

A 'Warm Current' in the Midst of Marxism

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Abstract:

Marxism is well known for its two components: a 'cold stream' which concerns objective scientific analysis; and a 'warm stream' that concerns enthusiasm and hope and leads to commitment to Marxism as a cause. One appeals to the mind, the other appeals to the heart. We may understand these two components as being in a dialectical relationship with one another. They are distinct, yet they necessarily interact to produce the richness of Marxism. This lecture argues that at times the 'cold stream' dominates, with objective scientific analysis becoming dominant. This may lead to stagnation in Marxism and fail to inspire those who wish to identify with Marxism. Yet, at those times we find that the renewal of Marxism comes from the 'warm stream', with efforts to bring enthusiasm and hope back into Marxism. In order to illustrate this argument, I examine some historical moments in the history of Marxism when such renewal has taken place: the work of Anatoly Lunacharsky

before the Russian Revolution; Ernst Bloch in Western Marxism; and the development of eco-socialism in our own day.

I would like to explore one of the major resources for the renewal of Marxism. It comes from what has been called the 'warm stream' of Marxism (the term comes from Ernst Bloch). This is the Marxism that excites the passions, that makes one enthusiastic, that causes us to hope and have faith in a cause. We may say this stream of Marxism is a matter of the heart. It may be contrasted to the 'cold stream' of Marxism. Here we have the scientific side of socialism, with its detailed engagements with economics, social analysis, and history itself. This may be described as a Marxism of the head. So we have the warm and cold streams of Marxism, one concerning the heart and the other concerning head. Let me be perfectly clear: I do not mean that these two features are incompatible. They may appear to have little in common with one another, but this is not the case. Instead, they are two components of Marxism that relate to one another dialectically. For example, a revolution does not take place purely through careful analysis of political events and organisation of the party; it also requires faith in the party and enthusiasm for the cause. In other words, it needs both objective analysis and subjective engagement – otherwise few would join the party at all.

So what does it mean to say that this warm stream of Marxism is a significant source of renewal? Projects like socialism have a tendency to stagnate from time to time.¹ They run out of steam and people begin to lose the enthusiasm they once had. The hope for a better future fades and they become comfortable with the world as it is. I suggest that one reason for such stagnation is that the scientific side – the cold stream – of Marxism begins to dominate during these times. Scientific analysis becomes more important, with its economic, social and political theories. As the scientific side dominates, it pushes aside the warm stream. The result is that Marxism becomes flat and fails to inspire people.

I should say that it is also possible for the warm stream to dominate. In this case, the outcome is not so much stagnation as impractical dreaming, or perhaps spontaneous revolutionary activity without detailed organisation and planning. It may then delude people and lead them to futile and unsuccessful revolutionary activity. So when this side dominates, it is necessary for some careful and solid scientific work to provide a grounding for Marxism. This was precisely what Marx and Engels did in the context of the early socialist movement. In response to the impractical dreams and great claims of the utopian socialists (Wilhelm Weitling, Gottfried Kinkel and others), they set themselves the task of analysing capitalism in detail. However, a full discussion of this matter is not my task here, for I wish to

¹ Of course, the process of stagnation is characteristic of any political and philosophical project that lasts for some time. A good example is the long history of religions, which go through periods of stagnation and renewal.

focus on the role of the warm stream in renewal. That warm stream takes many forms, not all of them appropriate at all times. It may concern ethics and a mode of living; it may concern the sense of human wellbeing; it may concern deep sense of justice for the poor and oppressed; it may concern the sense of faith and commitment; it may involve inspiring songs, flag-waving and marches; but above all it concerns the hope for a better future, especially one that is qualitatively different. Without this, Marxism loses the ability to inspire people.

Anatoly Lunacharsky and the Russian Revolution

The rest of my paper explores some examples of this process of renewal within the history of socialist movements. These concern the Russian Revolution, Western Marxism and the recent phenomenon of eco-socialism. The first example focuses on a relatively unknown figure, Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933). After the Russian Revolution of 1917 (October), Lunacharsky was appointed the first Commissar for Enlightenment, with responsibilities for education, art and literature. He himself was a poet, playwright, gifted orator, art and literary critic, and philosopher, with a particular concern with religion. But I am interested here in the younger Lunacharsky when he joined the Bolsheviks in the first decade of the 1900s.

In 1908 and 1911 he published two volumes of a work called *Religion and Socialism*.² As an aside, the reason for the neglect of this work is due to the condemnation by Lenin of the first volume. This condemnation was as much political and personal as it was philosophical, but the result was that it was largely ignored (even though Lunacharsky maintained the underlying assumptions of the work and they informed his later thoughts on education and art). When I began searching for this work, it proved difficult indeed to find it, so much so that it seemed very much a lost work. Eventually, a colleague of mine found a copy in the Lenin archive in Moscow, with the result that we are the only possessors of a scanned copy in the world.

Religion and Socialism is a very rich work, full of insights that anticipate later developments in Marxist thought and politics. My interest here is Lunacharsky's emphasis on a Marxism of the heart. He defines Marxism as both a scientific system and a 'deeply emotional impulse of the soul'.³ He identifies two possible sources for this warm stream: art and religion. As far as art is concerned, he felt strongly that the best achievements of art – in all forms – should be preserved in order to inspire people in the Soviet Union. They should not merely be preserved; they should be lifted to another and higher level. The great works of literature, sculpture, painting,

² Anatoly Vasil'evich Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1* (Moscow: Shipovnik, 1908); Anatoly Vasil'evich Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 2* (Moscow: Shipovnik, 1911).

³ Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 9.

and architecture should form part of the very new world being constructed under socialism. He even extended this sense to church buildings. An incident soon after the October Revolution of 1917 illustrates this sentiment very well. During the meeting it was reported that a beautiful cathedral had been destroyed in St. Petersburg, by crowds eager to tear down the symbols of old power. Upon hearing this news, Lunacharsky stood up, resigned from the government, and left in tears. It turned out that the news was incorrect and Lunacharsky withdrew his resignation.

But I would like to focus on his intriguing argument concerning religion.

Lunacharsky was an atheist, yet he saw deep value in religion. How so? Four features of religion are relevant. First, he argued that the 'dreams of humanity' are expressed in 'religious myths and dogmas'.⁴ What he means here is that the gods and heroes of religion provide images of the ideals of human achievement. By comparison, we are like raw materials that still need to be shaped so that we can draw nearer to those ideals. We have an extraordinarily long way to go before we achieve the ideals of human activity. In this light, we can see why his approach was called 'god-building': human beings would seek to build themselves up to be like the gods.

Second, this process has crucial turning points without which god-building would not be possible. The main turning point is of course a communist revolution. For Lunacharsky, the revolution was an intense time when the new person may

⁴ Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 7.

begin to be constructed. During the revolution he was full of excitement, sharing it with everyone around him. He said, ‘These events are epoch-making! Our children’s children will bow their heads before their grandeur!’⁵ For him, the revolution was ‘the greatest, most definitive act of “god-building”’.⁶

Third, an often neglected part of that revolution is the tradition of Christian communism.⁷ This tradition has both communal and revolutionary features. The communal side goes back to the earliest Christian practice of having ‘all things in common’⁸ and has been found in Christian groups ever since. The revolutionary side involves criticism of oppressive conditions and the organisation of revolutionary overthrow of those conditions. This Lunacharsky finds in the ancient Hebrew prophets all the way through to Marx, whom he describes as ‘the greatest of the prophets’.⁹

My fourth point really sums up Lunacharsky’s position. Here we need to ask what he really means by religion. He does not mean the belief in divine figures; he

5 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 1.

6 Anatoly Vasil'evich Lunacharsky, *Velikii perevorot [The Great Upheaval]* (St. Petersburg 1919), p. 31.

7 On this matter, Lunacharsky relies on Engels and Kautsky. Friedrich Engels, 'The Peasant War in Germany', *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (vol. 10; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1850 [1978]), pp. 397-482; Friedrich Engels, 'On the History of Early Christianity', *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (vol. 27; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1894-5 [1990]), pp. 445-69; Karl Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation* (trans. J. L. Mulliken and E. G. Mulliken; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897); Karl Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity* (trans. H. F. Mins; London: Socialist Resistance, 2007 [1908]); Karl Kautsky, *Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus I: Kommunistische Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976 [1895-97]); Karl Kautsky, *Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus II: Der Kommunismus in der deutschen Reformation* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976 [1895-97]); Karl Kautsky and Paul Lafargue, *Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus III: Die beiden ersten grossen Utopisten* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1977 [1922]).

8 This text is found in the Bible, Acts 2: 2:44-45; 4:32-35.

9 Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 188.

does not mean a supernatural world that is control of this one. Instead, religion concerns the emotive, collective, utopian, and very human elements of religion. Religion addresses the fundamental needs of the human spirit¹⁰; it is nothing less than the expression of enthusiasm and hope.¹¹ And religion can show us what faith means. Where does he find these features? He finds them in the core of religion, in its stories, ideas, and the anticipation of a better world. At one point he suggests that the 'religious consciousness' is the connection between the collective ideals of socialism and the organic needs of individual life.¹²

This, then, is how Lunacharsky sees the warm stream of Marxism. It was the form of Marxism that appealed deeply to him and other Bolsheviks before the Russian Revolution. In fact, this is what brought about his 'conversion to Marxism'.¹³ However, Lunacharsky was also aware that Marxism should involve both the cold and warm streams. As he wrote: 'The socialist ideal and socialist science prop up each other like the two halves of a magnificent arch'.¹⁴ Marx was, he suggests, both a scientist and a moral philosopher.

¹⁰ Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 21.

¹¹ 'Religion is enthusiasm and "without enthusiasm it is not given to man to create anything great"'. Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 228. On hope, Lunacharsky quotes the Apostle Paul: 'we are saved by hope' (Romans 8:24). Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 49.

¹² Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 2*, p. 126. I should say that Lunacharsky was fully aware of the dangers of religion. He notes again and again that a religion like Christianity has supported one tyrant after another, and that it can easily be oppressive and destructive. Indeed, this reality leads him to the insight that religion is politically ambivalent: the same religion may be both oppressive and liberating.

¹³ Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Lunacharsky, *Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1*, p. 17. See also: 'The clearest of intellects can and should be joined with a warm and responsive heart'. Anatoly Vasil'evich Lunacharsky, *On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 198.

I would like to close this discussion of Lunacharsky by asking why he made this argument. What was the context for his project in *Religion and Socialism*?

Lunacharsky was responding to a tendency in the Second International¹⁵ towards the ‘cold stream’ of Marxism. This was the scientific side of socialism that distanced itself from Hegel and even the Hegelian elements (the dialectic) of Marx’s own thought. That tendency was deeply influenced by the two major works every one read at the time: Engels’s *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and *Anti-Dühring*.¹⁶

Although they did an excellent job in spreading the core ideas of Marxism in readable form, they tended to stress the scientific dimension of Marxism at the expense of its emotional appeal. (In fact, Engels was able to express this moral appeal in other works, but these were not read). In Russia, this approach was championed by the ‘father of Russian Socialism’, Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918). In other words, this dominant, cold stream was producing stagnation within Marxism, both internationally and in Russia. Among others, Lunacharsky felt that renewal was required, and he attempted to do so by trying to recover the moral and enthusiastic appeal of Marxism.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Second International (1889–1916) was an organisation of international socialist and labour parties that formed in Paris on 14 July, 1889. It followed in the footsteps of the First International, which Marx and Engels had established. At the inauguration of the Second International, representatives from 20 countries attended. It also instigated 1 May as Labour Day, 8 May as International Women’s Day, and began the campaign for the eight-hour working day.

¹⁶ Friedrich Engels, ‘Socialism: Utopian and Scientific’, *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (vol. 24; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1880 [1989]), pp. 281-325; Friedrich Engels, ‘Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science’, *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (vol. 25; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1877-8 [1987]), pp. 3-309.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Lenin too felt that Second International socialism was stagnating. However, his effort at renewal was to rediscover Hegel’s dialectic (he did so in 1914). That rediscovery would lead soon enough to the success of the Russian Revolution.

Ernst Bloch and Western Marxism

The second example concerns the Western Marxist, Ernst Bloch (1885-1977).

Although Bloch came later than Lunacharsky, he was responding to a similar tendency in the Marxism of his own time. For Bloch the stagnation of Marxism in the mid-twentieth century was happening under Stalinism (I should say that Bloch and many other Western Marxists perceived Stalinism in this way, although the reality was far more complex). Bloch experienced this tendency in his own life. As a professor at the University of Leipzig in East Germany, he was attacked and then banned from teaching. Soon after (1961), he resettled in West Germany.¹⁸

What was Bloch's response? He explicitly set out to recover the 'warm stream' of Marxism. Indeed, the term 'warm stream' – which I have been using – was Bloch's own creation. Like Lunacharsky, Bloch also draws upon religion to renew Marxism. He was especially interested in the Bible. In the Bible, Bloch finds the origin of the revolutionary tradition. From the Bible, it runs through history to the Peasant Revolution in sixteenth-century Germany, and then down to his own day. But why does the Bible provide revolutionary inspiration? Quite simply, he finds in the Bible a vast store of themes, images, and stories that give expression to hope. Bloch calls this hope 'utopia' – a term he seeks to recover for Marxism. By utopia he means

¹⁸ Bloch was actually visiting West Germany at the time the Berlin Wall began to be built in 1961. He decided the stay in Western Europe.

neither useless dreaming, nor conservative desires to return to a mythical 'Golden Age'. Instead, utopia means a socialist hope for the future.¹⁹

Bloch searches for indications of this utopian hope in a very wide range of unexpected materials: literature, music, poetry, human psychology, but also popular culture, myth and folktale. But his prime source (along with the work of the German poet Goethe) was the Bible, especially its myths. We need to be careful at this point, for Bloch does not seek utopia in the central ideas of the Bible – such as creation, chosen people, sin, redemption in Jesus Christ, the origins of the church, and so on. Instead, he finds utopian themes in the stories of resistance. These are the moments when the people rebel against an oppressive God, rebellions that are usually depicted as 'sins'. This oppressive God is the one who supports oppressive rulers such as Moses and the later kings. Other biblical figures also challenge such oppressive power: the legendary man called Job who challenges God to answer his questions concerning suffering; the prophets who spoke out against injustice; and Jesus who urged revolutionary resistance to the Roman Empire. Bloch was also interested in the marginal (heretical) groups; those who were pushed to the margins and read the Bible in different and unorthodox ways. All of these express what he calls a desire for human beings to come out of hiding (*homo absconditus*) and engage in a protest atheism against the gods of power and oppression.

¹⁹ Fredric Jameson has suggested that 'utopia' is simply another word for socialism. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005).

This approach to the Bible requires a subtle method of interpretation. I would like to call this method a discernment of myth. What does this mean? It means the need to read myth insightfully in order to discern the moment of resistance in the myth. Again and again, the myths tell stories of rebellion, yet the revolutionaries are always punished. When people challenge their leader (Moses) in the desert, they are condemned and are often killed. When human beings disobey God in the Garden of Eden, they are expelled from the garden. For Bloch, these moments of rebellion are glimpses of hope. Indeed, they indicate the possibility that human beings may stand on their own feet and determine the course of history (as happened with the peasants and workers in Russia and China).

However, Bloch is fully aware that these moments appear in reactionary and oppressive myths. Can we then simply extract these moments of rebellion from the oppressive myths? It is not so easy to do so. Now Bloch's analysis becomes deeply dialectical. He points out that the rebellious elements of biblical myths (or indeed any myths) would not have been preserved were it not for their reactionary nature. The possibility of hope emerges from the forces that try to crush that hope. In other words, in these myths rebellion is inseparably tied to reaction. Will this always be the case? Only when reaction is overcome in a successful revolution does the dialectic move to another level.

Let me close this discussion of Bloch by asking why he draws on the Bible to recover the 'warm stream' of Marxism. An obvious answer would be that the Bible is the most important collection of literature in Europe, let alone many other parts of the world. At this level, his attention to the Bible would be like turning to Chinese Classics, or perhaps Confucius, to recover the warm stream within Chinese Marxism. But we can go further. Bloch also wanted to challenge his fellow Marxists to reconsider the Bible as a source of hope. Not to do so would limit the ability of Marxism to appeal to the people. This brings me to the deepest reason for focusing on the Bible. Bloch was fully aware of the fact that the Bible was the most significant influence on the peasants and workers who supported socialism. Or rather, the ideological framework of the world in which they lived was determined by the Bible. The Bible's stories, its characters, its themes and ideas, informed every aspect of their lives. They lived in a biblical culture. And it was that culture which also inspired them to support the revolutionary movements of socialism. The history of European revolutions reveals this very clearly. So Bloch set out to find out what it was about the Bible that inspired these peasants and workers in such a way.²⁰

²⁰ It is worth noting that Lenin too made wide use of the down-to-earth language of the Bible to appeal to peasants and workers in Russia. See further Roland Boer, *Lenin, Religion, and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Eco-Socialism

The third example of the warm stream of Marxism is a little different. It concerns what is called 'eco-socialism', which is a contemporary example and a different source of inspiration from Lunacharsky and Bloch. The position of eco-socialism is that any substantial improvement in the environment also requires significant social change. In other words, market based approaches such as emissions trading schemes will simply not do the job. Why? The environmental destruction on the scale we have now is the result of capitalism. The reason is that capitalism requires constant expansion to survive. It must expand its 'markets' in three ways. First, it attempts to turn more and more of the world into capitalist markets. New consumers of its products are constantly required.

Second, capitalism increasingly turns more things into commodities. Land is one of the best examples. It is one of the most astonishing achievements to turn pieces of earth into private property.²¹ Apart from land, we now find that all sorts of things are becoming commodities, pieces of private property that can be sold. Ideas have become private property ('intellectual property'), but so also has genetics (seeds, animals, genetically modified plants), water, and now there is talk of air becoming a commodity.

²¹ Karl Marx, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. III', *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (vol. 37; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1894 [1998]). Think about it for a moment: if I buy a piece of land (where that can be done in the world), what do I really own? How deep does the land go? Is it ten metres down? What if I get a bulldozer, dig out this land and take it elsewhere – say in a beautiful place beside the ocean? Is that still my land?

Third, in parts of the world already saturated by capitalism, it seeks to generate new 'needs' that people never realised they had. This is expansion by intensification. For example, I am old enough to remember a time without the internet, without computers and without mobile phones (let alone smart phones). Now, many people cannot imagine a world without them. Yet, we used to manage perfectly well without all these things. However, since then the mechanisms of capitalism have put us in a position that we feel as though we 'need' them. They have created these 'needs'. (I should say that I still enjoy being without all these things. The most pleasurable times are when I am hiking in the mountains, with just a tent and some food. Or when I am on a long voyage by freighter ship, on which there is no internet and no phone coverage. No one can contact me, and it is wonderful.)

So capitalism needs to expand: in terms of more consumers, the turning of more and more things into commodities that can be sold, and the creation of new 'needs'. The problem with this unceasing expansion is that it takes place on a limited planet.²² Ultimately, we cannot keep expanding capitalism, since the planet is a finite thing. Even more, this expansion results in imperialism, war, neoliberal globalization, racism, poverty and the destruction of community. All of this leads to environmental destruction. Each year, more and more plant and animal species

²² This is the argument made by Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

become extinct. Fresh water has become increasingly scarce, and air pollution has become a health-threatening reality. Even the climate has been affected, with global warming the result of ever-expanding use of fossil fuels (the latest being coal-seam gas). These realities suggest that the proposed solutions thus far are inadequate. Cleaner cars, more efficient appliances, carbon taxes, emission trading schemes ... what these and other measures do not question is the very system that has produced the problem itself.

In response, eco-socialism argues that the capitalist system itself needs to be challenged and changed. It begins by questioning the widespread assumption that human beings are rational, self-interested individuals who live in a 'market economy'; instead, human beings are primarily social creatures. Even economic relations are primarily social relations. But eco-socialism goes a step further to point out that we are not only social, but also part of nature. Human beings are not separate from nature, but very much part of nature. This position challenges a long tradition that sees human beings as in some way special, as distinct from all other species. We are not special, argue the eco-socialists, for we too are a species of animal.

Since social and natural relations are so closely related, eco-socialists argue that a profound social change is part of bringing about change in the natural

environment. They propose that only socialism can do so.²³ At this point, eco-socialists have different positions of what constitutes socialism. Some hold to an ideal socialism that has not yet been achieved, in which the state has disappeared and production is owned communally. Others argue that socialism has taken and may take different paths (Russia, eastern Europe, China, Vietnam and so on). Others argue that socialism still needs a strong state, for that state is able to coordinate the measures needed for environmental improvement. Ultimately, the key to socialism is to refuse the unending expansion of capitalist markets. Instead, the old communist slogan is relevant once again: from all according to their ability and to all according their need. Or as Chairman Mao put it, 'from the masses, to the masses'.²⁴

In the end, eco-socialists draw their inspiration from Marx and the Marxist tradition. They argue that Marx 'was a main originator of the ecological world-view'.²⁵ In the third volume of *Capital*, Marx writes:

23 There is even an Eco-Socialist International, founded in 2007, See <http://ecosocialistnetwork.org>.

24 Zedong Mao, 'Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership', *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (vol. 3; Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1943 [1963]), pp. 118-22 (120). I should point out that eco-socialism has also has an influence in China, especially through Pan Yue, the Vice Minister since 2008 of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Pan Yue is fully aware of eco-socialist thought, although he does find it too idealistic and lacks concrete suggestions as to solving problems. This is precisely what he and others have undertaken, since the environment cannot handle constant economic expansion. For Pan Yue, eco-socialism gives existing socialism new life, for the sake of a harmonious, resource-saving and environmentally-friendly society. In 2010 he received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for 'for his enterprising leadership and undeniable success in demonstrating how village-level economic development can be achieved without damage to the environment'. See <http://www.rmaf.org.ph/newrmaf/main> and <http://www.rmaf.org.ph/newrmaf/main/awardees/awardee/profile/59>.

25 Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* See also John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology* (vol. Monthly Review Press: New York, 2000); Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1999).

From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.²⁶

Why do these proposals constitute a warm stream within Marxism? I suggest that three steps take place to produce an ethical and political commitment. It begins with the bodily response to the physical reality of environmental degradation. You find that air pollution makes your eyes water and throat irritated. Or polluted water makes you sick or you smell fish that have been killed by a polluted river. You eat meat that is contaminated by heavy metals and feel ill. Or you live near a collapsed nuclear power plant (Fukushima) and see the effects of radiation. Or someone you know may die from pollution related illness. Second, these physical and bodily responses produce an emotional response. You become alarmed and perhaps fearful at what is happening, and think of your children and grandchildren. What world will they inhabit if it gets much worse? This emotional response leads to commitment to a cause to improve the environment. However, there is a third necessary step: a rational assessment of what needs to be done. This is where eco-socialism provides a compelling answer. But you would not have

²⁶ Chapter 46 of Marx, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. III', pp.

arrived at this rational response without the bodily and emotional response to the situation. In other words, the renewed interest in Marxism is generated by this warm stream that encourages people to become part of the movement. This is especially so among young people, for they will inherit the earth.

The ecological dimension of socialism therefore constitutes a recent example of the warm stream within Marxism. I should also say that it is part of a wider sense – again among many young people – that global capitalism is no longer valid, if ever it was. But let me ask: to what does eco-socialism respond? Obviously, it is a response to environmental destruction under capitalism. However, at a deeper level it is also a response to the stagnation and even decline of Marxism. Not long before eco-socialism emerged, communist states in Eastern Europe had collapsed (1989) and capitalism was proclaimed triumphant. Marxism faced not merely stagnation, but decline, retreat, disarray and even collapse – at least in the perception of many.

Yet the result has been anything but collapse. Instead, it has led to possibly to the most significant renewal of Marxism. This renewal began already in the 1990s, but gathered momentum in the 2000s and into the 2010s. A whole new generation is showing renewed interest in Marxism, along with other radical movements. With my growing awareness of China, I can say that here too renewal is underway. The specific conditions are of course particular to Chinese concerns, but I notice the signs of a fascinating renewal which is bred out of sense of stagnation. Perhaps the

emphasis on Confucianism over the last decade is a signal of the need for renewal through a warm stream. Or the renewed focus on Chairman Mao and the Marxist project by young people. Or even President Xi Jinping's 'mass line' campaign, in which he not only invokes Mao and goes to the countryside, but even speaks about 'faith' in socialism and the party.²⁷

Conclusion

Out of many possibilities concerning renewal via the warm stream in Marxism, I have discussed only three of them: the proposals of Lunacharsky concerning the emotive, collective, utopian, and very human elements of religion; of Bloch concerning the revolutionary traditions of religion and their ability to express hope; and of eco-socialism as a way of channelling the increasing concerns over environmental destruction towards a socialist path. I have also suggested that some of the more recent developments in China may be seen as signs of a desire to draw once again upon that warm stream, which may foster faith in the movement. I have left aside the question of whether these are best approaches to the renewal of Marxism. At one level, each response depends upon the specific circumstances. What worked in one situation may not work in another. At another level, the

²⁷ Xi Jinping calls 'faith' the 'master switch' for the party. Indeed, 'Ideals and belief are like vitamins for communists', and without them the party will suffer from 'vitamin deficiency' and consequently get 'rickets'. Here he invokes Mao yet again, who wrote in 1925: 'I have faith in communism and advocate a proletarian social revolution'. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2014-03/23/c_133208015_2.htm

continual reappearance of the warm stream (in its various forms) signals that Marxism does indeed need this dimension to remain vibrant and alive. How this will work out in China is, for me at least, a fascinating question.

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