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## Hegelianism and Meta-Religion: Ernst Bloch's Archetype of the Fall

This paper concerns Ernst Bloch's notion of "meta-religion," which is an attempt to inherit the religious without inheriting religion, while distinguishing itself from a merely secular atheism. I assert that the key to this meta-religious inheritance is the structural abandonment of the Fall. Focusing chiefly on Bloch's late work *Atheism in Christianity*, I provide an account of Bloch's appraisal of Feuerbach as a progenitor of his meta-religious project, before moving on to what I argue is the key problem for what Bloch terms the "meta-religious" inheritance of Christianity: the question of the Fall. I argue that as Bloch's own thinking regularly suggests, the archetype of the Fall is a necessary correlate of the archetype of freedom, and actually grounds an important aspect of Bloch's meta-religious inheritance of both Christianity and Hegel as part of the same dialectical theorisation of the sources of Marxism.

Keywords: Bloch, Hegel, Marxism, Christianity, meta-religion

## Introduction

The Marxist tradition maintains a complex relationship to both idealism and religion in general, and to Hegel and Christianity in particular. Ernst Bloch's uniqueness in this regard is marked by his serious engagement with both spheres, an engagement which, however, never lapses into mere appropriation. This may be summed up by his respective calls for "ideals without idealism" and "transcending without transcendence" (Bloch 2009, 69). This paper concerns Ernst Bloch's notion of "meta-religion" which is an attempt to inherit the religious without inheriting religion, in a manner which nevertheless distinguishes itself from a merely secular atheism. It argues that Bloch's approaches to both Hegel and religion are in fact part of the same dialectical theorisation of the sources of Marxism and that these two spheres present themselves in his work as inextricably linked, both in their contributions and limitations. Thus, uncharacteristically for a Marxist, Bloch's reading of Hegel is metaphysically realist and affirmative of the latter's Christianity in addition to involving an immanent critique of the left-wing reading of Hegel. His understanding of religion is conversely firmly rooted in the genre of Hegel's philosophy of religion and its critique in the wake of Feuerbach. Focusing chiefly on Bloch's late work *Atheism in Christianity*, I provide an account of Bloch's appraisal of Feuerbach as a progenitor of his meta-religious project, before moving on to what I argue is the key problem for what Bloch terms the "meta-religious" inheritance of Christianity: the question of the Fall. Bloch excludes the "archetype" of the Fall from his set of revolutionary or "Promethean" archetypes and representations, chief amongst them the archetypes of freedom. In *Atheism in Christianity*, the archetype of the Fall is inconsistently identified as complicit with the "conservative" traditions of the Jewish Priestly class<sup>1</sup> and ultimately with the repressive, and following Hegel one might add, "positive" streams of Christianity. Indeed, "meta-religion" may on the whole be defined as an inheritance of Christianity which disinherits the archetype of the Fall. However, the inconsistency with which this disinheritance is condoned is significant; for I argue that as Bloch's own thinking regularly suggests, the archetype of the Fall is a necessary correlate of the archetype of freedom, and, far from being complicit with

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1 It is perhaps worth clarifying that Bloch addresses the fact that Judaism neither recognises a doctrine of the Fall nor more generally of sin. However, the "Priestly" privileging of Genesis over against the "Prophetic" book of Exodus, is for Bloch part and parcel of the eventual articulation of such a doctrine in early Christianity.

the overall conservative tradition of “emanation,” actually grounds an important aspect of Bloch’s meta-religious inheritance of both Christianity and Hegel<sup>2</sup>.

### A note on “archetypes”

“Meta-religion” is a project of inheritance and so ultimately concerns memory. Following Hegel, Bloch is concerned with the question of how to remember and how to remember things correctly (which is to say, with a political emphasis). A number of modern philosophers – of whom Heidegger is only the most well-known example – have argued from the premise of human finitude to the conclusion that the human mind is constituted through an interplay of concealment and unconcealment; that finitude designates a certain immanent blind-spot of human consciousness. Bloch draws a similar conclusion but from the more rigorous and Marxist premise that it is alienation and reification which make up this blind-spot. Crucial for his work, then, is the conception of the “darkness” (the eye’s blind-spot) of the lived moment, our alienation from it, and its injunction to *Carpe diem* (Bloch 1995, 295). The disruption of the present indicates the displaced presence of a suppressed past. This unconscious or *Not-Yet-Conscious* – which Bloch also links to an essentially “pre-historic” temporality (Bloch 1986, 1959) – contains the unrealised meanings and possibilities of the past. It is at the same time saturated with the “archetypes” and “goal-images” of religion and art which keep this past alive and ready for future re-actualisation. *The Principle of Hope* has been described as an “encyclopaedia of these figures and their appearance in reality and in art” (Bloch 1959, xxix). *Atheism in Christianity* may accordingly be described as an attempt to trace the particular religious tradition of “revolutionary” archetypes which Marxism must inherit in the “meta-religious” mode (more on this below). What is ultimately meant by “archetype,” then, is the set of notions, which Bloch generalises as mythical, imagistic, and ethical, that have both shaped and must continue to shape the epistemological and onto-

What is ultimately meant by “archetype,” then, is the set of notions, which Bloch generalises as mythical, imagistic, and ethical, that have both shaped and must continue to shape the epistemological and ontological foundations of philosophy as concrete theory and praxis.

2 Due to limitations of space, I must exclude from my analysis Bloch’s fascinating engagements with the early Christian Marcionites (see especially Bloch 2009, 172-179) as well as with his experimentation with various Gnostic variants of the archetype of the Fall – both of which figure into his ultimate “abandonment” or criticism of the Fall archetype. My paper nevertheless contains implicit responses to at least the first of these issues and I hope to address them explicitly in a future work.

logical foundations of philosophy as concrete theory and praxis. I will thus refer to doctrines of theology, following Bloch's own practice, as "archetypes"; though as will become clear, these tend to shift imperceptibly from imagistic conceptions to religious theories and philosophical ideas.

The *topos* of the human soul

Bloch develops a series of broadly topological categories in order to describe what he calls the *Within* (*die Innern*, but also *das Drinnen*) of the human being (the first of his series of categories) which is "also known as the soul" (Bloch 2009, 213), or what following Meister Eckhart and the German Romantics after him, he sometimes calls the "human spark." He narrates the story of religious humanity in terms of the progressive externalisation and realisation of this *Within* or what in Hegelian terms might be termed the increased self-determination of the content of the human. If the *Beginning* of humanity is one of infinite smallness, a state of "pure need" (Bloch 2009, 205), as Bloch maintains, then this *Within* cannot initially distinguish itself from the *Outside* (*die Äußeren*) around it<sup>3</sup> (Bloch 2009, 192). It is a *homo absconditus*. Thus, following Hegel, we may say that the *Within* "passes-over" (*übergeht*) into the *Outside*:

If this Outside-us [*Außer-uns*] impinges too powerfully the only thing to do is comply and yield oneself up, giving up the infant drive to be oneself, which at this stage finds it even harder to disengage from the clan-environment than from the pressure of being. (Bloch 2009, 192)

This theme of the drive towards self-identity in the context of an indeterminate beginning is a transparently Hegelian one. Indeed, the first and most "primitive" forms of "immediate religion" emerge as a result of this initial conflation of the self with nature (Hegel 1969, 259-301). Bloch puts the logic of Hegel's doctrine of being to the use of studying such religious forms.

A so-called savage, when told about the soul, could find no sign of it inside him, for, among other things, it was invisible. But he pointed to a bird that was flying past, perhaps his tribal bird, and said that that was his soul. This was

3 This same point is made in Marx and Engels 1964, 75-76.

ego-less in a friendly way or rather it was *the abduction of an unnoticed Within*. (Bloch 2009, 192)<sup>4</sup>

Because this *Within* is so encroached upon by the *Outside*, there emerges a need to appeal to a *Something* (*Sache*) which achieves the distance from nature which the self cannot adequately achieve for itself. This is done “despite the poor grasp [humans] had of [their] own *Within*; indeed, that is the very reason why [their] own role was so long over-looked” (Bloch 2009, 192). As with Hegel, the sameness of the one side to the other, of being and nothing, and of the soul and human interiority in opposition to the exteriority of the environment, can be used to demonstrate an implicit difference between the two, from which there emerges awareness of a need for sublation.

However, this calling out to a *Something* addresses it as something *Up-there*. The *Up-there* (*der Höhe*) is the *topos* or site of the *Something*. The *Something*, precisely as an ersatz designation of the *Within*, is out of place. For if it is well understood, the *topos* of the *Within*, is precisely within. It is in this context that Bloch discusses Feuerbach, who famously sought to displace this *Something* from the *Up-there* (Feuerbach 2008). Bloch agrees with Feuerbach that the religious story is one of the evolutionary externalisation and realisation of the human *Within* and that this has as its upshot the reclaiming of this *Within* (which has become a *Something*) from the *Up-there* where religion has put it. He also agrees (or rather, both agree with Hegel), that the *In-there*, or the *Within* as not-yet realised, is “filled above all with desires” (Bloch 2009, 193). And though these include the desire for improved material conditions, for “there was no friendliness in the way man was assaulted from out there by lightning, thunder, storm and wild beasts,” there is an ineliminable “religious excess” to the innermost yearning of the human for its *Within*. As Hegel puts it in his youthful *Die Positivität der Christlichen Religion*,

it has remained primarily the task of our day to vindicate, at least in theory, as the property of man, the treasures which have been squandered on heaven. But what age will have the strength to enforce this right and really take possession. (Hegel 1948, 159)

Like Bloch, Feuerbach responded to Hegel’s call. However, for Feuerbach it is the essentially liberal bourgeoisie subject who takes as his

4 My emphasis.

property the treasures which heaven has squandered. For Feuerbach, in Bloch's essentially correct reading, "the gods are nothing but reflected men, transposed hypostases, the product of desires which presuppose the division of mankind from its 'essence'" (Bloch 2009, 194). Echoing Engels, Bloch points out that though Feuerbach theorises the human estrangement from its essence, he does not do so socially; "the economic roots of this alienation," the destructive forces of the *Outside*, social as well as climatological and geographic, "remain untouched" (Bloch 2009, 194). Accordingly, the human amounts to little more than a "readily available ensemble of liberal desires," with the drive toward happiness being the dominant one (Bloch 2009, 195).

Thus, Bloch's primary objection to Feuerbach is not simply that he focuses too much on Christianity and that his account of human nature does not plausibly explain religious projection in other and particularly non-humanist religions<sup>5</sup>, but that to the extent that the projection of Christianity to a *Beyond* is a projection of liberal desires, it is not truly estranged at the level of content from the *Here-and-now* which already affirms the legitimacy of such desires<sup>6</sup>. As Bloch puts it:

Feuerbach equals Enlightenment in that he wanted men to be students of the Here-and-now rather than candidates for the Beyond. But the Beyond should at the same time form candidates for a better Here-and-now. (Bloch 2009, 196)

For any projective theory of religion based on wishing or a "satisfaction dialectic," does not eliminate the wishes it emancipates from the *Beyond* and into the *Here-and-now*, viz. it does not erase content. The *Something* recovered from the *Beyond* and returned to its site *Within* remains for Feuerbach a *Something-from-the-Beyond*. His human religion can therefore be little more than a renewed drive to protect the post-Enlightenment 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism of the *Here-and-now*, rather than elicit a Utopianism for improving the *Here-and-now*.

## Abandoning the archetype of the Fall 1

We may identify a further criticism of Feuerbach which Bloch did not explicitly state, but might have done. It concerns the role of the narra-

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5 Though to this extent, Bloch's insistence on religious evolution maintains a similarly Frazerian emphasis on religious diversity.

6 Bloch similarly reproaches Freud, by excoriating the tendency to confine the unconscious to a determined past and to therefore stifle all concern for the future.

tive of the Fall and original sin in Feuerbach's analysis of Christianity and which therefore is the overall focus of this paper. Bloch was fond of Luther's claim that it is the mark of fallen humanity not simply to burn with desire, but to loathe when it obtains it, the very thing it desires (Feuerbach, 2008, 96). As we will see, Bloch is interested in self-subversion, in what Hegel called the "recoil" (*Gegenstoss*, as well as *Rückschlag*) of human realisation. Original sin, particularly when it is thus conceived as a self-subversion of one's desires, should rightly be viewed, and not only for Feuerbach for whom desires are the main anthropological constituent, as a self-subversion of anthropology *tout court*. Indeed, it is the chief wager of Christianity following Augustine, as Bloch is well aware, that the human spark is faded (and indeed for some Protestants, about whom Bloch is rightly cautious, it is thoroughly extinguished). As such, the doctrines of the Fall and original sin, about which Feuerbach is strangely quiet, form the main obstacle to his project of anthropologising theology.

One might have expected Feuerbach to include an analysis of the doctrine of original sin as expressing the alienation of humanity's essence from itself in "representational" or "imagistic" (*Vorstellungsform*) form. However, Feuerbach's sole, though by no means uninteresting comment on this matter, is that with Christianity, the difference "between God and man, which is originally only quantitative, is by reflection developed into a qualitative difference" (Feuerbach 1881, 217). By this he meant that the originally emotional, imagined, and immediate apprehension of divine awesomeness and the admiration of such awesomeness became theorised as a reified difference in the order of being between creature and Creator. Feuerbach's language here is transparently Hegelian. "Development by reflection" refers here to what Hegel calls *Nachdenken*, the process of translating the contents of "feeling" to "higher" forms of religious representation and thought. For Hegel, the necessity of this process proceeds from the suppression of content – otherwise proper to thought – to the form of feeling. Hegel associates this suppression with the Fall<sup>7</sup> and gives a soteriological emphasis to the postlapsarian exigency of philosophy<sup>8</sup> to bring this content back to the form appropriate to it. Feuerbach, however, argues from the fact of the suppression of this content to its inverted development in Christian theology. For Feuerbach,

7 In so far as for Hegel, as for Feuerbach, this designates the content of humanity's concept, its *Within*.

8 By this I mean Hegel's view that the labour (at the same time *Arbeit* and *Bildung*) done by humanity after the Fall necessitates a philosophical reconstruction of the concept (*Begriff*) whose content is suppressed by sin (Hegel 1991, 60-64).

religion is the “dream of the human mind,” where dreaming is construed in the Hegelian mode as the governing logic of inverted thought (Berthold-Bond 1995, 44-45), and the suppression of the higher contents of *Geist* is seen as requiring a dialectical inversion, so that the content is ultimately shown to correspond not to Absolute being but to human being (Feuerbach 2012, 102). To this extent Feuerbach disapprovingly reads Hegel, whose *Nachdenken* preserves significant aspects of the content which it formally alters, and terminates with a Christian theology, correctly.

It may be objected that the development of an “originally” quantitative difference between God and humanity into a qualitative one must have been a post-factum theological obfuscation. However, what enables Feuerbach to make this move is precisely the abandonment of the Fall archetype or narrative which conceives of an origin (before which we cannot go) as something requiring correction and therefore as not automatically obscured by a reflective development which it sees as an alien influence. It is furthermore notable that this excoriation of the orthodox theological model has some stunningly repressive consequences. In scholastic theology, the view of the qualitative difference was known as the doctrine of the analogy of being (*analogia entis*)<sup>9</sup>. Feuerbach’s philosophical anthropology transposes this qualitative difference, as it is conceived theologically, between God and humanity, to the same difference between different humans (which theology denies).

In short, there is a qualitative, critical difference between men. But Christianity extinguishes this qualitative distinction; it sets the same stamp on all men alike, and regards them as one and the same individual, because it knows no distinction between the species and the individual: it has one and the same means of salvation for all men, it sees one and the same original sin in all. (Feuerbach 1881, 159)

Feuerbach’s anti-egalitarian liberalism aside<sup>10</sup>, the elimination of this qualitative difference between human beings in Christianity has to do not with the fact that all human beings were created in the likeness of the one God, but with the fact that this very likeness – the universal ground for human individuality – is as such obscured after the Fall (when all come to require salvation). As Engels pointed out, Feuerbach’s

9 The “analogy of being” is something of an umbrella term tradition of developments, but for a paradigmatic exposition (see Bonaventure 2012, 2.11).

10 Though it should perhaps be noted that this speaks to the truth of G.K. Chesterton’s claim that original sin is ultimately “the doctrine of the equality of all men” (Chesterton 2011, 196).



“human,” his anthropological emphasis notwithstanding, remains surprisingly shallow when compared, for example, to Hegel’s ethics of the human community which include the entirety of the spheres of the law, economics, and politics (Marx and Engels 1964, 241). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify in Feuerbach intimations of what became a key part of Bloch’s understanding of the “meta-religious” project: the attempt to inherit the Christian religion without inheriting the archetype of the Fall. Bloch was, in other words, incomplete in his otherwise correct critique of Feuerbach because he did not abandon Feuerbach’s liberal-Pelagian rejection of the Fall archetype but made it a key part of his meta-religious project. In what follows I will look at this aspect of Bloch’s project more closely.

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## Abandoning the archetype of the Fall 2

Bloch’s relationship to Feuerbach is twofold. Firstly, there is their general connection to Marxian sources, and the intersection of these sources and the future of Marxism to the theme of religion. Less known is the second connection, on which I wish to focus here, which Bloch makes between Feuerbach and various mystical and theosophic traditions (Bloch 2009, 196). As Bloch points out, this precisely follows but is also an admonition of Engels, in spite of Feuerbach’s occasional construal of humanity as a merely abstract genus or his sinking into naturalism (Bloch 2009, 196; Marx and Engels 1964, 213-269). For Feuerbach’s thought is still rooted in the idea of a “subject reclaimed from the realms of the world of God and the mere Outside-us of the world, which is established in a new, and by no means cosmic, immanence” (Bloch 2009, 196). We can sense in the invocation of a non-cosmic immanence the influence of Franz von Baader’s notion of the *überzeitlich* or supratemporal immanence, the *Outside-us* of the world of cosmic time<sup>11</sup>. Bloch studied Baader (including perhaps under Oswald Külpe) and rightly points out that he extends the Romantic *Naturphilosophie* stemming from Paracelsus and Boehme beyond what is implicit in Hegel but in contradistinction to the one articulated by Schelling (Bloch 2009, 27). Indeed, it is Hegel’s emphasis on anthropology and on the human relationship to nature, as opposed to a theology of creation *tout court* (an emphasis which origi-

11 For Baader, the *Within* of humankind is supratemporal (and suprahistorical; “*überzeitlich*”), existing originally in a created heaven between eternity and fallen, historical time (Baader 1851, 511).

nated in part from a privileging of Baader over Schelling), which leads him to insist on an investment in history. Such an insistence then leads Feuerbach to develop a kind of parodic mirroring of a mysticism which Bloch identifies in his reading of him.

Though “mysticism” originally derives from the Ancient Greek initiation of the select into the mysteries, and *myein* ultimately comes to mean the shutting of one’s eyes or lips, Bloch emphasises that mysticism, far from closing its eyes to the world and its suffering, was the “child of a highly rebellious lay movement” (Bloch 2009, 197). Its religious heresy – as it was conceived from the fourteenth century onwards – was such that it could not effectively be demarcated from its political heresy (Bloch 2009, 197). Bloch agrees with Feuerbach, as he does with Eckhart, that “the mystery of religion is the mystery of man” and that this accordingly reveals the Utopian and Promethean dimension of religion (Bloch 2009, 196). This collapses what is sometimes thought to be the distinction between mystical theology, which closes its eyes to the *Here-and-now* in order to delve into the *Beyond* and perhaps the experience God who is apart from the world, and Theosophy, which looks for expressions of the *Beyond* as they are mirrored in the *Within* (Friesen 2015, 6). (Thus, the theosophist Jakob Boehme sought to identify the “signature of God” in all of creation.) Marx, who considered philosophy intrinsically hostile towards Christian theology, and had probably rightly observed that virtually every philosophy had been castigated as heresy (though often because it had indeed been “heretical”), had a respect for the heretical Boehme, whom he regarded as “divinely inspired” (Marx and Engels 1975, 190). It was a respect which did not even extend to Hegel, in so far as Marx considered Boehme’s otherwise religiously charged philosophy to be metaphysically materialist, beginning from its claim that the whole universe proceeded from a *Qual* (Ling 1980, 20-34). Bloch’s brief genealogy of Marxist pre-history is not unusual (Ling 1980). However, what is most interesting is its admission to a series of disjunctions, namely Eckhart vs Boehme, Baader vs Schelling, and one could add following Engels, Hegel vs Feuerbach. Bloch exhibits various preferences throughout his work and in *Atheism in Christianity* in particular, I would argue that he displays a determinate preference for Baader over Schelling, Hegel over Feuerbach, and Boehme over Eckhart. It could be suggested that the last mentioned preference does not sit comfortably with the first two in so far as Boehme may be aligned more readily with Schelling over Baader (who was a heterodox interpreter of Boehme) and even with Feuerbach over Hegel, in so far as Bloch reads the latter not as a Bohemian gnostic and therefore nihilist proto-atheist, but as a Christian

defender of *anamnesis*. Moreover, though both Hegel and Baader conceded to having been influenced by the “Teutonic philosopher” (an epithet imputed to him by the former), the extent of this influence can and has been seriously qualified in a way which it has not been with Schelling (and even Feuerbach). I will argue that this subtle inconsistency is likewise linked to the problematic abandonment of the archetype of the Fall in Bloch’s meta-religious project.

## Evolution vs Emanation 1: religion

Boehme is part of what Bloch approvingly identifies as the tradition of “evolution” over and against that of “emanation,” which much of *Atheism in Christianity* castigates. As Bloch puts it, in “emanation,” if the *Beginning* is identified as creative, then what comes from it must necessarily be lesser. The scholastics called this principle *omne agens agit simile sibi* (Mondin 1963, 86-93). Or as Bloch puts it, “He who speaks down from on high must certainly have something beneath him” (Bloch 2009, 19). Plato and his followers, notably Plotinus and Proclus, proceeded to conceive created beings in emanationist terms as downward falls whose only *telos* was to return to this creative source. As the Catholic scholar Battista Mondin notes, Hegel is to be regarded as the sole violator of this principle in the canon of classical philosophy.

Only in a Hegelian system, where being comes from non-being, is it possible to conceive evolution in such a way that the effect can be more perfect than its cause. With such a Hegelian concept of evolution the principle *omne agens agit simile sibi* is certainly incompatible (Mondin 1963, 88-89).

It is certainly true that Hegel’s articulation of this beginning has a strikingly Blochian character.

[T]hat which begins, as yet, is not; it only reaches out to being. The being contained in the beginning is such, therefore, that it distances itself from non-being or sublates it as something which is opposed to it. But further, that which begins already is, but is also just as much not yet. (Hegel 2010, 51)

However, for Bloch, Hegel is only the culmination of this tradition of evolution which is inaugurated at the very early stages of philosophy by Aristotle and emphasises the *Beginning* or *Primordial-One* as the result and not origin of a process of creation which is now one of upward growth and expansion.

This tension between the emanationist and evolutionary obtained independently in Greek philosophy and Biblical religion, in both cosmogonic and theogonic forms (Bloch 2009, 201). I will deal with them in reverse order. The liberation theologian José Míguez Bonino makes the distinction in the Biblical context. Firstly, he identifies a “cosmic” perspective, ostensibly linked to the Priestly tradition, which identifies a rationality in the universe so that whatever perturbs the peaceful (but not in reality always peaceable) equilibrium of heaven, nature, and society becomes a “trampling of reason.” And secondly, he identifies a “dialectical” perspective, ostensibly linked to the Prophetic tradition, which conceives humanity as a Promethean project of liberation which constantly emerges in the struggle against natural, societal, and religious objectifications. Thus, in the cosmic perspective, the historical subject is phenomenologically always already either conserving or retrieving this original peace, so that one’s goal-image, if it may be so termed, is intrinsically conservative, whereas in the dialectical perspective it is always reaching forward to a peace which is not-yet. These perspectives each tend toward some rather predictable implications for violence. From the cosmic or emanationist perspective, violence is always reactive, either as a disruption of a reasoned equilibrium in the first order, or as a legitimate coercion of this disruption in the second. From the dialectical or evolutionary perspective, on the other hand, it is part of the very becoming of historical subjectivity. Ultimately, it is this topological emphasis of eschatology which properly animates the evolutionary tradition for Bloch.

For him, these two perspectives are the respective theological correlates of the “contraries” of creation and salvation (or apocalypse). They are also the respective topological correlates of the *numen* and *novum* (or *ultimatum* after it). This first and perhaps most inevitable dualism of the Bible is rightly identified with the event of the Fall, an archetype which always remains central for Bloch as an analytic category. “Creation” is important because it marks the transition in the Jewish religion from the henotheistic worship of Yahweh as one god amongst other competitive deities (like Baalim) to the monotheistic worship of him as Lord and Creator of the whole world. Régis Debray has plausibly argued that the locality of this tribal and henotheistic Yahweh had to be globalised materially, first with the invention of the wheel and later with that of writing (the link between a universal humanity and language itself being made in *Genesis*, a text whose late emergence in the canon Bloch rightly notes [Bloch 2009, 20]). This may itself be linked to the suppression of the *Genesis* story of the Fall in Judaism, a fact which obsessed Hegel

(Hodgson 2005, 231-232). For a religion which had to become universal, but whose God remained tied to Jewish racial particularity, may have understandably become estranged from the universal content of the story of creation and the Fall. With Christianity, however, the Fall corrupts creation to the extent that it comes to require salvation. This “need” for salvation, in so far as it involves a recognition of the imperfection of creation – an arguably inevitable corollary of the cosmic perspective for Bloch – also “absolves” the Creator God as co-creator of the misery of the world (Bloch 2009, 20). However, this *post-factum* construction of a sinful Fall generates the Bible’s dualism of creation and salvation because instead of the first sin as a downward compelling towards evil by the serpent there emerges also the Gnostic reading of the Fall as the upward beginning of human freedom through the eating of the fruit of knowledge. Similarly, the Biblical “Messianic dream” proceeds only from an immanentisation of hope, inspired not by the Creator-God *Up-there* but from the Exodus out of a foreign land in the *Here-and-now*. Thus, as Bloch puts it, the “principle that leads us into this here-and-present world cannot also be the principle that leads out of it” (Bloch 2009, 21). Bloch’s argument then, is that the archetype of the Fall manifests these two different image-goals and points to the dilemma between emanation and evolution. As the discussion of the philosophical development of the same theme will emphasise, the dilemma between emanation and evolution is (as Bloch himself affirms) pre-Christian. The limitation of Bloch’s analysis, which I would connect to the abandonment of the Fall archetype, is that the options of emanation and evolution emerge from a contradiction in the Jewish and Greek traditions as precisely pre-Christian and accordingly lacking in the concept of sin.

## Evolution vs Emanation 2: philosophy

This theological background is linked philosophically to Bloch’s concept of realisation (*Verwirklichung*, but sometimes also *Realisierung*). Bloch’s history of philosophy identifies a tension between Plato the emanationist and Aristotle the evolutionist. According to Bloch, “realisation” was first thought and categorised, if not wholly problematised, by Aristotle for whom it involved a self-realisation of the form or *entelechy* inherent in things. However, Bloch identifies even in Aristotle, intimations of the “disruptions of realisation”, of the philosophical problem of realisation, in so far as matter (as opposed to form) is in itself *agnosis* and therefore

never fully actualised. The evolutionary tradition therefore also philosophically refers to this same tradition of realisation. Bloch develops the problem of realisation in *Prinzip der Hoffnung*:

in the entrance of something there is still a something which remains behind itself. The doer and the doing of the work of realization are not completely carried out, they live on to themselves. They remain absent from the deed which frees itself from them, as the tool remains absent from the finished machine or the poet from his poem. (Bloch 1995, 189)

These disruptions or deficits of realisations and human activity more generally were not adequately conceived philosophically until later modernity for material reasons; Bloch argues that up until then, labour was “the business of slaves and manual workers, thought took only brief notice of its [work’s] completion, realization. Creating and knowing were considered in antiquity as a pure depicting of something given” (Bloch 1995, 189). Intellectually then, a precondition for the recognition of the aporetic character of realisation was the substitution of the *mimetic* for the *poetic* in the aesthetics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (particularly in Germany [Taylor 1991, 62-64]), a notable shift given Bloch’s identification of this recognition with the aesthetics of Romanticism. Moreover, in Pagan antiquity, Creation was itself considered a demiurgic world-formation of eternal matter, rather than a *creatio ex nihilo* – the latter alone positing the low *Beginning* which engenders evolution. Likewise, in the ethical sphere; for Plato, evil could not be willed as such because knowledge of the good “inevitably posits the doing of it” (Bloch 1995, 189). In other words, even in the ethical sphere the realisation of the morally good will may be disrupted or recoil on itself, but the recognition of this fact occurs philosophically much later. And yet, as we have seen, it is prefigured by the archetype of the Fall and the Christian doctrine of sin. As Paul had written in *Romans* 7.19, “For I do not the good I want, but the evil I do not want.”

If the philosophical theorisation of realisation and its disruptions, whether of moral action or metaphysical and material formation, had been stunted in the Jewish and Greek religious and philosophical traditions, it was because of the lack of recognition of any concept of the Fall and sin. The problem lay in the fact that the Jewish and Greek traditions admitted to a series of continuous ideas as well as certain non-overlapping and mutually incompatible ideas which were paradoxically essential to that continuity. This is where Christianity, whose origins are irreducibly eclectic, was able to perform a synthesis of the

two. The congeniality of Greek philosophy had long been recognised by Jewish tradition, so much so that theories of literary dependence had been developed which argued for the remote antiquity of Moses as a source for Platonic philosophy. Bloch was also interested in the recurrence of continuous and comparable ideas and, as we have seen, identified many of the same tensions – evolution and emanation merely the chief ones amongst them – being religious in the Bible and philosophical in the Academy (Bloch 2009, 19). He was less keen, however, to compare the Jewish and Greek traditions, particularly as representing particular “evolutionist” or “emanationist” tendencies. This was undoubtedly because of his general focus on Christianity as a synthesis of the two. Bloch did not, or so I would argue, analyse this synthesis as such. However, his “meta-religious” project developed as a counterpoint to traditional or orthodox Christianity which he understood precisely in terms of the Jewish triumph of the Priestly emphasis on Genesis (contra Exodus) on the one hand, and Greek Platonic *anamnesis* over against Aristotelian proto-dialectics, on the other. He thus took both Judaism and Greek philosophy in their relation to Christianity, to have privileged *particular* aspects of their traditions. Accordingly, he argues that the Augustinian doctrine of the Fall proceeds from a privileging of Genesis over Exodus but does not consider why this doctrine emerges only with Christianity, which is to say, in the context of the Graeco-Judaic synthesis.

Bloch acknowledges – and so takes the side of mainstream Christianity – that the archetype of the Fall was “in” Genesis and in a way accessible even for the Jews (who, as Augustine puts it, were “blind” to it). Indeed, his association of the Fall and its anti-Promethean character with the emanationist, Priestly, or “cosmic” tradition of the Jews implies some such view. However, he does not argue in a way which his own thought sometimes implies, that the Fall is really the principle which allows Christianity to synthesise Jewish religion and Greek philosophy in a way which was previously impossible<sup>12</sup>. Consequently, though Bloch

12 One does not usually need to argue that Greek philosophy, which was linked to specific Pagan forms of religious reflection, had no such connection to Judaism. The synthesis of the two proceeds only from the initiative of the latter and indeed from a recognition of the latter as spiritually superior to the former. However, even in the case of Philo of Alexandria, such a synthesis tends to involve a relativisation of the two and so ultimately a weakening of the claim of Jewish superiority. Thus, Philo entertained, in a manner mostly uncongenial to his own religious tradition, that philosophy was a God-given dispensation to the Greeks corresponding in its status to the Revelation of the Torah (see Wolfson 1948, 141-143).

is in a sense correct that Christianity's Graeco-Judaic synthesis had accomplished a union of Priestly and Platonic perspectives, he did not see how this reconciliation had depended at least partly on the Christian development of a postlapsarian anthropology. The point here is that although the Priestly and Platonic traditions were the respective religious and philosophical expressions of "emanationist" thought, they required a reconciliation of religion and philosophy. This occurred at the level of specific doctrinal content. The Platonic theory of gender unity, for example, could only be reconciled with the Jewish theory of gender polarity by Gregory of Nyssa's synthetic theory (developed in dialogue with Paul) of gender difference as a postlapsarian cleavage of a prelapsarian unity. Gregory did not "make" the Jewish and Greek traditions compatible; he merely introduced the shift in perspective afforded by the doctrine of the Fall in order to reconcile incompatibilities which with Christianity, rightly come to be seen as crucial for the compatibility of Judaism and Greek philosophy. Bloch did not make this point, but he approved of Gregory's view (Bloch 1986, 1170), and in his correct assessment of the Fall archetype as a mediating concept marking both a point of rupture (between creation and salvation; Judaism and Christianity) as well as of return (as the procession of a circular *anamnesis*), he opened the possibility of doing so. What remains is the question of whether this justifies a reevaluation of the role of the Fall archetype in Bloch's meta-religious project. In what follows, I wish to argue that it does.

Meta-religion = meta-history

For Bloch, the philosophical and ultimately political project of utopianism is tied to the meta-religious articulation of an "evolutionist" atheism which "demythologises" eschatology. So far, so Marxist. However, there is a general and uncontroversial sense in which Bloch considers his "philosophy of hope" as itself meta-religion. This is meant to extend the scope of philosophy to a "total view of things" (*Totum des Blicks*) which grounds a concrete theory and praxis (Bloch 1969, 277-278). Bloch does not maintain, like Jürgen Habermas, that religion and philosophy both belong to the history of the origins of modern secular reason, since he finds history itself divided, only becoming genuinely philosophical when it makes specific reference to the practical production of a classless society (Bloch 1969, 278). The "total view" of philosophy, which includes a view towards the future (recovered from the unconscious past of the not-yet), grounds the connection between theory and praxis. Consequently, philosophy has for Bloch no synchronic



or “structural” constitution; it is only constituted as philosophy through the perpetual renewal of its inherited past.

From this proceeds an established, albeit ultimately wrong-headed approach that Bloch’s project reduces Marxism to religion or alternatively, that the former is a supplemental or regional aspect of the latter’s overarching framework. At its core is a refusal to recognise the radical closeness of the theistic and atheistic position on which Bloch’s project is premised. Thus, for Fredric Jameson,

the nonbeliever strengthens his adversary’s case by his tendency (a properly superstitious one, we might point out) to attribute some unique and specialized, intrinsically other type of psychological or spiritual experience to the believer; and this, even though it is made plain in theological literature from the very outset that faith is to be described essentially as the longing to have faith, that the nature of belief lies not so much in some apprehension of the presence of God as rather of his silence, his absence--in short, that there is basically no real difference between a believer and a nonbeliever in the first place. (Jameson 2016, 117)

Jameson’s conclusion follows if one is willing to accept the theological descriptions of faith and doubly willing, in this case, to accept the mystical bent of the theological description to which Jameson refers. Clearly, Bloch accepts both and it is therefore possible that he either rejects or modifies the presuppositions which ordinarily underlie a Marxist critique of religion. He perhaps initially rejects the view that humanity is originally pre-religious and that religion only arises as a result of “linguistic illusion, political mystification, and forgetting of human labour” (Milbank 2006, 178). Marx assimilated this view from the ancient materialists but also from Auguste Comte. And as we have seen, he modifies the Feuerbachian view of religion as the projection of a substituted content of humanity.

As John Milbank notes, Marx’s view is a Hegelian combination of these views, so that

the historically later [religious] illusion was a dialectically necessary illusion, and the epiphenomenon of socially mystifying processes. The Feuerbachian process of projection, alienation and return to the true human subject must be told as the narrative of human social, economic and political becoming. (Milbank 2006, 18-179)

Neither Bloch nor I would accept Milbank’s essentially “atheistic” reading of Hegel. (Indeed, it is unlikely that Marx accepted such

a reading himself.) But he is right to identify an anthropology different from the humanist anthropology of Feuerbach at work in Marx, which he rightly reads as a post-Enlightenment liberal reaction in favour of religion. However, his appraisal is useful to the extent that it allows us to construe Bloch's meta-religious position as precisely moving beyond the dilemma of religion as either historically original or historically later.

The reason for this, as Wayne Hudson has emphasised, has to do with the fact that the meta-religious position also entails the meta-political and consequently the meta-historical. As a result, the striving towards any post-*eschaton* event is also a return "to what has never yet been" (Bloch 1996, 366; Hudson 1982, 158). This reversal *cum* conflation of origin and result, which derives from Hegel's *anamnetic* epistemology (which Bloch otherwise castigates), suggests a residue of a circular stasis ontology in Bloch's process philosophy. Whilst this is sometimes read as a self-subversion, I wish to argue that it is part of Bloch's delicate dialectical inheritance of both Hegelianism and Christian religion. Furthermore, it allows him to suspend the question of the historical primacy of religion since the meta-religious content of humanity is accordingly only historical to the extent that history is the limit of its externalisation in time. This is what leads Bloch to write that "[h]umanity lives everywhere still in pre-history, indeed each and everything is waiting for the creation of a just world" (Bloch 1986, 1959). Bloch's critique of *anamnetic* epistemology, as Hudson explains, is resisting the tendency to

(1) restrict knowledge to knowledge of what has become (backward looking epistemology); and (2) to backdate the structure and contents of the world to a mythical beginning or "first point," as if everything was present in *potentia* and decided from the start (backward looking ontology). According to Bloch, anamnesis pervades both Hegel's epistemology and his ontology because Hegel lacks any concept of the genuinely future or the genuinely new. He conceives of knowledge as backward looking, ultimately as recollection. (Hudson 1982, 78-79)

Bloch's criticism of *anamnesis* is then tied to the claim that at least part of Hegel's project is backward-looking, both epistemologically and ontologically and that his concept of *Erinnerung* (anamnesis = recollection) is in some sense what closes off his entire system from the possibility of newness (Bloch 1962, 167-181). In this sense, he reads Hegel more correctly than most Marxists. His reading is essentially Christian humanist and ultra-metaphysical, resisting the epistemological and onto-

logical reductionism of both Alexandre Kojève and the Francophile Marxists on the one hand, and the liberal or American pragmatic interpreters on the other. This brings him ultimately closer to Lucio Colletti's "Marxist" interpretation. However, while Colletti sees this as an opportunity to rid Marxism of an alien religious and philosophical influence, Bloch proceeds to propose the difficult inheritance project he calls the meta-religious.

Bloch isolates the concept of *Erinnerung*, which he links to anamnesis and Neo-Platonic emanation, over against the "evolutionist" character of Hegel's overall dialectics. *Erinnerung* is thus said to close off Hegel's overall system from the radically new. This reproduces, as Colletti points out, the Engelsian tendency to identify a contradiction in Hegel, either between the "conservative" (i.e. emanationist) system and "revolutionary" (i.e. evolutionist) dialectics or between revolutionary premises and conservative conclusions (Colletti 1972, 115-123). However, while Colletti's "hermeneutics" do not allow for the dialectical inheritance of any theological or "conservative" tradition, Bloch's meta-religious project does. Bloch was, after all, aware that Hegel's role in the meta-religious project was of an ambiguous or dual nature. As we have seen, this is because aspects of Hegel paradoxically represent the culmination of both emanation and evolution traditions. One can plausibly attribute this *coincidentia oppositorum* to the Engelsian "contradiction hermeneutic" from which Marxism derived its historiography of the "left" and "right" Hegelians. In a sense, Hegel's philosophy presents us with a choice: evolution vs emanation, right vs left. Of course, this is only a choice for individuals, since the "meta-religious" inheritance of the theological is not an artificial appropriation but, according to Bloch, part and parcel of the legacy of Marxism. And yet there is a sense in which we must decide what this legacy is. His delineation of the competing streams of the religious and philosophical traditions of Christianity have so far suggested the following totalising alignments. On the one hand, there are metaphysics of emanation and epistemologies of *anamnesis*, with the result that the world and history are represented as realised without fail, proceeding, as it were, without disruption from *potentia*. On the other hand, there are metaphysics of evolution and epistemologies of *anagnorisis*, with the result that the world and history are represented in terms of an ongoing and conflictual realisation which is disrupted at every step. The relevant difference between anamnesis and anagnorisis, or the conservative and revolutionary uses of memory, is that with the latter, as Geoghegan explains, archetypal "memory traces are reactivated in the present, but there is never simple correspondence between past and

present” (Geoghegan 1996, 37). *Anagnorisis* is a “creative shock” where a past element displaces the consciousness of the present thereby aiding in the creation of a novelty (Geoghegan 1996, 37). This is in contradistinction to *anamnesis* which, according to Bloch, “claims that we have knowledge only because we formerly knew,” from which it follows, that there could be no fundamentally new knowledge (Bloch 1995, 8, 140-141).

This is perhaps all true for Plato and his followers. But Bloch writes that it also inhibits Hegel’s “ultimate circle of circles” (Bloch 1995, 8). However, I would like to argue here that the Fall, as it develops in Christianity (and is subsequently expounded by Hegel), reconfigures *anamnesis* so that the line between suppressed “past” and re-remembered “present” knowledge is superimposed onto the line between prelapsarian and postlapsarian humanity. Consequently, it comes to hold the key to the future of humanity as moving beyond the present as fallenness. As Hegel taught, it concerns the origin of knowledge and the relationship of knowledge and cognition to spiritual life (Hegel 1991, 61). Furthermore, it portrays this very origin of knowledge as disrupted so that the “primordial knowledge” that is to be recollected was never truly known in the first place. One can express this paradox in a number of ways, but it should suffice to say that for Christianity, knowledge is not simply “forgotten,” such that it can be straightforwardly recollected. For it is worth remembering, that for Plotinus, the human soul is never even fully descended from the contemplative realm of the divine intellect and forgetfulness is merely an epistemological consequence of its division into the terrestrial and celestial, which it must overcome in order to return to its creative source (Plotinus 1988, V.1.11). This is the emanationist picture *par excellence*. However, with the Christian picture, the human soul is much more radically severed from its true form, not merely epistemologically, but metaphysically and ethically. As Bloch rightly notes, for Plato, knowledge of the good “inevitably posits the doing of it” (Bloch 1995, 189). The archetype of the Fall is the most fundamental disruption of this notion; for Adam and Eve, it is precisely knowledge of good and evil which destabilises moral action.

It is important to emphasise then, following Hegel, but also in agreement with Bloch, that the Fall archetype does not straightforwardly point to a lost prelapsarian “utopia” which must be identically repeated. This is not because the Fall should be conceived, in a Gnostic mode, as coterminous with creation (Hodgson 2005, 141-155) (this would be to misread Hegel, though not, incidentally, the later Schelling). It rather concerns a utopia – an original peace – which was never fully actualised

And so ultimately, I would argue, the archetype of the Fall should be read as pointing toward the establishment of historical freedom; not as identically returning to Eden, which properly speaking, is the ground and the beginning of such freedom, but belongs to a past where this freedom was abandoned.

(human beings never fulfilled the commandment of freedom to “go forth and multiply”) and so ultimately points to “what is still in the future and therefore what has not come to be in the past.” Bloch suggests rather glibly that “the six days of creation and Paradise” are not eventually restored, “not even in Apocalypse” – because the Christian religious fantasy derived from the Fall is ultimately a kind of obscurantism (Bloch 2009, 23-24). However, it would be much more correct to say that it has been obscured; indeed, obscured by usurping and reactionary forces, as the rest of Bloch’s project rightly maintains. As he explains in *The Principle of Hope*, the “purely utopian archetype,” that of the highest good, is not “even historical, because there has never been a single appearance which could have even begun to fulfil its image.” But this is perfectly consistent with the Fall archetype in so far as the Fall “event” is not read historically (and meta-religion does not inherit “history”), even though, as Bloch acknowledges, Augustine could only invent history as we know it today, as “the story of human, man-made happenings” because he was the first to identify the doctrine of the Fall in the Bible (Bloch 2009, 23-24). And so ultimately, I would argue, the archetype of the Fall should be read as pointing toward the establishment of historical freedom; not as identically returning to Eden, which properly speaking, is the ground and the beginning of such freedom, but belongs to a past where this freedom was abandoned. Accordingly, the archetype of the Fall correlates to the archetypes of freedom that Bloch surveys in his encyclopaedia and which point to a return to a past or counter-history that never was.

## Conclusion

If one broadly accepts this line of thought, it becomes possible to suggest that the dual character of Bloch’s (in my view, correct) reading of Hegel (and indeed of Christianity) should be construed as best evincing the overall thrust of *Atheism in Christianity*. By this I mean that the contradictory traditions of religion and philosophy, which ultimately derive from the same deep source of humankind’s *Within* will be overcome once the meaning of this *Within* is returned to us, so that it may be brought back out again in a new and unalienated relationship to both ourselves and nature. Hegel can, and in a sense should be expected to represent both the conservative and revolutionary traditions of “emanation” and “evolution.” But his project should likewise be taken to signal – not the victory – but in a determinate sense the *future* of the

By this I mean that the contradictory traditions of religion and philosophy, which ultimately derive from the same deep source of humankind’s *Within* will be overcome once the meaning of this *Within* is returned to us, so that it may be brought back out again in a new and unalienated relationship to both ourselves and nature.

latter. Bloch closes *Atheism in Christianity* with a discussion on this “chiasmus of humanity and nature”:

There is a passage in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 in which Marx reaches out in an astounding piece of speculation, constructing a chiasmus that in recent years has become so well-known as to be almost unknown again. He goes so far as to speak of the “resurrection of nature,” and to do so with a certain humour, a mysterious lightness of touch, which makes the break with the past all the easier, and even more so the break with the oppression of the moment, in which this supremely Utopian chiasmus must seem both scandal and folly. His words are well known: “Naturalization of man, humanization of nature” — an ultimate, teleological solution of a sort very rare in Marx. The warm current is at work here in the complete reversal of alienation. But it would be banal to see the naturalization as no more than *mens sana in corpore sano*, and the humanization as a mere domestication of nature in an improved late-Arcadian key. This is, in fact, a really penetrating phrase; there are a lot of them latent in Marxism, but too few ever get actually said. It is a phrase whose two halves could have come from Jacob Bohme and Franz Baader respectively, with on the one hand their well-springs of fresh water and on the other their Sun-man or Man-sun. *Marx himself did not need such an encounter, but Marxism in its reduced form certainly does.* (Bloch 2009, 254-255)

This is one of Bloch’s most striking justifications for the meta-religious project. But when he says that Marx himself did not need such an encounter, but that Marxists today do, I take him to mean not simply that we must “return” to Marx, but rather, following Hegel, that the inheritors of a philosophical tradition must always relearn and recreate that tradition (Hegel 2008, 72-84). Marx was the true inheritor of Hegel who had included in him the encounter with Christianity. But if we are to inherit Marx, then we need to recreate this encounter, both with Christianity<sup>13</sup> and with Hegelianism. These are, after all, the two poles of the meta-religious sphere. In his encounter with Hegel and the philosophical genealogy of “evolution” more generally, Bloch discerned the archetypes of humankind’s freedom; I am suggesting that in the encounter with Christianity we should now discern the archetype of the Fall.

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13 Bloch justifies the appeal to Christianity vis-à-vis the “chiasmic interchange of man and nature” (see Bloch 2009, 255).

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**Tytuł:** Heglizm i metareligia. Archetyp upadku w myśli Ernsta Blocha

**Abstrakt:** Tematem tekstu jest pojęcie „metareligii” Ernsta Blocha, będące próbą zachowania tego, co religijne, bez zachowywania religii, w sposób inny jednak niż czyni to czysto świecki ateizm. Skupiając się głównie na późnym dziele Blocha *Ateizm w Chrześcijaństwie* pokaże, że postrzegał on Feuerbacha jako prekursora swojego meta-religijnego projektu. Następnie przejdę do głównego problem – tego, co Bloch nazywa meta-religijnym dziedzictwem chrześcijaństwa: kwestii Upadku. Jak dowodzę, archetyp Upadku – co często sugeruje sama myśl Blocha – jest koniecznym korelatem archetypu wolności. Archetyp ten ugruntowuje także Blochowską metareligię zarówno w dziedzictwie chrześcijaństwa, jak i dziedzictwie Hegla, którzy traktowani są w niej jako dwie strony tej samej dialektycznej teoretyzacji źródeł marksizmu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Bloch, Hegel, marksizm, chrześcijaństwo, metareligia