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Concerning the “Warm Stream” within 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. Ideally, they engage dialectically with one another. They are distinct, yet they necessarily interact to produce the richness of Marxism. My focus is primarily the warm stream, which continually reappears when the “cold stream” dominates. With an overwhelming focus on objective scientific analysis and on what is possible in the given circumstances, it risks confusing the final goal for short-term achievement and failing to inspire those who wish to identify with Marxism. 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 understand this process, this article analyses some earlier historical examples of such renewal. It begins by dealing with the criticisms of utopian socialism in Marx and Engels, since this had a significant effect on the way the warm stream was subsequently perceived. Then the article analyses the contributions of Anatoly Lunacharsky before the Russian Revolution and Ernst Bloch in Western Marxism. The unexpected dimension of their work was to draw upon the religious revolutionary tradition as one source for the warm stream of Marxism.

KEYWORDS

Marxism; warm stream; Anatoly Lunacharsky; Ernst Bloch; Marx and Engels

To the *warm stream* of Marxism, however, belong liberating intention and materialistically humane, humanely materialistic real tendency, towards whose goal all these disenchantments are undertaken. (Bloch 1995, 209; italics original)

I would like to explore one of the major, albeit at times controversial, resources for the renewal of Marxism. It is what Ernst Bloch called the “warm stream”: the Marxism which excites political passions, which makes one enthusiastic for liberation, which causes us to hope and have faith in a cause. In short, it is the Marxism that rises again and again in the face of disappointment and disenchantment. The other side is then the “cold stream” of Marxism, where we have the scientific side of socialism, with its detailed engagements with economics, society, and history itself. Let me be clear: although these two dimensions, of the heart and of the head, may at times appear to have little in common with one another, they are both dialectically necessary for Marxism to thrive. However, my interest in this case is the warm stream and its ability to provide sources for Marxism’s renewal.

What does it mean to say that this warm stream of Marxism is a significant source of renewal? A project such as socialism has a tendency to stagnate from time to time.¹ It runs 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 such periods. Scientific analysis becomes more important, with its economic, social and political theories. The danger is that the final goal is forgotten due to immediate circumstances and the focus on what is possible in the shorter term. Marxism becomes flat and fails to inspire people. Of course, the warm stream also has its deleterious effects. Now the result is not so much stagnation as impractical dreaming, with a real danger that people may be misled through false and exaggerated promises and hopes of utopian fanaticism. Spontaneous revolutionary activity, without detailed organisation and planning, may result, leading to the crushing of the revolution by the forces of counter-revolution.

The following analysis primarily concerns the beneficial effects of the warm stream with Marxism. However, as a foil for my argument and in order to set the context, I begin with the negative side. This concerns the struggles of Marx and Engels with utopian socialism, which both influenced them deeply but which they sought to counter through political manoeuvres and sustained scientific analysis. The downside of the initial work of Marx and Engels is that it rendered any manifestation of the warm stream suspect (it could simply be denounced as “utopian socialism”), even though both of them exhibited significant aspects of that dimension in their works. The subsequent sections of my argument explore a couple of notable efforts to recover the warm stream: Anatoly Lunacharsky’s invocations of art and a very different understanding of religion as a “deeply emotional impulse of the soul,” without which Marxism was much the poorer and threatened to lose its sense of mission; and Ernst Bloch’s complex dialectic of the two “red streams” in his philosophy of hope, for which the revolutionary tradition of religion—which Kautsky called “heretical communism”—was a key factor. Many other instances of the warm stream of Marxism might be discussed here, such as Marxist feminism or Marxist humanism, and it has many forms, although not all of them appropriate at all times. It may concern ethics and a mode of living; it may concern the sense of human well-being; it may concern a deep sense of justice for the poor and oppressed; it may concern the sense of faith and commitment; it may focus on environmental concerns (eco-socialism); but above all it concerns the hope for a better future, especially one that is qualitatively different. Without these elements, Marxism loses the ability to inspire people.

Marx, Engels and utopian socialism

I begin with the potentially detrimental manifestations of the warm stream, in order to contrast it with the more positive forms I discuss later. In particular, I am interested in the utopian socialism that dominated the early European communist movement when Marx and Engels joined it in the 1840s. This utopian socialism, inspired by Saint-Simon and Proudhon, sought to transform Christianity’s teachings into a code of ethics

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.

for communal living, with a focus on “brotherly” love and without all the supernatural trappings. This moral vision and sense of progress in human society towards collective love was coupled with a distinctly apocalyptic sense of an imminent transformation towards a new world order. It inspired German thinkers and activists like Heinrich Heine, August von Cieskowski and especially an early collaborator with Marx and Engels, Moses Hess (Breckman 1999, 131–76). For instance, in his popular *Die Europäische Triarchie* (The European triarchy), Hess proposed that the fusion of the Young Hegelian criticism of theology, French socialist politics and English industrial materialism would soon bring about the total collapse of the existing order and usher in a new age (Hess 1841, 1837, 2004; Kouvelakis 2003, 121–66). These currents also influenced other leaders of the early German communist movement, such as Hermann Kriege, Karl Grün, Gottfried Kinkel and Wilhelm Weitling (Weitling [1842] 1955, [1843] 1969; Boer 2014, 135–40). Marx and Engels devoted almost too much energy in opposing what they regarded as impractical and dangerous dreaming, with the potential to mislead the fledgling workers movement into futile revolutionary action (Marx and Engels [1846] 1976; [1845–46] 1976, 484–530; [1852] 1979). For Marx, this French-derived socialism “sentimentally bewails the sufferings of mankind, or in Christian spirit prophesies the millennium and universal brotherly love, or in humanistic style drivels on about mind, education and freedom” (Marx [1852] 1979, 142).

However, the most systematic and accessible depiction of utopian socialism appears in Engels’s widely read text, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” an extract from his *Anti-Dühring* (Engels [1880] 1989; [1877–78] 1987, 281–325). With his characteristic clarity, Engels maps the development of modern socialism from its material and theoretical precursors: class antagonisms between the emerging proletariat and bourgeoisie on the one hand, and, on the other, the strands of critical reason of the eighteenth century, namely, the three great utopian socialists of the early nineteenth century (Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen) and Hegel’s dialectics. Engels is careful to situate these developments in the context of the growth of capitalism, its class conflicts, and its systemic oppression of the growing working class at the hands of rapacious capitalists. But my interest is in his depictions of the utopian socialists.

In each case he is deeply appreciative of the insights made. Saint-Simon discerned the class war of the French Revolution in terms of an idle and defunct nobility, the new bourgeoisie and the vast masses of “non-possessors.” He may have passionately proposed a “new Christianity,” a religious bond forged by the union of science and industry, but he foresaw the transformation of politics into the direct administration and direction of production and distribution—in short, the abolition of the state. Fourier was one of the most able satirists of all time, deftly showing how the grand promises of the bourgeois prophets produced nothing more than worse oppression. He was the first to argue that the degree of the emancipation of women was a sure measure of general emancipation, and, above all, he showed dialectically how the age of civilisation—the last stage of four (savagery, barbarism, patriarchy and civilisation)—actually raised the vices of barbarism to a whole new and more sophisticated level. As for Owen, he expressed his enthusiasm and commitment in a calm, rational and business-like approach. Owen’s innovations took place in the context of the storm and fury of the wave of industrialisation in England (usually misnamed the “industrial revolution”), which led to the severe exploitation and immiseration of workers. He moved from his initial and widely praised effort at New Lanark to more

fully communist proposals. While New Lanark's 2,500 workers lived under relatively excellent conditions, with children cared for and taught in schools, Owen realised that they were still his wage slaves producing profits for the shareholders in the project. He saw that the key lay with the workers themselves. So he set about a large project to reform society on communist lines, attacking private property, religion and the present form of marriage. While earlier he was celebrated across Europe, with his new proposals he was ostracised from official society and business circles. Yet, he never lost his commitment to the cause, continuing to work amongst the workers, so much so that every advance by the workers was connected with Owen's name. Some ventures may have failed—such as the North American communist colonies or the workers' bazaars—but Engels is full of praise for the detail and methods of Owen's proposals, as also his realisation that they were merely the first steps to a full communist society.

Despite his appreciation of their achievements, Engels levels a number of criticisms at them. The first is that they do not represent a particular class, the proletariat (Engels [1880] 1989, 287). This point initially jars with his observations concerning Owen, who did devote his energies to the working class. But Engels's point is that the dream they had of a new society included all classes in the kingdom of reason and eternal justice. Second, these utopian socialists relied upon the man of genius, who appeared by accident in history. By his individual brilliance and prophetic enthusiasm, this genius sought to lead people to a bright new future. Little historical analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, of the production of classes and class conflict, and of the inevitability of revolution is to be found in their works (287–88). Third, they believed that the obvious reasonableness of their proposals would win all to the cause. Once people simply understood their proposals as the absolute expressions of reason, justice and truth, they would see how correct they were. These two points coalesce in his next criticism: the conflict of absolute truths, which leads to a mishmash of economic theories, social analysis and proposals for the ideal communist society. Such a situation can only lead to an “eclectic, average socialism” (297), one without any firm basis. Of course, the answer is the “scientific socialism” of Marx.

The most telling and influential criticism is that utopian socialism has become completely incompatible with Marxism (Engels [1880] 1989, 305). This criticism is both logical and historical. Logically, the scientific basis of Marxism means that the proposals of the utopian socialists, in all their enthusiastic haphazardness, become the opposite of Marxism. Historically, Engels relegates the utopian socialists to an earlier stage that has now been superseded. Utopian socialism may have played an important role when the proletariat was undeveloped, but now it is dangerous and potentially reactionary at a more developed stage. Indeed, the programmes of the utopian socialists for “duodecimo editions of the New Jerusalem” and “castles in the air” forced them to “appeal to the feelings and purses of the bourgeois” (Marx and Engels [1848] 1976, 516).

Given the influence of these works by Engels (as well as the *Communist Manifesto* itself) on the generation of socialists that followed, utopian socialism was banished to the outer darkness. With it went the “warm stream” that infuses the projects, thoughts and writings of such figures. The key was not to be one's passion for the cause but careful scientific analysis of the situation. No wonder then that the warm stream has since struggled to gain traction, for too often it seemed to be a reworked version of the utopian socialism that Marx and especially Engels relegated to history and thereby condemned. From this

perspective, it became easy to denounce the various cultural revolutions that have taken place in longer-lived socialist countries—whether in the USSR under Stalin, in Romania under Ceaușescu after his July Theses of 1968, or indeed in China under Mao Zedong. Their problems veered into the territory of the utopian socialists, with too many unfulfilled dreams of a perfect society, too much passion and enthusiasm, too much Marxism of the heart and not enough painstaking analysis of what was possible in the circumstances.

But did the warm stream really disappear with Marx and Engels? As a way into the subsequent discussion, I would like to dwell for a moment on Marx's *Capital*, the quintessence of scientific socialism. Researched and written over many years of rigorous research, with hardship and tragedy at almost every turn, *Capital* was the ultimate answer to the impractical dreams of the utopian socialists. Yet, the reader of this extraordinary work is soon struck by the sheer passion with which it is written. Turns of phrase show the stark reality of capitalist exploitation. Satire and humour reveal the obfuscations of the political economists.² Literary allusions and efforts to push beyond the limits of language witness Marx's effort to comprehend what could barely be captured in thought. Indeed, the ultimate fetish of capitalism, in which money simply produces money in and of itself, calls forth yet another image to capture the idea: "It is an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world, in which Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre do their ghost-walking as social characters and at the same time directly as mere things" (Marx [1894] 1998, 817). The examples are myriad, but the point is that in almost every carefully constructed sentence, Marx's passion and enthusiasm threaten to break out again and again.

Anatoly Lunacharsky and the Russian Revolution

With that in mind, I would like to turn to two important later efforts to recover the warm stream within Marxism. The first of these concerns 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. 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* (Lunacharsky 1908, 1911). 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, 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 the only 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. For my purposes here, I am interested in Lunacharsky's emphasis on Marxism of the heart. To be sure, he was careful to emphasise

² For instance, "The parson Malthus . . . reduces the worker to a beast of burden 'for the sake of production' and even condemns him to death from starvation and to celibacy" (Marx [1861–63] 1988, 349).

that Marxism should involve both science and passion, both calculated analysis and enthusiasm: “The socialist ideal and socialist science prop up each other like the two halves of a magnificent arch” (Lunacharsky 1908, 17).³ Marx was, he suggests, both a scientist and a moral philosopher. Yet, his predilection was for the warm stream. Marxism may be both a scientific system and a “deeply emotional impulse of the soul” (Lunacharsky 1908, 9), but he sought out the sources of inspiration in the latter. This warm stream has, for Lunacharsky, two potential sources: 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. As Lunacharsky put it when summing up a conversation with Lenin: “Everything that is more or less worthwhile in the old art must be preserved. Art-living, not museum art—the theatre, literature, music must be gently steered in the new direction of speedy revolution to meet the new requirements” (quoted in Yermakov 1975, 43). The great works of literature, sculpture, painting, 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. Rumour went around that major cultural buildings had been ransacked in Moscow, including the cathedrals of Vasili the Blessed (or St. Basil’s Cathedral in Red Square) and of the Assumption in the Kremlin. Upon hearing the rumour, Lunacharsky submitted his resignation to the government in tears. It turned out that the news was incorrect and he withdrew his resignation. The event prompted him to write a series of public pronouncements on the need to preserve ancient churches and great works of Russian cultural heritage. Lunacharsky devoted much of his considerable energy to fostering the transformation of art in the Land of the Soviets, even to new forms flourishing everywhere around him.⁴

But I would like to focus on his intriguing argument concerning religion, for here he found one of the great sources for the warm stream of Marxism. Lunacharsky was an atheist, yet he saw deep value in religion. Four features of religion are relevant. First, he argued that the “dreams of humanity” are expressed in “religious myths and dogmas” (Lunacharsky 1908, 7). In other words, 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. Yet we have an extraordinarily long process ahead of us before we can even begin to approach the ideals of human existence and activity. For this reason, he called his proposal “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 begin to be constructed. During the October Revolution he was full of excitement, sharing it with everyone around him. He was heard to say, “These events are epoch-making! Our children’s children will bow their heads before their grandeur!” (Fitzpatrick 1970, 1). For him, the revolution was “the greatest, most definitive act of ‘god-building’” (Lunacharsky

³ See also: “The clearest of intellects can and should be joined with a warm and responsive heart” (Lunacharsky 1981, 198).

⁴ For a useful, albeit brief, study of Lunacharsky, see Yermakov (1975). Fitzpatrick’s work is less interested in Lunacharsky as in the Commissariat for Enlightenment, of which he was in charge (Fitzpatrick 1970).

1919, 31). It was nothing less than the sparkling and crucial step towards fulfilling what Nietzsche had unwittingly seen: “The world is without meaning, but we must give it meaning” (Lunacharsky 1919, 31).

Third, an often neglected part of that revolution—surprisingly and controversially even at the time—is the tradition of Christian communism.⁵ This tradition has both communal and revolutionary features. The communal dimension may be traced back to the earliest Christian practice of having “all things in common,”⁶ a practice that has been found in radical Christian groups ever since. The revolutionary dimension involves criticism of oppressive conditions and the organisation of revolutionary overthrow of those conditions. This Lunacharsky finds in the ancient Hebrew prophets, from where he traces a tradition all the way through to Marx, whom he describes as “the greatest of the prophets” (Lunacharsky 1908, 188).

The fourth point really sums up Lunacharsky’s position. Here we need to ask what he really means by religion. He means neither the belief in divine figures, nor a supernatural world which is in 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 spirit (Lunacharsky 1908, 21); it is nothing less than the expression of enthusiasm and hope: “Religion is enthusiasm and ‘without enthusiasm it is not given to man to create anything great’” (Lunacharsky 1908, 288). Indeed, religion is able to show what faith and hope mean, especially faith and hope in a cause like Marxism.⁷ 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 (Lunacharsky 1911, 126).⁸

This form of Marxism appealed deeply to Lunacharsky and other Bolsheviks before the Russian Revolution—so much so that it brought about his “conversion to Marxism” (Lunacharsky 1908, 9). But why did he make this particular argument in *Religion and Socialism*? In the immediate context, he was one of number of younger people—such as Alexander Bogdanov and Vladimir Bazarov (Bazarov et al. 1908)—who joined the Bolsheviks in the first years of the twentieth century. By this stage, Lenin seemed like an old hand, even though he was in his thirties. For these younger members, the cause of Marxism drew them, as much a calling of the heart as one of the mind. Indeed, their enthusiasm drew them to the Left of Lenin, so much so that they advocated for a revolutionary push when the counter-revolution was on the upswing—a move that Lenin sought to dampen, since he saw it as foolhardy. However, Lunacharsky’s project had a larger context in mind. This was the direction of the Second International. The International, formed in 1889, had done much to unite the global socialist movement, instigating May 1 as Labour Day, March 8 as International Women’s Day, and it began the campaign for the eight-hour working day. Yet, theoretically it tended to veer towards the “cold

⁵ On this matter, Lunacharsky relies on Engels and Kautsky (Engels [1850] 1978, [1894–95] 1990; Kautsky [1895–97] 1976a, [1895–97] 1976b; Kautsky and Lafargue [1922] 1977; Kautsky 1897).

⁶ This text is found in the Bible, Acts 2:2:44–45; 4:32–35.

⁷ On hope, Lunacharsky quotes the Apostle Paul from Romans 8:24: “we are saved by hope” (Lunacharsky 1908, 49).

⁸ It is worth noting 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.

stream” of Marxism. A major reason was that the critics of Marx—Eugen Dühring is perhaps the most well-known—focused on the Hegelian dimensions of his thought. Their attack on Marx was relatively simple: Marx bases his economic and political theory on Hegel; Hegel is full of mysterious, maze-like, idealist and thereby theological nonsense (especially the Trinitarian pattern of thesis, negation, and negation of the negation—the “triad”); therefore, Marx’s work is rubbish.⁹ According to these critics, Marx thereby developed an iron law of history, based on the thoroughly idealist threefold schema of the dialectic. In response, defenders of Marx sought to distance themselves from Hegel and his perceived idealist residue in Marx’s thought. We see this process already in Engels’s *Anti-Dühring* and his study of Feuerbach (Engels [1886] 1990). He may have sought to locate Hegel as an important theoretical forerunner of Marx’s thought, but in the process he enacted an *Aufhebung* of Hegel, although in this case it had effect of producing the same move as that for the utopian socialists: Hegel was relegated to history, surpassed by Marx’s own insights and therefore of less relevance. In Russia, Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) also sought to defend the “dead dog” Hegel against attacks from critics such as Eduard Bernstein and A. Trendelenberg (Plekhanov [1891] 1974, 1928). Yet Plekhanov’s Hegel was heavily dependent on that of Engels, albeit a more wooden version of Hegel. Plekhanov’s enacted two moves on Hegel: one was to see Hegel’s philosophy—to draw an idea from Hegel as Plekhanov saw him—as expressing a truth for its time, only to be surpassed by Marx; the other read Hegel in an almost vulgar materialist fashion, thereby seeking to remove the idealist from Hegel himself. In both moves, Plekhanov destroyed Hegel while trying to defend him. The materialist Hegel was to be preserved, while the idealist was banished. And with idealism went matters such as revolutionary passion and enthusiasm, let alone any thought that religion may have something positive to contribute. The result of this imbalance was a curious stagnation in the midst of what seemed like healthy growth of the socialist movement. Among others, Lunacharsky felt that renewal was required, and he attempted to do so by recovering the moral and enthusiastic appeal of Marxism.¹⁰

Ernst Bloch and Western Marxism

Lunacharsky may have been the precursor, but it fell to Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) to offer the most sophisticated dialectical argument concerning the two “red streams.” 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 perceived to be happening under Stalinism, both in the USSR and in the global socialist movement.¹¹ For Bloch, this stagnation was political, intellectual and personal. After many years in exile during the Third Reich, he was finally invited to a professorship of philosophy at the University of Leipzig in 1949 (at the age of 64). Bloch held that fascism had not been defeated, but that it had merely moved from Berlin to Washington.

⁹ Or, as Dühring accused Marx: his theory was “based on this nonsensical analogy borrowed from the religious sphere” (Lenin [1894] 1960, 169).

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ More works on Stalin, especially biographies, are appearing all the time. Among a large field, the best are by Domenico Losurdo and Geoffrey Roberts (Losurdo 2008; Roberts 2006).

The socialist German Democratic Republic provided the opportunity for creating an anti-fascist society that would restore the greatness of German culture and philosophy. Initially, he was showered with honours. The publication of the first two volumes of *The Principle of Hope* (1995) led to the National Prize of the German Democratic Republic, and he was recognised as its leading philosopher. Eventually, he met stiff resistance from university authorities and the government of East Germany. Some of his students were arrested in the wave of protests after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, and Bloch was implicated. He escaped arrest, but was pushed into early retirement, banned from teaching and had to relinquish his editorship of the influential journal, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (German journal of philosophy). Bloch was criticised for being non-Marxist, too idealist and subjective, and ignoring the realities of class struggle and the construction of socialism for the sake of a distant and unrealisable goal. Elements of Bloch's thought may tend in that direction, but a careful reading of his work shows this was far from the case. Branded a mystic revisionist, he continued to write, isolated from intellectual life. After the appearance of the third volume of *The Principle of Hope* in 1959, he began to receive an increasing number of invitations to lecture in Western Europe. On one such occasion, he was in West Germany when construction began on the Berlin Wall (1961). He decided to stay in West Germany and was offered a guest professorship at Tübingen, where he devoted himself to writing, lectures and involvement with students. He would become one of the ideological heroes of the student protests in 1968.

The tendency in Bloch's work that his opponents in East Germany found problematic was precisely the warm stream of Marxism. Elsewhere, he writes—with a distinctly personal touch—of the need for the violin along with bread, although the communism of his time seemed to favour only the latter:

Today, however, different identity papers are demanded of persecuted teachers as well as poets. . . . The hazy glow of an aesthetics prior to realism was so radically abolished that a rift developed between the will to bake bread and the art of playing the violin, a rift that did not favour the violin. . . . In Russia, or in the narrower communist circles of Germany, historical and philosophical thinking is not seen to be determined by innate talents; yet such thinking cannot come to fruition without the license for objectivity and honesty that communism denies to it. The vehicle of world history has once again become very small, smaller than it was in the time of Feuerbach, when this image was first used, and smaller than in the time of Marx, that period of historical and dialectical richness. (Bloch 1998, 106–7)

In response, then, Bloch emphasises the warm stream as one source of hope, of passion for the cause and anticipation of the future. He designates what was to come, the homeland where we have not yet arrived, as utopia—which is really a code word for socialism.¹² We may distinguish in his work both a utopian hermeneutics and the elaboration of a philosophy of utopia (Jameson 1971, 116–59), with the former being his approach to reading for utopia in the most unexpected corners and the latter the philosophical system within which utopian hope is formulated. At his best, both hermeneutics and philosophy work together in a subtle interplay, as we see in the extraordinary work, *The Principle of Hope* (Bloch 1995).

¹² Fredric Jameson (2005) has suggested that “utopia” is simply another word for socialism.

However, for the sake of the presentation of his work, I distinguish between them, beginning with Bloch's utopian hermeneutics. Here he draws, like Lunacharsky, on religion and more specifically the Bible. Given Marxism's suspicions of religion, this move may seem surprising and unexpected, but the Bible is one of his great sources of inspiration, for here he finds one origin of the revolutionary tradition. For Bloch, the Bible is too great a text to be left to the reactionaries, and with good reason. From the Bible, the revolutionary tradition 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 utopian—that is, socialist—hope.

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 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 oppressive power: the legendary man called Job who challenges God to answer his questions concerning suffering; the prophets who speak out against injustice; and Jesus who urges revolutionary resistance to the Roman Empire. Bloch is also interested in the marginal (heretical) groups—those who were pushed to the edges 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.

This approach to the Bible requires a subtle method of interpretation, which may be called a discernment of myth (Boer 2007, 1–56). One needs to read myth carefully, attentive to the moment of resistance. 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. However, Bloch is fully aware that these moments appear in reactionary and oppressive myths. Is it then a matter of simply extracting these moments of rebellion from the oppressive myths? This would destroy the myths in question, so Bloch 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, so much so that reaction becomes the very ground and possibility of revolution.

The question remains as to why Bloch's utopian hermeneutics 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, especially 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.¹³

The other dimension of Bloch's treatment is philosophical, specifically in relation to the cold and warm streams of Marxism, which Bloch insists are inescapably and dialectically connected. At first sight, the union of the two red streams in the dialectical method may seem like a variation on the objective and subjective dimensions of Marxism. In this case, the one concerns science and the other belief, or realism and idealism, practicality and impracticality. The two poles come from different realms (head and heart) and are bound together through the dialectic. Yet the connection is not so simple, for Bloch seeks to locate the two streams within a materialist approach by calling upon Aristotle. This Bloch calls the "correlate of possibility," which determines both the militant optimism of the warm stream and the caution of the cold stream. But how is this materialist? From Aristotle, Bloch draws the distinction between material conditionality and material openness. In order to reveal how this distinction works, Bloch develops a number of fine distinctions. Let us stay with material conditionality for a moment. Initially, Aristotle speaks of the resistance of mechanical matter, what limits the possible, even thwarting what one seeks so that it becomes something else. To take a mundane example: a piece of wood cannot be turned into transparent screen that can be used as a window, or perhaps a bicycle. The material nature of the wood resists such possibilities. At the same time, this resistance is at one and the same time an expression of objectively real possibility, or *dunamis*. Thus, the very resistance of the wood opens up the objective possibility of a bookshelf or a pair of clogs. The key is that such potentiality is not in opposition to resistance, but is enabled by that resistance. This Bloch calls "what-is-according-to-possibility," his translation of *kata to dunaton*. Material resistance constitutes what is possible; and what is possible constitutes the nature of that resistance. All of this Bloch enlists on the side of the cold stream, the sober awareness of what is enabled by the given conditions.

The next step is crucial. Aristotle also speaks of the *dunamei on*, the "what-is-in-possibility." This is the other side of the possibilities generated by resistance, for it speaks of what is completely free of inhibitions. It is nothing less than the "womb of fertility from which all world forms emerge" (Bloch 1995, 207). In other words, matter is also the explosive ground of all conceivable possibilities, even the utopian hope of a far better world. Here is the material basis of hope, although Bloch signals one further shift. Aristotle still saw this nature of matter passively. Bloch, by contrast, is keen to provide matter itself with activity and agency. He finds this move in a typically heretical

¹³ 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 (Boer 2013).

stream of thought, running through the pantheistic school of Aristotelians, the physicist Strabo, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Avicenna, Averroës, and then the thirteenth century Christian philosophers, Amalrich of Bena and David Dinant, through to Giordano Bruno and ultimately the world-idea of Hegel. I write “typical,” since Bloch has a tendency to identify alternative genealogies (well before Foucault) by uncovering unexpected lines of thought. I am not sure such an approach is necessary, for the recourse to Aristotle to illuminate Marx does not ultimately need such a genealogy. But Bloch does claim Marx as the inheritor of this tradition. Without it, he suggests, Marx would not have been able to set the Hegelian dialectic on its feet, locating the world-spirit in matter and thereby identifying the historical materialist law of motion.

The purpose of this argument, however, is to locate both cold and warm streams within a materialist philosophy. Thus, coldness designates “what-is-according-to-possibility,” or considering what is in fact attainable according to the conditions, while warmth is the realm of “what-is-in-possibility,” or the very expectation of the attainable in the first place. In order to see how this is so, let me turn to another way of framing this dialectical interaction in terms of step and leap. Under certain conditions, the process towards socialism must proceed painstakingly, step by step, testing the way forward. Yet at times it becomes possible to leap forward, as Lenin, after returning to Hegel, formulated the opportunity for the Russian Revolution: “Breaks in gradualness: leaps, leaps, leaps” (Lenin [1914–16] 1968, 123–24). Instead of following the steps or stages through a mature bourgeois revolution to a socialist revolution, the proletariat could make a subjective intervention and reconfigure the conditions under which those steps should be undertaken. The catch is that “the path which has never been travelled before can only be skipped or jumped over with some failures” (Bloch 1995, 205). The risk is that a completely different goal is attained from the one imagined, which turns out to be an illusion. One need only consider the post-1991 Russia of the oligarchs and then the “illiberal democracy” of Putin to see Bloch’s point. In order to forestall such a development, the caution of the steps returns, in the reformulation of reform which now takes place after the revolution (witness China’s shift to reform in the late 1970s after a prolonged revolutionary period).

For Bloch, these two sides become the “strict determinations which cannot be skipped over” and the “unexhausted fullness of expectation” (Bloch 1995, 208). Inseparable for any revolutionary socialist project, they are yet distinct. Thus, the limiting role of analysing the situation, of engaging with what is possible in the circumstances, ensures that one is not disappointed. It pours lead in the seven-league boots, since the path to socialism is so often one that requires a steady step rather than wings. It unmasks ideologies and disenchant metaphysical illusions; it wages a perpetual struggle against obfuscations that would conceal the economic conditions of oppression and revolution. It also guards against the extravagance of utopian fanaticism found in Jacobinism or the wild enthusiasms of a cultural revolution. At the same time, the danger of the cold stream is that it slips into opportunism, philistinism, compromise and betrayal. So the warm stream comes into its own, ensuring that the project keeps focused on its goal. It views the realm of possibility—whether now or in the future—as an unobstructed and unmeasured expanse, so much so that what-is-possible remains unexhausted. For Bloch, this is the utopian *Totum*, and the source of hope amidst repeated disappointment. Indeed, the disenchantments enabled by the cold stream enable precisely this concrete hope. I would add that it is

the reason why socialism continues to inspire, why people still become socialists and why they keep trying again in spite of repeated disappointments and even failures. As he sums up, “To the *warm stream* of Marxism, however, belong liberating intention and materialistically humane, humanely materialistic real tendency, towards whose goal all these disenchantments are undertaken” (209).

I close this discussion of Bloch’s philosophical approach with two observations. First, Bloch insists repeatedly that the two red streams should never be separated from their perpetual dialectic, for then the project threatens to run into the mud, either through confusing the goal with immediate achievements on the path or through reifying the goal itself. We may speak of the respectively possible and the finally possible: what is possible in the existing conditions determines the conduct on the path, while the finally possible ensures that one does not mistake partial achievements for the goal itself, even concealing that goal. Second, he returns to emphasise the dialectical materialist basis of both streams. This entails not only the tension between what-is-according-to-possibility and what-is-in-possibility, but even more the fact that Marx discerned this process in the very workings of history and its material conditions. Thus, the historical-material substance of the path opens up the socialist goal, while the path itself opens up as a material function of the goal. Even the “warmth doctrine of Marxism” Bloch sought to recover is materialist, which he calls the front side of matter, or “forward materialism” (Bloch 1995, 210). After all, it is achieved not through some *deus ex machina* (mechanical god), but through work.

Conclusion

Bloch is, I would suggest, correct. However, in emphasising the dialectical interaction between the two red streams, he sought to ensure that the warm stream has its rightful place within Marxism. If it is neglected or pushed aside, Marxism confuses the goal with short-term achievements, falling into opportunism and betrayal. Above all, it fails to inspire those involved in the cause. This too is what Lunacharsky realised as he sought to identify what drew him and other radical Bolsheviks to the movement. For Lunacharsky, the appeal of Marxism is also due to its enthusiasm and hope, its collective and utopian drive. In order to identify how the warm stream works, Lunacharsky, like Bloch, sought to gain insights from the unexpected dimension or religion, albeit without the supernatural trappings. At the same time, their proposals are not universally applicable, for the nature of the warm stream varies depending on the specific circumstances. At times, it may be inappropriate and lead to utopian fanaticism, but at other times—especially during stagnation through the dominance of the cold stream—its recovery plays a crucial role. For Lunacharsky, this was the direction of the Second International, while for Bloch it was the stagnation of the international communist movement, which he experienced in his own life. The continual reappearance of the warm stream (in its various forms) signals that Marxism does indeed need this dimension to remain vibrant and alive.

I close on a slightly different note by asking what about the situation now. The greatest recent challenge to Marxism was the collapse of Soviet Union and communist states in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991. For many—Marxists included—this signalled the end of socialism as such. Marxism faced not merely stagnation, but decline, retreat, disarray and even collapse—at least in the perception of many. In the 1990s, these

prophecies seemed to come true, as the left was in complete disarray in many parts of the world. Yet the result has been anything but collapse. Instead, it has led possibly to the most significant renewal of Marxism in recent memory. Many of the old solutions seemed no longer viable, so, freed from the shackles of former approaches, Marxists began to re-examine all of the old questions. This renewal began already in the 1990s, but gathered momentum in the 2000s and into the 2010s. Various factors played a role, particularly the anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation movement, along with the financial crisis in Europe and North America from 2008. New developments have arisen, such as eco-socialism, Latin America's "socialism of the twenty-first century," the Chinese programme of reform and the renewed focus on the revolutionary traditions of religion (Burkett 1999; Foster 2000; Kovel 2007; Kovel and Löwy 2001; Dieterich [1996] 2006; Bruce 2009; Sadir 2011; Boer 2007–14). In order to provide some insight into the nature of this renewal, I have gone further back in the history of Marxism to indicate that such renewal is not new, for it has arisen whenever Marxism has seemed to be in decline.

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