**Love: The Ethics of Communism**

by Zak Brown

**Introduction**

Ethics is and has been a subject of much contention in leftist circles. What should we do? How should we act? This discussion has polarized most radicals into two camps: those who believe in a sort of pragmatic ethics (what should be done is that which is most practical for our goals) and those who hold strong to moral imperatives (certain things are unjustifiable as things themselves). Necessarily, these camps have overlapped on many issues (sexual violence, for example) and concluded that for any leftist certain actions are simply unapproachable. Regardless, ethics is often a subject of historical and theoretical consideration and most often not a field of active involvement.

Love has been discarded for a different reason. Not necessarily because radicals are incapable of love or hostile to it, but rather because modern liberalism has trapped the term in a realm of "convenient abstraction". Meaning that most discourse surrounding love is tied to abstract principles which pose no material threat to the status quo (a politics of mutual consideration, rather than action). Therefore, love is more or less a literary contemplation and has minimal importance in theory or practice.

This essay will attempt to establish both the theoretical importance of love and ethics and provide reasoning for the following propositions.

1. Love is the ethics of communism.
2. Every communist should offer love.

**Ethics**

The ultimate function of ethics is to determine the "right" course of action (thinking or behavior) with respect to some greater purpose. Generally, ethics attempts to establish that right course of action in accordance with being morally good. However, morality is something which deserves (and has entertained) a far different discussion than the one we hope to provoke in this essay. For this reason, we will suspend discussion of morality and focus on *ethics sans morality*.

This may seem confusing at first. How can we have ethics without a morality? To answer quite simply, apply ethics to a greater purpose which is not in relation to a system of morality. For example, the ethics of communism. Therefore, what is "right" becomes not necessarily that which is "morally good" but rather what affirms communism as a mode of existence (classless, stateless, egalitarian society).

Now this does not reduce the "ethics of communism" to a mere application of pragmatism (e.g. how do
we achieve communism). The point at which communism replaces morality as the universal reference in a "greater purpose" is the point at which it becomes a different sort of thing. It then has the ability to act upon things as being "communist" or "uncommunist" in the same way that morality can act upon things, rendering them as being "good" or "bad", irregardless of purpose, meaning also, irregardless of a pragmatic purpose.

The looming question then is, "why communism?"

The desire to be morally good is sort of assumed (except perhaps in metaethics), the desire to be communist or to achieve communism is certainly not. However, this too deserves its own consideration apart from what we are trying to demonstrate here, and plenty has already been provided (by earlier theoreticians) to answer that very question. For this reason we will suspend any consideration of "why communism" and simply presume that everyone reading this has already (to some extent) concluded communism is "desirable" in some sense or another.

Return to the original proposition:

1. Love is the ethics of communism.

Philosophy can only explain or elaborate upon things we already tacitly understand. It's simply impossible for us to examine, relate, or elaborate upon things that we have absolutely no understanding of. So we should at least presume we understand enough about love to develop an understanding which is both authentic to our experiences and useful in such a realm of liberation politics. If we can make this assumption, then everything else can fall into place.

What is love?

Love is not an object. It's a process. When we say "those two are in love" what we mean is that "those two love each other". It's active and it necessarily requires some level of distributed participation for it to "work" (we will explain this later).

Love is also a "becoming". It changes. Consider the traditional conception of love between two individuals who are dating. It develops subtly, moving in ways that are not always predictable but certainly still perceptible. Carving out spaces for its existence, allotting time for its growth, defining itself from features of romantic interaction. Once developed it explodes in all different directions, invading every part of personal life, moving openly and passionately. As time develops that same love changes, it may even oscillate between periods of passion and periods of casual expression. Love then is a process which is not consistent but very much a "becoming" that is always changing and generally

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2 This is the formal starting point of the inquiry and provides reasoning behind the plethora of examples from “real life” situations of love. Our goal is to break down a notion we already understand into its composing features and context which remains obscured.

3 Note that not only does love “carve spaces”, it also redefines the spaces in which it already exists, “defining itself”. Love is a spatial “becoming” with the capacity to transform the preexisting into something that it never-was (romantic). So must the communist carve new spaces (organs of peoples power) but also redefine those existing spaces (unions, community groups, etc.).
uneven.

Love is a connection. More importantly, love is a subsequent relationship, a development upon a connection which already existed. It was not the first connection to be formed and arguably not the most defining, yet still commanding incredible importance. Consider the example between the dating couple. They may have "began" as friends talking casually on the street or in a classroom. They may have "began" as coworkers passing each other day-by-day in the workplace. What's more certain is that they "began" as human beings; connected to one another by their very existence and the universal properties which categorize everything we consider "human".

Essentially, love is a connection but it is not a connection built from nothing, it is always a connection built from "something"; a preexisting relationship from which the potential for love springs and without which love is impossible.

Love is care, but more importantly, care that is affirming. Care itself is not enough to qualify love. We care about all sorts of things we do not love. We care about our jobs, we care about bills, we care about the neighbor playing awful music. None of these cares are "affirming"; affirming in the sense that they affirm both our own existence and the existence of the thing we are caring about. The love between the dating couple is a care which is affirming. It affirms both the desires of each individual toward each other and is conscious of that fact, therefore it is also a care which is actively considerate.

So now that we know what love is, at least categorically, what exactly does love do?

Love does one thing and it does so in the most powerful of ways: love transforms.

Love takes two, or three, or many different actors (individuals, groups, forces, etc.) and brings them into unity; to borrow heavily from Badiou, love transforms the Two into the One.

Now, just what sort of unity is this?

We can imagine all sorts of unities which are not necessarily created by love. One could easily argue that these are partial unities and not necessarily "authentic unities" - having all of the components for a unity which is "full". In fact, this is precisely what I would argue. That for a unity to be authentic, it must be created by love; and for it to be created by love, it must be both a unity in material and spiritual transformation.

There are generally two sorts of "partial unities" that we can observe:

There is the unity between material forces. Houses which are built alongside each other. Workers who toil in the same factory. These are substantial unities, unities of material substance in line with a

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4 The term “affirmation” appears quite often throughout this essay and could be interpreted many ways. However, it would be best to interpret “affirmation” as meaning a positive (active, creative) and constructive expression of self. Self-determination, liberation, revolution, etc. could all be considered “affirmations”, but in the context it is used here this affirmation must be personal and constituent to the communist.
singular purpose (whatever that may be). Material unities do not require love, they do not require consideration for the 'other', they require some form of: "bringing together" or "bringing forward" which is solely material and generally unilateral (domination) but also sometimes multilateral (collaboration).

There is also unities which are not necessarily substantial. Those that involve a unity in spirit but not in any material transformation. Protesters marching alongside each other. Believers standing amongst each other in prayer. The individual who cares for the 'other'. These are unities in spirit (spiritual unities) that do not qualify as love because the connection they share "brings forward" no material transformation between them. This partial unity can be unilateral (affection) or multilateral (companionship).

So how does an authentic unity, a unity created by love, make many into one?

It does so in the organic recomposition of existing substance into something which is itself entirely new.

That explanation doesn't help much, so let's return to an example which does:

Come back to our earlier discussion of the couple in love, the dating couple. Each has fallen in love, but before entering this love, each came into this relationship with different interests and desires, likes and dislikes, features and attributes. Along with these fixed and expressed things, they came with a collection of developing traits, something we refer to as potentials. Taken as a whole, these things qualify what we call a "multiplicity", a mass collection of different things and potentials, with different degrees and intensities.

What happens through love, the active unity of material and spiritual transformation, comes a reconfiguring (realigning, reshaping) of the existing multiplicity (mass collection of things, potentials) into a qualitatively new One. A new multiplicity which is composed from the last Two but a unified and more importantly a realized One.

The dating couple years after love is entirely new. They form a unified existence which is far different than what existed before. However, each individual is not unrecognizable from before their love. They may still have their specific tastes, desires, and attributes, perhaps modified, but in some cases still existent. The difference being that those desires, tastes, and attributes which survive in the One are those which have been realized therein⁵. Those that have not been realized have either ceased to exist or have been synthesized into something new. Potentials have also transformed and perhaps realized in the original individual, the 'other', or both in the One. What's important to note is that this One forms an existence which is qualitatively new and that is what love can uniquely create.

What does this have to do with communism?

⁵ To say a potential has been “realized” is to say it has reached its point of fulfillment: the point where a possibility has become an actuality, an abstract has become concrete, something that might have been now actually exists.
Readers at this point may have logged off or find themselves saying, "Gee that's cool but what does this have to do with communism?"

The answer is simple: everything.

What exactly is communism? A classless and stateless society. This does not mean one without difference, one without taste, without discussion, without multiplicity. Rather, communism is the undifferentiated realization of multiplicity, the explosion of human creativity in synthesis with one another without exploitation or domination.

What would be the ethics of such a system? What would be the ethics of a system which rejects the foundational violence of state repression and domination of power structures (capitalism, patriarchy, racism, etc.)? The ethics of a system that affirms and realizes the desires of different people working in a constructive synthesis?

It has to be love. It has to be. For communism? It must be love. Because love is communism.

Now that statement, “love is communism”, can be interpreted in two ways and I would argue both are correct.

1. The idea being that social formations are nothing less than the full aggregate of their micropowers. Essentially, what a system is, is exactly what we find when we perform decomposition, when we break it down. For capitalism, when we break it down, we discover poverty, alienation, and exploitation. More concretely we discover wage-labor, finance capital, private property, commodity production, etc. What if we perform decomposition on the theoretical system of communism? We find love. More concretely we find the “distribution based upon need”, performing of labor “based upon ability”, in the words of Marx the “free association of individuals”; instead of private property we find common ownership and access, instead of poverty we find “abundance”. All of which must necessarily relate back to unparalleled love; in the same way all of which in capitalism must necessarily relate back to unparalleled domination.

2. The idea that actions of love are in themselves communist. This is a very bold claim but it is one I feel should be defended. Not because it is fluffy and makes us feel good (although fluffy things themselves are admirable), but because the logic therein makes sense. It's reasonable. The greatest actions of love seek to synthesize a multiplicity of desire into a considerate and affirming One. That is the necessary goal of communism – the necessary goal of total liberation.

The question of communism is at its core a question of difference and contradiction. If we are to break down the constituent problems with regard to communism – how do we establish statelessness, it could even be argued that communism itself is nothing but the progressive resolution of every significant contradiction. A contradiction of significance being that contradiction which has the potential to, or already is, a contradiction of power; a fundamental antagonism wherein one force intends to overpower the other in some form of struggle (explicit or implicit). Therefore, overcoming this question of contradiction is all too necessary for communism itself.
classlessness, how do we make this concrete etc. - then we arrive at questions to do with contradiction itself. Asking how to decolonize bodies must necessarily confront the question of antagonism between the bodies and 'others', between the bodies and “things”.

As such, love functions both as an ethical method as well as a specific relationship in all its concreteness.

As an ethical method, it guides and facilitates practice which is “communist in nature” despite the difference in what that practice actually is. It also establishes limits for this practice by discerning what is and what is not authentic unity and therefore what can and cannot be considered love. However, love must also be concrete. It's a specific relationship. We can observe it. We can think about it. We can provide examples of love and even test its necessary properties.

Recall the two propositions, and now add the necessary operator between the two:

1. Love is the ethics of communism.

Therefore,

2. Every every communist should offer love.

The first is abstract. It draws our attention to the necessary properties of love, how we understand “what it is” and how that relates to the nature of communism. The first offers no particular imperative for anyone. It’s a declarative statement, and if anything only draws the grid for a more particular understanding of love and communism.

The second is both particular and universal. Accordingly, it follows from the necessary premise of the first proposition. That “if” love is the ethics of communism, “then” every communist should offer love. The statement read in its entirety is a guide towards being “ethically communist”; fundamentally not anything “specific” to circumstance but rather a method to be used in every circumstance.

However, the word “offer” is the most important word in the statement. Without that word, our entire project here would be entirely nonsensical.

**The Offering**

So why not simply state:

2. Every communist should love.

Isn't that true? Well, to some respect it certainly is. However, its not particular enough for the sort of “thing” we are addressing (love). If our understanding of love is correct here, then one cannot simply
love unilaterally. It must be a multilateral project, with participation from every active participant in any given relationship. Therefore, if we were to say:

2. Every communist should love.

We would be contradicting our earlier understanding, one cannot ethically obligate an individual with the action of the 'other'. Logically, what is being said is:

2. Every communist should love (if possible).

So how do we account for that possibility? We do so by provoking the possibility in the statement itself - by adding a supplemental condition for the existence of love: an “offering”.

The offering is precisely where our project touches ground; where it comes out of the clouds and begins to materialize in our actual existence as something we “can do”. It's also where our project begins, where love can actually follow from. The offering is the seed of our project and by planting it we can plan our growth like farmers in season, but without the offering we are doing nothing more than scavenging the forest for love where it may rarely appear.

So what does it mean to “offer” love in a material sense? Should we speak romantically to our political opponents or to the masses? Do we confess our love to the bourgeoisie, our oppressors, or engage in some other absurdity? Of course not. The offering is literal but not in the colloquial sense. Instead, the offering is established by two imperatives which themselves compose the structure of the offering:

1. Establish affection.
2. Encourage collaboration and companionship.

First, analyze the statement “establish affection”.

As we briefly mentioned earlier, a unilateral “partial unity” of spirit is understood as affection. One can have affection for another but it need not be a companionship – a multilateral “partial unity” in spirit – it need not be felt in return.

Think back to our example of the dating couple. Each individual likely established affection for the other before “falling in love”. That affection was itself a risk. It was uncertain and in many cases perhaps unreturned at first. It was necessarily uneven. Regardless, the establishment of that affection,

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7 Essentially, one cannot be burdened with the ethical responsibility of non-self action. This is not to claim that some action which is not the action of the self cannot be judged ethically; it certainly can, and if we hope to provide a system which is reliable at every instance, then it must. However, the ethical responsibility of a particular action necessarily falls upon the agent who is “doing” the action. In this case, one cannot be ethically burdened to love but only to “offer love”.

8 This “offering” is rarely a formal inquiry. Rather, it presents itself as an “offering” through interactions which extend something more than themselves.
that “partial unity” of spirit was necessary for love to even begin as it did, for the subsequent unities to be formed as they did. In this sense, the communist must establish affection for her 'other' as part of the offering, and this affection is “established” upon a connection which already exists. For example, the affection for fellow workers may be planted on a common class nature; for people of color on a common sense of suffering; for the oppressor on a common property we refer to as “humanity”9. The affection must also be “established” in the sense it must contest feelings of apathy and egocentricity. Not that the affection must be self-effacing. It must be the opposite. It has to be affirming of ones own desires and potential that can be realized inside the scope of unity, and understand these desires and potentials as being realizable in unity.

This affection challenges the communist to feel what the 'other' feels. To consider their desires, their interests, and their potential. To treat the potential of the 'other' as being the potential of the self. Not that the potential or desires are those of the self; clearly they are not. However, its the consideration of that 'otherness' which itself makes possible the spiritual transformation of the self in unity with the 'other'.

In this sense, affection can be difficult. The misapplication of affection can be disastrous to the project and to the self. Take for example, the affection the communist shows for a fellow worker. The communist appreciates the common experience of exploitation; the desire to be free of managerial examination; the struggle to survive on a wage and the slavery that entails. But imagine the worker is a racist or a sexist; he also desires to exert power over women and people of color. Can the communist be affectionate here? Can there be spiritual unity here? Absolutely not.

Indeed, when the communist shows affection this affection is shown towards the 'wholeness' of the 'other', but that 'whole' is broken down into differentiated particulars, into the multiplicity of desires, traits, drives, potentials etc. So affection must be both a total feeling of spiritual unity between the self and the 'other' and also a conscious and differentiating process wherein “problematic” features are noted. However, desires, traits, drives etc. are themselves “becomings”. Not only can they change, but they are constantly transforming. So when a “problematic” (essentially, non-affirming, repressive, “power-over”) feature is noted the communist must deconstruct it into its composing parts. Breaking it down until the potential to be something-other-than what it is (repressive) can be found10.

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9 With contemporary Marxism's infatuation with antihumanism, this might seem more controversial than it actually is. By “humanity” I am referring to certain transhistorical and universal qualities of human beings which give us our category. Most of these qualities can be considered “capacities” and “potentials” over “actualities”. Regardless, the entire project of communism rests on some respect for these universal qualities unless of course liberation is just a mindless endeavor with no premises to support its conclusion (equality).

10 For example, the desire to dominate women as an expression of masculinity can be deconstructed into something other than what it is. Breaking down this notion, we discover a desire to “find community” which has been expressed through domination, following how it was transformed into a feature of masculinity. The desire to “find community” and “define self” within masculinity is not problematic per se. What is problematic is how these desires are themselves shaped and expressed through systems of power and discourse in patriarchy. Therefore, the communist must contest this regime of power wherein the desire to “find community” becomes colonized as something masculine.
This might seem paradoxical. On one hand the communist must have affection for the 'other' as it is now but not in all of its constituent parts. Wouldn't that simply mean that the communist is having affection for something that is not “actual” that is just an image of something that “could be”?

Not necessarily.

Consider this: what the 'other' “could be” is always-already part of how it “actually is”. The nature of the 'other' and also of the self is a “becoming” that is more or less defined by its potential and the way that potential is transformed. Therefore, the communist establishes affection for the total being of the 'other'; the desires and suffering that can be appreciated in commonality as well as the potential which can be composed into something affirming but may exist as that which is not, according to what may be called “social ordering” (ideology, socialization, discourse, etc.)

In the event that this affection cannot differentiate, cannot be conscious while still being organic, then the affection is no longer an affection. It's no longer affirming to the self, to the communist, to communism, but instead becomes passive and liberal infatuation with the 'other'.

Equally so, if the affection differentiates “too much”, or rather does not proceed with authenticity of consideration, a fundamental respect for self and 'otherness', the affection becomes patronizing - a destructive and critical obsession.

The practice of affection must be taken cautiously but unafraid to engage in risk where it is necessary. Establishing affection is a risk itself. It always will be. In fact, the risk is how we interpret its necessary value. But like love, affection is a becoming, and that “partial unity” in spirit can always improve relative to its authenticity.

Encouragement

Consider the second imperative:

2. Encourage collaboration and companionship.

Establishing affection is mostly a point of inward departure; acknowledging the fact that the inward will generally precede the outward. The second imperative, the encouragement of collaboration and companionship, is not inward. It must be outward. In addition to being the most outward of the imperatives, its also the most active and treacherous.

Once more, return to our example of the dating couple. Once one individual has established her

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11 I use “social ordering” to express a few things. First, ideology, socialization, and knowledge-production are all related and interwoven. To speak of one solely (e.g. simply ideology, or simply socialization) is problematic. Second, there is a basis of “human quality” which is ordered by a sociality (the complex interaction of everything considered interpersonal).
affection for the other, she attempts to encourage a full unity: to provoke the “falling into love”. This is
done by establishing a multilateral “partial unity” in spirit – companionship – as well as a multilateral
“partial unity” in substance – collaboration. Now this does not occur all at once necessarily, it may be
staggered through fragmented interactions of varying significance. But ultimately there comes a time
when the other individual establishes her own affection and the two form a companionship in spirit.
While the companionship in spirit may precede the collaboration of substance it does not need to. In
any case, the collaboration of substance may soon follow after the companionship of spirit wherein love
has carved itself a space in the relationship and can flower onward.

The question is: how does one encourage “collaboration and companionship”? The answer must vary
along with circumstance and the uniquess to that 'other' which the affection is shown. However, this
does not mean the answer is immeasurably ambigius. Instead, I suggest a divergence along a familiar
boundary: that between the necessarily antagonistic and the non-necessarily antagonistic\textsuperscript{12}.

Take, for example, the relationship between one worker to another. This relationship is non-necessarily
antagonistic; note the importance of the phrase “non-necessarily”. It is “non-necessarily” because the
relationship between two workers, a connection shared in a common experience of everyday-production
at the level of subordination, does not implicate an antagonism between the two along that connection.
However, through the application of competitive discourse, or more importantly, a conflict of
identities/stratifying micropowers (patriarchy, racism, heterosexism etc.) this relationship may become
antagonistic; but, it is “non-necessarily” so. The affirmation of one along that specific connection to the
'other' does not pressupose the repression of the latter.

This is not the case for the relationship between the worker and her exploiter. This relationship is
“necessarily antagonistic”. Along this connection, one which is made possible only by the presence of
some governing inequality, the affirmation of one (the exploiter) requires the repression of the 'other'
(the worker). Such a connection can be considered as “necessarily antagonistic” because by its very
nature the two are in a fundamental opposition at the level of potential affirmation.\textsuperscript{13}

So, we begin by recognizing this fundamental difference between affection shown toward the “non-
necessarily antagonistic” and the necessarily so. This difference acts upon how we go about
encouraging companionship and collaboration.

A. With the non-necessarily antagonistic.

1. Interaction builds opportunity.

One must be willing to express her affection through a field of personal involvements which transcends

\textsuperscript{12} A modified usage of Mao's dialectic provided in \textit{On Contradiction}.

\textsuperscript{13} This represents the fundamental inequality which is the foundation of capitalism. The difference between those who own
the means of production and those who do not. Those who are more close to the point of accumulation, and those who
are not. Those who occupy a social strata which is more privileged, according to the social division of labor and the
mental/manual division of tasks, and those who do not.
the *everydayness* but also capitalizes upon those spaces wherein the everydayness is normally dominant. For workers, this means building a workplace solidarity in an often unfriendly matrix of everyday production; for students, this means establishing study groups and sessions wherein the academic is present but not dominant; rather, utilizing those spaces which are always-already given (to borrow from Althusser) to present something which has not been (given)\(^\text{14}\). Through these developments the strength of affection grows unilaterally but also encourages consideration by the 'other'.

2. **Unity precedes struggle; consideration precedes criticism.**

At some level there must be a contention between the self and the 'other'. The two are not equivalent by any sense of the term and from this realization begins the whole project of love (and communism). Companionship requires acknowledging the challenges to a spiritual unity. To surmount this we give precedence to consideration of difference over criticism of it (difference). Difference is good. It's the social ordering of difference which needs to be reconfigured (to summarize liberation crudely).

**B. With the necessarily antagonistic.**

1. **Affection is unconditional.**

Even in leftism, there's a common thread of attempting to – perhaps ever so subtly or “harmlessly” - establish a criterion by which one becomes worthy of affection. Wherein, the 'other', upon meeting certain conditions, becomes deserving of affection. Some bodies are simply disposable with respect to their actuality. However, if actuality were the standard by which we determine disposability, then certainly every body is conceivably disposable. Everyone can be disposed of, and necessarily to make this logic consistent, we are provoked to prove circumstances wherein every single body is disposable; this is not the politics of love this is the politics of hate\(^\text{15}\).

In contrast, the communist does not see actuality as a criterion for affection; for a material consideration beyond disposability. Instead, the communist sees all bodies as being worthy of affection on condition that actuality is always a becoming and therefore what can be considered “disposable” is the symbolic body which for a moment occupies what is “actual”. However, this symbolic body is not necessarily the

\(^{14}\) The real power of such an endeavor lies in repurposing ideological apparatuses for something of a counter-hegemony. The modern matrix of contemporary capitalism relies on its ability to colonize most forms of time and space for its own reproduction. An ongoing problem faced by modern organizers is: where do we organize, when and how? My methodology presents an answer in that the most powerful places for organizing are directly under the nose of the beast, and the form of which may not appear outwardly antagonistic to the system. For example, a student gathering discussing imperialism, capitalism, etc. may be entirely usual in context to a specific campus, and therefore draw little attention, but with the catalyst of a radical approach these ordinary ideological spaces can transform sympathizes into radicals.

\(^{15}\) The Red Terror is a great example of this. Wherein, we see Marxists of that era as well as post-Soviet Marxists champion the Terror as being that politicized revolutionary strike against reactionaries, carefully disregarding the brutality that befell all “class enemies” or those deemed to be enemies of the class. What is problematic is not necessarily that Tsarists and saboteurs were gunned down by the Soviet state, what is problematic is the method used to determine “who can die”.
body of the 'other' but rather the body of the 'other' may be a symbolic body\textsuperscript{16}. The 'other' often is a symbolic body but only a fool would present what qualifies as “becoming” identical to a symbolic body - a regime of power.

Let's take this out of abstractions and provide an example.

What is the criterion for affection – a unilateral spiritual unity with the 'other'?

Is it a matter of politics? Certainly many more non-communists than communists exist. Is it a matter of correct thought? Racism, sexism, heterosexism etc. all exist in force not only among the exploiters – the capitalists, the ruling class – but among common people, among the masses, among the exploited themselves. Is it a matter of wrongdoing? For not only are the masses the primary vehicles of ideology, principally they are its foremost actors as well\textsuperscript{17}.

Establishing affection on actuality is futile in every respect. Disposability is never satisfied and is always thirsty to devour more; that is the kernel of power within a politics of hate. If we are to take affection seriously, then we must take seriously what consistency requires.

Establish affection for the oppressor, for your oppressor, for your exploiter. A controversial suggestion no doubt, but not one without reason. Critics may already be spinning their heads. How can someone suggest that the oppressed show affection for their oppressors? Let's keep in mind the second proposition made at the beginning of this essay.

2. Therefore, every communist should offer love.

No moral claims have been made. No one has suggested this is the “good” course of action. That this is the “just” course of action. Rather, this follows reasonably from the second proposition, all of which is designed to illustrate what it means to say a “communist should do ____”. None of which is concerned with the moral consequences of such a conclusion but merely with the authenticity of the conclusion itself. All of which is considerably difficult\textsuperscript{18}.

2. Companionship is conditional.

Affection may be shown unilaterally, but remember, a unilateral unity of spirit is always partial and never sufficient for the project of love or communism. Before any love is to be found, arguably before any collaboration can be shown, companionship must appear and this must be the active affirmation of

\textsuperscript{16} For example, Jim may be an exploiter, but the exploiter is not Jim. Jim may embody exploitation, but exploitation is not what composes Jim.

\textsuperscript{17} This should not be interpreted as “hating the masses”. Certainly, all that is progressive exists among the broader population; however, that which is also the most reactionary moves among them just as freely.

\textsuperscript{18} Unconditional affection for the exploiter, does not mean submission to exploitation. It means that the communist develops a unilateral spiritual unity so that the 'other' is preserved as a genuine being separated from the symbolic body of oppression, so that even the most reactionary oppressors may eventually become liberated.
both the self and the 'other' in a spritual unity able to transform eachother. So even the greatest most authentic affection established by the oppressed for her oppressor is not enough to qualify love let alone that necessary condition, companionship; it must be shown in response, it must be multilateral.

This delivers us into our third point.

3. Resist through self-affirmation.

Companionship can only exist, in all of its beautiful authenticity, when established connections of domination have been relinquished. It's very difficult to imagine a spiritual unity wherein the self and the 'other' share a unity of ideas, emotions, desires, drives and the transformations therein, but still one is actively dominating the other in substance. In fact, this is the kernel of neoliberalism in practice. A feigning delight in the desires of the exploited, an empty vessel wearing the slogan “we're in this together”, when in actuality the affirmation of one has necessitated the repression of the other, substantially speaking19.

Therefore, until the necessarily antagonistic 'other' relinquishes or is deprived of their domination, encouraging companionship and collaboration takes a path of resistance.

Resistance which is not without affection; rather, resistance which in a sense details the limitless possibilities of companionship and collaboration to the 'other'. It may seem paradoxical at first.

On one hand, it is unlimited self-affirmation: a throwing off of substantial domination, a raging scene of passion that the 'other' cannot help but watch in horror and perhaps desire. This is where love with 'others' and strengthening of an existing One may substantially influence the resistance to domination and encouragement of companionship. This is an insurrection. This is May 1968. This is a revolution. This is the lifestyles of resistance that modern revolutionaries lead. This is resistance in its truest and most authentic sense; a scene of profound passion wherein the One is made present to 'others' in an explosion of affirmation.

On the other hand, it's an open invitation to the necessarily antagonistic 'other' to join in on something altogether beautiful. A “clearing event”20 wherein the 'other' begins to see themselves as being what they “actually are” in their symbolic body.

Now, it should be noted that while this resistance is fundamentally a resistance of affection based against the symbolic body of the oppressor; it is also, and must very much be, a resistance to the symbolic body of the self, of the communist.

19 And this is the very fine line which is walked between an inclusive politics of communism and an inclusive politics of liberalism. Both are inclusive, but only one is inclusive to that substantial and material oppression which defines modern global capitalism.

20 In the Heideggarian sense, where the subject sees themselves as “being-there-in-the-world” and all that wordliness implicates.
Take, for example, the Marxist understanding of socialism. Not only does socialism intend to do away with the bourgeoisie as an oppressing class, as the exploiting class, but also seeks to abolish the proletariat as an oppressed class, as the exploited class. The proletariat must not only destroy the symbolic body of the exploiter but also that of itself, of the exploited; that is the “world historic mission” of the proletariat (to borrow from Lenin): constructive self-destruction.

What if?

Imagine that the necessarily antagonistic ‘other’ cannot be encouraged into companionship and collaboration, no matter the affectionate resistance and authenticity displayed. What is the communist to do? Well, the communist should proceed with the only possible option: to resist (the ‘other) and strengthen the One up until the symbolic body of the oppressor has been destroyed.

The symbolic body of the oppressor is rendered obsolete once the symbolic body of the oppressed has been “thrown off”.

What are the police with no one to be policed? What are the capitalists with no one to capitalize upon? What is the state with none to govern? The first priority of a communist in resistance is to challenge the power which exists laterally in their “everydayness”. From this site onward, the symbolic body of the oppressed is accumulated and so forth invites the symbolic body of the oppressor to do what it does. Resistance which is authentic must not be only spiritual – a challenging of dominant ideas, beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, desires, etc. - but also substantial – challenging control of the instruments/means of production, material practices, and the established “mode of operation”21.

Violence?

The history of communist resistance has been a history of violence. Accordingly, it's difficult to address such an issue – especially in a piece detailing ethics – and completely ignore the question of “violence” and “justifiability”. Within the context of resistance, explained in this essay, what room is there for “justifiable violence” by the oppressed, and are any standards to uphold?

It would seem that throughout history the forces of communism have written a “blank check” with regard to violence. Not to say that communists of the past have reveled in violence (although perhaps some have), but rather that communists historically have seen “no price too high” for the emancipation of humanity22.

Is this an unreasonable position to take?

Perhaps not. If our actions were to result in the total liberation of the earth from the grips of

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21 Essentially, combining the maxim that the “personal is political” with a collective and organized political resistance which reflects the individual commitment to revolution.

22 I would argue this has less to do with any character malfunction of previous generations of communists but rather stems from an incomplete understanding of communism and Marxism as an operating science on “how to be a communist”.
domination, then is there any limit to attach to such action? Under the common historical premises, the answer would be “certainly not” – and a long history of violence has reflected that conclusion.

But is that the right framework by which to address this question?

If we accept the correctness of our project here, then we must necessarily move beyond such a static interpretation of what violence is “justifiable”\textsuperscript{23}.

If we have proven the second proposition, let us add another:

1. Love is the ethics of communism.

2. Every communist should offer love.

Therefore,

3. Violence is acceptable only if it is affectionate.

This is not to be read as a postmodern forray into the field of deontology. I would not suggest (at least here) that some actions themselves can qualify as being “good” or “bad”; however, I would suggest that some actions, interpretations, and ideas are in and of themselves either “communist” or “uncommunist”\textsuperscript{24}.

Historically at least, much has been done to create a convenient separation between what exists and what can exist. Capitalism exists, communism can exist. Exploitation exists, non-exploitation can exist. Violence exists, non-violence can exist. Many communists have adopted this understanding to interpret the necessity of violence in a period of transition to communism (the dictatorship of the proletariat; socialism). Violence exists, so to move towards a society based upon non-violence certain violent measures must be taken.

This separation (between “what does” and “what can”) is the reasoning of the Master: reasoning which has been extracted, very uncritically so, from a society where time itself is disciplined. This separation confuses intensity with existence. Not only can communism exist, it does exist, it has to exist; granted, it can only exist presently under much confinement and control, often unable to move “freely and rapidly” like capital through circulation – it exists in low intensities. The project of communism is not to bring something entirely new into existence, but to establish a new One which has always-already been here (fragmented, less configured, in Two). What we are dealing with is an explosion of intensity which itself becomes transformed, but importantly has not fallen from the sky once a certain

\textsuperscript{23} The point here, as the point in this entire essay, is to move beyond the ambiguity offered by a “virtue ethics of communism” which has been the de facto dominant strain.

\textsuperscript{24} This may be read as a neo-Kantian interpretation of communist morality, a charge which I would not oppose if and only if it accurately represents the kernel being presented here, and only if that kernel corresponds to the point of communism.
“threshold” was breached.

The project here is to remove the distance between what is immanent and what is transcendent – to bring communism to life here and now.

Doing so requires us to seriously engage this question of violence and when it becomes “acceptable”; ultimately determining when exactly violence is “communist” or “uncommunist”. The correct position is that violence is acceptable (communist) only if it is affectionate.

Here is why:

1. Non-violence is the standard, not the exception.

Collaboration and companionship require us to consider non-violence as the standard of action, not the exception to our common methodology. When approaching a disagreement, or a challenge of some sort – even with the necessarily antagonistic - our first duty is to explore the non-violent solutions. This requires the communist to be skeptical of any violent approaches first as a matter of ethics (what one should do) and secondly as a matter of efficacy (would this actually accomplish the goal). Generally, one may find that a violent solution can complicate the ethical and pragmatic concerns of a situation.

2. Affection limits violence to what is necessary.

It's absolutely mistaken to consider violence as necessary. Rather, it should be said that violence becomes necessary only after the non-violent has been exhausted or deemed wholly ineffective. With the correct application of affection, detailed in this piece, violence which is utilized at the point of necessity is still limited by the active reflection of spiritual unity. This is not a perfect solution – nothing can be considered “ideal” with respect to violence. However, this is certainly useful in minimizing what has been called the “excess” of communism in historical practice.

“Excess” is a convenient word to use when referring to the blatant disregard for human life and utter cruelty shown to those considered “class enemies”. If the politics of love were to be dominant, then we can presume that an authentic affection could prevent so much of this unnecessary bloodshed which has proven not only “uncommunist” in many respects but equally ineffective.

3. Affection opens up space for delayed non-violence.

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25 My reading differs greatly from earlier communists in that I understand communism to be a mode of existence, when it is realized as dominant becoming a stage of history, but before then still existing, albeit in subordination, at lower intensities of interaction.

26 When we say violence we are speaking strictly of violence against the biological substance – a physical body – but in some circumstances this violence can be spiritual (e.g. Cultural imperialism) which should be considered as well.

27 This might be criticized as being “ultra-left”, but if ultra-left is how we are going to describe a sensible and consistent approach to the ethics of communism then I am all for being labeled “ultra-left”.

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Even after the decision to engage in violence has been made (or simply developed as such), many possibilites for a non-violent resolution generally remain. The common understanding – that violence can only end in the total annihilation of the opposing force – is entirely wrong. In fact, violence which does not end with some sort of non-violent resolution only ensures a cycle of retaliation which does nothing to resolve the issue at hand. The most effective and ethically sound course of action is to consistently explore non-violent resolutions in the course of violence itself.

This is where affection becomes useful. Not only does affection limit the use of violence, it opens alternatives to the use of violence throughout its application. The conclusion being that even if non-violence is impossible, the establishment of affection can highlight points where that “impossibility” breaks; therefore opening routes for a “delayed non-violence” which minimizes the violence in any situation.

Is this effective?

An initial response might draw into question the efficacy of such a politics of love especially with regard to handling contradictions with the necessarily antagonistic (e.g. The ruling classes).

While expected, this question is deeper than one might lead on. At its core, such a criticism would have us interrogate the very principles of communism and namely the logic behind it; the rational kernel of such a question is actually, “can people change?”, or even better, “can communism work?”

It's better to meet these questions head on than to pretend the original inquiry is based on anything but a skepticism of the communist project. The basis of this project is only ubiquitous to our current existence. The dominant discourse is one of an unchanging spiritual element that guides human beings down a path of domination and violence. Whether we consider the unscientific explanations – “human nature is selfish”, people tend towards violence etc. - or the more scientific explanations – ideology engenders a subjectivity which would react to affection with violent retaliation – we are left with a skepticism of non-violence itself.

While not unjustified, these reasonings have little to offer the communist.

Yes, there is a risk that such a methodology could backfire – that the ruling classes would use “openings” in non-violence to reassert their collective dominance.

However, there is risk in every encounter we make, whether it be with a method such as this (politics of love), or a more traditional method (politics of speculation). Not that this alone disqualifies any criticism of the current methodology, but it should at least contextualize this problem for the reader as being one intrinsic to our project rather than something entirely unique to this method in specific.

I understand ideological concerns regarding the current methodology, but on the basis of a higher understanding and consistent system of communist ethics I think these considerations are best left to the field of skepticism.
A politics of love is no more risky than its Marxist competitor, a politics of speculation.

In the former, we establish a method to encounter contradiction and to resolve that contradiction with love. In the latter, we establish a rhetoric which guides our speculation regarding the 'other' in nearly every encounter; all of which results in us falling back on some arbitrary discourse of what is “justifiably violent” with no consistency in method or conclusion, and no accepted propositions to supplement it.

Historically, communism has been riddled with examples of the latter in practice.

Orders come down to “prepare a terror” for “class enemies” and the like. That order, a rhetoric, is passed down to subordinate organs of power which exercise that order at their own discretion – according to their own speculation of its applicability. The result is widespread terror which while being inconsistent in application – in some cases summary executions, in other cases torture - is consistent in its inability to develop into anything more than it already is (terror). Essentially, the radical nature of violence from the oppressed (revolutionary violence) is made reactionary by a politics of speculation that prevents it from rendering any actual change. The “class enemies” have not been defeated. Their symbolic bodies are hardly touched. Instead, those symbolic bodies are displaced and dispersed through the micropower of ideology. What we are left with is, by modern estimations, a poorly executed string of atrocities with nothing to show but shame.

Authentic revolutionary violence is one which strikes the symbolic body of the oppressor, and in doing so also cuts away at the symbolic body of the oppressed themselves. The biological substance of the oppressor, while being of great significance in manifesting domination, is not the primary target of resistance.

This is why a politics of love is superior.

A politics of love does not weaken the communist or the oppressed. It uniquely empowers them to make material transformations in their world. It also does not prohibit the use of violence entirely. It only establishes a limit to that violence in accordance with an already accepted set of propositions. In doing so, damage against the physical body of the ‘other’ is minimized while the symbolic body of the oppressor can be entirely destroyed.

“The Hammer”

To paraphrase Mao, communism is not love, it's the hammer we use to crush the enemy.

But really that simply asks the question, who is our enemy? Or maybe, what is our enemy?

29 This is the established pseudo-pragmatic “virtue ethics” I was referring to, when it comes to what is justifiably violent.
30 Evidence of this should be obvious to anyone familiar with the Bolshevik Terror and its actual execution.
31 This is the primary distinction between “reactionary” and “revolutionary” violence.
The enemy is us. We exploit. We kill. We dominate. We reproduce patriarchy, racism, and heterosexism in how we think of and treat the 'other'.

The enemy created us. The way we are brought up to think and behave; the things we are told to like and dislike; everything from our language to the clothes we like to wear, all of these are the Master's.

The enemy hates. It doesn't understand, it wants to give an understanding; it does not appreciate difference, it exploits difference; it does not construct the One, it constantly seeks to stratify the Two.

The enemy is not communism because communism is love.