

A humble communism, like fascism, accepts death as an integral part of life, but does not glorify it. "Martyrdom is never a goal, the goal is freedom and revolution." Rather, the transience of all things becomes a way to ask how we make time through our relations, "the knot of causes," and how we *endure* in and through the common.



## PERISH AND RETURN: FOR CLARK

15. In his book on startups, Peter Thiel literally writes that what creates difference, or “0 to 1 progress,” is technology. See P. Thiel, *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*, Virgin Books, 2014.
16. “Spinoza asks: What can a body do? We call the latitude of a body the affects of which it is capable at a given degree of power, or rather within the limits of that degree. Latitude is made up of intensive parts falling under a capacity, and longitude of extensive parts falling under a relation.” G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus—Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 256-257..
17. While the ideology of mastery finds a certain expression in the vulgar individualism of neoliberalism, it is arguably most clearly articulated in the neo-reactionary thought of people like Curtis Yarvin and their associates in venture capital and tech industries. Consider for example the call Peter Thiel makes for a renewal of Western political thought in order to avoid a resurgence of a Hobbesian state of generalized war. See P. Thiel, “The Straussian Moment,” in Hamerton-Kelly, R. (ed.): *Politics and Apocalypse*. Michigan State University, 2007.
18. Vaden & Salminen, 2018.
19. Vaden & Salminen, 2018.
20. See for example the following text written by a Western volunteer in Rojava, published under the pen name “Nancy Drew”: N. Drew, *On the Culture of the Shield*, 2021.
21. M. Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?”. Published in *Basic Writings* (ed. David Farrell Krell, Harper Collins, 1993).
22. A Japanese form of ritual suicide through disembowelment.
23. Drew, 2021.
24. C. Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, Riverhead Books, 2019.
25. For one historical account on the construction of one global clock time, see P. Galison, *Einstein’s Clocks and Poincaré’s Maps: Empires of Time*. WW Norton & Company, 2004.
26. Here Rovelli follows and elaborates not only on Heidegger, but also Henri Bergson, for whom time was always a continuous and unquantifiable duration. See H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will—An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Dover Publications, 2001.
27. Rovelli, 2019.
28. L.F. Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.
29. Arguably, Barrett’s emphasis on the engagement of the brain and body in a constant predictive calculus could also serve a reading that emphasizes a cybernetics of mastery. However, this would primarily be the case if this prediction would also serve a reduction into a symbolic system that does not recognize its own limits, instead of an embodied experience. On the roots of modern neuroscience in cybernetics, see: J-P. Dupuy, *The Mechanization of the Mind: On the Origins of Cognitive Science*, Princeton University Press, 2004.
30. M. Häggglund, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*, Anchor, 2020.
31. On this point, see P. Neel, *Hinterland: America’s New Landscape of Class and Conflict*, Reaktion Books, 2018.
32. On this sense of the “messianic,” see M. Tari, *There Is No Unhappy Revolution*, Common Notions, 2021.
33. The tradition simply becomes like the “big fuzzy ball,” to borrow an expression from Tove Jansson.
34. Regarding this point, a friend recommended the work of Vinciane Despret, *Au bonheur des morts – récits de ceux qui restent*. La Découverte, 2015.

## Notes

1. T. Jansson, *Moominland Midwinter*, trans. Thomas Warburton. Puffin Books, 1973.
2. Hiroshi, S. & M. Kojima *Tanoshii Mūmin Ikka* ("Delightful Moomin Family"), 1990-1991. [TV Show]. TV Tokyo.
3. For a general account of the presence of Nietzsche in the work of Jansson, see: H. Ruin, "Tove Jansson, Nietzsche and the Poetics of Overcoming." *Sats*, 19(1), 2018, 69-87.
4. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, excerpt in *LundiMatin*, November 14, 2016, lundi.am/necrologie
5. See especially: P. Loeb, "Eternal Recurrence." Published in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (eds. Richardson, J. & K. Gemes), Oxford University Press, 2003.
6. "Every time we understand the eternal return as the return of a particular arrangement of things after all the other arrangements have been realized, every time we interpret the eternal return as the return of the identical or the same, we replace Nietzsche's thought with childish hypotheses." G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Columbia, 2006, xi.
7. See "The Dicethrow" in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, starting on page 25.
8. This disdain for the law of large numbers is expressed in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 26-27.  
Consider for example: "Not a probability distributed over several throws but all chance all at once, not a final, desired, willed combination but the fatal combination, fatal and loved, *amor fati*, not the return of a combination by the number of throws but the repetition of a dice throw by the nature of the fatally obtained number" (27). The matter is further articulated by Deleuze in footnotes 28 and 32.
9. On this in general and a more historical overview on the development of the law of large numbers and its connection to expected values in particular, see I. Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
10. R. Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*, City Lights, 2015.
11. Joel Wainwright and Geoff Mann criticize Scranton for his fascination with death: "Scranton's call for us to 'learn to die' offers no political direction, only misanthropy. At a time when the Left everywhere must reinvent means to live together, we cannot make acceptance of death our aspiration." However, this opposition between a politics that affirms life but also accepts death is, as we will see below, a false one. See Wainwright and Mann, *Climate Leviathan—A Political Theory of Our Planetary Future*, Verso, 2019, 20-21.
12. D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke University Press, 2016.
13. This "universalism" of the capital relation should be read with some caveats, as it covers over the different stakes implied by different positions in the hierarchies of global capitalism. This question is articulated especially well by Andreas Malm in his Marxist critique of the bourgeois humanism implied in the concept of the anthropocene. See A. Malm, *Fossil Capital. The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*, Verso, 2016.
14. This division loosely follows the line that the Finnish philosophers Tere Vadén and Antti Salminen draw between posthumanism and transhumanism in their book *Elo ja anergia*. However, these two concepts come with so much theoretical baggage that I opt for introducing two concepts that are more immediately evident in their meaning. See: A. Salminen and T. Vadén, *Elo ja anergia*, Niin & Näin, 2018. Furthermore, the philosopher Yuk Hui recently made the convincing argument that the true *posthumanism* is in fact the type of *inhumanism* theorized by Jean-François Lyotard. On this, see the chapter "Inhuman contra system" in his *Recursivity & Contingency*.

# PERISH AND RETURN: FOR CLARK

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through a play on difference and repetition. Even traditions can only be repeated through difference. Trying to repeat the same tradition in exactly the same process ends the tradition, takes the life out of it.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps it is precisely the experimentation with tradition that seems in tune with the humility vis-à-vis our own human individuality in how we have collectively continued to remember Clark.

I now realize that Clark will never return, that the repetition will not recur without difference, but the joy and messianic power he expressed *will* return through other lives, different and only in this manner *precisely the same*. In this way, Clark's death will be something other than the absence of his individual *being* and instead a part of a collective *becoming*, where the difference he made returns through its repetition in new differences.<sup>34</sup> Moving from a fear of absence in being towards a joy of presence in becoming; this is what is meant by "learning to die." We must let go of ourselves by embracing our recurrence through the knot of causes. Similarly, whatever we hold dear in the "human," it will — given our current planetary predicaments — only recur if it is recognized to be something quite else. Letting go of this civilization, its desire for mastery and its fear of death, we must also establish new traditions and draw on others that have been forgotten and violently suppressed, opening up, through repetition and difference, new ways of inhabiting time together in the relational joy of becoming.

When Moomintroll, Little My, and Too-ticky bury the little squirrel in Moominland Midwinter, they arrange an unusual memorial ceremony. The little squirrel, its paws still stiff from the encounter with the lady of the Cold, is placed in a small bathing cap and on the back of a snow-horse. Suddenly, the snow-horse wakes up from its cold hibernation, cuts caper and sets off at full gallop towards the sea, while a small invisible shrew sings a "fast and lively tune." The mournful funeral procession becomes a joyful affair, as the participants observe the gallop of the snow horse with the squirrel on its back. Finally, the two are just a speck on the horizon.

*"I wonder if this went off right?" said Moomintroll worriedly. "It couldn't have been better," said Too-ticky.*



how paralyzing a trust in mastery can be in the face of actual encounters with death. At the same time, of course, it also shows how difficult loss is if we conceive of it in terms borrowed from the philosopher Baruch Spinoza, who thought of every relationship between different beings as singular and irreducible to their attributes. Adapting this framework, thinking of every encounter and every moment as pure difference can provoke a refusal, raising the temptation to instead refute this difference and succumb to a nostalgic desire for pure repetition, for the return of all things *exactly* as they were. Perhaps not a fascism *per se*, but certainly a reactionary negation of life.

While I turned to a desire for mastery in my most private moments, the collective response to Clark's death was driven by a turn towards optimism through humility. After Clark's death, a tradition of annual meetings and rituals in his memory was established. The first year we gathered in a large crowd around dinners, enormous campfires, dancing, crying, laughing. After that, the second year became a kind of re-enactment of the first year, an attempt to maintain the same tone of respect and reverence for our comrade's memory, but ultimately a sort of ritualistic repetition of the first year's gestures, without its spirit. This type of repetition is impossible, of course, because even grief changes with time. As a comrade in New York said, grief becomes more private over time as the singularity of our relationship with a person separates us from the grief of others. The traces a person leaves in us are different and last with different intensity, depending on our relationship to the person.

In 2019, we organized the third gathering in Clark's memory. The occasion showed me how important it is to keep experimenting even as we try to establish new traditions. The gathering was moved forward from December to January and we did not have a ceremony. Instead, a big dinner was arranged where people could share memories of Clark. Even people who never met him shared their experiences, in an effort to open up a memory that had begun to live a life of its own, partly independent of the traces Clark had left while he was still with us in the flesh. During the fourth gathering in 2020, we met in a completely different city. During the memorial service for Clark, those of us in attendance called out the names of loved ones we had lost, opening a space to share experiences of loss in general, another example of how life always finds a way specifically

*"Please," said Moomintroll. "Don't talk about him being dead all the time. It's so sad."*

*"When one's dead, one's dead," said Too-Ticky kindly. "This squirrel will become earth all in his time. And still later on, there'll grow new trees from him, with new squirrels skipping about in them. Do you think that's so very sad?"*

*"Perhaps not," said Moomintroll.<sup>1</sup>*

One of the only encounters with death in Tove Jansson's Moomin universe takes place in *Moominland Midwinter*, when a small and foolhardy squirrel has a fatal meeting with the beautiful and terrifying Lady of the Cold. When I first read *Moominland Midwinter*, the fate of the little squirrel came as something of a shock. I grew up watching the 1990s Japanese animated Moomin television series.<sup>2</sup> In that interpretation, everything was a bit softer and all the colors a little more bright. In the TV series, it is the hot-tempered Little My who encounters the Lady and is frozen to ice, but to different consequences. While Too-ticky and Moomintroll in the televised version manage to thaw out Little My, the squirrel's paws remain stiff and cold in the original text, despite efforts to save her. The narrative of the books affirms death as part of the course of life, while in the television series, death is written off and hidden away.

I returned to the Moomin books a couple of winters ago after a close friend of mine, Clark, was killed in a car accident. Clark was asleep in the back of a van packed with friends and provisions to be delivered from New York City to Standing Rock, the camp started by the Sioux in so-called North Dakota to stop the construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline that was to be run through their lands. My friendship with Clark had begun through our involvement in various networks around autonomous

politics, with which I had become acquainted during several visits to the United States. Clark's death shattered all who shared his context. I myself fell into a deep depression. It was at this moment that I sought solace in the Moomin books, including *Moominland Midwinter*.

Throughout the book's frosty course of events, the character of Too-Ticky embodies a serenity, a stoic attitude in the face of all circumstances, which ultimately grants her the power of a subtle self-overcoming. Where we might expect sadness, Too-Ticky demonstrates a curiosity about existence and an openness to the impermanence and, ultimately, the recurrence of all things. In this sense, Too-Ticky seems to be one of the foremost narrative mouthpieces of Tove Jansson's engagement with Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>3</sup>

A few days after Clark's passing, the French website *Lundi Matin* published as an obituary the following excerpt from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

*"Now I die and disappear," you would say, "and in an instant I will be a nothing. Souls are as mortal as bodies.*

*But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs –it will create me again!  
I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence.*

*I will return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this snake –not to a new life or a better life or a similar life:*

*–I will return to this same and self same life, in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest, to once again teach the eternal recurrence of all things–*

*–to once again speak the word about the great earth of noon and human beings,*

out of all different times, a pure quantification of time as a measure of value. Instead of a multiplicity of times and experiences of time, capitalism forces all time into the time of labor and value.

Against the reduction of all time to socially necessary labor time by capital, a humble communism is open to the full singularity of all things, to the difference required for all repetition. Fascism, on the contrary, may give the appearance of appreciating the singular, that which cannot be quantified, but always falls back on a fundamental order, a "politics of blood", where spatial homogeneity is maintained through temporal impermanence.<sup>31</sup> A humble communism maintains a curious openness to the emotional and singular flow of time, and encourages the cultivation of many times through a plural and widespread experimentation with different forms-of-life. The megalomania of the fascist drive for pure repetition, and the cybernetic desire for mastery of chance, is completely alien to this kind of political and existential position. Since there is no absolute reality outside of a network of events whose connection to the past is invariably both emotional and discursive, the blood politics of fascism and the mad, and anthropocentric futurism of cybernetic mastery are absurd. The former enforces a childish understanding of the eternal return, while the later tries to master difference through repetition.

When Clark first died, I actually turned to vulgar accounts of quantum physics in a dizzy attempt to find solace. I skimmed (lazily) through theories about how the brain exhibits quantum properties that might, in turn, suggest it acts as a lightning rod between this life and the next. This instinct to seek answers from the authority of mastery and the negation of transience was driven not only by grief, but by the fear that I would never again see Clark, that I would never again experience the sense of the messianic presence of a better world *in this current one* that he, unlike perhaps anyone I have met before or since, was able to bring forth from every encounter.<sup>32</sup> Because, as a friend noted after his passing, Clark more than anyone else *believed*, and thus, in other words, he more than anyone was ready to throw the dice. Hence, although my response now seems to me incredibly naïve, and in fact psychotic, it was understandable. While Clark embodied for me a love of fate, his death opened up the trap of mastery. My search for answers in that moment gives an indication of

relationship between death and time, remarkable in its emphasis on humility and relationality.<sup>24</sup> In his book, Rovelli gives a popularized account of how, among many in his field, time at a quantum level is not considered linear, but rather a network of different events. There is not one time that progresses independently of our experience of it, but many times. The “time” that we have grown up with and that we follow when we look at the clock is socially constructed and, in this sense, arbitrary.<sup>25</sup> According to Rovelli, a more apt description of time is one which considers our experience of time as a combination of the impressions and traces that we call memories and a continuous, explanatory reasoning that emanates from these traces. These traces eventually disappear and so we also sense the passage of time, rather than living in an eternal now where past, present and future are indistinguishable. Time is therefore, according to Rovelli, the foundation of our human experience, the duration in which we unfold and which can never fully be folded into any quantifications of it.<sup>26</sup> This experience is structured by narratives that bind them together and give them coherence, as well as emotions that give them their intensity. “We are histories of ourselves, *narratives*,” as Rovelli notes.<sup>27</sup>

This analysis seems to borrow not just from continental philosophies of time, but also from the findings of contemporary neuroscientists such as Lisa Feldman Barrett. In her book *How Emotions Are Made*, Barrett describes our reality as wholly emotional.<sup>28</sup> Our brains work by constantly predicting events around us by simulating different scenarios. The meeting of reality and simulation determines which simulated scenarios create new cognitive pathways and new concepts in our brains.<sup>29</sup> All thinking is conceptual and all concepts are emotional, because concepts can only take shape through the intensity we call emotions. Time is the passage of emotions and it is through emotions that we inhabit time. And what is the question of our relationship with death if not a question of how we inhabit time, emotionally and in our relations? However, we should be careful to avoid not only a reduction of time to an individual emotional experience, but also to avoid ignoring more structural constraints imposed on our plural, collective experiences of time. Under capitalism, the primary *social* time that structures our *individual* experience, is the necessary labor time required for the production of value, constraining the different times of different forms-of-life.<sup>30</sup> Thus capitalism can be understood as a levelling-

*to once again proclaim  
the overman to mankind.*

*I spoke my word, I break under my word:  
thus my eternal fate wills it  
—as proclaimer I perish!”<sup>31</sup>*

Nietzsche here elaborates one of his most famous, controversial, and—if academic literature is any indication—most difficult to interpret concepts: the eternal return. When I read the obituary for the first time, I did so in a state of deep grief. In my state, I found in the text a soothing salve: We will return, with the same sun, with the same earth, with the same eagle, with the same snake, yes, with the same squirrel. We are nothing more than the relationships—“the knot of causes”—that made us, and when they reoccur, we too will walk the earth again. I would, in other words, see Clark again. But, as a friend remarked, by the same token, I would also lose him again, not somewhere, in some life, but *here*, in this *same* life. We would, over and over again, live infinite variations of this life—re-experiencing its joy, but also its terror.

One might also argue that it is the eternal return that frames the narrative arc given to the little squirrel in *Moominland Midwinter*. This seems particularly evident in a scene where he darts out with the first sun of spring to greet the Moomintroll.

*The path was wet from melting snow, and Moomintroll could feel roots  
and pine needles under his paws. But he was shaking from cold, and his  
legs felt slithery, like rubber.*

*He hardly turned his head as a small squirrel jumped across his path.*

*“Happy spring,” said the squirrel, absentmindedly.*

*“Well, thanks,” replied Moomintroll and continued on his way. But all  
at once he stopped short and stared at the squirrel. It had a big and bushy  
tail that shone red in the sunset.*

*“Do people call you the squirrel with the marvellous tail?” Moomintroll  
asked slowly. “Of course,” said the squirrel.*

*“Is it you?” cried Moomintroll. “Is it really you? Who met the Lady of the  
Cold?”*

*"I don't remember," said the squirrel. "You know, I'm not very bright at remembering things."*

The giddy Moomintroll interrogates the little creature on the encounter with the Lady of the Cold, but to no avail: the squirrel doesn't remember, doesn't care. Is it the same squirrel? We'll never know. In fact, it almost feels like the whole question is redundant for Jansson. The squirrel departs the world during one cycle of the seasons, only to return with the next.

We belong to the network of causes which bring us to the world, and what matters is not whether it is precisely the same being—an essence—but the way it is in the world—as a sum of relations. As I read the passage about the little squirrel, I inevitably thought of Clark, the time immediately following his death, and the obituary from *Lundi.am*. We all would return.

Return: is this a soothing thought, or a terrifying idea? The ambivalence of the thought of the eternal return between ease and terror arose from my "cosmological" reading of Nietzsche's thought as a theory of the cyclical nature of time.<sup>5</sup> At the time, I thought it implied that we would return just as we are. There is a certain ease to such fatalism. However, as Gilles Deleuze has shown, such a cosmological interpretation is limited at best and "childish" at worst.<sup>6</sup>

Repetition—recurrence, return—can only manifest, Deleuze argues, through difference. Nietzsche's "eternal return" was always an interplay between difference and repetition. If we roll a pair of dice, it is the roll that recurs through the difference between the numbers that the dice show on different rolls, and not the other way around.<sup>7</sup> Cause (the throw) does not precede effect (the numbers). The throw as the necessary cause of the numbers that the dice show when they fall gets its meaning from the contingency of the numbers. Repetition depends entirely upon difference. Furthermore, the thought of the eternal return requires the question of how we position ourselves *ethically* vis-à-vis the prospect of eternal recurrence. Do we turn away from it or *will* it and if so, how?

For Deleuze, the most reactive reading of Nietzsche's theory is the statistical one: here the eternal return is understood as a formulation of the "law of large numbers," which would allow us to infer an approximation of the expected value of each roll through repeated throws of the dice.<sup>8,9</sup>

from Yukio Mishima who committed *seppuku*<sup>22</sup> after a failed attempt to reinstitute the Emperor of Japan through a military coup, to Dominique Venner who took his own life in the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris in protest against French "cultural decline."

While fascism and the humble communism advocated here may both embrace death, the differences between them are at least as important as the similarities. Fascism often slips into a direct cult of death, a celebration of the heroic individual who lives on through the family, the fraternity, or the nation. The family not only preserves the bloodline of the individual, but is the very foundation of the nation. The brotherhood is brought together by an honor between equals, a mutual recognition of individuals united by their homogeneity as men. The nation is the great and terrible community, the unity that negates and annihilates all internal differences. To die with honor in the fascist tradition is to die for those who are like us. Fascism honors the dead to honor relations, but in their similarity, not their difference. Here we find, once again, what Deleuze calls the "childish" reading of the eternal return as the perpetual recurrence of the same, not in its difference or as the return of *becoming*, but as eternal *being*, *willing* return, but as repetition without difference. Fascism embraces the throw of the dice not for its own sake but for the sake of a specific number, the number victorious for a specific bloodline and national community. In its attempt to preserve the homogeneity of the community (space, territory) through the homogeneity of time, fascism is a cult of death that is achieved through victorious throws of the dice. For the fascist enterprise, the purpose of the wager is only to win, not the wager itself.

A humble communism, like fascism, accepts death as an integral part of life, but does not glorify it. "Martyrdom is never a goal, the goal is freedom and revolution."<sup>23</sup> Rather, the transience of all things becomes a way to ask how we make time through our relations, "the knot of causes," and how we *endure* in and through the common. The victorious throw is not the throw that gives the highest number for a particular chauvinistic community, but the throw that affirms repetition through difference, the throw itself.

The theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli concludes *The Order of Time*, a popular science book on the physics of time, with a chapter on the



the squirrel returns through her relations, “the knot of causes” in which she is entangled. Her death as an individual, an “essence,” is an obsession of the Moomintroll, but ultimately meaningless. The squirrel doesn’t remember, doesn’t care, whether she is the same. In the TV-show, by contrast, death is trivialized. Whether we are understood as an essence or a knot of causes does not matter when grief and our decisions in the face of death are powered, forced, away. There is no contingency. The dice can be thrown over and over again without consequence, much like the limit value of predicting probabilities from an infinite amount of throws (perpetually growing data coupled with the predictive modeling of cybernetics) gives you the certainty of perfect mastery. While humility invites us to accept the transience of all things in their essence but their longevity in their relations, the desire for mastery holds on to the idea of future immortality for the individual or community in their essence, valorizing an eternal pursuit of increased capacity in the place of a relational, differential recurrence.

Instead of the intransient (“eternal”) individual (and “essential”) life that emerges from a drive to mastery, we should adopt a humble disposition in asking the question of the *good* transient and relational life, seeking capacities from relations and the common, in a kind of humble communism. The question of the good life is intrinsically linked to the question of how we think and conceive death. In order to perceive things, we must perceive the possibility of their absence.<sup>21</sup> And in order to perceive things in their entirety, we must also be able to perceive the possibility of their absence in its entirety. Thus, the question of the good common life is also a question of the good death.

In our day, it seems necessary to note that, in a Western context, fascism in particular displays a fascination with the good death. For example, consider the primordial myth of European fascism, told through the story of the Italian fighter pilot who was to make a flight over occupied Tripoli during World War I. When his commander, in a trembling voice, asked the pilot whether he was aware that he was facing almost certain death, the pilot simply replied “*Ne me frego*”—*I don’t care*. The slogan is used today by fascists around the world. Likewise, the pantheon of fascists is filled with figures who chose a “dignified” death over an “undignified” life,

Instead of such an attempt to “tam[e] chance,” Nietzsche advocates *amor fati*, that is, an affirmation of the repetition of the throw through whatever number it might recur. The same that returns is the return of difference itself. Life as such only recurs through each singular life, through the difference each life makes in the recurrence of life as such. To live is to accept the invitation to experience this uncertainty, this fear, without denial and without retreat. Even the most horrible or tragic moments, if *willed* as that which *must* return, would bring joy. And, more importantly, only by willing the return could we live fully. Or as Clark told a friend the last time they met, echoing Nietzsche: “Love your fate.”

We can find a contemporary expression of *amor fati* in Roy Scranton’s *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*, which Clark was reading the year before his death.<sup>10</sup> In the book, Scranton recounts his experiences as a US Marine in Iraq in the early 2000s. Every morning before his unit left the American Green Zone in Baghdad, Scranton meditated on the different ways he might die that day. Coming to terms with the inevitability of his own death in a determined manner was the only way he could overcome a paralyzing fear and maintain his composure in the face of the enormous dangers he faced on a daily basis.

Scranton later came to see important parallels between his personal experiences and the climate disaster that is now engulfing the entire planet. Just as Scranton had to learn to face his mortality as an individual, so too we must learn to face our mortality as a civilization.<sup>11</sup> Scranton argues, in other words, that we must do away with the worst baggage of the Enlightenment, which today manifests as vainglorious ideas that we as humans are separate from this world and above all from planetary relationships. Such a reckoning with Enlightenment thinking requires new narratives about who we are and our place in the world—although “new” here might in fact imply that we seek leadership and guidance from struggles that are in fact very old, such as the one at Standing Rock.

The issues of finding new guidance from old struggles is further elaborated in the recent work of Donna Haraway.<sup>12</sup> Taking note of the overtly humanist implications of the idea of the “anthropocene,” Haraway introduces the alternative concept of the “Chthulucene” in reference to the various cosmologies that emphasize the interdependence of all things,

from the Greek Gaia to the Inuit A'akuluujjusi. No matter, the challenge is still similar: we are all implicated in the schizophrenic condition we call capitalism, and to move towards any comprehensive and system level change, we must also let go of some parts of ourselves.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, we must learn not only to die, but also to grieve. Haraway writes:

“One way to live and die well as mortal creatures in the Chthulucene is to join forces to create refuges, to enable partial and robust biological-cultural-political-technological recuperation and recomposition, which must include grief over irretrievable losses.”

The planetary crisis that has challenged both Scranton and Haraway to ask questions of how to relate to human mortality has, on a more global scale, resulted in what we might organize into two different camps, two different styles, of reaching beyond and across the human and the symbolic systems maintained by our species. On the one hand, we find—as advocated by Scranton and Haraway, among others—an affirmation of *humility*. Not a protestant humility towards power, but a species humility towards the “knot of causes” in which “we are entangled” and the boundaries we have erected around the “human.” On the other hand, far removed from any type of humility, we find a drive toward *mastery* that attempts to overcome the human by forever extending it, compelling all of creation to submit under its force.<sup>14</sup>

The drive to mastery can be seen in those who wish to liberate human beings from various biological, psychological and social constraints. They want to enhance the intelligence (understood as IQ) of themselves and the species through various forms of personal and population level hacks, integrating all aspects of life into cybernetic feedback loops that optimize their productivity and vitality. All limits to personal development are perceived as problems that we can solve if only we have the correct attitude and the appropriate technical fix, whether through the agency of visionary individuals or tightly knit startups.<sup>15</sup> Spiritual traditions with multi-millennial origins can be disconnected from their cosmology and reappropriated as different types of self-help. The kind of serenity in the face of death exhibited by both Jansson and Nietzsche is replaced by a reckless drive for eternal life, an infinite extension of individual essences,

where individual capacities over-shadow collective relations.<sup>16</sup> Among the iconic startup evangelists of capital, such as Peter Thiel, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg, the desire for mastery is the prevalent affect, the structure within which all feeling must be fit. This is the reactive version of eternal return, the prediction of the dice throw through expected values, instead of *amor fati* and the affirmation of the throw itself.<sup>17</sup> It strives to control and master chance, instead of affirming it all at once, in its joy and in its terror.

Humility, on the other hand, can be understood as the pursuit of answers “beyond a selfish and narrow human knowledge and politics,” in a neglected “nature” and in the non- or inhuman.<sup>18</sup> This type of humility invites us to give up parts of the human and the anthropocentric in order to find both pre-modern and “new ways of inhabiting the earth.”<sup>19</sup> In this way, we could consider the struggles of the Kurds in Rojava and Bakur, as well as several land based struggles around the world as experiments in humility, not in spite of the pride with which they carry themselves, but precisely because of it. Humility towards the human strengthens resistance to power, revealing ambitions toward mastery to be exercises in human vanity.

This point is particularly evident in the way some of these struggles turn towards life through a radical acceptance of death. To confront death with serenity and without fear is a central part of the Kurdish struggle, as is remembering each martyr through public funerals. Martyrdom is not a mere fetishization of combat, but “the honorary status of anyone who dedicated their life to the struggle for freedom, no matter how they died.”<sup>20</sup> These traditions stand in stark contrast to death rituals in the Nordic countries, where funerals are generally quite private, and truly public funerals are exceptions staged only for national figures. In the Nordic countries, only private relations can be intimate and consequently even death becomes a private affair, something that should only move the immediate family and close friends. Among the Kurds, by contrast, death unites, instead of being a threshold to cross as an individual or as a human without relations to the surrounding environment.

The contrast between mastery and humility echoes the difference between the television adaptation of the Moomins and Tove Jansson's original texts. In *Moominland Midwinter*, death is deindividualized, as