Video Game in the Era of Surveillance: From Society of Control, Simulation to Individuation

Yun Ting Lo
Auditory.scenes@gmail.com

Keywords

Surveillance, Gilbert Simondon, Gilles Deleuze, relational ontology, genesis

INTRODUCTION

By revisiting Gilles Deleuze's *Postscript of Society of Control* and philosophy of Gilbert Simondon, this paper tries to formulate a philosophical investigation and reflection between video game and surveillance. In *Postscript of Society of Control*, Deleuze reviews the notion of discipline society and counter-proposes a new form of control outside of Focault's discipline society that is not only about institutions, space or enclosure anymore. For Deleuze, computer will be the major force of control in our contemporary society. His prophetical reflection on society of control is not only foresee the contemporary landscape of computational and algorithmic surveillance; but it also hints and yet he does not foresee video game as a new form and space of experiencing, exercising and reenacting control and surveillance. In recent years, the issues of surveillance has been one of the key themes in game production. Ubisoft's Watch_Dogs franchise (2014 and 2016) is one of the current mainstream examples of how video game incorporating the theme of surveillance in video game. In this paper, with two recent video games from independent developers, *Orwell* (2016) and *Paper, Please* (2013), this paper shows that these two games correspond and echo the notion of control and surveillance of Foucault and Deleuze respectively and meanwhile, this paper affirms the power of simulation and Ian Bogost's procedural rhetoric that allows the players to understand the inscribed messages inside the game, to experience horror of power and surveillance and more importantly, to exercise power with what Ian Bogost called "possibility space". Grounded with this discussion, this paper also attempts to take a step further elaborating the relationship between video game and surveillance based on Deleuze's concept of modulation that reveals the close connection of the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon. This concept is introduced by Simondon in opposing hylomorphism since Aristotle. The notions of modulation refers to the process of individuation by the metaphor of mould and brick. For Simondon, individuation of an individual is continuous and reveals the inclusion of incompatibilities into new individuation; this philosophy has revealed in the Deleuze's article. This philosophical insight allows us to bring forth the relationship between video game and surveillance: it is not an arbitrary relation but there is, in Simondonian perspective, *genesis* between these two disparate systems through constituting resolution of the tension between these two systems. From this perspective, this article tries to articulate an relational thinking in video game and thinks video game as a system that brings in tensions, problematics and incompatibilities.

BIO

Lo Yun Ting (also known as his artist alias Edwin Lo) is an artist based in Hong Kong working with the notions of sound and listening in various contexts such as video game/engine, performance and installation. His current research interest is the inter-relation between philosophy of technology (especially Gilbert Simondon and Yuk Hui), game studies, ludology and art.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bardin, Andrea. Epistemology and Political Philosophy. Springer, 2015.

Barthélémy, Jean-Huges. "Fifty Key Terms in the Works of Gilbert Simondon". Gilbert Simondon: Being and Technology. Edited by Arne De Boever, Alex Murray and Jon Roffe. Edinburgh University Press, 2013. pp. 203-231.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control" October. Vol. 59, 1992, pp. 3-7.

Deleuze, Gilles. "On Gilbert Simondon" Desert Island and Other Texts. Edited by David Lapoujade. Translated by Mike Taormina. Semiotext(e), 2004. pp. 86-89.

Frasca, Gonzalo. "Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology" Video/Game/Theory. Edited by Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron. Routledge, 2003, pp. 221-235.

Hui, Yuk. "Modulation after Control" New Formations. Vol. 84-85, pp. 74-91.

Galloway, Alexander. Gaming. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Bogost, Ian. "The Rhetoric of Video Games" The Ecology of Games. Edited by Katie Salen Tekinbaş, MIT press, 2008, pp. 227-140.

Woods, Stewart. "Loading the Dice: The Challenge of Serious Videogames" Game Studies. Vol. 4, no.1, n.p, 2004

Sauvagnargues, Anne. Artmachines: Deleuze, Guattari, Simondon. Translated by Suzanne Verderber and Eugene W. Holland. Edinburgh University Press, 2016

Simondon, Gilbert. "The Genesis of the Individual," Incorporations. Edited by Jonathan Crary, and Sanford Kwinter, Zone Books, 1992.

Game

Pope, Lucas. Paper, Please. 3909 LLC. 2013.