The Freedom of the Truth: Marxist Salt for Christian Earth

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MARXIST SALT FOR CHRISTIAN EARTH*

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INTRODUCTION

In Marxism, Liberalism, and Christianity, freedom is a central concept. In their respective ways, all three movements today are confronted with a crisis. While we cannot examine the philosophical development of the idea of freedom in detail here, it should be noted that the Enlightenment idea of the inevitability of progress marks a central point in this history. Liberalism is, as it were, the individualist and Marxism the socialist variety of "man's exodus from his self-incurred tutelage" (Kant). In both, the human being is viewed as an autonomous subject emancipated from its structural dependencies and taking control of its own history.

The ideological achievements of the Enlightenment and its atheistic humanism make possible today our self-destruction in a nuclear war, whether civil or military. In the view of many, therefore, both Liberalism and Communism are unsuccessful attempts to answer the question of peace and the defense of human dignity and values. Both come to grief, perhaps, on human autonomy, confusing as they do dependency with servitude. Not every dependency is "self-incurred" and not every dependency is tutelage. Belief in a completely perfect and happy society is proving more and more to be a superstition.

A change of direction seems to be needed: a change of direction away from the era of a supposedly objective science which dissects and analyzes everything—a science for which Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo paved the way and which Newton and Descartes produced and

directed—and towards an era which, while not rejecting scientific thought, broadens it into a total and dynamic vision of the world which also includes the spiritual dimension of human existence. The theme of this essay is the extent to which, in dialogue with an authentic Marxism which takes its bearings from and in opposition to Liberalism and in a wrestling with its own Christian tradition, the Christian idea of freedom can contribute to this necessary change of direction.

I. THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM AND ITS (ECOLOGICAL) IMPLICATIONS IN MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY

1. Development of the concept of freedom from Marx to new contemporary approaches in "Neo-Marxism"

a. Marx's concept of freedom: a further development of the Enlightenment's liberal bourgeois concept of freedom

Marx studies in both East and West are agreed that Marx's whole theoretical and political commitment was from the very beginning designed to serve liberation in one form or another. Marx was a radical democrat before he became a socialist. He strove for the achievement of democracy in Germany. Socialism and the workers' movement are the rightful heirs of the process of individual liberation which began with the Renaissance and the Reformation and which has not yet reached any generally satisfying conclusion as a result of the bourgeois revolutions. What Marx was concerned with was to make the civic rights and freedoms a reality of daily life for all human beings and thereby to abolish the limited egotistic and individualistic connotation of these rights and freedoms.

The bourgeois revolution made all (male!) adults equal in law. But despite the lapse of privileges, real inequalities continue to exist and therefore unequal possibilities of taking advantage of formally equal rights. For example, inequalities of possessions meant that the prosperous were able to make more effective use of the new legal freedoms than the propertyless and poor. With the rapid growth of a class of propertyless wage-earners, moreover, an increasingly large section of the population was excluded from "bourgeois society." Marx's objection to the liberal concept of freedom, therefore, was based on the fact that it had real significance for fewer and fewer people.

Marx also criticized this liberal concept of freedom on philosophical grounds. The liberal concept of freedom regards the individual human being as an isolated monad to which it assigns complete
autonomy; for it, the fellow human being enters the picture primarily as a limitation rather than as a complementing and enrichment of its personality. The picture of the human being underlying the liberal concept of freedom seems to be that of an isolated egotistic rival. No account is taken of the social dimension of human existence.

While the liberal aspect of the bourgeois view of freedom ignores man's social character, its democratic aspect ignores the concrete individual. Marx picks up here a distinction found in "The Rights of Man and of the Citizen" of the French Revolution and developed further by Hegel in his "Philosophy of Right," namely, the distinction between "homme" and "citoyen". In 1843, Marx called this process "political emancipation": "Political emancipation is the reduction of man on the one hand to the member of civil society, the egotistic independent individual, and on the other, to the citizen, the moral person" (Early Writings, p. 234).¹

Marx's account of the outcome of the civil emancipation movement could be epitomized as follows: the real human being is inauthentic and the authentic human being is unreal. The "citoyen" is a "moral person"; his civil State an "ideal" construction which floats in some imaginary height above actual civil society and above the human being who produces and labors. No real freedom and equality is attainable unless this opposition between bourgeois and citoyen is eliminated, and only via socialism can this elimination be effected. The human emancipation of the proletarian socialist revolution is to go beyond the "political emancipation" of the bourgeois revolution criticized by Marx. In this proletarian socialist revolution what is to be liberated is no longer the "egoism of trade" (from the restrictions of feudal control) but the human being from the "egoism of trade." The success of this liberation depends on the transformation of the human being: the transformation of the egotistic bourgeois (and of the egotistic proletarian) into a human being bound up in an alliance of solidarity with the fellowship of other producers.

In the language of Marx's early writings, this program is as follows: "Only when real individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become a species-being in his empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognized and organized his forces propres as social forces, so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of political force, only then will human emancipation be completed" (Ibid.)²

The individual who has become the species-being would therefore be morally transformed. The tension between personal and social interests would be eliminated. Morality (in the sense of the Kantian "categorical imperative," for example) would be superfluous because
there would no longer be any unsocial impulse needing to be reined in by it. But a legal system and State would also be unnecessary as morality, since it would be pointless to coerce human beings who are in any case optimally social, lovingly related to their fellow men and women, and voluntarily doing all that is required of them. Each individual would know and feel him or herself to be part of the common social force and acting in accordance with this dynamic in the interests of all the rest. State and capital could likewise disappear since their functions would have resumed in the forces and relationships recognized as social and controlled by socially-minded individuals.

Here, in the early writings and, in a somewhat modified form, still later in the "Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy" (1857/58), Marx assumes that labor would have been so transformed in a future social order that it will have lost its burdensomeness and can become for all mature human beings a quasi spontaneous and gladly performed activity. The purpose of the community control of forms of social organization is not only the elimination of the distinction between working time and leisure time but the abolition of the division of labor itself, or at any rate of the lifelong assignment to one specific type of activity, as an essential goal of the socialist revolution and of the advanced phase of post-revolutionary society. Later on, in Das Kapital, this view is replaced by certainly a more realistic view, in which the extension of leisure time, as a provisional goal valid at least for the foreseeable future, is regarded as the basis of genuine liberation.

b. The decline of Marx's theory into a theory legitimizing bureaucratic elites

The prerequisite for the degeneration of Marx's theory of revolution into (or its misuse as) a means of legitimizing political elites lies perhaps in its theory of history, i.e., in the shimmering ambivalence of this theory (to which we shall have to return later in a different context). As we all know, Marx assumed that history is an advancing process and that, in this process, the proletarian revolution is called to bring about the final liberation of humanity (human emancipation). Progress in world history is linked exclusively with socialism. The group, party or elite, which finds itself in possession of this scientific truth can logically deduce from it therefore the authorization to lead the people. This leadership can be understood as an educational aid in the emancipation of the working class (so Rosa Luxemburg), in which the working class itself must acquire the determinative insights to guide its actions from its own experience; or it can be understood (so Lenin) as an authoritative guidance
provided by the scientifically trained political cadres, who then have, of course, the responsibility for gradually lifting as many workers as possible to the level of their own scientific knowledge.

As long as Lenin had to compete with other parties for the favor of the electorate, this development of Marx's theory of history and even Lenin's party's elitist theory were not necessarily a threat to freedom and democracy. But once Lenin's party had acquired exclusive power and outlawed all other parties—not just the bourgeois ones but even the other workers' and peasants' parties which certainly existed—the "revolutionary advance-guard of the working class" was transformed, even in Russia, into the guardian—the bureaucratic guardian—of the people. The Marxist theory had thus suffered the same fate as the revolutionary bourgeois theory; instead of being a movement reflecting the interests of all, it had become an ideology masking reality and legitimizing a dominant elite—a development analogous to that which had overtaken the bourgeois revolution and which Marx himself had so sharpsightedly identified and so accurately described.

c. Critique of Marxism, its optimistic belief in progress and its ecological blindness

Without going into detail or quoting the relevant passages at length here, let me sum up in one or two points the criticism of Marxism crystallized in the two points specified in the heading of this section.

1. Marxism as "Statism" (State Control)

In harmony with the analyses of Yugoslav "revisionists," Soviet derived and oriented Marxism is characterized as "Statism": namely, the predominance of the central bureaucratic apparatus in organization, administration, leadership, and distribution of the means of production and what is produced. An undeniably higher degree of justice in the social distribution process is achieved at the cost of weaknesses in state planning and direction which prevent the maximal exploitation of available resources. Taken as a whole, Statism is the state-monopoly variety of capitalism, in contrast to the private economy capitalism of the West. There are structural differences (production conditions), differences of degree (standard of living), but no really fundamental differences.

2. The "fetishism of growth" in Marxism

The communist goal, "From each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs," can only be achieved by the maximum possible exploitation of natural resources, followed by their distribution according to diverse needs, at the expense of the achievement
of the real Marxist goal of the "naturalization of the human being and the humanization of nature."

The urge of Marxism to prove itself the better system leads to nature's becoming totally an object over against the human being. The "fetishism of products" characteristic of capitalist alienation has become the "fetishism of growth" of a "goulash communism." The pressure in favor of growth ("world level," catching up with the West, etc.) makes certain aspects of ecology and the question of technological justification taboo (nuclear power stations are built there "clandestinely," with almost cynical disregard for human considerations, accidents are played down—as the case of Chernobyl has shown; revealingly enough, there is not even a propagandist evaluation of the civil initiatives in this environmental field here in the West!). Even here, the question of real needs is not put.

3. Neglect of individuality and particularities

The Marxist-style world historical progress glorifies the triumphal worldwide advance of the European industrial system and by so doing accepts the destruction of the individual character of countless other peoples, nations, and cultures. In this conception, therefore, the world is divided into peoples who direct, form states, and have a role in world history, and peoples who are destined to decline. (We have only to recall Engels' statements about the Balkan Slavs, about the Czechs and Slovaks, the Mexicans, etc.—not to mention the question of nationalities and cultures in the Soviet system from the Ukraine to Afghanistan!) The blindness to industrialism's inherent destructiveness of every particularity derives perhaps in part here again from the materialistic picture of humanity and society which irons out all individualities and particularities.

4. Variations of the same principle

Basically, both pragmatically and ideologically, Moscow-style communism and Western-style capitalism are both variations of the same principle. In each case the goal is the "brave new world." The choice of means—the exploitation of nature in the interest of human beings—is almost identical in each case. The only difference is in the methods employed with these means: the conditions of production and the superstructure of State and society derivative from them if not entirely determined by them are different. Human enslavement and the subordination of human needs to the autonomous laws and material pressures of technological civilization are decked out in different ideologies in each case—In the one case: prosperity, equality of opportunity, freedom; in the other case: social justice, peace,
security—and yet in this manner standardized, so that the "idols" have become interchangeable.

The "unholy alliance" of "secret accomplices" is demonstrated in the common repudiation of non-conformists: Eurocommunism, etc. In the American-Soviet context, detente means freedom in one's own area of domination combined with economic exchange and the rejection of "revisionism" of any kind.

The criticisms briefly summarized here certainly apply in large measure to contemporary institutionalized Marxism, if only in part, contrary to Marx himself. Even if Marx did not (could not?) offer any reflections on the character of a non-capitalist technology, he did on the other hand clearly recognize that capitalist industrialization necessarily destroyed the ecosphere and plundered ruinously the future of the human race. Recent new approaches in Neo-Marxism are able therefore to appeal at least to Marx's intentions.

d) New Approaches in "Neo-Marxism"
1. The Human Subject and Its Inalienable Responsibility

I define "Neo-Marxism," to begin with, in Leszek Kolakowski's words as "the application of Marx's methods and conceptual apparatus to new areas of research" and this in such a form that, in Milan Machovec's words, "the genuine Marxist disciple of the 20th century (must) ask what it means to work in the 20th century in the way Marx did in the 19th century." On one point most "Neo-Marxists" are agreed; namely, in the criticism that "the most important principle of the 19th century, namely, that of concentrating on the economy above all else" has given rise to an "economism," tantamount almost to a "substitute metaphysics," whereas surely "what Marx himself wanted to do was precisely the opposite, namely, to liberate human beings from the pressure of the economic factor in order to secure them room for creative development." In Neo-Marxism, accordingly, the "problem of the human individual," so long suppressed, has forced itself to our attention.

The discovery of the human individual and his/her inalienable responsibility is accompanied by the critique of orthodox Marxism's historical determinism, in which historical progress and moral quality are merged almost to vanishing point, as Kolakowski ironically puts it: "You have only to believe in the inevitability of progress to believe at the same time in the progressive character of everything that is inevitable!" For Machovec, too, to interpret the "so-called historical necessity" as an infallible guarantee of our future, taking it to mean for example that "our victory is assured" or that "the future human being can be planned in every respect," is "something quite crude and vulgar--sheer opportunism, something which kowtows to
human laziness and inertia." Quite the contrary, "tomorrow's day can only come through the activity and commitment of the individual."\textsuperscript{10} But individual commitment carries with it the risk of failure: "the future itself is uncertain, for irreparable mistakes can also in fact be made."\textsuperscript{11} "Genuine socialism," therefore, operates with "the risk of loss," "sometimes with the certainty of loss--and the greater the likelihood of failure, the greater the moral value of the dead."\textsuperscript{12}

For Marx himself, human freedom, our historical initiative as human beings, is not swallowed up by the necessity of a natural process which unfolds deterministically. On the contrary, between nature and history there is a real dialectic. The deepest ground for Marx's position here is his anthropology, and particularly, his concept of work. "History," says Marx, "does nothing." History "possesses no immense wealth"; it "wages no battles." It is humanity, real living human beings, who do all this, who possess and struggle; "History" is not a person apart, using humanity as a means for its own particular aims; "history is nothing but the activity of humanity pursuing its aims . . ." (Holy Family, p. 125). Human history, therefore, is not just a special instance of the dialectic of nature. The difference is rather that humanity has made history, not nature. Marx differentiates very carefully between these two levels and the differences between them and emphasizes that a qualitatively new form of development has emerged with humanity. With work in its specifically human form, with work which is preceded by an intellectual establishment of the goal, history becomes the creation of humanity. "We presuppose labor in a form in which it is an exclusively human characteristic. A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax" (Capital I, pp. 283f.).\textsuperscript{14} By our human labor, we transform nature; by this transformation we at the same time transform ourselves, create new deeds and new horizons!

For Neo-Marxism, generally speaking, historical necessity and subjective activity are neither mutually exclusive nor reducible one to the other but stand in a dialectical relationship. "No providence, therefore, no inescapable destiny of the sons of men, but only hope. But not a hope of something which comes to us as an object, rather hope as something which is fulfilled--or not fulfilled--by subjective human activity."\textsuperscript{15} Plus the conviction that despite social and historical determination in many forms none of these forms relieves the human being from his or her moral responsibility since none of them cancels out the freedom of the individual to decide: "We adhere, therefore, to the doctrine of the individual's total responsibility
for his or her own deeds and to the amorality of the historical process. . . . We have no right to fob off our conscious behavior on to any factor whatsoever that predetermines our behavior, for we have in any case the power to make a decision.\textsuperscript{16}

2. Ecological Perspectives

That this emphasis on the subjective factor could at least also have ecological implications may be illustrated from Ernst Bloch who has developed similar ideas in the framework of a natural law interpreted as "maternal"--an aspect of Bloch's thought which has received too little attention, unfortunately.

Bloch sharply attacks "the ultimately defeatist heresy of an objective automatism"\textsuperscript{17} in history and emphasizes human thinking, willing, and doing. This is the "subjective factor" which notes the "contradiction of fact" and "kicks up a fuss, i.e., launches a revolution."\textsuperscript{18} In Bloch, therefore, even the theory of understanding is no ethically neutral "image theory" but a "further training or continuation theory" which concentrates on what is possible and should be realized which therefore needs not just insight into the historical process but also the ethically motivated imagination of the human agent. "Certainly an eye has its place here too, but not merely in an observing role only. On the contrary, it sees just how bad things are, how good they could be, and thus prepares to play its part in changing them."\textsuperscript{19}

Even if it was not possible for Bloch to know the present ecology movement more closely, he did indeed consciously grasp and even anticipate its recognition of the problem. In his work on "The Problem of Materialism--Its History and Essence" Bloch develops a qualitative concept of nature and employs it to attack "the absolutization of a merely quantitative and mechanical view of the essence of physical nature." He insists on the "qualitatively structured gradation of nature"\textsuperscript{20} as maintained in a continuous tradition from Aristotle by way of Thomas Aquinas down to Schelling and Hegel. For Bloch, this qualitative hierarchical structure of nature is not a static feature providing a vertical pattern of society upwards and downwards, but, on the contrary, the reflection of a dynamic movement inherent in matter. Without this graduated structure "there would have been no room at all in nature for any dialectical change from quantity to quality."\textsuperscript{21} A dialectic of nature would then be something other than the "quantitative bourgeois view of nature" which, "as Brecht says, is not interested in rice but only in its price."\textsuperscript{22} A dialectic of nature would then be, on the contrary, a "forwards-thinking of matter," forwards in the direction of homecoming. For in Bloch's view, nature no less than the human race needs such a homecoming.
The "kingdom of freedom" would then not only be a "kingdom of freedom" for humanity but would need to be delivered from such a "parochial human--only too human!--patriotism."\(^2\) The dominant interest of the bourgeois method of understanding nature is the unrestricted exploitation and pillage of nature until it is exhausted. The "principle of hope," on the contrary, demands a "concrete alliance" with nature; in other words, a "technology without violence and violation." At the same time, it would be a socialist technology, one which abandons "bourgeois technology," i.e., the technology which "hates" and distorts the world to the point of death. "The Marxist technology, when once it is thoroughly understood, is not just a philanthropy of kindness to ill-treated metals though it certainly means ending the naive transfer of the exploiter and animal tamer approach to the world of nature."\(^2\)

2. The "new creation" (kaine ktisis) as basis of the Christian concept of freedom

a) New approach in social ethics

The promise of a better world held out by modern technology has today been converted into, or at least inseparably connected with, a threat. "This situation calls for an ethic which by voluntarily curbing the forces entrusted to humanity prevents these forces from destroying humanity."\(^2\) The question therefore arises: "Must we not break open and out of the anthropocentric straitjacket of traditional ethics, and how is this to be done?"\(^2\) Break open and out of it in the direction of a new principle of conduct: "Act in such a way that you can let yourself be corrected by the consequences of your action!" This openness to correction, "the consciously built-in correctability of action," is "a maxim which takes account of the limited human measure of our capacity."\(^2\) This new ethical responsibility will necessarily consider its main task as the "balancing of the technologically feasible and the integrity of nature," since "the only way to overcome or correct the consequences of a technology which devours the natural environment on which life depends is by a corresponding technology which operates differently."\(^2\)

b) The need to say "No"

"We know we must live more simply but nothing is more complicated than living more simply."\(^2\) Certainly we shall never achieve a simpler life unless we learn that we have to say "No" even to parts of ourselves: to certain desires and dreams, to fears and neurotic suppression reflexes. To be able to say "No," however, insight and knowledge are not enough, and even assuming the necessity of changing
ourselves for the sake of the future of humanity, does the old Adam, the old humanity, know what the new Adam, the new humanity looks like? The "No" needs a strength, therefore, which is not derived from what is negated. The freedom to say "No" must be rooted in the "Yes," for renunciation is not born of want but of plenty. Sacrifices are not the fruit of contempt for the world but of love for the world. We can win the freedom to say "No" only if we do not quarry it from ourselves, for our being is not only a potential to be exploited, but something, a being, which we acquire from relationships in which we are placed.

The freedom to say "No" is not derived from the human being but comes into the human being. In other words, the human being enters into this freedom, is translated into this realm of freedom in which the law of death no longer rules but life. "The Crucified One is the beginning of the renunciation of world domination and world rule in order to live. In the death of the Crucified One, the believer's own death becomes for him or her the beginning of a new life."30

This faith, this trust and confidence in the God who raises the dead, is in the first instance a being led into nothingness: "It is God's very nature to make something from nothing. It is also impossible for God, therefore, to make anything of someone who is not nothing."31 Christ's cross and resurrection show that the human being only comes into being in being made by God. This is the root of freedom: the freedom of being unable and of not having to redeem ourselves by our own strength; and the freedom to be courageous enough--as the sinners rescued by God--to struggle for a better world.

c) The freedom of "God's children" from the "elements of this world" (stoicheia tou kosmou)

In the Christian understanding, justification is a worldwide occurrence in which God enables the individual human being and humanity as a whole within the framework of the whole creation to experience God's justice. What God intends in the justification event is the new human being, the new creation, the new order of creation: the "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (II Pet. 3:13). What is intended is the kingdom of God which Jesus brings, or of which Christ is the First Born.

If what happens in the justification event is the establishment of God's right in the world and in respect of humanity, and if this justification event takes place for humanity in the establishment of Christ's sovereignty over humanity, then there is implicit in this lordship of Christ an exclusive claim in opposition to everything else which persists in claiming to have sovereignty or power over humanity.
When God reconciles the world and humanity in the world with Godself, God's purpose is to rescue humanity from all false dependencies—from the archontes or stoicheia tou kosmou—into which, for whatever reason, humanity has fallen. The powers, the "alienation," by which humanity is enslaved, are not denied or unmasked as mere structures, nor are they expelled by exorcism; they are deprived of power "propter Christum." The humanity loved by God and rescued by God in Christ lives its new existence, therefore, the zoe aionios, not in the strength of an idea, but in virtue of "iustitia." Not humanity's own justice, of course, but the "iustitia aliena," the justice of Christ which is the basis of humanity's acquittal and opens to humanity the way to its freedom—"sola fide" and "sola gratia."

Humanity becomes free from the destructive compulsion to justify itself and from the desperate attempt to assert itself against God and to establish its own law against God. Conditions and things which have hitherto oppressed humanity are restored again to the discretion and responsibility of humanity as originally intended by God (Gen. 1:22): all things are yours but you are Christ's and Christ is God's (I Cor. 3:22f.).

Freedom is related to the human being who is the "ensemble of social relationships" (Marx); to the human being, therefore, who does not misunderstand herself/himself individualistically but is aware of her/his many social dimensions. Freedom cannot therefore be confused with complete independence or even with arbitrariness, but takes the concrete form of responsibility, for the opposite of servitude is not independence but responsibility. For the justified human being, freedom means the readiness to exercise power and government responsibly so as to order and shape the world in the direction of the divine justice which is being established in it: "God's program in history is the 'defatalization' of human life, the handing back of human life to human keeping and the transfer to humanity of the heavy responsibility of directing its own life."32

We must be careful to distinguish between dependence and servitude. Not every form of dependence need necessarily be an alienation for the human being but only those which stand in the way of her/his liberation. Conversely, there are dependencies, indispensable renunciations, which are not alienatory in character but which actually constitute the human being's freedom precisely because the human being is not an abstract individual crouching outside the world but the ensemble of a variety of relationships. The admission of our individual limits, the recognition of many inadequacies, are not therefore contradictions of human dignity; but the human will to greatness and freedom, rightly understood, also includes always an element of humility. Otherwise the myth of complete human independence would
experience very quickly the humiliating contradiction given to it by the facts of experience.

The forward vision, the anticipatory glimpse of God's successful world as revealed in the Christ event, makes the evil of the present world and its conditions intolerable. The justification event includes the affirmation and adoption of the human being as she/he is and also, in harmony with that, the promising and hopeful definition of the new humanity and a new world. Far from stabilizing existing conditions, it forces the human being into a difference with herself/himself and with the world which needs must find practical expression in action for the humanum and for the world which therefore become both in need but also capable of conformity to the new reality anticipated in the Christ event.

Christian responsibility is indivisible since no area can be exempted from it, for this responsibility is exercised as discipleship of Him who established God's right in God's world in its total and unrestricted range. The possibility of Christian responsibility is rooted in the justification event in which what God has in mind for the world and for the humanity inseparable from this world is made clear in an anticipatory way. Christian responsibility is oriented on God's still outstanding future; it has its place in the framework of the history inaugurated by God, "in which, 'already' now in the faith and in the practical discipleship of Christ of individual human beings, what has 'not yet' arrived at its goal universally and as the future of all human beings, is manifest." Awareness of this "eschatological proviso" preserves Christian responsibility both from passive fatalism and from Promethean arrogance.

d) On the profit of loss

The advantages of technological civilization are beyond question: standard of living based on the rational development of resources, worldwide communication, etc. But the disadvantages which are now beginning to emerge clearly are serious enough. The human being loses his/her sense of security by his/her dispersion in the work process and his/her isolation where he/she lives and in his/her use of leisure. The human being loses her/his sense of significance since the question of significance is external to the tangible pressures of technological civilization. It is almost taboo even to pose the question of significance, since technological civilization, as an autogenic perpetuum mobile, is curious at best only as to better ways and means of perpetuating its own means of production.

There is also a loss of the future, since the exclusion of the question of significance reduces the human being to present production and consumption. The question of the why and wherefore lies beyond
the antennae of technological civilization and industrial systems of production. Material pressures drown out questions of being. Those who like Charles Birch or Erhard Eppler ask the questions: "What sort of growth do we want? What is the cost of such growth? What is needed to achieve it?" necessarily adopt a stance opposed to the present structures of technological civilization and industrial systems of production. They will be on the lookout, therefore, for alternatives.

In harmony with what was said above (under a), the deficiencies of technological civilization can only be made good by a corresponding technology which operates differently. But if the question "What do we want?" is to take precedence over an uncritical pressure for growth and consumption and to lead therefore to a lessening of the ecological burden, the need for an alternative life-style must be communicated positively rather than negatively. Visions of horror and appeals to renunciation induce fear instead of providing encouragement. It must be made crystal clear that the attainable profit far exceeds the required renunciation.

It could perhaps be helpful here to recognize that the "era of property" is basically already over and that it is a good thing, therefore, to concentrate more on "being instead of having," as Erich Fromm puts it. Given the technological pressures of a levelling industrial civilization--in communism as well as in capitalism--is not private property becoming increasingly indefinite and pitiful? For what value has an old villa protected as an ancient monument or building of historical or architectural importance when a motorway or an airport is built nearby? Or again, what is the value today of a private dwelling compared with the privileges which once went with a farmstead or a craft industry complex? Is not the logical development of the present convergence of systems an increasing gap between property rights and property realities? In the face of the far-reaching nationalization of key industries and large service sector enterprises in the Western capitalist countries, is not the liberal formula "the broad spread of ownership" bound to strike us as no less cynical than the formula "Enterprise Owned by the People" (VEB) in the G.D.R? The serious problem lies perhaps not in property but in the propertyless functionary who sits at the levers of power and transforms entire populations into technologized components; this, too, is certainly another aspect of the problem of the exploitation of the earth and of the human being.

If this decay or these infirmities of goods and property can be accepted as a challenge, then the historical role of capitalism and technological civilization--the development of resources so that they suffice to meet the needs of all--could be lifted to a higher level.
It is now time to eliminate the danger of a further destructive exploitation by redistributing the available resources more equitably. This, together with a reestablishment of priorities, would assist the protection and continuation of these resources.

For the churches and Christian congregations, practical tasks could be to neutralize the loss of identity by a gain in identity in the area of communication. Church and parish as an integral factor in the cultural field too (leave the church in the village!); congregation as a house with an open door in whose rooms people can feel at home, and which can provide protection against fragmentation because it has a unitary and wholistic vision of life.

Great care must be taken to ensure that this church model of the "congregation for all" is not misused by being turned into a "useful idiot" to conceal and make up for the wounds inflicted by the technocratic industrial civilization, or again, that the function assigned to it in Late Capitalism is not that of turning the "distress of unemployment" into the "virtue of creativity." In the years and decades of the "society of transition," it will be important, in a "strategy of limited conflict" to maintain the option of an alternative lifestyle and to initiate educational processes for the humanizing even of the urban biosphere (urban district work, etc.).

II. IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF COEXISTENCE AND COOPERATION

1. Christian Faith in Relation to Ideology

a) Misunderstandings of the Marxist critique of religion

1. Science and technology render God superfluous

Faith in one God as presented in the biblical account of creation is incompatible with scientific knowledge of the universe, the earth, and humanity, since the scientific decoding of the laws operative in society, history, and nature and their practical application by humanity, administering the world on its own responsibility, leaves no room and no role for a God as a principle for explaining the world, as first cause, providence, and deputy for the unknown.

To this we have to reply: The methodological atheism practiced in all sciences today to the exclusion of every "God of the gaps" is to be accepted and approved without qualification. But we are not entitled to turn a methodological program into an absolute dogma designed also to exclude axiomatically as superfluous the Christian faith in God in Jesus Christ. The Christian community which worships God as its Creator is forbidden to idolize or demonize the world or to divinize or despise humanity. Science does not compel us to
disbelieve in God—or does faith in God require us to be unscientific.

2. God as a projection of unsatisfied human needs

In the footsteps of Feuerbach, Marx and Engels defined religion as the "imaginative image in human minds of those external forces which dominate their daily life"; as a "solemn complementation" and moral justification of the existing world and as a pseudo-comfort it is "opium of the people."

To this we have to reply: The God of the Bible, who appears in the Old Testament as champion and friend of the poor and needy and in the New Testament as Jesus who is Christ, in solidarity with the lowly and the outcasts of society, ends on the gallows, is not the God of wishful human thinking, of human longings and fears. On the contrary, God is the God who not only calls in question but, in the deepest sense of the word, also "cancels" out all the pictures and concepts of God dreamt up by us human beings. With Karl Barth, therefore, we hold that confession of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus as the Christ is the absolute difference which marks off Christian faith from every religious faith in God, i.e., from that religion to the criticism of which Feuerbach, Marx, Engels, and Freud have made fundamental contributions to be respected and valued even by us Christians.

The fact that the Marxist critique viewed religion only as an "expression of need" and not also as a "protest against the real need and distress," and thus failed to differentiate sufficiently between opium and "salt and light"—between an other-worldly bourgeois religion and the world-oriented message of the kingdom of God—is certainly to be explained by the centuries-long "Constantinian distortion" of the Christian message. This version has unfortunately remained the prevalent one in history down to our own day: from the "Holy Roman Empire" down to the "Christian Parties" of the present day and to the unholy alliance between the Vatican and the Reagan administration! The Marxist interest in the critique of religion is interest in revolutionary change. When Christianity no longer stands in the way of this change but even becomes the avant garde of change, then the critique of religion turns into an interest in Christianity. Konrad Farner asks: "If Christians can even be counted among the avant garde of communism, what happens then to the Marxist critique of religion?"34

b) Gospel and Ideology
1. The relativity of ideology

In the light of the Gospel, every ideology is seen as a picture of the world and society, but not as a doctrine of salvation. This
brings out clearly the relative character of every ideology, including
the socialist ideology. But relativity does not signify that the
ideology must be eradicated or fought against; it means the relative
confirmation of the ideology at a different level, without saving
character or saving claim, i.e., at a relative worldly level. "The
Gospel does not jealously erase ideology as if it were a rival force
but on the contrary sets the believer free, in the way he orders his
life and accepts his responsibility for the world, to cooperate con-
structively and critically within the framework of an ideology which
is focussed on a total political conception of society."

2. Humility as condition for the attainment of truth

Every powerful ideology tends, of course, to become exclusive and
threatens to violate the dignity and right of the individual by doc-
trinaire militancy. Unfortunately, church history has more than its
fair share of appalling examples of church militancy and Christian
fanaticism. Only if we are aware of this burden of guilt and are
deeply ashamed and penitent at the way the Gospel has been perverted
into an ideological weapon in the service of power, are we entitled
today, in respect of the socialist ideology, to point to the danger of
an ideological dogmatism and the effects of such dogmatism in the
Stalinist era, for example.

In the light of experiences on both sides, faith will limit
ideologies to the degree that they are humanly necessary and tolera-
ble; it will protect them from their own tendency to swell into doc-
trines of salvation and justification by keeping them strictly to
their true significance as powerful aids to rational, social, and
scientific research. But faith, too, is not to mistake itself for a
higher form of humanity, since this would inevitably lead to discrimi-
nation against atheists or Marxists both in theory and practice. The
believer can only be saved from sinful pride by the Pauline axiom that
the human being is "by nature" incapable of believing in God, i.e., is
an "atheist," that her/his faith is born of the Holy Spirit "ubi et
quando visum est Deo" (CA Art. V). "The human being is not lifted by
faith to a new quality but enters into a new relationship to God and
to other human beings, a relationship of faith and trust which ex-
cludes discrimination against the unbeliever."

2. Criteria of Coexistence and Cooperation

a) From "togetherness" to "mutual concern"?

1. The social relevance of justification by faith

In the secular world of today, the "works righteousness" rejected
by the Reformers takes the form of a religion of achievement.
Justification, on the contrary, means that life's ultimate significance is given to the human being by grace: we are accepted by God before all our own works and achievements. In consequence of this, approval by society takes on a different value and significance. The justified person is himself set free to work for reconciliation between individuals and groups. Cooperation in society therefore entails more than "caritas" (relief work); it also includes the changing of social structures ("love in the structures," Geneva, 1966!). In the freedom of the justified person (given sola gratia), Christians are eager to cooperate with all others in the social and political field.

2. The Church in Socialism

Despite ideological non-co-existence, therefore, possibilities of practical cooperation exist between Christians and Marxists; in work for peace, justice, and social equality, for example. Neither "inner emigration" nor opportunist conformity is compatible with the "freedom of a Christian." I adopt Günther Krusche's definition of the formula "the Church in Socialism":

We accept the social situation shaped by socialism as the area assigned to us by God for the practice of our discipleship of Christ, as mission field and opportunity to serve. Our horizon is not limited to ourselves as Church; it also includes the society in which we live as under the gracious rule of Jesus Christ. This eliminates fears and gives a large freedom: we are liberated to take the narrow way between opposition and opportunism, between rebellion and conformity, between a total No and a total Yes, in our society, the way between false dependencies and therefore the way of critical solidarity and adult co-responsibility. We are determined to be the Church within Socialism but we also remain the Church within Socialism, in other words, a distinctive entity which is not simply reducible to social terms and expectations. 37

Krusche has powerful arguments in his favor over against the view which still attracts many supporters, namely, the definition of the relationship between Christian faith and Marxist ideology as "antithetical" and the corresponding call for a "total confrontation between Church and Socialist State." For example, we are not entitled to mistake Christianity and Marxism-Leninism for ideology and anti-religion; they are to be related to the mutual "theories of social action." Above all, however, Krusche distinguishes between "socialism as social reality" and "socialism as ideology," by viewing them both sub specie aeternitatis.
Ideology as the official interpretation of the historical social situation, as economic and political strategy, as ethical goal and humanistic significance, while it is certainly a decisive factor in social reality is certainly not the only one. Social and political changes also change the ideology. Anyone who has learned to use the methods of historical criticism will also be able to see the ideology of Marxism-Leninism in its historical relativity and its historical changeability. And anyone who has learned to think eschatologically will be even less inclined to believe in its immutability.

Krusche also views Socialism in the light of the "promise of shalom" uttered by the "Lord who is at work in history" and can therefore take a different view of it than that of Socialism itself. He sees it, in other words, "as an open system in an open history," "open to the future of the kingdom of God." Krusche sees no reason, therefore, to let himself be forced into "false alternatives to Socialism" or to be mesmerized by its "eschatological passion."

Precisely because we know that we ourselves are unable to create the new world and do not need to do so, we are able with reasonable hope to help to advance society along the way which has been pointed out by the basic human impulse of socialism. But, knowing as we do of the eschatological difference between the kingdom of God and the classless society, we are preserved both from letting ourselves be paralyzed by the inevitable experiences of disappointment and from mistaking the penultimate for the ultimate.

3. Limits to Cooperation

Even in the question of the limits to cooperation, we must guard against doctrinaire and superficial global differentiations. The boundary line between Christian faith and Marxist ideology is not automatically determined by the ideology as such or by atheism. That would be to put the clock back to the pre-Marxist discussion in which the very question posed by Marxism was evaded, namely, the problem of the future of humanity in a just society. Nor does the boundary line lie even in an anti-religious propaganda or in hostile campaigns or administrative measures against the institutional church or individual Christians and congregations. For the Christian, the boundary line undoubtedly lies at the point where, in a specific case when a concrete decision is required of him/her, she/he is expected to acclaim unconditionally the ideological principles of society. But even in such conflictual and boundary situations, the Christian will pray for the strength not to succumb to the temptation to think in black and white, friend and foe, categories, and so not to let herself/himself
become discouraged or embittered or seduced into conformity and submission.

b) New Developments in Cuba

As reported in the Süddeutsche Zeitung on February 24, 1986, 181 delegates assembled for a national church conference for the first time under the communist Castro regime and declared themselves in favor of continuing the dialogue with the Castro regime already initiated by the Catholic Bishops in 1985. According to the decisions of this conference in Havana, the purpose of this dialogue is "to make evangelization with missionary boldness possible in the socialist society, to secure the rights of all citizens irrespective of their ideology, and to eliminate forever all forms of discrimination and intimidation" (Ibid, p. 9). As papal envoy, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio presided over the conference and communicated to delegates Pope John Paul II's agreement to this dialogue and to the effort to achieve agreement and conciliation with the Castro regime.

Besides this, Fidel Castro has discussed religious questions with the Brazilian Dominican Frei Betto in a series of conversations. The resultant book, *Fidel and Religion*, rapidly became a best-seller in Cuba and more than a million copies of it have already been sold.

According to a review in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (weekend edition of March 8-9, 1986), one of the main themes of the book is Castro's attempt to establish parallels and correspondences between the Christian religion and the Marxist revolution. "The decisive factor in a revolution," he says, "is morality." Most of the Ten Commandments corresponded with the moral demands of the Cuban revolution. The command to love one's neighbor is applied and embodied extremely concretely in the equality, fraternity, and solidarity demanded by socialism, and above all in the internationalist spirit. Finally, the revolution even performs miracles: "Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes in order to feed the people. What we want to do by revolution and socialism is exactly the same: to multiply the loaves and fishes in order to feed the people, to multiply schools, teachers, hospitals and doctors, to multiply factories, farms, jobs, to multiply the output of industry and agriculture, to multiply research institutes and research programs" (loc. cit., p. 7).

Christianity and Marxism-Leninism are at one in their repudiation of selfishness and greed; Castro praised the charitable works performed often under the leadership of Catholic sisters ("I have always pointed to the attitude of these nuns as a model for communists"). Castro compares revolutionaries and Communists who die for their cause with the Christian martyrs. "The religious martyr of yesterday was made of the same stuff as the revolutionary hero of today." And
again: "The communist movement has a legion of martyrs in its campaign for social justice; like the first Christians, they have everywhere been the victims of appalling vilification and brutal repression" (loc. cit.).

However strongly Castro emphasizes the parallel between religious faith and revolutionary faith, he avoids any attempt to truckle to the Church as a religious institution. Indeed, he pillories the historical sins of Catholicism and uses them to justify the Cuban revolution's hostility to religion. This was why in the past Catholics had been refused admission to the Communist Party; certainly not because they were believers, but as potential counter-revolutionaries. Even today the conditions are not yet ripe for the admission of Catholics to party membership. "At present, we are at the stage of coexistence and mutual respect between the Party and the churches." This coexistence and mutual respect includes the recognition of religious liberty as an inalienable human right. ("We consider that one must respect the rights of citizens to their beliefs just as one must respect their health, life, liberty, and all other rights—that the right of an individual to his philosophic thought and religious beliefs is an inalienable right.")

c) The freedom of the unprejudiced approach

Possibilities of coexistence and even of cooperation emerge whenever an undogmatic view of things prevails both in Christianity and Marxism. Noting, for example, that Marxism is not interested in speculative questions since its aim is to be a science of humanity and its history, not a total world-view, the Italian Lucio Lombardo-Radice concluded that scientific socialism is "a laicist doctrine" which does not lead to "any universal philosophy" and is therefore compatible with "several worldviews." The corollary of this is "complete liberty of opinion, the laicity of the State, freedom of knowledge and conscience."40

The Hungarian J. Poor also declared himself in favor of keeping an open mind on questions which cannot be answered apodictically. In his view, these include the important question as to whether there is a connection between alienation and religion or the Christian faith. In Poor's view, "there can be no agreed answer to this question at present." "But we--Marxists and Christians--consider it still more important that there is a common concern to put an end to social inequality. It will then emerge clearly where this conquest of inequality leads in connection with religion or the Christian faith."41

When Marxism refuses to make atheism a dogma, it can quite calmly leave to the future the answer to the question of God. The Swiss, Konrad Farner, states for example: "My own view is that no answer is
yet possible to this question today; it will only be possible in the
classless communist society." The question of God could certainly
then "even become the most interesting and inescapable basic theme of
a society largely relieved of material need." For even if the
question of God is the "central difference" between Christians and
Marxists, it is still not the ultimate difference, for the Christian
like the Marxist can be mistaken. "Anyone who does theology must at
least reckon with the possibility that faith is a mistake"--this
statement by Dorothee Sölle is cited approvingly by Farner, but he
reverses it and applies it to himself: "Each of us, therefore, the
Christian and the Marxist, must work for the establishment of the
Communist society, and then learn, one way or the other, whether they
are justified." The communist society as proof of God's existence?!
What a challenge for bourgeois Christianity!

III. CONCLUSIONS AND CONCLUSION

After what has already been said, we are forced to conclude that
Christianity and Marxism are certainly not as far apart from one
another as their "real distortions" (W.Z.) in East and West would seem
to suggest. While no direct convergences exist certainly, there are
favorable conditions for something of a "pro-existence in dialogue"
(W.Z.) both on the basis of the critique of religion and in view of
the view taken of freedom and matter. The "kingdom of freedom" and
the "classless society" of Marxism are certainly not altogether unre­
related to the "kingdom of God" of Christianity. The connecting point
may perhaps be in the "truth which must be done" and which therein
"makes us free" (Jn. 8:32).

Matter as active self-transcendence

E. Bloch's "warmth-giving" materialism looks to the kingdom of
freedom for the full richness of unalienated human existence. This
hope is based on "matter" as a principle--derived from "mater" (Latin,
mother)--and indeed as world-mother and inexhaustible "world womb."
Concealed within this "matter" as such is the kingdom of freedom in
the form of a not yet achieved goal, a goal still to be realized, a
really possible goal, entrusted to humanity, as an "uncompleted en­
telechy."

If matter is pregnant with this fullness for the future,
then it is not the opposite of mind, not limited, therefore, in prin­
ciple, to what is raw and uncouth, otherwise even the dialectical leap
from the body to consciousness would be unintelligible. "In order,
above all, to comprehend many other qualitative leaps in the material
development, it is obviously essential to broaden the concept of
matter which does not merely cast off mechanical eggshells but discovers and comprehends what has to count as material all the more after this casting off." Indeed, by the "dialectic as such," as pulse of life, an even more radical expansion of the concept of matter becomes possible, one which is not merely empirical but really speculative.  

This concept of matter is far removed from that "most trivial replay of shallow rationalism" of a Bücher or Moleschott, which Engels himself had already castigated as a dead materialism. Genuine Marxist materialism, therefore, is anything but a shallow bourgeois materialism; it is permeated with a prophetic and messianic spirit. Karl Rahner even goes so far as to interpret and affirm the "self-transcendence" of matter, as taught by dialectical materialism, as an "active self-transcendence" related to "existence as such," and therefore to God and God's kingdom.  

Bloch himself, of course, was not interested in this theological interpretation of his concept of matter; he was content with a "transcending without transcendence."

Community as brotherly and sisterly solidarity

For K. Farner, Communism is "a social order not a world view." As a social order, however, Communism can be justified by world-views as different as atheistic Marxism and "theistic" Christianity. Farner urges, therefore, the "de-ideologization" of "the Marxist 'science of communism'" in this respect. Viewed in this light, "Communism" could in fact be the "real utopia" common to both Marxism and Christianity. What, for example, is the difference politically between the kingdom of God which dawns in Jesus of Nazareth and the Marxist kingdom of freedom? To be sure, the kingdom of God is "not of this world" (Jn. 18:36), but it comes in this world and for this world, so that in it "righteousness dwells" (II Pet. 3:13) and "swords are beaten into plowshares" (Mic. 4:1-4). "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you, for whoever will be great among you shall be your servant and whoever will be first among you must be your slave" (Mt. 20:26). This is the ethic of a community free from domination, a social ethic which has some affinity with the goal of the Communist Manifesto: "An association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

For E. Bloch, too, the classless society will not necessarily mean the end of religion. "The really metaphysical question persists longer than the mythological transcendent answers which have been returned to it in top churches." In fulfilled socialism in particular, "the genuine, precious concerns which really suit us" will emerge "stronger than ever" in place of the "shabbiest of all concerns, the
acquisitive mania," and with them "the question of what is really wrong in life." In socialism, too, there will therefore be a "right to community," a community which is more than an "administration of things," a community which "takes very seriously the difficult question of brotherhood."48

With Bloch and Farner, I take the view that there is no chance whatever of overcoming materialistic rationalism by an immaterial--intellectually-philosophical, religious--rationalism within the traditional churches of whatever confession. It could perhaps be, however, that this structural institutional homelessness of the new is a strength rather than a weakness of what must come if our planet is still to retain one last chance. "In this world on the brink of a multiple apocalypse (ecologically, militarily, economically, morally), deliverance certainly does not lie with the reactionary 'statesmen' in East and West, nor with their helots ... but only with the last philosophers who not only interpret history but also want to transform it (as Luther once did), whether these thinking transformers be Marxists, Christians, Muslims, Socialists, Anarchists, Conservatives, Mystics, or Biometaphysicians."49

Endnotes

1 Karl Marx, Die Frühscriften, ed. by S. Landshut (Stuttgart, 1964), p. 199.

2 Ibid.

3 MEGA I,3, pp. 544ff.


5 MEW, Vol. 23, pp. 529ff.


9 Ibid., p. 191.


12L. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 94.

13MEGA I.3, p. 265.


15M. Machovec, op. cit., p. 33.

16L. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 125.


18"In einem Gespräch mit A. Reig," in Die Weltwoche, 10. August 1977, p. 43.


21Ibid.


26Ibid., p. 30.

27Ibid., pp. 36ff.

28Ibid., p. 40.

29H. Chr. Knuth, "Verzichten lernen oder die Freiheit, nein zu

_30_ _Ibid_, pp. 167ff.

_31_M. Luther, _Die Säben Busspsalten_. WA 1, pp. 183ff.


_34_ "Marxistisches Salz für christliche Erde--Christliches Salz für marxistische Erde" (Zurich, 1971), p. 20.


_38_ _Ibid_, p. 25.

_39_ _Ibid_, p. 28.


_43_ _Ibid_, p. 225.


_46_Die Weltwoche_, Zurich, 10. August 1977, p. 43.
47 Theologie des Kommunismus, p. 184 bzw. 331.

48 Ibid., Vol. VI, pp. 311, 310, and 314.