famine (North Korea) or reluctantly integrate into the international economy at the cost of their principled utopianism (China; Vietnam). With new semi-peripheries, where the manufacturing of goods can now be outsourced, multinationals zone in on a Global South devoid of post-war social democracy. New infrastructure and entanglement makes capital mobile, but labour remains static: syndicalist union opposition to multinationals and subsidiaries no longer poses a real threat, as the corporation either stomps it out (via third parties/state apparatuses) or displaces capital to another peripheral state. Back in the First World, these developments are paired to a post-Fordist shift into consumerism and tertiary labour, the service sector, adding an even further enhanced layer of commodity fetishism; whereas industrialised High Modernity successfully constructed social relationships between commodities, the emerging control society takes this a step further by displacing the very manufacturing of the commodity into invisible zones, and reorienting "productive labour" to the simple administration of prepackaged goods. The other side of this phenomenon is one of rustbelts: Detroit, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Lorraine, Northern England, and in turn this shifts the electoral makeup of the Global North. In the Keynesian-disciplinary paradigm, liberal democracies show relatively straightforward socioeconomic traits: economic elites vote for a pro-capital right wing, workers vote for a pro-labour left wing, and the state mediates class tension between industrialists and unions. This last aspect, variously termed by some as "social corporatism" and "tripartism", still partly exists today in Scandinavia—through the "Nordic model" so often admired by some liberals—as well as in the Low Countries, and in the programs of some christian-democratic parties; nevertheless in virtually every other First World country it is in the process of being decimated. With the onset of control and deindustrialisation, the whole paradigm begins to shatter; an information-oriented culture war begins between economic elites, who favour centre-right candidates, and "cultural" elites, born out of the blending of high and low culture so characteristic of post-modernity, who instead favour the newly soulless husks of formerly centre-left parties. Exit Thatcher and Reagan, enter Blair and Clinton: the "Third Way" bows down in a spasm of irony to the Iron Lady (once quoted saying—of the market economy—"There is no alternative") and any material progress for lower classes is denounced as pure impossibility, from all sides: it has now been made easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. In continental Europe, the story is similar. Gerhard Schröder, of the German SPD, garnered much backlash from his party's left wing after publishing a small manifesto with Tony Blair calling for centre-left parties in Europe to embrace a supply-side agenda; meanwhile, on the other side of the Rhine, France (while not embracing this "Third Way" just yet) sees the left electorate abandon the rotting carcass of the Parti Communiste Français in favour of a more moderate Socialist Party. Around thirty years later, the emergence of "En Marche!"; a political movement describing itself as neither left nor right, advocating social liberalism all whilst defending tax cuts on a supply-side basis, brings the "Third Way" to its logical conclusion. No one knows what the future holds; yet certainly it will be more of the present.

Opening: Neo-Leviathan

The End of History—which Fukuyama had excitedly proclaimed—did not last long. And if the Gulf War was a horrifying parody of war, it was only a matter of time before the world would witness a horrifying parody of the Gulf War. The first symbolic-weapon turned the flows

of globalization against themselves on September 11th 2001: four commercial airliners hijacked by Al-Qaeda are sent straight into the holy economic, political and military monuments to U.S hegemony (the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, the White House or perhaps the Capitol, though the last two were untouched). This attack and its consequences would plunge the international scene into a semiotic fever dream, far more intensified than the Gulf War: more flagrant violations of international law, more melodramatic theatre—Colin Powell's UN speech comes to mind—in short, more brashness. Rather than not happening or being simulated, the lingering and communicative "9/11" becomes the absolute event. And, to Baudrillard, it all culminates in the released photographic symbolisms of now infamous horrors in the Abu Ghraib prison. A "humiliation, symbolic and completely fatal, which the world power inflicts on itself"; aesthetic parallels in all realms, produced and consumed, were traced back to industrial pornography in his 2004 essay, aptly titled War Porn. For as he remarks the striking synergy between that emblematic Iraqi prisoner–scarecrow, electrical wires dripping down his arms, and the hooded members of the Klu Klux Klan, his quite ironic conclusion: "It is really America that has electrocuted itself". And, moreover, that very semiotic image virally circulating within the accelerating techniques of a control society is taken not by international observers craving to denounce; it is photographed by the perpetrators in themselves, deriving pure enjoyment from the act, praying to the construction of a heightened reality. One where humiliation of the victim, shock of the viewer, and symbolic bludgeoning of all are holy ontological agents. Hence the difference between Abu Ghraib and the non-events of 1991 could not be greater. The next stringent blows to presentism, we are still in the midst of: first the neo-krach of 2008, the gradual impotence of 'Third Way' social liberalism, the intensification of cultural strife in the leadup to Brexit and Donald Trump's ascent to the presidency in 2016. Four years later, temporary gains made by Biden in the United States and Macron in France have failed to make the future look any less bleak—as control societies shed their liberal presentism, the only appropriate reaction must be one of speculative horror.

The logic and realities of a control society are fundamental to contemporary polities. They are progressively establishing themselves as the de facto civil texts of all sorts of world cores: Wall Street, La Défense, the IMF, the City of London, l'Elysée, the World Economic Forum, to name only a few. But they have their limits. The mistake of superimposing Occidental contexts onto a wildly diverse collection of human worlds is one intellectuals have been guilty of for centuries, and as we have seen the part played by the material conditions of the post-war West in forming control mechanisms, it is clear that an analysis relying on the presence of these same mechanisms in peripheral states is far from self-evident. Through many perspectives it remains undeniable that modernity has ended on a world-wide basis: entanglement and globalization have made it so. Yet it is still worth remembering that the rare minerals which power modern computing are dug up in disciplinary mines, in pools of sweat, blood and sobs. That the service sector—now dominant in our flexible First World—runs on products fresh from the emerging disciplinary zones of Southern semi-peripheries. Just as one mustn't ignore the growing swathes of human spaces entirely beyond state control. Some may retort, and with admirable foresight, that expecting these stateless margins of humanity to successfully escape all-encompassing control is a stark underestimation of capital's prowess in recuperating anything that lives. That sort of dynamic pessimism, I find quite respectable; yet even capital cannot help but hurtle towards the hard structural limits of the biosphere. And arguably, it will be our present ecological realities which will mold the chessboard of future politics, one where nothing remains to be redistributed, democratised. Here Malcoeur's Neoleviathan is of use, a striking monograph where Medean polemical narra-

tion naturally deselects all losing moral pleasantries, where the technological cutting-edge of a control society outlives its generative surface, and enters with naked trepidation into the state of nature. A bouncing, vibrant pessimism tackles liberal presentism and its embeds in socialist and orthodox-fascist paradigms: the old walls separating disciplinary worlds, which had finally been torn down by accelerating digital flux, did indeed lose their despotic function as the scaffolds of bourgeois morality, statist administration, declaring the subject free from ideological squabbling. And yet it was a comically naive error to believe, in control or beyond it, that the horizons of liberation were to be grasped. The Neoleviathan is medieval or post-classical, which is quite different from the fully-centralized totalitarian apparatus of a contemporary reactionary state: as sprawling large-scale jurisdictions collapse from the contradictions or intensifications of their 'rational' sovereignty, external chaos rapidly assembles cultural in-groups, and aggregated Uniques are completely hijacked by any myriad of phantasms with just the right amount of differentiation needed to override their obsolescing catch-all predecessor, be it "Roman", "Human", "Civilized". Which phantasm wins out by attrition? Whichever one manages not to be deselected; it's that simple. And once none of them can keep up, life ends captured by itself. Does the Stirnerite child conclude the dialectic, finish the work of Enlightenment philosophy in one master stroke, and abolish the God-Man? Amorality certainly emerges—equipped with 3D-printed semi-automatic rifles, and a crude hatchet ready to cut into your genome, but with no hard feelings: vice does not triumph, virtue is simply deselected. Therein lies the mortifying wit of a control society's fate, a reality transparent to the public eye no matter how many bubbly growth statistics David Cameron gleefully bludgeons us with. Piling up sacred 'progress' religiously, beckoning all flows of desire to aimlessly race around in its anarchic digital spaces, it ends up cannibalising itself: ecological parameters go haywire, ensuing socioeconomic shock waves burn through our civilizational tapestry, and the forlorn technological vestiges of what once was are seized by leviathanised states, striving in desperation for survival, to escape deselection. A broad picture—one should be weary of speculating on the details with too much certainty. But we do have various scenarios at our disposal to ponder, five in particular: the shared socioeconomic pathways of the IPCC. Each gives differing predictions on greenhouse emissions and political trajectories based on two parameters, the extent of socioeconomic challenges to climate mitigation (the prevention of anthropogenic emissions) and to climate adaptation (the management of regional climate-related catastrophe). With no clear evidence of an imminent global eco-revolution, and far less evidence of a potential green transition via electoral means, it is safe to bet against some of the more optimist pathways. Leaving us with either autarkic-corporatist nationalism, increasingly stratified neocolonial capitalism, or fossil-driven accelerationism. The first, antithetical to any sort of rational international cooperation, is problematic for both mitigation and adaptation—therefore it is unsurprisingly the scenario closest to leviathanisation, with a chaotic scramble for regional food security potentially fracturing current state formations into scattered political vacuums. In contrast, the second threatens adaptation: the digital-semiotic framework of control allows 'responsible' consumer choices and local token gestures to characterize mainstream environmental activism in high to middle-income areas, allowing the maintenance of a knowledge-oriented managerial class in the First World. Regardless of how emissions evolve, unfamothable amounts of stratification, coupled to the disastrous consequences of climate change, turns developing countries into vast pools of abundant labour, and no help is conceded to a highly vulnerable Global South in adapting to new geographical conditions; it is highly unlikely that these wastelands will look anything remotely similar to a control society. Our final scenario is taken straight out of

a sci-fi movie, or perhaps Nick Land's philosophy: mitigation and low emissions are not given a second thought, the global market hurtles into fossil-fuelled control mechanisms, cybernetics, geoengineering—in awe, the myth of progress overrides the clamor of de-growth, and scientific humanism salvages the God-Man against all odds. Within an atmosphere where increasingly colossal amounts of carbon dioxide have locked in large-scale feedback loops, society erects self-regulating glass walls barring it from apocalypse, and valiantly tries to get a grip: here the degree of potential leviathanisation is therefore contingent on the tech cutting us off from the desert. Control mechanisms remain in place right up until progress succumbs to critical failure, international order shatters, and we are sucked right back into the original position to face the consequences. It is worth remarking, and the pessimist does so with relish, that while the preservation of 'business-as-usual' under SSP5 and the emerging Neoleviathans both make plentiful use of technology, one can withstand a far greater margin of error than the other. It takes one crack in the glass to plunge that particular socioeconomic narrative into genuine crisis, but precision is the last thing on a Neoleviathan's mind. The former scenario demands perfection, from technology yet to be invented—the latter involves an entity so dedicated to escaping deselection that, for all they care, the technology might as well detonate in the loser's face.

All this leaves one with various paths, as to how the mechanisms and participants of control societies might react to widespread ecological calamity. But speculation, while undoubtedly valuable, is only part of the full picture. In the final instance, to analyse control is to analyse how contemporary stratification materialises, in times of collapse and in times of anti-collapse, anywhere from the Euro-American cores of finance capital, to the sweatshops of Haiti, to the stateless highlands of Zomia. It is a process where one must confront the sobering possibility that our war of attrition against institutions may well be a reproduction of power rather than its abolition, far from the creation of new horizontal lives or worlds. Where the line between relative deterritorialization, characteristic of capital-induced cultural annihilation, and the construction of an absolute field of immanence shrouds itself in vast, recuperating motions. To avoid capture by control's snake-coil modulations, one must ruthlessly critique all that exists: the medium, formats, abstract logic, assumptions, historical narratives, counter-historical narratives, genealogies, ect. It is not a matter of fearfully staying in place, paralyzed and resentful: it is a matter of constructing with great care, dissolving the optimistic grip of carceral progress, in both political theory and in our heads. Utopianism must abandon those architectural blueprints so embedded with civilizational logic, and might instead embrace a truly vibrant, dynamic process of reversal—reversal of values and emotions, conscious states or phenomena. It would be hypocritical to prescribe the 'required' actions or lines of thought here: this is not an instruction manual, only an attempt to fashion beauty out of deeply horrific realities. When push comes to shove, this may well be our lone cold comfort, the only conceptual toy separating us from a bottomless ravine of trauma. And therefore the will to carve that dot of euphoria into animation owned entirely by us, for us, can only emerge from us.

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Cherfa
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