The Friends of Politics

by

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Abstract

In this study, I examine the affirmation of the politics of friendship, offering a critique of the deployment of it as a means of struggle in contemporary politics. This examination is an attempt to explore the ways in which the affirmative development of friendship as a political relation have championed its positive content at the expense of its negative characteristics. Through the critique of Aristotle's discourse of friendship, which holds up an exemplary form of friendship as its project, I offer a genealogy that incorporates the negative, specifically the not-friend, as an alternative to the exemplarity that so often characterizes the admirable in friendship.

"Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;

Or surely you'll grow double:

Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;

Why all this toil and trouble?"

— William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," 1798

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Contents

The Friends of Politics

Introduction

I initially came to the project of an interrogation of the relationship of friendship in the texts of the Romantic period, particularly the collaboration between Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. In their book of poetry, *The Lyrical Ballads*, I sense an immense productivity not only in their collaborative efforts but also in a particular relationality of friendship as such. As I began secondary research on the matter of friendship in general, on the discourse of the essence of friendship, however, I, by degrees, became suspicious about the ubiquitous positivity and affirmation that permeates these discourses, an optimism that far overshadows the consideration of its negativity.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously expressed, in their collaborative work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* that their intentions in writing together were "[t]o render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. . . . To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied" (3). At the heart

of Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration, and indeed, their friendship, is not simply the negation of the individual, not merely a merging or union of minds, but rather it is the negation of the concept of individual altogether, the establishing of a new field such that one plus one equals not two but many, multiples. In *What Is Philosophy?*, they entreat philosophers to become friends *of the* concept, that is, the philosopher, as friend, is the "potentiality of the concept," whereby philosophy as such is "the discipline that involves *creating* concepts," rather than assume the precondition of existing ones (5). It is an attempt to clear the way toward a radical alternative, of opening up to the potential of affirmation, that the multiple can affirm new relations and concepts through the positive movement itself.

It is from this position that arose my suspicion about the positivity of the multiple, indeed, the relational; I sought then to consider not only the affirmative in friendship, but the negative as well. Rather than simply assume a blind positivity, it seemed to me that every friendly relation also involved a negative relation, of antagonism, of disappointment. Where I would depart from Deleuze and Guattari, however, is in dialecticizing friendship such that the central matter becomes: What of friendship *as* a concept? The friend not only as a "conceptual personae," that which is "intrinsic to thought, a condition of possibility of thought itself, a living

category, a transcendental lived reality," not only that which enabled the becoming of concepts, but rather that which may operate as conceptual personae *and* as a concept in its own right (*What is Philosophy?* 3). This is where I began, in the need to hold onto the negative in friendship where it everywhere appears as eminently positive, not in such a manner as to undermine friendship, but to uncover the generative movement of the concept in the discourse of friendship, and also feel out the limits of it in this movement. From here, I gravitated to Jacques Derrida's writings on friendship, the great battle between the positive and negative that I sensed in his meditations on the relation in philosophy.

In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida, through the interrogation of a contradictory and hyperbolic phrase attributed to Aristotle, "O my friends, there is no friend" (1), traces a discourse of friendship "as it develops from Plato and Aristotle to Blanchot, from an attempt to define or describe the nature or essence of friendship in terms of presence and proximity to the final realization that friendship cannot be so defined and so must be invoked in other ways" (Naas 144). From Derrida, it could perhaps be said that friendship is constantly being reformulated conceptually, particularly because of its reliance on a certain understanding of conditionality, that is, friendship relies on both unconditional and conditional

preconditions for its existence: on the one hand, a friend is a friend because they have fulfilled a particular set of criteria which qualify them unconditionally for the present and future to be a friend; on the other hand, a friend, to remain a friend, must also fulfill the conditional promises and duties that come with being a friend, that is, the promise of fidelity, of trust, etc., whereby the conditional is always open to reformulations. Friendship is everywhere saturated with these demarcations—boundaries between the conditional and the unconditional, between friend and enemy, between sameness and alterity. The essential problematic of friendship, then, is that, like Aristotle's apostrophe, as soon as one is affirmed as a friend, there is a simultaneous disavowal of friendship because of its conditionality.

This internal dynamic, however, is not merely relegated to private relationships. Aristotle goes to great lengths in linking the categories of friendship with the constitutions of societies, finding that the type of friendships that proliferate in society have a correspondence to the type of political constitution. But as Derrida surmised, friendship has only ever been a political concept driven by a politics before politics, but stuck in the throes of this heritage, it became entangled by the concepts that it drew forth — fraternity, family, the enemy and all the rest.

The route to considering the politics of friendship was grounded entirely in the present circumstances that surrounded my initial thinking. This was a time of the beginnings of the Occupy movement, or more generally, the movement of squares. Without getting too far into the array of specifics in my experience of it in one pocket of the world through which it spread, I was afforded with the optimism and sense of possibility that Occupy opened up as a response to the Great Recession. While it was precisely the relational aspects of the Occupy camps — the friendships that form, the antagonisms that were always present not only from the hostile 'exterior' but also in the internal space of the camps — that congealed in considering the politics of these sorts of relations, I could not shake the feelings that the idealism of these relations were hiding the very real limits that they bore, even the optimism of the will to establish a better society in these camps seemed constrained — in pragmatism and in thought.

In any case, what occurred to me was that even the ideal proffers destabilizing limitations. And, in thinking the discourse of friendship, I thought to question the great ideal that persists from Aristotle, the exemplary friendship. In contemporary discourses on friendship, I found that much of these examinations hold onto a particular optimism for the exemplary friendship, the proper ideal through which being friends comes

to open up the possibility of a better world, often from a resistance to late-capitalism. This optimism I call the persistence of the exemplar, a particular constraint that permeates the thinking of friendship brought forth from the continually influential writings of Aristotle. To put it reductively, I consider this persistence of the exemplar as symptomatic of a parallel discourse in political philosophy, namely affirmationism. Taking cues from Benjamin Noys' critique of the tendency of affirmationism, its ready willingness to throw out the capacity of the negative in political thought, I take aim at the exemplar not merely to show that it is a false category, but that, like Noys, to traverse through it, revealing its latent negativity.

In the next section, "The Dying Sage, the Living Guard of Friendship," I interrogate Aristotle's conception of friendship in *The Nichomachean Ethics* to discern what precisely is at the foundations of his category of the perfect friendship, or what I'm calling the exemplary friendship. The friend is always at least two, its minimum necessarily exceeds the singular individual—though its needs may be singular (as is the case in friendships of pleasure or utility, Aristotlean concepts which will be discussed in detail below), it still requires the relation of the two—two singularities, self and other. And yet, through the exemplar, we see that

perfect friendship is precisely the double rendered singular, rendered *indivisible*. As Montaigne writes,

> the perfect friendship I am talking about is indivisible: each
> gives himself entirely to his friend that he has nothing left to
> share with another: on the contrary, he grieves that he is not
> twofold, threefold or fourfold and that he does not have several souls, several wills, so that he could give them all to the
> one he loves. (qtd. in Derrida 181)

Perfect friendships are the product of a dialectical process: beginning with two individuals, two souls, and through the synthesis of their fidelity, their equality, they become one, "their correspondence is that of one soul in bodies twain" (qtd. in Derrida 179). The most basic unit of exemplary friendship then becomes the friend rather than the individual.

The metallurgical union of perfect friendship, however, is not without its tensions; it is haunted by the very perfection of their spiritual affinity, of their indivisibility: for friendship, without exception, awaits its end (the death of the friendship) on the one hand, or the horizon of death (the literal death of the friend) on the other. This is not to say that there is, at the heart of friendship, a desperate nihilism — that its inevitable mortality is the chief element of all friendships — but rather that friendship is per-

petually mediated by a gap, a distance between the individual and the unit of the friend, between the living actuality and the suspended end. Peter Fenves perhaps put it best in that in friendship there exists "a certain aporetic distancing that corresponds to the double exigency on friendship: that the relation of friend to friend be one of equals and that it be an altogether nonhierarchical relation of asymmetrical and nonreciprocal non-equals—or individuals" (142). In this section, however, I conceive of this aporetic distance not just as one that stands in opposition to individuals, the alterity of another against the same, but that there is at the heart of friendship an essential antinomy, that of the not-friend. This antinomy provides the means through which the concept of friendship is generative, that it creates new categories that alter the terms of friendship, most crucially for our purposes in friendship as a political relationship.

It is in the last section then, "The Impotentiality of Friendship," where I draw from another concept of Aristotle's that provides the dialectical movement of the concept of the friend. Here, I argue that, at the heart of friendship, there is dialectic between actuality and potentiality. Through Giorgio Agamben's clarification of potentiality in Aristotle, however, I propose that friendship derives not so much from the actualization of the friend relation in people, but rather from its *impotentiality*, a mode through

which the inactualization of friendship is retained — there it suffers its non-act in the not-friend. Elsewhere, Agamben writes, "what is friendship other than a proximity that resists both representation and conceptualization? To recognize someone as a friend means not being able to recognize him as a 'something'. . . . friendship is neither a property nor a quality of a subject" ("The Friend" Agamben 31). I would wager that Agamben is quite right; friendship resists representation, and does not find concretization as a concept in itself; rather, the friend comes to have meaning only through its negative component, the not-friend.

In order to draw out this movement of the concept, I trace a genealogy of the not-friend as it starts in Aristotle, and then to its coming into discourse as the enemy. Finally, I locate the trajectory to its logical conclusion in Carl Schmitt's concept of the political. It is in this genealogy that I propose that the enemy concept reaches a fatal entanglement with politics, as an end of politics as such, or at least the imminent possibility of its destruction. But this is not to say that the path that runs from not-friend to the enemy is now one of a dead end, that we no longer have need of friends. These are miserable times, and "in radiant times there is no *need* for friendship" (Fenves 145). Friendship, in other words, is most sought after in times of turmoil, and in matters of resistance is quite rightly

turned towards for solidarity. Rather, what I hope to suggest is that be-cause the friend and not-friend can be shown to be generative as a dialec-tical process, and because the negative proffers powerful political poten-tials in the not-friend, there is hope in considering another path of the friend — not merely through an affirmation of the relation, but chiefly through its negative.

Let me be clear about what I *do not* propose. I do not propose to abandon our current modes of friendship, however insidious its effects. I do not propose to submit to the merely negative, or perhaps internal, other of friendship, that of a brand of 'unfriendliness.' Instead, I affirm the im-pulse of invention, as Michel Foucault puts it, "to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they can give each other pleasure" (136). Another friend is possible, and through it, another politics.

i. The Persistence of the Exemplar

> Don't back away from what is political in friendship. We've
> been given a neutral idea of friendship, understood as a
> pure affection with no consequences. But all affinity is affini-
> ty *within* a common truth. Every encounter is an encounter
> *within* a common affirmation, even the affirmation of de-
> struction.
>
> —The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, 2011

IN THE DEDICATION of his book, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Slavoj Žižek
acknowledges his fidelity to his friend, Alain Badiou, with the following
anecdote:

> Alain Badiou was once seated amongst the public in a room
> where I was delivering a talk, when his cellphone (which, to
> add insult to injury, was mine — I had lent it to him) all of a
> sudden started to ring. Instead of turning it off, he gently in-
> terrupted me and asked me if I could talk more softly, so that

he could hear his interlocutor more clearly . . . If this was not

an act of true friendship, I do not know what friendship is.

(Žižek n.pag.)

An act of true friendship! This story is no doubt meant to sound absurd, another one of Žižek's growing repertoire of jokes: it claims that true friendship is found in those relations that include elements of sabotage — insidious acts which, instead of testing the boundaries of friendship, attest to friendship in some truer sense. It does us no good however to take this joke too seriously. It is fairly evident that Žižek relates the joke both as an act of endearment to his friend, Alain Badiou, and also as a jocular snub, if not toward Badiou himself, then with the function of endearing dedications in general. It is also however a mistake to not take the joke seriously at all, for it points to a sort of absurdity inherent in exemplifications of the representative form of friendship, especially when thinking the truest of friendships. And it is in this philosophical gap between the severely pure idea of friendship, and the casual affinity of its practice, that this thesis intervenes.

From the classical writings of Aristotle and Montaigne, to the contemporary reexaminations by Ray Pahl and Todd May, there is a tendency within discussions about friendship to favor the exemplar, the empirico-

theoretical archetype of friendship. The exemplar permeates the discourses on friendships in philosophy, law, epics, novels, everyday life, within and across the whole spectrum of relational networks, fields, and institutions. While earlier discourses focused on friendship with the endeavor to understand the essence of human relations, more recent discourses seek to articulate its political potential.[1] Since perhaps Jacques Derrida's seminars on the close relationship between friendship and politics in the history of philosophy — already emerging as a conflict in an oft-quoted phrase attributed to Aristotle, "O my friends, there are no friends" (*The Politics of Friendship* 1) — this turn to friendship as a political relation wagers that the seeds of sexual, racial, or class conflict benefits from the theory and praxis of particular types of friendship or friendship in general. The figure of the friend is at once promoted the gatekeeper of the political, and the exit from it. Yet, there remains a limit, a boundary or impasse, firmly imbedded in this turn to friendship, a limit that haunts its desire for imminence: the presence and persistence of the exemplar.

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[1] See: Fenves, Peter. "The Politics of Friendship, Once Again." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32.2 (1998): 133-155; May, Todd. *Friendship in the Age of Economics: Resisting the Forces of Neoliberalism*. New York: Lexington Books, 2012. Schall, James V. "Friendship and Political Philosophy." *The Review of Metaphysics* 50.1 (1996): 121-141.

For thinkers like May, the period of Neoliberalism — the dominant mode of economics in late-capitalism — ushers, not incidentally, a feeling of hopelessness, especially for dissidents, whereby the "failure of hope is one reason for the lack of resistance to neoliberalism" (*Friendship in the Age of Economics* 13). Central to May's argument is that neoliberalism produces figures, much in the same way that figures of sexuality arise as historically contingent as theorized by Michel Foucault. Two such figures are the consumer and the entrepreneur. These figures, however, are not completely determined by their *modus operandi*, no matter how dominated by or willfully subject to market forces, no matter how accurate these portraits of our status as individualist consumer or *homo economicus*. It is at this point where friendship plays a central role in resisting the forces of neoliberalism: friendship is an element of our relation to the world that is not reducible to neoliberal figures, and so are a source of deviation, of an anomalous relation that offers non-market-driven determinations. For May, "friendship is a common aspect of human life, and its commonality allows us both a way to see how pervasive the figures of neoliberalism can be, and, more important, how close we often are to resisting those figures even when we don't recognize it" (59).

May's analysis of neoliberalism is concise and rigorous, and his affirmation of the subversiveness of friendship, in particular Elizabeth Telfer's relation of 'deep friendship,' is rich and compelling. But, while May recognizes the inadequacy of Aristotle's notion of true friendship, he does so only insofar that it depends on the rarity of virtue and therefore of true friendships, rather than true friendship, or any such variant of exemplary friendship, being a limit. My point is not to denounce such attempts at imagining alternative modes of resistance, particularly those under the mantra of 'the personal is political': it is precisely maxims like this that ignited waves of productive standpoints of resistance within for instance the many folds of feminism. Rather, my contention lies in the manner in which friendship — the positivity associated with this relation — is put forth as a mode of resistance to dominant forces without regard to the need for its own immanent transformation. That is to say, the manner in which friendship is conceived of as a ready-made mode of resistance, without an understanding of its own *limit* in the praxis of relationality.

What is at the heart of this harnessing of friendship's potential for resistance appears to be a consequence of the turn to affirmationism as a political strategy specific to the period of late-capitalism, but perhaps even more so the situation of capitalism revealed by the Financial Crisis of 2008,

a stage of deepening crisis. The central element of this particular crisis, unlike those that plagued the twentieth century, is the historically specific amalgamation of surplus populations,[2] wherein the dynamic of the capital-labour relation (the relation between working populations and the reserve army of labour) and its necessity to throw off labour through process innovations, creates a population superfluous to the production process, an endemic of chronically un- or underemployed individuals. This amalgamated group is the locus of misery. It is however also from this group (particularly, unemployed college graduates) — or perhaps more specifically, the mutual misery of their imposed situation — from which the tactics of affirmation emerge.

In the above epigraph, I have chosen to forefront a quotation from The Invisible Committee's *The Coming Insurrection* which is quite explicit on the triad of friendship, politics, and affirmationism. "Find each other," they impel the subjects of insurrection (97). For The Invisible Committee, the first crucial step is the assembling of bodies, the alienated and exploited mass of individuals under the thumb of capitalist valorisation, where they "[d]on't back away from what is political in friendship" (98). There is a "common affirmation" within every encounter, in which even the com-

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[2] See: *Endnotes* "Misery and Debt" http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/1

mon "affirmation of destruction," that is, the destruction of capitalist so-

cial relations, becomes the catalyst by which we unshackle the fetters of

our domination (98). From Marx and Engels's "Workers of the world

unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains!" to May 68's "Run, Com-

rade, the old world is behind you!" and now to "Don't back away from

what is political in friendship," the affirmation of friendship seems to fol-

low this progression from the shackled prisoner of exploitation, to the flee-

ing escapee, to finding other people with whom to create a new world

based on the fidelity of equality and freedom. What remains to be seen is

whether the affirmation of friendship is enough, if the fidelity to the hope

of friendship is one of an infinite potential or if friendship is itself bound

by limits, or in a general sense if friendship is an element of "the real

movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx and Engels

162).

* * *

This tendency of turning to friendship as a tactics of affirmationism

is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the social movements of the

twenty-first century, chiefly that of Occupy Wall Street. Not incidentally,

the tactics of occupation maintain the primacy of amassing bodies in op-

position to an ever-expanding field of accumulation, following the totalizing state of global capitalism. We have seen in the last couple of years since Occupy's first entrance in 2011 onto the scene of the post 2008 Financial Crisis world, the expansion from "Wall Street" to "Everything." There are two central concepts that delineate the logic of this expansion: on the one hand, there is the centrality of solidarity, the necessity of aggregating the discontent of the separated and scrambled masses most failed or threatened by the crises of capitalism; on the other hand, there is the refusal of demands, the growing realisation that there is no demand that could meet the ends of "social justice" demanded by the masses without the wholesale surrender of the totality of the capitalist relations of exploitation, put most succinctly by the Argentine slogan "Que se vayan todos," (They all have to go) during the riots of December 2001. Both these logics — that of expansion through bodies and that of the distillation of the singularity, the nothing of the non-demand — meet through the turn to affirming that we nevertheless must do something, whereby the only recourse is to recreate ourselves through new or reimagined social relations, in the parks, on the streets, in the universities, and in the banks.[3]

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[3] The current state of Occupy is encapsulated in the slogan "Occupy the Future," which attempts the reimagining of society through creating alternative modes of economics (ie. redistribution), construction of public space (ie. instituting a proper commons), etc., while

There is no shortage of critiques against Occupy, often pointing to the failure of the practice of inclusivity, whereby the voices and participation of particular sections of society remain excluded despite the democratic structure of these camps. Rather than simply saying that Occupy was not democratic enough, it is perhaps more proper to say that it was incapable of being so, that the camps were everywhere bound by limits, physical certainly, but also social.[4] *Endnotes*, in their sketch of what is being called the "movement of squares," of which Occupy remains a crucial part, points to a continuity between these movements' attempt to forge new social relations from the space of the squares and the insidiousness of classed, gender, and racial lines that nevertheless persist into the camps:

> The truth was, however, that the protesters remained firmly anchored to the society of which even their squares were a part. That was clear enough in the divisions between more

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simultaneously seeking immediate remedies to the current situation. Perhaps the most recognized of these projects is the "Rolling Jubilee" that operates by soliciting donations to buy up outstanding debts (normally a practice overseen by collection agencies) and "forgiving" them, clearing burdened debtors from their obligations. This turn to the future typifies the trajectory that I've tried to flesh out in miniature.

[4] Rather than merely posing the questions of the limit as a boundary or failure of affirmationist socialability to truly create new relations, I contend that the moment of the limit is precisely the point of socialization, that at the limit of a particular mode of praxis we find the means to overcome these limits.

"middle class" participants and the poor. But it wasn't only that: individuals with all sorts of pre-existing affinities tended to congregate in this or that corner of the square. They set up their tents in circles, with the open flaps facing inwards. More insidious divisions emerged along gender lines. The participation of women in the occupations took place under the threat of rape by some of the men; women were forced to organise for their self-defence. Such divisions were not dissolvable into a unity that consisted only of consensus-based decision-making and collective cooking. ("The Holding Pattern" n.pag.)

It is not by coincidence that these real limits that constitute capitalist social relations bled into the squares, thwarting their attempts at 'direct democracy.' The holdovers of their alienated and valourized lives insist themselves into the camps, the tents, and their activities, revealing that their occupation cannot purely be their 'bodies' disrupting flows—it will include their baggage, their biases and privileges, their economic positions, and all the rest.

My point however is not to denigrate Occupy in its attempt to create new social relations, but rather to point to a limit inherent in such at-

tempts at affirmation, for it is a limit that is also found within the relation of the friend, that is, the overwhelming positivity ascribed to it, particularly when thought of as a mode of resistance. This limit, put forth most strongly by thinkers like Benjamin Noys, is that of a regime of affirmationism that's emerged since at least Nietzsche:

> The contemporary dominance of affirmationism in Continental theory can be read as a sign of the triumph of [the] line of immanence, which has become correlated with the political ability to disrupt and resist the false transcendental regime of capitalism. It is the affirmation of immanence, particularly as the locus of power and production, which is supposed to deliver the re-establishment of the grandeur of philosophy and the possibility of a new post-Nietzschean 'great politics.' (Noys 1)

The missing element, for Noys, is the negative, or rather perhaps more accurately, the hidden element. For negativity has been made to serve affirmationism, "'freed' from dialectical subordination only to be made subject, finally and fatally, to affirmationism" (17). For Noys, the characteristic feature of the radical Left post-May 68' was that it turned away from thinking negativity — through the purification of affirmative positions —

in the face of capital's valorization. Negativity appears as an element of "weakening," "correlated with the suffering pathos of the subject," whereby the subject of revolution falls into the finitude of capitalist subjectivization (17). Furthermore, compared to the real abstraction of capital, from the extraction of surplus value from abstract labour, to the general equivalence of commodities within the money form, a politics of negativity appears to be ridden with traps because it relies on being 'within' the abstractions of capital. The negative, in other words, in the eyes of particular critics is too beholden to the misery wrought by capital. What's left is to affirm new modes outside of these real abstractions. But, and I agree with Noys on this point, "[w]hat [affirmationism] dogmatically excludes is the failure to create an affirmative philosophy that can truly select, rather than merely reproduce things as they are" (36).

While the dominant discourses of affirmationism — those of Derrida, Deleuze, Negri, and Badiou whom are examined in Noys' book — are not unaware of the limits of affirmation, of supplanting it over negativity, the discontent often leads to the replacement of such tendencies for another form of affirmation. The task is to sustain negativity within affirmationism. It is not then the case that Noys seeks a rejection of affirmation in favor of negation: for Noys, a movement toward a productive negativity lies

in the confrontation with affirmationist theory as "traversal," "rather than a dismissal," a negativity that "operates in the expropriation of positivities as a relation of rupture" (13, 18). It is this mode of traversal that leads my thinking on friendship and the limit of the exemplar, which is perhaps now more than ever embroiled in affirmation as a political relation.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

It is no surprise that the exemplar is a fixated object of analysis within friendship: for what is exceptional about the exemplar is that it is at once merely an example, a selection among the vulgar, and also the more purified, most inspiring of the set. This is not to say that the non-exemplary, normative friendships are regarded as inconsequential, or exclusive from the exemplary, but rather that the exemplary is seen to radiate with an intensity, an excess, which provides a gleam of the essence of friendship — a guiding light to follow in conducting the pursuit of friendship.

Perhaps the most revealing affirmationist tendency lies in the work of writers like Ray Pahl, who claims that it is precisely the socio-economic system of capitalism that allowed for friendship to expand as much as it has, alongside its creation of abundance and convenience with mass commodity production. To hear it from Pahl, "it was precisely the spread of

market exchange in the eighteenth century that led to new benevolent bonds" (54). On the contemporary situation, Pahl writes, "[f]riendship is the archetypal social relationship of choice, and ours is a period of choice — of clothes, style, fashion and identities — so, surely, friendship should be entering a golden age" (171). As if the choice in our friends, of choosing the most suitable and worthy individuals according to our tastes — relying on a certain fashioning reflected by those most exemplary of friendship — will itself serve as the means by which we discover the flourishing of not only the possibilities of friendship but also ourselves as individuals, or perhaps even of social relations as such. To be sure, capitalism produces social relations — classically those between labourer and capitalist, that of the labourer and the reproducer of labour-power — but the claim that capitalism is simultaneously the engine for the creation of "benevolent bonds" ought to give one pause. Pause not because these new bonds are not benevolent or perhaps more generously autonomous from an immediate exploitation by capital but rather that these bonds could very well be "cruel."[5] As Lauren Berlant writes, "Romance and friendship inevitably meet the instabilities of sexuality, money, expectation, and exhaustion,

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[5] Cruel in the sense that Lauren Berlant utilizes the term in *Cruel Optimism*, a relation such that the object of one's desire becomes an obstacle to one's flourishing. See: Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*,

producing, at the extreme, moral dramas of estrangement and betrayal, along with terrible spectacles of neglect and violence even where desire, perhaps, endures" (Berlant "Intimacy" 281). There are no purified relations in either love or friendship that do not run the risk of these instabilities, where even when the desire to love or engage in friendship resonates these run in tandem with countering risks that exist not in only in the world at large, surrounding the couple or the friends, but are immanent even within these relationships.

The selectivism of Pahl is most exemplary of the affirmation of friendship. But my critique of his selectivism has less to do with a mere skepticism — less to do with a suspicion about claims that center capital as the producer of positive relations: indeed, capitalism is historically the engine that enables the greatest amount of reproduction (survivability) *and* causes the greatest amount of misery. Out of capitalist relations, even if they serve to make our lives miserable, comes new particular bonds, particular instantiations of families and friends, from which the most varied positive affects and associations circulate. Instead, my critique of Pahl focuses on the manner of determination of these positivities, which all too readily accepts the parameters and limits of possible change as unlimited. Pahl's selectivism does nothing to expand the field of possible relations

"outside" of capital, which is not to say that in the full subsumption of re-lations into capital permits anything but its own determinations. The positing of an "outside," holds onto something of the potentiality for something all together new, some radical difference in the face of homo-geneity. Pahl's selectivism remains beholden to the actual of historical un-folding: friendships are contingent with the types of exemplary friend-ships that are found throughout the historical actualizations of the human community. As Michel Foucault writes on sexuality, particular figures emerge immanently with the genealogy of the discourse of sexuality, which facilitate "objects of knowledge" tethered to "transitory historical contingencies" (17, 20). Or to put it in other words, friendships are teth-ered to the structures (often institutional) of socially lived, rather than liv-ing, relations: parent-child, brother-sister, employer-employee, teacher-student, etc.; and, insofar as the figure of the friend is put forth as an object of the knowable and therefore replicable, it becomes a fixed form, that is to say, limited by what Raymond Williams called a structure of feeling:

> Perhaps the dead can be reduced to fixed forms, though their surviving records are against it. But the living will not be re-duced. . . . All the known complexities, the experienced ten-sions, shifts, and uncertainties, the intricate forms of un-

evenness and confusion, are against the terms of the reduc-

tion and soon, by extension, against social analysis itself. So-

cial forms are then often admitted for generalities but de-

barred, contemptuously, from any possible relevance to this

immediate and actual significance of being. (129-30).

As a consequence of the overdetermination of the residual social forms —

the forms that are fixed and knowable because they are reducible, and

therefore analyzable; the forms continually shored up to the present as

representative of living relations — the emergent social forms become ob-

fuscated. The affective social forms attached to the friend — the love of

another, the fidelity of being in communion and reciprocity — then be-

come a limit through the exemplar by the simultaneous affirmation of in-

tensities, of the singularity of an intensive model, *and* the suspension of

the potentialities of creating intensive relations. There is continually at

odds with exemplarity, a temporal irreducibility in friendship, that is, a

temporality that demarcates lived and living relations whereby the act of

modeling those great friendships works against its affirmative intentions.

I do not, however, doubt the theoretical richness of these exemplary

friendships; on the contrary, they are thoroughly *interesting*, but not as ex-

emplars as such; rather, they are interesting insofar as they are contain-

ments of intensive components. These friendships embrace intense relational aspects that, to a lesser or greater degree, exist within all friendships, that cover the expansive field of human relations, of the human community. For what is at stake here in my discussion of friendship is an attempt to distill an essence of the political from the mode of existence of friendship, which requires, first, a release from the persistence of the exemplar as a fixated form within the project of friendship. It is my contention that this persistence of the exemplar obfuscates the character of the intensive components of perfect friendships, shoring them up as constitutive of the ideal community. But to characterize these intensive aspects as exemplary among the human community is to feature a peculiarity in that they are both particular and universal: it is always simultaneously *these* aspects and *all* aspects: they admit all manner of contradiction and work against themselves. The way out of the barrier of the exemplar requires the destabilisation of it as horizon, enshrined in the regaling of those great friendships, and its reconceptualisation as merely example.

In conceptualizing the exemplar as example, what gives out in its status as a model for emulation is its insistence as the highest good in Aristotle, understood as merely one example of many. In Giorgio Agamben's formulation in *The Coming Community*, the example is a concept that

"escapes the antinomy of the universal and the particular" in that it is "one singularity among others, which, however stands for each of them and serves for all" (9-10). The space of the example is empty: "they are expropriated of all identity, so as to appropriate belonging itself" (11). The radicalism of Agamben's linguistics of the example is that a particular chosen element of representation, that which is given as an example, diverges from itself (singular) to the Whole (all things relatable) for a particular function. For instance, the set that composes the tree is comprised of *the* tree, *a* tree, *this* tree, but this case of the example's purpose is to utilize the signifier, tree, such that it reaches beyond its particularity to encompass and represent all instantiations of the tree — to see the tree for the forest.

The exemplary performs a limited function in that it does not express the essence of universal truth. As Agamben writes, "[e]xemplary is what is not defined by any property, except by being-called" (10). Calling exemplary friendship by its name, 'true friendship,' deserves no more than the act of being-called such that it is no more pregnant with meaning than any other form of friendship. This gesture should not be confused with an evacuation of the potential of true friendship, but rather the oppo-

site: it returns true friendship to the proper place of the example, "the empty space in which its undefinable and unforgettable life unfolds" (10).

And yet, to say that the example can be of any set, of whatever-singularity, is not the same as to say that it exerts a force that enables an excess of existing sets—a force that exerts an expansion or recomposition of the relations that exist within the structure of the Whole. That is to say, following Alain Badiou, there is nothing belonging to an existing structure (or as he would prefer, space of placement) that allows either a reconfiguration of that structure or an exit from the structure (the latter of which is a fantasy of the multiple). The task, as I see it, is twofold: (i) return the exemplar to the empty space of the example through which *its* potentiality and the potentiality of other modes of friendship become unfettered; (ii) establish a new set by which the example of friendship becomes entangled in an alternate set of relations. The latter proposition is undoubtedly problematic in that there is no guarantee that this "new set" will not encounter just as many contradictions and impasses as its previous paradigm. The crucial difference, however, is that this progression holds onto the potential of history, no longer bound to the goals of attaining true friendship, in Aristotle, and the discourses that follow him, which serves just as well to become virtuous men; instead, friendship rests on the contingencies of his-

torical communities, a relation through which the struggles of particular social relations are fought out.

Badiou has touched on such an idea in a lecture on happiness or rather on the process of configuring a new happiness under communism.[6] For Badiou, happiness is an affect that falls under the governing principles of the linkage between subject and event: if a new subject arises in "becoming a subjective part of the *consequences* of a local event," then the new happiness of a subject is not contingent on "the result of the change, but the change itself": "happiness is not the predeterminate goal of the movement, but the inventive subjectivization of the movement itself." The condition for happiness here is rooted entirely on the immanence of process, a configuration of affect within the real movement from present conditions to the horizon of communism, or rather, happiness is lodged between these two poles, communism in the present tense and the communist horizon. As Badiou says: "happiness is not the general possibility of satisfaction; happiness is not the abstract idea of a good society where everyone is satisfied; happiness is a subjectivity of a difficult task to organize the consequences of some event." On the matter of friendship and politics, then, which is in no small part linked to an idea of happiness, a new

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[6] Alain Badiou, "On Being Happy" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEY14y4jThY

friendship must be organized along with the movement of political strug-

gle, of the process of subjectivization. This process it what it means to be

the friends of politics: it is a subversion of the frame of the sort of politics

that are found in the internal dynamics and limits of the politics of friend-

ship, which we will trace below. The friends of politics instead affirm the

dual transformation that comes with something like an event or revolu-

tion.

There is so much given to friendship in the matters of revolution, of

changing the society through the joining of discontented individuals who

all hold a mutual desire for a better world. In any given protest, strike,

'social movement,' we rely on solidarity, we tenderly address each other as

comrades, because there is understood to be a reciprocity that, despite the

differences and disparities in approach, we need each other to enact our

political goals. My intervention lies precisely at this point dividing ends

and process: Is friendship merely a form that allows the political to un-

fold? Or is it rather the political itself, that is, a political process that social-

izes? The distinction is quite important and goes to the heart of my cri-

tique of the exemplar, that is to say, the persistence and problematic of the

exemplar as the dominant method by which the investigation of friend-

ship continues. From here, our investigation should return to the origin of

the problem, which begins with Aristotle's formulation of friendship as a

matter chiefly concerning ethics.

ii. The Dying Sage, the Living Guard of Friendship

Aristotle, perhaps more than any other philosopher, has had a substantial influence on the thinking of friendship. Indeed, as Jacques Derrida writes, Aristotle "stands guard over the very form of our sentences on the subject of friendship. He forms our precomprehension at the very moment when we attempt, as we are about to do, to go back over it, *even against it*" (6, emphasis added). For Derrida, more than the sentence, more than merely the stand point of the precomprehension, Aristotle stands guard over the subject of friendship through a specific method (more on this in a moment). There has been and continues to be a perpetual return to Aristotle in these discourses, a continual relapse in which the spectre of Aristotle is always-already embedded within the vanguard of thought.

It is in *The Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle investigates the matter of friendship as one of ethics. There, Aristotle develops the idea of friendship as a relationship understood through virtue and the good, through what he calls the method of the category.[7] For Aristotle, there are

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[7] For Aristotle, the category is the method that delimits the distinctions and divisions within reality in order to distill the genera of entities from the multiple or many (of the resemblances of things in themselves) to grasp the question of 'what is there?' Such categories as substance, quantity, quality, relation, passion, action, etc., which stand in opposition to the Platonic One, Aristotle outlines in his treaties, *Categories*.

My diagnosis of the category is not without attention to the multiplicity of ways

three categories of friendship: friendships of pleasure; friendships of utility; and, friendships of virtue, or perfect friendships. These friendships are mediated [8]by a two-fold principle of equilibrium that determine its endurance. On the one hand, there is the *a priori* quality of good or bad with men who enter into friendships. The friendships of good men is enduring

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it has been used in philosophical discourse. Immanuel Kant for instance revised the Aristotelean categories, opting instead for categorical conceptualism, which denies that we have access to divisions within the thing in itself and affirms that we have access only the cognition of things through the *a priori* knowledge afforded by the epistemological categories imposed on the objects.

Perhaps a philosophy that separates itself from the category — a false shuttling between infinite and the finite that haunts its tradition — would open the way to the openness of the concept, that which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have championed as the philosophers imperative in *What Is Philosophy?*, ie. the creation of concepts that serve nothing but the further creation of itself. Or, as Theodor Adorno writes in *Negative Dialectics*,

> Traditional philosophy believes it possesses its object infinitely, and thereby becomes as philosophy finite, conclusive. A different one ought to cashier that claim, no longer trying to convince itself and others that it has the infinite at its disposal. Instead of this it would become, put delicately, infinite to the extent that it refuses to define itself as a corpus of enumerable theorems. It would have its content in the polyvalence of objects not organized into a scheme, which impinge on it or which it seeks out; it would truly deliver itself over to them, would not employ them as a mirror, out of which it rereads itself, confusing its mirror-image with the concretion. It would be nothing other than the full, unreduced experience in the medium of conceptual reflection; even the "science of the experience of consciousness" would degrade the content of such experiences to examples of categories. (Adorno *Negative Dialectics* 15)

My critique of the category resembles Adorno in that the category is at once productive and stultifying. That is to say, the category establishes a coherent system of what is, while simultaneously encounters its limit (by being conclusive) on the unfolding or emergence of what is. As soon as we formulate the fundamental categories of whatever, we've relegated it to the specific *tout court*, withholding the specificity of objects which by rights belong to them at a particular time and space.

because of the *a priori* quality of these men; alternatively, those of bad men fall into impermanence. On the other hand, there is the matter of the motivation of men who enter into these friendships, ie. for the pursuit of pleasure or utility. While the friendships of pleasure and utility are merely incidental — that is, formed by the coincidental meeting and exchange of sensual or utilitarian needs — and are therefore impermanent (because their quantified existence, due to the particularity of their ends, is subject to change as the needs of the individual change), perfect friendships persist in their permanence, because they come to be through a relation that exceeds that of mere pleasure and utility, toward the virtuous and good. It is in this way that the former types include at once a likeness and unlikeness to the perfect friendship: they resemble the perfect friendship insofar as the latter includes the reciprocal exchanges of the former; they are unlike the perfect friendship insofar as the latter lack the qualities of the good. Thus friendships of utility and pleasure are unable to sustain their permanence in themselves, that is, unable to maintain a sustained relationship *qua* good:

> Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves. Now those who wish

> well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for
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> they do this by reason of their own nature and not inciden-
>
> tally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good
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> — and goodness is an enduring thing. (196)

The perfect friendship, in Aristotle's account, is desired for the perma-
nence of the reciprocal relation between good men. With the friendships of
utility and pleasure, the ends of their relations are subject to the inequality
of circumstances: on the one hand, utility will last only as long as each
friend has an equality of needs met; and, on the other, pleasure will last
only as long as each friend finds the other pleasurable. Friendship then
depends on the conditions of happiness and justice, insofar as these con-
cepts are inextricably linked to relationships of utility and pleasure. When,
for instance, one of the friends finds that the exchange of products or ser-
vices is returned with something of unequal value, there is unhappiness or
injustice. Aristotle appeals to the good in friendship then only insofar as
the good is that which fulfills the lack of the friendships of pleasure and
utility — where there is inequality, the good serves to mediate an equilib-
rium such that both friends experience happiness and/or justice. The good
is an "enduring thing" so long as it mediates those unequal exchanges,
supplementing them with a virtuous addition (ie. the honourable feeling

of having aided a friend): "good men will be friends for their own sake, i.e. in virtue of their goodness. These, then, are friends without qualification; the others are friends incidentally and through a resemblance to these" (199). But why do we have friendships at all? Are they necessary for happiness and justice *tout court*, and are happiness and justice consequently defined retroactively as that "without qualification," or defined, like the 'goodness' of pure friendship, by a their self-evident properties?

The basis of friendship is structured by two desires: from Aristotle, we find that, on the one hand, "without friends no one would choose to live," and so the very condition by which life is worth living, and therefore the reproducibility of life itself, rests on friendship (192). In other words, for a life to be worth living there must be a relationship with the *capacity* for the good, of producing happiness and of maintaining justice. We are incapable, according to Aristotle, of achieving either happiness or justice, without a friendly relation wherein we receive the products and affects formed by the exchange of friendship — eg. the pleasure of receiving laughter, or the utility of exchanging favours or things, both of which have the capacity for happiness or justice if distributed equally. On the other hand, when we desire friendship, there is always in its purview the desire for the rare friendships that *achieve* the good, the perfect form of human

activity, which in the field of friendship is the form by which the exchange between friends meets an equilibrium such that both friends feel that they mutually benefit. Because they are perfectly just in their relationship, these friendships are true friendships, and must be of the rare type worthy of truly good men, those rare men who demonstrate virtue and are virtuous through their relation to the friend, friendships which are without exemption exemplary. At bottom, it is this dual character of the capacity for and achievement of the good that are at the heart of Aristotle's conception of friendship.

True friendships are those of which all others should take heed, emulate and continually orient. These are the rare friendships, the few in number, the ones that, as Jacques Derrida writes, "take on the value of exemplary heritage": "Rarity accords with the phenomenon, it vibrates with light, brilliance and glory. If one names and cites the best friends, those who have illustrated 'true and perfect friendship', it is because this friendship comes to *illuminate*" (3).

What precisely do these exemplary friendships illuminate? Where does the light shine? For Aristotle, it is on the good. The good is that which is judged to be qualitatively superior, that which can be distinguished as an achievement of a mastery: "where such arts fall under a sin-

gle capacity . . . in all of these the ends of the *master arts* are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued" (Aristotle 1). As we will see, here we arrive at the at once forceful justification and stultifying effects of a purely affirmationist conception of exemplary friendship, that it is thrown amongst the heap of phenomena, outside itself, produces and reproduces itself as a model for mimesis, but impotent with regards to its immanence, with regards to its own subjects and objects in relation, that is, in friendship. As Derrida writes, the exemplary "gives rise to a project, the anticipation, the perspective, the pro-vidence of a hope that illuminates in advance the future (*praelucet*), thereby transporting the name's renown beyond death" (3). The exemplar creates a project, an ideal model to pursue, but it also projects the ideal image beyond the death of friends, beyond the survival of their lived conditions. The project haunts the living insofar that friendship under the veneration of the exemplary privileges the good, those rare men whose friendship illuminated virtue.

For Aristotle, the project is the good, the exemplary of a particular human activity. The good is something unique to the human animal, that is, the ability to pursue and distinguish the best of a particular activity (we have for instance a carpenter, and a *good* carpenter). The good comes to

subsume the project of friendship under its affirmationist light, its illumination of virtue. And for Aristotle, such a project, because men seek society, a communion of others with whom to venture in life, becomes a political one.

Within friendship, the good exists within many forms of friendship (except those among "bad" men), but it exists only insofar as all friendships *resemble* the good of perfect friendship. If friendship seems to be the mode through which the primary relations between men achieves goodness, then friendship is the driving relation for the political community insofar as "all forms of community are like parts of the political community; for men journey together with a view to some particular advantage, and to provide something that they need for the purposes of life. . . . [T]he particular kinds of friendship will correspond to the particular kinds of community" (Aristotle 208). It is not so much that particular kinds of friendship will merely correspond with the type of political institutions that pervade a community, or society, but rather that the dominant types of friendship are coterminous with the type of constitutions that allow for the particular advantages of these friendships.

Now while both friendships and the corresponding constitutions are coterminous, friendship and politics resemble the matter of good and

bad forms —the former we've already discussed, the latter being either the best form or the most deviant, or perverse: monarchy may pass over into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy, and timocracy into democracy. Justice being the chief virtue in the relations of men, Aristotle acquiesces to democracy being the deviant constitution that most benefits the common, the majority, through its capacity for justice among men, for in democracy justice and friendship "exist *more* fully" (Aristotle 212, emphasis added). The pronoun, "more," here signifies at once the possibility of a fuller inclusivity between the whole of a society because democracy allows for a maximal scope of commonness and generality within the impossibility of the full unification of friendship and political constitutions. The gap is not incidental, nor is it reconcilable — it necessarily mediates the actuality of democracy. As Derrida has surmised, democracy and friendship are indeed complimentary — or, more properly, indivisible — but its compatibility is punctured by holes, a tragic irreconcilability:

> There is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity, but there is no democracy without the 'community of friends' (*koína ta philōn*), without the calculation of majorities, without identifiable, stabilization, representable subjects, all equal. These two laws are irreducible

one to the other. Tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding. The wound itself opens the necessity of having to *count* one's friends, to count the others, in the economy of one's own, there where every other is altogether other. (22).

The need to count, to reach by arithmetic, the majority through which the whole of society may benefit is necessarily limited by the fact of alterity, of irreducible individuals, and the amalgam of majority, of subsumed representation. For Derrida, democracy as a constitution is perpetually at odds with itself through the two laws that it must maintain in order for it to exist at all. Perhaps more importantly, it is a contradiction that is imbedded at the heart of the political as such, where "political desire is forever borne by the disjunction of these two laws" (22). This is the very same problem that is posed by Aristotle's caution that to have friends is to also become limited by a cap on the quantity of friends one can offer oneself to. Although democracy allows for a fuller range by which friendships can exist, it must not be the case that within democracy every citizen should be friends, for then we would not have democracy. Democracy requires the element of alterity, of difference, in order to function through the power of the *demos,* for it counts on the count, the votes of the major and minor, those who are friends and those who are not.

Too much. Perhaps too much is given here to friendship and its correlation with politics. Certainly, friends may not vote in the same way. They may even have opposing leanings as extreme as the polars of far left and far right. But the point isn't that there isn't true democracy because friendship is inconstant and contradictory; rather, because it is inconstant and contradictory that democracy can be stable in the first place. Friendship, as Derrida writes, requires its *contretemps*, the importune circumstances that come along with being with the friend, and yet there is nonetheless something that mediates *contretemps*, makes the unbearable in friendship bearable: "There is no friendship without confidence, and no confidence which does not measure up to some *chronology*, to the trial of a sensible duration of time" (14). The "sensible" is not, I think, invoked incidentally, for in perfect friendship, it is the sensation of the good between friends that maintains its equilibrium. What is sensible is the fact of being with the friend, the conversations and activities that comprise of spending time with another. As Aristotle, writes, "[t]he essence of friendship is living together," and "since they wish to live with their friends, they do and share in those things which give them the *sense* of living together" (Aristotle 246, 247, emphasis added). This sensation of living together depends on the actuality of existing from day to day, minute to minute, moment to

moment, together with another. It depends on not only the resolution of

daily matters, but also their conflicts, the irreconcilable disputes, the mess

of living together. These sensory and temporal realities comprise the sense

of living together. Giorgio Agamben is, I think, quite right in his retrieval

of sense and being in Aristotle's discourse on friendship: "Within [the]

sensation of existing there is another sensation, specifically a human one,

that takes the form of a joint sensation, or a con-sent (*synaisthanesthai*) with

the existence of the friend. *Friendship is the instance of this 'con-sentiment' of*

the existence of the friend within the sentiment of existence itself" ("The Friend"

34). If the sensation of friendship is not simply an addition to the sensation

of existing but rather a component *within*, constitutive of, the latter, then

the matter of ontology depends on the social, and of the particular forms

of friendship that punctuate the social.

    As discussed above with Raymond Williams, while the social may

be reducible to an analyzable form, it is irreducible in that its actuality be-

longs to the emergent. Our sensation of being, or rather our "con-senti-

ment" with being, then, is felt in its emergent form, even if it is only

grasped through the dominant or residual. But there is another mode of

thought that has recently issued a verdict on friendship and democracy, or

more accurately on the mutual struggle waged between a pure version of

the former amidst an impossible form of the latter, which is Derrida's contemporary and theoretical other, Jacques Rancière. Understood within the frames of friendship and politics, Rancière writes that the aporetic structure of democracy depends on a "democratic paradox": "democracy as a form of government is threatened by democracy as a form of social and political life and so the former must repress the latter" ("Does Democracy Mean Something?" 47). If we understand social life as necessarily inclusive of friendship, then, democracy as a form of government must repress forms of friendship that arise within the creative practice of social and political life. In this formulation, democracy, while it allows for the proliferation of friendships, must also delimit friendship *qua* the state in terms of what it can allow. That is, friendship is bound by state constitution: the people gives over to the state: 'democracy is friendship, but do not be friends in this way.'

Perhaps it could be said that the discourse of friendship has always contained this structure of the democratic paradox, like Derrida does in his interrogation of Aristotle's often-quoted apostrophe, "O my friends, there is no friend," what Derrida calls the version of a vocative interjection "(*ōméga* with smooth breathing and a circumflex accent)" (209). Within this contradictory phrase, there is a dual movement of affirmation (all of you

whom I am now addressing, my friends) and negation (and yet, there is no friend). But these movements appear at the same time, again, as a *con-tretemps*, a sensible duration of time(s). No affirmation without negation; no negation without affirmation. As Derrida writes:

> Incompatible as they may appear, and condemned to the oblivion of contradiction, here, in a sort of desperately dialectical desire, the two times already form two theses — two *moments*, perhaps — they concatenate, they appear *together*, they are summoned to appear, in the present: they present themselves in a single stroke, in a single breath, in the same present, in the present itself. At the same time, and before who knows who, before who knows whose law. The *contretemps* looks favourably on the encounter, it responds without delay but without renunciation: no promised encounter without the possibility of a *contretemps*. As soon as there is more than one. (1)

Friendship then could be said to live out this contradiction, between friend and not-friend, which, it should be clarified, does not mean friend and not-yet-friend; that is to say, it can not be something like the figuring of the horizon of a utopian total society of friends whereby we could call all

people friends. For Aristotle, this division is, however varied, a fixed

point. There is in other words a limit to the number of friends one can

have: "for friends . . . there is a fixed number — perhaps the largest num-

ber with whom one can live together" (243). What interests me here is not

so much that one is limited by the temporality of living together with oth-

er friends; although, this aspect is a matter of much importance. Rather,

I'm interested in the other portion, the necessary subtraction of those one

does not include as friends, the not-friend — the antithetical portion.

The not-friend is not exactly defined against the friend, as absolute

antagonism, though it may reflect such a relation. Rather, the not-friend is

the absolute antinomy, that which must not be reconciled with the friend

such that a synthesis of the two at once erases any distinction at all. On the

one hand, this antinomy is presented quite distinctly in the very address

of "O my friends, there is no friend." On the other, in the discourse of *The*

Nicomachean Ethics, the not-friend is only signalled outside the circuits of

the practice of friends living together, as a prohibition that one must not

have too many friends or else lose friendship altogether. Derrida calls the

latter the recoil version of *O phíloi, oudeis phílos*, "(*ōméga* with rough breath-

ing, circumflex accent and iota subscript, *hoî*)," translating to "too many

friends means no friend" (209). What can we make of this gap? Is it merely

a matter of the mistranslation of the oft-quoted address, as Giorgio Agam-

ben has clarified in his essay, "The Friend"?[9] The matter of proper transla-

tion is beside the point, as there has now been a lengthy history of the

philosophical interrogation of this phrase, of the friend and not-friend.

What counts is that, in Aristotle's meditations, the not-friend was not yet

able to be understood as a concept, for it was limited by its coming into

discourse and thought. It is not until Nietzsche that a particular figure of

the not-friend is articulated: the enemy.

But let us stay on this extraneous element, the not-friend, for a mo-

ment longer. What is it? Is it possible to understand it not simply in con-

trast with the friend? As something in itself as having a relative degree of

autonomy? The essential character of the not-friend, as I see it, rests on its

status as the set of those one can't or won't consider friends, on its not be-

ing actualized. In order to answer these questions, therefore, it will be

fruitful to approach them laterally through the distinction between actuali-

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[9] Agamben's claim is that the phrase in question, *o philoi, oudeis philos*, or "O friends, there
is no friend," is nowhere found in the writings of Aristotle, and yet figures prominently
in Montaigne and Nietzsche (and later Derrida), who take the phrase from the transla-
tions of Diogenes Laertius. There is, however, a similar phrase in the latter's *Lives of Emi-
nent Philosophers* that reads, "*ōi* (omega with iota subscript) *philoi, oudeis philos*," which
translates to "He who has (many) friends, does not have a single friend."

ty and potentiality. Towards grasping this distinction, Aristotle has more

yet to offer us.

iii. The Impotentiality of Friendship

The not-friend, as I conceive of it, is located in its dialectic with the friend. This dialectic, insofar that the contradiction never fulfills itself in the abolition of the not-friend, nonetheless generates concepts that fill the lack in the not-friend, of which one such concept as I've suggested is the enemy. What follows is a genealogy of the generative philosophical discourse of the not-friend. I focus on three specific moments in the historico-conceptual dialectic of friend/not-friend: first I clarify the not-friend through Aristotle's conception of potentiality; then move towards the effects of Nietzsche's inception of the concept of the "enemy"; and lastly, find the fulfilment of the enemy concept in Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political,* which inextricably ties the friend/enemy distinction to the political. What will be attempted, in other words, is a genealogy of the negative of friendship, the friend's essential linkage to the development of the not-friend.

Recall that the structure of friendship that I described above includes two desires: one the generic desire whereby having friends is self-evident and necessary for human life, as a *capacity* of the social; and the other the exemplary desire for the perfect friendship, as the *achievement* of the good. It is no accident that this two-fold structure resembles Aristotle's discourse on potentiality, wherein capacity is homological to that of poten-

tiality. In *De anima*, Aristotle examines the mode of existence of the senses, chiefly, why there is the experience of the sensations of things but not the sensation of those senses themselves. One for instance does not mark the sensation of warmth without the presence of a source of heat, but this cata- lyst must be present even without its object of experience. For Aristotle, such is the case because "sensibility is not actual but only potential" (*De anima* 417).

As Giorgio Agamben has explained, however, the matter of the po- tentiality of the senses, of the faculties present within us, concerns more than simply that of non-Being, of mere privation, but rather "*the existence of non-Being*" — the willed activity of *having* privation ("On Potentiality" 179). Aristotle's concern with potentiality in *De anima* gets to the heart of the mode of existence of potentiality wherein he finds two potentialities. On the one hand, we have the generic potentiality — it is this type that is referenced when it is said that a child has the potential to know. On the other hand, there is the potential of those who have knowledge, of having the knowledge of say an architect to build, but not yet having built any- thing. This latter is the mode of existence of potentiality: "it is a potentiali- ty that is not simply the potential to do this or that thing but potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality" (179-80). This latter potentiali-

ty is the human experience *with* potentiality, wherein "[t]he greatness —

and also abyss — of human potentiality is that it is first of all potential to

not act" (181). This is no doubt a radical interpretation of Aristotle, that

our existence is not primarily relegated to the sensation of things that are

(or even might) actualized but rather as fully involved with that which is

not-yet. Agamben goes further:

> To be potential means: to be one's own lack, *to be in relation to*
>
> *one's own incapacity*. Beings that exist in the mode of poten-
>
> tiality *are capable of their own impotentiality*; and only in this
>
> way do they become potential. They *can be* because they are
>
> in relation to their own non-Being. In potentiality, sensation
>
> is in relation to anesthesia, knowledge to ignorance, vision to
>
> darkness. (182)

Impotentiality here articulates the relation by which potentiality itself con-

tains the ability to be or not be. Impotentiality is the inclusion of all poten-

tiality insofar that it is first of all the nothing of *adynamia* that must be con-

fronted in order for the experience of potential/actual to exist at all. In

other words, (i) 'to be potential' means to allow for the duality of poten-

tial/actual; (ii) 'to not be potential' means to exist within a faculty that can

only be a lack, an emptiness of pure potential. What is impotential relies

on the manner in which "[t]he potential welcomes non-Being, and this welcoming of non-Being *is* potentiality, fundamental passivity. It is passive potentiality, but not a passive potentiality that undergoes something other than itself; rather, it undergoes and suffers its own non-Being" (182).

If it can be an axiom that all potentiality is impotentiality (*adynamia*) and to experience the potentiality to not-be is to suffer passivity, then the difficult question must be asked, as Agamben does, what is the actuality of impotentiality, the act of the potential to not-be? As Agamben put it, the "actuality of the potentiality to think is the thinking of this or that thought; but what is the actuality of the potentiality to not-think?" (183). Put in another way, if all potentiality is impotentiality, and the proper sublation of potentiality is actuality, then what is the proper sublation, the actuality, of impotentiality? The question must be asked if one does not merely submit to an abysmal negativity within that of impotentiality, a stultifying void. Agamben's answer however is no less perplexing:

> if a potentiality to not-be originally belongs to all potentiali-
> ty, then there is truly potentiality only where the potentiality
> to not-be does not lag behind actuality but passes fully into it
> as such. This does not mean that it disappears in actuality;
> on the contrary, it preserves itself as such in actuality. What

is truly potential is thus what has exhausted all its impoten-

tiality in bringing it wholly into the act as such. (183)

The 'act' of impotentiality is nothing other than the preservation of itself in actuality, that is, it is neither merely potentiality which is the proper opposite of actuality, nor is it impotentiality as such which is the essence of potentiality. Rather, the act of impotentiality is that which is contingent with all that is actualized — all that comes into being as act — as an irreducible *remainder*.

There is perhaps no greater figure of the act of impotentiality than Melville's Bartleby. His persistent refrain, "I would prefer not to," preserves the autonomy of impotentiality within being, for Bartleby seeks not an absolute nihilism, the willing of nothingness; rather, he seeks the endurance of the non-act within being: he seeks becoming, even if it is perpetually forestalled as potentiality. As Agamben has noted, there is a hard distinction between 'prefer' and 'will': when the man of the law interrogates Bartleby's usual refrain, "You *will* not?," Bartleby specifies, "I *prefer* not." While the man of the law initially takes Bartleby to mean that he willfully defies what is requested of him, refusal through will, there is no

decision here, only the "ambiguity of potentiality (which is always poten-

tiality to do and not to do)."[10]

Hegel understood this in his way as the process of becoming, the

dialectic between being and nothing. He writes in *The Science of Logic*:

> *Pure being and pure nothing are . . . the same*. The truth is nei-
>
> ther being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over
>
> into nothing and nothing into being — "has passed over,"
>
> not passes over. But the truth is just as much that they are
>
> not without distinction; it is rather that *they are not the same*,
>
> that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and
>
> inseparable, and that *each* immediately *vanishes in its opposite*.
>
> Their truth is therefore this *movement* of the immediate van-
>
> ishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in
>
> which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which
>
> has just as immediately dissolved itself. (331)

It is in this marvellous passage that Hegel cuts through to the true content

of something, that anything at all must simultaneous be and not-be: "a

hundred actual dollars," Hegel quips, "do not contain a whit more than a

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[10] Agamben, Giorgio. "Bartleby, or On Contingency." *Potentialities.* Stanford: Stanford UP,
1999: 254

hundred possible ones" (339-40). It is because of the paradoxical duality and indistinguishability of something that anything can come to be (or not be) — nothing after all will come of nothing, but neither is it true that out of only something will come something else, something truly other than itself. Becoming therefore is a matter of the process of the "vanishing" of heterogenous elements, something and nothing, a movement Hegel says that preserves their distinction as much as they are dissolved into each other.

We are now in a suitable position to delve into the contents of the friend and not-friend. But we must, as they say, begin again. "O my friends, there is no friend," cried the dying sage. There is no separating this contradiction, their flux — both the friends whom I'm addressing and the impossible relation. They appear at the same time, the friend and the not-friend, as a *contretemps*. One, the friend, affirms the vital necessity of fidelity between social beings; the other, not-friend, maintains the impossibility of having friends, to call an other a friend. Something and nothing; actual and potential. The former, the friend, can only be thought through as actual, that is, as the other whom we are calling friend, with whom I enter into real, reciprocal exchange, in pleasure and in utility. Or, as Derrida wagers as an axiom, "the friendship I bear [*porte*] for someone, and no

doubt love as well, cannot remain a secret for myself," that is, not as mere-
ly potential (9). "Even before it is declared (to the other, in a loud voice),
the *act* of love would thereby be, at its very birth, declared" (9, emphasis
added). The friend is of the actual, where the very declarative act, as in "O
my friends...," enacts its existence, as precondition. While often thought
through as being the fount of this reciprocity, the friend can not do with-
out its coupling with the not-friend, as I've written above, the necessary
antithetical portion, ". . . there is no friend." The two must be thought to-
gether, the friend as a declarative affirmation of love and desire, and the
latter, the not-friend, as that which determines the forms of the politics of
friendship.

The not-friend belongs to potentiality. This too however requires
some untangling. For the not-friend is potential in two senses: on the one
hand, there are those that surely are not-yet friends, but can potentially be
friends, are welcome into the warm embrace of the possibilization of
friendship. On the other, the not-friend is vitally and irreducibly impoten-
tial. Just as impotentiality maintains its existence as pure potentiality, suf-
fers its non-Being as non-act, which enables potentiality, the not-friend ne-
cessitates its non-relation. Derrida attributes this irreducibility to a prob-
lem of politics, indeed, of "the very work of the political: the properly po-

litical act or operation amounts to creating (to producing, to making, etc.) the most friendship possible" (8). For making the most friendship possible, necessitates its limit, a requisite numeration, of being forced to count one's friends, as Derrida repeats often in *The Politics of Friendship*, "how many of us are there?" (1). "One must choose and prefer: election and selection between friends and things . . . , but also between possible friends," the aporia of an arithmetic lesson (19). Let us be clear at this point, even if it amounts to repeating what is said above. Politics in this investigation of friendship, indeed, at the heart of the existence of friendship, through Aristotle, rests on the linkage between friendship and democracy. For democracy, more than any other constitution, enables the "most friendship possible," for it both fosters the community of friends — "where the citizens are equal they have much in common" — and maintains the fact of alterity, of otherness from within, of disagreement (Aristotle *The Nicomachean Ethics* 212). This politics however is imbricated among a specific unfolding of this history of friendship, as Derrida surmised, within the folds of fraternity, a continual process of fraternization. What, however, of the relationship between friendship and politics as such? I argue that there remains a passage outside of this fraternity. The passage outside of the

heritage of the Aristotelian history of friendship depends upon how it tarries with the potential.

It is essential, given the nature of potentiality (that which has not/not-yet come to pass into actuality), to think though some pre-history. The friend as a concept exists in a necessary state of duality: in order for the fidelity, companionship, love, etc., of friendship to exist, an irreducible excess is required, as I stated above, a remainder. This remainder comes to organize the concept of friendship such that the friend becomes unthinkable without it. The location (one must think spatially as well as temporally) of this irreducible antimony rests in living together. This is where Derrida begins his investigation of the politics of friendship: the linkage between enumeration and living together. Zeroing in on the distinctive feature of primary friendships in Aristotle, as opposed to the friendship of bad, ill-intentioned men, secondary friendships, which class friends as things, Derrida notes that Aristotle stocks good things *among* good friends, as singularities. As such, however, "[s]ince it is a question of singularities, this is an inevitable consequence: one must prefer *certain* friends," the "calculation into the multiplicity of incalculable singularities" (Derrida 19-20). One comes to prefer in their choice of friends — to choose among those in which circumstance and proximity prove fortunate — only

through the decisiveness of "living with each *one*," "for one must live with each him. With each her" (Derrida 20). Living with another — again, for Aristotle, *with* is not merely a supplement to living but rather a condition *for* living, that it is an axiom to live in communion — is decisive for at least two coterminous factors. One can only arrive at preference through spending a meaningful amount of (i) time together, which it turns out is the "whole" of such time.[11] This first is necessary because the choice of this friend requires a decision made with (ii) confidence, with stability (*bébaios*), as primary friendships are marked by the stability of their equilibrium, their ability to stand the test of time. These two factors, time and confidence, stage the drama of the undecidable, which nonetheless must be decided; otherwise, there is no friendship: we must choose our friends. But this undecidability cannot vanish, but rather takes the form of appearance of a concentrated confidence, concentrated in that time must lose its determination, that friendship no longer requires time, and the confidence in one's friend gives over to faith. As Derrida writes:

> In the *passage* of time *through* time. Time exits from time. The
>
> ordeal of stabilization, the becoming-steadfast and reliable

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[11] Aristotle defers to the bushel of salt proverb: one must have eaten a whole bushel of salt with someone before there can be trust between them.

> (*bébaios*), *takes time*. For this ordeal, this experience, this cross-ing (*peira*), withdraws time, it removes even the time neces-sary to dominate time and defeat duration. *Bébaios*: the stable but also the reliable. It determines a temporal but also in-temporal modality, a becoming-intemporal or omnitemporal of time, *whatever it affects* (certainty, calculability, reliability, 'fidence', truth, friendship, and so forth). But it also marks — or rather, it hides in marking — the passage between two ab-solutely heterogenous orders, the passage from assured cer-tainty, calculable reliability, to the reliability of the oath and the act of faith. (16)

This act of faith, no less necessary than illusory, requires the wrenching of time, such that for the rest of time, for the whole of time, the friend will have confidence in friendship. For Derrida, here lies the truth of friend-ship, "and with it the truth of the political," that friendship takes time and in taking time, in becoming confident of the truth of primary friendship, the friend is affirmed (16). But while all of this gives the affirmative di-mension to the friend, what we are primarily concerned with here is the negative, of the decoupling and anxiety of the faith in the friend, of all that

does not come into friendship *in act* — to wit, all that is preserved in the act.

The impotentiality of friendship exists in two senses, paradoxically through the submission to faith. The determination of the passage through time — its necessary negation, which does not mean its elimination but rather its omnitemporalization — constitutes the negative content of faith, evacuating none of its theological content. It is in this distinction between modalities, "assured certainty" on the one hand and the "act of faith" on the other, that marks the limit point of primary friendship: one must be assured of the truth of primary friendship, that he is my friend, but this certainty, its overwhelming faith, rests on the unforeseeable horizon of the future. Certainty therefore must give way to faith, but it is an uneasy exchange. Just as it is impossible to be the friend of God,[12] so too is friendship between men, in the passage to faith, taken to the threshold of omnitemporality. One cannot live there, there where it is without time, without the living *with* that is so necessary for friendship, and therefore without the decision and thinking.

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[12] Aristotle writes that "much can be taken away and friendship remain, but when one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases" (Aristotle *The Nicomachean Ethics* 204).

In the time before omnitemporalization, "[t]he time is the time of this decision in the ordeal of what *remains to be decided* — hence of what has not been decided, of what there is to reflect and deliberate upon — and thus has not yet been thought through" (Derrida *The Politics of Friend-ship* 15). This distance, however, between deciding and decided, between temporality and omnitemporality, between thinking and thought, is ir-reducible. But it is precisely this irreducibility that gives content to the im-potentiality of friendship — that which is endlessly deliberated within the abyss of inaction and indecision: "the suspended indecision, the undecid-able *qua* the time of reflection" (15). *O my friends* (whom I am deciding to call friends)*, there is* (decidedly) *no friend.* The torsion of this sentence, its dizzying vortex through which no number of rereadings could neutralize, as Derrida's analyses attest, pits the dialectic of friendship against its het-eronomy, the irreconcilable dualism of the friend and the not-friend.

But just as there is merely nothing without decision, just as there would be no friend without a simultaneous decision on who will be a friend and who will not be, there has to be some becoming through this dialectic — of which what comes, I argue is the conceptualization of the not-friend, that is, the actualization in concept of the not-friend. On this side of the division, Derrida makes both a great leap toward the under-

standing of the politics of friendship but also a fatal misstep: on the one

hand, he features the conditions of possibility of the friend, the trace of its

conceptualization within the folds of fraternity and democracy; on the

other, he locates solely this positive movement of the friend, positive in the

sense that there is only friendship's deepening into the sociality of frater-

nity.

      For Derrida, the conditions of possibility, the potentiality, of friend-

ship are mediated by the perhaps, "in what is still to come, perhaps" (31).

He writes,

> To think this friendship with an open heart — that is, to
>
> think it as close as possible to its opposite — one must per-
>
> haps be able to think the *perhaps*, which is to say that one
>
> must be able to *say* it and to *make* of it, in saying it, an event:
>
> perhaps, *vielleicht*, *perhaps* — the English word refers more
>
> directly to chance (*hap*, *perchance*) and to the event of what
>
> *may happen*" (30)

For Derrida, the still to-come of friendship rests in thinking alongside the

contingency that enters into the immanence of democracy — that is, enters

the practice of democracy as such that in itself cannot overturn its decisive

requisites of majority and minority — of which the principle element of

this chance, this event, is the coming of the radical Other. What comes

from this Other is the reconfiguration of democracy, the oft-cited democra-

cy to-come: an overturning no doubt, but what interests me here is the na-

ture of this overturning and the figures that arise in the discourse of

friendship, the figures and concepts shored up into actuality. There is no

staging the actuality of friendship without also the actuality of the politi-

cal:

> Politics of friendship: our theme thus invites us to privilege
>
> — indeed, to isolate — the place of the political in the gener-
>
> al logic of this hyper-aporetic, in the hierarchy or architec-
>
> tonic proposed by Aristotle. . . . [T]he work of the political,
>
> the properly political act or operation, comes down to creat-
>
> ing (producing, making, etc.) the most possible friendship.
>
> This tendential law — one might say this *telos* — seems, in
>
> the same move — to bind friendship to politics — in their
>
> origin as well as their end. If the political carries out its work
>
> in the very progress of friendship, then the two motifs, as
>
> well as the two movements, seem contemporaneous, co-orig-
>
> inary and coextensive. In each and every aspect, friendship
>
> would be political. (199).

Derrida pursues this primary coupling of friendship and politics in such a way as to understand these two threads as woven into a series of knots, with each knot between the friend and the political binding up ever more within the interlace of fraternization.

And with each successive tying of these motifs, there comes a primary exclusivity of the fathers and brothers who are the constituent force of political society. "Woman is not yet capable of friendship,"[13] Nietzsche writes, which sounds out the conspicuous absence of woman in Aristotle's idea of friendship, "But," he continues, "tell me, you men, who then among you is capable of friendship?" (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 42). This capacity amongst men restructures the terrain by which one understands the initial capacity of friendship (that mentioned above of Aristotle's axiom that life must be lived with friends), which for Nietzsche, requires the mediation from another situation, war, and thus the concept of the enemy. "'At least be my enemy!' — Thus speaks true respect that does not dare ask for friendship. If one wants a friend, then one must also want to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must *be able* to be an enemy" (40). And so the dialectic between potentiality and actuality is al-

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[13] We will return to the woman question in regard to friendship below as I do not merely ascribe to the misogynistic tone; rather, the woman question is here signalled along with the impotentiality of the "not yet" — what is preserved in actuality.

tered in that the concept of the not-friend must fold into the enemy, where it remains preserved as impotentiality. The actualization of the enemy arises from the contingency of becoming, but also from a particular determination of what comes into discourse and visibility. This latter is the function of Nietzsche's performative contradiction, his upheaval of the friend that shores up the enemy concept: it swells the field of fidelity such that the good that Aristotle holds up as exemplary must include a negative dimension, that of doing war for the sake of the friend. Indeed, it is as Derrida writes, "[w]ith all the reversals, all the revolutions it engenders *ad infinitum*, the . . . 'performative contradiction' . . . has the advantage of quickening — indeed, of dramatizing — a desire for friendship which, never renouncing what it says should be renounced, at least opens thought up to another friendship" (213). What counts in this other friendship, however, is not the loss of the friend, the loss of its autonomy (which as we have determined above was never merely a singular concept), but rather the immanent reconfiguration of the field of friendship itself along with the joyful experience of leaving its old version behind, as a spectre. It is with this hope for joy that Nietzsche is able to say:

> Perhaps to each of us there will come the more joyful hour when we exclaim:

> "Friends, there are no friends!" thus said the dying
>
> sage;
>
> "Foes, there are no foes!" say I, the living fool. (*Hu-*
>
> *man, All Too Human* 149)

How do we listen to this traversal, the affirmation of the dying sage's cry,

the negative reversal by the living fool?

It is at this juncture of Nietzsche's intervention, or heralding, that

the enemy comes to signal the turn towards a proper field of the negative

within friendship. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, the only remnants of negativ-

ity were found in "bad men," and in this we can include the foe, the ene-

my, who lay precisely outside the stable circuits of the friend relation: as

Aristotle surmised, friendship for bad men is marked only by their im-

permanence, a quality that debars the relations of/with bad man from tru-

ly becoming primary friendships. In addition, however, it is this same ex-

clusion of bad men that renders unthinkable the friend-enemy relation as

a politics of friendship — that is, as a political relation that unfolds along-

side the antinomy of the friend and not-friend, which includes its devel-

opment, or, as Derrida calls the event of the coming into being of the ene-

my in Nietzsche's reversal, an upheaval, or the revolution *of* the political:

There is indeed something of an upheaval here, and we would like to perceive, as it were its seismic waves, the geological figure of a political revolution which is more discreet — but no less disruptive — than the revolutions known under that name; it is, perhaps, a revolution of *the* political. A seismic revolution in the political concept of friendship which we have inherited. (*The Politics of Friendship* 27)

Derrida is careful to distinguish two revolutions: on the one hand, those revolutions known under the *name* of revolution — the American, French, Bourgeois, etc. — that courses through the annals of history as a force that overthrows particular organizations of society; on the other, this other revolution, this seismic wave, operates within the field of the political itself. It is, then, with the question of friendship also a question *of the* political. This is nothing short of an event, an occurrence of the perhaps, that accelerates the political to a new end, a new telos. Derrida names the logic of this event in the discourse of friendship teleiopoiesis, "that which *renders* absolute, perfect, completed, accomplished, finished, that which *brings* to an end," wherein, from within, the logic of the following could be questioned: "If there is no friend elsewhere than where the enemy can be, the 'necessity of the enemy' or the 'one must love one's enemies' straight

away transforms enmity into friendship" (32-33). What this means with respect to Nietzsche's reversal, the poiesis of the call, his inception of the enemy and war into the discourse of friendship, is that a separation between friend and enemy and the present possibility of combat becomes unthinkable. The question of the political then is bound by the absolute possibility of mortal combat with the enemy (killing of the enemy) for the friend and the absolute necessity of the enemy (where a world without the enemy is beyond reach, a horizon), again, for the friend. Nietzsche imparts this maxim when he exclaims: "He who lives for the sake of combating an enemy has an interest in seeing that his enemy stays alive" (*Human, All Too Human* 183). The figure of the enemy comes to occupy this episteme of the discourse of friendship, as natural fact, such that it is not only necessary to think of the enemy when thinking the friend, but rather that they are unthinkable apart. The enemy and the friend together come to exemplify the truth of friendship as such. They are inextricably bound, but, as we have seen in Aristotle, it is only so as an effect of some event, as the enemy previously remained precisely outside of the field of primary friendship, outside the truth of friendship because of their tendency to impermanence. And yet, there is nothing but stability, *bébaios,* throughout this new relation of friendship — the friend lives to fight the enemy for the sake of the

friend, and so the enemy *must be* an enemy: there must be an enemy if we want of friendship.

This concept of the friend-enemy coupling reaches its conceptual fulfillment by the time of Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, wherein he attempts the articulation of a general definition of the political. Against the idea that the political as a phenomenon that integrates all aspects of the social (aesthetic, moral, economic, etc.) into a total state, Schmitt insists that the political must be understood on its own terms, which, if we're to understand aspects of the social as necessarily polemical (ie. beautiful and ugly in aesthetics, good and evil in ethics), is found in the criterion of the friend and the enemy from which "political actions and motives can be reduced" (26). The friend-enemy grouping is to be understood neither as a private relation, nor as a relation that exists on a continuum of friendly and hostile, but rather as a concrete situation that opposes groups with absolute hostility, with the "ever present possibility of combat" in which the killing of the enemy is at stake (32). For Schmitt, "all political concepts, images, and terms have a polemical meaning. They are focused on a specific conflict and are bound to a concrete situation; the result (which manifests itself in war or revolution) is a friend-enemy grouping, and they turn into empty and ghostlike abstractions when this situation

disappears" (30). This grouping gives nothing to the polemicizing of sub-stance but simply the fact of grouping itself, of friends and enemies, *within* a *concrete* situation. The concrete situation is that of combat, but it is clear that combat is not perpetually concrete, that we are perpetually at war; peace is not a foregone conclusion.

So what of this situation remains concrete? For Schmitt, the distinc-tion between real war and real peace marks no meaningful separation, if one can still think of politics as a concept; what counts is the possibility of such a war taking place such that even the act of avoiding war remains tethered to the situation of combat: "What always matters is the possibility of the extreme case taking place, the real war, and the decision whether this situation has or has not arrived" (35). It is the peculiarity of Schmitt's concept of politics that in order to think it, one must presuppose the abso-lute limit of the concept, that in order for it to be political, the culmination of hostilities to the point of war must always already be inherent in it, even in times of pure stability, of absolute peace.

What is at stake in Schmitt's concept is to hold onto the element of antagonism, which for him is essentially tied to enmity. As Schmitt writes, "[t]he friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning pre-cisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War fol-

lows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the

most extreme consequence of enmity" (33). The friend, in other words,

contains only an empty abstraction without the real possibility of killing

the enemy, the extreme case, such that the linkage becomes all the more

irreducible. The enemy comes to determine the real meaning of the friend;

the friend does not exist without an enemy, real or potential. Schmitt

posits a concept of the political grounded in the presupposition of its abso-

lute limit — that of the "existential negation of the enemy" — but what

also follows, in the last instance, is the possibility of the closing up of poli-

tics itself. Schmitt writes that politics disappears as soon as the friend-en-

emy antithesis disappears: "A world in which the possibility of war is ut-

terly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without

the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without

politics" (35). The end of politics, however, is not a hypothesis that relishes

in the fulfillment of the end of history, the fulfillment of perpetual peace;

rather, what is at stake in the loss of politics amounts to, what Derrida

calls, a crime against the political:

> the teleiopoesis that regularly turned the friend into an ene-
>
> my, and vice versa, with the risk of spectralizing — others
>
> would say: of losing — both.

— We have lost the friend, as it is said in this century.

— No, we have lost the enemy, another voice says, in this same waning century. Both voices speak of the political, and that is what we wish to recall. They speak, in sum, of a political crime of which it is no longer known — this is a question of borders — if it is to be defined *in the order of the political . . .* or if it is a crime *against the political itself. . . .* Following this hypothesis, losing the enemy would not necessarily be progress, reconciliation, or the opening of an era of peace and human fraternity. It would be worse: an unheard-of violence, the evil of a malice knowing neither measure nor ground, an unleashing incommensurable in its unprecedented — therefore monstrous — forms; a violence in the face of which is called hostility, war, conflict, enmity, cruelty, even hatred, would regain reassuring and ultimately appeasing contours, because they would be *identifiable*. The figure of the enemy would then be helpful — precisely as a figure — because of the features which allow it to be *identified* as such, still identical to what has always been determined under this name. (Derrida *The Politics of Friendship* 82-83)

It is at this point of my genealogy of the not-friend that we arrive at the logical conclusion of the historical development of the concept of the enemy: the loss of the enemy would lead to the loss of the political as such. Nay, more, the loss of the political would, as per Derrida's estimation, abolish not even an ounce of enmity: it would result in even more monstrous violence, more volatile and destructive.

If we are to have a politics of friendship once again, it must shed its tether to the enemy, that historical synthesis which began in Nietzsche, and culminates in Schmitt. If the end of this 'fundamental antagonism' brings about an end to politics as such, it should be welcomed, as this line of the enemy has propped up a exclusive fraternal heritage, and the politics of friendship, as a generative concept, between friend and not-friend, requires a deviant mode. The genealogy of the not-friend, as I've presented it as a negative concept that comes to determine its positive content, in the friend, gives the politics of friendship back its potentiality, that its impotentiality as a concept offers new formulations, through the not-friend.

Coda

It is an undeniable (and inexcusable) limitation of this thesis that the question of female friendships are not taken into account in the critique of the fraternal discourse of friendship. What I sought out in the line of reasoning and writing delved perhaps too far into a critique of the affirmative conception of friendship in politics, which I see in Aristotle and those who invoke him and the heritage of his thought even to this day. If one seeks a new politics of friendship, one freed from the friendships of brothers, it will undoubtedly be found in female friendship.

So, I should pose the question, why this insistence on the now long and certainly tired discourse of fraternal friendships? The question is posed not only to work on friendship that reinscribes the discourses of Montaigne, Cicero, and others, and through them, the trace of Aristotle, of phallogocentrism, but the present work itself, which takes on the heritage of this thought, as I write above, as a traversal. In Derrida, this work amounts to the work of de-naturalizing the brother, or deconstructing its fraternal logic.

At a point in *The Politics of the Friendship*, which in many ways guides my interrogation of friendship, Derrida is confronted with the call for a decision between *either* admitting that the political (of friendship un-

der the Schmittian logic) is nothing other than the phallogocentric in act, and affirm by creating the political from without this heritage, in a beyond the political, *or* keep this thing called "friendship" in all its fraternal oaths, seeking to conceive of it differently, in reorganizing or reformulating. Derrida writes that a revolution of the political, as tethered to friendship, particularly one that figured the subversion of fraternity, "would consist in not renouncing the logic of fraternity, *one* fraternization rather than *such and such another*, therefore one politics rather than some other, all the while working to denaturalize the figure of the brother, his authority, his credit, his phantasm" (159).

For Derrida, there is no choice other than the double gesture of "deciding without excluding, . . . in moving out *beyond this politics* without ceasing to intervene therein to transform it" (159). The project of de-naturalization, therefore, within productive power of deconstruction, must grapple with the fraternity of friendship immanently. As Derrida writes:

> To be consistent with this de-naturalization of fraternal authority (or, if you prefer, with its 'deconstruction') a first necessity, a first law, must be taken into account: there has never been anything *natural* in the brother figure on whose features has so often been drawn the face of the friend, or

the enemy, the brother enemy. De-naturalization was at work in the very formation of fraternity. This is why, among other premises, one must recall that the demand of a democracy to come is already what makes such a deconstruction possible. This demand is deconstruction at work. The relation to the brother engages from the start with the order of the oath, of credit, of belief and of faith. The brother is never a fact. (159)

Fraternal friendship is never a natural fact, Derrida tell us, which from the outset seems like quite an obvious point. Even in Aristotle, friendship is found among brothers, between father and son, and in this one can not disregard the absolute condition for friendship: living together. It is characterized by the social mediations, which at its center is the family. In order to be attentive to the de-naturalization of the brother, one must simultaneously be attentive to the contingencies of the formation of the family — of chief concern here will be the gender/class distinction.

What drives the politics of friendship is a fundamental inequality, the inability by number, by the count, to count one's friends. How many of us are there? Or as I've charted in the genealogy of friendship, what characterizes the thinking of the politics of friendship is the development of

the not-friend, an antithetical portion that comes to determine the coordi-

nates to friendly relations. If we are to pursue a politics of friendship that

seeks to subvert the fraternal heritage, it is less on the grounds that

women too can love in this way (though certainly it is true), but rather that

there is something antithetical, historically a site of exclusions (from the

vote, the wage, etc.), to the phallogocentric conception of friendship in fe-

male friendships: in the immanence of the history of the discourse of

friendship, we find the subversion of it. For this subversion, I turn to the

distinct character of the discourse of Marxist Feminism.

The campaign for Wages for Housework in the women's movement

in 1970s Italy and Britain was not so much the outright refusal of the

sphere of woman's work, the site of unwaged reproductive labour, but the

subversion of an historical instantiation of this community, the family, un-

der capitalism. What was coming into discourse at this time was the artic-

ulation of a particular exclusion in the work of women in the domestic

sphere: where working class men struggled as a class by virtue of their ex-

ploitation in the wage relation, women were excluded from this specific

apparatus of exploitation, that is, they did not produce surplus value in

the factory, in a specific mode of production in capitalism. The ingenuity

of the analysis from women like Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, and

Silvia Federici (to name only a few), was that in this exclusion hid a whole sphere of exploitation, that is reproductive labour. As Selma James writes:

> When previously so-called Marxists said that the capitalist family did not produce for capitalism, was not part of social production, it followed that they repudiated women's potential *social power*. Or rather, presuming that women in the home could not have social power, they could not see that women in the home produced. If your production is vital for capitalism, refusing to produce, refusing to *work*, is a fundamental lever of social power. (James 10)

Contra the male-dominated Marxist myopia in the factory, Marxist feminism laid bare the exploitation of reproductive work, characterized as necessary labour, that which is vital to reproducing the labourer in the factory. This work is wageless, and as such hidden, insofar as it is presumed to be free labour to capital. What is crucial here, however, is the insistence of social power without undermining the proletarian struggle in the factory: as James argues, along with the vital production for surplus value in the factory, the work at home constitutes a labour that is vital — without it, there would not be a labourer able to return to the factory the next day. The work at home is never ending and was not acknowledged within the dy-

namic of capitalism, as necessary labour within the totality of a mode of production. The refusal of this work at the home, while at odds with the praxis of the refusal of work in the factory — insofar as they remain separated spheres under capitalist social relations — maintains a two-fold antagonism: one against capitalist production, the same as the factory worker, and the other against the linearity of the struggle of the factory worker, who requires reproductive work even in its struggle against capital. As *Théorie Communist* write, "The gender relation is a contradiction between men and women. As such, this contradiction is *in* the class struggle *against* the class struggle" (*Théorie Communiste* 9).

To presume this point, the contradiction of gender within the contradiction of class, is not so much an effort to undermine the struggle of the male sphere of production, but rather to maintain a strict division between a dynamic that holds together distinct logics, a dynamic that is not reconcilable without doing violence to the struggle of women. When one refers to women as comrades, with solidarity or friendship, one subsumes the specificities of the struggle in the domestic sphere with that of the public:

> when women fight, whether in the private or public sphere,
>
> when they attack the very existence of those spheres which

is constituted by their separation into public and private,

they must confront their male comrades, insofar as they are

men *and* insofar as they are their comrades. And they (the

women) are the men's comrades, but women. (*Théorie*

Communiste 16-17)

Crucial to this distinction, "comrades, but women," is the manner in

which comrades are partitioned by the lines in which irreconcilable

spheres — masculine public and feminized private — are maintained, that

even in the mutual struggle between comrades, between friends, there is a

vital antagonism. "O my friends, there is no friend": I have written above

on the dynamic of friendship in that the friend finds its determination not

so much in the categories within friendship, but in its antithesis, the not-

friend. Derrida asks, against Carl Schmitt, "what if the woman were the

absolute partisan? And what if she were the absolute enemy of this theory

of the absolute enemy, the spectre of hostility to be conjured up for the

sake of the sworn brothers, or the other of the absolute enemy who has be-

come the absolute enemy that would not even be recognized in a regular

war?" (Derrida 157). In Schmitt, the loss of the enemy, the loss of possibili-

ty of killing the enemy, results in the loss of politics. What is dogmatically

refused in Schmitt is the alterity cut off from the fraternal heritage of

friendship (which is found most rigidly in Nietzsche): woman as the absolute partisan.

The absolute partisan resonates with the thought of Marxist Feminism insofar that it refuses subsumption within the struggle of the friend/enemy distinction, that to fall into an inclusion of the male-dominated sphere results in even more exploitation. As Dalla Costa and James, in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community*, write:

> Every time they have "let us in" to some traditionally male enclave, it was to find for us a new level of exploitation. . . . [T]hose of us who have gone out of our homes to work because we had to or for extras or for economic independence have warned the rest: inflation has riveted us to this bloody typing pool or to this assembly line, and in that there is no salvation. We must refuse the development they are offering us. But the struggle of the working woman is not to return to the isolation of the home. (Dalla Costa and James 50)

The novelty of Dalla Costa and James was the refusal of inclusivity as it was a path toward not only a continued exploitation in the home, but also one outside of it, for reproductive work would nonetheless remain neces-

sary for the dominant mode of production. Thus the struggle in the women's movement would be attentive to both the abolition of both the division of public and private spheres of production, and capitalist production. They therefore characterize revolutionary politics as follows:

> The challenge of the women's movement is to find modes of struggle which, while they liberate women from the home, at the same time avoid on the one hand a double slavery and on the other prevent another degree of capitalistic control and regimentation. *This ultimately is the dividing line between reformism and revolutionary politics within the women's movement* (Dalla Costa and James 50)

The struggle within this framework is found at the threshold between reform and revolution insofar that it recognizes both the common struggle, exploitation by capital, and the division in the proletariat, the struggle of unwaged slavery in the home. It is in the women's movement that one finds the coordinates for a partisanship by which the resistance to subsumption serves as a productive movement, of being comrades — that is, as mutually proletarian — but women, a division in the proletariat.

How this plays out in the politics of friendship follows upon the development of the enemy concept as an inversion — women, in the

nexus of the gender/class relation, allow for the recognition of the mutual struggle, one that includes men along class lines, but simultaneously keeps an antagonism along gender lines: friends but not friends. In other words, this form of the struggle would not mean having an enemy to kill, as in the absolute possibility of killing the enemy that constitutes the friend/enemy distinction, and therefore politics, but rather one that seeks the abolition of both the gender and class relation, of ourselves as producers of surplus value and as reproducers in the work of socially-necessary labour.

The beyond politics that Derrida seeks in female friendships, that which de-naturalizes the fraternal heritage of the discourse of friendship, can be found in the antinomy of the equation, comrades, but women. It remains attentive to the figure of the brother as just one aspect of the political struggle in our times and maintains the irreducible necessity of the power of women in the struggle. The subversion of the community operates internally to the contingencies of the friend, the family, the subject positions wrought by capitalist production. It is at this threshold that future research on friendship should maintain the immanent critique of friendship, shedding the brother but maintaining the dynamic antinomy of the friend.

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