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'Over the portal of the new world, 'Be Thyself' shall be written': Ideology, connectivity and authenticity of the self in radical left social movements.

*Chris Waugh**

***Abstract**: This article reconceptualizes ideology in social movement studies. 'Ideology' has become something of a watered-down term in the literature, and is frequently conflated with the similar (but distinct) concept of 'frames' (Oliver and Johnston, 2000). Against this conflation, I contend that radical ideologies are quests for authenticity of the self. Radical activists actualize an authentic sense of existence impossible under the existing order. To the participants of such a movement, radical ideologies are both doctrines of regeneration and revolution. This article opens an avenue into conversations in social movement theory on ideology and identity formation, as well as broader interventions into political sociology. I examine ideology as a means to foster connectivity and authenticity in relation to two case studies; firstly, the 'Idea of Communism' conference in London (where heated debates around the left relationship with 'identity politics' took place); and secondly, through an ideology focused reading of Coleman & Bassi's research into performances of masculine persona identified in radical left-wing social movements (2011).*

***Keywords:** Ideology, authenticity, selfhood, connectivity, radical left social movements.*

Introduction

'We fumble like children in the dark, trying to catch hold of each other, we fumble to grasp the evanescent idea of an absolute happiness, of a life reconciled with itself. And what we believed to grasp, this phantom of liberty, always escaped us.' (Idier, 2018).

*Chris Waugh: Department of Sociology; University of Manchester. chris.waugh-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

> '…nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes… thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.' (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1965).
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> ''Know thyself' was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, 'Be thyself' shall be written,' (Wilde, 1910).

These three seemingly disparate reflections on the nature of radical politics, written across two centuries, all articulate a similar concern: that the current state of things as we know it is *inauthentic,* hindering the individual from the pursuit of joy and a reconciled life, freedom of activity, and the ability to truly 'know thyself'. Arguably, belief in a radical new world is tied to a belief in a radically new sense of selfhood and individualism. The question of belief and beliefs has tangentially occupied Social Movement theorists for many decades now. The dominant approach to this matter is referred to as the framing process, that is, a means of understanding how social movement and activists 'frame' their beliefs about the world to themselves and the wider public (Gamson, 1995). While some research has explored social movement ideology (that is, the belief system within social movements) as its distinct entity, more often than not academic understandings conflate frames and ideologies (Oliver and Johnston, 2000), and social movement theory remains trapped by this line of thinking's 'dualistic inheritance' (Metucci, 1992), always conflating, never nuanced. As a result, little scholarship has explored the role of authenticity and its connections of ideology, or how the process of sharing in an ideology allows for feelings of connectivity and solidarity between activists, but also a means by which activists can, and do, police the boundaries of their identities and movements.

The central thesis of this article is that radical political ideologies are often understood by activists as a quest for authenticity, but a quest that is not always free from what we might call the shackles of the old world. What ideologies of the radical left[1] (and to an extent, elements of the radical right)[2] share is a rejection of the boundaries of capitalist subjectivity, and conceptions of authenticity linked to capitalism – though this article will predominantly draw its examples and evidence from groups on the radical left for brevity. I argue that committing oneself to a radical ideology is to commit to a journey of living authentically, and identities are reimagined by movement participants. I offer this conceptualization of authenticity as a way to disrupt the conflation of 'frames' and 'ideology' within Social Movement research.

[1] A somewhat ambiguous concept, providing a full definition of the 'radical left' could be a paper in and of itself, though I offer a working definition for this article within this section. According to March and Mudde (2005) 'radicalism' refers to a broad 'ideological and practical orientation towards 'root and branch' systemic change in the political system occupied by the radical actor' (ibid, 24). Radicals are not 'anti-democratic,' but 'anti-liberal democratic' - broadly hostile to the structures and apparatus of liberal democratic states. March and Mudde contrast this with 'extremist' groups, who offer 'opposition to the values and practises of democracy, either as it exists in a particular system, or *as* a system, which may, but does not necessarily, involve a propensity to violence' (ibid, emphasis in original). However, some radical left groups can, and do, engage within the liberal democratic framework (Kelly, 2018). Additionally, by linking extremism purely to illegality, March and Mudde overlook the fact that what is and is not legal is relative, and that states can, and do, prohibit forms of protest and tactics either temporarily or permanently. To move beyond the ambiguities left by the above definitions, I suggest for 'radical' to be considered as not simply a positional term, but as a relational and temporal one as well. Chiocchetti (2016) suggests that radical 'must be understood not as a substantive but as a predominantly relational qualifier' - that is to say, that what is radical tends to differ between cultures and contexts. Similarly, Charalambous and Ioannou (2019) note that what is considered radical changes over time. Indeed, while much of the literature offers (an admittedly vague) consensus that radical leftism sits to the left of social democracy, and thus earns the pejorative term 'far-left', in previous eras of history social democracy itself would have been firmly positioned at the far left of the political spectrum (ibid, p6). Acknowledging the relational and temporal aspects of radicalism has its utility, but I maintain they should not be taken to mean that radicalism can be all things to all people - a kind of floating political signifier tied to nothing. Within the Anglophone sphere, while the radical left takes many forms, utilises different tactics and so on, I argue below that what unifies the radical left is often grueling demands placed upon activists within organisations. If – as I argue – radical SMOs offer a mediated version of authenticity through adherence to their ideology, then the path to authenticity is often a difficult one.

[2] The relationship between movements of the radical right and anti-capitalism is complex, and full discussion is outside of the scope of this article. Briefly, it is worth noting that radical right anti-capitalism is often infused with anti-globalisation, though the basis of the critique comes from turning the social questions raised by globalised capitalism into national questions, as opposed to internationalist questions, and that the racist, antisemitic and xenophobic tendencies of the radical right are not lost in this. For further reference, see Sommer (2008) and Saull (2015). I offer my own brief take on fascistic concepts of authenticity later in the article.

Furthermore, I contend that for many activists the process of becoming authentic is connected to how closely they follow a Social Movement Organisation (SMO) ideology. One can only truly be authentic, the logic goes, if one is true to the party, or the group. Thus, the pursuit of authenticity occurs and is validated though a mediated form of ideology, in other words version of an ideology espoused by an SMO. Since engagement in an SMO requires participation in a hierarchy (formal or otherwise) with its power dynamics, history, and norms, the pursuit of authenticity *can* mirror the hierarchies of wider capitalist society. In short, we need to appreciate that within the nature of activist authenticity, the dynamics that their very form of authenticity would outwardly oppose can in fact be reproduced.

Hereafter, this article will map out a framework for thinking about authenticity, ideology, the nature of the radical left, and how these concepts can be problematized. Subsequently, I focus on a specific kind of authenticity derived from engagement in the spaces and intellectual traditions of the English-speaking radical left. Through a critical examination of leftist debates around 'left-wing melancholia' and the role of identity politics, I explore how radical notions of what is and is not authentic can translate into certain forms of political praxis, and where problems can arise within this – namely, how the pursuit of authenticity can sometimes reproduce the very inauthenticity is claims to resist.

What is authenticity?

Authenticity is a nebulous concept in both popular and political discourse. It articulates both a sense of truth-telling, of clarity of vision, but also means by which to live one's life. If one is to pursue authenticity, one must address an ontological question 'how can I be authentic?' but also a question of praxis, that is 'how can I live authentically?'. The question of authenticity can be framed in numerous ways - as 'self-actualization', as 'being true to one's self', as 'autonomy', or as 'individuality'. Yet I argue that ultimately the question returns to an extension of the famous aphorism of the Oracle at Delphi which Wilde

references in his essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* - it is to 'know thyself,' but also to *'be* thyself' (Wilde, 1910, p7).

How then does one understand a politics of authenticity? It is certainly possible to find a rich vein of philosophical and political work that sees the world as offering an inauthentic life – one thinks here of Marx's concept of alienation (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1965), Adorno's critique of western culture (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997), of Heidegger's skepticism of technology (Sherover, 1983). As Marshall Berman puts it, the politics of authenticity amounts to a 'dream of an ideal community in which individuality will not be subsumed and sacrificed but developed and expressed' (Berman, 1972, 4). Such a dream is in itself an element of radical politics with some history behind it. One can find one such expression where Marx and Engels declare that the overthrow of the bourgeois would lead to 'an association in which the free development of each will be the condition of the free development of all' (Marx and Engels, 1967, 27).

The pursuit of authenticity is also the pursuit of a kind of radical new conceptualization of individualism. This is not the competitive individualism of supposed meritocracies, but an individualism which draws its richness from understanding individual identity in a social and collective context. Authentic individuality can only really exist through a 'radical rejection of things as they are' and a belief that 'the social and political structures men live in are keeping the self-stifled, chained down, locked up' (Berman, 1972, xix). This is not to say that authenticity has only been the pursuit of radical thinkers and movements. One can trace a philosophical desire to piece together the toolkit for an authentic life from Montesquieu through Rousseau and Diderot (see Berman, ibid, especially chapters one and two). Similarly within the Christian tradition, the desire to live a more Christ-like life was in some ways a way of rejecting a form of inauthentic human existence mired by sin (Bielo, 2011).

What unites these various attempts to grapple with the question of authenticity is the sense in which it arises from a sense of 'undisputed origin or authorship' (Varga, 2014, n.p). That is, the idea that an individual has full creative freedom over their life, values and destiny. In this sense, to be in a radical political movement is to engage in a process of authoring both a new world, but also a new sense of selfhood. Moreover, what in my view distinguishes a radical authenticity from a more philosophical authenticity is that the former is embedded within new ideas about connectivity; pursuit of authenticity is not simply about pursuing a better, more joyful life for the individual, but also about pursuing more authentic connections with others. A new and authentic sense of selfhood is limited without a community in which one can experience more authentic connections with equally actualized beings. As Lehman (2019) and others argue, authenticity can be defined as a 'connection between an entity and a person, place, or time,' (37). An individual can feel an authentic connection to a place (i.e. feel 'authentically British,' say) or between people.

Since living authentically and experiencing authentic connections with others requires action and authorship, it comes as little surprise that the experience of activism provokes profound feelings of connectivity. To my mind, here is a key aspect of what makes activist authenticity a distinct attempt to reconcile the self and the community through action and praxis. For Wilde, the process of building socialism was about building 'sympathy with thought' regarding others, as opposed to 'sympathy with suffering,' or 'unhealthy and exaggerated altruism' which characterize human connection under capitalism (Wilde, 1910, 4) According to him, socialism is of value because it helps to build communities free from hunger and poverty, but also because it 'will lead to individualism' (ibid, 3). For Wilde, such individualism was only available to those with private property, who have 'no necessity to work for a living' and thus are not limited in their senses of self, and fields of action by the 'tyranny of want' (Ibid, 6-7).

However, socialism can only do so through action. For the activist, community, activity, identity, and the pursuit of authenticity become linked. Activists are, after all, individuals embedded in their communities who both shape and create networks and relations necessary for social transformation (Martin et al., 2007). Furthermore, it is radical ideologies that prioritise a sense of authenticity, as opposed to non-radical or centrist ideologies[3]. Activist authenticity comes from disruption of the brutal tedium of the 'reality' of global capitalism, and opposes it with the 'authentic universality' of the real, the possibility of a new way of living (Fisher, 2009). The reality of capitalism does come with a conception of authenticity, but it is a consumptive, isolating one which lacks social or affective elements (Fisher, 2009; Fisher and Gilbert, 2013). In contrast to this, Negri captures the elation of experiencing a new, authentic connectivity through activism in striking terms: '[i]mmediately, I feel the warmth of workers and proletarian community, every time I wear a balaclava…. Every action of destruction and sabotage reflects upon me as a sign of connection to the working class' (Negri, 1978, 42-43). Negri's joyful sense of connection and authenticity here represents a conscious rejection of separations enforced by the dominant social order, 'the separation of public and private, the separation of mind and body, and the separation of one's inner being and one's outer actions' (Ventrone, 2018, 36).

For Berman, authenticity became a key feature of movements of the New Left. Such movements railed against liberal capitalist democracies not because they were too individualistic, but because they created and sustained an individual subjectivity which was profoundly inauthentic as it 'forced every individual into competitive and aggressive impasses…which prevented any individual feelings, needs, ideas and energies from being expressed' (Berman, 1972, 14). In this sense, the pursuit of authenticity was an attempt to find a new kind of Marxism, one devoid from the 'spiritual emptiness' of Soviet Communism,

[3] Though such ideologies do have conceptions of authenticity, which I touch on briefly below.

but instead a 'Marxism with a soul' (ibid). This concern for a politics of authenticity was not merely confined to the Western incarnations of the New Left. In his study of left movements in both East and West Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, Reichardt identified an 'alternative milieu', a regime of new subjectivities that required its members to feel authentic and live authentic lives - a kind of third-way form of politics distinct from both capitalist liberal democracy and Stalinist totalitarianism. It was in this epoch on both sides of the Iron Curtain that 'postmaterial values, ideals of self-actualization rather than materialistic consumption became increasingly popular', taking the form of various practices 'such as joining consciousness-raising groups, listening to rock and punk music, or making bodies and sexuality a central aspect of politics' (Reichardt, 2010, 71). These activities all functioned as stepping stones in the minds of activists towards living a more authentic life (Häberlen et al., 2018). This was both an attempt to rebel against the aforementioned spiritual emptiness of Soviet communism (especially, perhaps, around matters of sexual politics, which were heavily repressed (Bosia et al., 2020; Sandomirsky, 1951)) but also a way in which people 'questioned and refused who they were supposed to be [under capitalism]: heterosexual men or women, productive citizens, or eager consumers' (Häberlen et al, 2018, 9).

However, while leftists wanted to live authentic lives, free from tyranny on the one hand and the false satisfaction of capitalism on the other, there existed a tension between coercion and freedom within these movements. Activists not only had the right to live freely, but they had an obligation to make an account of themselves, and render that account unto others (Reichardt and Siegfried, 2010). Two important points follow: firstly, that authentic activists must engage in a kind of authorship of the self, to live an authentic life; secondly, that such authorship is conducted with an audience in mind. An audience who can both act as witnesses to the authentic way of living (and perhaps find themselves drawn towards its brand of activism), but also to judge and potentially even police how genuine the authenticity seems

to be. The author can create their sense of authenticity, but that sense of authenticity can and will be judged by a diverse range of readers within the social world.

This is not to say that all forms of non-Soviet leftism in the period drove for an authentic sense of socialist individualism. One thinks here of the Weatherman Underground, the US collective which mimicked the organizing structures of Maoist groups or the Vietcong, wherein individualism was thoroughly subsumed to the extent that even activists' sexual practices were collectivized through frequent rotation of sexual partners and orgies, and the condemnation of members who chose monogamy (Thoburn, 2010; Varon, 2004; Wilkerson, 2011). Weatherman, and organisations like it, found themselves in the tradition of a kind of revolutionary anti-individualist militancy, drawn from the work of Nechaev (Thoburn, 2008), in which a revolutionary 'is a doomed man. He has no personal interests… no emotions… no name… not friendship or attachment, except for those who have proved by their actions that they, like him, are dedicated to revolution' (Nechaev, 1971, n.p). Yet this collectivism, or anti-individualism, was itself an attempt to avoid the alienation of what Nechaev calls 'this filthy social order' (Ibid). In Weatherman's case, group sexual practices were motivated by the organization's belief that monogamy was an extension of the restricted and alienated culture of capitalism (Wilkerson, 2011). In this sense, one could argue that a collectivist and anti-individualist approach to an organization still retains a desire for authenticity, albeit by a different model.

While we can see a general trend toward activism around a politics of authenticity, we can also see that authenticity in itself is a contested state of being. It is worth noting as well that the pursuit of authenticity was not merely the prevail of left activists seeking a new form of socialism with a soul. Far-right and fascistic movements also articulated a similar desire, with a need for a kind of authentic individuality where an individual is 'responsible for his own development,' and the choices that individual makes are not 'made by any other human being, or collective of human beings'(Goldwater, 2007, 9). As Umberto

Eco notes, the fascistic mythos points to a desire for authenticity by its attempt to appeal to the social frustrations of the middle classes, play on fears of political humiliations, and advocate for a rejection of modernity as the path towards a liberated, and even heroic, form of individuality (Eco, 1995). Fascistic authenticity is a return to an idealized, heroized past. In short, there is not 'a single regime of authentic subjectivity, but several and often competing visions of what it meant to be authentic and how one could be authentic' (Häberlen et al., 2018, 9) What counts as authenticity can vary between publics and contexts, and this in itself can be a site of contention for activists within movements, as we will explore in more detail in the case studies below.

Put simply, one's sense of authenticity can clash with one's community's sense of what is authentic, an activist may consider one form of praxis to be authentic, yet doing so brings them into a clash with their movement's sense of authenticity. Indeed – as I'll go on to argue – the process of trying to be authentic can be riddled with tension, something which becomes clearer from a Foucauldian perspective. For Foucault, it is through the operations of technologies of power, a human being becomes 'the principle of his own subjection' (Foucault, 2012, 30). Individuals self-regulate, rather than have power imposed upon them. This process can be linked to what Foucault calls 'care of the self', a personal ethic of the self or a form of self-governance which is in part motivated by the need to interact with others, since (the logic goes) if you are capable of caring for your own ethics, 'you cannot abuse your power over others' (Foucault, 2019, 31). Thus, the guidance of the self and guidance of others is interwoven, rather than at odds with one another. While this problematizes the idea of authenticity as 'undisputed authorship of the self' (Varga, 2014, n.p), such authorship cannot be done entirely in isolation. Since it is the interplay between self-guidance and guidance of others which helps form social interactions and identities (Lemke, 2010), there remains a tension between what one can want for one's self, and what one's community wants for one – what Skinner calls the interplay between *subjectification* and *objectification* (Skinner,

2013). This refers to the tensions between how individuals come to understand themselves as subjects, and the process by which someone or something is made concrete, an ideal type.

Frames, ideology and authenticity in Social Movement Theory

The following section seeks to pull apart the often-intertwined concepts of frames and ideology. While both useful to social movement scholars, these concepts often remain elusive and unclear. To counter this obfuscation, I will offer a working definition of ideology and the notion of the 'radical left', and connect them to the concept of authenticity by arguing that radical ideology becomes the lens by which one can see the inauthenticity of life, and offers a map to find one's way toward genuine living – though as I will contend later in the article, it is often a mediated form of ideology that individual activists have to grapple with.

Oliver and Johnston (2000) highlight the casual conflation of 'frames' and 'ideology' within social movement literature. As a result, frame analysis is often 'made to do the work of other concepts' (Oliver and Johnston, 2000, 1) , while the importance of ideology in understanding the political formation and ideas of social movements is overlooked. This conflation is the product of the pejorative theories of ideology, which I will discuss in more detail below. They argue that frames are malleable concepts that 'call attention to the ways in which movement propaganda reflects both the frames of the writers and their perceptions of the frames of their targets' (Ibid, 9). In addition, they highlight the relative lack of work distinguishing an ideology's value commitment from its theory , in other words, the distinction between the value of ideas and the value of norms. Kelly (2018) and others have observed that within radical left groups, especially those of the Marxist or Trotskyist tradition, there is often an obsession with ideological purity and advancing the 'correct' analysis. This in itself can be seen as a need to be the arbitrator of the most authentic take on Marxism, but it can also be an attempt to offer a framework for

the 'correct' norms and behaviours for activists who choose to follow that ideology. Ideology in this sense is not just a lens by which to view the world but in addition a framework by which to live.

However, it is worth trying to pin down a more concrete definition of ideology. Doing so can be tricky, especially within the radical left, in part because the radical left consists of a plurality of different systems of belief. As established above, there is not one 'Marxism' or 'socialism', and there is substantial disagreement within various strands of Radical Leftism as to what is the correct political analysis. As Eagleton points out, there is no 'single adequate definition of ideology' (Eagleton, 2014, 1), which poses something of a barrier to a researcher approaching a milieu where ideology has considerable importance. A simplistic definition of ideology would be as a set of beliefs, values, principles and ideas about the world, with overlap and reinforce one another (Snow et al., 2013). The classical Marxist conception of ideology see it as an illusion and distortion of reality (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1965; Žižek and Fiennes, 2011). In a more colloquial sense, to think or speak 'ideologically' is something of a pejorative - it is oversimplifying the world at best, and approaching it with fanaticism at worst (Eagleton, 2014).

However, a degree of unreality in beliefs is not unusual. For Mannheim, 'ideology' and 'utopia' have a dialectical relationship with one another. Ideology, 'those ideas and values in which... the unrealized and the unfulfilled tendencies which represent the needs of each age' (Mannheim, 2013, 179) provided the 'explosive material' which leads to the overthrow of the existing order, and gives birth to utopias that 'break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence' (Ibid)). I argue that within the context of social movements, ideology fits with the idea of prefigurative politics (Graeber, 2004; Maeckelbergh, 2009); that is, politics which embody the kind of social relations, decision making processes and cultural practices of a 'better world' yet to come, what Jeffrey and Dyson (2021) similarly characterize as 'anticipatory'. To see ideology in social movements as prefigurative goes some way towards countering the argument that it is a form of unreality: ideology is

not real - yet. Though at the same time, there is a 'realness' to ideologies in that they must provide for individuals a sense upon which to base an identity, and present to those individuals a version of the world that they will not simply reject immediately.

How, then, do ideology and authenticity interplay? Polleta and Jaspar (Polletta and Jasper, 2001) discuss the concept of 'mobilising identities,' that is, identities such as 'worker', 'citizen', 'homosexual' - which may pre-exist a movement but are 'reimagined by movement activists...integrated with a *movement* identity, i.e. a collective identity based around shared membership in a movement' (ibid. 289, italics in original). While all individuals may have an innate desire to live authentically, but when that desire meets with the mobilising aspects of radical ideology, it firstly reinforces the idea that new authorship of the self must be connected to the authorship of a new society, and secondly offers a path to authentic life via adherence and commitment to radical ideology. As Renato Curio, a founding member of the Italian Red Brigades put it, radical ideology works like a dream of a better which contains a nightmare of the present: 'our dreams told a story that up until then we had not heard. They showed a scene we had looked at many times, but had never seen…an extraordinary experience that changed my view' (Ventrone, 2018, 39).

Marking the boundaries of authenticity within activist movements

What distinguishes activist authenticity from a more philosophical sense of authenticity is that the former is a public process. Conducted before an audience, activist authenticity is subject to more external forces which scrutinize its validity. The actions of an actor can be judged to be authentic if there is a perceived 'realness' or sense of moral consistency to their principles, or because their actions align with a sense of cultural and cognitive expectations (Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005; Johnston and Baumann, 2007). Walker and Stepnick (2020) argue that - for activists - these evaluators are wider public audiences 'including policymakers, journalists, the general public and other observers' who police the boundaries of

authenticity and may or may not 'judge them [activists, and their organizations] to be authentic' (ibid, 43). Additionally, an actor can be perceived embodying authenticity without ever making any direct claims to it themselves – one thinks here of the discourses around the authenticity of political figures such as Jeremy Corbyn, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jose Mujica (Berger, 2019; Gabetta, 2015; Mueller et al., 2019).

Yet while some theorists have considered the role of wider publics in determining the authenticity of activists (Walker and Stepick, 2020), less has been said about how activists' peers police and determine authenticity – in short, how one's comrades might deem, or not deem, one to be an authentic activist. While this process of arbitrating authenticity occurs within the norms and expectations of activist culture, my contention here is that such a process is to an extent enforced through the extensive nature of education and time commitments required by many SMOs. The creation and recreation of an ideal activist subjectivity involves a separation from society, a separation achieved through often grueling and hermetically sealed education programs, and the monopolization of the activists' time, especially within the Marxist or Trotskyist tradition (Kelly, 2018). Being a member of a radical left group often requires that activists commit a significant amount of time to the group. For example, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty[4] sets out the expectations of membership as being to defend the aims of the party in 'word and deed', conduct activities under the 'discipline of the organization,' join trade unions, pay regular monthly contributions to the party coffers, 'keep links with other political groups under the supervision of appropriate AWL committees', and 'educate themselves politically and attend structured education classes of the AWL' (Liberty, 2017, n.p). While party members do have the right to 'express dissenting opinions', they do not have the right to organize around those opinions or take internal disputes outside of the Party (Ibid).

[4] A UK based Trotskyist organisation which began as an offshoot of the Militant Tendency.

The AWL's expectations of members are mirrored in other Trotskyist groups (Kelly, 2018, p96). The boundaries between public political life, and private personal life outside of the political group become blurred. The idea of the personal having a political aspect is hardly a new addition to radical politics; my contention here is that radical groups expect individual activists to maintain their political work (and by extension, their pursuit of authenticity) at all times. To maintain one's position within a radical left organization, one must not only commit one's time, but also separate from society in the sense that the political group and its priorities come before any other commitment. Indeed, there are examples of activists being required to uproot their entire lives for the sake of the organization. Numerous radical left groups would 'redeploy' activists around the country - the International Marxist Group sent eight members from London to Liverpool to start a new branch in 1972, while the Workers Revolutionary Party sent several members from London up to Scotland for fear it was losing influence in Scottish politics (Kelly, 2018, 97). Even when activists were not expected to uproot and relocate to new cities for the sake of the radical left group, even a temporary withdrawal from politics had to pass through the group. Corin Redgrave, a notable member of the WRP, had to formally write to the leadership of the party for permission to perform in a play; similarly, the AWL took the view that 'you can ask for a leave of absence, but you can't declare it unilaterally' (Kelly, ibid).

It would appear that in principle, in Trotskyist groups personal desires an individual may have about needing to rest, or not wishing to leave their home, are secondary to the desires of the group. Not only is the activist 'separated from the masses and their possibilities for revolt,' but also 'separated from his own desires' (Blanc, 1972, n.p.) which, including their desire to live an authentic and connected life, are heavily mediated by the group. While this may not be stark in all activist groups, it is possible to see a peculiar similarity between the commitments of activism and the way that Marx conceives of the worker under capitalism. For Marx, part of the alienation of the worker comes from a sense of detachment between his

labour and the process of production, thus 'labour is external to the worker' (Marx, 1982, 30). This experience mirrors that of the militant activist - in his belief that he is above the masses as their educator, and in his participation in a radical left group that monopolizes his time, and limits his learning, the activist becomes akin to the worker: 'just as the worker does not work for himself, the militant is not militant on his own behalf' (Blanc, ibid, n.p).

It is worth noting that my claim is not that activism *is* work (at least in the Marxist conception of work). While the worker feels alienated, he can still find some solace outside of work in his free time. In theory, there is *no* outside of activism or the mediated pursuit of authenticity - given the significant obligations placed upon the activist, any free time that the activist has is devoted to political work. Within the framework of capitalism, the effectiveness of work is not measured by the relative pleasure that the worker gains from it, but instead by its economic value. As Marx put it, value arises from the number of hours of labour put into the production of a commodity, which then dictates that commodity's value (Marx, 2018). The activist's task is less easily quantifiable; as Blanc puts it, ''the advancement of the revolution' still hasn't found its measuring instruments' (Blanc, 1972, n.p) . In the absence of any measurable sense of impending revolution, the activist starts to imitate the productive process of capitalism in terms of a reductionist emphasis on 'the number of hours spent, the number of leaflets distributed' (ibid, n.p). This mimicry of capital relations conflicts with what activist surely should be at its core –what, following Marx's labour theory of value, should be unalienated labour, 'human interaction with nature' rather than the valorisation of value (Marx, 1992) – something that does not perpetuate capitalism, but disrupts it. The emulation of capitalist work discipline can be seen as a symptom of the technologies of control to the wider power structures of the world, and thus the activist experiences their form of alienation, for 'militancy is rooted in the alienation of each of us' (Blanc, 1972, n.p).

Much as the worker is alienated from his labour through the external control of his time, energy and individuality, the mediating role of the SMO has a similar function for the activist who does not (necessarily) get to decide for himself what authenticity means. One can only really be true to oneself, the logic goes, if one is true to the party, or the group, and so the pursuit of authenticity occurs and is validated through a mediated form of ideology, that is the version of the ideology espoused by the SMO. It remains the case that for many activists, the pursuit of authenticity is mediated by engagement within a hierarchical organization with its own power dynamics[5]. In other words, when considering the nature of activist authenticity, we need to appreciate that, despite its best efforts, such authenticity can reproduce some of the dynamics it might outwardly oppose. There are numerous examples of this reproduction of oppression; one thinks here of the 'Comrade Delta' rape scandal in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 2013 (Platt, 2014), the mishandling of allegations of historic sexual abuse in the Revolutionary Communist Group in 2017 (Fightback, 2018), or the allegations of sexual assault in the supposedly 'safe space' Occupy Camps in the US, and UK (Milatovic and Wanggren, 2012). Radical left movements have a 'tendency to locate the source of oppression outside immediate circles' (Downes, 2017, 35), thereby overlooking inequalities within the movement, and shifting responsibility for those inequalities to the State or rival political groups (ibid). Such 'self-protective cultural practices' (Downes et al, 2016, 1) are the frameworks in which activist authenticity is mediated and validated. Therefore, the reproduction of oppression can easily become a feature of a supposedly emancipatory sense of authenticity.

[5] The point being made here does not suggest that there is something pejorative about hierarchical activist organizations – there is an age-old verticalist vs. horizontalist debate between social movement theorists (Chironi and Fittipaldi, 2017; Sitrin, 2006; Sitrin, 2012; Toplišek and Thomassen, 2017) and activists, and this article is not intended to weigh into those debates or defend any particular side. Instead, my suggestion is that pursuing authenticity in this manner involves doing so within a form of hierarchy which it could be argued mirror the hierarchies of wider capitalist society.

Locating authenticity in and around left-wing melancholia – the 'Idea of Communism' and its discontents

As we have established, radical ideology offers a way for activists to live more authentic lives, but that authenticity is often contested. Below, I examine two examples of authenticity contention within the Anglophone left. First, within the left's intellectual heritage around notions of left-wing melancholia, and subsequently, by examining how disagreement around the 'correct' interpretation of ideology leads to the reproduction of oppressive structures. I use this as way to understand how mediating forms of authenticity present conflicting paths for activists. I draw on these examples as they demonstrate how a concern with authenticity and its relationship to the left's understanding of its own ideology has both epistemological and praxis-based consequences for activists.

Our first example is the 'Idea of Communism' conference, which took place at Birkbeck University in 2009. At this event, contentions around identity politics and the history of the left revealed conflicting standpoints about how one could be authentically socialist or communist. Here, leftist intellectuals and activists debated how to address both the 'idea of communism' (that is, to separate the communist imaginary from Stalinism and state socialism) and also the problem of what Benjamin called 'left-wing melancholy' (Benjamin, 1974), characterized by a sense of defeatism, despair and an eventual loss of radicalism. For some at the conference, the radical left lost an element of its radicalism because it failed to adapt to new struggles and epistemologies of resistance around race, gender, sexuality, disability and so on, and instead retreated to a conservative 'lost ideal of traditional left theory and politics' (Guattari, 1984, 95). On the other hand, the 'New Communists' camp argued that 'issue politics, identity politics, and their fragmentation into a multitude of singularities' (Dean, 2012, 54) was the cause of the left's melancholia. In this thread, the left lost its radicalism *because* it embraced struggles of 'identity politics, issue politics and multiculturalism,' leading to the loss of 'radicalism and authenticity' (Dean, 2015, 10). Such debates were not simply about the left's relationship to its history, but also about competing visions

of what ideological stance-taking needed to take place in order to transform society – that of orthodoxy, or what might be more loosely thought of as intersectionality. On both sides of the debate, appeals to the authentic nature of particular ideological readings were embedded in the interlocutors' discourse (Dean, 2015; Douzinas and Žižek, 2010).

It is worth bearing in mind that the debates around the radical left and its relationship to other resistance movements is a conversation spearheaded in large measure by the academic left and can be understood as a form of 'communism from above' (Dean, 2015). However, I have included the debate here for a few reasons. Firstly, it illustrates how ideology and authenticity interplay within activist debate. The Idea of Communism conference was about trying to find the most authentic reading of Marxist ideology at a time when Marxism as a political force appeared to be declining – thus, the authenticity of the participants in the debate related to how their understanding of the ideology could position them as the more authentic figures and agents of that ideology. Secondly, connectivity plays a few roles in these discussions – on the one hand, the connectivity between activists in the Marxist tradition (in this case, the two camps of the New Communists vs. those who were more ambivalent to the term) but also around the connectivity of Marxist activism and ideology to other theories of resistance. For many, the Orthodox Communist movement was seen as conservative for its failure to embrace new strategies and epistemologies of resistance that emerged in the 1960s, but Zizek and Dean might argue that that iteration of the 'Old Left' was more radical than the New Left then came after it. In other words, that to look back to the past and resignify it is the only way to find a path into the future. Such an argument seems to appeal to a sense in which the 'Old Left' had a kind of 'ideological purity', and not a diluted form of Marxism[6]. Conversely,

[6] The history of socialist antipathy towards other epistemologies of resistance is largely underanalysed, but some compelling examples are available; The PCF, French Communist Party, for example, maintained until well into the 1970s that feminism and gay rights were part of the "rubbish of capitalism" (Bréchon, 2005); Ted Grant, leader of the British Trotskyist groups Militant and Socialist Appeal criticized the New Left for "all the nonsense of the petty bourgeois - women's lib, gay lib, black nationalism, guerrillaism - you name it!"(Wood, 2013); more recently, the

adherents of Brown and Guattari would suggest that the left's radicalism would be threatened by that very return to the ways of the past. Thirdly, the debate links to an ongoing 'epistemological dissonance' between Marxism and feminism (Bakan, 2012) which in many ways addresses some of the central concerns of this article.

The debates around the Idea of Communism may have originated within the Academic Left, but I along with others (Dean, 2015; Bakan, 2012; Coleman & Bassi, 2011) would contest that it mirrors disputes, tensions and conflicts in movements around masculinities, misogynies, and hierarchies of disciplinary power. I would go as far as to argue that such a dogmatic disregard for intersectionality is a factor in the reproduction of oppression I discussed earlier. Fourthly, and finally, I would suggest that the debates are useful evidence of how movements produce their theoretical analysis (Bevington and Dixon, 2005) and demark the boundaries of an authentic activist self, but also show how the construction of that authentic self has had to be subject to a degree of public scrutiny. Activist authenticity cannot be resolved as a private affair, but must be displayed and debated. While the Idea of Communism debates originated in academia, activists also engaged in the questions raised (see Dean, 2015).

Authenticity and masculine power – left wing men and gendering of authentic life

As we have established, activist authenticity is a disputed and debated term within political movements. While activist authenticity often positions itself as being distinct from the false authenticity of wider capitalist society, it is important to understand that such new senses of authenticity are not immune from

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Communist Party of Great Britain-Marxist Leninist (CPGB-ML) condemned "identity politics, including LGBT ideology," as "reactionary", antithetical to Marxism and a "harmful distraction…from the class struggle of the proletariat," (CPGB-ML, 2018). Implicit in these critiques is an idea that Marxism as an ideology is threatened or undermined by more intersectional approaches to resistance.

the structures and power dynamics of wider society. Pursuing authentic living should be a project of emancipation, but as I have argued above, sometimes that pursuit can reproduce the very structures and oppressions it might seemingly reject. Thus, a consideration of how a leftist sense of authenticity connected to the politics of gender, race, disability, sexuality and so on is necessary.

One example of this is the research by Coleman and Bassi (2011) into the nature of masculinities within the radical left. They explore how 'privileged masculine performances' exist within '(anti-)globalization movements' and the extent to which these performances and related praxis 'bolster, as much as contest, the order that these movements seek to subvert or overthrow' (Coleman and Bassi 2011, 204). These machismo performances were the 're-iterating [of] cultural scripts through which capitalism and the many violences attendant on it are reproduced,' and that 'the enactment of 'resistance' politics...may shore up the status quo even as it undermines it' (ibid, 205). The conclusions that Coleman and Bassi draw from their study is that these masculine performances undermine the politics of revolutionary groups not simply by reinforcing power relations found in a capitalist society, but by excluding voices and bodies which do not conform to the hegemonic masculine display, including women, gender non-conforming people and men with alternative masculinities (Coleman & Bassi, 2011, 213). It is notable that the values that these male personas seek to embody - academic knowledge, efficiency, urgency, the will to action - are not unique to the counterpublic of the movement, but are in fact things which would be considered important aspects of subjectivity in dominant, neoliberal culture (Türken et al., 2016). The fact that male power finds its basis around dominant societal values - even in spaces supposedly separate, or at least somewhat withdrawn from that dominant public - fits with the findings of other scholars of masculinities. In his analysis of male power in a US university fraternity, Kiesling (1997) found that men are 'pushed (and push themselves) towards identities which do not challenge...the fraternity or of dominant US Society' (113).

In other words, ideology in radical left groups offers the chance of more authentic selfhood, but ideology also offers a means by which a form of radical selfhood can be constructed in an inauthentic world. In that sense, one could think of the role of ideology as being what Foucault, in his work on the technology of the self, calls 'the plateau on which I shall find my identity' (Foucault, 1988, 25). For Foucault, technologies of the self are means which individuals can 'by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations' on their thoughts, bodies, conduct, and so on to 'to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Ibid, 18). Within the context of radical left groups, ideology requires a certain series of actions to play out on the individual level to self-actualize as an authentic activist. The masculine personas identified by Coleman and Bassi and Bakan do a similar thing - the movement's ideology requires that they behave in a certain way (whether concerning questions of theory, violence or urgency) to cement a sense of authenticity and become, within that context, powerful.

Concluding remarks

This article has attempted to map out a new way to consider the role of radical ideology within social movements. I have contended that as activism orientates itself around the pursuit of a new self, as much as a new world, and that ideology offers not just a system of beliefs and values, but also a set of expected behaviours and norms, markers by which one can measure progress on the path towards a more authentic life. However, within the radical left, especially the Marxist or Trotskyist left, ideology is often mediated by the party or the group, and pursuing authenticity requires considerable commitments in terms of time, labour and sacrifice. Compounding this, authenticity itself is contested, and not all activists will agree on how to become authentic, or what authentic life looks like, and thus one might find reproductions of the values of the dominant society. In short, the pursuit of authenticity as an activist is not so much a path

without a map, but a path which branches, doubles back on itself and has if anything, multiple conflicting maps.

This article has offered a new framework for thinking about the role of authenticity within social movement ideologies. I have offered a review of theoretical work on authenticity, ideology and framing, and argued that radical ideology offers activists a path towards a more authentic life, a life which rejects the oppressions and pseudo-freedoms of the world as it is. However, that path is mediated by the movement. Such mediation can result in a failure to critique dynamics of power and oppression within movements, through a dogmatic rejection of intersectionality, or a lack of reflexivity around sexual politics. As a result, activist authenticity can sometimes result in the reproduction of oppression. Of course, this article has (by virtue of length and time) had to omit other questions. Further research could explore how rebelling against inauthentic life can create a new form of inauthenticity, which masks as being authentic. One thinks of fascistic conceptions of authenticity here. Similarly, it would be worth exploring how radical left authenticity distinguishes itself from neoliberal capitalist authenticity, and where it overlaps, beyond the brief overview that this article has provided. However, despite these omissions, it is hoped that this article begins the process of further critical interrogations of the connection between radical ideologies and the process of identity formation and selfhood.

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