FRIENDSHIP
ON FASCISM, CONSENSUS
& THE POLITICS OF PHILOSOPHY

0. When the political right declares the political left to be the "true fascists" in the midst of our contemporary culture wars, they are perhaps recognising their own aptitude for producing an internal consensus in contrast to the left's inability to agree & its readiness to eject everything which does not wholly coincide with itself. This is, of course, to suggest that fascists can't agree. The truth is that *they must*.

Here, already, the first of our paradoxes emerges. This essay will attempt to grapple with many.

1. What defines the popular conception of fascism today is itself largely in contention. Generally speaking, fascism seems to be defined by an indeterminate intolerance & the forced suppression of any opposition. Whilst this is indeed a central tendency at the heart of any fascism, the nature of the suppression at hand – which underpins all such accusations, knocked back & forth across the political divide – is often vague & underdefined.

At the very least, we can say that perceptions of power are central. The left's ability to set the cultural agenda, arguably underappreciated within its own ranks, is seen as tyrannical by a right which nonetheless has a firmer grip on state power than it often likes to admit. Nonetheless, the ground from which both accusations of fascism are thrown is worth taking note of.

Holding these two perspectives together – with no comment made on the validity of the arguments which constitute them – we begin to see a picture of two opposing forces which give shape to our contemporary status quo; of two opposing sides which constitute the internal borders of *that which is*, warring over how far they can shift the Overton Window which frames our present moment.

However, with each side so entangled with the other, neither seems capable of shifting the overall situation so much as to rupture the cage-like equilibrium that they themselves constitute &, in turn, are constituted by: contemporary capitalism.

2. The shape-shifting nature of fascism today is a particularly contentious & telling example of contemporary capitalism's socio-political unruliness but it is not the only one. The very nature of our new & ever-growing populisms further clouds the waters that many leftist commentators have described

as a "crisis of democracy"[1] – that is, a crisis of consensus. "Brexit" appears as perhaps the most painfully obvious example of such a concept in the West, its conceptual meaning & processual outcome so contentious that it has persistently & repeatedly humiliated the political process in the United Kingdom over the last three years. We can also extend our view outwards & see the same dissolution of meaning affecting everything from the political philosophies of "neoliberalism," "communism" or even "accelerationism."

As each term or concept is passed around from group to group, rising to the surface of public discourse by virtue of this promiscuity, we watch with horror as each word tumbles into meaninglessness, where one group's gospel is another's shameful misuse. This is a situation we are used to seeing, of course, in various different contexts, but to see it as a central trap from which contemporary politics cannot seem to wrest itself is depressing to many. Indeed, defining contemporaneity in itself as the temporally progressive shoreline of a universalised thinking, we find ourselves in a moment of traumatic untimeliness through which discourses & the concepts that fuel them become fatally entwined in a mutually destructive death-spiral, both seemingly incapable of affecting the other to the degree that we have long been told is necessary, each diluting the structural analyses of the other in the popular imagination. Consensus becomes both weapon & shield for all sides who proclaim possession of the majority's support whilst ultimately finding it impotent as various positions go to war with one another over minor differences of opinion. We watch helplessly as Overton Windows overlap, creating a disorientating & kaleidoscopic politics.

So, what is to be done? How do we deal with words – with *concepts* – when their innate lack of consensual meaning is abused with such regularity? How do we stand by the words & concepts we deploy in our conversations, resisting their cooption, whilst retaining their potential for the production of the new? How do we remain true to our broader identifications with the left or the right when both umbrellas are so full of holes?

It is perhaps necessary for us to begin with an uncomfortable caveat: what if we consider our discourses & the ideas that underpin them to be, at first, processually distinct from one another?

3. This is an argument we find presented to us in *What is Philosophy?* – the final collaborative work by Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari. The pair

[1] See, for example, these three broadly leftist opinion pieces, all from 2018: Ganesh Sitaraman, "The three crisis of liberal democracy," *The Guardian*, 17 March 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/17/the-three-crises-of-liberal-democracy>; David Leonhardt, "The Growing Crisis of Democracy," *The New York Times*, 17 October 2018: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/opinion/democracy-voter-registration.html>; Michael Walzer, "The Crisis of Democracy is a Crisis of the Left," *Public Seminar*, 13 November 2018: <http://www.publicseminar.org/2018/11/the-crisis-of-democracy-is-a-crisis-of-the-left/>.

begin by skewering the present dilemma through which we now live – &, in many ways, have always lived. Whilst the implications of this dilemma are implicit – & they are wise not to inflame an unproductive separation between fields of knowledge & understanding – it seems they are, at first, hoping to hold philosophy & politics apart from one another in order to identify the ground from which they both emerge.

In one particularly telling passage from the introduction to the book, Deleuze & Guattari write – damningly, it seems, & without mincing words – that philosophy cannot "find any final refuge in communication, which only works under the sway of opinions in order to create "consensus" & not concepts."[2] Communication, in this sense, becomes the process of eliminating discursive difference whereas, for Deleuze especially, writing in his book *Difference & Repetition*, the aim of philosophy should always be to "eliminate all presuppositions" which are "contained in opinions."[3]

The implications of this for politics soon become clear. Deleuze & Guattari go on to declare:

> The idea of a Western democratic conversation between friends has never produced a single concept. The idea [of the concept] comes, perhaps, from the Greeks, but they distrusted it so much, & subjected it to such harsh treatment, that the concept was more like the ironical soliloquy bird that surveyed the battlefield of destroyed rival opinions (the drunken guests at the banquet).[4]

The Greeks' distrust of the concept, in this sense, comes from the concept's aversion to concensus (with the latter taking shape in idealised Platonic forms). For Deleuze & Guattari, the task of the concept is, instead, to rupture consensus, in the form of the status quo, making the concept a vector through which we might produce the new – produce *difference* – which, in turn, reproduces & extends itself in being constantly challenged & held in contention.

Whilst it may make us uncomfortable to acknowledge it today, what Deleuze & Guattari are arguing is that democracy & philosophy, despite both being heavily associated with the Greeks, share no other original binding. They are instead grounded by an original difference – the difference between concept & process – &, for Deleuze in particular, the primacy of the concept must be maintained.[5] This is not to discard democracy but

[2] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 6.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) 171.

[4] Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 6.

[5] Deleuze would comment on the nature of this difference between concept & process

rather includes the concept of democracy within itself. We must not allow the *concept of democracy* to be subsumed by the horrifically contaminated *process of liberal democracy* as it is presently enacted by the state.

4. This skepticism towards the democratic process can be found today on both the left & the right of political philosophy, & it remains a controversial position in each instance. On the one hand, we might look to Nick Land's emphatically anti-democratic text, *The Dark Enlightenment*, which considers the ways in which capitalism, allowed off its democratised leash, can help "a 21st-century post-demotist society [recover] from democracy, much as Eastern Europe sees itself as recovering from Communism."[6] On the other hand, we can consider the communist writings of Jodi Dean, who has repeatedly argued that "democracy is so intimately tied up with... 'communicative capitalism' that every attempt from the left to re-appropriate the term, to give it a more radical meaning & to distinguish it from the electoral regimes of representative democracy has to fail."[7]

As controversial as these arguments often are, they are by no means new to the realm of political philosophy. We might also look to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche – perhaps one of the most well-known modern philosophers to be critical of democracy. As with Dean & Land, the issue with an idealised form of democracy for Germany's great moral genealogist is that, in resting on its laurels, it becomes that which it is meant to help us resist. Nietzsche points to the Christian Church, in particular, as that sociopolitical entity which came to dominate & tyrannise the world precisely because of its democratisation.[8] In his book *On the Genealogy of Morality*,

throughout many of his writings. For instance, ending his second book on Cinema, he writes that a "theory of cinema is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to & which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices, the practice of concepts in general having no privilege over others." It is through this same sense of a giving-rise-to that Deleuze understands political philosophy. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Robert Galeta (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 287.

6 Nick Land, *The Dark Enlightenment*: <http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>. Land writes: "Democracy & 'progressive democracy' are synonymous, & indistinguishable from the expansion of the state. [...] Since winning elections is overwhelmingly a matter of vote buying, & society's informational organs (education & media) are no more resistant to bribery than the electorate, a thrifty politician is simply an incompetent politician, & the democratic variant of Darwinism quickly eliminates such misfits from the gene pool. This is a reality that the left applauds, the establishment right grumpily accepts, & the libertarian right has ineffectively railed against."

7 Thomas Biebricher & Robin Celikates, "Saying 'We' Again: A Conversation with Jodi Dean on Democracy, Occupy & Communism," *Critical Legal Thinking*, 6 November 2012: <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2012/11/06/saying-we-again-a-conversation-with-jodi-dean-on-democracy-occupy-&-communism/>.

8 See Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules & Form-of-Life* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013) for a more contemporary argument of this position, in which Agamben argues that the Church's attempts to control its independent monastic dioceses

Nietzsche notes how the establishment of Christianity as a world religion shows us that "the morality of the common people has triumphed" – the morality of "'the slaves', the 'plebians', 'the herd.'" However, echoing Marx, Nietzsche is unsettled by & cynical about this successful intoxication of the masses, which the Church today "rather slows down & blocks the passage of... instead of accelerating it."[9]

Why? Why temper this revolutionary sentiment? In his early notebooks, Nietzsche writes that Christianity "had to be democratised" – that is, stabilised – in order to succeed on its quest for world domination. This is not a positive process, however. Nietzsche characterises democratisation as a "slow struggle... whereby everything profound, esoteric, accessible to the talented individual [is] extirpated." He concludes that whilst it continues to produce an intoxicating "optimism," making its followers feel good about themselves, "purgatory & κατάστασις" are nonetheless Christianity's primary creations.[10]

The question becomes: how can we embrace this need for difference & the new without wholly dismissing the principles we associate with our democracies (even as they lie in tatters)? How can we challenge the counter-productive presuppositions of our present moment without opening the door to that which is "new" only by virtue of the unprecedented nature of its own conservatism? And again, is this not the question that haunts every corner of our politics in our present moment? Nietzsche, Deleuze & others have a concept ready & waiting for just such a question but it is a concept which requires considerable exploration. It is a concept which, in this context, has remained somewhat maligned, perhaps due to it appearing to be cloyingly sentimental. It is the concept of the friend.[11]

5. The friend, for Nietzsche, is a peculiar figure. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he writes of the friend as that "third [who] prevents the conversation of

likewise brought to heel Christianity's originally revolutionary sentiments.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Revised Student Edition, 2007) 19.

[10] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, eds. Raymond Geuss & Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 14. The exact meaning of κατάστασις, in this context, is unclear but the translators suggest in an accompanying footnote that it connotes a sense of orderliness or of everything being in its right place. This non-Greek speaker's own attempts at translating the word find it invoking the words "state" or "situation" & so I am interpreting the word as referring to a kind of "stasis." However, the translator's confusion seems to come from the word's proximity to "purgatory" (alternatively translated as "limbo") which seems to already contain this association. It is perhaps the safest option to defer to the original translator's own uncertainty.

[11] The friend is a concept that is perhaps doubly ruined in the popular imagination for anyone whose cultural consciousness remains haunted by a certain late-naughties British sitcom. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-5fdrBXinI>.

the two from sinking into the depths." He continues, however, in almost Machiavellian terms: "If one wants a friend, then one must also want to wage war for him: & in order to wage war, one must *be able* to be an enemy"; "In one's friend one should have one's best enemy."[12]

The concept of the friend is often characterised as little more than a recurring quirk in an already strange book, in stark contrast to Nietzsche's more famous concepts that are also introduced within it. And yet the friend takes on a particular resonance in later being associated with the concept of the overman. Nietzsche writes (or rather Zarathustra decrees) that the friend shall be "your festival of the earth & an anticipation of the overman"; "in your friend you shall love the overman as your cause."[13]

The overman, being that goal which humanity sets itself in its own image, its own overcoming, is often taken to be a philosophical call for the utopian transcendence of our present selves into a new nature, but here the overman finds its grounding in the immanence of the friend who is at once already the other & "I." As Deleuze would later write, Nietzsche's concept of the friend "must be interpreted in a strange way: the friend, says Zarathustra, is always a third person in between "I" & "me" who pushes me to overcome myself & to be overcome in order to live."[14]

Returning to *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze & Guattari echo this articulation when they poignantly argue that the philosopher, in hoping to produce difference through concepts, must be a *friend* to the concepts that they both pick up & produce; philosophers must be "friends of wisdom."[15] This is not to say the philosopher should strive to possess wisdom as an object, but rather argues that they might overcome it & *be overcome by* it. They continue to argue, further echoing this point, that the philosopher is nothing but the "potentiality of the concept."[16] The friend, then, is an eerie figure – an absent presence.[17] In being between "I" & "me," the friend does not describe a "person" *as such* but rather a "conceptual personae," a hypothetical being of pure Thought who arrives from the future; a latent intensity within an "image of thought that will be occupied by [other] concepts."[18]

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, eds. Adrian Del Caro & Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 40.

[13] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 45.

[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 1986) 5-6.

[15] Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 3.

[16] Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 5.

[17] A definition I am borrowing from Mark Fisher's *The Weird & the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016)

[18] Deleuze & Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 61.

6. The missing links between Nietzsche & Deleuze & Guattari's conceptions of friendship are Georges Bataille & Maurice Blanchot – & it is the latter in particular who Deleuze & Guattari acknowledge as the primary source of their conceptual understanding of the friend in this sense. In writing on this Nietzschean figure, Blanchot preempts the apparent paradoxes of Deleuze & Guattari's own formulation. Blanchot asks, if no concept has ever been produced by a democratic conversation between friends, then: "*How could one agree to speak to this friend?*"[19] Having ruptured the common senses by which we understand "agreement," "communication" & "friendship," what is left? Are we left alone to crash upon the shores of our own subjectivity? We certainly find ourselves encountering a kind of nihilism but this should not forestall action. Blanchot continues:

> We must give up trying to know those to whom we are linked by something essential; by this I mean we must greet them in the relation with the unknown in which they greet us as well, in our estrangement. Friendship, this relation without dependence, without episode, yet into which all of the simplicity of life enters...This is thought's profound grief. It must accompany friendship into oblivion.[20]

Here, philosophies of difference, applied to our politics, find their unground in a solidarity without similarity. To communicate with this friend, as Nietzsche has already demonstrated in his talk of war & enemies, is not to seek the "democratic conversation" that Deleuze & Guattari have previously derided, but it need not be predicated by hostility. It is instead to engage without presupposition; to communicate through risk; through chance, with chance itself being "a friend who visits his friend, a friend who will be asked back, a friend of destiny whose destiny itself assures the eternal return as such."[21]

   The implication here is perhaps less complex than we might at first anticipate. Under what circumstances do we communicate with the actual (non-conceptual) "friends" who orbit our lives? Certainly not through "Universals," as Deleuze & Guattari term that which we might think of here as "small talk," in its being governed by common sense & sensibilities. This is not communication but an exchange of predictable platitudes. To be a friend to someone we must get to know them & then, perhaps, take them somewhere new – a movement reciprocated between beings again & again like a dicethrow. It is a communication that Maurice Blanchot himself would call an "infinite conversation" – a mode of being constituted by "an

[19] Maurice Blanchot, "Friendship" in *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 289

[20] Blanchot, "Friendship" in *Friendship*, 291-292.

[21] Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 26.

uninterrupted line that inscribes itself while interrupting itself"[22]

For Georges Bataille – one of Blanchot's closest philosophical friends – the nature of this communication is articulated much more clearly. It is that act of relation which constitutes the battle-ready Nietzschean friend in that it "cannot take place without wounding or defiling"; "cannot take place between one full & intact being & another: it wants beings who *question* being in themselves."[23] This communication "only takes place *between two beings at risk* – lacerated, suspended, both leaning over nothingness."[24] The risk of communication – that is, the existential risk (whether virtual or actual) that communication casts upon those beings engaged within it – is nonetheless a necessary risk & one to be championed. The alternative – a life of silence wherein the ego folds back on itself – is surely the greater evil. For Bataille, only this risk has "the virtue of exploring very far in advance of the possible, without prejudicing the result, granting the *future* alone, to its free expiration, the power that one normally grants to taking sides, which is only a form of the *past*."[25]

In this sense, communication for Bataille is likewise antithetical to consensus, & this is emphasised by the wider context of his writings on (& *through*) Nietzsche, who he emphatically declares to be his friend, demonstrating said friendship through his communication with the concepts of the dead philosopher, whose central enlightening & rupturing gesture – of central importance to Bataille, as an historian & librarian of antiquity searching for necessarily unsafe passage to the future through his present in Nazi-occupied France – is Nietzsche's horror at "the idea of subordinating his thought to a cause."[26]

7. With an all too obvious & tragic irony, it is this horror that Nietzsche's thought was mired in for so many years, posthumously "democratised" – like Christ himself; or the Anti-Christ he always professed himself to be – under the quasi-religious retooling of his "Will to Power," its intoxicating poison constrained in order to subordinate it to a goal – a fascist goal – by way of his sister's enamourment of the Nazi regime.

Following Nietzsche's mental breakdown in 1889, from which he would not recover, his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, was left to preside over his estate, trawling his notebooks in order to publish & profit from posthumous materials, in particular the best-selling volume of aphorisms,

[22] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) xviii.

[23] Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: SUNY, 2015), 33.

[24] Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 34.

[25] Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 8

[26] Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 6

The Will To Power (1901), which she edited under the long shadow of Hitler's rise to power, producing a version of Nietzsche's philosophy that aligned with her own (& the Führer's) burgeoning ideology of National Socialism.

We may note here that, in stark contrast to Förster-Nietzsche, Bataille is a friend to Nietzsche by virtue of the fact he picks up his thought & takes it somewhere new that is nonetheless loyal to Nietzsche's philosophy in itself. It is a friendship predicated on an understanding which nonetheless eschews any attempt at producing a consensus. Bataille, then, is a wanderer with Nietzsche as his shadow. Nietzsche, in this sense, is a man that Bataille knows he can never truly know, unable to subsume him inside of himself. Instead, he allows Nietzsche to guide him in his own self-overcoming, in turn leaving "Mr. Nietzsche" behind, just as Nietzsche himself did.[27]

It is here that we can return to our discussion of contemporary fascism, the problematics of which find their encapsulation in debates around the productivity of communicating with one's enemies but the writing of the philosophers considered here brings another – all too often ignored – question to the fore: how good are we really at communicating with our friends? We must ask this of ourselves more frequently: what is it *to be* a friend – a question in which the question of how to be an enemy is already folded? What is it to ground a politics on this figure of an elusive interval between our contemporary discourses?

8. Maurice Blanchot, as Deleuze & Guattari argue in *What Is Philosophy?*, is an exemplary friend to the concept but he is nonetheless an enemy to many others. His conceptual productions & adoptions were not stumbled upon through adherence to popular opinion. Quite to the contrary, having begun his intellectual career contributing to the far-right discourses of 1930s France, it was only later that Blanchot would find himself moving explicitly to the left & refuting the ideas he once held dear. It is arguably his formulation of these concepts of friendship & communication that necessitates & even formulates this trajectory which constantly inscribes & interrupts itself. Because of this, it is likely that Blanchot would remain an uncomfortable figure on today's left-wing were he still alive today, but, in being a friend to him nonetheless, we may find his thought rupturing our presently consolidated political identities in newly productive ways.

---

[27] Bataille begins his book with a quotation from the preface to the second edition of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science:* "But let us leave Mr. Nietzsche…" Presumably writing this preface after a recovery from one of his many illnesses – he was a very sickly man – Nietzsche's base materialism ungrounds his own sense of self. Nietzsche wonders to what extent his own illnesses have inspired his philosophy & so, in hoping to understand that which carries him through life, he must leave his self behind, nothing more than a screen onto which presently unknown forces are projected. See: Friedrich Nietzsche, "Preface to the second edition" in *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 4

In order to better understand this shift to the left, perhaps it would be useful for us to note here that the concept of the friend can likewise be translated as the "comrade" – although the political baggage that this word carries dissuades us philosophically from doing so. Indeed, whilst the discourses of communism have wholly engulfed this term, they can ultimately take no ownership of it. Comradeship, like friendship, is a relation which gives itself as a goal. The communist call to "seize the means of production" is also worthy of acknowledgement here, understood as a challenge to the very nature of ownership & private property upheld by the state. It instead calls for the bringing of such mechanisms *into the commons*. It is in this sense that the communist, like the philosopher, must be a friend to the concept in overcoming & being overcome by the productive mechanisms of thought *&* labour. Echoing the terms by which we have defined the friend, the comrade becomes that founding goal on which communism itself as a movement has been built. However, it is also the concept which communism, in its state forms, first forgets because, like the friend, it is not a Universal – which is all that the state seeks to produce in order to give form to itself & the loyalty of its peoples.

Blanchot writes on the concept of communism explicitly in these terms – terms that are speculative & open-ended. Renouncing the foundations by which we presently understand ourselves, nihilism reemerges here – an encounter with which is, for Blanchot, "irrefutable, but an irrefutable nihilism does not suspend the play of needs for men as a whole."[28] If we hope to overcome capitalism as the processual attempt to account for & eradicate our never-ending quest to satisfy our needs – a process which capitalism, in its own self-interest, always wants to extend & perpetuate without resolution – then the capitalist foresees a people "deprived of truth, of values, of ends," but such a people will nonetheless "continue to live &, in living, continue to search & to satisfy their needs, thus continuing to keep alive the search's movement of relation to this necessary satisfaction."[29]

Here we find ourselves captured by capitalism's central paradox – the central engine of capitalist realism. As we search for satisfaction under capitalism we inevitably continue to search for communism, which Blanchot defines, via the French writer & political activist Dionys Mascolo, as "the process of the materialist search for communication."[30] Blanchot, in being both a friend to the concept &, in particular, being a friend to the concept of communism, finds himself in alignment with Marx explicitly, whose "statement – 'the reign of freedom begins with the end of the reign of needs & external ends' – does not promise anything to his contemporaries

[28] Blanchot, "On One Approach to Communism," in *Friendship*, 93

[29] Blanchot, "On One Approach to Communism," 93.

[30] Blanchot, "On One Approach to Communism," 93.

but the search for the right direction & the determination of a possible future."[31] The indeterminacy of this position is not symptomatic of a cowardly indecision but rather necessitates our ethical encounter with Bataillean risk & Nietzschean morality. As Bataille would write of his friend Mr. Nietzsche, his "doctrines are strange... in that one cannot follow them."[32] However, all is not lost in nihilism. If Nietzsche (&/or his conceptual personae, Zarathustra) is the prophet of anything it is "new paths."[33] Perhaps this is how Marx himself must be rethought.

Who today is a *friend* to Marx? All I see are scholars...

9. Here we might turn, in conclusion, towards accelerationism – a topic of particular interest to this writer & a philosophy inseparable from the trajectory we have been exploring.

Birthed from the carnal canal of Nick Land's libidinal materialism, accelerationism is a radical articulation of the temporalised inevitability of change as enacted by capitalism itself as a closed system which struggles to hide its own attempts to colonise its outsides. As a friend to Marx, Nietzsche & Deleuze, the accelerationist carries forward the observation that capitalism's "libidinal energetics [are] not a transformation of intentional theories of desire, of desires understood as lack, as transcendence, as dialectic."[34] These energetics, at once ours & not-ours, are "chaotic & pre-ontological." Our attempts to subject these flows & energies to democratic control is to fundamentally misunderstand their nature. We do nothing but humiliate ourselves in front of our own observations.

Such humiliations have stalked the philosophies of accelerationism persistently over the years, having repeatedly fallen victim to the very tendencies they were formulated to critique. Struggling to stay afloat under the pressures & processes of democratisation which rain down upon it from both left & right, accelerationism finds itself as readily associated with "alt-right" fascism as it is with fully automated luxury communism – both of which already constituted by their struggle with that which we are *becoming* in a world defined by the stasis of *being*.[35]

---

[31] Blanchot, "On One Approach to Communism," 95

[32] Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 94

[33] Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 95

[34] Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille & Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 42

[35] Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation*, 43–44: "...libidinal materialism accepts only chaos & composition. 'Being' as an effect of the composition of chaos, of the '*approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being*.' With the libidinal reformulation of being as composition 'one acquires degrees of being, one loses that which *has* being.' The effect of 'being' is derivative from process, 'because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the 'real' world a world not of change & becoming, but one of being.'"

Two years ago, it seemed that accelerationism's generic affirmation of post-capitalist becoming seemed to be on the cusp of entering the mainstream. Today, however, in 2019, with accelerationism becoming associated with the violent eco-fascism of Christchurch terrorist Brenton Tarrent, many argue it has suffered a fatal & irredeemable appropriation.[36]

On the contrary, it is this writer's belief that the friendships we agree to with the concepts we produce & take up, like communism & socialism (each with their own violent cooptions), must not be lost to the tyranny of individuals who seek to violently enforce their consensus upon us. In so easily giving up the concepts that speak (broadly) to that which we might become – because they do not coincide with that which we think we are – we only succeed in losing sight of ourselves & where we are headed in foreclosing the productivity of risk. In light of this, Blanchot would write that it is "undoubtedly the task of our age to move toward an affirmation that is entirely *other*" – a task which, he notes, is "difficult" & "essentially risky" – & it "is to this task that communism recalls us with a rigor that it itself often shirks."[37]

Communism's success or failure rests on the essentiality of this risk & so it is perhaps no coincidence that the communicative grounding of contemporary capitalism seeks to capture all mechanisms of communication in our day-to-day lives, monetising the reduction of communicative risk which is, in fact, exacerbated & made entirely unproductive by a capitalism which always tries to reduce the common subjectivity of our era to an impotent Universal.

In 2005, Jodi Dean would write of the ways in which this universalising tendency of communicative capitalism undermines democracy through its production of the "fantasy of activity or participation [which is] materialised through technological fetishism" & the "fantasy of wholeness [which] relies on & produces a global both imaginary & Real."[38] This construction of false consensus has prevented, Dean continues, "the emergence of a clear division between friend & enemy, resulting instead in the more dangerous & profound figuring of the other as a threat to be destroyed."[39] In this sense, capitalism itself, in attempting to capture these innately human mechanisms of communication, attempts to position itself as the friend. For its own gain, it individualises & alienates the capitalist subject from itself as both "me" & "I," producing social media "bubbles" of consensus which, as we all have

---

[36] See: "Anomalous Worlds: Accelerationism & Patchwork," *Xenogothic*, 26 March 2019: <https://xenogothic.com/2019/03/26/anomalous-worlds-on-accelerationism-patchwork-pws4/>

[37] Blanchot, "On One Approach to Communism," 97

[38] See Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation & the Foreclosure of Politics," *Cultural Politics* 1.1 (2005): 51 <https://commonconf.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/proofs-of-tech-fetish.pdf>

[39] Dean, "Communicative Capitalism," 51-52

seen, deny various demographics from forming any affective relationship with the body politic.

From here we can return to where we started, with our observation that left & right fascism constitutes two sides of the same capitalist coin, whereby the discourses that surround the topic of fascism are, in themselves, rendered fascistic by nature of their capture by capitalist apparatuses of reductive communication. What is required in response is a new sense of friendship which maintains the originally intoxicating poison of a communication that is not democratised but embraces the hazards innate to its own risk function.

10. What form does this friendship take? I cannot say. It must be enacted rather than defined.

As such, the silence of this essay's abrupt end is not a sign of impotence. It is rather the hope that, having taken the writing of communicating its contention, I can pass the baton on. The concept of friendship – to borrow again from Blanchot – must be "entrust[ed] to others, not that they may answer it, rather that they may choose to carry it with them, &, perhaps, extend it... opening unknown spaces of freedom, mak[ing] us responsible for new relationships, always threatened, always hoped for..."[40]

<div align="right">

XENOGOTHIC
May 2019

</div>

[40] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1988) 56