IF SOMEONE IS FALLING, GIVE HIM A PUSH.

– G. Grosz

ANOMIE  APODIEASY  ANARCHY

UNCONSCIOUS ORGAN OF THE EXPERIMENTAL COMMITTEE

VOR

TEXT
Revolutionaries have only sought to change the world. The point, however, is to destroy it.

"Anarchism is a crime against the whole human race. All mankind should band together against the anarchists." - Theodore Roosevelt
"TO ME, CHIMAERAS!"

"HER PARENTS GAVE HER NO NAME BUT REFERRED TO HER IN A HISTORICAL MANNER AS 'THE DESTROYER.' WHENEVER ANYTHING WENT RIGHT IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD SHE PUT IT WRONG AGAIN."

-LAURA RIDING, ANARCHISM IS NOT ENOUGH
He holds a needle up between his thumb and forefinger so it catches the lamp-light—a flash of silver—and sets it upon the stool before him with great formality.

"Watch as I lift this needle into the air."

He pulls an overstuffed armchair up to the stool and seats himself before it. The guests encircle him three rows deep as he commences concentrating. The needle is almost invisible upon the stool; the guests strain their eyes to see it. It does not appear to be moving.

Time slows to a crawl. The veins stand out on the Thaumaturge's forehead, stark in the breathless silence. The lamp sputters. The tension is unbearable.

Finally, a guest whispers to his neighbor, eliciting an answering whisper. Someone surreptitiously uncorks a bottle of wine; it begins to make the rounds along with more whispering. A nervous chuckle gives way to outright laughter, and everyone begins to converse freely—but for the rotund man in the greatcoat, who is fully immersed in his effort.

The doorman arrives to deliver a message and the guests invite him in, jovially explaining what their host is up to. The cook shows up a few minutes later, snacking on a scrap of chicken; they force her to return to the kitchen and bring back enough for everyone. The party turns raucous. A procession of llamas files through the room, driven by a stone-faced Sherpa. The Thaumaturge and the needle remain motionless.

Across the Pyrenees and the Strait of Gibraltar, the young poet Robert Desnos is working late, the odd shooting star falling into his glass. The passing moon hooks him by the collar, its crescent tip carrying him north over the city, the desert, the coast. He sees the starlight on the crests of the restless sea, strikebreakers laboring on torchlit docks, orphans sleeping on the steps of cathedrals.

The guests in the drawing room are becoming restless and belligerent as the bottles empty. They begin to leave practically en masse. The last ones to leave practically scramble for the door, and the Thaumaturge remains immobile, his entire being concentrated into a single point of will. The needle does not move.
The guests gather in the drawing room: fugitive nihilists, scowling conspirators, ragged authors and dandyish defendants. They take turns holding their hands up to the fireplace and stalking about, fists in pockets. The conversation drifts from Kronstadt to the rising price of bread. Kerosene casts a flickering light from the mantelpiece; the figures at the edge of its glow could be George Grosz, Hannah Höch, Max Beckman. Egon Schiele is there, spectral, an underage mistress at his side.

At length, their host enters, a black great-coat dramatizing his bulk. Some used to call him the Thaumaturge, not without a little irony. No one has seen him in years.

“I’ve summoned you all here to share something momentous with you. While you were out fomenting revolution and popularizing this thing you call Dada, I sequestered myself to study the science of telekinesis. I am finally prepared to demonstrate my findings.”
It is the gloomy end of 1921; an icy drizzle patters the grey streets of Hamburg. All the uprisings have failed: Rosa Luxemburg’s waterlogged corpse lies in the Landwehr Canal, while Makhno languishes in a Romanian internment camp.

IT’S MIDNIGHT ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2011, ten years after the World Trade Center attack. We’re walking down the train tracks, each carrying a scale model of one of the twin towers. Gravel crunches under our shoes. The cardboard buildings are taller than we are; tiny bodies dangle from the windows, rapping against the hollow walls at each step. The full moon shines down from the top of the sky, making a tremendous stage of the world with our tiny silhouettes in the center: Quixote and Panza, Vladimir and Estragon.

Along with his building, my friend carries a placard inscribed with a manifesto:

**In Praise of the Jumper**

Whether they hit the ground with a thud or burned up midair, choking on dust as the world collapsed around them, we knew immediately these jumpers had joined the experimentation committee. Trapped between flames and clouds, they chose to fly.

In the face of hellish peril, they chose action and defiance even knowing the apocalypse had come. Would that only we could find the same courage, just once, in the crisis that now consumes us. Amidst the everyday wreckage of this society, this emptiness and boredom, futility and meaninglessness—to jump, along with all those who have ever jumped, with just one grain of faith that we shall fly.

I wish I could have joined those jumpers, everything in flames and a beautiful sky and a hundred stories in free fall screaming

Long Live Death!

Whether this is what we “really think” is beside the point; there are American flags hanging from every telephone pole from here to the Mexican border. Our task is to interrupt this pat narrative, this kitsch—not only in the geography of our town but also in our own servile acceptance of it. It would be extremely inconvenient for us to get stopped in the course of erecting our little monument; I have a suspended sentence from felony riot charges, while my comrade’s felony riot case has yet to go to court. But that’s what we’re here for: the risk is the payoff. For this brief moment, we are paragons of transgression, heedless of risk or rule, filling our pockets with firecrackers to jump into the fire. We have joined the Experimentation Committee.
ALL-POINTS BULLETIN: BEWARE THE EXPERIMENTATION COMMITTEE!

"You need to know how to experience freedom in order to be free. You need to free yourself in order to experience freedom. Within the present social order, time and space prevent the experimentation of freedom because they suffocate the freedom to experiment. Only by upsetting the imperatives of time and social space will it be possible to imagine new relations and surroundings. The old philosopher said one can only desire on the basis of what one knows. Desires can only change if one changes the life that produces them."

-Anonymous, At Daggers Drawn

"The transformed speaks only to relinquishers. All holders-on are stranglers."

–Rainer Maria Rilke

Blistering Critique:

"...and so by fearing to risk, we impose the worst-case scenario upon ourselves—and upon everyone! If I commit suicide on account of the wretchedness of this world, my blood will be on your hands!"

My partner rubbed his palms together, miming a Sadean pleasure at others' suffering as a consequence of his refusal to overthrow capitalism: "Ah, your blood is on my hands!"
If it works, it's obsolete. Real innovation rarely comes from the successful—those who have something to lose can't afford to stumble about at random. On the contrary, it comes from the ones who have their hands free: lunatics, ne'er-do-wells, outsiders, MAXIMUM ULTRAISTS.

In sleepy backwaters far from academia's ivory towers, teenagers improvise munitions and Wright brothers invent airplanes. Most never achieve fame, not even of the fifteen-minute variety. They don't contribute to the sort of progress recorded by historians—incremental, linear, triumphalist. They aren't part of an ongoing agenda; they presuppose a direction, whereas it is precisely the refusal of direction that enables them to make their discoveries.

Some call this play. Others call it folk science. We call it the Experimentation Committee. The Experimentation Committee doesn't hold yearly conventions or award laurels. For the most part, it is comprised of people who never meet each other: it is not a membership organization, but a secret society of the effect, which one may only by departing from the familiar. It is a tunnel of darkness, a cocoon in which one becomes another.

Joining the Experimentation Committee is not only a matter of experimenting in means, but also in ends: not just acting according to values, but, as Nietzsche put it, revaluing them. This kind of project or direction can at least evaluate their success according to an external measure: without this convenience, the Experimentation Committee is not for the faint of heart.

When you understand something, you know less, for you no longer see the field of possibilities. People are only likely to break new ground when they don't understand how something works, when they imitate without mastery or comprehension. In this regard, the internet may actually be a barrier to innovation—it tends to spread identical copies, not unique imitations.

1. When economists revalue a currency, they do so in relation to other currencies; thus one may simply understand Nietzsche as proposing that we reevaluate traditional values relative to other values. As he says, one must have chaos within oneself to give birth to a dancing star.
Bouazizi was not enacting a strategy. He was alone, as alone as a person can be. By drawing back the curtain from injustice so we could see it for what it was, he gave us a precious gift, but one that he had to pay for. The European Parliament awarded him a posthumous Sakharov Prize, but he died knowing only that he had acted on his humiliation and rage, to no end other than to express them. His death hangs in eternity as an irreparable tragedy. We might say the same of so many others who have thrown away their lives in the history of revolutionary struggle.

What can we learn, then, from this man who gave free vegetables to poor families, who had to buy his wares on credit the way many of us must, who reacted against the same policing that imposes inequalities in the US? First, that misery is the same the world over today, even if it assumes different forms. But we can go further: in Bouazizi's example, we see what it takes to get out of here even if we do not wish to ignite a worldwide conflagration but simply to change our own lives.

What would life be like after a revolution? The dishwasher pictures a dishroom without a boss. The renter imagines herself in the same little hovel, rent-free. The shopper looks forward to stores without checkout counters. We can hardly imagine beyond this horizon—yet surely it would be easier to change everything entirely than to build a version of this world in which the same institutions and habits magically cease to be oppressive. When what we are is intrinsically determined by capitalism, it's not enough to try better ourselves; we have to cease to be ourselves.

In the era of precarity, this is clearer than ever. Globalization has swept the entire population of the planet into one labor pool that competes for the same jobs: mechanization is replacing those old jobs, rendering us more and more disposable. In this context, those who set out merely to defend their positions in the economy are doomed. Look at the student movement of 2009-2010, or the protests in Wisconsin last spring: these rearguard struggles to preserve the privileges of a particular demographic could only fail. Today we can neither found our strategy on incremental victories—we are in no more of a position to win them than our rulers are to grant them—nor on the fixed roles that once gave the general consensus a footing. We are in a moment in which the only thing we can do is imagine a society where we are not ruled by others who rule us.

Abstract theoretical considerations about what is needed rarely bear fruit; more often, people discover innovations by trying things at random until one works, as in the Experimentation Committee in the EZLN. We count the Experimentation Committee among the Experimentation Committee because the EZLN is not necessarily a revolutionary uprising but a group that is always experimenting and learning from its mistakes. The EZLN suggests that innovations should prioritize wide-ranging experiments, even at the risk of failure, because we cannot expect to find the right path to freedom by accident. We count Subcomandante Marcos among the Experimentation Committee not because he participated in or even supported the EZLN in its early years, but because he himself has been an innovator and experimenter in his own right.

All of us have been part of the Experimentation Committee at some point in our lives—although perhaps not in the way that the EZLN was. Each person who goes beyond their role, who experiments wildly, who throws away any chance of success, who does not listen to liberal attention to escape massacre for another week, cannot fail to touch our hearts even if they do not advance our collective goals.

If you aren't sure what we mean, hurry—cease reading this instant and compose your own text expressing whatever you can imagine we might mean. Only thus will you have any hope of generating something new.
Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz are first-round draft picks. Playing free jazz isn’t enough, but Sun Ra qualifies. Punk bands like Contropotere and Gism almost make the cut, but Creation Is Crucifixion enlisted when they started reprogramming video games in addition to playing hardcore. Voina seems inspiring, though our Russian comrades report—not surprisingly—that they’re assholes. Neither Marinetti nor any other marionette of state or capital has a damn thing to do with the Committee.

The Experimentation Committee claims the death rattles of sacred cows as its national anthem. The Experimentation Committee strikes fear into the hearts of all who earnestly wish to succeed. The Experimentation Committee is an unquenchable fountain of youth, ceaselessly replenishing the world despite all our efforts to seal it up. Join up or run for fucking cover.

Blistering Critique:

This makes a case for unproductive experimentation according to the logic of progress and productivity. To make an argument against them, it would be necessary to show that innovation and progress are actually opposing forces.
COMRADES—
SURELY IT IS TOO LATE, BUT WE NEED YOU FOR THE EXPERIMENTATION COMMITTEE!

To join—and thus contribute to prospective future issues of this publication—mail one of the following to:

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USA
On December 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in response to his treatment by Tunisian police, setting off a chain reaction worldwide. Let no one forget that the wave of uprisings still sweeping the globe did not simply spring from the hard work of activists, however long some labored to pave the way. It did not begin with people setting out to better themselves or the world. It began with the ultimate gesture of despair and self-destruction.

Those who fulfill demands made in the name of the Experimentation Committee earn the right to make such demands of others. A cursory review of the contents of this publication should hint at the potential therein. Expand the Committee!
Blistering Critique:

Now we were getting to the heart of the matter. “No, I mean that I’m not sure about the focus on friendship as a privileged space from which to fight, as if friendship were somehow outside the dynamics that make everything else so rotten.” That hit close to home—my clique had broken with hers as a result of interpersonal conflicts long before most people in North America had even heard of them. This was the first conversation we’d had in half a decade. “Of course, I can’t help but see this through the lens of how people have interpreted your material in the US, but it seems to me that social relationships are just as colonized as economic or political relationships, and just as fragile—look at how ours ended.”

“You know, we also have had this conversation,” she answered. “In fact, there was a split inside our group. Before they left, some of the people involved wrote a text called The Terrible Community.”

Affinity-based projects can be more efficient than any army of employees because the wheels are greased with affection—enabling them to sustain stark challenges and heavy workloads. But when they finally collapse, they crush us in the crash.
Our notions of what constitutes a “good” presentation are so constrained by the norms and expectations of the genre that they have become disconnected from any concrete measure of effectiveness, let alone the question of what is fulfilling for attendees—or pleasurable for the presenters!

So?

An extravagant refusal!

A departure from the norm!

An experimental exercise in freedom!

...in which we may discover much that is routine.

Perhaps so! But a girl can dream!

To borrow from Mario de Andrade, “I went to the conference with the intention of seeing old friends, taking in a workshop or two, distributing a few pamphlets, going out for drinks, and setting off a bomb in the middle of the world.”

So let's get down to business! We'll start at the beginning: why are you an anarchist? No—don't answer! Too easy, too conservative! Better—what is your sole reason for living?

For living? Hm... I suppose I've always felt that the only possible justification for life was to experience intense passion.

Aha, passion! Yes, when a burning desire...
Overwhelming passion—you have passion! Some anarchist you are! My life is meaningless unless you have passion.

And like any master, when you look at it, isn’t it? Do you think, for example, that passion will bring you happiness?

Many anarchists claim they’re fighting for a better world, and I think they’re wrong. Either you’re fighting for a better world and you’re a utopian writer, or you’re fighting for revolution and you’re an anarchist. There’s no middle ground.

OK. Ill try out your narrative. Let’s say a revolutionary is someone who simply cannot tolerate the world as it exists. How can we be sure that this is actually a response to the way the world is, rather than to something internal? “Passionism as pathology!”

Exactly. And listen—every lover knows that the greater the obstacles, the greater the passion. That’s what desire is for. In evolutionary terms, we don’t have desires in order that we may fulfill them and be happy, but as a force to propel us. That’s why desire increases in proportion to the difficulty of the object: a misfortune for most of us, but a boon for romantic poets.

So, if great passion is provoked by tremendous obstacles, we can see why a passionate would become an anarchist rather than a utopian writer.
Right—party politics is too easy. The passionist gravitates to something more difficult and dangerous. In the extreme case, what you’re calling passionism becomes a sort of will to nothingness: pursuing things that do not and perhaps cannot exist, the pursuit of passion alone, including tremendous suffering and tribulation, is an end unto itself.

OK, I’m convinced of your framework, but I think your critique misses something. The point of existence isn’t just to achieve happiness or have an easy life—for the passionist, the pursuit of passion alone, including tremendous suffering and tribulation, is an end unto itself.

But hear me out: passionism isn’t just masochism or self-destructiveness; it’s something else. Passionists aspire to the maximum amplification of life.

Obviously! The question is whether that’s the sort of end we want to come to.

But let me explain what I mean. When you graph a sound wave, you have the neutral state and a curved line that departs from it, returns down, crosses the neutral line and goes below it a short distance from the neutral line. The higher the sound wave is, the higher it is above the neutral line; the lower, the lower it is below it. The distance from the neutral line is called amplitude, popularly known as volume.

As an aging punk, I guess I have to get behind that, but—

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

The end of friendship takes on a new meaning if we are thinking the eventness of friendship. Friendship propels and captures us and forces us to be friends. It is something beyond or something that is also a condition of the relationship collapse. When we are friends and have become estranged. But this was right...

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That we have become estranged is the law above us; by the same token our former friendships are imagined. There is probably a tremendousity to every form of friendship in which our very different ways and goals may be included as elements of our power of vision. In small ways we are more than friends to the extent of this sublime possibility—let us then believe in our star friendship even if we should be compelled to be earthly enemies. —Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

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The end of friendship takes on a new meaning if we are thinking the eventness of friendship. Friendship propels and captures us and forces us to be friends. And this something-beyond or something else also creates the conditions in which our friendships collapse.

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V. THERE IS NO FRIEND

Now then, section five. Is this doing philosophy? I don't think I've covered anything I said I would in the description. My throat hurts from cigarettes. I'm getting exhausted and I'm not sure I'm getting anywhere. All these pulled quotes from Derrida have gotten me nowhere. And this odd claim, whatever I've been getting towards, that there are no friends, only events, moments, of friendship, and perhaps we have not even had one yet. How do we even know afterwards? It strikes one almost as cold and empty and a bit sociopathic. Moreover, how can any meaningful politics come from this?

I don't know how much time I've taken up in reading this to you so far. It feels like I've written a lot but not really said much. It's 1 pm, yesterday, I'm in the lobby and most of you are in some workshop or another having a common experience that will give you new language, or new ways in which to speak with one another. I am out here alone, in my own world, writing, writing in silence in what hope is a successful attempt to find friends. Perhaps you'll be in luck, and at the end of this I'll take questions after all. I'm sure you're thrilled at the prospect.

I mentioned earlier the Whatever, a term I'll readily admit has been abused by some in our anarchic milieu of late. Agamben mentions that the Whatever Singularity is “whatever you want, that is, any possible future.” He means we should stop looking around trying to find friends and instead start making friends, or, doing friendship, with those bodies with whom we share a form of life, the ones who understand what we mean when we say “friend,” or more importantly understand when we do friendship.

And in doing so, we are creating a new form of life, developing new practices—creating new meanings for friendship in friendship.

This is largely, I think, grounded in the idea that we can lose ourselves—our predicates, our identities—in the Event. Maybe you've experienced this total loss of self, maybe not. I have, but then my self was found and things turned out pretty shitty [ed. note: a reference to ongoing legal troubles]. So really, whatever might be a good concept for philosophy, and if you want experimentation and danger and the possibility of ever present threat of being hurt—which is basically what friendship is, right—then Whatever might be a good way to go.

So far we seem to understand that friendship, at least as a thing to have as a relational quality, friendness or whatever we might say, might be impossible. It's like running en masse with the cops closing in, and we call out “Friends!”—and they are there, or else they aren't. Even the naming, the event of friendship, is not itself what makes friends. It's something else something beyond us, something whatever, that
Well, we're positing that passionism is a matter of temperament, right? That lines up with this theory of consonance I've been developing. Consonance means “sounding together,” the pleasant sensation of tones vibrating in harmony with each other. Where one finds consonance is determined in part by one's temperament. Let's go back to our example of the sound wave. When you temper a piano, you adjust the intervals between the notes, which affects how the notes harmonize. Different temperaments produce different consonances and dissonances between notes; equal temperament, in which the octave consists of twelve equal semitones, is only one of many possibilities.

OK, I follow, but where are you going?

If we too have different temperaments, it means that the things that resonate with us—that make us feel consonance or dissonance—vary according to how we've been tempered, how our lives have “tuned” us. Passionism is a comparatively rare temperament; it's not the primary mode through which most people seem to experience consonance. They might experience it in giving and receiving orders, for example—the feeling that “everything is in its place.” This explains why when we do outreach modeled on what drew us to anarchism it doesn't draw the rest of humanity the same way.

No kidding.

Anarchists have concluded that the root of our experience of dissonance is hierarchy. That sentiment comes intuitively to young rebels, but your average branch manager probably experiences anarchy as dissonance—not just on the level of bias or ideology, but as a deep-seated emotional reaction.

If I get your metaphor, temperament isn’t just a matter of what resonates with us on an item-by-item basis, but how the intervals make different “chords” resonate.

Certain piano temperaments work really well for playing in, say, F major, but sound terrible in C minor. Carry the metaphor over: two people can encounter the same songs—the same raw material,
For Aristotle and his virtuous friends, they are friends because they are virtuous, and their virtue is the main reason they are friends. This is different from other friendships, such as those of pleasure or utility, which exchange the many for the one. Aristotle's friends are friends because they have exchanged virtue for virtue, and their friendship is based on the shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Friends of pleasure have an understanding of what they expect from their lover or beloved. A proper inequality. A friend of utility, on the other hand, has an understanding of how much each is due the other, and reserves the right to give or take, in a sense like a bank account. But an understanding of what they expect from each other is due them, although the exchange of virtue is not a bank account, or a market. Rather, it is a sharing of something they have in common, and a test of their character.

Aristotle's friends are named in the event, and the event to which they are named is the test of friendship. Thus, if a friendship is not named, it is not a friendship. Aristotle tests others and names them as friends. Whatever it names has already disappeared.

For friendship to have meaning, it must be named in the event, and the event to which it gives name must carry in itself the fullest meaning of friendship. All friendship, as we have seen, depends on a difference which is properly a difference without virtue, when we prefer to take what is rather than some nonexistent noble virtue. So, while Aristotle looks for those who are friends and finds himself lacking (O my friends! There is no friend!), we friends of anarchy must look for friendships of potentiality and becoming, always leaving open the possibility that something may yet change.

For friendship to have meaning, it must be named in the event, and the event to which it gives name must carry in itself the fullest meaning of friendship. All friendship, as Aristotle defines it, is based on a difference without virtue.

From what I have said, we can conclude that friendship is a relationship between two people who have exchanged virtue, and who share a difference which is properly a difference without virtue. When we prefer to take what is rather than some nonexistent noble virtue, we are naming a friendship. When we prefer to take what is rather than some nonexistent noble virtue, we are naming a friendship.

So an anarcho-passionist might find that a bread-based diet, sleeping on hardwood floors, and fighting for lost causes produces a feeling of consonance, while another person might experience it as dissonance, finding that lost causes go better with white lace wedding gowns.

To take this further, we can imagine socialization as a massive set of pliers twisting the tuning pegs of our hearts into frequency with the vibration of patriarchy, or something like that.

Hm... it is true that I've never liked anything in a major key. How tragic! The anarchist living in a capitalist world—he thought he only liked sad music. Sad but true.

Some of my thinking about this came out of my efforts to understand gender. What the difference is between man, masculine, and butch. For instance, I think masculine and feminine are aesthetics—gender, or the difference between male, woman, and both, and of butch. For instance, I think masculine and feminine are aesthetics—gender, or the difference between man, woman, and both, and of butch.

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and "F" encompass all meaningful human characteristics, and are divided between them. We can imagine all sorts of loving constellations of traits besides our current notions of masculinity and femininity—there are different patterns and combinations for different people. All these patterns unfortunately get bound up with systems of sex, gender, power, and privilege.

So in this account, freedom is a matter of being able to pursue your own version of consonance without interference. I can imagine mainstream gay rights advocates might push that line, but it seems to let the self-satisfied branch manager off the hook. Freedom simple is impossible. Impossible, not for the least reason, because for Aristotle, friendship is an attribute, a state of being. Really he's going about it all wrong. Perhaps Aristotle already has friends—we can see from his collection of friends that he is writing such chapters as "Aristotle, Ethics," his definitions and descriptions of friends as a sort of praise of his friends and what they already share. We imagine he wrote this toward the end of his life, as he sorted through his collection of friends. But Aristotle's sense of the world is inadequate for our form of the. His idea of friendship is already an unknown. Or at least, since you are still here reading, you are trying to discern how the word "friend" is supposed to be used. But this doesn't mean we can use it. There is something missing if I simply call you all "friends." For us, friendship does not keep silence. Friendship is a shared experience in which we live in common and find ourselves headed in the same direction. To think alongside Wittgenstein again, there is that which can be expressed in propositions of language—say, my calling you "friend"—and that which can only be shown and never converted into words. Derrida's point, taken from Nietzsche, is that friends allow this whatever to lie between them, in silence.

For us, friendship is an unknown. Or at least, since you are still here reading, friendship is an activity that we are trying to discern as we are doing it. For Agamben, and so for us, friendship is still an event, an unknown. From Derrida, we receive the ominous illuminating message:

"Friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by silence." Here we challenge Aristotle directly. Friendship isn't the result of endless chatter and argument. Friendship is the result of shared experience in which we live in common and find ourselves headed in the same direction. Friendship isn't expressed in propositions of language—say, my calling you "friend"—and that which can only be shown and never converted into words. Derrida's point, taken from Nietzsche, is that friends allow this whatever to lie between them, in silence.
IV. FRIENDSHIP AND EVENT

In Agamben’s essay “The Friend,” he notes that friend is a sort of non-predicative term, that is, a term from which it is not possible to establish a class that includes all the things to which the predicate in question is attributed. What I’m saying is, I simply mean which names.

In the curious case of insults, we find that often the insult is not the result of being compared to something undesirable but in being-named as such in a way that one cannot defend oneself. We think of children who insist on calling Nick, Rick, and Nicky cannot defend themselves because there is simply nothing in the being-named itself that can be defended. The power of the word goes beyond any power of defense. The only thing one can do is to try to eliminate the names.

I would call friend but couldn’t, for whom I couldn’t say a middle name or perhaps even a first. I certainly know nothing of your virtue, but you do, in fact, fall among my group of friends—I would even go so far as to say you are my friends, my good friends, my true friends. This is virtually the opposite of what Aristotle would define as a true friend. What ties us together is not language—remember, it’s the activity between us that gives us language. Rather, it is silence, and what happens in silence.

To tie this back to our earlier topic, perhaps one of the reasons you and I are passionate, and I am passionate, is that we both have intense experiences that have forced us into a freedom we couldn’t have dared on our own. This is why nothing is sweeter to us than tyrannical passion: it doesn’t just impose meaning on an opaque world, it also liberates us from it.

Right—freedom may be the last thing we want. Remember what Alfredo Bonanno wrote about leaving prison: “The instant you get out of prison you have the sense that you are leaving something terrible behind, and even if you lived it badly and suffered horribly, which is not always so, to regain a sort of inner peace.”

When you break with everything you know, consonance and dissonance be damned, that’s TERRIBLE FREEDOM. It means wrenching yourself out of your routines, your commitments, your values. We don’t possess the capacity to do this, but it is unthinkable except in the most extreme circumstances.

I guess when I think about it, all the most important experiences, from the first unpermitted march to parenthood and death, are beyond the scope of anything we could rationally choose, let alone be prepared for. Whether or not we want them in advance can’t be the right question when those experiences transform our very wishes.

You’re saying we’re faithful not to our specific passions, but to passion itself—because it is a master that has been able to set us free.

This poses an uncomfortable question: to what extent do we have to make choices that are difficult or even abhorrent to us in order to experience real freedom?

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with a distinct boundary. Form of life is both the experience of our past and the possibility we share of the future. Yet we inhabit form of life in the present: it is ‘what we are when we speak.’

Oh shit, I’ve just introduced the concept of time. And if I start saying “was,” “is,” and “will be” all of a sudden I’m going to be talking Heidegger and Being and grammar and shit. Not going there.

Friends make the world turn round. You share secrets, lockers, money, hopes & dreams. Friends need you. You need friends. A friend can make the day go by as fast as lightning, all the giggles have to end. Or a fight with a friend can make you miserable as you count the minutes ticking by (sid: 12:34).

It seems as if this day will never end. How can you say you’re sorry if you feel that they have done you wrong even if I want a friend. If they go and play with some other friends how can I join a game I know I would never play. You don’t want to stay alone. Please just stay a true friend.

the case, it is always better than the nothing that your life is reduced to the moment it disappears.”

It’s not always so easy to isolate the irony in our fear of the unknown.

Somewhere else, he reports that it’s more terrifying to be on the run from the police than to be in prison—that is to say, consequences are less frightening than risks. Anyone who has suffered a sleepless night before an action knows this! This isn’t just because uncertainty is the most unendurable condition, but also because we’re afraid of being responsible for failing—of being responsible, period. Of freedom.

So in your formulation, the task of the anarchist is to win both first-order freedom—the liberty to do as we choose—and second-order freedom, TERRIBLE FREEDOM, transforming the conditions that constitute our choices.

Anarchism as ideology—what you’re calling first-order freedom—is familiar to us: it’s the commonsense notion that we should be free to live in accordance with our wishes. Self-determination. But anarchism as method—the pursuit of TERRIBLE FREEDOM—refuses to take the wishes as given; it challenges the “self” in self-determination.

In short, the pursuit of first-order freedom means taking control of our lives, while the pursuit of TERRIBLE FREEDOM means abolishing it. Freedom exists in a dialectic between asserting our interests and reinventing them.

Now check this out: if the anarchist project were just about defending and extending first-order freedom, we would have little to say to those who experience consonance in hierarchy. But insofar as we champion TERRIBLE FREEDOM, we set out to interrupt that consonance, to subvert the processes through which people currently find joy and meaning in life, starting with ourselves. This is not a clean or simple project.
And if when I say friend it means a certain willingness to throw everything away for a person you've just met or if you seek out certain intensities because you believe that is the purpose of friendship, to have grand and good life experiences, then perhaps we share a certain form of life—a certain idea of the good life, a common understanding of the word happiness.

To share a form of life is to share potentialities, to inhabit a something that is possible in the future. It is not to be static, to be identified, but to be living in common. And if here we have again Aristotle's friendship, this mistranslation from the beginning: "O my friends, there is no friend!" What if perhaps the translation was supposed to go something like, "He has not a single friend"? This is really then the question of numbers. When I call "Friends," how many of us are there?

Aristotle doesn't give us a clear number, but he makes it certain that we understand what friendship is only possible with a limited number. So then here we suddenly see that true friendship requires a degree of living together. We can understand this as the ability to develop collective experience and common meanings. Aristotle doesn't tell us how many friends we have, or how many we should have. And yet he gives us a number, a number that is clear to all of us.

There are just too many people for us to be friends with everyone. The more people we try to be friends with, the less time we have to develop each of our friendships. More importantly, though, friendship requires a degree of living together. We can see that the form of life is the possibilities we share and the good life we create.

Form of life for Wittgenstein isn't a technical term, there's not a number attached to it, and really philosophers aren't clear if he suggests there's just one human form of life, or if forms of life are akin to culture or subculture or nation—though of course we must heartily reject the idea that form of life is anything akin to culture. We see here Aristotle trying to figure out numbers, the numbers game.

But at this point here we are thinking about friendship together, whatever we're thinking about. And we see him trying to figure out numbers, the numbers game. But even if we call it a form of life, even if we call it a form of life, there's not a number attached to it, and really philosophers aren't clear if he suggests there's just one human form of life, or if forms of life are akin to culture or subculture or nation—though of course we must heartily reject the idea that form of life is anything akin to culture. We see here Aristotle trying to figure out numbers, the numbers game.

And so we return to my original question about why we're revolutionaries. We're revolutionaries because we want to create new forms of life, to break through the line flat and suppress our complications, as passionate and revolutionaryaries we want to extend the curves as far as possible in both directions: joy and suffering, triumph and defeat, the freedom to realize our desires and the TERRIBLE FREEDOM to override them.

Creation and destruction, the ecstatic intercourse of revolution.
I’m trying to use philosophy here to cross a few borders and get from Aristotle’s descriptions of “friendship” to Agamben’s prescription for the whatever singularity. Hang tight.

Agamben uses the term form-of-life (with hyphens) as a way to say “the good life,” a life that cannot be separated from its form, in which the restriction of the possibilities of life is simply impossible. What is “good life,” what is good for each form-of-life is simply happiness, however that form-of-life might define it.

He takes the term from a linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein, who used the term in a radically different way. For Wittgenstein, form of life is simply a shorthand way of saying all of the environmental, historical, sociological factors that create the conditions for us to understand the words we use, how we understand and use language. When two bodies understand one another, they share a form of life. This is because words, in Wittgenstein’s convincing characterization of language, only have meaning in shared use. So, for the word in our examples, ‘good,’ good isn’t a word that has a meaning in itself. We learn “good” in activity, in our relations with one another. We can say “good” is the product of our form of life. Our understanding of good is a part of our form of life.

Because Aristotle speaks of virtue, and we do not have virtue, only whatever, we will say that what Aristotle calls virtue is a common inclination toward a particular form of life; the whatever that holds us together as friends is a certain unspeakable fact of our living in common without justice. Justice, Aristotle’s justice, is excluded even from his virtuous friendship. Why is this the case? Because we do not treat them as friends—friends, as we together understand the word, because we share a form of life. Friends do not share some-thing (virtue or justice, for instance), they are shared by the experience of friendship.

—I’m on page five of my speech; I don’t know how far this is in the lecture itself. Maybe you’re getting bored at this point. I hope not, because really this is where it gets even more boring. No one really understands this Agamben shit, and no one knows where he’s going with it, except maybe our old friend and he just thinks it means the T-word. I’m going to try to salvage something from that understanding.

I guess a part of where I’m trying to go with this Wittgenstein-Agamben connection, at the moment so far removed from friendship, is that what is good is dependent on our form of life, it is dependent upon how we always already act in the world. If we understand something when it is communicated it is by always already having experienced it. And so when I say friend and we hear different things, it is because while we share some activity in common we inhabit different forms of life.

Blistering Critique:

You’re skirting the most important question: are you arguing for passionism? Here are the stakes: if you contend that anarchist struggle is vital—and you contend that passionism disposes people to it more than other temperaments do—and you contend that people are largely tempered through oppressive socialization... then it would seem that you’re arguing that people (but not you!) should be pursuing desires other than those that are currently consonant for them. How authoritarian! How selfish!

Why should a few maniacs who, by their own admission, are incapable of happiness get to set the standards according to which everyone else with a conscience has to wreck their lives? On the other hand, if you’re framing temperaments as more or less neutral expressions of “just how we are”—akin to gender, for instance—does that doom you to polite liberal quietism? Or, if not that, then—even worse—vanguardism?

“Whatever well-tempered non-maniacs will never take the necessary steps to destroy the basis of their complacency—we, the few bold and hopeless enough to go for it, must lead them into the crashing Wagnerian dissonances of passionism!”

On the other hand, if you’re framing temperaments as more or less neutral expressions of “just how we are”—akin to gender, for instance—does that doom you to polite liberal quietism? Or, if not that, then—even worse—vanguardism?

At the end, you begin to address this theoretical problem, albeit in an unapologetically contradictory manner. But isn’t this just a passionist ploy—if you can’t be happy, at least you’ll take everyone else down with you?
III. VIRTUE AND FORM OF LIFE

WHY, THEN, THIS NEGLECT OF VIRTUE? Well, to be honest, because I haven’t read Aristotle’s chapters on virtue and so making it the emphasis of this essay as a description of how we should do friendships is really beyond me. Nevertheless, my loose understanding of what is meant by virtue and Aristotle’s treatment of virtuous friendship in the Friendship chapters reveal it as something we must reject if we are to achieve the chaos of love and friendship we so madly desire.

To begin again—why friendship and politics? For Aristotle, “the properly political act comes down to creating the most possible friendship.” This is a bit clarified, perhaps, when we utilize Nazi philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt’s concept of the political—that the “political” is the act of declaring friends and enemies. His desire, in a nutshell, in understanding this concept, is the suppression of the political within a political order—the suppression of difference and conflict within a society. By defusing the intensity within society with which people made themselves—that is, how they declared friends and enemies—the State would reduce all bodies to mere citizens, lacking the intensities of love and enmity that created discord. In this reduced position, as hostis [Latin for “enemy”], citizen bodies unknown to one another would find their only friends in the State, which would also then define their enemies and have total control over their form of life.

A bit of a bastardized paraphrasing, for sure. Continue to run with me.

For Aristotle, the telos or end-goal of the State is the Good Life. The ideal State is one that allows its citizens to dwell in virtue. And so here we have it again, that damn virtue. We can excuse Aristotle for not having seen the horrors that follow in the wake of all those grand projects of virtue, and certainly I need not list them for you. But this really is the crux of the problem, the problem of government and collectivities generally but also this problem of friendship, which we still haven’t pinned down. We won’t blame Aristotle for not being a nihilist, but really—this is a man who believes in good and evil, and metaphysics. I doubt he’d even heard of historical materialism. His attempts at defining and discovering virtue are virtuous, but what it reveals is something else—that which Aristotle defines as virtue is virtuous for a particular form of life. Certainly we don’t expect wives to obey husbands or peasants to obey kings, so we can no longer call these things virtuous. So this is why we discarded the notion of virtue and used it as kind of a placeholder. That is, we can reject Aristotle’s universal virtue for the idea that virtue, the object of the good life, is simply whatever is the object of a particular form of life.
“So… I guess it worked.” He let the implications sink in.
“That’s crazy.”
“Yeah, it is.”
“Should we write a communiqué or something?”
“Good question. This is a whole new ball game. I don’t know what the protocol is.”
“It’s tough, because we’re coming from two different traditions. On one hand, we’re anarchists, and our cultural heritage decrees that we have to make anonymous statements claiming our actions—on the other hand, we’re…”
We both paused, trying to figure out what else we were.
“…Wiccans,” he finished for me, shaking his head in dismay. “We’re fucking Wiccans.”
“Oh god, we are.”
We knew about Wiccans from the anti-globalization movement. They were the older folks dressed colorfully near our black blocs; we respected them, but they seemed a little nutty. Why are older anarchists always so weird? And now that we were getting on in years, too, we were taking up their mantle.
There were precedents. In 2004, when a gigantic green dragon puppet erupted into flame outside the building hosting the Republican National Convention, Starhawk had suggested that this was caused by the pagan cluster’s spiral dance. I’d heard rumors she did the same thing when a police officer died of a heart attack while chasing a skateboarder in Philadelphia a little later. Yet to our knowledge, this was the first time in our tenure that anarchists had successfully put a curse on an entire police department.
“What’s the security culture around this? Do we need to post it anonymously? It’s not illegal to cast spells, is it?”
“I don’t think so. We just have to be careful not to leak any technical details, so they can’t remove the curse.”
“Should I leave in the part where we’re hiding in the woods, waiting for that couple to quit their stargazing so we can get our black magic on?”
“Sure, but don’t linger on it. Make it a real communiqué—show them we mean business. And let’s not release it until December—then we can call for solidarity actions on the anniversary.”

So then: friendship, the three types of friendship. Pleasure, utility, and, the one we have largely neglected with perhaps good reason, virtue.

[Quote from The Politics of Friendship, page 53]
virtue, the friends I have here around me. Well, no, we're certainly not friends of virtue (some of you can perhaps guess who is around me at the moment). But the highest form of friendship, which, obviously, I must think I share with those around me and at the moment, that is to say the virtue that holds friendships together. Of course, the virtue of life is that which holds us all together. We can see this in the fact that our friendship may continue, but is not reducible to these. It is something else, something whatever.

What this form really offers for us is the suggestion of a friendship grounded in a whatever—a set of values or external conditions—which we would say, probably the friendship in which we say we would say politics, based on friendship. It is the friendship in which we would say much of what my soul recognizes something in. A pure friendship is the friendship of the friend who is not us, but it is not reducible to these acts. Utility may be a virtue, but not reducible to these acts—pleasure and utility spring forth from a well of whatever.

The Anarchist Cabal of Blackest Darkness claims responsibility for the disruption of the Asheville Police Department throughout the year 2011. The APD is currently involved in a lawsuit and is under investigation for alleged misconduct. The Cabal of Blackest Darkness is a group of rebels and poor people. As every black magician knows, you can't dish it out if they haven't already got it coming. One year ago, at the peak of a total lunar eclipse on the night of the winter solstice, we performed a ceremony invoking the forces of darkness to protect our city. The APD remains in disarray; many trials have been indefinitely delayed. May the next blow cancel them altogether!

This coming solstice, we urge our comrades to join us in following up on last year's action, rerouting the forces of darkness to the Asheville Police Department. May the powers that be learn that there are forces in this world more powerful than their repugnant servility. With revolutionary greetings,

Cabal of Blackest Darkness – Occult Vengeance Cell
Here is an example of how you might try this at home. Properly performed, the following spell will provide for the participants a period of nightmares, failed sexual relationships, hopelessness, anhedonia, and extreme wanderlust. The targets of the spell will be completely unable to prosecute the case.

To be performed at dusk, or the climax of a lunar eclipse. Abstinence from sexual activity, alcohol, meat, drugs, and cigarettes for a period of two weeks purifies the mind and body of the practitioner. A more vigorous abstinence such as fasting, solitude, or a night without sleep may supplement such abstinence if the ritual must be performed without the time for fullest purification.

Take a moment for quiet contemplation, perhaps investigating passages from Leviticus, maybe even chapter 20. Orient yourself towards the purpose of this rite: revenge, anger, retribution, violence, disruption, confusion, all to serve for the protection of oneself and one's friends.

Gather all necessary materials in a single box or bag. To begin, say aloud to yourself, “I am mine own god.”
II. THREE TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP

"OMNES AMICI, TIBI NUSquam sibi amici.
"My friends, there is not a friend!"

A quote from Aristotle, coming to me by Derrida in citing Nietzsche in citing Montaigne in what is perhaps a mistranslation of Aristotle that, nonetheless, provoked and courses through Derrida’s book Politics of Friendship, the book that is largely responsible for my rambling up here today. Such mistranslation and misquoting will perhaps form the backbone of what follows in my attempt to do philosophy, so bear with me.

How could Aristotle, who writes two chapters on friendship in his Nichomachean Ethics, declare there are no friends? If there is no friend, then how could I call you “my friends,” my friends? If I call you “my friends,” how dare I add that there is no friend?

Friendship, then. What’s most important for our purposes is not this misquote—this “supposed” misquote—but really Aristotle’s take on three forms of friendship. So, while you and I may have ... based in Aristotle’s ideas of Virtue and the Good. It’s actually fairly difficult to use Aristotle’s forms to get us anywhere meaningful, not the least because we do of course reject his ideas of Virtue and the Good, and the End. But we can come to that later. Let me just point out here that Aristotle’s classifications of friendship, of pleasure—this is essentially the idea of Love—friendships of Utility—this is essentially the idea of Friendship—friendships of Practical Good are three key forms of friendship. We have here political and economic friendship, the best friendship, the friendship based on Aristotle’s forms of friendship. What’s most important for our purposes is not the form of pleasure collapse as soon as the friends, the parties, the people we talk of, the regimes collapse, so what we take from this, the idea that we do of course reject the notion, this way of thinking about friendship, most prone to collapse are built on the promise of their own collapse.

Let’s, take the utilitarian friendship, since this is what Aristotle calls the political friendship and our lecture is supposed to be on anarchy—which, while it isn’t really, or at least it shouldn’t be, a political concept, we find many people treating it as such. The promise of certain political friendship is that one party is useful for the other, both parties find use in one another, and so an alliance is formed. Perhaps in the anarchist camp we find this as two bodies identifying one another, two bodies identifying one another, two bodies identifying one another, and then organizing efforts. Perhaps in the anarchists, this is the closest we get to the idea of friendship as a way of organizing efforts.

“I do require that you aid me and my cause by performing the duties of your office according to the dictates of my words, and in accordance with my will.”

“I require that you shall perform that which I have charged you to do all without any interference, harm or destruction to those I love and those I call friend and family.”

“Nor shall any beast be subject to any effects from you whatsoever. Further, you shall faithfully and completely fulfill my request given here within 90 days, that I may enjoy the benefits of this charge without trickery, deceit, or guile of any kind.”

Hail Asmoday, the destroyer!
Hail Andras, the murderer!
Hail Flauros, the arsonist!
Hail Shax, the maimer!
Hail Satan! Hail Satan! Hail Satan!
Liberator and prince of darkness.

Towards the east say, “Jehova.” Towards the south say, “Adonai.” Towards the west say “Eheieh.” Towards the north say, “Agla.”

Depart.
May your ventures succeed, comrades.

No excuses! No forgiving!
You who laugh and joy in living
Pour this book, with all its follies
Far and heart and open door!
Friends, believe me: all my folly’s
Soon a blessing heretofore!
What a book, what I discover—
Have a book contained it ever?
Hail in me the guild of fools!
Learn what this fools-book’s
Reason coming to its senses!
Shall we, friends, do this again?
Amen! and auf Wiedersehen!

Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human

The period of “purification” may confuse some who wish to perform this operation in good faith. Equally valid would be a period of ritual desecration, week-long binges of sinful depravity: not bathing, a purposeless crime spree, or bouts of extreme gluttony and sloth. I imagine it speaks to the lifestyle of the authors that abstinence, sobriety, and solitude are seen as methods of escaping vulgar routine and preparing to travel to another world.

While I’m glad to see the Cabal isn’t actually encouraging novices toward the evocation of demons, the success of last year’s Evocation to Full Physical Apparition, the rite quoted above, may rest solely on the intensity of the trance and madness provoked by the visible presence of the spirit and its physical consumption of the poppet delivered unto it. This publicly available spell combines witchcraft, ceremonial magic, and demonolatry in a way that might only be meaningful and perhaps even dangerous for those who attempt it without proper preparation and understanding of the risks involved.

Fine to lie in quiet together
Coziness still to join in laughing—
Contentment a silken heaven
By my side, amid the grasses
Join with friends in cheerful laughing.
Hail to the white tooth together.
Am I right? let’s lie in the quiet,
Am I wrong? let join in laughing
End in being aggravating.
Aggravating, loudly laughing.
As we reach the grave together
Shall we do this again?
Amen! and auf Wiedersehen!

No excuses! No forgiving!
You who laugh and joy in living
Pour this book, with all its follies
Far and heart and open door!
Friends, believe me: all my folly’s
Soon a blessing heretofore!
What a book, what I discover—
Have a book contained it ever?
Hail in me the guild of fools!
Learn what this fools-book’s
Reason coming to its senses!
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Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human

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Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human

Human, All Too Human
We might suddenly find ourselves on different planets, speaking different languages, alienated, isolated, and alone. The exact same touches, words, and gestures suddenly convey such different meanings.

Doing philosophy is a way of putting our ideas together, gathering together from wherever we are, starting again from there so we can have this discussion. Maybe your understanding of friendship is one that, if applied universally, would or could somehow result in anarchy or the chaotic world we want. So, when I say friendship as a thing we have yet to figure out, you are confused. Friends, to you, perhaps, are obvious, more obvious than any political movement or ideology. We would disagree here, and our conversation would get sidetracked as your thoughts took you in the direction that I must be a fool, or megalomaniac or solipsist or sociopath, to say we have no idea what it is to be a friend, who is a friend, that I do not know whether or not you and I are friends.

So then, to begin to unsettle your understanding of friendship, I must begin again, from a different position. After all, this is supposed to be a philosophical lecture—and to be honest, when I’m not trying very hard to understand what a “friend” is doing,

Perhaps no contemporary publication exemplifies the spirit of the Experimentation Committee more thoroughly than Letters Journal, surely among the most obscure periodicals currently in print. When the time came to draft contributors for this issue of Vortex, the Letters staff was at the top of the list. Alfonso 1970s, a time-traveling Italian autonomist from the Years of Lead, volunteered for the task.

After sending a threatening email in poor English ("HERE IS ALFONSO 1970S...") and posting a terrorist music video online with his partner The Thug, Alfonso showed up at the finale of the 2010 Letters Journal tour in Bloomington. To the horror of all, he lambasted the audience with his trademark megaphone while The Thug set things on fire, performed lewd gestures, and doused the presenters with water, destroying their notes. Eventually, the editor of Letters was coerced into accompanying the two out of the child-care center booked for the event into the backyard, where a golden throne waited atop a litter. As the crowd looked on, the hapless editor was pushed into the chair, raised aloft, and declared king.

At this point, an acquaintance of his happened by with a roll of parchment: "Ah, King Don—I was hoping I’d find you here. I bear an entreaty from your loyal subjects." Alas, there was nothing for it but for poor Don to read the proclamation aloud to the assembled masses, promising that he would produce an artistic work answering the assigned question: "What is the new windows?" The following play, which provoked outrage when he unsuccessfully attempted to have it performed at a panel discussion during a conference in North Carolina, was the result.
when our irreconcilable definitions make us wholly unable to communicate any longer. This is really just another way of saying we need to first “define our terms.” For communism or anarchism or liberation. OK, that seems easy enough. But friendship? What could we even mean by a politics of friendship? Friendship has a billion histories and as many meanings. The intensity with which we use the words needs to be matched by an intensity of thinking in common.

At first glance, and perhaps because I have already a position on the issue and so have framed it as such, one feels a particular affinity between the two concepts. After all, as I’ve described it, what is friendship but the anarchy of the relation between two loving bodies? And what is anarchy but a global system of friendship? But this would really be an over-simplification, of both terms. Anarchy, or anarchism, after all, is not merely some noble ideal, but a particular constellation of projects and rebellions over the past two centuries aimed at overthrowing the ruling social order. It is a history of peasants ransacking town halls and government buildings, of conspiracies assassinating dozens of heads of state and capitalist magnates. Sometimes it fails, it fails at itself in its very being itself. It is the calculated project of shooting landowners and collectivizing land in Spain in 1936, of strikes and demands and riots across the United States, and a thousand other insurrections with and without flags aimed at wrecking the landscape to find out what happens when we attempt live without these practices of calculation and obedience which have dominated our forms of life for centuries and millennia.

Anarchy is not the mere extension of the offer of friendship to anyone (some fascists on the wrong side of a Heil Hitler salute could tell you that!). And there’s something to our notions of friendship that suggests a universal friendship would not necessarily lead to the kind of world we are interested in. There’s something peculiar about that idea. Friendship has its own history; it has billions of histories, and the rich and powerful monsters have friends no less than we.

Yet somehow here we are: anarchy, friendship. This lecture is less a proposal than an attempt to bridge the gaps in our thinking, a first movement in a direction, toward what really I don’t know. Let’s keep that in mind.

—I just took a break from writing this and had a thought, which I’ll insert here and then see where it goes. When I said friendship before, when I say friendship, perhaps we are thinking of different things. After all, if friendship for each of us has its own history it obviously has its own meaning; we each use the word in different ways with different understandings.
break the window that is the end of windows. It’s a practice, a practice of breaking language, over and over, continually, giving it force and meaning and weaving these practices together with others, also breaking language or writing poetry or writing windows.

Who are you? How do I call you friends? What does this mean? And more importantly, if this next hour we spend together is to have any meaning, how shall we put our discovery to use?

I’m intentionally reading this word for word, and I hope besides the content you’ll appreciate something from the format itself. It’s not so often we allow one of us to just write and talk, and I’m listening to Cindy’s right now—I wonder if she’s talking so fast, so cast her head is spinning. Besides the content, she’s talking so fast, so cast her head is spinning. I can’t concentrate on what she’s saying. I’m doing this exercise in the hope that I could, at the end of the hour, put together a sort of a practice of the content, one that you could appreciate it or not. It’s a practice of the content, one that you could appreciate it or not.

Given also that this is supposed to be a lecture of anarchy and friendship, perhaps it would be first prudent to elaborate that concept. For us, anarchy shall mean the state of affairs, or the attempts at moving toward such, that wholly rejects capitalism—that is to say, any form of property, any form of ownership, any form of privilege—any system of horrible violence which coerces obedience and exacts punishment for misdeeds.

If some of you wish to make political use of the thought in this lecture, then we should begin here: before we claim to wish to build a politics based on a particular word: communism, anarchism, etc., we should sit down and talk about the words we hold in common, then perhaps all is well; but perhaps also we will find day

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Nothing about this talk feels dangerous or stupid. So I'm going to do it.

I. THE QUESTION OF FRIENDSHIP

Already a problem here, friends. All the earliest philosophers noted that philosophical matters are best discussed among friends. So then apparently we have a problem before we even begin—are we in bed, where they are able to make the most of their discoveries and follow them through to their logical conclusions?

I think it would be fair to say pieces of this lecture are a sort of taking up of the Letters Journal challenge to break language like a window. If you listen closely, perhaps you'll catch it. If you've taken a philosophy course, maybe it will be pretty clear. A lot of this is... I'm out of words. You'll have to forgive me. I just... it's a trash can, will this work? What about PVC pipes? Or bricks? Hammers? And even if any of these work, we're not trying to

Emerson, "Friendship"
This is a lecture, workshop, and discussion on anarchy and friendship. I am not a philosopher. Sure, this lecture is a part of a project that I'm going to use in a likely futile attempt to get into grad school [ed. note: did not apply ... really, the reason I'm here is to see what happens. It's 10 am this morning and I'm just now finally collecting all of my notes from a month—a rather intense month—which I have spent attempting to reconsider and experiment with friendship. If I draw from experiences more than the texts in front of me, I hope none of you will consider this a weakness. Also, it would be a mistake to consider this lecture a proposal of any sort, or advancing a thesis. Mostly it's an attempt to capture thoughts and put them in front of others. What's important is that we all understand that what I am doing is not a research project. It's not an experiment. It's not a proposal. It's not a thesis. It's just, well, I (Hugh) am sharing some ideas with you.

Also—friends, don’t record this.

Act One: The Phone Call

Act One begins c. 15 minutes before the panel is scheduled to begin. The panelists are pacing around and “getting prepared,” some audience members are engaged in small talk. Panelist 4 hands Moderator a copy of the script with Hugh’s lines highlighted.

Hugh: (Cell phone rings, answers phone) Hello?

Letha: (Slightly urgent/distressed voice) Hugh? Hi, this is Letha, in Cincinnati.

Hugh: Hey, how are you?

Letha: Uh, I’m okay I guess, I’m okay. Can I talk to you about something?

Hugh: Is everything okay? I can’t really talk right now because I’m about to moderate this anarchist panel thing. (Steps away from people around him to talk “privately,” though others in the room can hear what he is saying)

Letha: I just… well, I never told you about Don’s… (makes audible nervous sound)… I guess I’ll call back later? (mumbles) It’s all fucked. (stops mumbling) I mean, I just realized I never told you about Don’s… (hangs up)

Hugh: Hello? (Realizes she hung up and stares with neutral face expression, thinks about calling her back, thinks “If it is important, she will call me back,” does not call her back, walks towards other people in room, wonders what she was going to say about Don)
Panelists 1-5 sit down at table at the front of the room in a prearranged order. Panelist 4 hands panelists 1, 2, 3, and 5 copies of the script, with each of their respective parts highlighted. Panelists 1-5 read script with confused or bemused or annoyed or anxious looks on their faces. The audience filters into the room.

Panelist 2: (to panelist 4) This is sort of funny, but I’m not going to read from your script. (laughs) Did you really expect us to read from it?

Panelist 3: This is fucking stupid.

Panelist 4: But you are all playing lead roles! I tried to write your parts fairly and accurately, though obviously I don’t know y’all very well. I tried to take all of your “internet presences” and strip away some of the internet bravado. This is my first play.

Panelist 1: …

Panelist 4: Cindy, I watched a video of a talk you gave in Louisville, Kentucky and created your lines from the talk.

Panelist 1: (chuckling to herself) I really don’t know what to say.

Panelist 5: (flipping through script) I don’t get it.

(PANELISTS 1, 2, 3, and 5 look down at the table, then look at PANELIST 4)

(uncomfortable silence)

(The crowd becomes aware of the silence)

Panelist 4: I mean, I thought it would be an interesting idea if we acted out a scripted panel rather than pretending to be “original” or “inventive.” I felt like the potential conflicts or arguments that would arise between us are largely scripted
anyway, so this seemed more honest. I think I’m going to read from my script even if y’all do not, but that’s going to come out as stilted or awkward. I really want this to work.

PANELIST 1: (flipping through script) I can’t believe you took the time to write all of this.

PANELIST 4: I just want this to work.

MODERATOR: (laughing uncomfortably) Well, the scripts are nice, but I think we should get the panel started. (The panelists sit up a little straighter and the audience becomes nearly silent.) Today’s panel is on the topic of “Contemporary Anarchist Struggle.” My name is Hugh, and I will be moderating. First I will introduce the panelists, then I will explain the format of the discussion, and finally I will begin posing questions to our panelists. If you have any questions throughout the panel this afternoon, please write them on a notecard and pass them to me. (an unnamed person stage left begins handing out notecards)

MODERATOR: Okay, our first panelist is Cindy Milstein. Cindy recently published the book Anarchism and Its Aspirations and is a member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

PANELIST 1: Hello.

MODERATOR: Our second panelist is Maximillion, who joins us from the Institute of Experimental Freedom.

PANELIST 2: (gestures with one hand)

MODERATOR: The third panelist, Doug, joins us from California, where he is involved with the publications Vengeance and Modesto Anarcha.

PANELIST 3: Yo.

MODERATOR: Our fourth panelist today is Don, who edits Letters Journal.

PANELIST 4: (scratches head) Hi.

The text that follows is compiled from an incomplete series of lectures delivered primarily to non-academic audiences, one at a private event and one as part of an anarchist convergence. It was an experiment in a different way of doing lectures. It makes several successive voices contemporaneous: the process of thinking about the subject, of writing about it, of speaking about it, of your reading which is about to commence. The resulting failure has only provided hours upon hours of continued adjustments, new hypotheses, and further attempts to arrive in a position for which we are sorely unprepared.
The following essay was never meant to be read again, let alone put into print. That it appears here is an attempt to assault the dignity and intentions of the author.

It poses the question of friendship without even really beginning to answer it, relying on a handful of authors with a merely passing interest in friendship—even Derrida’s “Politics of Friendship” is really just about democracy. Reading books, friendship is elsewhere. After three hours of talking, we might arrive at a stronger sense of friendship, but it’s not the lecture per se that delivers us there.
the social democratic project, or other revolutionary projects? Panelists will each have five minutes for their opening remarks. We will begin with Cindy Milstein. Cindy, you have five minutes.

Panelist 1: Thank you Hugh, and thank you to everyone who came today. This conference is awesome, and the organizers have done a really good job pulling it all together. (looks down at paper, pauses) Wait, you didn’t write a monologue for me? I thought you were going to transcribe a video of me giving a presentation in Louisville. You did a horrible job writing my character.

Panelist 5: Don, why are you even here?

Panelist 4: I’m sorry Cindy. I’m sorry Finn. I guess I’m here because Khalil told me to come here. I don’t really know what to say. I have a lot of excuses. I’m sorry.

Panelist 1: It’s typical of writers, especially men, to cast themselves as the lead in their own play. Can I continue? We’re here to talk about anarchism, not talk about you.

Panelist 4: Yes, I’m so sorry. Please continue.

Panelist 1: But you didn’t write a monologue for me. How can I continue?

Panelist 4: I thought you weren’t reading from the script.

Panelist 3: This is fucking stupid.

Moderator: (laughing loudly)

Panelist 4: (puts head down on table)

Panelist 3: How can working class people take anarchism seriously when it’s nothing but bourgeois liberals and artists with nothing to say about real struggles going on? Can you imagine taking a coworker to this conference?

Panelist 1: It’s still my time to speak.
Panelists 2, 3, 5: Then speak!

Panelist 1: So the subject of the anarchist project... well, without a written monologue, I will talk from my notes. The subject of the anarchist project are the working men and women, the students, and all oppressed people. The subject of the anarchist project are the social movements that do exist. We need to work harder at our own ends. We need to join communists and anarchists in building anarchistic movements.

Moderator: My time can't possibly be up. You were interrupted. The time spent talking about the play-script can't possibly count against me.

Panelist 1: I was going to talk about building anarchist momentum by participating in popular social movements.
I’m so unfamiliar with your work I had trouble writing your part. That’s one of the reasons your monologue gets cut off. I want you to be represented fairly, but I don’t know if I can do that. I don’t know if I can represent any of you fairly, maybe not even myself. Maybe being fair is the wrong thing to try to do. I had never written a script before.

Panelist 1: I’m starting to wish I was unfamiliar with your work!

Panelist 4: Okay. I cede my time to you Cindy, since I’m not an anarchist and don’t really have a position on the subject of this panel.

Panelist 1: I don’t want your time.

Panelist 4: OK.

Panelist 5: Whoever invited this guy made a terrible decision. Are we going to spend this whole panel talking about his stupid play script or can we talk about the subject at hand? For some of us this topic isn’t idle abstraction, it’s a life and death struggle in our neighborhoods and communities. Cops are killing and locking people up. There is real anger, and rather than sit back and criticize each other, we need to get our feet on the ground and get our hands dirty.

Panelist 2: “There are no means of excluding practices of normality either the civil war of gendered society or the social peace of banal sexual techniques of power and their accompanying anxieties.” Wait, did you really give me that line? Did you just write me as a caricature?

Panelist 4: Yes, mostly I took lines from IEF pamphlets. Everything you say is more or less unrelated to what other people are saying.

Panelist 2: I guess that’s what happens when you enter into the logic of civil war and get organized.

Moderator: (laughing) Can we continue the panel?

Panelist 3: No. This panel has fallen apart. Middle class degenerates!

Audience: (together and loudly) CONTINUE THE PANEL!

Panelist 5: The script doesn’t have a monologue for me either.

Panelist 4: Sorry, I looked at your group’s website but couldn’t figure out what you would say on this panel.

Panelist 5: I wasn’t talking to you. I don’t know. I will present something from my notes, rather than read the script. Who is the subject of the anarchist project? Anarchists are the subject. This is not to say that anarchists are the revolutionary subject, but that the anarchist project and the revolutionary project are carried out on two different levels of human organization. To borrow Hegelian language, revolution occurs or does not occur on the world-historical level of organization, but the anarchist project does not and cannot occur on that level. Our struggles occur on an individual or human level. It is unclear how this relates to the higher level of revolution. We have to begin where we are and accept ourselves as the primary actors in our collective drama. In Oakland, this meant putting aside the question of “who belongs in the riot,” which has been posed again and again by Leftists and social managers, and finally realizing that we belong to ourselves and for ourselves. If we seek out others—for example, those who were arrested with us in the streets—we do so on our own terms and nobody else’s. As long as anarchists continue to play second fiddle to larger social bodies—whether “popular social movements” or even “the local community”—we will fail to create our own trajectory of struggle and impose ourselves on the world. If one accepts the painful and difficult responsibility of carrying out one’s own struggle and not relying on others, the real possibility of affinity and solidarity emerges. And if we lose—because we might lose, we will probably lose—it won’t matter because the fight was ours the whole time. We will die on a battlefield of our own choosing. We are the subjects. We cannot accept any less than that.

Moderator: Those are the initial statements from each participant. Remember if you have a question, please send it to the front on a notecard. We will now begin the response segment. Each panelist has 3 minutes to respond to what the others have said.

(lights fade)

End Scene
Panelist 1: Let's try to continue.

Panelist 4: Okay, okay, we don't have to read from the script. Panelist 2, Maximillion, what is your response to the initial question?

Panelist 2: The Anarchist Man is of the same apparatus that links the Anarchist Queer, the Anarcha-Feminist-Woman, and The Anarchist POC. This apparatus can be best described as what remains of antagonistic politics, but we could also think of it as the precursors of the imaginary postfeminist dictatorship, which is the logical advancement of an insurrectional feminism. Identity politics is clearly a limiting strategy. The subversion of the subject of the discourse of race, class, and gender is a site of rupture. The site of rupture is a site of danger. Danger is the blood of the heart, the heart of the moose standing in the road, prepared to give her life to kill a motorist. Danger is the separation between the body-as-life and the body-as-citizen. When Cunardline, says 'I've been dangerously, they are halfway right. To live is to be dangerous, to inhabit the space, to contaminate the space, with our dresses and corsets and the gravity and gesture, but we can insist on placing Danger front and center, on creating dangerous spaces rather than pretending our spaces are safe. Danger is the subject of the anarchist subject. We submit it and take pleasure in its cruelty. I will give up the rest of my time.

Moderator: Let's keep this moving along. shall we? Doug will speak now.

Panelist 3: Hey, I'm Doug from Modesto Anarchos & Vengeance. I'm not here to talk a bunch of academic bullshit or play games or whatever. Proles are the subject of the anarchist project. Working-class struggle is everything. That's my answer, straight up. Middle class activism and art and subculture get together to steal and break shit. Nobody wants to read theory journals that tell them we're on the right track. How many of the people in this room aren't even? How many of you have any clue what I'm talking about?
John Doe: (to person next to him) Finally someone said that shit!

Moderator: Remember, panelists, you have five minutes to make your opening statements. Nobody, except Cindy Milstein, has used all of their time. Next up is Don from Letters Journal.

Panelist 4: Hi, so uh, I want to talk about something else. I want to talk about a question: what is the new windows? What is the new windows? That question is sort of unclear, so let’s break it apart. Right now windows are the things anarchists break, right? So, the new windows is the new thing for anarchists to break. But there is more. Windows are also the border between the inside and the outside, the space where one views the outside but does not enter it. This border is not a separation but a space where the inside and outside penetrate and contaminate each other. So, what is the new windows? What is that penetrating space that must be broken? I don’t know how to answer that question directly, so I’m going to work around it and maybe get closer to it in a roundabout way. I think anarchism is primarily the struggle for a generalized state, for a diffuse and historical state that covers the entire social terrain, a total democracy. The two main anarchist proposals—represented here by Maximillon and Cindy, with Doug as a sort of middle ground between the two—are two different visions of democracy. On the one hand, we have the riots which are a pure and unmediated democratic gesture. In many places in the world, candidates are elected with the riot, rather than the ballot. Social war is, in reality, civil war, as Maximillon says, but in making the social/civil war connection, they do not acknowledge the fundamentally democratic nature of that proposition. The horizontal, free society envisioned by Milstein lacks the pure democracy of the riots and puts in its place a series of democratic mediations: the assembly, the council, and so on. Competing democratic visions. But what is the new windows? What is the penetrating space that must be broken? I want to say language. I want to say communication. Both of those are, in a direct way, spaces of penetration between the inside and the outside, but how would one break them? And why? Maybe the form of this panel, its scriptedness, its incompleteness, the flatness of the characters, the impossibility of representing something “real” point towards half of that answer. To those of you seeking guidance from a king, your answer is there. This is part of the experiment.

Moderator: Ok. Finally, we have Finn from the Oakland 100.