

Marxism and Religion: An essay to reconstruct the Marxist Approach to Religion

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After the dissolution of Soviet Union, “the return of religion” was pointed by some academics. Even the Cold War period, the organized religions used its political practical force in world politics. President Carter's adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's Green Belt Project shaped economically and politically one side of Islam. Soviet official atheism benefited “Christ Myth Theory” for the war against first Catholicism and second Islam.

Objectives: *The aim of the study get a literature review on Marxist principal texts about religion to describe the historical theoretical base/position of Marxism on it. The authenticity of the study is the first time the study tries to refound the Marxist approach to religion against historical revisions and misunderstood. Lenin did the same for Marxist State theory with his book “State and Revolution”. The study discusses the Marxist approach to religion in a historical context to assist the same aim for Marxist approach on religion.*

Material and Method: *The materials of the study is the principal text of Marx and Engels about religion on MEGA. The methodology is the literature review. The approach of the study is constructive.*

Results: *Marx's approach to religions is consistent and comprehensive. Marx makes a differentiation between three stage of faith: Psychological (practical atheism), practical and theoretical. Marx's “soft” critics are about psychological and practical faiths. Marx's “hardcore” critics are about principally theoretical faith. There is no inconsistency and contradictions about the Marx's affirmations about religions. How Marx's and Engels's affirmations about Post-proletarian dictatorship (withering away of the state) were distorted and used as a tool to refuse to the obligation of revolution by social democrats, Marx's comprehensive and consistent approach was used either to make a compromise with religions (to hide the “hardcore” critics of Marx, and to stress the “soft” critics) or to attack the faithful laboring masses (to use as a tool of Marx's “hardcore” critics in breaking out of context. As Lenin said, the affirmations of Marxism could be truly understood first in the relations with all the other affirmations and second in relations with reality.*

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Conclusion: *the Marxist approach to religion is actual. It could be a key point to fight against xenophobia and anti-semitism and anti-muslim discriminations. Marx's concept makes a differentiation between faith and faithful. To criticise the faith and organized faith traders rather than the faithful laboring mass could be a key point for new progressist movements. Even Marx's theory does not put the faithful individuals as passive victims. It keeps them as respectful active individuals. Marx's "hardcore" criticism about the root of the Abrahamic religions present a rich base for new-atheist movements. Marx's "human created gods" affirmation could be interpreted as well as "human created demons". To think a god as a demon who created by the dominant classes' most despicable desires could be a new explanation of Lucretius's famous affirmation: "Tantum religion potuit suadere malorum" (To such heights of evil are men driven by religion).*

Keywords: *Marxism, Religion, extremism, Soviet Union, revisionism.*

Introduction: After the dissolution of Soviet Union, "the return of religion" was pointed. Even the Cold War period, the organized religions used its political practical force in world politics. President Carter's adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's Green Belt Project shaped economically and politically one side of Islam (Yetkin, 2017). Soviet official atheism benefited "Christ Myth Theory" (Drews, 1920) for the war against first Catholicism and second Islam. By the practice, Soviet Union kept the Byzantic tradition: "State has to control the religion". Orthodox church was used as a useful tool. Islam was transformed and reformed. The results were presented by the official Atheist Handbook of Soviet Union (Nastolnaya Kniga Ateista) (Skazkin,1985). By Soviet practice, Slavic and Orthodox peoples were evaluated as most loyal peoples of the Union. Latin orthodox peoples practically were evaluated as "second class loyal", Muslim peoples (because of Turkey's NATO membership) could be evaluated "the third degree most loyal" and Catholics were evaluated directly as "unreliable elements". Vatican's hierarchical organization, relations with capitalist and wig-right groups, historical image, contemporary pro-Western position and Vatican Bank's existence were evaluated as the threatenings by Soviet Union (Altındal, 1992, Andronov, 1983). By this concept: the Vatican controlled, financed and manipulated the Catholic people against the Soviet Union. "Blue Army" was the conspiracy organization of Vatican in URSS. Especially in Pope John Paul II period's anti-Soviet acts in Poland, Soviet Union officers claim Vatikan and Blue Army for the affairs (Ankut,1986).

The conflict's effects arrived even Turkey: Aytunç Altındal joined the ideological struggle as a claimed Soviet spy. He defends that Jesus never existed (Altındal,2005). Mehmet Ali Ağca, as a pro-NATO Turkish neo-nazi organization member, he tried to kill Pope John Paul II in Rome. John

Pope John Paul II is the first and even today unique Polish origin pope in all Vatican history. Soviet side interpreted the election of John Paul as a message for anti-Soviet movement in Poland (***,1986). Paul Henze as a CIA specialist who worked in Turkey defended that Ağca was a Soviet spy. This claim is not proved. (Andronov,1983)

In the progressist-revolutionary side in Turkey, Dr. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı defends that the Abrahamic religions (especially Islam) have a revolutionary core, and Prophet Muhammad was a historical revolutionary figure (Kıvılcımlı, 2017). The same line is continued by Abdullah Öcalan, by him, self-declaration of Muhammed as a prophet was a historically revolutionary act (Öcalan, 2008). In another hand, Turan Dursun, as a former mufti, focused especially Islam, he defends that, by the principle text, Islam and Muhammed have any positive core and value. Looting and plundering were the main motivation source of the religion by the texts (Dursun, 2017). The history doesn't justify Kıvılcımlı-Öcalan line even it was an apriori for the majority of wig-left champ in Turkey. The "soft" approach to religion was used as a theoretical pretext to get the alliances with Islamist movements. The alliance strategy defeated in 1979 in Iran and in the other examples. In contrary, the rising of ISIS and Salafism, Wahhabism, Jihadism ideologies could be evaluated as a contemporary/last justification for Turan Dursun's affirmations for the real core for Abrahamic religions (especially for Islam).

In the Muslim world, Yemen revolution and Qaddafi's "Islamic socialism" created a weak, unclear but alternative way against "Green Belt" project. In Iran, Ali Seriyati tried to connect with 3rd World anti-colonialist revolutions and Marxists. In Latin America, Liberation Theology created an alternative way who was symbolized by Camilo Torres. In Iraq and Syria, like Algeria, Baas regimes set up pragmatic, eclectic and unprincipled relations with religion. Byzantine rule stayed valid for them: State has to control the religion.

The Eastern Roman Empire created and inherited its own way about the relationship between State and religion. The Eastern monolithic point of view influenced the relationship. Like the difference between Eastern monophonic and Western polyphonic musical traditions, Western part stayed in "double power: Pope and Emperor" situation against the monolithic power of Eastern part. But in music, monophony has limitless riches thanks to microtonal rather than polyphony's limited force. Post-Soviet time's topic related by religions: Islamist political movements' rise in Middle East, Ex-Soviet (Syria inclus), Ex-Yugoslavia countries and Turkey; terrorism with islamist reliefs (Al-Qeda network all around the world after 11 September 2001, Hamas in Palestin and as an exceptional existance: Libanon Hezbollah.), Christian radicalism in USA (Ku Lux Klan, bombing the abortion

clinics – anti-abortion violence) (Wilson, 1988) wig-right's rise in Israel and Buddhist extremist violence against muslims in Arakan and ISIS's atrocity in Syrian Civil War.

The aim of the study gets a literature review on Marxist principal texts about religion to describe the historical theoretical base/position of Marxism on it. The authenticity of the study is the first time the study tries to refound the Marxist approach on religion against historical revisions and misunderstood after Soviet Academy of Sciences. Lenin did the same for Marxist State theory with his book "State and Revolution". The study discusses the Marxist approach to religion in a historical context with a Marxist semiotic discourse analysis to assist the same aim for Marxist approach on religion.

Material and Method: The materials of the study is the principal text of Marx and Engels about religion on MEGA. The methodology is the literature review. The approach of the study is constructive. The theoretical frame is a reestablishment of the theoretical structure of Marxism on the own text of Marx-Engels-Lenin against the misunderstandings and distortions. The study claim that there are distortions and misinterpretations/misunderstandings on the Marxist approach to religion. The misunderstanding/misinterpretations and distortions' common point is the inconsistent and eclectic approach to Marx-Engels-Lenin text on religion. The holistic analysis of all the text (MEGA and Lenin collect work) shows that the theory is consistent and valid even today. The theory could be a key even today to explain the contemporary phenomenon like religion based radicalism in the metropolis (like wig-right movements) and peripheries (like ISIS).

The selected texts for the literature review are studied with the orthodox/classic Marxist approach. By the materialist approach, ideas come from reality. Historical materialism and on its base the economy-politic could give the permission to strip the roots of the ideas. The theoretical analysis/claims of Marxism might be figured out in the relations of themselves each other and in the relations of reality in a holistic approach(Lenin,1995). The Marxist approach is used in the Marxist text as well: To understand the phenomenon and their relationships in the background in a historicization concept and find the roots of the ideas on the reality in this case. "All science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided." (Marx, 1894), and the essence is nothing more than the sum of relationships (Marx, 1959). The reality is principal and ideas are secondary.

Litterature Review: Marx and Engels's theoretical texts about religion is collected in the book "On Religion" (Marx, Engels, 1976) by Progress Published. The book was published in 1976 in Moscow. The book is the main source for the study. The book gives a chronological presentation of Marx and Engels theoretical works from Marx's Ph.D. thesis ("Democritus and Epicurus") to

Engels's preface of "Class Struggles in France". But the collection is not included the text "On the Jewish Question" (Marx, 1843). "On the Jewish Question" is accused as an anti-semitic text and Marx is accused as a "radical anti-semite"(Ezra,2015). The academics who accuse Marx as an anti-semite could be accused in fact as the incapable theoretical as well. Marx's critics about religion could be classified "soft" and "hardcore" critics. The famous text about religion:

"Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." (Marx, 1844)

The text could be evaluated as a "soft" critics about religion. When Marx stressed that religion is the opium of the peoples, opium was sold in markets in Germany. The modern translation of this phrase would be like "Religion is the cigarette of peoples". Smoking of cigarette could be a cause of losing money, smelling bad and having lung cancer as an increased possibility. But the same Marx wrote as well:

"Once society has succeeded in abolishing the empirical essence of Judaism – huckstering and its preconditions – the Jew will have become impossible, because his consciousness no longer has an object, because the subjective basis of Judaism, practical need, has been humanized, and because the conflict between man's individual-sensuous existence and his species-existence has been abolished. The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism"(Marx, 1843).

Marx softened his critics about religious in one year from 1843 to 1844? The text "On the Communism of Reinicherd Beobachter" (Marx, 1845-46) shows that this claim could not be proved.

"The social principles of Christianity have now had eighteen hundred years to be developed, and need no further development by Prussian Consistorial Counsellors.

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of antiquity, glorifies the serfdom of the Middle Ages and are capable, in case of need, of defending the oppression of the proletariat, with somewhat doleful grimaces.

The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and for the latter, all they have to offer is the pious wish that the former may be charitable.

The social principles of Christianity place the Consistorial Counsellor's compensation for all infamies in heaven, and thereby justify the continuation of these infamies on earth.

The social principles of Christianity declare all the vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either a just punishment for original sin and other sins or trials which the Lord, in his infinite wisdom, ordains for the redeemed.

The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submissiveness and humbleness, in short, all the qualities of the rabble, and the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread.

The social principles of Christianity are sneaking and hypocritical, and the proletariat is revolutionary.

So much for the social principles of Christianity.” (Marx, 1845-46).

Could be evaluated Marx as a “Christianophobia” (!)?

Marx kept his point of view until his last day. In “Critique of Gotha Program” he stress:

“ ‘Freedom of conscience’! If one desired, at this time of the Kulturkampf to remind liberalism of its old catchwords, it surely could have been done only in the following form: Everyone should be able to attend his religious as well as his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in. But the Workers' party ought, at any rate in this connection, to have expressed its awareness of the fact that bourgeois "freedom of conscience" is nothing but the toleration of all possible kinds of religious freedom of conscience, and that for its part it endeavours rather to liberate the conscience from the witchery of religion. But one chooses not to transgress the "bourgeois" level.” (Marx,1875)

Engels’s critics about religion could be evaluated as much more “soften” than Marx, Engels’s “soft” text focused either a different level of faith or much more specific and historically exceptional cases like first Christian communities. Engels shows that a religion could be a flag for oppressed mass in an exceptional case but it stays always as a pseudo-revolutionary flag. From first Christian communities to 1979 Iran revolution history justify that the alliance with organized clerical forces brings disaster for revolutionary forces. Engels’s texts and his donation for Salvation Army in the UK are distorted also.

Engels says in Anti-Dühring:

“Christianity knew only one point in which all men were equal: that all were equally born in original sin -- which corresponded perfectly to its character as the religion of the slaves and the oppressed. Apart from this, it recognized, at most, the equality of the elect, which however was only stressed at the very beginning. The traces of common ownership which are also found in the early stages of the new religion can be ascribed to solidarity among the proscribed rather than to real

equalitarian ideas. Within a very short time the establishment of the distinction between priests and laymen put an end even to this incipient Christian equality.” (Engels,1878)

Engels didn't change his ideas after Marx's death (1883) as well.

“Tyndall's emotional need proves nothing. The Chevalier des Grieux also had an emotional need to love and possess Marion Lescaut, who sold herself and him over and over again; for her sake he became a cardsharp and pimp, and if Tyndall wants to reproach him, he would reply with his “emotional need”!

God=nescio; but ignorantia non est argumentum (Spinoza)” (Engels, 1883)

Lenin shows that each Marxist affirmation should be evaluated first, with the relations between the all other affirmations, second, with the reality (Lenin,1995).

Soviet Academy of Sciences (Skazkin,1985) made extensive research to describe the Marxist approach to religion. The Academy created the Atheist Handbook (In Russian: Настольная книга атеиста). The studies of the Academy shows that Marx (and Engels) texts are consistent. The “soft” and “hardcore” critics focus the different level of faith. The Academy described three different stage of faith in human society. But the academy couldn't focus the theoretical roots of “hardcore” critics of Marx and Engels.

Results: The texts show that Marx (and Engels) critics about religion could be classified as “soft” and “hardcore” critics. By the Soviet Academy of Sciences the critics are consistent because they focus the different stage of faith. By the Academy, there are three different believers typologies (level of faith):

1. Psychological Believers: All human might want to believe a lovely protected God in the sky. This god protected him/her from the unpleasant situations and bad guys. After death, these persons want to go to the heaven, stay there eternally with his lovely relatives. Plus, the bad guys should be in heaven... These religious persons, in general, know nothing about religion. They are Muslim because they are borne in a Muslim family, they are Christian because they are borne in a Christian family. They don't do regularly religious practices. Moreover, they are practically atheists. In our modern/postmodern and industrial/post-industrial society, minimum %80 of religious persons are like these (Skazkin,1985).

2. Practicals: They keep their traditions. They don't know the theology of their religion, just follow their ancestors' way. They feel better thanks to their religious practices. These practices are like some kind of therapy for them. In present days nearly %15 of believers are like these (Kirilenko, Korshunova, 1985)

3. *Theologians*: For each modern society, nearly %3 of believers know very well their religion. Moreover, the most active atheist could come from this community because they know religions very detailed. (Skazkin,1985)

By the main classification of religions, there are two main categories of religions by roots:

A. Nature-based religions: Paganism. These religions' root is the inability of troglodyte against nature. They are afraid of inundations, storms, and earthquakes. They gave the personalities for these natural forces or they accepted their old ancestors as the gods that they could control these natural sources (Engels, 1878). These religions are polytheists and more pacifist than monotheist religions. For example, by these religions each city or town has own gods and these gods are gods only for these towns/cities. The other cities or towns of the world, they have any forces as a god. If these cities and town would like to found a unity, they could construct their own Pantheon and put all gods in there. When these religions' believers were a majority in the world, humans lived in little towns and cities, commercial activities were limited and there were not big empires.

B. Society based religions: These religions came from social inequalities. They sanctify social inequalities for the sovereign social classes against the producer peoples. Three celestial religions are the specific types of society based religions (Şenel,2018).

In this case, the "soft" critics of Marx (and Engels) focus psychological and practical faith. The "hardcore" critics focus theoretical faith. Marx makes a differentiation either between faith and faithful or the different stages of faith. Marx's approach does not put the faithful also as passive victims. Marx's "hardcore" critics are distorted for accusing him as an anti-semite, the critics hide to get a theoretical base for opportunist political alliances and acts. Engels's "soft" critics also were distorted and used as a tool for the same aim.

Discussion: The difference between theoretical's God and oppressed laboring mass' God comes from where by Marx? Marx gives us the key: By Marx (and Engels) the people create the gods. But human society is divided into different/antagonistic social classes. Social classes have different/antagonistic interest. In this case, Marx and Engels "soft" text shows that the oppressed laboring mass created the "full of love god". But also Marx shows that the superstructure is set up on infrastructure. "The ideas of the ruling class are, in any age, the ruling ideas" (Marx, Engels, 1845). In this case, where to find the roots of Abrahamic religions for ruling classes? Demiurgos could be a key for the research (Irenaeus, 1885). By Marxist theory, each For every three celestial religions came from a social evolution who got a big development of commercial activities, agriculture, craftsmanship activities and imperial states. By latest research, the first monotheist religion came from Ancient Egypt (Heracleion, 230). Pharaoh Akhenaton created the first

monotheist religion. He might use the Gnostic theory as a theoretical base. Gnostics was a Satanist group and their “single god” Demiurgos is a demon as well (Irenaeus, 1885). Akhenaton's concept imitated by some of the old Judaic group: They created first “Mobil god” as Ark of Covenant. Before Ark of Covenant, the Gods are local and stable. Each God was a god only for its city/town/region and Gods could be met in Pantheons (Şenel,2017). After the defeat of pre-reform Judaism, with the Babilonia Talmud, Modern Judaism is created by a reformist and much more pacifist base. Jesus or his relatives created the Christianity as a second reform essay as well, and Roman Empire gave a form to Christianity. Christianity and especially Catholicism is highly influenced by Gnosticism, It maintained the bloody way with the Crusades and colonialism, till the Catholic peoples took a swing of reforms. In the Christian world, Protestantism/Evangelism could be evaluated as the last child of Gnosticism. Islam is a legitimate child of Gnosticism/ pre-reform Judaism as well. By this concept, to truly understand and deepen the Marxist approach to religion could be possible. Marx “human creates God” affirmation dialectically is understood as “ruler human creates a daemon and oppressed human find a god on its face”. By the concept, Three celestial religions could be classified as the source of immorality, crime, occupations and mass massacres. These religions created/adopted/supported and instrumentalized by the ruling classes of empires. These all three religions are the war doctrine to recruited the soldiers by the motivation of looting and plundering for the ruling classes side, and in the same case they are “opium of people” with a lovely father God for oppressed class.

Against the polytheism “local democratic” aspect, a monotheism represents immorality. By monotheist concept each local god “controlled” his/her local area and this belief supported the peace and respect for diversity (Şenel, 2017). Whereas, by monotheist concept, there is only one god/demon and it controls all world/universe. It's not a local god. The local gods could be convenient for city-states. A universal god is a must for imperia. If there is only one god, it means, all another gods are fakes and all believers of these gods are infidels. By the religious concept, kill, rob and make into slave them is allowed by holy texts (Dursun, 2017).

On this theoretical base, a new classification and description for Abrahamic religions (of ruling class, in fact, by Marxism, the ruling class is the owner as relying ideas as well) could be possible. In this context, for each celestial religions is constructed by these simple principles: There is only one verify. There is only one true way. All another affirmations and ways are wrong. There is only one source of true information: “Their” God. All another source of information is wrong. There is only one person who can access this source of truth: “Their Prophet”. There is only one community on the true way: The community of this prophet, believers of this religion (this type of thinking

could be evaluated as a self-justification hoax). Pray for only "our" God is counted as a pray. other prays are classified as witchcraft. They are "selected group"/First class humans. All the another are second class humans. They can kill them, rob them, rape them and make into slave them. Moreover, not only they can kill/rape/rob/make into slave them, but also they should do these things on them because God/YHWH/Allah calls them for holy war.

The implications of the same simple principles could be found for the aftermath concept. The humans bad and good aspects and actions are nothing by their God. Go to Hell or Heaven is not about the bad or good actions of humans. Only their religion's believer can go to the Heaven, even they are a sinner. But if a very kind, pacifist and trust human is not a believer in their religion, he/she goes to the Hell and stay there eternally with to expose horrible tortures (Dursun,2017). God judge the humans by their own ideas. In present days, only dictatorship countries judge thought crime. Their heaven-hell concept is also unjust and support/share mass immorality (Hitchens, 2009). The holy judgment judges humans by its own standards instead of historical high moral standards. For example: By Islam, get married with a 9 years old little girl kid for a man is not a sin by classical clerics but if two women kiss themselves by mouth, it's a great sin (Dursun, 2017).

By the new description, the main base and quality of the religion (of ruling class origin) is not to believe a life after death (like the religion of oppressed laboring mass). The main base is discrimination/supremacy between believers and non-believers, epistemological monopoly claim, monopoly claim on alleged heaven and to allow robbing, killing and making a slave of non-believers for believers.

This concept of ruling class is either broken day by day by the reforms who improved by the people's movements and progress of humanity or rise by the crisis of capitalist system in the metropolis (as racism/xenophobia) and peripheral countries (as religious-based fascisms) (Hitchens,2007).

Conclusion: The Marxist approach to religion is actual. The dialectic of the approach to religion that a unilateral approach to religion either "soft" critics base of Marx or the "hardcore" is not balanced. In contrary, the core of the religion is described by ruling classes. In this case, the "hardcore" critics are the true principal base for the Marxist approach, not "softs".

The approach could be a key point to fight against xenophobia and anti-semitism and anti-muslim discriminations. Marx's concept makes a differentiation between faith and faithful. To criticise the faith and organized faith traders rather than the faithful laboring mass could be a key point for new

progressist movements. Even Marx's theory does not put the faithful as passive victims. It keeps them as respectful active individuals.

Marx's "hardcore" criticism about the root of the Abrahamic religions present a rich base for new-atheist movements. Marx's approach could be a key to construct a true alliance politics for progressive movements and protect them new fails like in 1979 Iran.

Marx's "human created gods" affirmation could be interpreted as well as "human created demons". To think a god as a daemon who created by the dominant classes' most despicable desires could be a new explanation of Lucretius's famous affirmation: "Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum" (To such heights of evil are men driven by religion).

This approach is could be a key-point for improving a well-described multiculturalism and free-thinking: Evolution of general human thought could be accepted as reliable limits of multiculturalism. To recognize the double character of the religion and the different stages of faith could give a permission to make a differentiation between xenophobia, hate-speech, and free-thinking, blasphemy.

The universe is a highly complex and human intellectual capacity could not be eternal. If a God of three celestial religions says that he creates the universe and humanity, and even in this case he offers some affirmations even unacceptable for average human morality and intellectual capacity, probably, it could be thought that he is not a god. The God ideas could be created as a puppet demon-god for getting economic and political power. In this case, to keep infidel and enrich own life rather than not the clerical authorities could be a much more effective idea.

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