

**ANTI-SCIENCE AND THE
ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY
DEFENDING REASON IN A FREE SOCIETY**

EDITED BY

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CONTENTS

Introduction 7

PART I: REFORGING THE LINK BETWEEN SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY

1. Alan Sokal: What Is Science and Why Should We Care? 17
2. Michael J. Thompson: Science and the Democratic Mind 35
3. Joseph Chuman: The Synthesis of Science and Democracy:
A Deweyan Appraisal 59
4. Lee Smolin: The Philosophy of the Open Future 77

PART II: SCIENCE'S DEMOCRATIC DIMENSIONS

5. Diana M. Judd: The Scientific Revolution
and Individual Inquiry 105
6. Margaret C. Jacob: The Left, Science Studies,
and Global Warming 123
7. Barbara Forrest: Betraying the Founders' Legacy:
Democracy as a Weapon against Science 131

PART III: PERVERTED SCIENCE, DISFIGURED DEMOCRACY

8. Kurt Jacobsen and Alba Alexander:
The Return of Determinism: Science, Power,
and Sirens in Distress 153

9. Landon Frim and Harrison Fluss: Back to the Futurists: On Accelerationism Left and Right	177
10. Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker: The Myth of the Expert as Elite: Postmodern Theory, Right-Wing Populism, and the Assault on Truth	203
PART IV: THE REVENGE OF ANTI-SCIENCE	
11. Philip Kitcher: Plato's Revenge: An Undemocratic Report from an Overheated Planet	225
12. Michael Ruse: Democracy and the Problem of Pseudoscience	241
13. Thomas de Zengotita: The Freedom to Believe—Or Not	259
List of Contributors	271
Notes	275

INTRODUCTION

A contradiction resides deep in the heart of modern society. On the one hand, we inhabit a world increasingly dominated by science and technology, one where the progress of scientific knowledge and technical efficiency seems without end. On the other hand, there also exists a deep-seated opposition to scientific knowledge and to science itself as a form of knowledge. A trend has been gathering momentum in modern culture away from science as a means to think about human affairs and an approach to truth. Although technology and technological forms of rationality have transformed our world, hostility toward science as a method and as a way of comprehending the social and natural world has emerged as an obstacle to a more humane and more democratic society. From religiously motivated arguments against the teaching of evolution in public schools to the denial of climate change, new-ageist espousals of alternative medicine, the regular distortion or dismissal of social-scientific data, outlandish claims about the effects of vaccinations or the fluoridation of water, and widespread basic ignorance about concepts such as “theory” or “evidence,” anti-science viewpoints are becoming more and more manifest in our daily lives.

This trend is one that we call here “anti-science,” and it is characterized by more than a skepticism of science as a body of knowledge about the natural world; it is also a hostility toward the very notion that objective truth claims can be defended. The anti-science attitude predisposes one to view science—as a mode of inquiry—as belonging solely to educated elites, who use it to “disenchant” the world and to control those with differing worldviews, particularly those, for example, who find their identity in knowledge that comes through nonscientific means. This anti-science position has its roots not only in the populist anti-elitism of the

as to navigate more treacherous realms ahead, inner and outer? It seems our shoddy modern versions of Odysseus are determined to plug their ears to the voices of objective reason too.

CHAPTER 9

BACK TO THE FUTURISTS: ON ACCELERATIONISM LEFT AND RIGHT

LONDON FRIM AND HARRISON FLUSS

INTRODUCTION

There are two basic strategies for undermining science: the honest and the subversive. Traditionally, social conservatives have seen scientific knowledge as a threat to their faith-based and hierarchical worldview, substituting a godless nihilism for traditional virtue. American history is full of examples of this “open and honest” conflict. The Scopes Monkey trial of 1925, for example, pitted conservative Christians against the teaching of Darwinian evolution in schools. The bizarre debate between Ken Ham (of the Creation Museum) and Bill Nye, on the biblical flood myth, is a more recent example of the same.¹

But by the late twentieth century, the Christian Right’s strategy began to change. Rather than attack science directly, they attempted to muddy the waters of scientific discovery by expanding the definition of science itself. No longer would science be derided as a worldly tool of the devil. The strategy now was one of subversion. Their rhetoric was aimed at freeing science from secular constraints, i.e., the “secular-humanist” worldview. This change of strategy is well illustrated today by the so-called “Discovery Institute,” which advocates the teaching of Intelligent Design, or “ID theory.” This institute accuses Darwinian evolutionists of pre-

suming materialism and atheism, while prejudicially excluding the God hypothesis. As one open letter put it, mainstream scientists push “agnosticism upfront but atheism through the backdoor.”² ID theorists thus position themselves as even more scientific than the mainstream establishment. They feign a radical openness to all hypotheses and pretend not to be wedded to any particular metaphysics. Yet the true purpose of this supposed openness is merely to smuggle in theistic doctrines that they had, in fact, settled on ahead of time.

This strategy of subversion is analogous to another—superficially quite different—tendency relevant today. *Accelerationism* is an aesthetic, cultural, and political trend that seeks to speed up the processes of technology and capitalism in order to radically transform society. Specifically, it has impacted today’s political scene, marked as it is by the alliance of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and right-wing libertarianism—embodied in influential figures like Peter Thiel, the cofounder of PayPal and an early adviser to the Trump administration. Accelerationism, in this right-wing form, gives voice to popular white resentment about economic stagnation and the welfare state but wraps this sentiment up in a shiny, futuristic package.

The term “accelerationism” is often identified with the “neoreactionary” ideas of Nick Land. Through him, accelerationism has influenced the more popular alt-right discourse. Recently, even sections of the political Left have adopted accelerationist ideas, producing works such as the #Accelerate Manifesto, the Xenofeminist Manifesto, and the #AltWoke Manifesto.³

Demographically, the accelerationist has little in common with the stereotyped image of the Bible Belt Christian. The former are culturally technophilic, identifying primarily with cybernetics and programming. They emerge from a political economy marked by global world trade, increased automation, off-shoring, and its correlate—the algorithmization of industry (e.g., Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon). Accelerationist buzzwords reproduce the lingo of Silicon Valley: going viral, creative disruption, full automation, and “lines of flight.”⁴ In their right-wing form, they tend to identify with venture capitalists such as Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, and are sympathetic to right-libertarian politics, which enable all of

the above. In their left-wing variants, they fetishize technology for its supposedly Promethean ability to emancipate humanity, rather than a traditional focus on labor.

Whatever their political allegiances, accelerationists mirror the financialization of the economy, where information is cast as the main source of value. Emphasizing free and dynamic creation, speed, and the disruption of established norms, they romanticize science for its liberatory potential. At the same time, accelerationists seek to sever scientific exploration from its proper moorings—that is, an Enlightenment worldview marked by intelligible natural laws.⁵

Enlightenment rationalism is at loggerheads with the accelerationist’s insatiable desire to overcome all limits to human and natural existence. Accelerationists therefore adopt the subversive strategy common to Intelligent Design theorists. Rather than opposing science directly, accelerationism poses as its most loyal friend, claiming only to “liberate” science from any constraining metaphysical rules. Repudiated is lawful causality, derived from the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, and the Cartesian notion of physically extended objects, which exist independently of human perception. In its place is set an anarchic, will-based vision of the world that is radically contingent. Pure potentiality takes the place of comprehensible reality.⁶ A dizzying universe marked by unlimited, open possibilities takes the place of an intelligible universe bound by intelligible natural laws.

This accelerationist gambit to “liberate” science is no less harmful than the one affected by sophisticated religious fundamentalists. For the Enlightenment worldview is no straightjacket to science; it is rather its indispensable backbone. In the absence of a lawful universe of mind-independent objects, empirical data loses all its meaning. Such points of data evaporate into nothing more than emotive declarations. What counts as evidence can be endlessly redefined to suit the political program of the moment, blurring the distinction between fact and fancy, and between science and mere faith.

The accelerationist seeks to overturn the Einsteinian/Spinozist vision of the world, wherein “God” is identical to objective Nature, and “divine decrees” are simply the immutable laws of the universe. Einstein’s God

“does not play dice.” But the accelerationist rebellion against such rationalism insists upon something far more romantic, voluntaristic, and in the end, literally super-natural. To Einstein’s dictum that “God does not play dice,” the accelerationist echoes Niels Bohr’s pithy response: “Don’t tell God what to do!”⁷

ORIGIN STORY

To understand accelerationist politics, it is useful to trace its nineteenth-century origins and development. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* epitomized this century’s synthesis of romanticism and science. Subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*, it depicts a scientist who flouts the mechanical worldview of the Enlightenment. In combining experimentation with the occult arts, Victor Frankenstein escapes both the norms of science and of civilization. In overcoming “ordinary science,” he takes the place of God, as the creator of intelligent life, i.e., Frankenstein’s monster.⁸

This God-like elevation of human will is likewise the touchstone of Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy, another key figure in the accelerationist’s pantheon. Crucially, Nietzsche’s infamous declaration that “God is dead,” is not so much a theological statement as it is a sociopolitical one—hence its relevance for today’s politics. God is dead because “we killed Him” through our popular disbelief. God’s death thus signifies the absence of any objective standards or moral authority outside of man himself.⁹ We should recognize the sweeping nature of this claim. Nietzsche’s death of God not only denies a supernatural arbiter of truth and morality but moreover denies *any* objective standards whatsoever. Only the strong-willed individual is left to create order out of this anarchic world; they become creators ex nihilo.

The effect of Nietzsche’s anti-morality is to condemn the virtues of empathy, compassion, and egalitarianism. Rather than objective moral goods (there are none), these are merely the rationalizations of weak people trying to cope with an inherently hostile, amoral, and chaotic world. Nietzsche subsumes these false virtues under the rubric of “slave

morality,” and traces their lineage from Rabbinic Judaism to modern democracy and socialism.¹⁰ Only the free spirit, who has overcome slave morality, is fit to affirm life as it truly is, and to rule over those weaker souls that constitute the vast majority. The political program that emerges in Nietzsche is one of aristocratic hierarchy and authoritarianism: The unthinking obedience of the masses is the material fodder for the unguided, free creativity of the very few at the top.¹¹

The phrase “accelerate” appears in Nietzsche’s late notebooks (the *Nachlass*). Here, Nietzsche anticipates another key feature of accelerationist thought: the idea that progress will be accomplished only through a total crisis and the absolute degradation of humanity. It is the logic of modernity—in all of its decadence—that needs to be exacerbated in order for something new to be born. Nietzsche calls for “accelerating” the leveling tendencies of modern life, to the point where nothing permanent or stable remains.¹² The last men and women of history will be utterly defenseless, obedient, and sheeplike. Out of this degraded ash-heap of civilization, new masters arise to dominate the herd from above. Hence, in Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the assemblage of mediocre townspeople say to the prophet: “Give us this last human being, oh Zarathustra . . . make us into these last human beings! Then we will make you a gift of the overman!” In other words, the townspeople ask to be subjugated, in order to pave the way for a dominating tyrant.¹³

BIRTH OF A (FUTURIST) NATION

Nietzsche’s philosophy of the future subsequently inspired a whole generation of turn-of-the-century and interwar thinkers. These writers reacted to intensified industrialization and the specter of global conflict. While not all explicitly adopted the label “Futurism,” they each emphasized a total break from modernity, whether scientifically, aesthetically, or politically. Together they anticipated, and were a bridge to, late twentieth-century accelerationism. In Italy, the standard bearer of futurism was Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.¹⁴ His writings divinized items of tech-

nology, from electric lamps to steam engines, factory furnaces, and cars. In many ways, this anticipated the very sort of technology-fetish endemic to technoscience discourse today. Consistently, Marinetti valorized the attributes of velocity, virility, and ecstasy. He even waxed romantic about his car, what he called a “vehement God of steel,” in his poem “To my Pegasus.” Here, Marinetti personifies his car as rushing “voluptuously . . . into Infinite freedom,” and even sexualizes it with the amorous request, “I am at your mercy . . . Take me! . . . Take me!”¹⁵

Like Nietzsche before him, Marinetti’s worldview is scrupulously amoral. In place of any universal, humanistic ethos, there is only the sublime aestheticization of politics. This is particularly evident in the Italian futurist’s love for war. For it is in war that a masculine will to dominate is most spectacularly showcased:

For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as anti-aesthetic. . . . Accordingly we state: . . . War is beautiful because it establishes man’s dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns . . . Poets and artists of Futurism! . . . remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art . . . may be illumined by them!¹⁶

In Germany, the “reactionary-modernist” Ernst Jünger would extend this line of thought. Whereas Marinetti fetishized modern production and its commodities, Jünger looked to the material basis of these—the modern mass economy with its regimented legions of workers. Retained is the ethos of war and the pervasive amorality. But with Jünger greater attention is paid to the human subjects that carry out war and turn themselves into the fodder of modern war economies.

This is no humanism: It is not human nature that is celebrated, but rather the subjugation of human beings into something machinic and inhuman. Here we have one of the earliest anticipations of cyborg theory,

where the tools of war are not merely adapted to the human form (as with a simple sword), but, on the contrary, the very nerve centers of human beings—their brains and intellects—are molded to seamlessly operate the advanced control panels of weapons systems:

In order to deploy energies of such proportion, fitting one’s sword-arm no longer suffices; for this is a mobilization [*Rüstung*] that requires extension to the deepest marrow, life’s finest nerve. Its realization is the task of total mobilization: an act which, as if through a single grasp of the control panel, conveys the extensively branched and densely veined power supply of modern life towards the great current of martial energy.¹⁷

People are ultimately turned into industrial commodities. Modern capitalism bursts beyond the fetters of its original liberal-bourgeois context. No longer are people the individual bearers of rights, confronting each other in the free marketplace. Jünger’s notion of “total mobilization” shifts liberal-capitalism into an authoritarian form: “States transformed themselves into gigantic factories, producing armies on the assembly line that they sent to the battlefield both day and night, where an equally mechanical bloody maw took over the role of consumer.”¹⁸ This picture retains the capitalist marketplace while blurring the lines between buyer and seller, what is bought and what is sold. If the nation-state becomes a great war-foundry, then citizens are likewise turned into war-product, to be produced and consumed in the marketplace, now conceived as an international battlefield.

The focus is on technological innovation, divorced from the human frame, and the valorization of speed and efficiency *for its own sake*. As these machinic attributes are foregrounded, the universal human requirements for safety, security, and solidarity disappear into the background. And indeed, the emphasis upon the values of the machine very often comes into direct conflict with basic human decency. When the great spectacle of mass war requires both total mobilization and total destruction, even the notion of innocent civilians must be considered quaint and outdated:

Just as every life already bears the seeds of its own death, so the emergence of the great masses contains within itself a democracy of death. . . . Giving out the night-flight bombing order, the squadron leader no longer sees a difference between combatants and civilians, and the deadly gas cloud hovers like an elementary power over everything that lives. But the possibility of such menace is based neither on a partial nor general, but rather a *total* mobilization. It extends to the child in the cradle, who is threatened like everyone else—even more so.¹⁹

What's more, the global scale of conflict that Jünger imagines presumes a rank ordering, not just of individuals or families but of whole peoples and civilizations. Jünger's voluntarism—i.e., his belief in an unbridled free will—accommodates this *weltanschauung* (worldview) of racial division and conflict. For a strong will cannot be bound by universal norms of human equality, but necessarily breaks through these. What's more, there can be no guarantee that such strong wills are evenly distributed throughout the globe.

Belief in such an unbounded will would actually preclude meaningful international agreement.²⁰ Whereas the Enlightenment rationalist can point to the intellect as the common faculty of all human beings, and a means for coming to common accord, a totally free will is just the sort of thing that defies being "common" or lawful. It is rather inherently unique, anomalous, and practical; every bit as unique as the various cultures of the world.

Jünger saw industrial society as necessarily leading toward a global civil war (with Germany hopefully taking the lead). This would ultimately result in a world-state of worker-soldiers. The problem of nihilism, that Nietzsche had previously diagnosed, would resolve itself on a heroic and planetary scale. Fascist propagandists at the time were indeed influenced by Jünger's ideas of technological world conquest. However, Nazi leaders also thought that Jünger's predictions in *The Worker* were insufficiently racial and *völkisch*.²¹

Closer to the National Socialist position was the work of Oswald Spengler, a fellow revolutionary conservative in Germany. In his book *Man and Technics* (1931), Spengler speaks of science as a kind of myth-making, or a free and creative pursuit.²² What's more, the voluntarist

nature of scientific praxis means that it will be carried out differently by different peoples. Of all the cultures in the world, Spengler asserts, it is the Germanic "Faustian" culture that most honestly embraces its own self-creation and affirms the dictum that "God is dead." It is therefore amongst the Teutonic peoples that real heroism is most possible; for only they clearly perceive that there is no stable, governing Nature to discover—but only the imperative to assert one's own will:

True, every scientific theory is a myth of the understanding about Nature's forces, and everyone is dependent, through and through, upon the religion with which it belongs. But in the Faustian, and the Faustian alone, every theory is also from the outset a working hypothesis. A working hypothesis need not be "correct," it is only required to be practical. It aims, not at embracing and unveiling the secrets of the world, but at making them serviceable to definite ends.²³

This notion of "science as myth" resonates strongly with accelerationists today, particularly in their idea of "hyperstition." Hyperstition is the concept that invented or contrived ideas can have real effects in the world. Doubtlessly this is sometimes true, as in the case of convincing propaganda, virtual crypto-currencies, or even garden-variety advertising. But the idea of hyperstition goes even further than this in its Nietzscheanism. It is the additional claim that all realities are but competing fictions, and that the supremacy of one narrative over another has nothing to do with its relative accuracy, but rather with the agonistic play of competing forces.²⁴

On this view, science is necessarily undemocratic.²⁵ It cannot be based on the inquiry of an objective world by common intellects. On the futurist account, neither exists to begin with. Nor are the fruits of scientific and technological advance brought about with the masses in mind. Rather, scientific endeavor is the heroic act of the strong individual for *their own* practical ends, and *their own* glory:

In reality the passion of the inventor has nothing whatever to do with its consequences. It is his personal life-motive, his personal joy and sorrow. He wants to enjoy his triumph over difficult problems, and the

wealth and fame that it brings him, for their own sake. Whether his discovery is useful or menacing, creative or distributive, he cares not a jot. Nor indeed is anyone in a position to know this in advance.²⁶

This is the very opposite of science as it is normally conceived, namely as the gradual accumulation of facts, and the testing of hypotheses, ultimately for the utilitarian benefit of mankind as a whole. To this picture of "normal science," Spengler shows only disdain. He identifies this as a mediocre sort of technics. This is tied up with a whole history of rationalism and materialism, from the French *philosophe* La Mettrie to the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin.²⁷

Rather than technology liberating the masses from toil and drudgery, Spengler sees science as only increasing the necessary demands for labor. For again, there are no natural limits. The machines are insatiable, and they are entirely insensitive to ordinary human suffering or welfare. Not only this, but the titanic scale of industry entails that work will become ever more monotonous. Specialization renders labor incomprehensible to the workers themselves; the narrowness of each job removes its organic connection to the operation as a whole or to any finished product. Not that the true purpose of technology could be understood by mere workers anyway, as this is properly speaking a free and artistic creation of the scientist and the captain of industry.

This whole situation, then, creates a dangerous, reciprocal relationship: The inability of the worker to comprehend her own work, combined with deadening and tedious labor, produces resentment from below. This is matched by an equally strong contempt from above, on the part of the bosses, for a degraded labor force, reduced to unthinking automata. The political corollary to all this is a noxious authoritarianism. C. L. R. James's dictum that "every cook can govern" is necessarily rejected; the lowly worker cannot understand the whole apparatus (whether of industry or the state), let alone have an informed opinion as to its proper operation.²⁸ Instead, Spengler's technological worldview implies a political despotism that presumes itself unquestionable before a debased, unthinking, and angry mass.

One should not think that this mutual distrust and hatred is merely a "bug" in Spengler's Right-romantic worldview. To the contrary, it is a vital tension in his system, marked as it is by constant struggle and tragedy. Technology atomizes the world. It does this not only by turning skilled craftspeople into assembly-line workers, but at the same time by undermining the traditional institutions of communal life. Much the same has been claimed on the Left, notably in the pages of the *Communist Manifesto*. For in the face of mass production and consumption, the halo is ripped from both family and church. Each individual becomes a producer and consumer in their own right, increasingly drawn into the mass economy and liberated (or alienated) from traditional social structures. As Marx and Engels put it, "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."²⁹

But, whereas Marxists saw the tensions brought about by technology as a step toward emancipation, the same cannot be said for the fascist-minded futurists. The former see exploitation as giving rise to worker solidarity and consciousness; the latter see the contradictions as simply permanent, destructive, and ever-worsening.

However, it is precisely because of this danger that the right-futurists also saw the place for a world-savior. In the case of Spengler, the final hope for humanity came from Germany, which he saw as the nation least corrupted by materialism, hedonism, and liberalism. An analogous vision for German-led renewal was expressed by the philosopher Martin Heidegger. Never wavering in his appreciation for the "inner truth and greatness" of Nazism, Heidegger claimed that it revealed a new understanding of the "encounter between global technology and modern man."³⁰

This all speaks to a pervasive feature of the right-wing German imagination. In wielding new technologies (the radio, the TV, the jet engine, and the V-2 rocket), the National Socialists saw Hitler as forging a new humanity out of the flames of global conflict; for "where danger is, grows the saving power also."³¹ This view of global conflict and renewal is at once postmodern and ancient. It posits a heroic savior figure, entirely alien to modern mass politics, and yet using the masses, along with advanced mass

production, for his authoritarian goals. After the war, Heidegger distanced himself from Hitler but retained the same messianic hope for the redemption of Europe. As he put it in the infamous *Der Spiegel* interview, "Only a God can save us now."³²

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

The political influence of futurism was carried into the late twentieth century by a trio of influential French thinkers, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard. Nominally on the radical Left, they would use futurist motifs to diagnose the problems of capitalism and modern *anomie*. They have often been associated with the tumultuous events of May 1968, where Parisian workers and students took to the streets and occupied buildings in protest. The fallout from May '68 was a reconfiguration of Left politics and a disillusionment with institutions of the so-called "Old Left," namely the French Communist Party and the Trade Unions. Contemporary theorists have labeled this trio the first of the accelerationists.³³

Rather than a nationalist authoritarianism, these writers embraced, at various times, libertarian and quasi-anarchist rhetoric. They retained the futurist's eschatology—things are bad; they will only get worse; and it is in the "getting worse" that the last glimmer of hope resides. When it comes to capitalism, there is no point in merely local forms of resistance. Such parochial politics misunderstands the systematic and totalizing nature of the market. The only possibility for emancipation must come from within the logic of the capitalist economy itself. The processes of production, circulation, and inflation should be encouraged maximally. Only by "accelerating" these tendencies can the whole system of capital exhaust itself as it hits up against its own, inherent limits. To pursue an "outside" to capitalism is illusory; capitalism must instead be the engine of its own demise.

As opposed to moralizing against the ruling class from a transcendent position, these writers pinpoint the problem as one of immanent political

economy and its pressure points. All of this sounds very materialist. Indeed, these French thinkers sound *almost* Marxist; echoing Marx's dictum that "the barrier to capital is capital itself."³⁴ This, however, is to ignore their hidden, Nietzschean premise: a strident post-humanism. Affirming the will-to-power involves a simultaneous rejection of any common, human nature uniting all individuals. This human nature, what Marx sometimes calls "species being," would be eschewed as just another illicit "outside" to the market itself. It would be to parochially rely upon some "all-too-human" standard. Gone, therefore, is Marx's vision of a community of associated producers who comprehend the necessities of nature in order to maximize human welfare, leisure time, and material security.³⁵

Gilles Deleuze, along with radical psychotherapist Félix Guattari, promotes a metaphysics of desire. Capitalism is (provisionally) good in that it encourages this by constantly revolutionizing production, and thereby demolishing all of the old, static forms of living and producing. The problem for them is that desire becomes "caged," insofar as the present system also throws up authoritarian structures in order to maintain itself. Think of the police, mass incarceration, organized religion, and the bourgeois family. These institutions put artificial breaks on our creativity. So, capitalism "deterritorializes" by atomizing society into individual, anomic producers and consumers; at the same time it periodically "reterritorializes" society by trying to hold everything together through repressive institutions.³⁶

The political imperative of the day is to accelerate the process so that we can eventually break through to something new. For them, therefore, schizophrenia is the archetypal modern syndrome—surpassing all authoritarian strictures for an ultimate deterritorialization. While bourgeois society demands the stable ego as the sine qua non of polite society, the schizophrenic instead follows their own uncaged desires.³⁷

Not that this was sufficient for all accelerationist thinkers at the time. Jean-François Lyotard would critique Deleuze and Guattari's focus on the libidinal as still retaining some notion of an "outside" to capitalism. For Lyotard, there can be no sense of the libidinal apart from capitalist desire itself.³⁸ A schizophrenic escape from market oppression will not do; One

must rather delight in the “mad destruction” that markets themselves inflict:

The English unemployed did not have to become workers to survive, they . . . enjoyed [*ils ont joui de*] the hysterical, masochistic, whatever exhaustion it was of hanging on in the mines, in the foundries, in the factories, in hell, they enjoyed it, enjoyed the mad destruction of their organic body which was indeed imposed upon them, they enjoyed the decomposition of their personal identity, the identity that the peasant tradition had constructed for them, enjoyed the dissolutions of their families and villages, and enjoyed the new monstrous anonymity of the suburbs and the pubs in morning and evening.³⁹

For his part, Jean Baudrillard would go even further, identifying the “terminal velocity” of capitalism, neither in desire nor exploitation but in death itself. The tendencies of markets to suffer inflation, especially, signifies the evacuation of all value from the capitalist system. The post-apocalyptic future of the market is therefore the precapitalist gift economy.⁴⁰ This embodies Baudrillard’s imagined return to an idyllic past. Premodern values will emerge to replace capitalist exchange value. Foremost of these is the aristocratic ethos of “excess.” As opposed to modern economic imperatives to save, and to be efficient, the aristocratic impetus is to expend excess energy in festivals, luxuries, and, generally, the exuberant celebration of life in the struggle against death. This marks an absolute break from Marx’s rational critique of political economy, which Baudrillard dismisses as merely “petit bourgeois”: “At any rate, Marxism is only the disenchanting horizon of capital—all that precedes or follows it is more radical than it is.”⁴¹

The preceding genealogy of accelerationism is not merely a matter of biography; rather, it outlines certain patterns of thought still present in contemporary politics, art, and science. It should be instructive that these same values have been held by conservative nationalists and post-68 French Radicals alike. For Marinetti and Deleuze, it is an anti-humanist celebration of intensity, the machine, and creative disruption for its own sake. For Jünger and Lyotard it is the identification of alienated workers

as the fodder for said machine. Finally, for Spengler and Baudrillard, it is the view that capitalism—the modern economic “machine”—ends with cataclysm, the destruction of liberal norms, and the ironic return to something premodern.

LAND AND THE CCRU (THIS IS ENGLAND)

Accelerationism came into its own during the tech-boom of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. Responding to the fall of the Berlin Wall, French critical theory, and the 1980s cyber-punk scene, Nick Land, Sadie Plant, and their like-minded graduate students founded the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, or CCRU for short. The Unit appropriated leftist rhetoric in criticizing bourgeois culture, patriarchy, and heterosexism; at the same time, the CCRU envisioned a futurism that abandoned socialism, or anything that would resemble a Marxist critique of capital. For them, humanism was a disease and man a “drag.”⁴² Land and Plant’s writings emphasized dynamism, flow, the machinic, and an overall vitalism, as well as the celebration of alienation as transformative beyond the merely human.⁴³

Sympathetic commentators have called Land’s writings an “anti-Logos” program.⁴⁴ In other words, his discourses on science and technology reject a rationalist metaphysics. Importantly, Land never offers a direct, metaphysical argument against the *principle of sufficient reason* or any other rationalist tenet. He gives no proofs and makes no deductions. That, in any case, would undermine his own irrationalism and be a performative contradiction. Instead, Land takes a more “pragmatic” and empiricist approach. He invokes current technologies and scientific fads in order to undermine rationalism, without ever engaging with it directly. Quantum mechanics, time travel, virtual currencies, cybernetics, and number theory are all deployed to undermine an intelligible and orderly view of the universe.

Land has a lot in common with some better known philosophers of science, including Paul Feyerabend and even Karl Popper. The latter

rejects rationalist metaphysics as necessary for empirical investigation, even taking up the label of “indeterminist.”⁴⁵ With Feyerabend, the commonalities run even deeper: These include strident statements about philosophy’s inability to guide science at all; the denial of any distinction between science and mythic ritual (e.g., astrology and rain dances); a valorization of the pragmatic; as well as a general openness to “incommensurability.”⁴⁶ This is the idea that two scientific theories may be wholly incomparable since grounded in radically divergent vocabularies, and so no rational choice between them can be made. The social implication is that people holding divergent worldviews may be permanently cut off from any mutual understanding, and also, that the choice between these worldviews is one of will, rather than objective evidence or testing.

Here it is revealing to quote Land at length, especially from his essay *Qabbala 101*:

Since qabbalism is a practical programme, rather than a doctrine of any kind, its formal errors—mistakes—are mere calculative irregularities, and correcting these is actually a procedural requirement of (rather than an objection to) its continued development. It is the rational dismissal of “the” qabbalistic enterprise that is forced to take a metaphysical stance: ruling out on grounds of supposed principle what is in fact no more than a guiding “empirical” hypothesis.⁴⁷

Note that the mystical worldview Land is invoking here is contrasted, and celebrated, as against the rationalist, “metaphysical” stance. Whereas *qabbala* is a purely practical pursuit, which is self-regulating and self-correcting, rationalism requires something more: namely the belief in indisputable, self-positing, first principles. It therefore claims to be grounded in objective and universal knowledge. The dichotomy Land sets up between theory and practice is highly dramatic. And yet it conforms very well to the typical discourse in contemporary philosophy of science. Namely, the humble, piecemeal, empirical, practical investigator is contrasted to the allegedly dogmatic, overbearing, arrogant, punitive—yet really myopic—rationalist. The rationalist then presumes to make durable rules for the universe without ever bothering to get her hands dirty here on earth.

Again, like Feyerabend, the distinction between science and myth—even the occult—is obliterated. For all such investigations, whatever their original motives, virtuously proceed along strictly pragmatic lines, and so will correct themselves as they go, without the need for any outside, restrictive principles to guide them:

Epistemologically speaking, qabbalistic programmes have a status strictly equivalent to that of experimental particle physics, or other natural-scientific research programmes. . . . There may be no “empirical,” procedurally approachable mysteries—or mysterious problems—of the kind qabbalism guides itself towards. If so, it will approach this fact in its own way—empirically, probabilistically, impressionistically, without any logical, transcendental or philosophical meta-discourse ever having been positioned to put it in its place.⁴⁸

Of course, Land gives far too much credit to pragmatic investigation to “self-correct.” For in the absence of some grounding, rationalist principles, there can be endless explaining-away of all phenomena that seem to disprove one’s core mystical beliefs. But this is nothing particularly new; the whole modern history of evangelical pseudoscience has been an absurd effort of this type. One need only recall the ways that literalist Christians dismiss carbon-dating for the age of the earth, or fossil evidence for dinosaurs preexisting human beings. There is always some supposed flaw or irregularity in the data, the equipment, or the design of the experiment to complain about.⁴⁹

One might imagine that empirical science itself rules out such unconvincing, fringe objections. The mainstream scientists will counter fundamentalist challenges by invoking methodological strictures. They will certify *their* findings, against those of their pious critics, by appeals to the “preponderance of evidence,” “statistical significance,” or the “repeatability” of their experiments. And they are right to do so. But this is not sufficient. For where is “evidence,” “statistical significance,” or the import of “repeatability” ever defined? Why are these considered important to begin with? The fundamental problem is this: Scientific methods may be legitimate, but they cannot be self-grounding. That would be viciously

circular, and put science on par with any other (internally consistent) doctrine of faith.

On the most fundamental level, the hyper-empiricism of the accelerationist demotes truth itself. For even truth can no longer be considered an overriding, permanent, and grounding value. When metaphysics is set aside, and when one no longer attempts to make sense of an objective world, all that is left is a pragmatic quest for “what works.” It may be the case that seeking knowledge simply doesn’t “work” as well, or is not as pleasing or convenient as asserting one’s own freedom to believe. As Feyrabend states, the choice between incommensurable values will always be something of a free choice.

And it is of course not true that we have to follow the truth. Human life is guided by many ideas. Truth is one of them. Freedom and mental independence are others. If Truth, as conceived by some ideologists, conflicts with freedom, then we have a choice. We may abandon freedom. But we may also abandon Truth.⁵⁰

We should not pass over this point too quickly. We have here a very revealing statement, and one which matches how the accelerationist mind frames the basic question of human knowledge. Specifically, there is a shift between what we may call a “first order” and “second order” decision. On the first order, there is a decision to be made between ultimate, incommensurable values—truth or freedom. But on the second order, we realize that this choice, itself, is a free and unguided one, entirely a product of the free will itself, rather than evidence or “sufficient reasons.” The deck is stacked. A free choice between “truth” and “freedom” will always call the match in favor of the latter, and against the former.

It is then clear how the notion of hyperstition emerges from this basic skepticism about truth and objective standards. In fact, hyperstition is only pragmatism made self-aware. Once we admit that our only criterion is “what works,” we are no longer impelled to search for the truth, so much as to invent it. The successful inventions are simply those that have the biggest impact.⁵¹

While this may strike some readers as consistent with progressive social values, nothing can be further from the truth. The free invention of reality is necessarily antidemocratic. As a product of the creative free will, it implies a battle for domination, rather than a common search for agreement. The questions become: Whose world-narrative comes out on top? Who can shape reality most profoundly?

The implicit authoritarianism underlying the concept of hyperstition is well on display in Nick Land’s 2012 work, *Dark Enlightenment*. Here, Land inveighs against liberal, “PC” orthodoxy, what he calls “The Cathedral.” Democracy, for Land, is marked by entropy—a consumerist culture that merely reproduces itself incessantly, without ever creating anything genuinely new. Land’s excessive use of neologisms help define his political imperative: It is first to transcend the “heat-death” of modern democracy, and then to seek a “bionic horizon” that not only goes beyond the “hubbub” of political deliberation but also redefines human beings as such. The foil to the Cathedral is the “Cracker Factory”—a deliberate play on words, bringing to mind not only anti-PC white culture, but also the physical “cracking up” of the establishment. Land thus combines a postmodern, tech-infused libertarianism with a virulent neoconfederate ideology. Rather than seeking freedom *within* society (as more moderate libertarians might), Land promotes the mantra of “no voice” and “free exit,” i.e., secession from modern democracy altogether.⁵²

Hyperstition is fundamental to this sort of politics. Land appears to promote a stark realism, counterposing the stale ideologies of liberal democracy to the hard-nosed, empirical recognition of human inequality, including racial disparities in achievement and IQ.⁵³ But he is not after “hard-truths,” not really. In fact, Land’s nominalized universe precludes their very existence. His ethos of “cracking up” and “breaking through” is rather about a willful and creative destruction. Land wants to insert new, governing myths in place of the presently hegemonic ones. The bad egalitarianism of democracy, for Land, allows for the lazy masses to leech off of the productivity of creative elites. But when this same egalitarianism breeds resentment, the masses can violently rise up. The solution, in Land’s view, is a new ideology of escape—not altogether dissimilar from the notion of a

“capital strike” in Ayn Rand’s better known novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. But the point is that all of this is myth-making. It is an attempt to reframe reality on different terms than the liberal, the democrat, and especially the Marxist. In particular, it is a ploy to engage people’s imaginations, and so to change their minds about the ultimate sources of value. Whereas the Marxist will promote a “labor theory of value,” Land recasts workers as merely the passive fodder for novel, techno-industrial creations.⁵⁴

LEFT-ACCELERATIONISM (LEFT BEHIND)

Given the grim history of futurism, might it nonetheless be possible to redeem this tradition for an emancipatory politics? To be sure, attempts to found a “left-futurism” are almost as old as the term itself, and were especially manifest in prerevolutionary Russia.⁵⁵ But today, a left-accelerationism is once again en vogue. A myriad of Left blogs, academic symposia, gallery exhibitions, and political manifestos, each drawing on Land’s writings, have proliferated over the last decade.⁵⁶

While diverse in their rhetoric and particular aims, these initiatives tend to coalesce around a handful of specific themes. First of all, there is the rejection of a failed folk-politics, i.e., small-scale, non-hierarchical attempts to change whole systems at the local level. This rejection is born out of the failures of the Occupy movement and similar micro-political projects. Second, there is a critique of existing identitarian (racial and gender) politics, which they cast as overly moralistic and given to an ethos of victimization. Instead, left-accelerationists insist upon a return to the universal, and to mass politics. They hold that world systems (such as capitalism) can only be overturned by an equally systematic opposition.

Perhaps the most important example of left-accelerationist politics comes from the work of Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams. In the #Accelerate Manifesto, and in their more recent book *Inventing the Future*, Srnicek and Williams try to synthesize Nick Land’s techno-futurism with Marxist ideas of universal emancipation.⁵⁷ Instead of Land’s praise for authoritarian government and racist overtones, Srnicek and Williams

promote a social democratic alternative, with demands for universal basic income, full automation, and technological progress. In contrast to much of postmodern thought, Srnicek and Williams affirm a rhetoric of modernity, rationalism, and the Enlightenment. Against the deep ecologist, they reject a precious worship of nature in favor of an unbridled, Promethean mastery of the environment for human ends.

But in this Prometheanism we can see very clearly the commonalities that left-accelerationism has with the whole bloody history of futurist thought. Specifically, it is the mastery of the Will over Nature that is celebrated and valorized. While left-accelerationists maintain a facade of Enlightenment universalism, they in fact distance themselves from the actual positions of Enlightenment-era thought, especially the determinism and objectivity of Spinoza and the French materialists. Indeed, their supposedly “mass politics” is marked by the same notion of hyperstition as is seen in the neoreactionary works of Nick Land. For them, there is no one intelligible world that can be grasped universally. There is only the agonistic contest of incommensurable worldviews—each considered “universal” from the inside, but nonetheless in constant competition with one another.⁵⁸

This tracks very closely to the left-accelerationist notion of freedom. For them, freedom must be considered a “synthetic enterprise” and never a “natural gift.”⁵⁹ This is to say that human freedom is not based on some objective and universal view of human nature as such. It is rather something volitional and invented. The rhetoric of Srnicek and Williams around freedom initially sounds conventionally left wing. Freedom is not merely “freedom from” outside restrictions (as the classical libertarian might assert), but is instead the “freedom to” pursue one’s desires. But in this, the left-accelerationist tips their hand; for desire, itself, is entirely ungrounded, improvisational, and indeterminate. Who is to say what counts as a proper yearning or inclination? To answer such a question with any certainty at all would require an appeal to something like human nature. But this is precisely what the left-accelerationist rejects. In its place, there is only this aforementioned conflict of worldviews and value systems, that is, incommensurable definitions of desire.⁶⁰

Theirs is at most an existentialist sort of “humanism,” or, to use their phraseology, a “humanism that is not defined in advance.”⁶¹ The creative will takes the place of any intelligible nature in its open-ended quest for self-definition. Much the same can be said for left-accelerationist takes on racial emancipation and feminism. Drawing on Land’s early collaborator, Sadie Plant, they deny knowing what it is to be a woman, and insist instead on an open ended “evolution” of what women’s liberation could mean:

It’s always been problematic to talk about the liberation of women because that presupposes that we know what women are. . . . It’s not a question of liberation so much as a question of evolution—or engineering. There’s a gradual re-engineering of what it can be to be a woman and we don’t yet know what it is.⁶²

This approach certainly has some distinct benefits. For one, it avoids what Srnicek and Williams term “parochial humanism,” i.e., illicitly substituting Eurocentric and masculinist conceptions of the human for a universal essence.⁶³ Problematically, however, the left-accelerationist lacks any objective values against which to judge their vaunted “evolution” or “engineering” as either progressive or retrograde. In this, they default back into the very sort of parochialism they claim to oppose. For there are only the particular twists and turns of an evolutionary story, and the particular historical moments therein. Never is there a trans-historical standard to evaluate these moments: “The universal, then, is an empty placeholder that hegemonic particulars (specific demands, ideals, and collectives) come to occupy.”⁶⁴

For the accelerationist, our “self-engineering” implies a degree of conflict and alienation. We only create ourselves within a particular social nexus. If workers are exploited under capitalism, then this very exploitation is defining of who they are, and who they may choose to become. But here a crucial difference must be noted between the left-accelerationist, on the one hand, and the classical Marxist on the other. For the Marxist, exploitation may well be productive of worker emancipation. If work becomes ever more specialized and centralized, if hours and conditions

deteriorate, and if wealth becomes concentrated in ever fewer hands, this may well give rise to class consciousness. Yet this is because such conditions are an assault on a common human nature itself. The need for meaningful work, and social collaboration are part and parcel of what it is to be a human being, and so inhumane conditions may be a spark for class revolt. But the point is that emancipation, on the Marxist view, involves reclaiming the proper life-conditions for human beings, and also developing their innate capacities. This is why emancipation is not only a material development but, at the same time, a moral imperative.

On the left-accelerationist view, however, there can be no human essence, no “species being,” considered apart from alienation. Alienation not only defines our circumstances at a particular historical juncture but actually defines the totality of who we are:

There is no authentic human essence to be realised, no harmonious unity to be returned to, no unalienated humanity obscured by false mediations, no organic wholeness to be achieved. Alienation is a mode of enablement, and humanity is an incomplete vector of transformation. What we are and what we can become are open-ended projects to be constructed in the course of time.⁶⁵

Why one should embark on such a project at all remains an open question. So too does this project’s specific agenda. The left-accelerationist claims to promote gargantuan leaps in technology so that the working day can be radically shortened, or even eliminated. Yet one may ask why they would not just as easily take the opposite view, such as the right-futurist Oswald Spengler. As we saw, for him there will be no relief from long working hours; the new, gargantuan machines will simply be manned by ever greater scores of workers, reduced to a state of unimaginable hyper-exploitation. Certainly, the left-accelerationist would abhor such a grim vision, but lacking in humanist principles it is terribly unclear why.

HYPE, HYPE-MAN, HYPERSTITION

Srnicek and Williams have inspired subsequent manifestos that further elucidate the themes of left-accelerationism. These include the Xenofeminist Manifesto and the #AltWoke Manifesto. The former calls for a rejection of external nature as unjust, in order to make room for the creative will, while the latter embraces a “post-truth” and “post-fact” world to better facilitate Left political designs. The #AltWoke Manifesto takes the cultural ethos of Trump’s presidency for granted, in accepting that we are plunged into a world of “alternative facts,” which aligns well with the CCRU concept of hyperstition.⁶⁶

There is an even deeper affinity between hyperstition and what we find in something as pedestrian as Trump’s *The Art of the Deal*. It may be uncomfortable to left-accelerationists, but hyperstition, the idea that fictions can create realities, comes awfully close to Trump’s notion of “truthful hyperbole.” Deals can be cut, and projects promoted, through substituting fantasy for the truth:

I play to people’s fantasies. People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. . . . People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole.⁶⁷

This notion of willing your way to the top with useful fictions is in fact religious in origin and, at the same time, deeply American. This is the theology of Norman Vincent Peale, that Protestant guru behind *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and Trump family minister.⁶⁸ The Trump family’s twin mantra of “Be a killer/You are a king,” is simply a more vicious version of Peale’s “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”⁶⁹ Crucially, Peale’s formula is in no way concerned with brotherly love or salvation. Neither is it based upon the actual existence of Christ, but rather the practical benefit of belief itself. Belief—regardless of theological truth—should engender practical success in this world.

A worldview that places practical success over truth will always end

up as both unscientific and undemocratic. It will be unscientific because “success” is never self-defining. The pragmatist may appear, superficially, to be a hard-nosed realist who only cares about the facts and results. But what counts as facts or legitimate results will be grounded only in an unaccountable will or decision. Feyerabend’s deconstruction of science prevails: Science is indistinguishable from myth or, perhaps, even political propaganda. Democracy is likewise denigrated. For on this worldview collective deliberation about a common world of facts becomes impossible. There can only be a contest of wills, and the domination of the many by the strongest, the most vicious, and, perhaps, the most self-deluded.

In the end, what the accelerationist is up to is nothing terribly new. Despite its futuristic rhetoric, accelerationism merely resurrects an old, religious idea about the absolute freedom of the will, and its ability to create facts ex nihilo. The genuine alternative to this is, likewise, nothing new. Rather, it is rooted in Enlightenment rationalism, which argues for a materialist, secular, and determinist understanding of the universe. On the rationalist view, both science and democracy commence from the very same starting point: an intelligible world. Scientists can engage in repeatable experiments for the very same reason that communities can extend democratic control over their economy. In each case, interpersonal agreement depends on there being an objective, comprehensible world beyond the whims and wills of strong personalities. And moreover, the data that scientists collect should be able to inform communal decision-making, illuminating not only the external world but also helping to further define human needs and flourishing. A democratic society thus needs science to inform its deliberations, but the sort of science adequate to this task must itself be grounded in a rationalist metaphysic.

Vietnam," *APRJA (A Peer-Reviewed Journal About)* 6, no. 1 (2017): 14, <http://www.aprja.net/computing-war-narratives-the-hamlet-evaluation-system-in-vietnam/?pdf=3204>.

98. In this vein behold Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, "The Dynamics of Violence in Vietnam: An Analysis of the Hamlet Evaluation System," *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 3 (May 2009) and Matthew Kocher, Thomas B. Pepinsky, and Stathis Kalyvas, "Aerial Bombardment, Indiscriminate Violence, and Territorial Control in Unconventional Wars: Evidence from Vietnam," *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 2 (April 2011).

99. See Hugh Gusterson, *Drone: Remote Control Warfare* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2016); Grigore Chamayou, *A Theory of the Drone* (New York: New Press, 2013); Medea Benjamin, *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control* (New York: Verso, 2013); Andrew Cockburn, *Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins* (New York: Verso, 2016); P. W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (New York: Penguin, 2011); and Jeremy Scahill, *The Assassination Complex: Inside the Government's Secret Drone Warfare Program* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

100. Gusterson, *Drone*, pp. 23–24.

101. Jon Boone, "US Drone Strikes Could Be Classified as War Crimes, Says Amnesty International," *Guardian*, October 22, 2013.

102. Robert M. Young, *Mind, Brain, and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century: Cerebral Localization and Its Biological Context from Gall to Ferrier* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 31.

103. Brian Charlesworth and Deborah Charlesworth, "Geneticists Know There's More to Life," *Guardian* March 11, 2018.

104. Nicholas Rescher, *The Limits of Science*, 2nd ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), p. 35.

105. Noam Chomsky, *For Reasons of State* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), p. 42.

106. Curtis Bowman, "Odysseus and the Siren Call of Reason: The Frankfurt School Critique of Enlightenment," *Other Voices: The (e)journal of Cultural Criticism* 1, no. 1 (March 1997).

107. Nancy Love, "Why Do the Sirens Sing? Figuring the Feminine in Dialectic of Enlightenment," in *Rethinking the Frankfurt School: Alternative Legacies of Cultural Critique*, ed. Jeffrey T. Nealon and Carn Irr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

108. Objective reason, which rejects stunted formal theories, means criticism and by "criticism, we mean the intellectual, and eventually practical effort which is not satisfied to accept the prevailing ideas, actions, and social conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit; effort which aims to coordinate the individual sides of social life with each other and with the general ideas and aims of the epoch, to deduce them genetically, to distinguish the appearance from essence, to examine the foundation of things, in short, really to know them." Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, p. 270.

Chapter 9: Back to the Futurists: On Accelerationism Left and Right

1. Elizabeth Dias, "What You Missed While Not Watching the Bill Nye and Ken Ham Creation Debate," *Time*, February 5, 2014, <http://time.com/4511/bill-nye-ken-ham-debate/>.

2. Mark C. Biedebach, "Atheism Comes into the Classroom through the Back Door," chap. 3 in *Evolution vs. Creation . . . a New Approach to Teaching How Life Began* (manuscript in progress; California State University, Long Beach, CA), <http://web.csulb.edu/~mbiedeba/ch3.html>.

3. Nick Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," *Dark Enlightenment* (blog), December 25, 2012, <http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>; Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," in

#Accelerate: *The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanesian, 2nd ed. (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic Media, 2017), pp. 347–62; Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation," *Xenofeminism*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/qx8bq.txt>; "#AltWoke Manifesto," *e&e& Journal*, February 5, 2017, <http://tripleampersand.org/alt-woke-manifesto/>; Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (London: Verso, 2015).

4. Andy Beckett, "Accelerationism: How a Fringe Philosophy Predicted the Future We Live in," *Guardian*, May 11, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in>.

5. It is true that many accelerationist writers embrace the rhetoric of modernity, and even the Enlightenment. See, for example, Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*, p. 49. Nonetheless, these writers consistently eschew the major conceptual tenets of radical Enlightenment thought, namely, the existence of an intelligible, deterministic, universe governed by equally intelligible and stable natural laws.

6. Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1–9.

7. Manjit Kumar, *Quantum: Einstein, Bohr, and the Great Debate about the Nature of Reality* (repr.; New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), p. 331.

8. Alan Ramon Clinton, *Mechanical Occult: Automatism, Modernism, and the Specter of Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2004), p. 193.

9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 181.

10. Robert C. Holub, *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem: Between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 166–203.

11. Don Dombowsky, *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 9–66.

12. Frank Cameron and Don Dombowsky, eds., *Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche: An Edited Anthology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 236.

13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 10.

14. Certainly, there were other proponents of Italian futurism, some of whom even occupied the left wing of the political spectrum. However, at least in Italy, futurism did come to be dominated by a right-wing and nationalist ethos, and Marinetti himself was instrumental in this.

15. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "To My Pegasus," in *Selected Poems and Related Prose*, ed. Luce Marinetti, trans. Elizabeth R. Napier and Barbara R. Studholme (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 38.

16. Filippo Marinetti, quoted in, Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 19–20.

17. Ernst Jünger, "Total Mobilization," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 126–27.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

20. For the will is "world-forming," rather than formed by a common world. See Ernst Jünger, *The Worker: Dominion and Form*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, trans. Bogdan Costea and Laurence Paul Hemming (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), pp. 189–90. Commentators on Jünger have likewise pointed out the extent of his valorization of the

particular will, and how this fundamental worldview could accommodate the anti-Semitism of his time. While opposing the alarmism of Nazi propaganda, Jünger did identify the liberal Jew as nonetheless "alien" to German culture, and so incapable of "playing a creative role" in German life." See Thomas R. Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 74, 109.

21. Jünger, *Worker*, p. xv.
22. Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (1932; New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 82.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Benjamin Noys, "Futures of Accelerationism" (seminar, Faster/Slower/Future, Towards Postcapitalism, Kaaithheater, Brussels, Belgium, October 22, 2016).
25. Spengler, *Man and Technics*, p. 87.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
27. *Ibid.*
28. C. L. R. James, *Every Cook Can Govern: A Study of Democracy in Ancient Greece It's Meaning for Today*, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Bewick Editions, 1992).
29. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 6 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2010), p. 487.
30. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 213.
31. Friedrich Hölderlin, as quoted in Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland, 1977), p. 28.
32. Richard Wolin, ed., "Only a God Can Save Us: *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger," in *Heidegger Controversy*, p. 91.
33. This account of French accelerationism is heavily indebted to Benjamin Noys's two books on the subject, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 5, and *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014), p. xi. It was Noys who reintroduced the term "accelerationism" into the modern lexicon, and, further, identified accelerationist thought as bound up with the conditions of late capitalism.
34. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume III*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), as quoted in, Noys, *Malign Velocities*, pp. 8–10.
35. Marx, *Capital*, p. 959.
36. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 239–40; Noys, *Malign Velocities*, pp. 1–2.
37. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 240.
38. Noys, *Malign Velocities*, p. 4.
39. Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 111; cf. Noys, *Malign Velocities*, p. 3.
40. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, rev. ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), p. 58.
41. Jean Baudrillard, "When Bataille Attacked the Metaphysical Principle of Economy," trans. David James Miller, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 11, no. 3 (1987): 60.
42. Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987–2007*, ed. Ray Brassier and Robin Mackay, 2nd ed. (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2012), p. 446.
43. Noys, *Malign Velocities*, p. 54.
44. Land, *Fanged Noumena*, p. 21.
45. Karl Popper, *Quantum Theory and the Schism in Physics: From the Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery*, ed. W. W. Bartley III, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 175.

46. Eric Oberheim and Paul Hoyningen-Huene, "The Incommensurability of Scientific Theories," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last updated March 5, 2013, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/incommensurability/>.
47. Land, *Fanged Noumena*, p. 591; cf. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, new ed. (London: Verso, 2010), p. 14.
48. Land, *Fanged Noumena*, p. 592.
49. Mike Riddle, "Doesn't Carbon-14 Dating Disprove the Bible?" in *The New Answers Book: Over 25 Questions on Creation/Evolution and the Bible*, ed. Ken Ham (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006), pp. 77–87.
50. Paul Feyerabend, *Knowledge, Science, and Relativism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 183.
51. In this way, science collapses into technology. There can be no sense of knowledge acquisition for its own sake, i.e., a pure theoretical attitude. Rather, all scientific pursuits are instrumentalized for specific ends and involve invention. Hence the rise of what is now termed "technoscience."
52. Land, "Dark Enlightenment."
53. Nick Land, "IQ Shredders," *Outside In: Involvements with Reality* (blog), July 17, 2014, <http://www.xenosystems.net/iq-shredders/>.
54. See Land's critique of the "Labor Theory of Value," in *Fanged Noumena*, pp. 346–47.
55. On the Left-Nietzscheanism of Russian futurism, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism*, 1st ed. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002); on the contradictions of Russian futurism, see Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, ed. William Keach (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005).
56. Many of these are anthologized by Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, eds., *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, 2nd ed. (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic Media, 2017); As for the art scene, one example of this is the LD50 Gallery, which was heavily criticized for promoting Far-Right figures. See "Why Is Nick Land Still Embraced by Segments of the British Art and Theory Scenes?" *E-Flux Conversations* (blog), March 17, 2017, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/why-is-nick-land-still-embraced-by-segments-of-the-british-art-and-theory-scenes/6329>.
57. Srnicek and Williams, "#Accelerate: Manifesto," pp. 351–52.
58. Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*, p. 57.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
62. Sadie Plant, "Binary Sexes, Binary Codes," as quoted in, Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*, p. 82.
63. Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*, pp. 76, 83n74.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
66. Jon Swaine, "Donald Trump's Team Defends 'Alternative Facts' after Widespread Protests," *Guardian*, January 23, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/22/donald-trump-kellyanne-conway-inauguration-alternative-facts>.
67. Donald J. Trump and Tony Schwartz, *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 58.
68. Norman Vincent Peale gave sermons at Marble Collegiate Church in Manhattan. Fred Trump would take his family on Sundays to listen to Peale's sermons on the "power of positive thinking." Peale also officiated at Donald Trump's wedding to Ivana Zelníčková. See David Brody and Scott Lamb, *The Faith of Donald J. Trump: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: Broadside Books, 2018).
69. Michael D'Antonio, *The Truth about Trump* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015), p. 39; Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Fireside,

2003), p. 2. Of course, Peale's phrase is taken from Philippians 4:13. However, in Peale's hands, these words are turned into a practical "formula" or means of "self-hypnosis" for overcoming all worldly obstacles, if only they are said out loud.

Chapter 10: The Myth of the Expert as Elite: Postmodern Theory, Right-Wing Populism, and the Assault on Truth

1. Donald Trump, quoted in Nick Gass, "Trump: 'The Experts Are Terrible,'" *Politico*, April 4, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/donald-trump-foreign-policy-experts-221528>.
2. Michael Gove quoted in Henry Mance, "Britain Has Had Enough of Experts, Says Gove," *Financial Times*, June 3, 2016.
3. Wolfgang Streeck, "The Return of the Repressed as the Beginning of the End of Neoliberal Capitalism" in *The Great Regression*, ed. Heinrich Geiselberger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), pp. 159–60.
4. Daniel C. Dennett, "The Hoax of Intelligent Design and How It Was Perpetrated," in *Intelligent Thought: Science versus the Intelligent Design Movement*, ed. John Brockman (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), p. 34.
5. There is now a rich literature on the global rise of populism. Some of the best works include Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); John B. Judis, *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* (New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); and Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).
6. The anthropologist Angela Nagle has made a similar point in her *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from Achan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2017), p. 62. Shawn Otto has made a somewhat similar claim about a connection between postmodern thought and neoconservatism. See Otto's *The War on Science: Who's Waging It, What It Matters, What We Can Do about It* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2016), p. 199.
7. Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 72–73.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
9. Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: New Left Books, 1978), p. 86.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
11. As this volume was going to press, Mouffe released a small volume arguing for a leftist populism that presents her and, to a certain extent, Laclau's advocacy of populism in a more accessible form. See Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (New York: Verso, 2018).
12. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), p. 81.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
15. Jon Elster, "Hard and Soft Obscurantism in the Humanities and Social Sciences," *Diogenes* 58, no. 1–2 (February–May 2011): 159–70.
16. Consider for example the attack on intellectuals in the conservative historian Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals: From Marx and Tolstoy to Sartre and Chomsky* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

17. Russell Kirk, "Cultural Debris: A Mordant Last Word," in *The Portable Conservative Reader*, ed. Russell Kirk (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 706.
18. See the debate from Buckley's *Firing Line* television show, "Firing Line Creation and Evolution Debate 1997," Christopher Hitchens, October 19, 2011, YouTube video, 1:18:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XZDTsQaxw8>.
19. For this history, see George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006).
20. See, for example, Gabriella Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous* (New York: Verso Books, 2014). Angela Nagle has provided a similar criticism in her *Kill All Normies*.
21. For a discussion of right-wing internet culture, see Nagle, *Kill All Normies*. For an excellent, more general discussion of the effect of the internet on the notion of expertise, see Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 105–33.
22. For a discussion of "Red Pilling," see Abigail Brooks, "Popping the Red Pill: Inside a Digital Alternate Reality," CNNtech, November 10, 2017, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/11/10/technology/culture/divided-we-code-red-pill/index.html>.
23. For a sampling of Peterson's diatribes, see "Jordan Peterson on Women's Studies (from the Joe Rogan Experience #877)," PowerfulJRE, December 1, 2016, YouTube Video, 7:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88KJ5rgCNmk>. A brilliant critique of Peterson and the irrational sources of his claims has been offered by Pankaj Mishra in "Jordan Peterson & Fascist Mysticism," *New York Review of Books*, March 19, 2018, <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/03/19/jordan-peterson-and-fascist-mysticism/>.
24. For a discussion of the problem of "citizen journalism" and its right-wing practitioners, see Jesse Singal, "'Citizen Journalism' Is a Catastrophe Right Now, and It'll Only Get Worse," *New York Magazine*, October 19, 2016, <http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/10/citizen-journalism-is-a-catastrophe-itll-only-get-worse.html>.
25. For example, see "Citizen Journalists Are the Future of the Truth," Alex Jones, April 6, 2017, YouTube video, 5:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvIDKUSFFXE> [YouTube account has been taken down].
26. Steve Lohr, "It's True: False News Spreads Faster and Wider. And Humans Are to Blame," *New York Times*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/08/technology/twitter-fake-news-research.html>.
27. For a record of the debates and the efforts of creationists to make scientific arguments, see the sources collected in Robert T. Pennock and Michael Ruse, eds., *But Is It Science? The Philosophical Question in the Creation/Evolution Controversy*, updated ed. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2009).
28. For more on Paltrow's claims, see Nichols, *Death of Expertise*, pp. 115–17.
29. For an excellent case in which Richard Dawkins took Chopra to task for his incorrect usage of scientific concepts, see "Richard Dawkins Interviews Deepak Chopra (Enemies of Reason Uncut Interviews)," Bernard Segura, May 4, 2013, YouTube Video, 22:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsH1U7zSp7k>.
30. For information on McCarthy's anti-vaccination campaigns, see Harry Collins, *Are We All Scientific Experts Now?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 111–12.
31. One of the best critiques of Žižek is Alan Johnson's "Slavoj Žižek's Linksfaschismus," in *Radical Intellectuals and the Subversion of Progressive Politics: The Betrayal of Politics*, ed. Gregory Smulewicz-Zucker and Michael J. Thompson (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 99–120.
32. For more on the right-wing assault on science, see Chris Mooney, *The Republican War on Science* (New York: Basic Books, 2005) and Dave Levitan, *Not a Scientist: How Politicians Mistake, Misrepresent, and Utterly Mangle Science* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017).