Habit, Temporality and the Body as Movement: '5:2 your life'

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The popularity of the 5:2 diet in the UK in 2013 – where dieters eat normally for five days a week and 'fast' on the remaining two[1] – led *The Guardian* newspaper to run a series of articles exploring whether the fasting method would work across different spheres of life, including alcohol consumption, time spent on screens and worrying. Introducing the special section on 'How to 5:2 your life', self-help writer Oliver Burkeman suggests that the intermittent nature of the 5:2 plan is potentially helpful in 'habit change', that is, in breaking old and making new habits. Not only does the plan restrict a certain activity, it may also provide, Burkeman argues, the opportunity or impetus to come up with 'original new ways to spend your leisure time' (2013).

In this article, I explore the 5:2 plan in terms of the relationship between habit, temporality and matter through a focus on the somatechnics of the body in movement. More specifically, I make links between some of the recent work on the body and habit which suggests, broadly speaking, that habit is an important way of understanding the body, the social and the temporal,[2] and recent work on the body and animation and automation.[3] This latter set of literature explores how animation, traditionally the preserve of the human, is now also a capacity of non-human entities or technologies and, as such, raises questions as to whether the dichotomies of human/non-human, bodies/technologies and nature/culture can hold. I examine how a prevalent framing of the blurring of the distinction between animation and automation is to see various technologies as 'creeping' into the realm of the body, threatening to

turn humans into automations. However, through a focus on critical arguments about the impossibility of maintaining dichotomies, I argue that the 5:2 plan can be understood to emerge from an awareness of, and as a response to, a temporally and socially specific configuration of nature and culture, bodies and technologies, and animation and automation.[4]

I suggest that an attention to the dynamic boundaries of these dichotomies is particularly helpful for exploring the body *in movement*. As I will discuss below, work on both habit and animation and automation seeks to consider how bodies are always involved in a somatechnical process: habit involves a relationship between repetition and change, and the distinction between animation and automation traditionally revolves around a tension between life and movement on the one hand, and inertness and mechanism on the other. Moreover, the 5:2 plan can be understood as a self-help self-improvement programme, where the self and/or body becomes a project to be worked on (Featherstone 1991), and where such projects are oriented towards becoming different and better in the future. The self and/or body is therefore *in movement*; a process of moving forward, of changing habits so that bad ones are replaced with good ones.

In this article, I consider the temporalities of habit and unpack the futurity of habit. It is important to note the processual and future-oriented character of the self and/or body within such plans because of how self-improvement has come to be an imperative – that to which all selves and/or bodies should adhere or aspire, and to take into account the power relations involved in the ways in which this imperative is accessed and experienced differently by different selves and/or bodies (Coleman 2012). A point to be noted here then, is that the readership of *The Guardian* is generally liberal and middle class; the areas of life that their 5:2 feature addresses are not universal. In this sense, as others have pointed out (see for example Heyes 2007, Swan 2010), self-help and self-improvement projects are classed, requiring a particular kind of cultural capital to be seen as desirable and achievable. This point should be kept in mind throughout the article: the configurations of nature and culture, bodies and technologies, and animation and automation in the 5:2 plans that I discuss are specific to a particular privileged section of Britain.

The article begins by introducing the 5:2 plan in more detail and discussing this plan in terms of relations between bodies and technology, and animation and automation. It then examines these dichotomies in terms of two traditions of understanding habit: what

Tony Bennett *et al.* call a 'negative' tradition in which habit is conceived as 'automatic, unthinking repetition' (2013: 7), and an alternative tradition that emphasises change and creativity. It pays close attention to how nature and culture are seen to function in and through habit, and explores how, as change, habit can be understood as matter – that is, as the entanglement of nature and culture, bodies and technologies, animation and automation. This suggestion is developed via a focus on the temporalities of habit change, and an analysis of the kinds of movement involved in the 5:2 plan.

'How to 5:2 your life': Technology, Animation and Automation

The Guardian series 'How to 5:2 your life' is introduced by Oliver Burkeman (2013), writer of a weekly column in the Saturday magazine supplement of the newspaper called 'This column will change your life'. Burkeman is therefore well-known to readers for writing on social psychology, self-help culture, productivity and happiness. The lead paragraph to the introduction asks, 'What if the 5:2 diet wasn't only for weight loss? Could doing what you like for five days and being disciplined for two work with drinking, worrying or spending?' Burkeman argues that the 5:2 plan is popular with dieters because it offers a realistic method for disciplining food intake. In contrast to diets that restrict the consumption of food permanently and consistently, the 5:2 plan involves a different relationship between bodies, affects and food:

> because you're never more than 24 hours away from eating whatever you want, it's a way of eating less – and of being mindful about what you eat – that people actually stick to. It doesn't overtax your willpower; nor does it conjure images of a joyless life spent permanently without burgers. 'Conscious self-denial', Bertrand Russell wrote, 'leaves a man self-absorbed and vividly aware of what he has sacrificed'. The Fast Diet has a built-in remedy for that. (Burkeman 2013)

For Burkeman, the intermittent discipline of the 5:2 plan is a potentially helpful means of breaking old and making new habits. While cautioning that '[t]his moderate sort of approach won't work for everyone, nor for every bad habit: sometimes, going cold turkey is preferable', the 5:2 diet offers a number of reasons that 'habit change' might be easier than with 'extreme self-denial'. The 5:2 diet is 'simple and therefore easy to remember – but it's also precise, and therefore easy to follow'. It is thus easy to be disciplined on '2 days'. Moreover, as

I indicated above, in moving from discussing the 5:2 diet to the possibility of a 5:2 *life*, Burkeman suggests that habit change is potentially easier with this method because it

> also introduces a challenging constraint, of the kind of thing likely to provoke creative thinking: if you're allowed to consume only 500 calories a day, or banned from frittering the evening on the internet, you might come up with some imaginative new recipes, or original new ways to spend your leisure time.

This idea of the 'challenging constraint' is interesting, and I will return to it in more detail in the next section. Here, however, it is worth considering some of the reasons for the popularity of the 5:2 plan. Why might there be a need to change habits now? Are there particular kinds of habits that need changing?

Articles in the 'How to 5:2 your life' section cover applying the principles of the 5:2 diet to: watching television; drinking alcohol; relationships; spending; fitness; worrying; screen time; and managing your carbon footprint.[5] While the various journalists and writers approach their 5:2 task differently, and describe it in more or less humourous ways, each of them reflect on their reasons for taking up their particular fasts. For example, in the article on the spending fast, feature writer and commentator Sophie Heawood (2013) describes herself as someone who 'really, really love[s] spending money', so that despite a busy and successful career, her bank account is always in debit. In the article on his alcohol diet, writer Phil Daoust (2013) explains that while 'most of the time I actively enjoy it', '[t]here are moments when I'm not entirely sure why I'm drinking, when it feels like a chore: I've started, so I'll finish'. The television fast is described by Stuart Heritage (2013) as a way to experiment with television being no longer 'the boss of you'. Perhaps most strikingly, in the article on the screen diet, undertaken by herself and her three children, Emma Cook (2013) describes her interest in trying out the fast as emerging from how 'technology was taking over our family', resulting in a 'spooky' 'lack of interaction':

> No conversation, arguing or laughter. Instead, the perpetual soundtrack of shrieky American voices and inane CBeebies theme tunes. I wasn't exactly a great role model, enchanted by my new Mac Air and iPhone, checking my emails while they did their homework.

In all of these cases, the bad habits in need of change are framed in terms of unhealthy or unsatisfactory relations between bodies on the

one hand and technologies on the other. One way in which to understand these experimentations with the 5:2 plan then, are to see them as emerging from a sense that various technologies – food, alcohol, money, television, screens – are encroaching upon everyday life, and as a way to stop such 'technology creep'. I am here working with a deliberately open definition of technology as machines, devices or substances that are conceived as in some way additive or supplementary to the human body. Despite their variation, the 'bad habits' of the 5:2 plans can be understood in this way, as they have become problematic because they are indulged in to excess, and therefore must be managed.

While the division between the human body and technology that is assumed in seeing technology as additive or supplementary does not map precisely onto the division between nature and culture, it is helpful nevertheless to think through these two sets of divisions together. As Patricia Clough among others has pointed out, the binary opposition between technology and nature, where technology is seen as distorting and destroying nature, has a long history.[6] Clough explains this division via Heidegger's argument that technology 'is to be understood in terms of the distinction of *techné* from *physis* or nature' (2000: 87):

> For Heidegger, *techné* is not merely technological or mechanical. Like *physis, techné* brings forth; but it does so differently than does *physis. Physis* brings forth of itself, whereas *techné* makes use of another, the craftsman or artist, the human labourer. (2000: 87)

Clough goes on to note how, for Heidegger, modern technology threatens nature; it 'uses up' or 'obliterates' human labour (2000: 87). Here then, technology and nature (humans, human labour) are opposed. This opposition between *techné* and *physis* or nature does not lie in the fact that the former is inert and the latter alive, as '*techné* brings forth'. Rather, the opposition lies in their differing capacities for bringing forth: *physis* 'brings forth of itself' whereas *techné* 'makes use of another' – and, in this 'making use of' threatens to obliterate the human.

These distinctions between nature/culture and humans/ technology resonate with the ways in which the opposition between animation and automation has conventionally been framed. Jackie Stacey and Lucy Suchman define animation as 'the capacity to bring things to life through movement', traditionally seen as the reserve of human beings (2012: 16), and automation as referring to

'the replacement of human bodies with machinic labour' (2012: 2). They argue that the concepts of animation and automation become especially significant as automations become more lifelike (in the design of robots, for example, and in representations such as *Toy Story 2*) and humans become more automated. Vivian Sobchack describes this situation as such:

> We now live in a culture pervaded by perceptive and cognitive computational machines (perhaps better called 'entities') that have achieved such power and agency as to have achieved what some might call 'a life of their own'. In contrast, we also now live in a culture in which our 'humanity' is increasingly (to use a phrase familiar to animators) 'squashed and stretched' by forces beyond our control; and thus it often seems that our lives no longer quite belong to us, that we have become increasingly powerless and, however frenzied, increasingly inert. (2009: 375)

One of the key points of Stacey and Suchman's argument is that in contemporary culture the boundaries between animation and automation are being disrupted. In Sobchack's description, for instance, animation in humans is being 'squashed and stretched' and features of being animated, including power, agency and autonomy, are now also part of the life of machines. In this way, animation is no longer the preserve of humans as different 'things' may also be animated, and have the power to bring other things to life – or indeed to make them powerless, inert and effectively 'dead'. Returning to the distinction between *physis* and *techné*, part of the threat of technology comes from its automation; technology is in danger of turning the human body into an automation. According to such a view, the technologies discussed in *The Guardian* feature are potentially alien to and destructive of nature: contemporary 'technology creep' is in danger of taking over life, making it difficult to have a healthy or satisfactory (sense of the) body. There is an uncomfortable, possibly threatening, relationship between technology and the body.

However, Stacey and Suchman argue that if a clear divide between animation and automation is being disrupted, it is difficult to think of animation and automation as continuing to belong in separate spheres (human/non-human). Drawing in part on theories of bodies as processual and relational rather than as pre-existing possessive individuals (2012: 17), and in part on contemporary practices and representations that these theories are attempting to make sense of,

Stacey and Suchman suggest that animation and automation are entangled and co-constituted: 'human and machine are mutually constitutive (instead of one animating the other) and agency is no longer the property of the autonomous individual but is dispersed across multiple interactions' (2012: 33). As such, 'the boundary between bodies and things [is] much more porous' (2012: 33). The porous boundary between bodies and technologies is also theorised by Clough, who critiques Heidegger's oppositional understanding of nature and culture, humans and technology, and argues instead that

> nature and technology, body and machine, the virtual and the real, and the living and the inert might be understood in terms of *differential* relationships rather than oppositionals or even dialectical ones. ... [T]he body and the machine, the virtual and the real, and nature and technology are inextricably implicated, always already interlaced. (2000: 11)

As I will discuss below, a serious consideration of these theories that bodies and technologies are always already entwined and that life – animation, movement, bringing forth – is located not only in humans – in their agency and autonomy, for instance – but is distributed across (the relations between) all kinds of human and non-human bodies raises a number of questions. For example, how might the disruption of the boundaries between animation and automation be understood as part of a shift in the relations between humans and non-humans, living and mechinic things, nature and culture? And of what help is this re-conception of animation and automation to understanding the 5:2 plan?

Habit, Nature and Culture

In order to address these questions, returning to the issue of habit change is productive. Habit change, I suggest, is to be understood not in terms of oppositions between nature and culture, animation and automation, bodies and technologies, but as involving their entangled constitutive relationality. To begin to develop this suggestion, it is helpful to unpack the 'challenging constraint' that Burkeman identifies within the 5:2 plan: this is, as I have discussed, what he argues makes the plan conducive to habit change. The challenging constraint refers to how, importantly, the 5:2 plans are not only meant to replace the bad habits developed in relation to one specific activity or behaviour with good ones in that same

activity or behaviour, but also to involve habit change in other areas of life as well.

This logic of the challenging constraint is apparent in the different articles in *The Guardian*'s 'How to 5:2 your life' feature. For example, in the article on 'the spending fast', Heawood experiments for a month with spending on two days of the week only a quarter of what she usually would per day. Heawood states that she 'hated the stupid diet' so much that 'on week four I ditched the 5:2 to focus on my long-term expenses instead'. While ostensibly a failure, Heawood nevertheless expresses being 'truly grateful' to the 5:2 plan for making her 'look … at the smaller issues of daily spending [which] forced me to address some bigger issues instead'.

Likewise, reflecting on the application of the 5:2 diet to watching television, Heritage concludes that 'the diet was actually quite easy. I went out and saw people. I became a bit more self-aware. I started looking at my girlfriend when I talked to her. And really, what had I missed?' Heritage's conclusion is reached following a consultation with a psychologist;[7] discussing the difficulties that he was finding with the diet, including boredom and his attempts to 'cheat' by recording television programmes on the fast days and watching them on the non-fast days (alongside those days' programmes), he writes that the psychologist Philippa Perry

> diagnosed me with a massive case of Fomo (fear of missing out). To binge on last night's TV the next day was to miss the entire point of the exercise, Perry told me. I needed to cut my losses, forget about what was on last night and move on. She also advised me to use all this new free time positively, regardless of how bored I felt. 'Out of boredom comes ideas', she said. 'And ideas are good.'

In her article on the screen diet, Cook explains how it is her eldest child, aged ten, who initially finds the fast most difficult, describing him as 'morose, restless, roaming from room to room like a caged lion'. However, it is also this child who comes to appreciate the shifts in family interaction that the diet produced, comparing fast and feast days as 'the difference between sitting on the sofa with a screen and you [Cook] shouting at us all, or sitting at the kitchen table, drinking tea and chatting to you'. The screen diet involves changing habits with immediate family members as well as with screens. In all of these cases, the fasts are undertaken not only to halt or curb particular activities or behaviours: they also open up the possibility of developing new and better ones – social awareness, familial relations, 'bigger issues'.

Indeed, in the article on fitness, columnist Zoe Williams remarks on this feature of the plan explicitly:

> If you want to know whether the two-day-a-week principle works, it does; even that frequency is habit-forming. It creates other healthful habits; I started making ridiculous snacks for myself – dainty asparagus spears on rye bread – as if trying to tempt into appetite an invalid from the royal family. The sense of being rationed makes you work harder, and for longer, and makes it all feel like less of a chore. (2013)

Williams' comments here echo those in Burkeman's introduction (quoted above) and also point to the relations between habit, frequency and duration – in this case, how long the habit changes enabled by the plan will be adhered to). According to Bennett *et al.*, habit is key to understanding 'the relations between the human and the non-human' (2013: 5) and 'for interrogating body-society relationships' (2013: 5). Habit is also central to understanding the ways in which certain activities and behaviours become solidified – in and over time and in and through bodies – as well as how (human and non-human) capacities for change and adaptation are both restricted and governed, and opened up (2013: 6–8). As the experimenters with the 5:2 plan point out, and as I explore further below, habit entwines bodies, technologies and time.

Bennett *et al.* suggest that there are two broad evaluations of habit: 'negative' and what might be posed in distinction as 'positive'. Situating the negative tradition in Kant's conception of habit as 'automatic, unthinking repetition' (2013: 7), Bennett *et al.* argue that habit comes to 'serve ... as a key marker of the boundary line separating nature from culture as the historically accumulating realm of free human agency' (2013: 7, reference omitted). In other words, habit is seen as 'a negative counterpoint to the processes of human self-making through which freedom is progressively won' (2013: 7): habit restricts the ways in which humans progress towards freedom. In this way of thinking, habit is seen as restrictive; it limits the capacities of humans to deliberately and consciously exercise will power over automatic, unthinking repetition. Importantly, as Bennett *et al.* (2013) note, habit highlights the line that separates nature and culture and poses the question of how far humans are governed by nature (here, automatic, unthinking), and how far culture (here, history, agency, freedom) enables humans to overcome nature.

The relationship between nature and culture highlighted by habit is addressed in a different way in the other 'positive' tradition identified by Bennett *et al.* Rather than working in the Kantian

tradition,[8] this other mode of conceptualising habit is traced from Ravaisson to Deleuze via Bergson (2013: 7–8).[9] Here, habit acts not so much as a 'boundary line' separating nature and culture, as it does a 'nature-culture *hinge*' (2013: 8, my emphasis). Bennett *et al.* quote Brian Massumi:

> Habit lies at the hinge of nature and these divergent lines of culture. Habits are socially or culturally contracted. But they reside in the matter of the body, in the muscles, nerves, and skin, where they operate autonomously. Although they are contracted in social/cultural context, they must be considered self-active autonomies: spontaneous self-organisations that operate on a level with movements of matter. (cited in Bennett *et al.* 2013: 8).

Massumi suggests that to examine how habit is at the hinge of nature and culture, it is necessary to look at 'the matter of the body'. This 'turn' to matter is now widely acknowledged,[10] with theorists arguing that matter be conceived as inextricably and simultaneously natural/cultural (see, e.g., Barad 2007; Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Coole and Frost 2010). In terms of habit, this would require a refusal of a clear or oppositional separation between nature and culture. Habit is not natural (automatic, unthinking, bodily) and then, successfully or not, controlled by culture (rationality, civilising, conscious agency); rather, it 'reside[s] in . . . muscles, nerves, and skin'. Habit is at once natural and 'socially or culturally contracted'[11].

   An example of habit as both nature/culture from the reports on 'How to 5:2 your life' is provided in Cook's article on the screen diet. Cook describes the 'three golden rules' to make the diet sustainable, provided to her by child and adolescent psychiatrist Richard Graham:[12]

> Stay active, stay active, stay active. 'This isn't about activity as distraction', he explained. 'It's drawing on your body in a different way, using your physical self on those days off and noticing how different it feels. Getting out and about is a good start.'

Staying active on 'fast' days is here explained as a means of using, or embodying, your body differently – in this instance, by 'getting out and about'. What is also significant here is that activity is situated in both the body ('using your physical self') and the mind ('noticing how different it feels'). In contrast to the 'negative' tradition of habit, whereby conscious will power is the means to change automatic, unthinking repetition, here the success of the screen diet is framed in terms of both nature and culture. Habit change occurs in the *matter* of the body.

The Matter of Habit: Assembling Bodies and Technologies

In the 'negative' tradition, habit is seen as automatic and unthinking; in the 'positive' tradition, it is viewed as change, creativity and potentiality. The former locates habit in nature, which is understood as passive and requiring the work of culture to alter. In this sense, although examining *human* habit, the 'negative' tradition sees habit as non-human; nature is automated (it repeats unthinkingly). The latter tradition, however, refuses to make such a clear division between nature and culture. Indeed, one of the reasons that the second tradition of habit might be posited as 'positive' is because rather than seeing habit as in some ways restrictive, it is instead intrinsically linked to change. As Elizabeth Grosz puts it when tracing the lineage between Ravaisson, Bergson and Deleuze's work, this tradition links habit to 'an ever-moving world. In a world of constant change, habits are not so much forms of fixity and repetition as they are modes of encounter, materiality and life' (2013: 217). Moreover, in theorising habit in relation to change, the 'positive' tradition refuses the elision of habit and mechanism altogether. As Grosz notes,

> habit is not regarded as that which reduces the human to the order of the mechanical, as in the works of, for example, Descartes, Kant and Sartre, but rather as a fundamentally creative capacity that produces the possibility of stability in a universe in which change is fundamental. (2013: 219)

Here, then, habit does not 'reduce . . . the human to the order of the mechanical', as habit is 'a fundamentally creative capacity'. This is not to suggest that habit is not repetitive – it 'produces the possibility of stability' – but, rather, that repetition is itself inherently creative, connected to difference (see Deleuze 2001).[13] In posing habit as non-mechanical repetition, what this suggests is that habits are 'self-active autonomies: spontaneous self-organisations that operate on a level with movements of matter' (Massumi, cited in Bennett *et al.* 2013: 8). Matter – as nature/culture – is creative, changing, oriented to difference and the virtual.

Thus, while it is possible to see the 5:2 plan as emerging out of an assumption that nature and culture are separate, that culture as technology is coming to impede and impinge on nature ('life'), and that the effect of this technology creep is human life itself becoming automated, it is more difficult to see the habit change that it indicates as working through a nature/culture, animation/automation split.

Rather than there being a division between nature and culture, animation and automation, the 5:2 plan involves these 'elements' as relations, as necessary ingredients for successful habit change. The habit change of the 5:2 plan does not involve human will-power overcoming culture, nor automation being held off by a reassertion of the human's capacity for animation. Rather, the habit change of the 5:2 plan involves *matter*, a constitutive set of relations between bodies and environments:

> Habits are the ways in which living beings accommodate more of their environments than the constitution of instincts generally permits: habits are how environments impact and transform the forms of life they accommodate and are themselves impacted and transformed by these forms of life. (Grosz 2013: 219)

Habits are extended to 'living beings' – in the terms that I have been developing, those human and non-human bodies that are capable of animation. These 'living beings' are in mutually accommodating and transforming relations with their environments. In this sense, it is not that environments impact negatively on living beings, or that living beings can hold off the environments that they are in. Instead, living beings are part of their environment, and these environments are part of living beings.

In terms of how I have suggested that the habit change of the 5:2 plan be understood then, it is not so much that technology is 'creeping' into life, but that life and technology are inevitably and integrally intertwined. Indeed, in *The Guardian* write-ups, while all of the experimenters suggest that new and positive habits have developed from following the 5:2 plan, none of the plans result in the contributors giving up entirely on what I have termed the technological bad habit (and some writers, such as Heritage, go back to their old routine, despite the creation of new habits whilst on the diet). Reflecting on the alcohol diet, Daoust reports that 'the ratio of boozy to sober days is more like 4:3' than 5:2, Cook records 'increasing the fast principle to weekend afternoons' but not giving up on screens altogether, and Jon Ronson (2013) notes the capacity of the worry diet to limit but not stop altogether his tendency to anxiety. Of course, this feature of the 5:2 plan is the reason for its popularity and success: rather than giving up certain foods altogether, the original 5:2 food diet plan involves 'intermittent discipline' (Burkeman 2013). Technologies – food, alcohol, screens, worrying – are therefore not banned, but in Grosz's terms, there is an 'accommodation' between technology and bodies. What this suggests

then, is that technology and the body, culture and nature, animation and automation are thoroughly entangled.

The Body as Movement: Habit, Change, Time

What significance does the argument I have made so far regarding habit and the entanglement of bodies and technology have for a concern with the body in movement? In what ways is the 5:2 plan relevant to thinking about the body and movement? One of the reasons for attending closely to the popularity of the 5:2 diet and its potential extension across other aspects of life is that, as a form of self-help, the plan necessarily involves the body as a site of change. As such, the plan is concerned with improving the body, moving the body forward to a better future through creating different habits with and around technology. Furthermore, studying *The Guardian*'s 'How to 5:2 your life' feature indicates something interesting and important about the extent to which self-help and self-improvement are engrained in contemporary culture. That habit change is necessary and desirable is the assumed starting point; the 5:2 plan is the method for achieving this change in a realistic way, given that other diets demanding 'extreme self-denial' (Burkeman 2013) have proved themselves impractical and unworkable. In both of these ways, an analysis of the plan sheds some light on how the body is conceived as a continual project to be worked on.

Examining the plan via an approach that takes up the 'positive' tradition of habit, however, shifts attention away from an understanding of the body as a passive material or blank canvas that is shaped by the self or the mind. One of the points that I have attempted to emphasise here is that it is not that the self or mind is separate from the body, working on it, turning it into a project, but that the body is both nature and culture. Habit is and works through a nature/culture 'hinge', through 'the matter of the body', where matter is 'active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable' (Coole and Frost 2010: 9). Far from being only restrictive, habit involves change – it involves the body in and as movement, as Grosz notes:

> Habit not only anchors a site of regularity in a universe of perpetual change; it initiates change in the apparently unchanging, it opens up the possibility of understanding the very force of temporality itself, the force that adheres the past to the present and orients both to the possibilities of action in the future. (2013: 233)

Grosz's emphasis on change focuses attention on the issue of time that, as I have indicated above, is important to consider in terms of the body *in movement. As change, habits are inherently temporal.*

As I have discussed, one way to understand the temporality of habit is to see habit as endless repetition, where repetition is the reproduction of the same. According to the 'positive' tradition of thinking however, repetition is always involved in the creation of difference: repetition involves change. In the sense that habit is movement and change, and that this movement and change is not in opposition to but integral to repetition, it is worth examining in more detail the (potential) temporalities of habit. Grosz identifies 'two [temporal] vectors at work in habits' (2013: 221):

> a temporality that is open-ended, in which the future is not contained within the present, but where the present established certain regularities to anticipate what the future may involve; and a living being whose activities can be modified by the incorporation of stereotyped or stylized behaviours. (2013: 221)

The second 'vector' Grosz distinguishes refers to the ways in which the habits of 'living beings' can be altered by 'incorporating ... stereotyped or stylized behaviours' into the matter of the body. This can be understood in terms of advice given by the psychiatrist to Cook, where habit change is about 'drawing on your body in a different way, using your physical self ... and noticing how different it feels'.

The first vector, the open-ended temporality whereby there is an anticipatory relationship between the present and future, can be understood as part of the conception of the world that the 'positive' tradition of thinking on habit has, where the conception is of change and movement. For Grosz (whose work has elaborated this tradition), 'habit [is] fundamentally creative and addressed to the future rather than consolidating the past' (2013: 217). Such a conception of habit does not render the past redundant, as the past is always-already contained within each present and future moment (see for example Grosz 2013: 227; Coleman 2009). Rather, what this conception of habit attends to is the ways in which there is always difference in repetition, and that change and movement are future oriented.

Just as the understanding of the past as contained within the present and future disrupts the idea of time as linear progression – moving from the past into the present and on into the future – so too does the conception of the future within the 'positive' tradition of thinking about habit. Rather than the future being that which unfolds,

steadily and directly from the past and present, the future is instead conceived as the virtual; as potentiality or possibility. The relationship between the future/virtual and the present/actual is not linear progression, in which the future/virtual follows on from the present/actual; instead, the virtual is 'a momentary indeterminate force, surrounding actuals like a cloud' (Grosz 2013: 230). The future/virtual and present/actual exist – potentially – at the same time.

Such a conception of temporality is important in terms of habit because it suggests that while habit is future-oriented, it is not a smooth and straightforward line of progression. Rather, habit is an *assemblage* of different temporalities: of the past in the present; of the present/actual; and of the potentiality of the future/virtual. As Grosz argues:

> Habit is change contracted, compressed, contained. In this sense, habit's contracting capacities outstrip the change it is to address. It remains there as possible or potential action even when the change which brought it about ceases. It thus anticipates a possible change. It is, in other words, a potentiality, a possibility, a virtual mode of addressing a future change (2013: 220–21).

As an assemblage, habit is change, where this change has happened (and might have ceased), is present (is contracted) and is a potentiality (an anticipation of what might also or further be different).

This understanding of the different temporalities of habit might be what Williams points to in her comments on habit formation. Here, she describes how the 'frequency' or repetition of exercising on two days per week works ('even that frequency is habit-forming') and that the habit change of exercising itself opens up other habits ('[i]t creates other healthful habits'). There are then different temporalities involved in the habit change that Williams experiences and describes: a temporality of frequency, where an activity or behaviour (exercising) is repeated; a temporality of change, where old habits (not exercising) are replaced with new ones (exercising); a temporality of the habit enduring ('The sense of being rationed makes you work harder, and for longer, and makes it all feel like less of a chore'); and a temporality of making other habit changes (eating healthily). While these temporalities of change may all be understood as oriented to the future, this future is experienced differently and via different practices. The orientation to the future that is understood in this conception of habit involves change as movement – not as a necessary moving forwards (as linear progression would suggest), but as movement inclined towards the virtual (where the virtual is not 'beyond' the actual in the sense of following on from it, but is the 'cloud' that

'surrounds' the actual). Habit change is movement towards the virtual. Understood in terms of the 'positive' tradition of habit – where the body is a force, a process of change – the body *is* movement.

This conception of the body as movement is important to consider with regards to what the various 5:2 diets imply and involve – that is habit change, shifting bad habits into good ones, and through this change opening up new habits. To experiment with the diets is therefore to commit to habit change, to actualising the virtual differently (becoming slimmer or fitter, for example, spending less, spending less time on screens and more with family members, and so on). In exploring the 5:2 plan in terms of habit *and* the porous lines between automation and animation, nature and culture, the body and technology, my aim has been to highlight how the plans are not only attempts to control technology creep, but also to set up and 'accommodate' relations and rhythms between bodies and technologies: this is to attend to how and why a commitment to habit change, to actualising the virtual differently via the 5:2 plan, might have become significant; that is, to think about the relevance of the body as (certain kinds of) movement *now*.

Notes

1. The 'fast diet', otherwise known as the 5:2 diet, became popular following a Horizon documentary, *Eat, Fast, Live Longer*, first screened on BBC2 on 6 August 2012, featuring medical journalist Michael Mosley. A book, *The Fast Diet*, co-authored by Mosley and food and fashion writer Mimi Spencer followed in January 2013, with a recipe book written by Spencer in April 2013. A website, with dedicated forums, The Fast Diet, was also launched in 2013, along with Twitter and Facebook accounts. There is controversy over whether 'fast' is the appropriate term to use for this diet, as rather than avoiding all food, men consume up to 600 calories and women 500 calories on '2' days on this regime.

2. Tony Bennett, Francis Dodsworth, Greg Noble, Mary Poovey and Megan Watkins (2013), 'Habit and Habituation: Governance and the Social', *Body & Society*, 19:2–3.

3. Jackie Stacey and Lucy Suchman (2012), 'Animation and Automation – The Liveliness and Labours of Bodies and Machines', *Body & Society*, 18:1.

4. I therefore examine the 5:2 plan through a series of dichotomies: nature/culture, the body/technology, and animation/automation. While these dichotomies do not neatly map onto each other (nature is not synonymous with the body for example, and depending on the specific approach, culture may be understood in terms of animation or automation), they nevertheless resonate with each other and, in being thought together, can helpfully illuminate both the appeal and functioning of the 5:2 plan.

5. The articles can be accessed through *The Guardian*'s website at http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/series/how-to-5-2-your-life (last accessed 20 November 2013).

6. See Clough (2000) on the implications of this understanding of technology as in binary opposition to nature for some postmodernist and cultural theory.

7. Every article in the '5:2 your life' series includes the writer speaking or visiting an expert in their field.

8. Bennett *et al.* trace this lineage from Descartes through to 'complex phenomenological accounts' in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu, and to some post-Foucauldian arguments (see 2013: 7).

9. My reference to the positive tradition of habit then is not to suggest that it sees habit as good; rather, I am suggesting that a connection be made between the lineage of conceiving habit from Ravaisson, Bergson and Deleuze, and the ways in which power operates as productive or creative (Foucault 1991; Lash 2010), and that matter is conceived in affirmative terms (Coole and Frost 2008). This is signalled by placing 'positive' in inverted commas.

10. This is not to claim that this turn is widely accepted or agreed upon. For critiques of the new materialism, see, for example, Sara Ahmed (2008), Maureen McNeil (2011) and Nikki Sullivan (2012).

11. This conception of matter as at once nature and culture is also helpful for thinking through how technology and the body might map onto the nature/culture distinction. Here, as discussed above in relation to Clough's work, the body is posited as nature, and technology as culture (and therefore supplementary). In this case, it is culture/technology that poses the threat to humans, in turning humans into automations.

12. Graham is consulted because he launched a technology addiction programme in 2010 (see Cook 2013).

13. Indeed, this is what Lisa Blackman describes in her analysis of the 'paradox' (2012: 187) of habit in the work of Gabriel Tarde, where habit refers 'to custom, sedimentation, discipline through repetition, as well as providing the conditions of possibility for the new, creativity and innovation' (2012: 195). Tarde's work is only one of the foci of Blackman's illuminating article, which examines the paradox of habit in recent work on affect, as well as in histories of cognition in psychology. See also Weiss (2008) on the paradoxical nature of habit, and Metcalfe and Gane (2010) on the roles of repetition, ritual and discipline on creative practices.

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