

Accelerationism

In political and social theory, **accelerationism** is the idea that capitalism and technological change^[1] should be accelerated. Accelerationism may also mean that capitalism and its negative processes should be accelerated in order to trigger revolt and the implementation of a new system.^{[2][3][4]} Some contemporary accelerationist philosophy takes its lead from the Deleuzo-Guattarian sociological theory of detrterritorialization, aiming to identify and radicalize the social forces that promote an accelerationist process.^[5] Accelerationism has been described as a "fringe philosophy".^[1]

Accelerationist theory is divided into mutually contradictory left-wing and right-wing variants. Left-wing accelerationism attempts to press "the process of technological evolution" beyond the constrictive horizon of capitalism by repurposing modern technology for socially beneficial and emancipatory ends. Right-wing accelerationism supports the indefinite intensification of capitalism itself, possibly in order to bring about a technological singularity.^{[6][7][8]} Neo-Nazis, white nationalists and white supremacists have increasingly embraced far-right accelerationism.^{[9][10][11]}

Accelerationist writers have additionally distinguished other variants such as "unconditional accelerationism".^[12] A far-right and white nationalist adaptation of the term surfacing during the 2010s eschews the focus on capitalism of the prior variants to refer to an acceleration of racial conflict through terrorism, resulting in a societal collapse and building of a white ethnostate.^[13]

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Background

In his essay "A Quick-and-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism", Nick Land cites a number of philosophers who have expressed apparently accelerationist attitudes.^[12] These include Karl Marx in his 1848 speech "On the Question of Free Trade", advocating free trade on possible accelerationist principles as follows:^[14]

But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.

In a similar vein, Friedrich Nietzsche argued that "the leveling process of European man is the great process which should not be checked: one should even accelerate it",^[15] a statement often simplified, following Deleuze and Guattari, to a command to "accelerate the process".^[16]

Contemporary accelerationism

Prominent theorists include right-wing reactionary accelerationist Nick Land.^[12] The Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU), an unofficial research unit at the University of Warwick from 1995 to 2003,^[17] included Land as well as other social theorists such as Mark Fisher and Sadie Plant as members and is considered a key progenitor in both left-wing and right-wing accelerationist thought.^[18] Prominent contemporary left-wing accelerationists include Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, authors of the "Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics";^[7] and the Laboria Cuboniks collective, who authored the manifesto "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation".^[19] For Mark Fisher, writing in 2012, "Land's withering assaults on the academic left [...] remain trenchant", although problematic since "Marxism is nothing if it is not accelerationist".^[20]

Along accelerationist lines, Paul Mason has tried to speculate about futures after capitalism in works such as *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*. Mason declares that "[a]s with the end of feudalism 500 years ago, capitalism's replacement by postcapitalism will be accelerated by external shocks and shaped by the emergence of a new kind of human being. And it has started". He considers that the rise of collaborative production will eventually help capitalism to kill itself.

Focusing on how information technology infrastructures undermine modern political geographies and proposing an open-ended "design brief", Benjamin H. Bratton's book *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* is associated with accelerationism. Tiziana Terranova's "Red Stack Attack!" links Bratton's stack model and left-wing accelerationism.^[21]

Other forms of accelerationism

Since *accelerationism* was coined in 2010 by Benjamin Noys to describe the aforementioned philosophical movement, the term has suffered from considerable conceptual stretching and has taken on several new meanings.^[22]

Žižekian accelerationism

Several commentators have used the label *accelerationist* to describe a political strategy articulated by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek.^{[23][24]} In a November 2016 interview with Channel 4 News, Žižek asserted that were he an American citizen, he would vote for Donald Trump as the candidate more likely to disrupt the *status quo* of politics in that country.^[25] This usage of the term *accelerationism* bears similarities to the Marxist immiseration thesis.

Far-right accelerationism

Since the late 2010s, neo-Nazis, white nationalists and white supremacists have increasingly embraced a violent form of accelerationism as a way of establishing a white ethnostate.^{[9][10][11]} The origins of the far-right version of accelerationism dates back to the 1980s, when American Nazi Party-National Socialist Liberation Front (ANP/NSLF) member James Mason advocated in the newsletter *Siege* for sabotage, mass

killings and assassinations of high-profile targets to create chaos and destabilize and eventually destroy the system. His works were later republished and popularized by Iron March and Atomwaffen Division, both connected to terror attacks and numerous killings.^{[26][27][28]} According to Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a nonprofit organization which tracks hate groups and files class action lawsuit against discrimination:

Other ideological variants of accelerationism seek to push beyond capitalism by bringing it to its most oppressive and divisive form, prompting a movement to build a just economic system in response. In the case of white supremacists, the accelerationist set sees modern society as irredeemable and believe it should be pushed to collapse so a fascist society built on ethnonationalism can take its place. What defines white supremacist accelerationists is their belief that violence is the only way to pursue their political goals. To put it most simply, accelerationists embrace terrorism.^{[28][13]}

Brenton Harrison Tarrant, the perpetrator of the Christchurch mosque shootings that killed 51 people and injured 49 others, had embraced accelerationism in a section of his manifesto titled "Destabilization and Accelerationism: tactics". It also influenced John Timothy Earnest, the man accused of causing the Escondido mosque fire at Dar-ul-Arqam Mosque in Escondido, California; and committing the Poway synagogue shooting which resulted in one dead and three injured. Furthermore, it influenced Patrick Crusius, the man accused of committing the El Paso Walmart shooting that killed 23 people and injured 23 others.^[29] Brenton Tarrant wrote:

True change and the change we need to enact only arises in the great crucible of crisis. A gradual change is never going to achieve victory. Stability and comfort are the enemies of revolutionary change. Therefore we must destabilize and discomfort society where ever possible.^[13]

Although this tendency is distinct from Landian accelerationism, Land has promoted Atomwaffen-affiliated Order of Nine Angles that adheres to the ideology of neo-nazi terrorist accelerationism, describing O9A's works as "highly-recommended".^[30]

Former Deputy Secretary of Defense Mick Mulroy said that many far-right groups dedicate themselves "to preparing for another American civil war", specifically mentioning the Boogaloo movement. He also stated that they are not alone, as many far-left groups are also preparing, and "these groups want to generate the very crisis they claim to be concerned about."^[31]

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