

Notes for Week 7 (March 3, 2010)

Discussion on "Postscript on the Societies of Control" by Gilles Deleuze

- Deleuze reacts to Foucault's disciplinary society
 - Sovereignty → discipline → control
 - Deleuze's **society of control** is similar to Foucault's *biopower*.
 - The control society appears to be a new *epoch*
- Contrasts of the Modes of Being (discipline; control)
 - Fixed modes; changing modes
 - Contained; open
 - Discrete; continuous
 - Factory; corporation
 - Entities are now *systems* that go beyond their physical correlates. For example, we have a *hospital system*, not simply multiple hospitals
 - Corporations can rapidly reorganize its operations
 - Ford makes their own audio equipment
 - General Motors makes revenue from financing
 - General Electric makes home appliances and owns NBC/Universal
 - The key is **diversification**
 - Corporations are obliged to maximize profits for their shareholders
 - They have the status, but not the accountability, of an individual
 - Mold; modulation
 - "**Modulation**" is akin to a self-deforming cast
 - Signature-number; code
 - Racing; surfing
 - Racing gives the drivers and his pit crew a lot of precision over his movements, and races have very clear winners. Conversely, surfers do not have direct control over the waves and the metrics for winning are less clear
 - Mole; serpent
 - The serpent moves much more fluidly
- This parallels a shift from the *modern* to the *postmodern*

- Discipline promoted *efficiency* whereas control features *adaptability* and *reconfiguration*

Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*

- The **Efficiency Movement** (c.1890 – 1932)
 - Advocates pushed for finding the *one best way* to solve every problem
 - The movement was supported by the likes of Herbert Hoover and JD Rockefeller
 - For example, we often consider the *optimal route* for getting somewhere
 - Is the shortest path the optimal path? Not necessarily, there are other factors
 - Less crowded paths
 - Safer paths
 - Paths that respect the laws and others' property rights
- According to Frederick Taylor, you can figure out and implement *the optimal level of productivity* for all employees
 - "Humanpower" can be measured just like horsepower and there are *mathematical laws* to prove it
 - Example: an overloaded worker gets tired even when not moving
 - Taylor's mathematician figured out that a worker should be idle for 52% of the day. Supervisors must strictly enforce rest time.
- Employees can be controlled to *act efficiently without question*
- Taylor *frames* his discussions to be scientific
 - In the past, Taylor says, behavior was governed by **rule of thumb**. The rule of thumb draws a parallel to the *apprenticeship* model
 - It isn't precise, but it may work well for the individual
 - "Every single act of every worker can be reduced to a science." The constituent parts of each activity can be optimized.

- Ironically, Taylor primarily bases his argument on anecdotes and hypothetical scenarios. Taylor does not present and theory or law to unite and explain his concepts.
 - Example: “The optimal wage increase is 60%.” How could Taylor ever justify this statement as a law?
 - Additionally, Taylor seems to act as if all workers are identical, interchangeable and machine-like.
 - In fact, Taylor presupposed that the workers in question will be exceptionally stupid.
- Topical Tangent: Mario Savio protested in 1964 that Berkeley students were being treated as machines.
- Taylor discusses “breaking the workman” as individuals, not as groups or gangs. However, this method is also standardized
 - **Soldiering** is the deliberate act of underworking
 - People tend to figure out the minimum accepted level of productivity
 - If people are on salary, that communicates a *benefit of the doubt* on the employer’s part. Ironically, people are often less productive when their work is more closely monitored
- Taylor makes the glaring (yet unsurprising) omission of giving workers an ownership stake in the company

Motion Study and *The Easier Way*

- “A little motion study around the house would help your housework.”
- Method is a more important factor than Worker

Quantity vs. Quality

- Quality is the *accuracy* of inspection, not simply the *number* of inspections made
- Example: *SixSigma*
 - Having less than one defect per million products. How does one achieve that level of consistency? The *rule of thumb* will not be conducive to this standard

- Quality then shifts from *uniqueness* of product to *uniformity* of product (the use of the word is turned around)

Post-Break Subjects

- **Ergonomics** is the “science of work”
 - Fitting the environment to the people, not the other way around.
- The **Hawthorne Effect**: In productivity experiments, the knowledge of being monitored may cause increased production, skewing results.
- Dreyfuss’ *The Measure of Man* (a reference book for human motion) had a large impact on the design of computer products
- Paul Fitts analyzed the tradeoffs in speed and accuracy, and determined **Fitts’ Law**
 - There is an alternative law that uses a square root instead of a logarithm
 - These laws have been implemented in computer interfaces
- Background information on Taylor
 - Taylor was fired from the Bethlehem Steel Company in 1901; Andrew Carnegie disliked scientific management
 - The backlash against Taylor was substantial, he put workers under enormous strain
 - Unions called Taylor’s methods of employee observation “a spy system”
- In contrast, the *Gilbreths* were much more humanist
 - studied the **science of bricklaying**.
 - They had 12 children and applied their motion studies to their own household.
 - Introduced ambidexterity to bricklaying, special scaffolding to reduce lifting
 - Reduced the number of motions for a bricklayer from 18 to 5 (and sometimes just 2).
 - Also came up with a way to keep track of the number of bricks a bricklayer laid.
 - Gilbreth emphasized **motion**, whereas Taylor emphasized **time**.

- **“Therblig”** (Gilbreth spelled backward (almost)), a step of worker motion.
- *Standardization* is the same response to every situation
- *Specialization* is the specific assignments of tasks so that performance will be refined.