# Glenbrooks octos

## 1

#### The aff engages in leftist melancholia which gives up the struggle against capitalism in favor of meaningless individual resistance. This forgoes all material and structural change by deriving satisfaction through ideological resistance without material efforts – Dean 13:

“Communist Desire”, Jodi Dean, , 2013, LHP AM

An emphasis on the drive dimension of melancholia, on Freud's attention to the way sadism in melancholia is 'turned round upon the subject's own self', leads to an interpretation of the general contours shaping the left that differs from Brown's**. Instead of a left attached to an unaclmowledged orthodoxy,** **we have one that has given way on the desire for communism, betrayed its historical commitment to the proletariat, and sublimated revolutionary energies into restorationist practices that strengthen the hold of capitalism**. **This left has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggles of working people against capitalism - commitments that were never fully orthodox, but always ruptured, conflicted and contested - with incessant activity** (not unlike the manic Freud also associates with melancholia), and so **now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories, art, technology, procedures, and process**. It sublimates revolutionary desire to democratic drive, to the repetitious practices offered up as democracy (whether representative, deliberative or radical). **Having already conceded to the inevitably of capitalism, it noticeably abandons 'any striking power against the big bourgeoisie',** to return to Benjamin's language. For such a left, **enjoyment comes from its withdrawal from responsibility, its sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micro-politics, self-care, and issue awareness**. Perpetually slighted, harmed and undone**, this left remains stuck in repetition, unable to break out of the circuits of drive in which it is caught** - unable because it enjoys. **Might this not explain why such a left confuses discipline with domination, why it forfeits collectivity in the name of an illusory, individualist freedom that continuously seeks to fragment and disrupt any assertion of a collective or a common?** The watchwords of critique within this structure of left desire are moralism, dogmatism, authoritarianism and utopianism - watchwords enacting a perpetual self-surveillance: has an argument, position or view inadvertently rukeo one of these errors? Even some of its militants reject party and state, division and decision, securing in advance an inefficacy sure to guarantee it the nuggets of satisfaction drive provides. **If this left is rightly described as melancholic, and I agree with Brown that it is, then its melancholia derives from the real existing compromises and betrayals inextricable from its history - its accommodations with reality, whether of nationalist war, capitalist encirclement, or so-called market demands.** Lacan teaches that, like Kant's categorical imperative, the super-ego refuses to accept reality as an explanation for failure. Impossible is no excuse - desire is always impossible to satisfy. A wide spectrum of the contemporary left has either accommodated itself, in one or another, to an inevitable capitalism or taken the practical failures of Marxism-Leninism to require the abandonment of antagonism, class, and revolutionary commitment to overturning capitalist arrangements of property and production. **Melancholic fantasy (the communist Master, authoritarian and obscene) as well as sublimated, melancholic practices (there was no alternative) shield this left, shield Ltd, from confrontation with guilt over such betrayal as they capture us in activities that feel productive, important, radical.**

#### The alternative is the politics of the comrade – one that is oriented toward a shared communist horizon – only our methodology can fight capitalism, anything else allows it to take over co-opting any movement – Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The term ***comrade* indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal**. **It highlights the sameness of those on the same side—no matter their differences, comrades stand together**. As Obama’s joke implies, when you share a politics, you don’t generally distance yourself from your comrades. **Comradeship binds action**, **and in** this binding, **this solidarity, it** collectivizes and **directs action in light of a shared vision for the future**. **For communists, this is the egalitarian future of a society emancipated from the determinations of private property and capitalism and reorganized according to the free association, common benefit, and collective decisions of the producers.** But the term comrade predates its use by communists and socialists. In romance languages, comrade first appears in the sixteenth century to designate one who shares a room with another. Juan A. Herrero Brasas cites a Spanish historical-linguistic dictionary’s definition of the term: “*Camarada* is someone who is so close to another man that he eats and sleeps in the same house with him.”[2](about:blank) In French, the term was originally feminine, *camarade*, and referred to a barracks or room shared by soldiers.[3](about:blank) Etymologically, comrade derives from *camera*, the Latin word for room, chamber, and vault. The technical connotation of *vault* indexes a generic function, the structure that produces a particular space and holds it open.[4](about:blank) A chamber or room is a repeatable structure that takes its form by producing an inside separate from an outside and providing a supported cover for those underneath it. Sharing a room, sharing a space, generates a closeness, an intensity of feeling and expectation of solidarity that differentiates those on one side from those on the other. Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover. Interested in comrade as a mode of address, carrier of expectations, and figure of belonging in the communist and socialist traditions, I emphasize **the comrade as a generic figure for the political relation between those on the same side of a political struggle. Comrades are those who  tie themselves together instrumentally, for a common purpose: *If we want to win—and we have to win—we must act together*.** As Angela Davis describes her decision to join the Communist Party:I wanted an anchor, a base, a mooring. I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty; tired of men who measured their sexual height by women’s intellectual genuflection. It wasn’t that I was fearless, but I knew that to win, we had to fight and the fight that would win was the one collectively waged by the masses of our people and working people in general. I knew that this fight had to be led by a group, a party with more permanence in its membership and structure and substance in its ideology.[5](about:blank) **Comrades are those you can count on. You share enough of a common ideology,** enough of a commitment to common principles and goals, **to do more than one-off actions. Together you can fight the long fight. As comrades, our actions are voluntary, but they are not always of our own choosing**. **Comrades have to be able to count on each other even when we don’t like each other and even when we disagree. We do what needs to be done because we owe it to our comrades.** In *The Romance of American Communism*, Vivian Gornick reports the words of a former member of the Communist Party USA, or CPUSA, who hated the daily grind of selling papers and canvassing expected of party cadre, but nevertheless, according to her, “I did it. I did it because if I didn’t do it, I couldn’t face my comrades the next day. And we all did it for the same reason: we were accountable to each other.”[6](about:blank) Put in psychoanalytic terms, the comrade functions as an ego ideal: the point from which party members assess themselves as doing important, meaningful work.[7](about:blank)Being accountable to another entails seeing your actions through their eyes. Are you letting them down or are you doing work that they respect and admire?In *Crowds and Party*, I present the good comrade as an ideal ego, that is to say, as how party members imagine themselves.[8](about:blank) They may imagine themselves as thrilling orators, brilliant polemicists, skilled organizers, or courageous militants. In contrast with my discussion there, in the current book, I draw out how **the comrade** **also functions as an ego ideal, the perspective that party members—and often fellow travelers—take toward themselves**. This perspective is the effect of belonging on the same side as it works back on those who have committed themselves to common struggle. The comrade is a symbolic as well as an imaginary figure and it is the symbolic dimension of ego ideal I focus on here. My thinking about the comrade as a generic figure for those on the same side flows out of my work on communism as the horizon of left politics and my work on the party as the political form necessary for this politics.[9](about:blank) **To see our political horizon as communist is to highlight the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the proletarianized against capitalist exploitation—that is, against the determination of life by market forces; by value; by the division of labor (on the basis of sex and race); by imperialism (theorized by Lenin in terms of the dominance of monopoly and finance capital); and by neocolonialism (theorized by Nkrumah as the last stage of imperialism).** **Today we see this horizon in struggles such as those led by women of color against police violence, white supremacy, and the murder and incarceration of black, brown, and working-class people. We see it in the infrastructure battles around pipelines, climate justice, and barely habitable cities with undrinkable water and contaminated soil. We see it in the array of social reproduction struggles against debt, foreclosure, and privatization, and for free, quality public housing, childcare, education, transportation, healthcare, and other basic services. We see it in the ongoing fight of LGBTQ people against harassment, discrimination, and oppression.** It is readily apparent today that **the communist horizon is the horizon of political struggle** not for the nation but **for the world**; it is an international horizon. This is evident in the antagonism between the rights of immigrants and refugees and intensified nationalisms; in the necessity of a global response to planetary warming; and in anti-imperialist, decolonization, and peace movements. In these examples, **communism is a force of negativity, the negation of the global capitalist present.** **Communism is also the name for the positive alternative to capitalism’s permanent and expanding exploitation, crisis, and immiseration, the name of a system of production based on meeting social needs**—*from each according to ability to each according to need*, to paraphrase Marx’s famous slogan—in a way that is collectively determined and carried out by the producers. This positive dimension of communism attends to social relations, to how people treat each other, animals, things, and the world around them**. Building communism entails more than resistance and riot. It requires the emancipated egalitarian organization of collective life.** With respect to the party, intellectuals on the contemporary left tend to extract the party from the aspirations and accomplishments it enabled. Communist philosophers who disagree on a slew of theoretical questions, such as Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou, converge on the organizational question—no party! **The party has been rejected as authoritarian**, as outmoded, as ill-fitting a society of networks. **Every other mode of political association may be revised, renewed, rethought, or reimagined except for the party of communists**. **This rejection of the party** as a form for left politics is a mistake. It **ignores the effects of association on those engaged in common struggle.** **It fails to learn from the everyday experiences of generations of activists**, organizers, and revolutionaries. **It relies on a narrow, fantasied notion of the party as a totalitarian machine.** It neglects the courage, enthusiasm, and achievements of millions of party members for over a century. **Rejection of the party form has been left dogmatism** for the last thirty years **and has gotten us nowhere**. Fortunately, the movements of the squares in Greece and Spain, as well as lessons from the successes and limits of the Occupy movement, have pushed against this left dogmatism. They have reenergized interest in the party as a political form that can scale; a form that is flexible, adaptive, and expansive enough to endure beyond the joyous and disruptive moments of crowds in the streets. A theory of the comrade contributes to this renewal by drawing out the ways that shared commitment to a common struggle generates new strengths and new capacities. Over and against the reduction of party relations to the relations between the leaders and the led, comrade attends to the effects of political belonging on those on the same side of a political struggle. **As we fight together for a world free of exploitation, oppression, and bigotry, we have to be able to trust and count on each other. Comrade names this relation. The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear**. It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one’s work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx’s lyrical description of communism in which work becomes “life’s prime want.” We get a glimpse of that in comradeship: **one *wants* to do political work**. **You don’t want to let down your comrades**; you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. **Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling**. French communist philosopher and militant Bernard Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of “common time”; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.[10](about:blank) From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism’s apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism’s 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time occurs. **How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work as self-transformation**. At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, inflection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face.Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.[11](about:blank) But the feeling didn’t last. **The pressures of organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists.** Since then, on social media and across the broader left, **relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we’re uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm**. **Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle.** As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick:I knew that I could never feel passionately about the new movements as I had about the old, I realized that the CP has provided me with a sense of comradeship I would never have again, and that without that comradeship I could *never* be political.[12](about:blank)For Ross, the Communist Party is what made Marxism. The party gave Marxism life, political purpose. This life-giving capacity came from comradeship. Ross continues: “The idea of politics as simply a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity was—*is*—anathema to me.” His description of politics as “a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity” fits today’s left milieus. Perhaps, then, his remedy—comradeship—will as well. Various people have told me their stories of feeling a rush of warmth when they were first welcomed into their party as a comrade. I’ve had this feeling myself. In his memoir *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*, the theorist Frank Wilderson, a former member of uMkhonto weSizwe, or MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), describes his first meeting with Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party and the chief of staff of MK. Wilderson writes, “I beamed like a schoolboy when he called me ‘comrade.’”[13](about:blank) Wilderson chides himself for what he calls a “childish need for recognition.”[14](about:blank) Perhaps because he still puts Hani on a pedestal, he feels exposed in his enjoyment of the egalitarian disruption of comradeship. Wilderson hasn’t yet internalized the idea that he and Hani are political equals. “Comrade” **holds out an equalizing promise, and when that promise is fulfilled, we confront our own continuing** yet **unwanted attachments to hierarchy, prestige, inadequacy. Accepting equality takes courage.** Wilderson’s joy in hearing Hani call him “comrade” contrasts sharply with another instance Wilderson recounts where comrade was the term of address**. In 1994, shortly before Wilderson was forced to leave South Africa, he encountered Nelson Mandela** at an event hosted by *Tribute*magazine. **After Mandela’s public remarks, Wilderson asked a question in which he addressed Mandela as “comrade.”** “Not Mr. Mandela. Not sir, like the fawning advertising mogul who asked the first question. **Comrade Mandela. It stitched him back into the militant garb he’d shed since the day he left prison.”**[15](about:blank) **Wilderson’s recollection shows how comrade’s equalizing insistence can be aggressive, an imposition of discipline. This is part of its power. Addressing another as “comrade” reminds them that something is expected of them. Discipline and joy are two sides of the same coin**, two aspects of comradeship as a mode of political belonging. As a form of address, figure of political relation, and carrier of expectations, comrade **disrupts capitalist society’s hierarchical identifications of sex, race, and class.** It **insists on** the **equalizing sameness of those on the same side of a political struggle** and **renders that** equalizing sameness **productive of new modes of work and belonging. In this respect, comrade is a carrier of utopian longings** in the sense theorized by Kathi Weeks. Weeks presents **the utopian form** as **carrying out two functions**: “One function is to alter our connection to the present, while the other is to shift our relationship to the future; one is productive of estrangement, the other of hope.”[16](about:blank) **The first function mobilizes the negativity of disidentification and disinvestment**. **Present relations** **become** strange, **less binding on our sense of possibility**. The second function **redirects “our attention and energies toward an open future** … providing a vision or glimmer of a better world.”[17](about:blank) **The power of comrade is in how it negates old relations and promises new ones—the promise itself ushers them in,** welcoming the new comrade into relations irreducible to their broader setting.

#### The role of the ballot is fidelity to the truth – dedication to a shared horizon is liberatory, Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The idea that comrades are those who belong to the same side of a political struggle leads to the fourth thesis: **The** relation between comrades is mediated by **fidelity to a** truth**;** practices **of comradeship** materialize **this** fidelity**. The “same side” points to the truth comrades are faithful to—the political truth that unites them**—**and the fidelity with which they work to realize this truth in the world.** “Belonging” invites attention to the expectations, practices, and affects that being on the same side generates. The notions of truth and fidelity at work here come from Alain Badiou. In brief, **Badiou rejects the idea of truth as a proposition or judgment, arguing instead that** truth is a process**. The process begins with the eruption of something new, an event.** **Because an event changes the situation, breaks the confines of the given, it is undecidable in terms of the given; it is something entirely new**. Badiou argues that this undecidability “induces the appearance of a *subject* of the event.”[60](about:blank) **This subject isn’t the cause of the event. It’s an effect of or response to the event,** “the decision to *say* that the event has taken place.” Grammar might seduce us into rendering this subject as “I.” **We should** avoid this temptation and **recognize the subject** **as** designating an inflection point, **a response that extends the event.** **The decision that a truth has appeared, that an event has occurred, incites a process of verification**, the “infinite procedure of verification of the true,” **in** **what Badiou calls an “exercise of fidelity**.”[61](about:blank) **Fidelity is a working out and working through of the truth, an engagement with truth that extends out into and changes the world. We should recognize here the unavoidably collective dimension of fidelity: in the political field, verification is a struggle of the many.** Peter Hallward draws out some implications of Badiou’s conception of truth. First, it is subjective. Those faithful to an evental truth involve themselves in working it out, exploring its consequences.[62](about:blank) Second, fidelity is not blind faith; it is rigorous engagement unconcerned with individual personality and incorporated into the body of truth that it generates. Hallward writes:Fidelity is, by definition, ex-centric, directed outward, beyond the limits of a merely personal integrity. To be faithful to an evental implication always means to abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of its consequences. **Fidelity implies that, if there is truth, it can be only cruelly indifferent to the private as such.** **Every truth involves a kind of anti-privatization, a subjective collectivization. In truth, “I” matter only insofar as I am subsumed by the impersonal vector of truth—say, the political organization, or the scientific research program.**[**63**](about:blank) **The truth process builds a new body**. This body of truth is a collective formed to “work for the consequences of the new” and this work, this collective, disciplines and subsumes the faithful.[64](about:blank)Third, collectivity does not imply uniformity. The infinite procedure of verification incorporates multiple experiments, enactments, and effects.Badiou writes, “An organization lies at the intersection between an Idea and an event. However, this intersection only exists as process, whose immediate subject is the political militant.”[65](about:blank) We should amend this statement by replacing *militant* with *comrade*. Comrade highlights the “discipline of the event,” the way that political fidelity cannot be exercised by a solitary individual—hence, the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the unity of theory and practice, the barren incapacity of each alone. Comrade also affirms the self-abandonment accompanying fidelity to a truth: its vector, its unfolding, is indifferent to my personal experiences and inclinations. For communists, the process of truth has a body and that body is the party, in both its historical and formal sense. Already in *Theory of the Subject*, Badiou recognizes the necessity of a political body, the party as the “subject-support of all politics.”[66](about:blank) He writes:The party is the body of politics, in the strict sense. The fact that there is a body by no means guarantees that there is a subject … But for there to be a subject, for a subject to be found, there must be the support of a body.[67](about:blank) **As a figure of political belonging, the comrade is a faithful response to the evental rupture of crowds and movements, to the egalitarian discharge that erupts from the force of the many where they don’t belong, to the movement of the people as the subject of politics.**[**68**](about:blank) **Comrades demonstrate fidelity through political work; through concerted, disciplined engagement. Their practical political work extends the truth of the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the oppressed into the world.** Amending Badiou (by drawing from his earlier work), we can say that the comrade is not a faithful subject but a political relation faithful to the divided people as the subject of emancipatory egalitarian politics.[69](about:blank) **For us to see the revolutionary people as the subject in the struggles of the oppressed, for their subject to be found, we must be comrades.** In *Ninotchka*, Nina Ivanova Yakushova can’t tell who her comrades are by looking at them. The party has told her who to look for, but she has to ask. After Iranoff identifies himself, Yakushova tells him her name and the name and position of the party comrade who authorized her visit. Iranoff introduces Buljanoff and Kopalski. Yakushova addresses each as comrade. But it’s not the address that makes them all comrades. They are comrades because they are members of the same party. **The party is the organized body of truth that mediates their relationship. This mediation makes clear what is expected of comrades—disciplined, faithful work.** Iranoff, Buljanoff, and Kopalski have not been doing the work expected of comrades, which is why Moscow sent Yakushova to oversee them in Paris. That Kopalski says they would have greeted her with flowers demonstrates their *embourgeoisment*, the degeneration of their sense of comradeship. But they are all there for work. Gendered identity and hierarchy don’t mediate relations between comrades. The practices of fidelity to a political truth, the work done toward building that truth in the world, do. The solidarity of comrades in political struggle arises out of the intertwining of truth, practice, and party. It’s not reducible to any of these alone. **Comrades are not simply those who believe in the same truth—as in, for example, the idea of communism. Their fidelity to a certain truth is manifested in practical work.** Work for the realization of a political truth brings people into comradely relation. **But carrying out similar tasks in fidelity to the same truth isn’t sufficient for comradeship. The work must be in common; no one is a comrade on their own. Practices of comradeship are coordinated, organized. The party is the organization out of which comradeship emerges and that comrade relations produce. It concentrates comradeship even as comradeship exceeds it.**

## Case

#### Semiocap misdiagnoses the problem—the problem is not the inability of the individual to be truly individual, it is the individual as a form of subjectivity itself.

Dean, Jodi. October 10, 2016. “**Collective Desire And The Pathology Of The Individual, Part 1 (Jodi Dean).”**  https://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/

An **interesting strand of contemporary theory designates the specificity of capitalism with the qualifier “cognitive**.”[[1]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn1) I do not write under this term, although I am influenced by theorists who do insofar as they also highlight communication. Franco **Berardi, for example, observes that “cognitive labor is essentially a labor communication**, that is to say communication put to work.”[[2]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn2) While communication encompasses a wide array of waged and non-waged activities expropriated for and exploited by contemporary capitalism, **the term “cognitive capitalism” feels to me like an academic version of the hacker dream of leaving the meat. It gives away too much**. **The term accepts the neoliberal claim for a knowledge society wherein workers are primarily** creative workers or a kind of “**cognitariat**.” It’s not surprising, then, to find those interested in contemporary knowledge management emphasizing the convergence between capitalist management gurus like Peter Drucker and Marxists Antonio Negri and Paulo Virno.[[3]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn3) In a way**, the term “cognitive capitalism” makes the world appear smarter than it is**, **as if intelligence replaced manufacturing when in fact manufacturing was pushed out of some countries and onto others in the search for ever cheaper labor**, **when factory work was becoming all the more brutal and massified even if less visible**.[[4]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn4) **Further, the term cognitive capitalism implies that affective labor is something new. This obscures rather than acknowledges the long histories of women’s affective labor and the struggles around attempts to enclose it in the home and harness it for capital**.[[5]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn5) **Finally, “cognitive capitalism” overplays immateriality even as it brings materiality, meat, bones, and blood back in via the emphasis on brains.** And here **especially I am reluctant to embrace the term because of the ways its diagnoses, the pathologies it identifies, can be rendered functional for capita**l**: they can tell capital what it needs to fix. Workers too depressed? Try Zoloft!** Working so many hours that focus is impossible? Try Adderall! **Or, in a more recent configuration, one that is sinister in its playfulness: bored by your screen of spreadsheets and memos? Watch some cute kitty videos – these improve worker efficiency**![[6]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn6) **Rather than viewing contemporary capitalism as cognitive, I view it as communicative**.[[7]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn7) As Hardt and Negri write, “Communication is the form of capitalist production in which capital has succeeded in submitting society entirely and globally to its regime, suppressing all alternative paths.”[[8]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn8) Whether of affects, images, anxieties, or ideas, communication is the means of capitalist subsumption, the vehicle for its intensification and expansion. **My focus here is on one pathology associated with the capture and instrumentalization of our communicative capacities, that it to say, on what happens when our basic sociality serves as a primary means of capitalist expropriation, which it has since capitalism began. This pathology is the individual form of subjectivity**, **a form that emerges historically and is today the site of opposing dynamics, of pressures that simultaneously disperse, concentrate, and overburden individuality as personal singularity**. My discussion might be particular to the hyper-individualistic culture of the United States. In an overview of histories of the individual, the political theorist Steven Lukes describes differences among nineteenth century French, German, English, and American concepts of the individual, noting how the American version implied capitalism, liberal democracy, and the American Dream.[[9]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn9) I do not attend to these differences (and so may over generalize from an American situation, which may still be beneficial insofar as it sets out a kind of imperialist individuating). Rather, **I focus on the individual as a form like the commodity is a form. The commodity is a form for value. The individual is a form for subjectivity, indeed, a form endeavoring to abolish collective subjectivity by separating it into and containing it within individuated bodies and psych**es. C.B. MacPherson locates a “possessive individual” at the heart of the liberal theory of the seventeenth century which conceived the individual “as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them.”[[10]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn10) **For liberals like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke**, MacPherson argues, “**The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession**.”[[11]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn11) **This individual is not understood as part of something larger, as fundamentally interconnected with others, as dependent on relations to others human and nonhuman. Rather, it is a proprietor of capacities engaging other proprietors. This necessarily and unavoidably capitalistic orientation, fundamental not only to liberal understandings of property but also to the market and to contract**s, is crucial to MacPherson’s critique of liberalism. We should note its fundamental reflexivity: proprietorship relies on a series of separations and enclosures. **Capacities are separate from others as well as separate from the self or ego, which can thus enclose these capacities within its person**. Training, whether moral or technical, is then work on and for the self rather than part of collective reproduction for the common good. **Enclosed within the individual, capacities become so many objects available for exchange, and, as capitalism evolves and expands, for investment, stylization, and self-branding**. **Even as I treat the individual as pathology, I also consider how we are moving beyond the pathology of the individual form. The last couple of years have been tremendously exciting. People have come together in opposition to capital and its demands for cuts, austerity, and more and more money for the one percent. Critical analyses of our setting and diagnoses of the pathologies plaguing it need to be supplemented by attention to the ways people are already overcoming them, moving beyond them, expressing new or formerly repressed capacities**. **My tag for this beyond is “collective desire.”** My research in this direction is just beginning, still provisional and influx.[[12]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn12) The intuition I pursue here is that **recognizing the pathological nature of the individual form lets us see possibilities for emerging senses of and desires for collectivity. More precisely, rather than looking at drugs and mental illness as pathologies, we should consider the likelihood that the individual form itself is the pathology; drugs attempt to maintain it, keep it going. The individual, then, is pathological in the sense that the setting in which it functioned is passing away. So the problem is not that the extremes of a contemporary capitalism that has merged with the most fundamental components of communicativity is making us depressed, anxious, autistic, and distracted and so we need to find ways to preserve and protect our fragile individualities. Rather, depression, anxiety, autism, and hyperactivity signal the breakdown of a form that was always itself a problem, a mobilization of reflexivity, a turning inward, to break connection and weaken collective strength.** The setting that is passing away is bourgeois capitalism. I use “bourgeois capitalism” to indicate an economic form inclusive of industrial as well as post-industrial, communicative, capitalism; Keynesian as well as neoliberal approaches to the economy; and a vision of the subject as a free, rational, individual as well as the critique of the exclusivity of this vision. In bourgeois capitalism, the individual appears as a form of freedom even as it functions as that enclosure of the common that fragments, disperses, and diminishes that collective power capable of guaranteeing freedom. **As capitalism has intensified, so have the pressures for and on the individual. The individual is called on to express her opinion, speak for herself, get involved. She is told that she, all by herself, can make a difference – collective action, though, that’s off the table, either impossible or too repressive to constitute a real alternative. It is no wonder that communicative capitalism enjoins us to uniqueness, to specialization and specificity: we have to distinguish ourselves to get hired or, for most of us, to maintain the fantasy of something like a fair competition (it would be horrible to think that we went into enormous debt for nothing, that we put all the work into a proposal, design, or manuscript that had no chance). At the same time, this specialization supports marketers’ interests in ever more granular access to customers, police efforts to locate and track, and capital’s concern with preventing people from coalescing in common struggle**. **Once we acknowledge, however, that the individual form is not threatened but is the threat, not a form to be preserved but one whose dissolution points to emerging collectivity, then we can move beyond the diagnosis of the pathologies of what has already past and amplify alternative tendencies in the present**. *Alone Together* Sherry Turkle’s ethnography of people and machines explores “networked life and its effects intimacy and solitude, on identity and privacy.”[[13]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn13) Reporting on her interviews with teenagers, Turkle describes young people waiting for connection, fearful of abandonment, and dependent on immediate responses from others even to have feelings. For example, seventeen-year-old-Claudia has “happy feelings” as soon as she starts to text. Unlike a previous generation that might call someone to talk about feelings, when Claudia’s wants to have a feeling, she sends a text.[[14]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn14) Turkle also reports people’s anxieties about face-to-face interactions, expectations associated with the telephone, that is, speaking to another person in real time (205), and the multitasking that implants an uncertainty as to whether another is even paying attention. **Combined with pressures for immediate response and the knowledge that the “internet never forgets” insofar as it’s difficult for most of us to eliminate all traces of our digital identities after they’ve been uploaded, archived, and shared, our new intimacy with technology, she demonstrates, is affecting the kinds of selves we become. We experience solitude, privacy, connection, and others differently from how we did before. For Turkle, these new experiences are pathological**.[[15]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn15) Drawing from Erik Erikson’s work on personal identity, she argues that networked technologies inhibit the kind of separation necessary for maturation. Parents are always in reach, available, even if they are not actually present but themselves over-worked, distracted, and over-extended. **Young people do not learn how to be alone, how to reflect on their emotions in private. Fragile and dependent, they fail to develop that sense of who they are that they need to have “before” they “forge successful life partnershi**ps.”[[16]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn16) **Rather than inner-directed and autonomous (Turkle refers to David Riesman), the culture of mobile phones and instant messaging has raised other-directedness “to a higher power**.”[[17]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn17) The expectation of constant connectivity eliminates opportunities for solitude even as people are “increasingly insecure, isolated, and lonely.”[[18]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn18) Turkle concludes, “Loneliness is failed solitude. To experience solitude, you must be able to summon yourself by yourself; otherwise you will only know how to be lonely.”[[19]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn19) On the one hand, Turkle is surely right. There is nothing surprising in her account of contemporary “tethered selves.” From her diagnoses of narcissism (which in their gesture to what is arguably Freud’s most unreadable essay could be seen as indexing the fraught problematic of individuation) to her worries about the constant and even addictive character of networked communications, she repeats already well-known criticisms of teens and media. **On the other hand, the language Turkle employs when she speaks of solitude might signal something more than an updating of the critique of mass and teen culture for a networked age. She uses the second person– “you must be able to summon yourself by yourself”—and shifts from a descriptive to an imperative mode: “you must” if you are to know something besides how to be lonely. Turkle relies on this mode because she has described the reflective individual as threatened by networked technologies and she wants us to join her in defending the individual from this threat. Directly addressing the reader, she insists that the reflective individual be shored up (even as she rejects technologically mediated forms of this shoring up as themselves pathological). For Turkle, a self that is less bounded, more expansive, less separate, more connected, is immature, at risk of loneliness. It needs to form its identity, separate itself from others, and go through the stages of its becoming individual**. I should add here that what Turkle links to technology, Dany-Robert Dufour (in *The Art of Shrinking Heads*), has linked to the acceleration of the process of individuation more broadly, particularly in connection to the decline in symbolic efficiency or change in the structure of the symbolic.[[20]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn20) The contemporary subject, he says, is called upon to create itself.[[21]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn21) **Turkle’s interviewees describe themselves in ways that rub up against Turkle’s own concerns with separation and individuation. For example, a nurse, tired after eight hours at work and a second shift at home says that she logs onto Facebook and feels less alone. A college junior explains, “I feel that I am part of a larger thing, the Net, the Web. The world. It becomes a thing to me, a thing I am part of. And the people, too. I stop seeing them as individuals, really. They are part of this larger thing.”****[[22]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn22) The student’s words here remind me of a line from Felix Guattari in “The micropolitics of fascism”: “The collective engagement is at once the subject, the object and the expression. No longer is the individual always the reference point for the dominant significations.”****[[23]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn23) The college junior feels himself and others to be part of a larger collectivity such that viewing himself and others as separate, as individuals, makes no sense; it loses the connection that arises through their mutual engagement.** For Turkle, though, connectivity is so pathological that she depicts it biochemically, as an addiction. Her argument relies on Mihaly Csikscentmihalyi’s work on “flow.” Most references to flow are positive, descriptions of a desirable experience of focus, involvement, and immersion. Turkle’s, however, is critical: “In the flow state, you are able to act without self-consciousness” (as I will explore in a minute this absence of self-consciousness is an attribute crowds theorists also associate with being in a group, mass, or crowd). For Turkle, this acting without self-conscious is a problem because “you can have it when texting or e-mailing or during an evening on Facebook” (again, the use of the second person pronoun points to Turkle’s own anxiety, her attempt to implicate us in practices that are threatening and most be combatted).[[24]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn24) Melding game and life, that is, actual games like World of Warcraft, with email and Facebook, Turkle explains, “**When online life becomes your game, there are new complications. If lonely, you can find continual connection. But this may leave you more isolated, without real people around you. So you may return to the Internet for another hit of what feels like connection**.”[[25]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn25) She uses neurochemistry to justify the language of addiction: “Our neurochemical response to every ping and ring tone seems to be the one elicited by the ‘seeking’ drive, a deep motivation of the human psyche. Connectivity becomes a craving; when we receive a text or an e-mail, our nervous system responds by giving us a shot of dopamine. We are stimulated by connectivity itself. We learn to require it, even when it depletes us.”[[26]](http://jcrt.org/religioustheory/2016/10/10/collective-desire-and-the-pathology-of-the-individual-jodi-dean/" \l "_edn26) **What’s interesting in Turkle’s pathologizing treatment of connectivity is the way she blurs interaction with machines—phones, computers—with interactions with people. Our brains react to sounds by releasing—injecting—dopamine. But rather than this reaction being a valuable reinforcement of our connections with others, it is a dangerous stimulant that can deplete us. Would happy neurochemical responses to seeing people face-to-face be similarly suspect? Is the thrill of contact with others at a party, in a rally, at a concert, or in a crowd also at risk at becoming a craving insofar as such intense and demanding contact might also deplete us?**

#### The aff falls into the trap of neoliberalism with their focus on silence, interiority, and individuality. They misdiagnose communicative capitalism and ignore the *only potential for politics*: collective action. This is Dean’s actual explanation of communicative capitalism and its implication – the card they said to star. Dean,

**Dean, Jodi. “Four Theses on the Comrade.”**

**Two** opposed **tendencies** **dominate** contemporary **left theory** and activism: **survivors and systems**. **The** **first** inhabits social media, academic environments, and some activist networks. It **is voiced through** **intense** **attachment to identity** and appeals to intersectionality. **The second** predominates in more aesthetic and conceptual venues **as** **a** post-humanist **concern** **with** geology, extinction, **algorithms**, “hyperobjects,” bio- systems, **and** planetary **exhaustion**.2 **On the one side, we have survivors**, those with nothing left to cling to but their identities, often identities forged through struggles to survive and attached to the pain and trauma of these struggles.3 **On the other, we have systems, processes operating at a scale so vast**, so complex, that **we can scarcely conceive them let alone affect them**.4 **These two tendencies correspond to neoliberal capitalism’s dismantling of social institutions**, to the intensification of capitalism via networked personalized digital media and informatization, **what I call “communicative capitalism**.”5 More and more people experience more and more economic uncertainty, insecurity, and instability. Jobs are harder to find, easier to lose. Most people can’t count on long-term employment, or expect that benefits like health insurance and retirement packages will be part of their compensation. Many people’s work is more precarious – flex-work, temp-work, contract-work – ideologically garnished as “entrepreneurial.” Unions are smaller and weaker. Schools and universities face cuts to budgets and faculty, additions of administrators and students, more debt, less respect. Pummeled by competition, debt, and the general dismantling of the remnants of public and infrastructural supports, families crumble. Neoliberal ideology glosses the situation as one where individuals have more choice, more opportunity to exercise personal responsibility. Carl Schmitt famously characterized liberalism as replacing politics with ethics and economics.6 Correlatively, **we should note the displacement of politics specific to neoliberalism**. **There is individualized self- cultivation, self-management, self-reliance, self-absorption, and – at the same time – impersonal determining processes, circuits, and systems**. **We have** responsible individuals, **individuals who are responsibilized**, treated as loci of autonomous choices and decisions, and we have individuals encountering situations that are utterly determined and outside their control. Instead of ethics and economics, neoliberalism’s displacement of politics manifests in the opposition between survivors and systems. The former struggle to persist in conditions of unlivability rather than to seize and transform these conditions. The latter are systems and “hyperobjects” determining us, often aesthetic objects or objects of a future aesthetics, something to view and diagram and predict and perhaps even mourn, but not to affect.7 Survivors experience their vulnerability. Some even come to cherish it, to derive their sense of themselves from their survival against all that is stacked against them. **Sociologist** Jennifer **Silva** **interviewed a number of working- class adults** in Massachusetts and Virginia.8 Many emphasized their self-reliance. Other people were likely to continue to fail or betray them. To survive, they could count only on themselves. Some of the young adults described struggles with illness and battles with addiction, the challenge of overcoming dysfunctional families and abusive relationships. **For them, the fight to survive is the key feature of an identity imagined as dignified and heroic because it has to produce itself by itself**. **Accounts of systems are typically devoid of** survivors. **Human lives** don’t matter; **the presumption that they matter is taken to be the epistemological failure or ontological crime in need of remedy**. Bacteria and rocks, planetary or even galactic processes, are what need to be taken into account, brought in to redirect thought away from anthropocentric hubris. When people appear, they are the problem, a planetary excess that needs to be curtailed, a destructive species run amok, the glitch of life. **The opposition between survivors and systems gives us a left devoid of politics. Both tendencies render political struggle, the divisive struggle over common conditions on behalf of a common project and future, unintelligible. In the place of politics we have the fragmenting assertion of particularity, of unique survival, and the obsession with the encroaching, unavoidable, impossibility of survival**. Politics is effaced in the impasse of individualized survivability under conditions of generalized non-survival, of extinction. **However strong the survivors and systems tendencies may be on the contemporary left, our present setting still provides openings for politics**. Here are four.9 First, **communicative capitalism is marked by the power of many**, of number. Capitalist and state power emphasizes big data and the knowledge generated by finding correlations in enormous data sets. Social media is driven by the power of number: How many friends and followers, how many shares and retweets? **On the streets and in the movements, we see further emphasis on number – the many rioting, demonstrating, occupying, blockading**. Second, identity is no longer able to ground a left politics uttered in its name. No political conclusions follow from the assertion of a specific identity. Attributions of identity are immediately complicated, critiqued, even rejected. Third, **because of the astronomical increase in demands on our attention that circulate in communicative capitalism, a series of communicative shortcuts have emerged**: hashtags, memes, emojis, reaction GIFs, as well as linguistic patterns optimized for search engines (lists, questions, indicators, hooks, and lures).10 **These shortcuts point to the prominence of generic markers, common images and symbols that facilitate communicative flow, that keep circulation liquid**. If we had to read, much less think about, everything we shared online, our social-media networks would slow down, clog up. The generic serves increasingly as a container for multiplicities of incommunicable contents. Fourth, the movements themselves have come up against the limits of horizontality, individuality, and rhetorics of allyship that presuppose fixed identities and interests. The response has been renewed interest in the politics of parties and questions of the party form, renewed emphasis on organizing the many. **Cutting through and across the impasse of survivor and system is a new turn toward arrangements of the many and institutions of the common**.11 **Against this background, I consider the comrade**. **The comrade figures a political relation that shifts us away from preoccupations with survivors and systems, away from suppositions of unique particularity and the impossibility of politics, and toward the sameness of those fighting on the same side. Thesis One: “Comrade” names a relation characterized by sameness, equality, and solidarity. For communists, this sameness, equality, and solidarity is utopian, cutting through the determinations of capitalist society.**